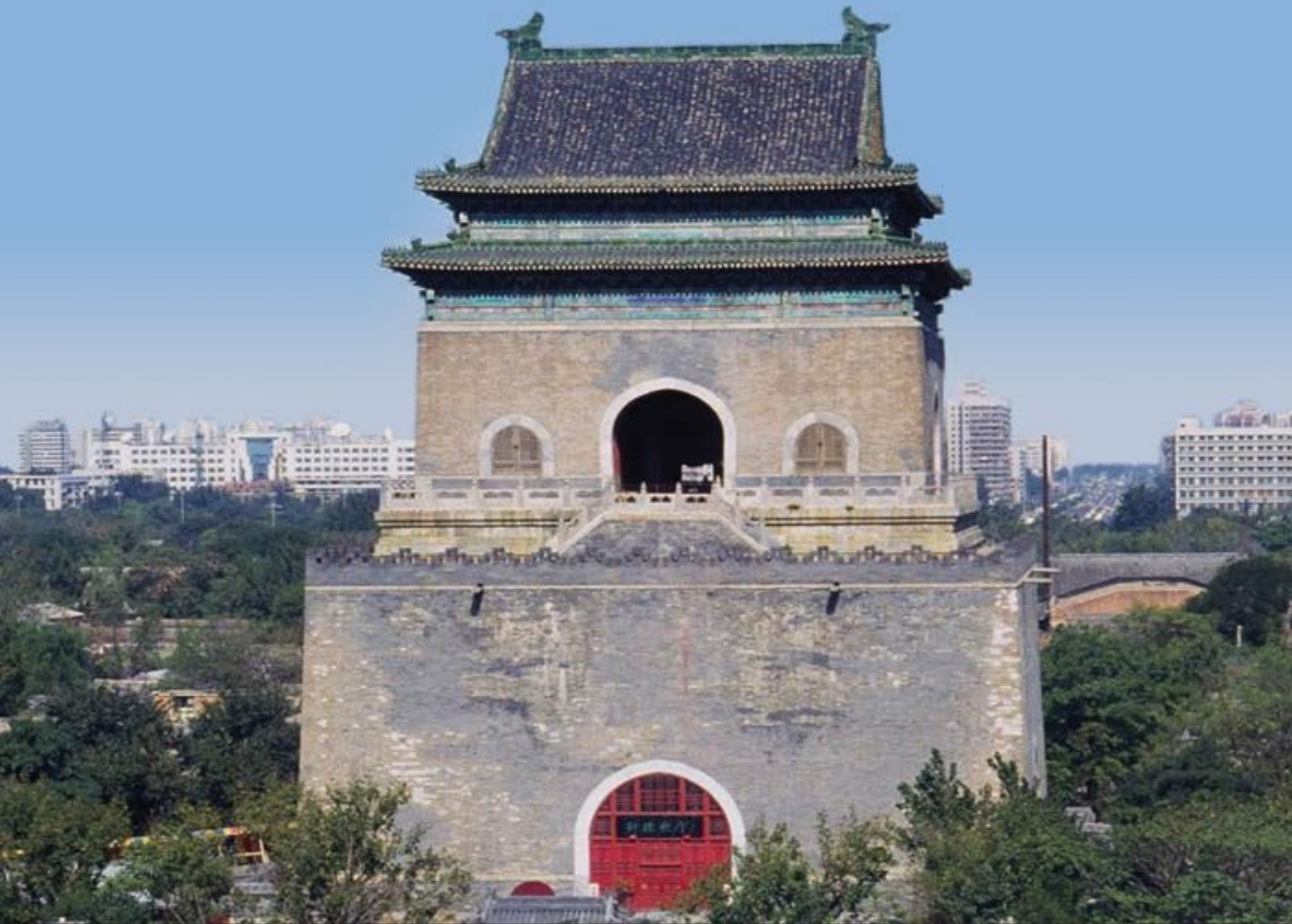


EDITED BY  
**PETER  
CLARK**



≡ The Oxford Handbook *of*  
**CITIES IN  
WORLD HISTORY**

**THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF  
CITIES IN WORLD HISTORY**

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# THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

**CITIES IN WORLD HISTORY**

*Edited by*

**PETER CLARK**

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,  
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.

It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

The editorial material and arrangement © the Editor 2013

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First Edition published in 2013

Impression: 1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN 978-0-19-958953-1

Printed in Great Britain by  
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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## PREFACE

This book has been written at a time when the city has been pushed to the world's centre stage as never before. Not only do more people now live in cities than in the countryside, consuming a high proportion of global natural resources, but the economic and financial crises of 2008 and 2011 have had a seismic effect on the urban balance of power between Asia, other so-called developing regions, and the advanced West, whilst the popular uprisings in the cities of the Middle East have opened up a new political and cultural landscape in that region with radical resonances elsewhere. Given that many of the world's leading cities have existed and been important for centuries, if not millennia, the need for a wide-ranging, comparative examination of global urban development which puts current economic, social, political, and cultural changes in an extended historical perspective has never been greater.

The proposal for this book came from the publisher. It has posed many challenges. First, because as we explain in the Introduction (Ch. 1), despite the enormous increase of research on urban history in recent years, most of it has involved national or regional studies, and there has been much less interest in comparative analysis on a transcontinental scale. So a network of around fifty leading scholars interested in global comparative research, a scientific Ark, had to be built from scratch. Linked to this is the problem that national funding councils, while giving lip service to global perspectives, prefer to support regional or local projects. Lastly, in the age of accountancy publishing, the constraints on editors and authors are inevitably stringent: not all towns and cities, not all topics could be covered in this work. All funding for illustrations, meetings, and the like had to be raised by the editor and authors.

Nonetheless, the book is the first detailed study of the world's principal urban systems from early times to the present day. The aim from the start was to organize an integrated work with arguments, discourses, and themes: not an encyclopaedia of miscellaneous articles. This does not mean that there is a consensus, party line on global urbanization and its consequences. In fact the book explores a great plurality of views and ideas; thus on the figures for urban populations there is considerable diversity of opinion, reflecting the fragility and/or complexity of the data. To promote dialogue we organized two international conferences, at the University of Helsinki in May 2010 and at the University of Pennsylvania in April 2011, at which most contributors, in the fertile tradition of urban history, debated, argued, and indeed created the essence of the book with a good deal of hard talking and modest sociability. We are most grateful to the University of Helsinki, the History Department, Helsinki University, Urban Facts, Helsinki City, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Helsinki, and the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation for funding and supporting the Helsinki meeting. My former assistant Matti Hannikainen was invaluable in coordinating the meeting, along with Suvi Talja, Richard Robinson, Rainey Tisdale, and Niko Lipsanen. We are equally indebted to Renata Holod for taking the lead in organizing the Philadelphia meeting and to Nancy Steinhardt and Lynn Lees for helping her. Funding for the Philadelphia conference came from the University of Pennsylvania's Provost's Fund for International Projects, the School of Arts and Sciences, School of Design, the Penn Institute for Urban Research, the Center for Ancient Studies, the African Studies Center, the Middle East Center, Center for East Asian Research, the History Department, the History of Art Department, the Penn Museum, and Bryn Mawr College, and we thank them for their generosity. Gregory Tentler provided valuable logistic support, and John Pollack and Dan Traister from the Van

Pelt Library of the University of Pennsylvania coordinated a superb exhibit of early modern urban maps, one of which is reproduced in this volume.

Other debts are no less important. As editor, I am very grateful to David Mattingly and Lynn Lees, assistant editors for the early and modern periods respectively, for their invaluable advice, encouragement, and (when needed) solace; also to the other members of the editorial group for their support. The University of Helsinki gave financial help for producing the illustrations; Matti Hannikainen helped to coordinate the contributors' website for the volume; and Mark Elvin, Graeme Barker, and Martin Daunton gave important advice at an early stage.

We are particularly grateful to Niko Lipsanen for drawing most of the Regional Maps and a number of the Figures; Suvi Talja also assisted. The China Map for the ancient period was drawn by Sijie Ren, University of Pennsylvania.

At Oxford University Press Stephanie Ireland, Emma Barber, and Dawn Preston helped at the rather difficult production stage. Susan Boobis prepared the index.

Last but not least, the book owes an enormous amount to those authors and their families (Laurel and Tobias, children of contributors, were born during this enterprise!), as well as institutions, who supported the venture with enthusiasm and commitment.

Peter Clark

*Helsinki*



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## REGIONAL MAPS

The Regional Maps at the start of each part of the book are principally intended as a guide to the location of urban centres referred to in the chapters. The problems of fragile population data, the extended time periods, and differences between regions mean that the categorization is imperfect; also note that city names change over time. The maps are not comprehensive nor are they designed as a geography lesson (thus regional and state boundaries are omitted).

Cities in the Regional Maps for Parts I and II are mainly based on data from authors with additional reference to specialist maps. Cities in the Regional Maps for [Part III](#) have been mostly ranked according to the population data for *c.*2000 derived from the *UN World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*. Cities that had passed the 1 million line by 2005 were included. In a few cases data were checked against national statistical series.

Location data are from Perry-Castañeda Collection, University of Texas/CIA, when available, and otherwise mainly from Google Maps. Mediterranean Europe location data are partly from *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, edited by Richard Talbert (Princeton University Press, 2000).

## PLATES

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# INTRODUCTION

PETER CLARK

IN 2008, for the first time, the majority of the world's inhabitants lived in cities rather than the countryside. The world has become, in some measure, truly urban. No less striking is the proliferation of large cities. Currently (2011) there are nearly 500 cities and urban agglomerations with over a million inhabitants, and 26 mega-cities exceeding 10 million, compared to only one city (Edo, modern Tokyo) with about a million people in the early 18th century.<sup>1</sup> How has this critical transition come about? How did city systems evolve and interact in the past? What was the role of cities within societies and how did this compare between regions? Why were some urban communities more successful, more creative than others? What did it mean to be a town dweller in Ancient Greece, Meiji Japan, or in industrial and post-industrial Europe? How have urban patterns in the past impacted on those of the contemporary world?

In this *Handbook* we try to answer these questions through the first detailed analysis of the evolution of major urban systems in the world from early times to the present.<sup>2</sup> There is no idea of offering an encyclopaedia of urban developments, even less a conspectus of individual city histories. Rather the strategy is two fold: first, to present case studies of the main trends in the principal urban systems; second, to offer a comparative analysis of some key variables—power, population and migration, representations, environment, commercial networking, and so on—that help to explicate, distinguish, and interconnect those systems and networks. Developments and processes are examined over three broad periods: the early era from the origins of cities to around 600 CE; the pre-modern era up to the 19th century; and the modern and contemporary period, from the 19th century to the present time. Given the complexity and specificity of area developments, the chronological analysis cannot be perfectly synchronized.

This introduction will first discuss the value and problems of a comparative approach to the history of cities and a number of the core themes and questions that need to be explored; and then set out a brief schematic overview of the main trends in urban development from early times to the present, with an introduction to the chapters that follow.

What is clear is that while recent times have seen a growing degree of convergence between urban regions, urban systems, and urban structures across the world, the disparities and differentiation are still very striking. Thus, whereas the Americas, Japan, Europe, and Australasia have urbanization rates well above 70 per cent, the rates in Africa and Asia including the Middle East lag behind. Again the distribution of the urban population living in mega-cities is highly variable—much greater in Asia and the Americas than in Europe or Africa. In terms of the standard of urban life the variations are no less striking. Of the top 30 cities offering the best quality of life in 2007, seven were in Europe, six in North America, and none in Asia or Latin America; again many of the world's leading tourist destinations are located in Europe. On the other hand, almost all the urban agglomerations whose territory exceeds 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>—decentralized cities often vulnerable to poor civic governance and acute social and environmental problems—are to be found in Asia and Latin

America.<sup>3</sup>

To comprehend these variations and contrasts, we need to understand where cities, urban networks, and urban society have come from: the historic rollercoaster of urban growth, the evolution of urban hierarchies, and the way a range of key factors have shaped the formation of cities and urban networks. We need to be able to compare developments in China, Japan, India, and the Middle East, as well as in Europe, the Americas, and Africa. There is no teleological agenda, no reductionist idea that cities develop along the same trajectory. There are many different types of city, many different urban inventions, most notably in the early period; by later times there may have been greater urban confluence. However, it is the fundamental contention of this work that the comparative study of the world's urban communities in the past is a prerequisite for comprehending contemporary and future urban development on a global basis.

## COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO URBAN HISTORY

We are confronted by many challenges in a comparative approach—related to literature, definition, and conceptualization. First, literature. One of the paradoxes of urban studies, particularly urban history, is that 40 or 50 years ago there was lively interest in comparative research. One early influence came from Robert Park and the Chicago School which tried in the 1920s to construct a general model of the city, but their comparative analysis was superficial and largely geared to American cities. A more important impetus came from the French *Annales* School which after World War II was increasingly interested in urban studies. Following the example of Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949) which compared developments across southern Europe, North Africa, and (fleeting) parts of the Near East, a series of French area studies shed comparative light on Middle Eastern and European cities with incidental illumination of Indian cities.<sup>4</sup>

Another major stimulus for comparative research derived from the English translation of Max Weber's *The City* in 1958. First published in 1921 Weber's study argued strongly for the distinctive civic and communal identity of the European city rooted in its medieval Christian heritage with significant levels of urban autonomy—an 'urban community in the full meaning of the word'; elsewhere in the Middle East and Asia communal identity and action was variable and incomplete without the distinctive civic burgher leadership of European towns.<sup>5</sup> Though his argument has provoked continuing debate (see in particular below, [Chs. 9, 12, 21, 23](#)), Weber's work gave important momentum to comparative work on Islamic and Chinese cities.

A third influence in the 1950s and 1960s was the exciting research being done by social anthropologists on, for instance, contemporary American and African towns. This encouraged historians to highlight possible similarities between the cities of early modern Europe and present day urban structures and developments.<sup>6</sup> One of the most ambitious attempts to construct a model of the pre-modern city on a global, cross-temporal basis was Gideon Sjoberg's *The Preindustrial City, Past and Present* published in 1960.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1980s, however, comparative studies had started to run out of steam—for at least two reasons. One was the post-modernist reaction against broad comparative histories, so-called meta-narratives, as a kind of colonialist construct, an imperialist project. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) argued that such an approach distorted our understanding of the Middle East and its world

(though he says little about cities as such). Subsequent writers were even more critical of comparative area studies.<sup>8</sup>

Another reason was the extraordinary upsurge from the 1980s of specialist literatures, boosted by the growth of research institutes, specialist journals, and the like. Within Europe, for instance, we recognize a flowering of research by French, German, British, and other national schools. Driven increasingly by the pressures of the academic employment market and public research policies, work of this generation has frequently taken the form of highly specific, close-focused studies.<sup>9</sup> Even more problematic has been the way that national research communities have formulated their own distinct agendas of research prioritizing particular periods and themes. Trying to undertake comparative analysis across Europe is thus fraught with difficulty, certain urban topics being completely ignored in some countries but lavishly explored in others. A similar explosion of specialist output on the history of cities has occurred in many countries across the world.

The challenge is how to direct this upsurge of specialist literature into a new comparative analysis of cities. Certainly the last decade or so has seen a revived appetite for comparative urban studies, fed in part by growing interest in globalization and the role of metropolitan cities in that process, and pioneered by sociologists and geographers.<sup>10</sup> More recently research on the pre-history of globalization, in which Asianists and economic historians have been influential, has opened up crucial discussions, not just about the so-called Great Divergence between Asia and the West in the late 18th and 19th centuries, but about global living standards, manufacturing, marketing, and much else: in this analysis cities have steadily moved to centre stage.

Other challenges confront the student of global urbanization. Major difficulties are associated with defining what is meant by a city or town. Weber defined cities largely in institutional or communal terms. The German geographer Walter Christaller in the 1930s created a Central Place theory that used the provision of service functions for other settlements as the key criterion for urbanism; work that influenced researchers on China as well as Europe. Demographers like Josiah Russell and Kingsley Davis writing in the post-war era deployed population thresholds to define cities.<sup>11</sup> Such simplicity can be treacherously misleading.

Given the great diversity of cities and towns across the world and the important demographic, economic, and other changes between the ancient period and present day, it would seem sensible to adopt a non-prescriptive framework, recognizing the multi-functionality of urban communities over time. On this basis we might expect cities and towns, usually but not invariably, to have a relatively dense population concentration; a range of economic functions; complex social and political structures (but not necessarily institutional ones); a cultural influence extending beyond community borders; and a distinctive built environment—often distinguished by important public buildings and public spaces. But not all these definitional markers would be present at the same time. This kind of catholic definitional matrix avoids the rigid urban modelling that the post-colonialist critics of early comparative studies excoriated. It is not a perfect solution. Contemporary sprawling, mega-city regions do not fit easily into this picture, though at their centre there is often a multi-functional core on this model.

One final set of conceptual issues needs to be raised. As we noted, we are interested in examining and understanding the divergent patterns of urbanization and urban development and how these have been shaped by local circumstances, as well as regional and national variables. But historians are equally interested in the parallels and convergences. Here we need to ask if those similarities, say for example in the ground plans of early cities, often with a gridiron pattern, are the result of common but

autarkic human responses to the structural pressures of urbanization (thus the need to deal with traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and the like), and how far they are the effect of ‘connectivity’—the transfer of cultural, commercial, and other ideas.<sup>12</sup> As we shall see below, all the signs are that intercontinental connectivity was already affecting some aspects of urban development in the ancient period and was increasingly (albeit not consistently) influential in the pre-modern era, heralding the major interactions of modern and contemporary times.

Turning to the core issues addressed in this book, a central concern is with the pattern of urbanization worldwide. The urbanization process in the past was far from being predictable or sustained. It was characterized by a rollercoaster of developments as waves of expansion were followed by deceleration, even de-urbanization. In the Ancient Period early towns often sprang up independently to meet local needs, but later urban patterns were frequently of wider significance. Of fundamental interest is why expansion (and sometimes contraction) was a general, near-global process at certain times, as in the great era of urban growth reaching from Asia to Europe during the 11th to 14th centuries, but not in others, as in the 17th and 19th centuries, when first Europe, and then later China and India stood outside the main urbanization trends. Regional differentiation at all levels is crucial to understanding the historic trends in urban growth.

The book raises important questions about the drivers of urban development. A number of chapters (especially [Chapters 9 and 23](#)) shed light on the tension between market forces, such as agricultural specialization, commercialization, and industrial growth, and the role of power—of rulers, landowners, religions, and later states—in the establishment and promotion of cities. How does the dynamic relationship change across the global scene and over time? Among the other recurring drivers of urban change noted in this book is the impact of competition and cooperation. Rivalry between cities—over resources, trade, population, and much else—was probably influential in the earliest period and remained of vital importance in later eras, increasingly serving as one of the locomotives of globalization. But other chapters reveal how emulation and cooperation among cities, impacting on governance, infrastructure development, cultural life, and above all on urban landscapes, played a vital part both in urban differentiation and in the internationalization of cities.

In whatever region of the world, a shared concern of town dwellers has been with the provision and delivery of urban services. As we shall see, over time those services, whether economic, social, political, or cultural, have fluctuated greatly in type and scale, between cities and urban systems across the world. But no less vital and related are how services are organized: the different types of agency—municipal, state, private, or mixed (including religious and voluntary organizations); and the problems of finance, a critical issue for urban development (see e.g. [Chs. 14, 23, 27](#)). What cannot be doubted is that in most, if not all, periods cities make waves in the world around them. Not least, they generate often polarized perceptions or attitudes. From early times, we see how cities attract positive reactions and praise—in literature, songs, maps, paintings, film, and the like. But in certain areas at particular times, cities, and big cities especially, spawn bouts of anti-urbanism, as in late 18th-century Britain, early 20th-century Germany and Russia, and post-independence India and Maoist China.<sup>13</sup> What factors lay behind such outbursts and what impact do they have on city development? And when does the contemporary sense of urban hegemony begin?

Such general themes and questions highlight both the plurality and parallelism of urban systems and take us back to the theme of connectivity. If there were a growing measure of convergence and interaction of urban networks from ancient and premodern times, what were the main vectors of connectivity? Two at least were critical: diasporas and international trade. While immigration was



the life blood of cities (see [Chs. 8, 22, 35](#)), offsetting recurrent demographic deficits caused by high mortality, so it seems likely that ethnic migration, often large-scale and long-distance, was a powerful force for internationalism, often linked as in Europe, the Middle East, or Asia, with the growth of transnational trading networks. In the same way overseas commerce may from early times, and certainly by the 14th century, have connected up trading centres, often ports, in East and South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, an interaction which expanded and extended on a world scale in the early modern period (see [Ch. 19](#)), even before the huge explosion of global commerce in the 19th and 20th centuries with all its powerful convergent and divisive repercussions (see [Chs. 25 et seq.](#)).

Having explained some of the challenges of comparative analysis and also some of the themes and questions that shape this volume, it is time to sketch the main phases of urban development since its origins and relate these to the chapters of the book.<sup>14</sup>

## URBAN TRENDS IN EARLY TIMES

Cities appear to have originated in Mesopotamia (modern Syria and Iraq) around the 4th millennium BCE, then appear in the Nile River valley, and afterwards are found across the Mediterranean world. Cities also emerge on an important scale in the Indus Valley during the mature Harappan era (2600–1900 BCE), and in China reached a high point of development by the 3rd millennium BCE.

In [Chapter 2](#) Augusta McMahon shows that Mesopotamian cities generally contained planned temple and palace complexes but unplanned neighbourhoods and areas of industry. Many cities were organic developments, with water supply, transport routes, hinterland links, and immigration critical to their development. Fewer were planned political cities, associated with regional states. As elsewhere, Mesopotamian cities experienced cycles of growth and decline: urban development was very much a process. In the Mediterranean region ([Ch. 3](#)) we see the emergence of an integrated network of cities (often deliberate foundations) of a density and complexity that would not be matched until the early modern era: as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Robin Osborne explain, early Phoenician foundations from the 9th century BCE were followed by Greek cities from the 8th century BCE and later Roman cities. Communities were self-conscious of their urban identity and city evolution was shaped not just by economic activity (industry, services, and long-distance trade) but by norms of ordered space and relations to power. In the Indus Valley ([Ch. 5](#)) four to five major settlements developed into large fortified cities, with some craft industries and involvement in long-distance trade but compared to the Mediterranean and Middle East, urban centres appear the exception rather than the norm; and by the 2nd millennium BCE they were all in decline. Although early proto-urban settlements in China date from the 6th millennium BCE, by the mid-3rd millennium BCE China had experienced, according to Nancy Steinhardt ([Ch. 6](#)), an urban revolution: numerous cities appeared often replete with large walled areas, ruling elites, and largely agricultural resources, though with some artisan workshops.

By the 1st century CE, developed urban systems are found in many areas of the world (see [Table 1.1](#) and [Regional Maps 1.1–5](#)). Urbanization had arrived as a global phenomenon, though most cities and towns were small and town dwellers formed only a minority of populations.

Generally, urban growth was promoted by: movement from the countryside; agrarian improvement; increased political stability; and the expansion of long-distance trade. Thus across the Mediterranean and into the Middle East, mostly under Roman rule, we see a developed hierarchy of settlements led by metropolises like Rome with over a million people and Antioch and Alexandria, each having about

half a million, but with a range of provincial capitals, major ports, and smaller cities. As David Mattingly and Kevin MacDonald explain in [Ch. 4](#), cities likewise sprang up across the Sahara (for instance at Jarma), in the Middle Niger and West African forest (thus Ife), and also in the Upper Nile. Such cities demonstrated strong local peculiarities, although as elsewhere state formation and long-range contacts and trade (including long-distance traffic) played a part in their growth. By this time, in northern and western India, the Early Historic Period, urban centres reappeared, albeit with limited continuity with earlier developments—growing in new areas such as the Ganges valley; now, as Cameron Petrie notes ([Ch. 5](#)), there was important trade with the Roman world and China, as well as South East Asia. We also find cities flourishing in China under the Western and Eastern Han dynasties (see [Ch. 6](#)). Their two great capitals Chang’an and Luoyang were extensively planned with palaces, temples, official buildings, markets, and crafts: Chang’an had around 250,000 people and Luoyang twice that figure. General growth of cities across the country was boosted by trade, strong government, and identification with Chinese culture. Urban developments also spring up elsewhere: for instance, the early Mayan and other Mesoamerican developments in central America.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1.1 Estimated Urbanization Rates 1st Century CE**

	% urban
Mediterranean Europe: Italy	32
whole region	?15–20
Northern Africa	10–15
Middle East	?10
North India	15
China	?17

*Sources:* Ch. 8; further information from David Mattingly, Cameron Petrie, Augusta McMahon, Robin Osborne, Nancy Steinhardt.

While there was great diversity of urban forms, basic forces shaping urban development can be identified. Fundamental to the growth of cities at this time, as in other eras, was migration, although, as Luuk de Ligt explains in [Ch. 8](#), the data are often sparse and difficult to interpret. Still it is likely that with high mortality in cities—due to disease (for instance, malaria, plague) and environmental problems—migration flows were necessarily high to sustain the relatively advanced levels of urbanization (see [Table 1.1](#)). Mobility included not only forced movement by war captives and slaves but also voluntary migration by herdsmen, farmers, and craftsmen attracted by economic opportunities and charitable handouts in cities; among the movers were ethnic groups (for instance, Jews and Greeks at Alexandria).

In [Ch. 7](#) David Stone emphasizes the variation in the economies of early cities, highlighting the complexity of relations with the countryside (transfers of surpluses and taxes but also labour services and parasitism), as well as the variable significance of specialist producers, and the powerful economic interaction with ruling elites. He also points to the propensity of early cities to economic decline and disappearance, underlining the rollercoaster nature of urbanization.

Given that many early cities were political constructs, the structures of power and citizenship were evidently vital for urban development. Mario Liverani ([Ch. 9](#)) finally puts to rest the conventional comparison—predating Weber—between an Oriental city based on power and a Western city based on citizenship. Instead he argues that whilst structures of power had existed from the first urbanization, communal institutions grew up over time and were generally limited in the ancient

world. Political power was frequently associated with religious and ceremonial structures that identified cities as distinct to the countryside, and interacted closely with urban society. But as J.A. Baird indicates (Ch. 10) cities were not only notable for the plurality of religious spaces (such as temples, sanctuaries, procession ways and walls) but the complex temporality and topography of religious and ritual life, serving both to demarcate social groups in the city and position it in wider urban networks, as well as projecting its image to the world. At the same time, the cultural matrix of the urban community was specific and individual—a legitimizing force for the city rather than the ruler.

Together power and culture defined the built environment of cities, and in Ch. 11 Ray Laurence demonstrates that the production of rectilinear urban space in the Roman and Chinese empires was surprisingly similar, albeit with significant differences in creative mentality. Planning was particularly important in the case of the foundation of new cities both in China and the West. But whereas planning was a manifestation of power and cultural vision, it was also a response to the serious environmental problems facing virtually every ancient city such as water supply, sanitation, rubbish clearance, and traffic congestion.

### URBAN TRENDS IN THE PRE-MODERN ERA

For an extended period from the 3rd century CE there was growing instability in the existing urban systems and few indications are found of new urban development. The Graeco-Roman network of cities divided into the Eastern and Western empires and then suffered major decline, especially in the West.<sup>16</sup> Across the Middle East Muslim Arab conquests from the 7th century led to short-term upheaval with ancient cities occupied and new ones established. Chinese cities during the Age of Disunion (3rd to 6th centuries) suffered from instability and warfare. New capitals were established and urban fortifications extended, but growth was often short-lived. The Indian picture is obscure: cities after the Gupta kings experienced variations in urban growth, some centres in the north going into decline but others in the south flourishing.<sup>17</sup> Generally, political instability—tribal invasions into urban Europe; Muslim invasions of the Byzantine empire; political upheavals in India and China—had an impact. But the spread of pandemics, especially bubonic plague from the 3rd century, decimating populations, disrupting agriculture, and disturbing long-distance trade, equally contributed to the loss of urban traction.<sup>18</sup>

From the 9th century, however, the urban rollercoaster regained momentum and much of the world seems to have enjoyed an extended period of urban revival. The next three to four hundred years saw an important growth of big cities such as Paris, Baghdad, Hangzhou, and Cairo. Meantime, a massive increase took place in the number of towns, with urban centres, often market towns, founded or growing up in new regions—for instance in Europe, Japan, China, southern India, East Africa, and Central and South America. In Ch. 12 Marc Boone examines the recovery of European towns up to the 14th century with the Mediterranean and Low Countries leading the way, though with towns spreading to hitherto under-urbanized regions such as northern and eastern/central Europe. Crucial was the commercialization of agriculture and intensification of trade, the ambition of rulers, the impact of an expansive Church, and the emerging cultural and intellectual identity of cities. For China, Hilde De Weerd (Ch. 16) stresses how this period witnessed the development of the social, economic, and cultural specificity of towns, complementing their administrative role. Strong, rapid, dramatic, and uneven urbanization resulted from major demographic shifts, marketization, and

commercialization—due to government policy as well as private initiative. In [Ch. 14](#) Dominique Valérien considers the complex nature of the ascendancy of Islamic cities from the 8th century, drawing on late Roman and Byzantine legacies but also powered by militarization under Muslim rule and by their function as a key vehicle in the affirmation and diffusion of Islam. Absence of civic autonomy (except for short-lived episodes) was offset by informal power structures and organizations within the city such as neighbourhoods and *waqfs*. Strong urban growth in the high Middle Ages, especially in Syria and Egypt, was boosted by heavy rural and ethnic immigration and by international overland trade that benefited from the rise of the Mongol empire stretching from the Middle East to East Asia.

In sum, this second great wave of global urbanization was driven by a number of powerful forces evident in many countries: the widespread growth of populations, helped by a diminution of epidemics; increased agrarian output (due to a combination of more intensive and extensive farming); greater political stability—most notably the creation of the Mongol empire; and linked to this and other developments, the revival and efflorescence of intercontinental trade.<sup>19</sup>

During the 14th and 15th centuries urban growth lost some of its momentum again and in some areas of the world may have gone into reverse. Demographic decline is evident for a number of the world's leading cities, while few new urban centres were founded. Economically, the disruption of intercontinental, especially overland, trade between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe may have led to the reduced importance of urban industries, though urban services expanded. Influential was the return of plague pandemics from the early 14th century, spreading from China via central Asia to the Middle East and Europe, depressing urban populations, agriculture, and long-distance trade. Also significant was the break-up of the Mongol empire and other forms of political instability in Europe, the Middle East, and India. Yet the picture was varied on the ground. In Europe (see [Ch. 12](#)) depopulation meant city buildings became uninhabited and economic life disrupted; but the main urban networks survived, and there was a growth of new services, cultural industries, and luxury trades, as cities in north-west Europe started to outshine those in the Mediterranean.<sup>20</sup> In the Middle East ([Ch. 14](#)) the impact of plague, devastating military campaigns by the Turko-Mongol Temür (Tamerlane), and the realignment of international trade had a variable effect, Egypt doing better than the Levant.<sup>21</sup> In China by contrast ([Ch. 17](#)) the political and economic instability during the Yuan–early Ming transition was short-lived, and by the 15th century Chinese cities had recovered much of their earlier dynamic. In Japan too the 14th and early 15th centuries saw urban expansion and new towns established ([Ch. 18](#)); and in Latin America Mayan, Aztec, and Inca urban networks appear to have grown in the Yucatán and Guatemala, in the Mexico valley, and in present-day Colombia (see [Ch. 20](#)).

The urban rollercoaster lurched forward again during the 16th to 18th centuries. Why? One common factor was renewed agricultural improvement and the increasing sophistication of agrarian trade. Another was the rise of global maritime trade between the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe that provided impetus for industrial production and urban consumption. No less important was the new consolidation of state power in Asia, the Middle East (under the Ottoman and Safavid empires), and in Europe (with the advent of more effective, often centralized states), and the extension of European rule to the Americas.

Notable was the proliferation of large cities in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Many new towns were established—in China, Japan, but also in Europe and Latin America—and there was the development of a necklace of interconnected international port cities from Havana to Manila,

Guangzhou, Nagasaki, Batavia, Bombay, Amsterdam, London, and Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> The resurgence of urban growth was particularly remarkable and sustained in China under the later Ming and Qing (as William Rowe explains in [Ch. 19](#)), marked by an upsurge of periodic markets and market towns, while the great port of Guangzhou flourished in the 18th century as a hub for international trade.<sup>23</sup> (See Regional [Map II.5](#).) Urbanization was underpinned by the production of bulk staples linked to agricultural commercialization, the expansion of interregional trade and large-scale exports of manufactured goods such as silks and ceramics. Under the Mughal empire from the 1520s northern and central India enjoyed ‘a veritable golden age of urbanization’, with town formation, the growth of a clearly defined urban hierarchy and an urbanization rate of perhaps 10 per cent: all this helped by political stability, expanding internal trade, and buoyant overseas commerce with Asia and Europe, as Indian cottons clothed many of the world’s better-off (see Regional [Map II.4](#)).<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the 18th century the Chinese urban system seemed to be treading water, despite the proliferation of small commercial cities and towns, while in India political fragmentation and instability after the fall of the Mughal empire, together with Western political and commercial penetration of coastal regions disrupted the urban system and privileged colonial port cities at the expense of inland towns.<sup>25</sup> Probably the world’s most dynamic urban system of the early modern era was in Japan. According to James McClain ([Ch. 18](#)), after the end of the 16th century civil wars the Japanese urban system was restructured with the creation of a new administrative capital, Edo (Tokyo), which was home to over a million inhabitants by the 1720s, the rise of important provincial castle towns, and the advent of many market towns (see Regional [Map II.5](#)). At the start of the 18th century the urbanization rate may have reached over 15 per cent. Here little impetus came from overseas trade (strictly regulated from the 1630s) but from agrarian innovation, commercial integration, infrastructure investment and political stability.

The Middle East likewise enjoyed strong urban growth into the 18th century under the dual dominance of the powerful Ottoman and Safavid (Persian) empires, which provided greater security and opportunities for manufactures and international commerce with Asia and Europe (see Regional [Map II.2](#)). Istanbul’s population rose to 700,000–800,000 in the late 17th century, and other cities like Aleppo and Izmir also flourished (see Ebru Boyar, [Ch. 15](#)). During the 18th century the commercial significance of the region suffered competition from the oceanic trade routes, and some industries lost out to European imports: but there remained significant urbanization and urban prosperity until the last decades of the century.<sup>26</sup> As Bruno Blondé and Ilja Van Damme analyse in [Ch. 13](#), Europe experienced the most volatile change, as the urban revival of the 16th and early 17th centuries, signalled by the rise of capital cities in all regions and the foundation of hundreds of new market towns, was succeeded by urban stagnation or decline. Deceleration was caused by economic and political instability, extensive warfare, and high levels of epidemic disease. Recovery in the late 18th century was limited and marked by urbanization from below, including the renewed dynamism of small towns having agrarian and industrial functions and boosted by general population growth (see Regional [Map II.1](#)). Only in England (and later in the southern Low Countries) do we find a new kind of urbanization powered by innovative technology, improved transport, more intensive and productive agriculture, and heavy investment in international trade, most evidently with the Americas but also with Asia. Nonetheless, right across Europe cultural life and material culture were urbanized.<sup>27</sup>

Across the Atlantic, Spanish *conquistadores*, (as Felipe Fernández-Armesto explores in [Ch. 20](#)) built on limited but important networks of pre-Columbian cities to create one of the most extensive

systems of new towns—ports, mining towns, and administrative centres—in the world (see [Regional Map II.6](#)). Initially focused on the extraction of bullion for export to Asia and Europe, by the 18th century the region’s thousand or so towns were more concerned with local and international trade in agrarian goods (sugar, tobacco, cocoa, coffee).<sup>28</sup> In contrast, up to the end of the 18th century major North American cities were relatively few, all Atlantic ports like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston; and a more developed urban hierarchy including smaller market centres was confined to New England and some of the mid-Atlantic states (see [Ch. 27](#) and [Regional Map II.7](#)). In 1800 a maximum of 6 per cent of people lived in urban communities as most European immigrants settled in rural areas.<sup>29</sup> In Africa urban growth as in the past was unstable and mainly clustered in coastal areas: in the Niger area and Gold Coast, influenced by European traffic in slaves, ivory, and imported goods and also by state formation; in East Africa succoured by Islamic and Portuguese trade to the Middle East and across the Indian Ocean; and in the south focused on the Dutch settlement at Cape Town with its global transit activity.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 1.2 Estimates of Urbanization c.1800**

		% urban
Europe	Western	21
	all	12–13
Africa		2–4
Middle East		12
India		6
South East Asia		6–7
China		3
Japan		?15
North America		3–6
Latin America		7

Sources: Ch. 35; P. Clark, *European Cities and Towns 4000–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 128; further information from Leo Lucassen.

Patterns of urbanization across the world towards the close of the pre-modern era are illuminated by [Regional Maps II.1–7](#) and [Table 1.2](#). We can see that city growth is increasingly a global phenomenon, embracing the Americas and South Asia. But even allowing for the problematic population data average rates are relatively low (compare with the equally fragile figures in [Table 1.1](#)). Crucial here may be the fact that while the pre-modern era saw the advent of tens of thousands of new small and medium size towns across the world, the number of very large cities (around 1 million) remained tiny: only one or two in the 18th century (Edo and later London).

Urban growth from the 16th century was propelled by widespread demographic expansion—despite the continuing high incidence of epidemic disease in all major cities. Population growth frequently outran economic expansion and in most cities, as in earlier periods there was endemic poverty (and social inequality), housing shortages, poor nutrition, and morbidity. Recurrent population deficits, as mortality exceeded fertility rates, confirmed the critical reliance on large-scale immigration. As Anne Winter explains in [Ch. 22](#), which compares pre-modern Europe and China, migration was a pervasive feature of urban life. If more forced migration occurred in Asia than Europe, in other ways the typology of mobility was broadly similar, distinguished by: short distance migration of poorer folk often from the countryside; more long-distance intercity movement by

merchants, officials, and the like; and ethnic and female migration. Patterns of integration in China may have been less institutional than in Europe with its municipal controls, more dependent on native place associations.

In [Ch. 21](#) Bas van Bavel, Jan Luiten van Zanden, Eltjo Buringh, and Maarten Bosker present a model to compare and contrast the urban economic experience of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East with insights into American development. Here they emphasize the importance of political institutions, particularly more open participatory government and greater urban autonomy, in contributing to the faster economic growth of European cities by the 18th century. They also point to the same factors influencing the rise of the Atlantic urban region in the early modern period, laying the foundations for the first Great Divergence between East and West (see also [Ch. 34](#).) Wim Blockmans and Marjolein 't Hart ([Ch. 23](#)) examine the foundations of urban power in cities which they attribute to a city's independent capacity for resource extraction, and its nexus in the wider framework and balance of power in a society. Relative autonomy and municipal institutions made European communities distinctive, but non-European cities could also develop a voluntaristic public sphere and exploit the opportunities provided by weak rulers. What is evident is that the new consolidation of state power in Asia, the Middle East, and in Europe (with the rise of more effective, often centralized states), and the extension of European rule to the Americas and beyond were crucial to global urban development in the early modern era. Cities became the privileged hubs of expanded state power.

Peter Burke in [Ch. 24](#) highlights the shared experience of cities in pre-modern times as they were perceived and sought to promote their urban identity, whether in terms of the built environment (gates, squares, religious, civic, and other buildings); eulogies and chronicles; or descriptive literature. Though Burke points to the special importance of urban public space in the West, and the contrast between the print cultures of the East Asian and European city and the manuscript culture of its Middle Eastern counterpart, he stresses how parallel trends were influenced by intercity rivalry and increased commercialization. At the heart of contact and exchange between the world's cities were the great ports which played an instrumental role in the transition to proto globalization serving not only intercontinental commerce but acting as gateways to inland and regional trade networks. [Chapter 19](#) by Leonard Blussé focuses on the major ports of South East Asia such as Melaka (later Portuguese Malacca), Spanish Manila, and Dutch Batavia which provided from the end of the 15th century a crucial pivot for that vibrant commerce in manufactures, processed goods, and raw materials between China, India, Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe. Complex multicultural communities shaped by power (and increasingly Western colonialism), the ports were vital for the dissemination of religious ideas, representations, and institutions.

## URBAN TRENDS IN THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

The end of the 18th century and first part of the 19th opened the door to urban restructuring on a global scale. Before, Asian cities had been among the biggest, most advanced, and most dynamic in the world, but by the early 19th century West European cities were picking up the baton. The so-called Great Divergence was not only of major significance for global economic history but also for the development of urban systems across the world (see [Ch. 34](#)). Thus, urbanization began to accelerate in Europe, led by Britain and Belgium, whilst Chinese, Japanese, and Indian rates stabilized or stagnated. But before the 1850s the urban transformation in the West was selective. True, European capital cities like London, Paris, and Brussels grew strongly and there was an upsurge of

specialist towns, including new industrial centres, global port cities, and early leisure towns, and the invasive export of colonial towns. Yet European cities retained many traditional features and in consequence they were slow to adapt to the mounting social pressures of urbanization.<sup>31</sup> In 1850 the vast majority of humankind still lived outside cities and towns and, even those who were town dwellers for the great part inhabited communities that were essentially pre-modern in organization and environment.

The era from the late 19th century to World War II marked the onset of the third great age of urbanization. According to Andrew and Lynn Lees in [Ch. 25](#), European cities forged ahead on many fronts: in accelerating urbanization rates (reaching 43.8 per cent by 1910); in the proliferation of big cities (123 by 1910, three times the number in 1850); and the creation of new models of urban culture, society, and active municipal governance which had a powerful influence across the world. Though Western Europe led the way, Europe's less urbanized regions in the north and east soon began to catch up.<sup>32</sup> Across the Atlantic, as Carl Abbot analyses in [Ch. 27](#), North American cities began to proliferate, leapfrogging from the East Coast to the Midwest to the West Coast, just as the number of great centres increased, along with multiplying specialist industrial and other towns. If the shape of the urban system were already framed before 1870, it was filled in over the next half century. As in Europe, the period up to the early 20th century saw North American cities resolve many of their basic problems of governance and public services and become beacons of modernity. But already by World War II that distinctive car-driven decentralization of American cities was speeding ahead with the proliferation of suburbs, alongside the growing racial heterogeneity and social deprivation of city centres.<sup>33</sup>

Why was this such a period of urban transformation in the West—as the Great Divergence finally took hold? Both in Europe and North America urban growth was propelled by an increase in natural population as mortality rates declined. Nonetheless rural to town migration remained important, just as international ethnic movement was increasingly significant, especially from Europe to the cities of North America, but also within Europe. Economically, the spread of new technology and rising productivity was vital, but so too was the expansion of the service sector in response to rising urban living standards. Again world commerce, with free trade policies dominant at least until near the close of the 19th century, surged forward, powered by steamships and railways. Not least, the ascendancy of strong national governments in Europe and the United States served to protect and bolster the interests of Western cities in the global marketplace, supporting protectionism when it suited them; elsewhere governments were often weak or under colonial sway.<sup>34</sup>

Outside Europe and North America, urban systems were slow to expand. In Asia, as Rowe shows ([Ch. 17](#)), late Imperial China saw only limited changes with traditional administrative structures, ancient regional patterns, and inter-regional trade countering the dynamic effects of international trade and Western urban models, both centred on the coastal area of the treaty ports<sup>35</sup>. Under the Chinese Republic (after 1911) the new impetus for Western-style innovation—in industry, urban planning, and culture—was largely stymied by political instability, warfare, and Japanese competition (as Kristin Stapleton argues in [Ch. 28](#)). Likewise, South Asia (according to Prashant Kidambi, [Ch. 30](#)) experienced urban stagnation during the long 19th century, albeit with spurts of growth—mostly concentrated in imperial ports like Bombay and Calcutta. From the 1930s, however, urbanization was fed by urban economic growth and large-scale migration (in flight from rural deprivation). Likewise under imperial rule, South East Asia similarly enjoyed only limited urban expansion before World War II ([Ch. 31](#)).



Japan was the exception. After the Meiji Restoration (1868) urban change was initially slow, but, according to Paul Waley (Ch. 29), from the end of the 19th century Western-style industrialization, along with state reforms, energized modern urbanization—building on the advanced urban system of the early modern era. By the 1920s urbanization rates had reached 18 per cent, the big cities were growing fast (Tokyo, for instance, numbered nearly 4 million at the time of the 1923 earthquake), while the urban infrastructure was modernized with the introduction of town planning and social welfare reforms.<sup>36</sup>

In the Middle East the impetus for urban growth during the 19th century, exemplified by the revival of Istanbul, Cairo, and Baghdad, stemmed from Ottoman administrative reforms (including the recognition of some municipal autonomy), favourable terms of trade, infrastructure improvements, and the powerful impact of European metropolitan models on urban development and planning (see the analysis by Mercedes Volait and Mohammad al-Asad in Ch. 32). After World War I European colonial rule, political instability and international protectionism stifled most urbanization, though the biggest cities continued to expand. In Africa, as Bill Freund explains (Ch. 33), urban growth remained highly selective, during the 19th century mainly limited to areas of European commercial and colonial intervention—most obviously South, North, and West Africa. Nonetheless, from the 1930s one finds accelerating urbanization across the continent as scrappy colonial towns turned into expansive cities, their growth fuelled by heavy migration from the countryside. In Latin America, the post-independence decades suffered general stagnation, but as Alan Gilbert contends in Ch. 26, from the late 19th century booming Atlantic trade, foreign investment, and European immigration, as well as state formation, led to an urbanization surge in the south and the rise of Buenos Aires, Rio, and Santiago as modern cities; elsewhere urban growth and change were modest in scale. Around 1930 Latin America's urbanization rate still stood at only 14 per cent, but thereafter accelerated sharply. Crucial factors were general demographic increase and the emergence of urban manufactures, encouraging rural movement to town.<sup>37</sup>

Inaugurating a time of dramatic change, the late 20th century saw the onset of a new urban world. The transformed pattern of global urbanization by 2000 is visible from Table 1.3. It is also highlighted by the Regional Maps iii.1–8. First, after World War II urban growth rates began to rise sharply in East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, though Africa trailed behind until recent years; by comparison European and North American urbanization rates broadly stagnated from the 1970s—reflecting the onset of the Second Great Divergence in economic and urban development. Secondly, and no less striking, a significant proportion of the accelerated urban growth in the expanding countries was concentrated in a score or so of mega-cities (above 10 million) from Shanghai to Cairo and Mexico City;<sup>38</sup> relatively few new towns were founded. Thirdly, the earlier specialist cities—industrial towns and global port cities—suffered serious set-backs, not only in Europe and North America but (where they were established) in Asia too. Lastly, there has been a major expansion of urban services, though with a significant shortfall of provision in many developing countries; even in North America and parts of Europe the major municipal advance of the post-war decades stalled from the 1970s and 1980s, affected by privatization, segmentation, and fragmentation of provision.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 1.3 Estimates of Urbanization c.2000**

		% urban
Europe	Western	75
	all	72–74
Africa		37
Middle East		73
India		28
South East Asia		40
China		36
Japan		79
North America		77
Latin America		75

Sources: Ch. 34; P. Clark, *European Cities and Towns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 359.

The survey chapters in [Part III](#) chart the complexity of the changes. As we can see from [Ch. 27](#), the North American system has experienced major upheaval since the late 20th century: the decay of old industrial cities; the relentless suburbanization of cities (a solid majority of North Americans living there by 1990);<sup>40</sup> and problems of municipal finance and governance. No less striking were regional trends: the stagnation of the urban Midwest and the North East, but the new vitality of the Sun-Belt cities of the West and South, buoyed up by immigration, leisure, and defence industries; and the rise of mega-regions (for instance the Boston–Washington corridor and Chicago–Toronto–Pittsburgh cluster) (see [Regional Map III.8](#)). Across the Atlantic, European cities (see [Ch. 25](#)) recovered rapidly from World War II and the planned city enjoyed its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 1980s however de-industrialization, mounting social problems associated with unemployment and ethnic immigration, suburban growth, and financial retrenchment have posed major challenges for European cities. Even so, for much of the period up to 2010 they maintained (by global standards) relatively high levels of social cohesion and stability, prosperity, and civic identity.<sup>41</sup> By comparison to cities elsewhere European cities are generally striking for their modest size (see [Regional Map III.1](#)).

In the Middle East (see [Regional Map III.2](#)) the scenario is highly regionalized (see [Ch. 32](#)). In the Gulf region virtually new cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi have been created, boosted by gushing oil revenues and powerful state intervention, while in Turkey cities have benefited from increased industrialization and tourism. Elsewhere, most expansion has been concentrated on state capitals and tourist centres (often dual historic and modern cities). Too often, urban development in the post-war era was distorted by the hegemony of state capitals, political instability (warfare and disruption of elites), and the nationalist policies of authoritarian regimes. From the 1990s, however, a new wave of globalization linked to economic liberalization has stimulated renewed urban growth and modernization.<sup>42</sup>

In China, as Stapleton demonstrates ([Ch. 28](#)), the post-war era saw the Communist Party try to remodel and reconstruct cities on the Soviet model and rebalance the urban system away from the coast towards the interior (with, for instance, the establishment of Soviet-style industrial towns). But since the political reforms of the 1980s such policies have been reversed; economic planning has been decentralized and state and foreign investment channelled towards burgeoning port and industrial centres on the south coast: thus the creation of Special Economic Zones at Shenzhen and Pudong has triggered the rise of mega-cities with high levels of immigration, housing shortages, pollution, and other problems (see [Regional Map III.5](#)) In South Asia too the post-war decades under

nationalist governments (with anti-urban sentiment in vogue) led to a slowdown in urban expansion but economic liberalization since the 1990s has contributed to accelerating urban economic growth (see Regional [Map III.4](#)). According to Kidambi ([Ch. 30](#)), states have played a vital part in building new capitals and industrial towns, influencing economic policy and restricting civic autonomy. In South East Asia, a similar pattern of delayed development is visible. Since the 1980s, as Howard Dick and Peter Rimmer point out ([Ch. 31](#)), there has been an explosion of sprawling large cities, with twenty boasting over a million inhabitants in 2010, including three mega-cities, Jakarta, Manila, and Bangkok, with over 10 million (see Regional [Map III.6](#)). Here international trade and state investment have played critical roles, as well as migration from an overcrowded countryside. By comparison, Australian cities have seen more modest but affluent growth, erected on a colonial heritage, Western capital, and immigration, and exploiting the new commercial and industrial opportunities offered by a dynamic East Asia.

In Japan urban development during the late 20th century has been long term and sustained (see [Ch. 29](#) and Regional [Map III.5](#)). Overcoming the destruction caused by World War II, the Japanese landscape was transformed from the 1950s by urbanization and industrialization. Growth was initially based quite widely, though mainly in the Tokaido corridor from Tokyo to Osaka. However, from the 1980s the focus concentrated on the Tokyo metropolitan area, marked by intensive vertical as well as horizontal building development. Sponsored strongly by the state, Tokyo has become the hegemonic capital of Japanese high finance, commerce, and industrial direction, controlling an empire of factories that are increasingly located outside Japan: in consequence some of the leading provincial and older industrial towns in the country have stagnated or declined.<sup>43</sup>

Outside Asia the most dynamic urbanizing region has been Latin America (see [Ch. 26](#) and Regional [Map III.7](#)). Expansion has been fed by large-scale rural migration to town (up to the 1980s) and structured around the runaway rise of a cohort of six or seven mega-cities—mostly capitals and ports—that have benefited from foreign investment, expanding manufactures, and international trade. Though metropolitan growth is slowing, still in numerous countries the leading city contains a quarter or more of the total population. Metropolitan concentration has left the vast majority of smaller cities and towns marginally integrated into the wider international economy. As elsewhere, the outcomes of mega growth have been mixed: improved living standards, primarily but not exclusively among the urban middle classes, have to be set against widespread pollution, traffic problems, and the urbanization of poverty. In post-colonial Africa (see Regional [Map III.3](#)) urban growth was at first strong, driven by high state investment in new capitals and public infrastructure, by exports of raw materials, and by heavy rural immigration; but by the 1980s it had largely ran out of steam due to governmental failures, the changing terms of trade, declining Western support, and falling migration (see [Ch. 33](#)). However, recently urbanization has revived in much of Africa, despite limited urban investment or growth of production. Rather, newcomers to the city are attracted by urban entertainment and culture and the superior health and education facilities, as well as government activity, concentrated there.

Behind this reordering of global urban systems in the late 20th century we can identify a number of core determining factors: relative declines in industrial output, technological leadership, and labour productivity in European and North American cities; major population growth in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, leading to large-scale movement from the countryside; expansive global trade, boosted by transport advances and renewed liberalization, but now restructured and more evenly balanced towards non-Western countries; and the growing problem of state–city relations in

many parts of Europe and North America.<sup>44</sup>

A number of these and other issues crucial to understanding the modern and contemporary city are explored in detail in [Chs. 34–43](#). On the economic front, Ho-fung Hung and Shaohua Zhan in [Ch. 34](#) compare the rise of urban industry first in England and later Europe in the 19th century and then in China in the late 20th century and discuss possible explanations, among them: the growth of an engineering culture in the West, the rise of dynamic business elites, and state support for business including urban production and overseas trade. At the same time, they stress the importance of inputs from the rural economy, through transfers of surplus agrarian capital to the urban industrial sector, through the role of smaller towns as growth centres, and the importance of cheap workers from rural immigration. However, as many chapters show, modern urban growth since the 19th century has owed as much to the service sector as to manufacturing.

To the present day, cities remain confections of movers. Leo Lucassen ([Ch. 35](#)) discusses the importance of migration and ethnicity in modern urban development and pinpoints traditional aspects (links to villages), the high volatility of mobility, the importance of temporary movement, and the fundamental problem of social integration (with a balance of informal assimilative agencies and state policies at play). As Gilbert explains in [Ch. 36](#), migration to cities clearly has a fundamental impact on urban social inequality, serving as one of the vital causes of poverty turning into an urban phenomenon (though with wide variations between regions). At the same time, Gilbert also shows the complex effect of globalization and international capital flows, and contends that while social polarization and segregation have increased, large-scale communal agitation and protest have not. This he attributes to modestly rising living standards and improved welfare provision by states and urban governments in developing countries.

Three further chapters explore the challenges and opportunities presented by modern urbanization. Martin Melosi ([Ch. 37](#)) discusses the way that environmental problems in the 19th century—difficulties of sanitation, water supply, pollution, and waste disposal—created by large-scale city growth helped to generate new professional and municipal services, new concepts of social justice, and decisive medical outcomes, including falling mortality rates. Just as environmental issues served to galvanize urban governance in Europe and North America before World War I, he shows how mounting environmental pressures in the fast growth cities of Asia and other developing countries are engendering serious strains but also emerging solutions, often but not invariably borrowed from the West. In [Ch. 38](#), Marjatta Hietala and Peter Clark examine concepts and realities of urban creativity. Using evidence from leading modern innovative cities like Berlin, New York, and Tokyo, as well as from more specialist technology centres such as Bangalore and niche cultural cities like Kingston, Jamaica and Stockholm, they critique the conditions for creative success, among them the important role of agglomeration, labour mobility and diversity, education, the interaction of technology and cultural industries, internationality, and public support. They argue that not all these factors are present in the same place, and stress the role of intercity competition in shaping creative developments, and the significance for leading centres of a reservoir of creative resources fuelling new generations of innovation. While representations have been crucial for massaging the reputation and cultural influence of cities from earlier periods ([Ch. 24](#)), Hannu Salmi argues in [Ch. 39](#) that, since the early 20th century, cinema—whether in Europe, Hollywood or more recently Bollywood, and Nollywood (Nigeria)—has been vital in promoting enhanced urban awareness and identity, and defining the image of cities both as glittering theatres of modernity and also as shock cities. Along with new types of media including television and the Internet, film has helped forge the dazzling

influence of the city across a globalizing world.

Yet modern urbanization needs to be unpicked. From the late 19th century a growing proportion of the urban population lived in suburbs, and by the late 20th century this became the norm in many parts of the world, though with Europe one of the few exceptions. As Jussi Jauhiainen explains in [Ch. 42](#), suburbs date back to ancient times, but the 19th and 20th centuries saw an incredible explosion of suburbanization. Thus we find self-build shanty towns mushrooming at some time outside almost every major global city—from Paris and Athens, to Bombay, Cairo, and São Paulo—frequently ‘improved’ after the first generation. And many kinds of planned suburbs: terraced and villa suburbs; industrial suburbs; garden suburbs; gated communities; and endlessly sprawling semi-planned suburbs (America’s suburbia). Suburbs not only generate problems of social inequality and segregation, they also threaten urban finances, the viability of civic governance, and the efficacy of urban strategic planning. In [Ch. 41](#) Xiangming Chen and Henry Fitts shed light on another almost unstoppable urban phenomenon of the modern era: the growth of metropolitan cities and city-regions, most notably in the United States, East and South East Asia and Latin America (see [Regional Maps III.8, III.5–7](#)). Their analysis focuses on patterns of social and spatial inequality, the impact of globalization and the problems of governance and finance of such sprawling, over-extended entities, and the implications for transport and infrastructure. Around half of the early 21st-century mega-cities of Asia and elsewhere were previously colonial cities established by the European powers.

In [Ch. 40](#) Thomas Metcalf examines the range of colonial towns—from settler towns (particularly in Africa and Australasia), to imperial port cities, administrative hubs, and resort towns with their small expatriate enclaves and mainly indigenous populations. The urban creations of the different colonial powers had their own national distinctiveness but also important shared features: racial zoning, heavy policing, urban planning, petty regulation, and minimal municipal democracy. Imperial ports also figure in Carola Hein’s study of port cities ([Ch. 43](#)). Crucial for economic and cultural interaction between urban societies from ancient times, Hein demonstrates how port cities became powerful players in the 19th-century development of international trade and colonization, serving as bustling gateways linking and mobilizing urban networks. But in the late 20th century mechanization and containerization engineered a dramatic shakeout, with the dominance of world trade by a select group of mega-hubs (Hong Kong and Rotterdam, for example) leaving many older ports to struggle to revitalize their economies through waterfront tourism and other service activities. One must never forget that urbanization is a game of winners and losers.

Everything in this book demonstrates that cities and towns are incontrovertible star players in the ‘big history’ of world development described by Penelope Corfield in [Ch. 44](#). As she argues, ‘becoming globally urban is one of our great collective achievements over time’. There is no one Grand Narrative of that process. Cyclical theories of urban growth and decline, Western teleological identifications of cities with progress, and ideas of cities as revolutionary forces, all fail to comprehend the complex permutations and intricacies of the urbanizing process and its impacts. Here Corfield suggests the need to look at cities as both the product of short-term upheavals and deep-seated continuities, as places that manage, adapt to, and thrive on change. From that perspective we can see more clearly some of the critical factors that recur in the chapters of this book and that are fundamental to understanding how the city has been shaped in history: the powerful tensions between the state and market forces, between rulers and cities, and between cities themselves, ever competing with and emulating one another; the restless mobility of urban peoples; the constant remaking of social structures and cultural identity. The book shows how the making of the urban world is not

synonymous with the big city, however spectacular the contemporary model, but is constructed from the messy aggregation of many different types and sizes of urban communities. We see from early times the shared interactive experiences of cities—well before contemporary globalizing trends. At the same time, the book explores the nature and effects of urban differentiation and pluralism at every level—regional, national, and local: as important nowadays as in the time of the early cities.

In sum, this *Handbook* cannot hope to offer a definitive or comprehensive view of global urban history, as was made clear at the start. Rather through the following chapters spanning from ancient times to the present, the aim is to establish a framework for analysis, to open up an arena for comparative discussion and debate, to foreground big issues and questions for further research, to highlight the infinite complexities of urbanization over the longue durée, and to shed a bright, multicoloured spotlight on a subject that will never go away.

## NOTES

1. <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm>;  
<http://www.citypopulation.de/world/Agglomerations.html>
2. For important earlier studies see Peter Hall's acclaimed pioneering, *The World Cities* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) (a study of four European and four non-European cities), also his later more comprehensive *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation and Urban Order* (London: Weidenfeld, 1998); Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth* (New York: Academic Press, 1974) (demographic analysis); also Paul Bairoch, *Cities and Economic Development from the Dawn of History to the Present* (London: Mansell, 1988) (mostly concerned with economic development).
3. See Table 1.3; <http://www.citypopulation.de/world/Agglomerations.html>;  
[http://bwnt.businessweek.com/interactive\\_reports/livable\\_cities](http://bwnt.businessweek.com/interactive_reports/livable_cities);  
[http://www.euromonitor.com/Top\\_150\\_City\\_Destinations](http://www.euromonitor.com/Top_150_City_Destinations); World Urbanization Prospects 2007 revision, <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp?panel=2>
4. R. Park, *The City* (with R. D. McKenzie and Ernest Burgess) (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1925); F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols. (Paris: Colin, 1949); L. T. Fawaz and C. A. Bayly, eds., *From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 2 et seq.
5. M. Weber, *The City*, ed. D. Martindale and G. Neuwirth (New York: Collier Books, 1962), esp. 88.
6. Cf. Peter Burke, 'Urban History and Urban Anthropology of Early Modern Europe' in D. Fraser and A. Sutcliffe, eds., *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 69–82.
7. G. Sjöberg, *The Preindustrial City, Past and Present* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).
8. Fawaz and Bayly, eds., *From the Mediterranean*, 6; E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); see also C. A. Breckenbridge and P. van der Weer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).
9. Cf. R. Rodger, ed., *European Urban History: Prospect and Retrospect* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993); P. J. Corfield, 'Historians and the Return to the Diachronic', in G. Harlaftis et al., eds., *The New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography*. (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 14–15.

10. S. Sassen, *Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 2001); Fu-Chen Lo and Yue-Man Yeung, eds., *Globalization and the World of Large Cities* (Tokyo: UN University Press, 1998); N. Brenner and R. Keil, eds., *The Global Cities Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006).
11. Walter Christaller, *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1933); for Christaller's influence on Chinese historians see, for instance, William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1977). J. C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948); idem, *Medieval Regions and their Cities* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1972); K. Davis, *Urbanization in Latin America* (New York: Milbank, 1946); idem, *World Urbanization, 1950–1970* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1969–72).
12. Colin Renfrew, 'The City through Time and Space', in J. Marcus and J. A. Sabloff, eds., *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2008), 36–7, raises some of these issues but without stressing the significance of connectivity.
13. P. Clark, *European Cities and Towns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 199, 234, 322–3; Richard G. Fox, ed., *Urban India: Society, Space and Image* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1970), 200.
14. For more literature references for the next sections see the notes to individual chapters.
15. Marcus and Sabloff, eds., *The Ancient City*, chs. 13–15; also below, Chs. 7, 20.
16. G. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins, eds., *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); G. Brogiolo et al., eds., *Towns and Their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
17. J. Heitzman, *The City in South Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 34–41.
18. On the extensive impact of plague see D.C. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pesilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), esp. 111 et seq.
19. Cf. N. di Cosmo et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 100 et seq. For the classic account of the the growth of intercontinental trade and other contacts see J. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); see also D. A. Agius and I. R. Netton, eds., *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), ch. 1.
20. See also Clark, *European Cities*, 34–7, 105.
21. See also D. Behrens-Abouseif, 'The Mamluk City', in R. Holod et al., eds., *The City in the Islamic World: I* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 296–311.
22. See below, Ch. 19: for more see A. Reid, ed., *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
23. E. Cheong, *Hong Merchants of Canton 1684–1798* (London: Curzon Press, 1996).
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25. C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars 1770–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 209 et seq.
26. E. Eldem et al., eds., *The Ottoman City between East and West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 48 et *passim*; also S. Ozmucur and S. Pamuk, ‘Real Wages and Standards of Living in the Ottoman Empire 1489–1914’, *Journal of Economic History*, 62: 2 (June, 2002), 316.
27. For a somewhat more positive interpretation of European trends before 1800 see Clark, *European Cities*, 139–57, 217–19.
28. Cf. also Jean-Luc Pinol, ed., *Histoire de l’Europe urbaine* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), II, 287–352.
29. G. B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); S. K. Schultz, ‘The Growth of Urban America in War and Peace 1740–1810’, in W. M. Fowler and W. Coyle, eds., *The American Revolution: Changing Perspectives* (Boston: NorthEastern University Press, 1979); Clark, *European Cities*, 136.
30. D. M. Anderson and R. Rathbone, eds., *Africa’s Urban Past* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 4–6, 67 et seq.
31. A. Lees and L. H. Lees, *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chs. 2–4.
32. Clark, *European Cities*, 229, 231–2.
33. Cf. K. T. Jackson and S. K. Schultz, eds., *Cities in American History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 251–352.
34. Lees and Lees, *Cities*, 48–54 et *passim*; Clark, *European Cities*, ch. 13.
35. R. Murphey, ‘The Treaty Port and China’s Modernization’, in M. Elvin and G. W. Skinner, eds., *The Chinese City between Two Worlds* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1974), 20–1, 22–8.
36. For Tokyo N. Fiévé and P. Waley, eds., *Japanese Cities in Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2003), 26 et seq.
37. Cf. L. Bethel, ed., *Latin America: Economy and Society 1870–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 85 et seq.
38. Cf. J. Gugler, ed., *World Cities beyond the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
39. T. Lorrain and G. Stoker, eds., *La privatisation des services urbains en Europe* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).
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41. Clark, *European Cities*, 357–8, 367–9.
42. See also Y. Elsheshtawy, ed., *Planning Middle Eastern Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
43. K. Fujita and R. C. Hill, eds., *Japanese Cities in the World Economy* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1993), 7–10, 66 et *passim*.
44. P. Bairoch, ‘International Industrialization Levels from 1750–1980’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 11 (1982), 301–10; see also below, Ch. 34, [Table 34.1](#).



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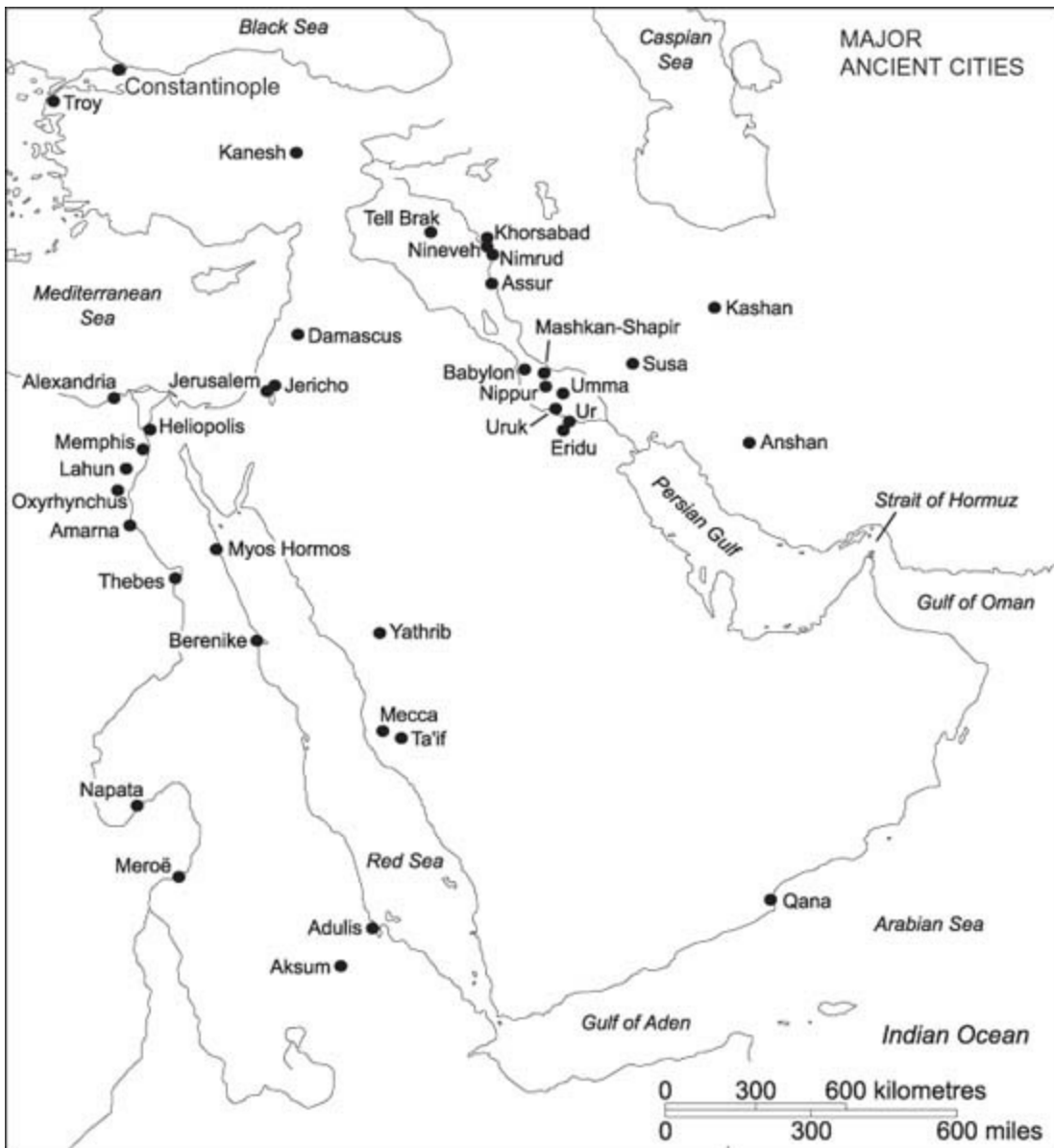
PART I

**EARLY CITIES**

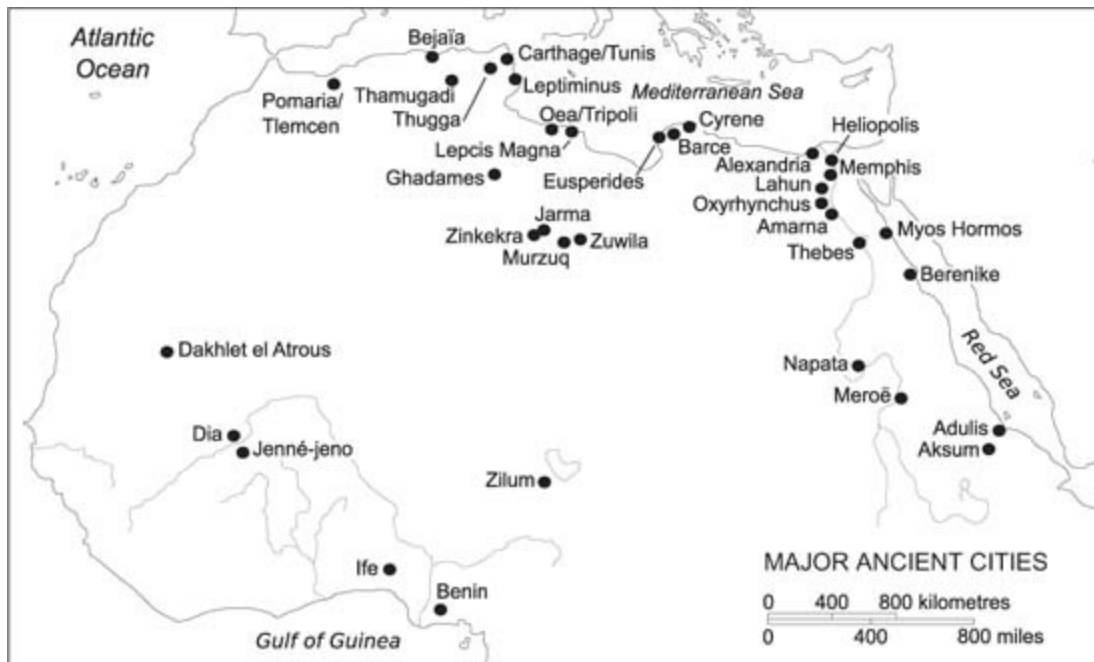
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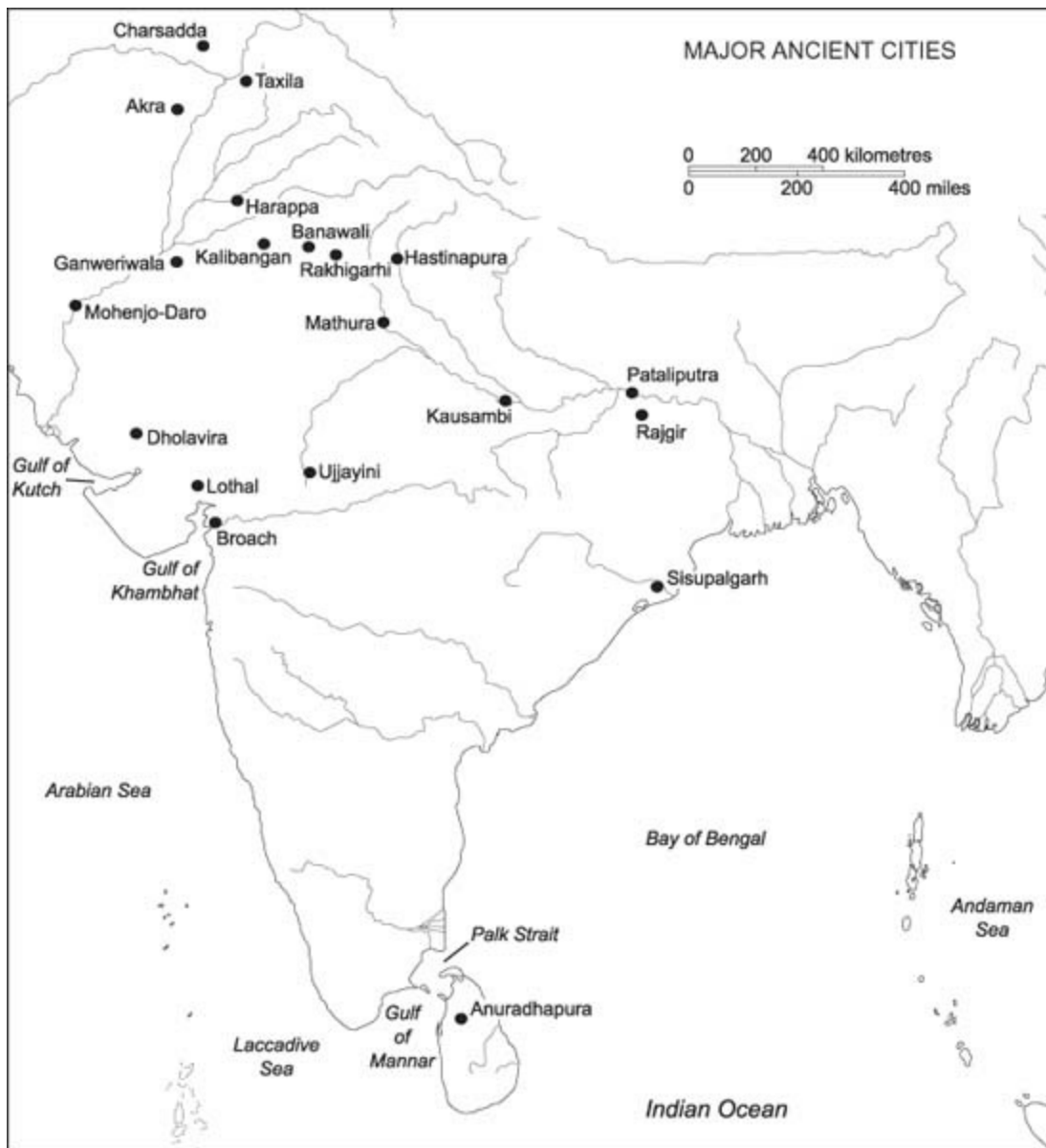
Regional Map I.1 Mediterranean Europe



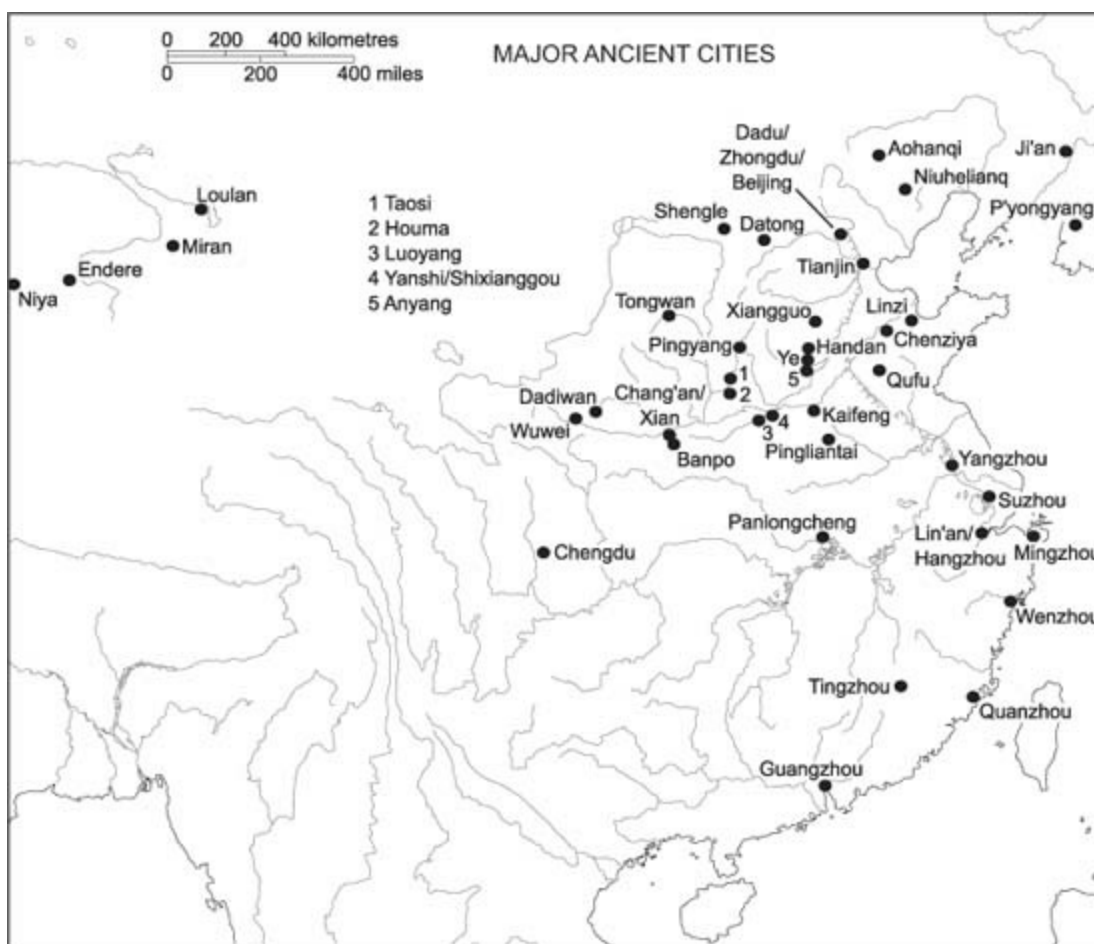
**Regional Map I.2 Middle East**



**Regional Map I.3 Africa**



**Regional Map I.4 South Asia**



Regional Map 1.5 China

# MESOPOTAMIA

AUGUSTA MCMAHON

It is widely acknowledged that the world's first cities originated in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq, north-east Syria, south-east Turkey and south-west Iran) in the 4th millennium BCE. Because of this placement at the beginning of urban history, 'the Mesopotamian city' is frequently included within general studies of cities past and present. However, 'the Mesopotamian city' did not exist; instead there were diverse Mesopotamian *cities*, variations through more than 3,000 years of changing political and economic contexts and across more than 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> of highly variable landscape. In particular, strong southern (southern Iraq, Babylonia) and northern (northern Iraq and north-east Syria, Assyria) variants existed.

This chapter surveys key aspects of Mesopotamian cities, including the earliest 'organic' examples in late pre-history (*c.*3850 BCE, Late Chalcolithic Period) and the artificial cities of the 1st millennium BCE (Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires). It explores the definition and origins of Mesopotamian cities and aspects of their cityscapes, addresses positive and negative aspects of urban life, touches upon Mesopotamian emic thinking about the city, and sketches diachronic trends in urbanization and deurbanization. It also examines the relationship of the city's inhabitants to their sustaining area, plus the idea of the 'city-state'.

### DEFINING THE CITY: SIZE OR CONTENTS?

The earliest Mesopotamian cities in south and north were *c.*50–75 ha (Uruk and Nippur in southern Iraq, *c.*3500 BCE; Tell Brak in north-east Syria, *c.*3850 BCE), but absolute size is insufficient for urban identification. Power hierarchy and socioeconomic heterarchy are more useful features.

Mesopotamian cities invariably contained one or more religious, political, and/or economic institutions, materialized as monumental building complexes (either palace or temple; see Liverani, Ch. 9). These building complexes were 'public' in that they were highly visible and provided services to all the city's inhabitants, but they were private in their limited access and contrastive presentation of hegemony. The complexes were often, although not always, physically central to the cityscape (similar to 'epicentres' in Central and South American cities<sup>1</sup>), and they were spatially prominent landmarks from which most locations within the city, and many beyond, were visible and vice versa. The most famous are the religious complexes at the southern Mesopotamian city of Uruk *c.*3200 BCE: the Eanna precinct buildings that extended to 250 by 400 m, and the Anu Temple on its platform that prefigured the famous ziggurats of the late 3rd millennium BCE. Although monumental buildings varied in plan from city to city and over time, they everywhere had a consistent visual vocabulary of scale, enclosure of large spaces as courtyards, redundancy of rooms, distinctive buttressed façades, and formal entrances. Temples and palaces were the first, and remained the largest, repositories of textual archives.

Widely accepted lists of city traits include other visible features such as city walls, yet these were

less common than assumed and often post-dated city origins. Density of occupation is also frequently listed as vital for classification as a city,<sup>2</sup> and Mesopotamian neighbourhoods were densely occupied, with tightly clustered houses. Specialized craft production or industry is also mentioned,<sup>3</sup> and Mesopotamian cities, as seen in material culture, buildings, and texts, included diverse and specialized economies and inhabitants with heterogeneous social or professional identities. This variety thus fulfils the ‘demographic’ idea of a city.<sup>4</sup> Writing was an urban technology, in large part invented to record and administer the burgeoning economy and to categorize this heterogeneity. Mesopotamian cities were also ‘functionally’ urban,<sup>5</sup> with impact beyond their edges, including ruralizing surrounding landscapes and settlements and creating a symbiotic economic, religious, and social network. It is the latter more than all other aspects that perhaps offers the clearest definition of a Mesopotamian city: its reliance on a larger hinterland<sup>6</sup> and the existence of a rural inverse.<sup>7</sup> Ruralization would have been felt both in terms of a new relative scale of settlement size and in new directionality of behaviour. Movement across the hinterland landscape in and out of the city would have increased, and the landscape itself would have been altered; the city presents a highly visible created landmark.

### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN RECONSTRUCTING MESOPOTAMIAN CITIES**

Our knowledge of Mesopotamian urban spaces is regrettably incomplete, because no entire Mesopotamian city has ever been excavated. This problem is not unique to Mesopotamia. We frequently lack connections between different functional areas: the temple complex is excavated in isolation, the neighbourhood as a separate unit. At every site where a neighbourhood has been excavated, houses are contiguous and tightly packed, with party walls and narrow streets 2–3 m wide, but the known edges of these neighbourhoods are simply the edges of our excavations. Transitions between functional spaces, as well as the nature of the total cityscape, are virtually unknown. Did neighbourhoods extend for many hundreds of square metres, or were they small pockets of houses surrounded by open space, defining walls, public buildings, or work areas? Was their density consistent across a city or from city to city? What was the nature of urban open spaces: multi-purpose and communally owned or regulated zones controlled by an authority? Urban edge zones are also rarely excavated, and we lack information about the crucial transition between city and non-city spaces and about ‘suburban’ activities and landownership. Finally, Mesopotamian cities lack clear physical evidence of markets, and it may be that edge zones were the locus for vibrant commercial exchange.

The gaps in our knowledge of urban landscapes mean that estimations of population sizes, for cities and regions, remain speculative (see [Ch. 8](#), de Ligt).<sup>8</sup> This lack of clarity about population size then has an impact on our ability to interpret and reconstruct internal social structures and agricultural, pastoral, and resource sustaining areas.

Our data for cross-city comparisons are also weak. The well-excavated palace in one city may not have matched the (unexcavated) palace in another in scale and power, but too often we assume similarities. There is a cautionary tale in the 1920s–1930s reconstruction of a southern Mesopotamian ‘temple-state’, based in a rich archive of documents from the 3rd millennium BCE southern site of Girsu.<sup>9</sup> Scholars studying that archive initially reconstructed the temple that housed it as both economically and politically powerful, to the near-exclusion of any other authority. As more

comparative material became available, that reconstruction was rewritten, and common agreement is that 3rd millennium BCE leaders' power combined secular and religious aspects and that palace and temple power varied from city to city and over time. But what currently accepted generalizations are based on similarly thin evidence?

Mesopotamian cities also expanded and contracted over time; the city of one moment was not the city of the next (see below). Collection and dating of surface material culture allow sketches of cities over time,<sup>10</sup> but these remain sketches only. In addition, one must raise the problem of emic definitions. Mesopotamia has a rich textual record, and its past inhabitants habitually categorized people, gods, and objects in detailed lexical lists. But Mesopotamian languages had no words to distinguish village, town, and city. The variables of size, contents, and socio-political complexity that archaeologists and urban historians seek were not specified. To the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the place where any group lived together was an *ālu* (Akkadian) or URU (Sumerian), no matter what its size or internal structure. This modern/ancient terminology mismatch implicates the final methodological problem: reconstructions of Mesopotamian cities often seem devoid of residents, as scholars focus on buildings and material culture. We discuss the importance of institutions or the different urban experience of high versus low status groups, but rarely those of individuals, and still more remote are the different urban lives of the old versus the young, or male versus female.

## ORIGIN OF CITIES AND CREATION OF CITIES

Tradition places the first city in southern Mesopotamia (southern Iraq) at *c.*3500 BCE, and specifically at the site of Uruk. There is also a widely held theory that adjacent regions only urbanized after influence from the south. However, recent excavations and surveys in northern Mesopotamia (e.g. Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar in north-east Syria) have revealed growth of urban-sized sites, urbanized regional settlement hierarchies, monumental public buildings, and socio-economic complexity from as early as the late 5th millennium BCE, or *c.*4200 BCE.<sup>11</sup>

Physically, cities in these two regions varied. Uruk was dense and well-defined, anchored by central religious institutions.<sup>12</sup> Northern cities appear more variable, with densely occupied cores and less-dense outer towns. Religious and secular authorities were represented in these northern cities, but their physical placement was less prominent and central than in the south. However, both share the most important urban traits: specialization of labour and integration of urban and rural populations.

How did these cities develop? Many Mesopotamian cities have long biographies, which typically begin with foundation as an agricultural village in Neolithic or Chalcolithic pre-history (6th millennium BCE or earlier), followed by millennia of economic and social developments through and well beyond early urbanization. Mesopotamia's earliest cities expanded through both natural internal developments and, crucially, local immigration. In both north and south Mesopotamia, some early cities grew from 'towns' relatively rapidly and were quickly embedded within rings of minimally occupied land; much of the previous population of those rings was drawn into the city, while that land became used for more intensive agriculture to support the clustered population. Uruk lay within a sparsely occupied ring of land of *c.*15 km radius in the late 4th millennium BCE,<sup>13</sup> and Tell Brak had a similar ring of *c.*8 km radius, slightly earlier.<sup>14</sup> This immigration may have been a positive move, involving people embracing economic opportunities and manufacturing or trade efficiency, or the



move may have been for defensive reasons or might even reflect relocation of population by a controlling urban power. It is this aspect of magnetism, whether a push from a tangible power structure or the inexorable pull of economics, which was crucial to city origins in this region and which distinguished town from city.

After initial rapid growth, most cities reached a natural plateau of 100–150 ha, in both north and south Mesopotamia;<sup>15</sup> however, they could still contract, re-grow, or be consciously expanded by a political authority. More rare were artificial cities established *ab initio*, invariably the outposts of expanding regional states (e.g. Old Babylonian Haradum in central Iraq<sup>16</sup>) or empires (e.g. Neo-Assyrian Khorsabad in North Iraq). Imperial capitals in particular breached the region's natural size plateau and incorporated from 300 (Nimrud and Khorsabad) to over 700 ha (Neo-Assyrian Nineveh and Neo-Babylonian Babylon) within their walls. These included densely built citadels with public architecture, but their residential occupation may have been dispersed or even non-existent. These unnatural cities or 'planted'<sup>17</sup> settlements bore clear messages of hierarchical power, but their internal variation and socio-economic heterogeneity—crucial aspects of cities—were thin. Their high external visibility and poorly integrated, low-density interiors may reflect their identity as monuments for an external gaze rather than cities to be used. However, the Mesopotamian term (see above) for imperial capitals was the same as that for organic long-term settlements.

## PLANNED AND UNPLANNED URBAN SPACES

Planning or lack of planning in urban landscapes is often used as a proxy for degree of control held by an authority over the city's population. Mesopotamian cities, like many ancient cities, included both 'unplanned' organically developed areas of houses together with strictly planned monumental complexes. While the two seem unrelated, monumental structures may have affected activities in and movement through seemingly unplanned areas, in creating view-sheds and traffic routes. The main temple in many Mesopotamian cities was located within the most densely and continuously occupied part of the site, and Mesopotamian cities were 'walking cities', of a scale that required no secondary mode of transport. Arguably, flow of people and goods to and from a temple over time might have dictated the layout and other zones of the city. Even 'unplanned' residential areas were potentially actively affected by monumental focal points and linked traffic patterns.

But did temples anchor Mesopotamian cities? Most cities had one patron deity and main temple; but Mesopotamia was a polytheistic culture, and cities often had many temples ranging from significant buildings to small shrines. Some cities were notably polycentric (Nippur; and compare the Indus, Petrie, Ch. 5) while others had a single dominant temple (Ur). And from the 3rd millennium BCE, the palace was a separate structure and counterpoint to the temple; both could have affected mental maps and physical urban landscapes through their ideological and economic aspects. To pick apart and identify the entangled effects of these buildings on access and residential space is impossible. And indeed creation of a contrast between visually formalized public spaces and less visibly organized private spaces may have been a planning goal. The concepts of 'organic' and 'irregular' are culturally determined<sup>18</sup> and spaces that seem irregular to us may have reflected clear social statements to their occupants.

What were these planned buildings? Texts from the 3rd millennium BCE onward in southern Mesopotamia refer to repair or rebuilding of temples as among the most important activities of kings, although texts are thin on practical details: new buildings are described as bigger, brighter, or simply

newer. However, we have ample physical evidence for planning to match the names of commissioners. One of our clearest examples of building and expansion of a temple is the 3rd–1st millennia BCE religious complex at Ur ( $330 \times 195$  m in the late 3rd, expanding to  $400 \times 255$  m in the 1st millennium BCE).<sup>19</sup> Axial symmetry, high walls and gates, and the incorporation of more space than was necessary for the temple's range of functions<sup>20</sup> are characteristic at Ur and of south Mesopotamian temple complexes in general, which are also notable for their repeated feature of 'empty' courtyards. These courtyards captured and configured space and would have acted as 'performance theatres' for rituals and festivals, opportunities for transmission of messages of social cohesion, religious adherence, or ideological conformity.<sup>21</sup> In addition, they surrounded the buildings with space and light, and they were paradoxically enclosed and yet open (see Ch. 10 for more discussion of urban religious spaces). Official rebuilding at times physically overran neighbouring houses, such as the expansion of the Inanna Temple at Khafajah (central Mesopotamia) in the mid-3rd millennium BCE<sup>22</sup> or Inanna Temple at Nippur (southern Mesopotamia) in the late 3rd millennium BCE. This ability to appropriate private property is testament to the power of the leaders and institutions and the emphasis on perfect execution of a balanced plan.

Northern Mesopotamian temples, by contrast, were more often single rooms or relatively small buildings of a few rooms, without the awe-inspiring, over-large courtyards of the south. However, their thick walls imply significant height, e.g. 3rd millennium BCE shrines at Tell Kashkashuk III ( $6.6 \times 7.8$  m, but with walls 1.2 m thick) and Mari, or 2nd millennium BCE temples at Ebla and Tell Brak. Thus the 'excess space' model is still applicable in the north; the space enclosed was vertical rather than horizontal and a similar statement of power was achieved. Both north and south variants achieved high visibility from the outside.

Mesopotamian palaces are less well known than temples until the imperial capitals of the 1st millennium BCE (Nimrud, Khorsabad, Nineveh, Babylon), but the scattered earlier examples known from south and north Mesopotamia (3rd millennium BCE Kish and Eridu in south Iraq; 3rd millennium BCE Tell Beydar, Tell Bi'a, Mari, and Tell Chuera in Syria; 2nd millennium BCE Tell Brak, Tell al-Rimah, Tell Leilan, and Mari in Syria) followed similar spatial principles to temples: monumentality, elements of symmetry, and enclosure of excessive space as both redundant rooms and large courtyards. Both palace and temple required significant economic investment and physically represented and communicated the power of elites and urban institutions behind them. Unlike Aztec epicentres, Mesopotamian temples and palaces were surrounded by enclosing walls, with limited points of access. But many city inhabitants would have been administratively and economically engaged with both; palace and temple were major employers and active in trade, manufacturing, and land management. Access to temple and palace may have been limited but was not apparently forbidden and may have been part of daily life for many urban dwellers.

In the issue of *Town Planning Review* following Childe's famous article on the urban revolution, the Mesopotamian scholar Henri Frankfort made a remarkably modern statement that the cities of Mesopotamia from c.3500 BCE were 'sharply defined, dynamic, aggressive bodies'.<sup>23</sup> Sociologists speak of the modern 'creative city', as a concentration of intensive economic activity, a target of immigration, a locus of opportunity for wealth acquisition, a support system for the disadvantaged, and the wellspring of artistic and literary culture. Similarly, Mesopotamian cities were where the greatest wealth was seen, where industrial production of everyday and exotic items was clustered, and where art and literacy were born. Modern and Mesopotamian cities were creative motors for technological and ideological innovation.

But the main focus of Frankfort's article was a contrast between planned and unplanned Mesopotamian cities. Khorsabad, the Neo-Assyrian capital city of Sargon II (721–705 BCE) was his model for a planned city, with its square walls and precisely located gates and buildings (minor divergences from the symmetrical notwithstanding). By contrast, most south and north Mesopotamian urban residential neighbourhoods (e.g. 3rd millennium BCE Khafajah and Tell Asmar in the Diyala River valley north-east of Baghdad,<sup>24</sup> and Tell Taya in northern Iraq, 2nd millennium BCE Ur and Nippur) were overwhelmingly irregular and 'organic', and it is these residential areas that scholars of Mesopotamian urbanism inevitably turn to when exploring unplanned space. 'Neighbourhood' is used here for continuous built areas dominated by houses, in which we expect the inhabitants were in frequent social contact. The examples above reveal Mesopotamian neighbourhoods as 'nucleated', or high-density and physically crowded. Houses were constrained by each other in terms of space and property lines, but there was no attempt at consistent orientation. Houses were not strictly geometric, and their outlines and internal subdivisions changed gradually over time; streets and alleys meandered and were discontinuous and had no civic projects such as paving or drainage. Houses shared party walls and were grouped into clusters or contiguous blocks (c.5–15 houses) outlined by streets. Public spaces, such as streets, alleys, or small plazas, were only grudgingly provided.

Residential and commercial buildings were adjacent to small shrines, particularly at Ur; little zoning of urban space was apparent. And as in Egypt (Tell el-Amarna<sup>25</sup>), houses of various sizes—which may be indicators of the inhabitants' status—were often in close proximity. There was no unequivocal segregation along lines of wealth or status. This proximity of households of varied status would have fostered interaction, and the overall image of the urban neighbourhood is of informal but strong social cohesion that developed from bottom up. There may even have been several scalar levels of integration and interaction: among inhabitants of one street or alley who would have had daily face-to-face contact, among those within a contiguous block where interaction may have been less frequent, and among those in a larger district of several blocks and streets with whom contact might in fact have been rare but who shared professions<sup>26</sup> or descent. Corporate action by neighbourhoods is not documented, nor was a neighbourhood considered a unit for purposes of, e.g. taxation; when people interacted with secular or religious institutions, it was as individuals or members of a lineage, which may not have been co-resident.

This picture of densely occupied and heterogeneous urban neighbourhoods holds true most clearly at early 2nd millennium BCE Ur<sup>27</sup> and at 3rd millennium BCE Abu Salabikh, Khafajah, and Tell Asmar.<sup>28</sup> However, at early 2nd millennium BCE Nippur, two excavations in 'Tablet Hill' (Areas TA and TB) revealed different arrangements, with TA presenting an Ur-like eclectic group of houses and TB a more formally arranged cluster of larger homes.<sup>29</sup> And as mentioned above, our knowledge of the edges or physical defining features of neighbourhoods is minimal. Streets and alleys defined house blocks, however they were not external boundaries so much as dendritic modes of access into the interior of housing clusters. In addition, there is a possibility that housing near any city's edge may have been less dense than in its centre. Two of the earliest cities in northern Mesopotamia, Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar, exhibited diffused settlement in their outer towns in the 4th millennium BCE: each had a central core of closely packed buildings plus an area surrounding or to one side which showed a low-density occupation more commonly associated with villages. Sjöberg's classic description of the 'preindustrial city', with elite housing and power institutions at the centre, surrounded by two or more rings of occupation by increasingly lower class groups and dirty industries,<sup>30</sup> may apply to Brak, where excavation at the site's edge has recovered evidence for tanning and ceramic production.

However, the concentric arrangement did not apply to the mid-2nd millennium BCE city of Nippur, where a royally commissioned expansion of the city to the south was used for spacious houses with elite-associated contents.

There were occasional examples of planned housing in early cities in Mesopotamia (e.g. Old Babylonian Haradum), but these tended to be relatively small, single-period settlements, such as provincial capitals or trading posts. By the 1st millennium BCE, the city's potential for representing control of space and place was recognized and imperial leaders built new cities as parts of power creation and maintenance strategies. While our knowledge of residential zones in Neo-Assyrian capitals is weak (see above), there is greater evidence for this aspect in Neo-Babylonian cities of the south. Both Babylon and Ur had elements of city planning based on geometric principles, including city blocks outlined by orthogonal streets. However, the reconstruction of a full city grid at 1st millennium BCE Babylon is based on conjecture from insufficient data.<sup>31</sup> And even the massive Neo-Babylonian empire was not able to entirely overcome the organic nature of Mesopotamian neighbourhoods and their millennia of tradition. At both Babylon and Ur, long-held property plots and house orientations were retained even when new street alignments were imposed. The orientations of house and street were then at odds, resulting in characteristic saw-tooth facades and trapezoidal rooms. This is one of the few materialized instances of Mesopotamian resistance to power, and notably it arises from within upper-class owners of large urban land plots.

Mesopotamian cities lend themselves to interpretation on several levels, but unequally. In Rapoport's 'high-level meaning',<sup>32</sup> built space may reflect a culture's cosmology and value system; and while we might expect this to be achieved in monumental building complexes in Mesopotamia, the buildings are simply too variable and texts are mute on this subject. Ziggurats were physically like mountains, but mountains were less important in the Mesopotamian value system than were rivers. To us, the square plans of Nimrud and Khorsabad might reflect the traditional epithet of leaders: 'king of the four quarters'; but contemporary texts do not support this. Attempts to explore cosmology and value through Mesopotamian cities thus fall flat. However, Rapoport's 'mid-level meaning' that equates buildings with the material expression of status and power is relevant for certain public structures with monumentality, high visibility, labour, and capital investment, and clear statements identifying their royal commissioners. The high visibility but limited access to temple and palace—their minimal integration with the city's inhabitants—expresses unstated ideology. And Mesopotamian cities neatly but more subtly match his 'low-level meaning', in particular the tight packing and apparently erratic spatialization of residential areas reflecting quotidian experience and bodily practices of their inhabitants, while also constraining those practices.

## URBANIZATION CYCLES

Mesopotamian urbanization was not a regular uni-directional trend, either regionally or as experienced by individual settlements. The peak of urbanization (which saw the maximum percentage of the region's population in urban centres) occurred in the later 3rd millennium BCE in both north and south. The maximum size of 'natural' urban centres was also reached at that point, *c.* 100–150 hectares. This size was primarily based on agricultural sustaining areas but also fit the region's available transport technologies, social relations, economic interconnectedness, and religious and political ideologies.

This 3rd millennium BCE urbanization was in fact the second wave in the trend and by no means the

last. The earliest urban sites appeared in north Mesopotamia in the late 5th and early 4th millennia BCE, and in southern Mesopotamia by the mid-4th millennium BCE. There was an initial peak in size and numbers in the late 4th millennium, *c.*3200 BCE. This was followed by a (too little-discussed) collapse *c.*3000 BCE, during which most cities shrank and some were abandoned. Economic and political changes revived the city in the 3rd millennium BCE, but two further de-urbanization events occurred in rapid succession at the end of this millennium. Further urbanization and de-urbanization across the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE appeared at less extreme amplitude and can be connected variously to political and climatic developments.

A biography of one long-lived site illustrates the general settlement cycles in Mesopotamia. Nippur, in the centre of southern Mesopotamia, probably began as a small village of several hectares in the 6th millennium BCE (this settlement is buried under later occupation but is indicated by material culture that percolated into later levels).<sup>33</sup> It may have already had a shrine below its most important temple, to the wind god Enlil. It reached *c.*50 ha at the same time as Uruk expanded, at the end of the 4th millennium BCE, and shrank thereafter. But by the mid-3rd millennium BCE Early Dynastic Period it had re-grown 'naturally' to reach *c.*40–50 ha, with a number of known additional temples and unstructured neighbourhoods. Its central location, easy access to the main Euphrates channel for irrigation and transport, and good catchment of agricultural land contributed to its growth and primacy over other villages and towns nearby. And as the city of the regional pantheon's chief deity, Enlil, the site also had religious importance. The Enlil temple was the target of a royally commissioned expansion in the late 3rd millennium BCE Akkadian Period. After an interlude of regional political chaos through which Nippur retained a relatively stable size and internal structure, the city was enlarged by Ur III kings in the final century of the 3rd millennium BCE. This expansion involved a city wall that surrounded 135 hectares and incorporated a new and previously unoccupied area to the south of the city. The Enlil temple platform was simultaneously raised into a ziggurat, the nearby Inanna Temple was significantly expanded, and at least one neighbourhood of houses was redeveloped, with larger buildings and wider streets.

However the city contracted sharply in the 2nd millennium BCE, initially because of political neglect and religious reorganization that reduced the power of Enlil, and eventually due to environmental collapse and the reduction of water in its crucial Euphrates channel. It was virtually abandoned by *c.*1720 BCE (and partially covered in sand dunes), only to become a target of a second politically motivated expansion from *c.*1400 BCE under new Kassite kings. The Ur III city wall was rebuilt and a programme of temple reconstruction provided employment for a new population. The south of the city was filled again with expansive suburban houses and gardens akin to modern 'urban sprawl'.<sup>34</sup> Another wave of environmental and political troubles, capped by a military incursion from further east, saw the site virtually re-abandoned from *c.*1225 to 750 BCE, except for occasional repair on the main temple. The city next experienced a Neo-Assyrian imperial garrison, a final city wall, and more temple reconstruction, and it became a vital trade centre for interaction between urban dwellers and increasingly common nomadic pastoralists in the mid-1st millennium BCE. Another gradual decline across the later 1st millennium BCE as other sites rose to prominence was briefly halted by the site's use as a provincial centre in the Achaemenid and Seleucid Periods and then as a Parthian fort in the 1st–2nd centuries CE, after which the settlement shrank in the Sasanian and Early Islamic Periods (perhaps becoming a local centre for pottery manufacture) and was abandoned for the last time *c.*800 CE.

These cycles saw expansion and contraction of Nippur from as few as only several hectares to

over 135 and variation in its ratio of organic to planned spaces. The changes in scale and internal landscape can be variously attributed to combinations of natural growth, political targeting, and environmental decline or amelioration. The factors that might have contributed to the extraordinary sustainability of Nippur include its central location and water access, but these were shared by other less successful settlements; its religious importance, and the political awareness of religion, may have been a crucial factor. These cycles contributed to a distinctive multi-mounded modern ruin that would also at times have been a feature of the past cityscape during periods of urban contraction (see further, below). The cycles seen at Nippur were echoed at other long-lived cities in the south, such as Ur. Cities in northern Mesopotamia (i.e., Tell Brak) had comparable cycles of evolution and devolution, but at different amplitudes and schedules, due to the variant climatic and political trends there. Contraction of sites, or de-urbanization, should not be seen as societal collapse in this region, but as an adaptive strategy.

## URBAN LOGISTICS AND PROBLEMS

Southern Mesopotamian cities had one invariable logistic restriction; connection to a river course or canal was vital in this arid region, where agriculture was only possible with irrigation. The use of rivers and canals for irrigation is well known and rightly emphasized, but both were equally used for transport, since boats were the dominant transport mode for bulky agricultural products and building materials. Many cities were water-centred (e.g. canals through Babylon, Mashkan-shapir, Larsa, and Ur, or river channels through Nippur and Babylon). Le Corbusier famously insisted that the ‘city of tomorrow’ must be located far from the river, which should be relegated to an invisible service role; the sordidness and industrial oppression of modern wharves may have been on his mind. Past Mesopotamian riverbanks, like city edges, are under-explored but may have housed positive urban elements such as markets, gardens, or elite houses. Water—for agriculture, transport and life itself—thus may have directed and informed movement and space in the urban centre and the urbanized landscape as much as did streets and monumental buildings. Rivers may have had multiple roles. They could have formed edges, or finite boundaries between functional zones, limiting movement. But they were also active transit routes that would have facilitated movement and provided a view of or through the city not visible from other vantage points.

Northern Mesopotamian cities’ reliance on rivers and canals was less strong, as the region’s agriculture could usually be supported by rainfall, although an adjacent water source was still critical. But particularly under the 1st millennium BCE empires, canals were created in the north with the dual purpose of supplementing agricultural yields from rainfall and stamping the commissioner’s signature on the landscape, tying city and hinterland together symbolically and practically.

However, for all the emphasis on general urban water proximity, Mesopotamian urbanites still had often to travel a significant distance to acquire water from rivers or canals. Wells were virtually unknown (unlike, e.g., the Indus; see Petrie, [Ch. 5](#)), and canals did not interpenetrate the city (early 2nd millennium BCE Mashkan-shapir and 1st millennium BCE Babylon are limited exceptions). As already mentioned, practical public services in Mesopotamian cities were unknown. Religious services were provided, and intangible aspects such as defence, diplomacy, and dispute settlement were supplied, but administrative authorities did not offer even the most basic assistance with the time-consuming tasks of daily life.

If water needed to be fetched, rubbish needed to be taken away. Rubbish is not an exclusively

urban problem, but the occupants of cities generate larger and more intractable mountains of it than do smaller groups. And the dense use of urban space and lack of civic facilities in Mesopotamian cities made discard of that rubbish an additional problem. Material culture quantities had already increased dramatically across the Neolithic shift from nomadic hunting and gathering to settled agriculture, and this was the beginning of an inexorable trend. Urbanites owned more tools and ceramics and broke these objects more often; food discard, human and animal waste, and debris from intensified production were also urban rubbish elements. Tradition holds that some rubbish was removed and spread on fields ('manuring'), to raise soil fertility; there is evidence for this in sherd scatters around many northern Mesopotamian settlements of the 3rd millennium BCE in particular. Other rubbish stayed where it was made: in houses and streets, inexorably filling rooms and raising street levels. Rubbish is stratigraphy, and stratigraphy is rubbish; both are basic elements in archaeology. But stratigraphy and manuring cannot encompass all the urban rubbish created. At Tell Brak in the mid-4th millennium BCE and at Abu Salabikh and Ur in the 3rd millennium BCE, rubbish was used as a material resource for shaping and marking the urban landscape. At Brak, a pile of rubbish covered and marked a series of mass graves resulting from violent conflict and partly defined the city's outer edge for several centuries. At Abu Salabikh and Ur, rubbish was piled adjacent to the business and industrial quarters of temple institutions. These piles contained temple votives, clay sealings and tablets, household garbage, and burials. In each case, what was created is 'sacred rubbish', with unusual contents and high visibility in deposition. The integration of rubbish piles with burials may have been a way to resolve the problem by creating positive features.

The lack of discussion of rubbish is symptomatic of a reluctance to discuss other problems of the Mesopotamian urban experience. Mesopotamian cities were the sources of technological and ideological innovation but were also incubators of social conflict and alienation. Warfare is not unique to cities but became more elaborate and formalized after urbanism in Mesopotamia. This is expressed as conflict between cities over water or land (the Umma-Lagash battle represented in art and text) or internal social stress (mass graves at Tell Brak). Cities clearly worked, or they would not have been so numerous and long-lived, but living in a city came with costs and sacrifices.

### **THE NEVER-FINISHED CITY**

Archaeologists visualize and discuss many settlements, including cities, in 'phases', 'levels', or other apparently precise temporal slices. This terminology facilitates description of diachronic change or stasis and enables efficient comparison with other settlements. But Mesopotamian cities were processes as well as settlements; they continuously evolved. Construction in particular was never-ending, whether privately organized rebuilding of house walls or state-commissioned construction of a temple complex. Continuous construction in fact might be added to any Mesopotamian city trait list.

Our clearest instances of continuous construction projects are linked to early states and to late empires. Uruk's main religious quarter, the Eanna complex, was its most salient feature as the settlement reached urban size in the mid-4th millennium BCE. Particularly in the late 4th millennium BCE this complex saw the building, razing, and rebuilding of two-dozen often barely used structures, across *c.*200 years. By rebuilding established structures, leaders demonstrated their connection to and valuing of tradition, but by creating something newer and often larger, they linked that rebuilding specifically with themselves. And entire urban landscapes were composed of old and new buildings, repaired buildings, ruined buildings and ruin mounds, open space, and construction sites. Texts in the

1st millennium BCE, for instance, describe open space and refer to the buying/selling of ruined houses.<sup>35</sup>

Archaeologists also focus on ‘final’ plans, but arguably the process of construction was an equal objective of many building projects in the past. Construction of Neo-Assyrian palaces and new capital cities possibly deliberately was stretched out over decades. Extended construction projects embodied control of people, control of and creation of space, and control of time. A similar argument has been made for Aztec and Mayan construction projects, with emphasis on the collective nature of labour and resulting social integration and acceptance of ideology.<sup>36</sup>

## HINTERLAND AND CITY, CITY AND CITY-STATE

R. McC. Adams is the most authoritative proponent of an approach to Mesopotamian urbanism which foregrounds interactions between hinterland and city.<sup>37</sup> The economic relationship between city and hinterland and reconstructions of political city-states are traditionally explained beginning from site size hierarchies (many villages, fewer towns, one city) in a region surrounding and logistically connected to any city. Texts are also vital for both reconstructions: textual analyses have identified *c.*150 attached settlements in the orbit of Umma in southern Iraq, ranging from towns through villages to small clusters of houses.<sup>38</sup> Cities and their hinterlands were usually topographically contiguous, but important resource and consumer areas (marshes, steppe) could be economically attached to either adjacent or distant urban centres. Materials traded over long distances suggest that far-flung areas might also be considered economic hinterlands for many Mesopotamian cities (i.e. beads from the Indus in the Ur Royal Cemetery; see also below, [Ch. 5](#)). Similarly, political control held by cities could be contiguous or dispersed. In southern Mesopotamia, hinterlands tended to be stretched along a north-west–south-east axis, following the orientation of river channels and canals. In northern Mesopotamia, hinterlands came closer to Christaller’s regular polygons but could be affected by transportation opportunities or blockages provided by rivers and rock outcrops.

In economic models of early Mesopotamian urban development, the immigration of people that physically created cities meant that the hinterland also lost craft production to the city, which drew it in and transformed it into efficient centralized industry. New commodities (elite decorative items) and the commodification of everyday items (ceramics, textiles) were generated by urban settlements and their economic clustering, further linked to supply and demand. And the increasingly exclusively agricultural and ruralized hinterland produced more subsistence goods and unprocessed resources for the city (e.g. grain, wool for textiles, and straw for bricks) and received manufactured items in return.

Post-Fordism, with its specialization, integrated roles of women (key actors in textile manufacturing), and production related to demand, thus was in fact already typical of Mesopotamian cities from the mid-4th millennium BCE. This reflects Jane Jacobs’ ‘spark of city economic life’<sup>39</sup> and Soja’s ‘synekism’,<sup>40</sup> the positive economic stimulus provided by and economic entanglement generated by densely clustered populations. But locations of market and elite economies and industries occasionally shifted in Mesopotamia. The centralization of production in early cities is contrasted by some industrial dispersal in mature cities. For instance, terracotta plaque production appears to have shifted from Ur to the neighbouring town of Diqdiqqah *c.*1.5 km away in the early 2nd millennium BCE, while the pottery-producing site of Umm el-Hafriyat *c.*24 km east of Nippur may have serviced several urban centres from the 3rd through 2nd millennia BCE. Manufacture may have



disaggregated and physical loci of production shifted, but in both cases it was urban demand that supported and enabled this shift. Analogies for the dispersal of industry—and the residences of labourers with it—can be seen in Chicago’s Pullman and Calumet townships and Gary, Indiana in the 1880s–1900s.

The city and the political state were deeply entangled in Mesopotamia. Our earliest known states had cities at their cores, and the earliest cities were central to states. The political city-state aspect of Mesopotamian urban networks is in part built upon the above model of economic interaction, since there is evidence that some early workshops and craft production were at least indirectly controlled, either through exclusive elite patronage or institutional regulation. Thus the city–hinterland economic relationship incorporated a political element. Religious and civic provisions by urban institutions for the rural population filled out the rest of the city-state structure. City-state modelling for Mesopotamia has been very much influenced by Structural Marxism, and the hinterland has been seen as the underdeveloped and exploited half of the partnership, in part because of this grounding in the economic and empirical and in part because of an imbalance of ancient texts towards temple and palace institutions. The intangible outflows of religious action, defence, and law were less often written down and are of less clear absolute value. The Mesopotamian city-state was an extraordinarily successful political and economic structure and often became a default position when larger territorial or regional states collapsed; city-states were often maintained beneath imperial veneers.

### MESOPOTAMIAN CITIES IN TEXTS AND ART

Mesopotamia, like the Egyptian and Roman worlds, combines dense archaeological evidence with a rich contemporary textual record. As well as the world’s earliest cities, Mesopotamia was the source of the first writing, invented within the cities of southern Mesopotamia in order to administer economic interactions. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia then rapidly embraced the possibilities of this new technology to inscribe history, laws, science, medicine, mathematics, and literature.

Individual cities had enormous resonance in the Mesopotamian belief system and political rhetoric. Texts include laments generated if a city was destroyed and the protection of its patron deity was removed (*Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur, Nippur Lament*); pseudo-historical texts describing kingship handed down to specific cities (*Sumerian King List*); and military campaign annals, particularly popular among Neo-Assyrian kings (e.g. Sennacherib, Ashurbanipal), recording numbers of enemy cities destroyed.

However, cities were infrequently represented in Mesopotamian art, although the imperial art of the 1st millennium BCE did include a brief popularity of this theme. Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs often showed besieged and conquered foreign cities and occasionally captured leaders carrying symbolic models of cities in processions. In every case, the representation of the city was made through its apparently most salient feature, crenellated city walls and towers, as seen from the exterior. Much like the use of *alu*/URU to denote any settlement, these artistic representations were surprisingly generic.

### CONCLUSION

Mesopotamian cities contained the basic elements of planned temple and palace plus unplanned

neighbourhoods and areas of industry, but individual cities composed and placed these elements in varied ways. Water access, transport routes, and connection to a hinterland were more important location variables than were defence or high symbolic visibility, until the advent of imperial artificial cities. Mesopotamian cities and city-states were successful long-lived structures despite their evidence for difficult daily life logistics and potential for social stress. Individual cities and entire regions underwent varying cycles of occupation, growth, and decline related to short-term and long-term events and trends. And above all, the Mesopotamian city was a process, a locus of never-ending change, of making, consuming, discard, and construction.

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## CITIES OF THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN

ROBIN OSBORNE AND ANDREW WALLACE-HADRILL

IN a famous discussion of the small town of Panopeus in Phokis in central Greece in the final book of his *Guide to Greece*, the 2nd-century Greek writer Pausanias questions whether a settlement can be reckoned a city if it has no offices for magistrates, no gymnasium, no theatre, no civic centre (agora), no public water-fountain (10.4.1). Modern discussions of Mediterranean urbanization too have concentrated on the individual cities, often taking a similar approach, picking out the defences, religious facilities, and civic centre as the essential features of the Greek city.<sup>1</sup> Others have constructed a trait list that focuses on rather more abstract qualities, most famously Gordon Childe whose list includes such features as craft specialization, use of writing, and social stratification.<sup>2</sup> But even the most general definitions, according to which the ‘essential feature’ of the ancient city was ‘the creation of a political, religious, and cultural centre’, over-determine what counts as a city while ignoring the city’s most fundamental feature, for the single most important fact about the vast variety of ancient Mediterranean cities is that, while they might pride themselves on being self-governing (‘autonomous’) and self-sufficient (‘autarkic’) units, they nevertheless functioned as nodes of wider networks.<sup>3</sup>

The civilization, and often very literally the city life, of the Greeks and the Romans has been the inspiration behind much that dominates modern cities. This discussion of the ancient city is intended to show how many different ways of inhabiting the city were already developed in antiquity and to uncover some of the basic tensions between (economic and other) dependence and independence that meant that cities always required, but often also disowned, broader networks.

After an opening discussion of the peculiar character of the ancient Mediterranean city, we try to show how the history of the Mediterranean in antiquity is a history of the formation and exploitation of networks of cities, and of competition between differently organized networks. We then explore something of the variety of different cities that are developed to play specialist parts within these networks. While acknowledging that relatively densely populated and relatively large communities always both demand some political organization and depend upon a larger economic network, we stress that neither politics nor the economy are necessarily the primary motivations for urbanization, pointing to ways in which cities are used by groups with very limited political or economic power. We have chosen to illustrate the range of overlapping roles and relationships sustained by the city rather than to claim particular cities or types of city for particular periods. There is, we believe, no such thing as ‘the classical city’ or ‘the Hellenistic city’ or ‘the late antique city’. Some roles are indeed more frequently performed by cities in some periods and other roles in other periods, but particularly in the context of a study of urbanism more generally, it is the importance of the urban network in encouraging distinct roles, not the distribution of these roles by period, that is most significant.

The Ancient Mediterranean basin has some claims to having served as the crucible of the modern city. Certainly, in the broad period of the first millennium BCE and the first half of the 1st millennium CE, the Mediterranean saw the development of a network of cities of a density and complexity that would not be matched again till the early modern period (see Regional [Map 1.1](#)).

The cities of the ancient Mediterranean are notable in three respects: first, a very high proportion of ancient Mediterranean cities were deliberate foundations, settlements that did not so much grow up naturally as were deliberately and artificially inseminated. The ancient Mediterranean world was an urban world because its inhabitants made it so. They did so not in a single programme of city foundation but repeatedly: all the great Mediterranean powers expressed their power by city foundations.

As early as the 9th century BCE, the Phoenicians began a programme of city foundation in the western Mediterranean that created a string of distinctive urban settlements in North Africa, southern Spain, Sardinia, and Sicily. During the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries BCE Greeks formed cities throughout the central Mediterranean (as far west as Ampurias (ancient Emporion [= Marketplace]) in north-east Spain), the northern Aegean and Black Sea, round the eastern end of the Mediterranean (including Naukratis in Egypt), and in Libya. Some of these were established by individual initiative, others by deliberate decisions by existing cities to form new settlements elsewhere with which they expected to keep a link. In the fifth, fourth, and third centuries BCE the most powerful Greek cities, particularly Athens, and then the Hellenistic kings (with Philip II of Macedon setting the pattern which Alexander the Great and his successors would follow) established planned settlements at choice locations for strategic reasons. Rome established its control, first in Italy and then beyond, by creating new cities and injecting new inhabitants into old cities, typically called ‘colonies’, a process that they believed went back to the 6th century kings, and certainly was continuous from the early 3rd century onwards. And among these cities ‘seeded’ in this way, a very large number have been continuously occupied ever since.

The success of the city foundations owes much to the second particular feature: although classical antiquity is famous for the city-state, ancient cities were not isolated centres of population at the heart of an independent territory, but were integrated into religious, political, and economic networks.<sup>4</sup> Some cities, and this is true of the string of cities established by the Phoenicians, were parts of networks that were thin and designed to deliver a particular result, maximizing connectivity in a very limited number of directions; it is notable that many of those cities are on sites never subsequently re-occupied by urban communities.<sup>5</sup> But most cities were from the beginning, or became, parts of networks that were thick and flexible, and which maximized the number of directions and ways in which the city was connected.<sup>6</sup> This connectivity is despite—though no doubt also the cause of—the repeated insistence by the cities themselves on the importance of autonomy.

It was the autonomy of the individual units that enabled them to network densely and effectively. Each unit may be thought of as formed by its own network of farms, villages, and small settlements clustering around a dominant centre. Cities constantly competed with each other for control of territory, that is for the integrity of the constituent parts of their own networks, and successful cities absorbed more territory at the expense of others. But all knew the difference between extending their own internal networks and extending the external network. It was one thing for Athens to fight Megara for the control of their borderlands, another thing for Athens to compel Megara to join the network of its alliances.

Third, the communities that resided in ancient Mediterranean cities were self-conscious about their

corporate identity and expended an extremely high proportion of their resources on public amenities and on buildings and other monuments that drew attention to the community as a whole, rather than to individual members of that community. It was not palaces and castles but stoas and temples that caught the eye in the Mediterranean city. Exactly what public facilities were built where varied from city to city, but some degree of monumental community facilities were regularly on display, whether to enable, and show off, commercial activity, civic government, or the athletic, musical, and other cultural events that were the central ingredients of all major religious festivals.

For all that the cities of the ancient Mediterranean across more than a millennium have striking features in common, however, the ancient city and ancient urbanization should not be thought of as a single phenomenon. Ancient historians seeking to characterize the ancient economy have often treated the whole Mediterranean over the entire period from the 8th century BCE to the 6th century CE as a single historical phase, in which human settlement was shaped by the same historical forces.<sup>7</sup> Greek and Roman thought conceptualized the city, in terms of patterns of urban layout, of its social and political formation, of its distinct culture, and of the relationship between city and countryside, in ways that would have lasting influence, and this has further encouraged the view that there was a single ancient city and that it was like modern cities.

But a glance at settlements that we might want to call cities only emphasizes the enormous variety to be found in the ancient Mediterranean. Although the city was, and was seen as, an instrument of territorial control, from the earliest foundations of settlements to the creation of complex imperial formations from Alexander to the Roman empire, and although the city regularly served as a motor of social, economic, and/or cultural transformation, and was seen as a defining quality of civilization, the ancient city is too various in form and function to map in any simple way onto modern images of urbanism.

As Max Weber pointed out, the politically and economically integrated relationship of city (with its network of sub-centres and villages) to country makes it quite unlike the medieval European city, where city may stand in contrast to countryside.<sup>8</sup> Antiquity achieved a few major urban conglomerations, above all Rome itself; yet the populations of the majority of ancient urban centres were not large (even classical Athens, including the port of Peiraius, had an urban and suburban population in the region of 140,000), and it was even possible to have centres with administrative power and virtually no inhabitants. It is difficult to identify distinctive urban economies when productive activity (say of food, wine, oil, clothes, or bricks) was closely integrated with rural production. Dense networks of cross-Mediterranean trade led to impressive levels of exchange of goods but only with imperial Rome is it clear that this encouraged commerce to evolve as an independent sector of the economy.

What is more, there was indeed change over time. All early urban settlements were small, many of them extremely small by any standards of modern urbanism. But in the course of antiquity both the average size of cities increased and, still more markedly, the gap between the largest and the smallest cities became enormous. It is not simply that Rome, the centre of a massive empire, grew to hold a million people, but cities of far less political significance—Antioch or Alexandria in Egypt—swelled to around half that size. The sorts of forces which Christaller modelled in the abstract when he explored the varying nature of the networks that formed around central places in different economic, political, and cultural conditions can be seen at work over the millennium with which we are concerned here, creating differential flows within the network that required or produced cities of very differing forms and capacities.



## THE HISTORY OF THE CITY AS A HISTORY OF NETWORKS

The history of the ancient Mediterranean is a story of urban networks being formed, extended, concentrated, and dissolved. Networks and nodes go together, neither is viable without the other. Between the 9th and the 6th centuries BCE, the first communities that we can call urban appear and are immediately linked to one another through the creation of new city settlements. Both Phoenicians and Greeks establish new communities at a distance from their homeland—in North Africa, Spain, and the western Mediterranean in the case of the Phoenicians, and in the northern Aegean, Black Sea, Adriatic, Sicily, Italy, southern France, and North Africa in the case of the Greeks.<sup>9</sup> Even if the settlers came from several cities, the link back to a particular city came to be privileged. That was compatible with the autonomy, the self-governing independence, of the new communities, but was an assertion that in the web of connections the new city would make for itself, identification with a mother-city was important. Some cities, like Chalcis in Euboea, became associated with one or a small number of settlements abroad, other cities, like Miletos in Ionia, with a very large number. None of the cities identified as having a peculiar role in foundation were large, and the idea that they were simply disposing of surplus population makes no sense: they were engaged in extending their network of effective connections.

It is no coincidence that this expansion of city settlement is parallel to the spread of literacy. The communication necessary to maintain networks so extending across the Mediterranean demanded writing, and it is unsurprising that it was from the Phoenicians that the Greeks borrowed their alphabet as well as the idea of settlement abroad. Unsurprising too that distinct local alphabets were something shared with a mother city. Writing was essential both to the extension of the city over space, and of its extension over time. One of the earliest public uses of writing was to record laws, and the new settlements are notable for their prominence in stories of lawgivers. The regularity offered by fixed rules was matched by the regularity displayed in the urban form. Rarely are defensive walls associated with first settlement; rather first settlement sees the designation of distinct public areas and the division of urban space into plots which, if not initially completely regular are frequently fully regularized within two generations. The first grid patterns are seen as early as the 7th century BCE, way ahead of the theorization of the grid city by Hippodamus of Miletus in the 5th century.<sup>10</sup>

The interdependence of urban centres and networks is well illustrated by the third such independent network established in this early period—perhaps under the influence of the Phoenician and Greek examples: the Etruscans. The Etruscans had metallurgical resources that brought them into contact with both Greeks and Phoenicians, and in the 8th and 7th centuries they evolve very rapidly into a network of autonomous cities with urban centres, and, again by no coincidence, start a simultaneous expansion of their networks, with individual cities setting up new communities in the Po valley around Bologna, and in south Italy as far as Salerno, overlapping the territory of Greek expansion. Literacy, the development of sophisticated and distinct urban cultures, and the planned city go together with Etruscans, as with the Phoenicians and Greeks. The grid-city is a feature of Etruscan Marzabotto and Pompeii, as it is of Phoenician Solunto. In central Italy too, the new model of city network has an immediate impact: Rome emerges as a recognizable urban centre, with a central place in the forum, with monumental development on the Capitoline, and with a restructuring of the community as one of citizens (*cives*), from the 8th century BCE, and simultaneously the neighbouring area of Latium with which it perceives community emerges as a league of independent cities, with its

own balance between autonomous city units and networking association.<sup>11</sup>

The flow of goods, services, and ideas across networks is rarely even. Whether because of their geographical location, their resources, or the chances of their local history, some nodes grow to dominate their network. It is a notable feature of Greek settlements abroad that virtually none chose to identify themselves with cities which had unusually large territories. So Sparta and Athens, which came politically to dominate the Greek mainland, were reckoned mother-city for only one or two early settlements. But cities like these two were not at all without networks: Sparta formed in the 6th century a network of political alliances that ensured its dominance of the Peloponnese. Athens in the 5th century BCE took advantage of others' need for its military support against Persia to create an imperial network of some 250 cities (out of a total of just over 1,000 cities in the Greek world as a whole) that offers a classic case of network evolution.

The cities of the Athenian empire retained technical autonomy, but the balance of the flow of resource was always unstable as what flowed out of Athens was military power, while what flowed in to Athens were enforced contributions but also simultaneously free trade. That unstable flow was itself a threat to those outside the network, throwing into relief the way that urban expansion was a differentiating phenomenon. Athens' principle opponent, Sparta, appeared as the very opposite of Athens in urban structure, with its low degree of monumentalization and dispersed settlement in village-like clusters. Sparta's networking was purely political, spurning maritime trade, and literacy (hence communication). Neither Sparta nor most of the other nodes in the network of the Peloponnesian League saw much in the way of urbanization; the only urbanized members of the League were cities, like Corinth, which were also parts of other networks—and not by chance it was Corinth that urged the Peloponnesian League into conflict with Athens.

Equally dependent on a network of cities were the Hellenistic kingdoms formed in the wake of Alexander's defeat of the Persian King Darius III. Already Philip, Alexander's father, had employed the urbanization of Macedonia and the foundation of cities as tools to extend Macedonian power, and Alexander and the successors were busy founders of new cities, exploiting the potential for network expansion far to the east, reaching to Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> These foundations, and equally the infamous destruction by fire by Alexander of the Persian administrative and ceremonial centre at Persepolis, show an awareness of the variety of roles cities needed to play (or be prevented from playing) as nodes of empire. There was no identikit Hellenistic city, and the first of Alexander's foundations, the extraordinary city of Alexandria in Egypt which served as the most important gateway between the world of Egypt and the Near East and the Mediterranean, was quite different from any other.

The new cities founded by Hellenistic kings did not replace existing cities: far from demolishing the existing networks of cities, the kings exploited them. The need for central control and bureaucratic structures was much reduced by working through cities that administered their own territories. Although the ideology of autonomy and traditional hostility to kingship generated familiar ideological tensions, the cities were able to incorporate the new realities of power—whether Hellenistic kings or in due course Roman rule—within existing structures: even treating the Hellenistic kings as gods was a way of bringing this reality within the symbolic structures of the *polis*.

Livy noticed that the expansion of Alexander's empire coincided chronologically with the extension of Rome's control in Italy. The mechanism for Rome's expansion was not just successive wars, but the planting of a network of new settlements. Colonies, whether of Roman citizens or of their Latin allies, were an effective way of controlling territory through communities which could

organize themselves at a local level. Roman Italy of the mid Republic, in the 4th to 2nd centuries BCE, is often characterized as a patchwork or mosaic, of communities with different statuses and relationships with Rome. There are no great homogeneous blocks of territory subject to direct control. This is because Rome too, like Alexander and his successors, operated through the expansion of a network, and the nodes remained separate and could maintain different characters and statuses.<sup>13</sup>

Urban centres proved more effective in some areas than others: in Greek south Italy, or Etruscan central Italy, or the Po valley, the urban nodes grew; but the mountainous heart of Italy, the territory of the Samnites, just as the Sabine mountains nearer Rome, remained remarkably under-urbanized. Similarly, there remained areas of Greece, in the northern Peloponnese and western central Greece, which were seen by contemporaries to be un-urbanized, and were characterized as communities of tribes or *ethne* rather than poleis. The distinction was far less watertight than suggested by the Aristotelian model, but the common feature of Samnium and the Epirus is that the stronger sense of identity of the larger, tribal, unit goes hand-in-hand with the non-emergence of independent units within the larger group capable of forming separate network nodes and hence developing monumentalized centres.

The victory of Augustus and the evolution of a new model of imperial control was at best only partially reliant on the formation of an imperial bureaucracy and the refining of central command structures. The independent node of the city remained crucial to the system, and the potential for large-scale networking between the nodes was realized to an unparalleled extent. Augustus and his successors were constantly active in founding cities, whether veteran colonies in the old colonial territory of Italy, or, now more significantly, new overseas colonies, especially in Spain, Gaul, and North Africa (which saw a dramatic rise of urbanization), but also in the eastern Mediterranean. Cities both spread into new, barbarian territory, like Britain, and undergo often spectacular monumentalization. In numerous cities of Asia Minor (Turkey), where urbanization had long been the pattern, the centres see a new scale of monumental development, one which leaves an unmistakable archaeological trace, but the same is found in a wide arc of territory in what was to become the Islamic world, from Syria through to Mauretania. That this was consciously willed by Rome is suggested by the exception: Egypt, which emperors always treat as a province apart, was only slowly differentiated into a series of urban centres that were effectively independent over the course of the Roman empire; the shadow of the system of central command established by the Pharaohs was heavy. Alexandria stands on the coast as the exception to exception, created by Alexander, and acceptable because the metropolis of royal power, whether of the Ptolemies or the Roman imperial government.<sup>14</sup>

The Roman empire was not merely a network, it was a network of networks. If Roman government depended upon provincial capitals and they on regional capitals, it also depended upon the network of military garrisons. As the empire was expanding, the legionary bases trailed the way for the networks of cities as departing soldiers were replaced by a civilian population and the fort became a town. Once the empire was effectively static, the network of military bases was increasingly separated from the development of civic government, while remaining vital to the possibility of such government acting under *pax Romana*. The growth of Christianity added a further network; this essentially urban religion coordinated its activities via a hierarchy of ecclesiastical officials all of whom were firmly linked to particular places. And all these separate networks were served by the development of a highly efficient and effective system of overland communication based upon the network of Roman roads.

If the growth of the Roman empire can be traced in the expansion and consolidation of a city network, so its collapse is that of a network. The story of the cities of late antiquity is multiple and diverse. As the network ceased to supply reliable political and military support, as its connectivity was variously compromised by invasion and unrest, individual cities experienced widely varied trajectories. In the eastern Mediterranean, large parts of the network survived intact and cities continued to flourish. In North Africa, the Vandal invasions entirely destroyed the network, and numerous urban sites were simply abandoned. Rome itself, so dependent on a complex and long-distance network for its supplies, experienced dramatic population collapse, and Ostia, no longer needed as a port city, was abandoned. But in Spain, Gaul, and northern Italy enough of a local network survived to ensure that centres like Marseilles or Milan experienced substantial continuity.<sup>15</sup>

## HIERARCHIES OF CITIES

In modern thought, the city is defined by its place in a hierarchy, being both larger and juridically superior to the town, the village, the hamlet. The degree to which there was a formal hierarchy within any of the networks which we have described varied. Most frequently throughout classical antiquity, there was no formal hierarchy. Most normal is that the administrative unit in the city is essentially the same as the administrative unit elsewhere: the town of Athens contained separate ‘demes’ just as did the countryside of Attica, and a similar situation prevails with the *vici* and *pagi* of the Roman world. But the fact that our network of cities was not formally part of a hierarchy does not mean that there was no differentiation between cities and other settlements or between one city and another. Very far from it.

The point of a network is precisely that the different nodes contribute differently. This may be, as in the cities of the Hanseatic league, because the different nodes have access to different economic resources. Or it may be that the different nodes are able to dominate different political communities—as the cities that made up the Boeotian confederacy delivered their contributions to the federal army through their different local authority. But frequently what the different nodes provided was not different varieties of the same kind of resource, but different kinds of resources altogether. Whether such differences in provision constitute even an informal hierarchy will depend on whether there is a clear and stable relationship between the different kinds of resource supplied. Most commonly, the instability of that relationship is precisely what ensures that power within the network does not flow in any single direction.

The fragmentation of natural resources across the Mediterranean was one thing that encouraged the formation of new human settlements in the first place, and those human settlements acquired histories which supplied yet further differentiated resources, both in terms of physical plant and in terms of human and divine associations. But for a very high proportion of cities the links they formed were links across the Mediterranean, and therefore links that did not themselves require significant investment, it was easy to join together with a changing range of other cities for a changing range of purposes. Nor did those other cities need to be at any particular distance: even far-away cities linked themselves to mother-cities or forged special relationships based on economic or religious connections. Cities established to play one part in one network found themselves linked into other networks as different demands were differently articulated in the face of political or religious innovation, warfare, or natural disaster. Geography enabled but it did not enforce: Mediterranean cities were always in competition to keep their place in the network against rival providers.

As soon as we move from the strict periphery of the Mediterranean to the land empires of the Hellenistic East or the Roman north-west provinces the nature of the networks necessarily changes. Networks depended much more on land communication and that meant upon roads. Roads demanded both initial investment and continued maintenance, and, once established, determined the directions in which it was worth travelling. Patterns of communication across the Mediterranean could change spontaneously to effect new sorts of relationships, but the relationships in a land empire were much more firmly fixed. That comparative rigidity is one reason why more settlement hierarchy emerges within the Roman empire. Since land communication was slower there were serious limits on the distances over which certain sorts of linkages were effective; this both reduced competition and meant that when conditions were propitious the density of the network of cities was much more consistent than was required around the Mediterranean; when conditions were more difficult such networks were much more vulnerable and the history of urbanization away from the Mediterranean is much more subject to cycles of growth and decline.

Until Alexander's foundation of Alexandria in Egypt put one city in control of a huge proportion of the reliable grain surplus available in the Mediterranean and Alexander's Ptolemaic successors choose to capitalize upon that unique economic position by adding unique political and cultural resources, the range of size of ancient cities, though large, was not such as seriously to distort all other networks. Rome outgrew even Alexandria through the concentration of resources from a vast area of military conquest and through closely aligning political and economic networks.<sup>16</sup> In both cases what was fundamental to the growth of a single node was the combination of political and economic functions, and the growth of the node itself created an economic centre of gravity that made hierarchy inescapable.

## THE VARIETY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN CITY

*The city as centre of local exchange.* Pompeii offers the modern investigator the rare chance to get under the skin of an ancient city, examine its fabric in close detail, and listen to its voices. But the impression that we can get close to this city is also delusive: it offers not a sample of the ideal type of the ancient city, but a snapshot of a specific case determined by place and time, in the context of the boom of early imperial prosperity on the bay of Naples. It reveals less than at first view appears. The busy rows of shops seem to attest to the commercial life of the town, and the voices of groups of tradesmen urging passers-by to vote for this or that member of the elite seem to provide the necessary link between local trade and politics. Occasionally figures emerge who seem to point to large-scale trade across the Mediterranean, like the Umbricius Scaurus whose fish sauce is found in amphorae across the western Mediterranean, and who proudly depicts these very amphorae in the mosaics of his atrium. Yet on closer inspection, most Pompeian trade emerges as essentially small-scale and local. Their houses reveal how widely prosperity could spread across the local population, far beyond the ruling elite; but the degree of prosperity is superficial, in a society characterized by the urge of the ex-slave to assert respectability. This is a bubble that could have burst even without the intervention of Vesuvius, but it is also a bubble that was replicated all over the Roman empire.<sup>17</sup>

*The city of industry.* Modern scholars have often warned that no ancient city depended on industry or put commercial interests at its heart. But the reliance of some cities on particular products is not seriously in question. In particular a number of cities of the ancient world relied upon privileged access to mineral resources. Athens itself was heavily dependent upon the silver mines in the south of

her territory, and a city like Thasos had significant mines under the town itself, as well as in its territory. Although the precise ownership of mineral resources within ancient cities is not always clear, access to precious metals was certainly regularly controlled by ancient cities, and the same seems to have been true for other mineral resources also, at least to judge by the way in which Athens tries to use resources of ruddle as a political lever against the cities of Kea.<sup>18</sup>

But Thasos, a city located to control the strait from the island to the Greek mainland, extended its control beyond merely silver and gold. The rich series of stamped amphora handles, along with a sequence of laws about the sale of wine, show an intense identification between the city and its particular industrial products, whether they are products of the food industry or of mining. Just as Xenophon's discussion of division of labour is concerned with quality, not quantity, so too does the city of Thasos concern itself primarily with quality. But far from showing that the ancient city had no interest in economics, this surely indicates the extent to which the good name of the city, and the very nature of what it was to be Thasian, was bound up with Thasian labels on quality wine and pure silver.

*The city as entrepôt.* If ordered coherence was the preferred face of some cities, it was a face put on against constant pressures. For the cities of antiquity, and above all port cities, regularly find themselves hosts to a wide array of temporary residents, interested not in the city as an ordered political society but as the site at which they can meet each other. The size of the visiting population may have been very significant in many cities, but we can have no doubt that in the Delos of the 2nd century BCE the visiting population was dominant. Strategically placed in the centre of the Aegean, Delos was nevertheless transformed from a place which had been all sanctuary, the symbolic centre not just of the Cycladic ('circling') islands but of the Aegean, to being actual hub around which the life of the whole Mediterranean turned by being afforded privileged tax status by the Romans.

Tax-free status, a political gift, made transaction costs at Delos lower than those elsewhere and it became the place to be seen if one wished to have a finger on the economic pulse, and in consequence also if one wished to have a finger on the political pulse, of the central and eastern Mediterranean. With a tiny territory and no significant natural resources of its own, Delos' only signal asset was its position, and that position was a resource only if it could be turned into visitor numbers. Here is a town whose inner life depends upon being turned outwards.<sup>19</sup>

*The city as state.* Greek historians have long claimed that the Greek *polis* represented a peculiar political form, in as far as it was a political unit in which town and countryside played equal and complementary roles, in which the urban could not be divided from the rural, and in which there was no dominance of centre over landscape or vice versa.<sup>20</sup> Although to a large extent these are so many pieties, recent attempts to demonstrate that there was, on the contrary, a marked division in classical Athens between city and countryside, have only succeeded in showing that the urban and the rural were multiply entwined—in political and cultural, as well as in economic, ways.<sup>21</sup>

Athens was never a typical Greek *polis*. It was both extremely large, in terms of the size of its territory (2,400 km<sup>2</sup>), and extremely populous (300–400,000 in the 5th century), with a remarkable population density not only in the town but over Attica as a whole. But the rich ancient evidence in the form of literary and epigraphic texts, reveals clearly the diffusion of its political life. The sovereign Assembly, which all free-born Athenian males over 18 could attend, and the Council of Five Hundred which prepared all business for the Assembly met more or less exclusively in the town of Athens. But the Council was made up of a fixed quota of Athenians from each of the 139 'demes'

(villages/wards), only a handful of which were in or even close to the town. Those demes had a lively political life of their own, and it was in the local context that Athenians learnt what it was to live politically. Whenever the distribution of any magistrates or political activists in Athens is plotted it is discovered that most originate from outside the town, and this tendency increases rather than decreases over time.<sup>22</sup>

Arguably Athens' success as a democracy rested precisely on the incorporation into the heart of its political decision-making of the maximum diversity of experience among those who stood to have to serve it with their lives. The town provided a model and framework for life replicated across the city-state in communities, some of which were so tiny that we would never call them towns. Yet the attachment of Athenians to their local community seemed, even to contemporary observers, to be the attachment of citizens to a city, and while not every deme could boast a full set of facilities, the theatres, sanctuaries, and defences which marked the town were variously replicated across the countryside. The city-state of Athens worked as much by replication of the city across the territory as by domination by the city of the territory.

*The city as ordered space.* As early as the 5th century BCE political thinkers came to believe that the plan of a town should also be a social plan. Hippodamus of Miletus, to whom several important 5th-century town plans are credited, is described by Aristotle in *Politics* as wishing to map the social classes of a city onto its regular spaces.<sup>23</sup> How far the earliest regular town plans, which go back long before Hippodamus, were undertaken as conscious or theorized acts of social engineering is not certain, but from the 5th century onwards it was not possible to plan a city without some thought for how the distribution of the population across space and in terms of land ownership related to the social map.

A particularly remarkable example of the creation of order space in a Greek city is provided by the city of Selinous, founded in the 7th century, where we see not only a fundamental reorientation of the grid-plan but also the provision of a uniform street façade.<sup>24</sup> Different cities achieved similar results by different means: at Pompeii already in the archaic period the original irregular core of settlement was extended and enveloped by a new regular city.

*The city as service-centre.* The implication of Pausanias' sneer about Panopeus, quoted at the opening of this chapter, is that what makes a city is the facilities that it provides. Neither Pausanias nor the archaeologists and sociologists of today who adopt a similar check-list approach are completely foolish. The presence of facilities and of certain capacities both encourages the formation of cities and is a consequence their formation. In particular when a place is explicitly picked out to become a city, provision of facilities is high on the planner's list.

This is well illustrated by the city of Messene, deliberately founded to provide an urban bulwark against any resurgence of Spartan dominance over the southern Peloponnese. Not only was this city given monumental walls, but, as Pausanias (4.31) describes and as recent excavations have increasingly revealed, it had a theatre, stadium, gymnasium, agora, stoas, council house, fountain house, and major sanctuaries. Yes even in this case, not all the facilities were created at the moment of foundation. So too within the Roman world, the settlements created as centres of civilization, such as Colonia Claudia Victrix in Britain (Colchester) were provided with a standard set of amenities, but these were then developed over time.<sup>25</sup>

But the case of Panopeus shows how basic urban services could be provided even if there was no specific monumental provision made for them. Alongside the city of the planners was the city that

operated despite having no plan.

*The city as monument.* Thucydides was famously rude about the disjunction between Spartan power and the insignificant material manifestation of the city of Sparta. One Hellenistic visitor who recorded his reactions in writing was equally rude about the mean appearance of Athens outside the Acropolis. But expectations of monumentality created an opportunity for cities to become places of display. The most striking example of display cities comes in Asia Minor, and among them none is more striking than Aphrodisias. This was a city whose major asset was superficial—its name. This provided it with a specious link to Rome that it expressed monumentally, above all through the construction of the Sebasteion, an enormous centre of emperor cult that was effectively all façade. Here history was turned into myth and myth into history, creating a fantasy world. While it is important not to overdo the cynicism and neglect the religious cult involving this monument, there is little doubt that it was the monument itself, and not any associated ritual, that turned this city into a major centre. Where buildings demanded to be seen, people came to be seen along with them.<sup>26</sup>

*The city of culture, education, urbanity, and religion.* Alexander and his successors, the Ptolemies, in founding and developing a new city at Alexandria in close contact with the Mediterranean, brought the historically isolationist Egypt into the mainstream of Mediterranean exchange. Quite besides its major economic significance as the major port for the export of Egyptian grain, the new city served a crucial function of mixing diverse populations, bringing the new Macedonian and Greek ruling class into contact with the local population, and encouraging immigration, notably of Jews. The court displayed its Greek heritage and identity aggressively by promoting culture and education through its library and museum: Alexandria rapidly established itself as one of the principal Mediterranean centres of scholarship and scientific research, and so played a critical role in transforming Greek culture from a local phenomenon to a ‘universal’ language or *koine* by which the elites of the diverse countries of the eastern Mediterranean could distinguish themselves. Mixture of populations did not lead to a mixture of cultures but to the definition of a new language of dominant culture. Religion played an important role, and Alexandria emerged as a cradle of new religious practices like the cult of Isis. Alexandria retained its role through the Roman empire into late antiquity as a place where diverse populations, distinguished ethnically, culturally, and religiously, met, engaged, and not infrequently clashed with riotous consequences.<sup>27</sup>

*The city as outcome and instrument of imperial control.* Rome is at once the emblematic ancient city, and the exception that breaks the rules. If few Mediterranean cities were reliably self-sufficient in staple foodstuffs, grown in the immediate hinterland of the city, most nevertheless reckoned to meet most of their needs most of the time. The population of imperial Rome grew dramatically in the last two centuries BCE to over a million, was massively reliant on imported staples, particularly grain. And yet, this Rome was still autarkic (‘self-sufficient’) in so far as it controlled the territories, first of Sicily, then of Egypt and North Africa from which it demanded grain and other commodities. Rome as a city was thus intertwined with Rome as an imperial power. Imperial power enabled unprecedented levels of wealth and human resources, including a heavy reliance on slavery, and Rome became the biggest centre of exchange of goods in the Mediterranean, commanding an exceptional range of imports. Any threat to Roman territorial control (like barbarian invasions) imperilled Rome’s survival as a city. The city was the ultimate expression of imperial power, the place where the emperor displayed his control in buildings of unparalleled size and sophistication, where imperial largess sustained the populace in exchange for demonstrations of imperial crowd-pulling power. The emperor and his court turned Rome into the inescapable centre for elites drawn from across the



Mediterranean. By the same logic, when military crisis and instability from the 3rd century onwards demanded the extended absence of the emperor from his city, and Rome's position at the top of the settlement hierarchy was challenged, the survival of the city itself was put in doubt. The dramatic collapse of the population in the 5th century showed that the city could not survive the collapse of imperial power except in a radically transformed guise. Arguably the emergence of a predominant Bishop of Rome, propelling the city to the top of the hierarchy in a different network, ensured the survival and revival of Rome, as the secular empire was turned into a sacred one.<sup>28</sup>

## BUILDING ON THE ANCIENT CITY

Greek and Roman antiquity well illustrate that cities come in very many forms. Dense clusters of human settlement and activity are both required for and enable a very great range of different human activities—not only activities which go on inside the city, but activities elsewhere which require a city's input. In many cities political, economic, and cultural activities were enabled together, but we can trace significant numbers of cities where the economic or the political or the cultural were developed more or less in isolation. Different political and social orders generated different needs and different effects and these were reflected in very varied individual cities and very different patterns of cities. The relatively rich historical and archaeological data reveal very strikingly the way in which, and the pace at which, urban settlement responded to such social and political demands. But no city developed in isolation. What was and was not possible in one place was affected by what was already the case elsewhere. Only in an already urbanized world could a Rome develop, only where there was a Rome could an Aphrodisias be formed, only with Rome in the background could the Pompeian bubble be sustained. It was against the background of the formless Panopeus that order could be imposed on the city of Selinous, against the background of a city structured by politics that the city of Thasos could impose structure upon the exploitation of economic resources.

## NOTES

1. Cf. Gustave Glotz, *The Greek City and Its Institutions* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1929).
2. V. Gordon Childe, 'The Urban Revolution', *Town Planning Review*, 21 (1950), 9–16. For a discussion of Childe in relation to the Greek city see Catherine A. Morgan and James J. Coulton, 'The Polis as a Physical Entity', in Mogens Herman Hansen, ed., *The Polis as an Urban Centre and as a Political Community*, Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Centre vol. 4. (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1997), 87–144.
3. The quotation is from Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, 'The End of the Ancient City', in John W. Rich, ed., *The City in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1–49 at 1. For the case against any definition in terms of traits except the trait of population density see Robin Osborne, 'Urban Sprawl: What Is Urbanization and Why Does It Matter?' in Barry Cunliffe and Robin Osborne, eds., *Mediterranean Urbanization 800–600 BCE* (Oxford: British Academy/Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–16.
4. The Greek city-state, in particular, has been subject to a massive enquiry directed by Mogens Herman Hansen. Cf. especially Mogens Herman Hansen, ed., *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-state Cultures: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre* (Copenhagen:

Kongelige danske videnskabernes selskab, 2000), and Mogens Herman Hansen and Thomas Heine Nielsen, eds., *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

5. Maria Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West: Colonies, Politics and Trade* (2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
6. Perigrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
7. For all their very different approaches, Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), and Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* both broadly subscribe to this view.
8. Max Weber, 'Die Stadt: eine soziologische Untersuchung', *Archiv von Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 47 (1920–1), 621–772, reprinted in id., *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922). For a discussion of Weber's ideas about the ancient city see Mogens Herman Hansen, 'The *Polis* as an Urban Centre: The Literary and Epigraphical Evidence', in Hansen, ed., *The Polis as an Urban Centre*, 34–54.
9. Irad Malkin, *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
10. For a survey of such theorization see Nicholas Cahill, *Household and City Organization at Olynthus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1–22. See further below p. 60.
11. For Etruscan urbanization see Nigel Spivey and Simon Stoddart, *Etruscan Italy* (London: Batsford, 1990); Vedia Izzet, *The Archaeology of Etruscan Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Corinna Riva, *The Urbanisation of Etruria: Funerary Practices and Social Change, 700–600 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
12. On Alexander's foundations see Peter M. Fraser, *The Cities of Alexander the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); on the cities of the Hellenistic world see Richard Billows, 'Cities', in Andrew Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 196–215, together with Jones, *Greek City*.
13. Edward T. Salmon, *The Making of Roman Italy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).
14. On the Roman west see Ray Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West c.250 BCE–c. AD 250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On Egypt see Alan Bowman and Dominic Rathbone, 'Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 82 (1992), 107–27; Richard Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2002).
15. See Rich, *City in Late Antiquity*.
16. See Neville Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland: The City of Rome and the Italian Economy, 200 BCE–AD 20* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
17. The case is most aggressively made by Willem Jongman, *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1988).
18. For Thasos see Robin Osborne, 'The Politics of an Epigraphic Habit: The Case of Thasos', in Lynette Mitchell and Lene Rubinstein, eds., *Greek History and Epigraphy: Essays in honour of P. J. Rhodes* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2009), 103–14.; for Kea see Peter J. Rhodes and Robin Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BCE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), no. 40.

19. For the society of Hellenistic Delos see Nicholas Rauh, *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce: Religion, Economy, and Trade Society at Hellenistic Roman Delos, 166–87 BCE* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1993).
20. For a monumental enquiry into this see n. 4 above.
21. Nicholas Jones, *Rural Athens under the Democracy* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2004) with review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2005/2005-04-03.html>), and in *Classical Review*, 55 (2005), 585–7.
22. Robin Osborne, *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and *Athens and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Claire Taylor, ‘From the Whole Citizen Body? The Sociology of Election and Lot in the Athenian Democracy’, *Hesperia*, 76 (2007), 323–45.
23. See above n. 10.
24. Franco de Angelis, *Megara Hyblaia and Selinous: The Development of Two Greek City-States in Archaic Sicily* (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 2004), 132–4.
25. Christopher Mee and Anthony Spawforth, *Greece*. Oxford Archaeological Guides. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 246–52. Philip Crummy, ‘The Circus at Colchester (*Colonia Victricensis*)’, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 18 (2005), 267–77.
26. Kenan T. Erim, *Aphrodisias: A Guide to the Site and Its Museum* (Istanbul: Turistik Yayınlar, 1990); R. R. R. Smith, ‘The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 77 (1987), 88–138.
27. Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
28. Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, ‘Cosmopolis: Rome as World City’, in Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, eds., *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–20.

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# AFRICA

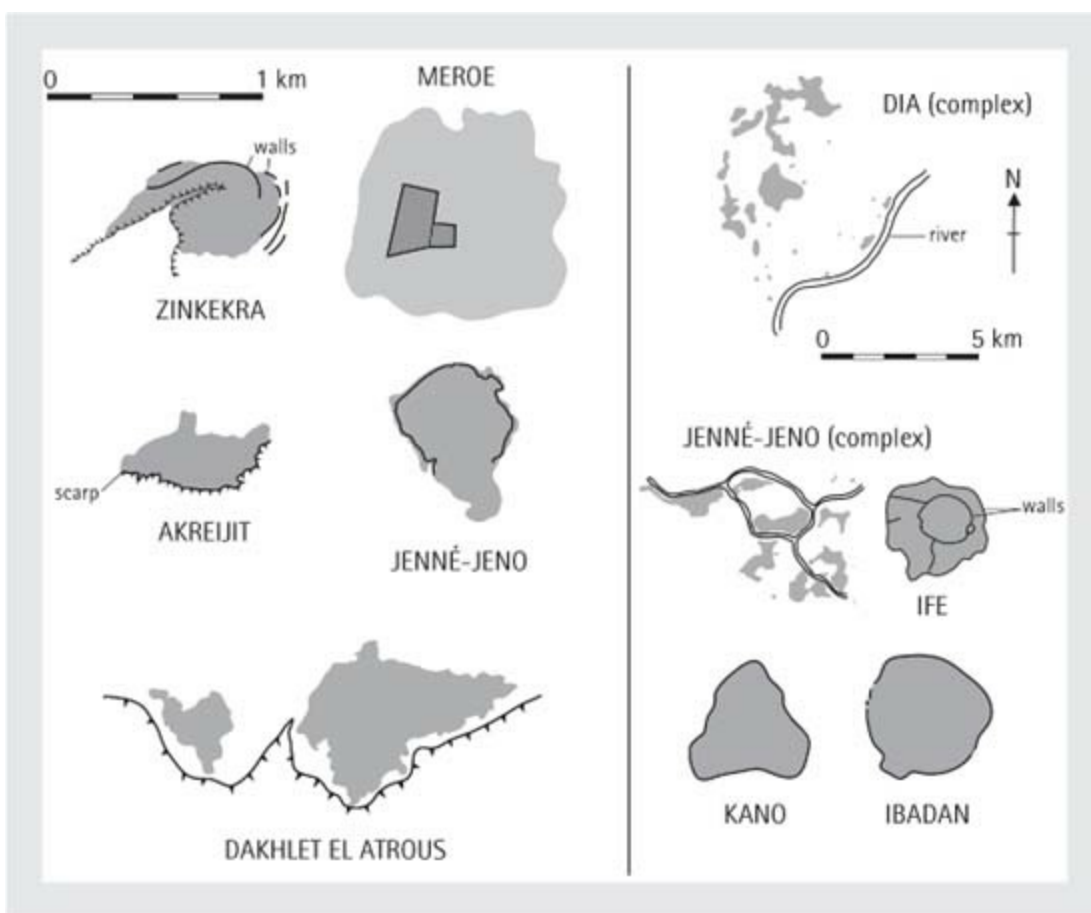
DAVID MATTINGLY AND KEVIN MACDONALD

WITH the exception of the Mediterranean and Nilotic civilizations, there has been little acknowledgement of pre-Islamic, or pristine urbanization in Africa. We believe this to be a notable omission in studies of global cities. In this chapter, we review first some thematic and definitional questions and then present brief surveys of several of the early urban societies in Africa. Three key issues are stressed from the outset: the strikingly wide geographical range and structural variety of urban forms; the apparent dichotomy between more hierarchical and more heterarchical urban societies; the contrasting functions of towns in the service of state formation or inter-regional exchange.

Regarding the localization and concentration of urbanism, it is not surprising to find that the earliest cities in Africa (see Regional [Map 1.3](#)) are linked to the great rivers of the continent, in particular the Nile and the Niger. There have also been significant urban expressions along the Mediterranean seaboard, or on the Red Sea and East African coast, where contact with neighbouring civilizations was part of the context.<sup>1</sup> Yet, African urban forms take on a dazzling array of expressions, confounding traditional expectations of normative Old World archetypes of what defines ‘urban’.

### DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Early urbanization in Africa has been treated as exceptional (Egypt and the Nile), as due to Mediterranean civilizations (Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans) or to have begun only as a result of external trade stimulus in Islamic times (most others). This chapter presents the now substantial evidence for indigenously developed, pre-Islamic urban centres in Africa. The emergence of urban societies on the Upper Nile in Sudan has long been recognized (Kerma, kingdom of Kush/Meroe), but we now know that there were also towns in the Western Desert of Egypt and in the Central Sahara as well as in West Africa around the Inland Niger Delta and the Niger Bend from the late 1st millennium BCE. What is clear, however, is that these early urbanizations in Africa were not part of a homogeneous process and there are significant local particularities that set these early urban societies off from one another and from contemporaneous Mediterranean urbanization to the north. Current definitions of early urban societies cannot be easily applied to all these African examples.<sup>2</sup> By ‘pre-Islamic’ we intend not a specific calendar date, but rather the epochs prior to the first influence of the Islamic (or European) worlds. As such, relatively pristine and isolated polities of early 2nd millennium CE date, such as Ife are referred to in this chapter, though the bulk of our examples relate to the late 1st millennium BCE and the 1st millennium CE.<sup>3</sup>



**FIGURE 4.1** Comparative plans at two different scales of a number of African urban and proto-urban sites, with settlement areas shaded. The largest enceintes at Ife, Kano, and Ibadan are of post-Islamic date, but are included for comparison with the extended settlement complexes around Dia and Jenné-jeno (compiled from various sources, montage D. Mattingly).

A full survey of all examples of early urbanism in Africa is beyond the scope of this chapter, but we have selected a range of examples of the varied forms of urban settlement that are to be found. Coming up with a definition of urbanisation that neatly encompasses all of our case studies is impossible, because of their geographical and cultural diversity. The urban footprint is not a reliable measure as very different constraints operated on the size of settlements and localized populations, for instance, in the central Sahara in comparison to the sub-Saharan zones (Fig. 4.1). For some of the societies under review there is literary evidence to support the urban ascription (Egypt, the Maghreb), but many of our examples relate to sites whose urban function must be derived solely from archaeological evidence. For these reasons it is impractical to make distinctions between towns and cities. We define ‘urban’ in broad terms: nucleated settlements, larger in terms of their extent and population in comparison with other contemporary sites, possessing allied hinterlands for their subsistence support, often with evidence of specialized manufacturing, trade, political, and/or religious activity. The sites may have a monumental aspect, again contrasting with lower echelon settlements. In the next section, we also discuss a particular distinction that can be made between the communities behind some of these early urban experiments: hierarchical and heterarchical societies.

### HIERARCHY AND HETERARCHY

Many instances of Africa urbanization seem to be linked to state formation processes, though there was considerable variability in the sort of society that emerged. Some might be termed city-states (micro-states) and others as forming elements of territorial (or macro-) states.<sup>4</sup> At first glance African urbanization may be regionally divided between societies where pronounced and coercive

hierarchies were emergent (Egypt, Garamantes), and others where more heterarchical processes were at work, sometimes encapsulated within wider hierarchical structures (the Middle Niger). Heterarchy may be defined as a mode of organization whereby power is spread horizontally, rather than vertically, with lineages and specialist groups (ideological and technological) negotiating corporate decisions.<sup>5</sup> However, upon closer examination, degrees of hierarchy across early urban sites probably were historically and politically contingent. For example, recent historical investigations in the Segou region of Mali have revealed a strong folk taxonomy dividing urban centres into long-lived, semi-autonomous mercantile centres (*Markadugu*) and those created by the power of the state (*Fadugu* and *Dendugu*).<sup>6</sup> Many heterarchically organized Middle Niger cities, such as Jenné, survived multiple periods of immersion in state territories while retaining relatively robust self-governance. The granting of such autonomy was linked equally to the fear of ‘killing the golden goose’—the economic prosperity generated by the long-established trade networks of such cities—and the reputed supernatural (‘eternal’) reputations of the places themselves. Large settlements whose *raison d’être* was wedded only to state power were comparatively ephemeral, and thus are more difficult to document archaeologically. Comparative studies between different African urbanizations are at an early stage, but the archaeological definition of hierarchy and heterarchy in such circumstances will be important poles for future debate.<sup>7</sup>

## FUNCTIONS AND CONNECTIVITY

The pre-Islamic urbanization of the Sahara and sub-Saharan zones was often linked to state formation as well as long-range contacts and trade. Commercial factors at local, regional, and inter-regional scales often appear as significant drivers for African urbanization, with geographic nexus points creating important foci for exchange. In Ethiopia, for instance, the kingdom of Aksum in the 1st millennium CE combined a highland Ethiopian trade web with longer-range trade contacts to the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. However, it is important to realize, especially when historical data are to hand, that ideological factors also played an important role in African urbanism, with centres playing critical roles as foci of religion and (sometimes) royal cult. In the central Saharan oases, towns and villages were often visibly fortified, perhaps projecting localized power as much as defence. South of the Sahara urbanism allowed ranges of specialists in metallurgy and sculpture to flourish, whether at Dia, Jenné-jeno or Ife. Despite the diversity of urban trajectories exhibited across Africa and the profound socio-economic and structural differences that existed between the societies served by these early towns, the new evidence requires us to consider carefully the potential for interconnectivity between urban networks. While there are factors that suggest a strong local and independent impulse in urban developments, the examples we shall describe are no longer as isolated and insulated from other urban networks as was once thought. For example, impressive developments in West Africa were contemporaneous with significant changes in the central Sahara. While it is far from the case that we need to return to long discarded diffusionist views, it is also clear that early Saharan and Sahelian urban networks were in contact with each other. The nature and scale of such interactions merit greater investigation. Long-range trade, whether across the desert or by sea (as in the case of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean) appears to be an important feature of several of the early African urban stories.

## THE FIRST URBANIZATION IN THE NILE VALLEY

The process of settlement nucleation and state formation from the 4th millennium BCE has been well documented in the Nile Valley. However, Pharaonic Egypt and, to an extent, the story of Kerma and the later kingdoms of Kush and Meroe in Sudan have tended to be seen as exceptional in an African context, linked to the life-enhancing potential of the great river. This is a well exposed urban story, although in fact the number of extensively excavated urban sites in the Nilotic region is comparatively small, with most attention having focused on their temple and funerary complexes. However, the existence of extensive nucleated settlements around temples is now demonstrated sufficiently to counter the older view that Egypt was a state without towns.<sup>8</sup> There is also increasing evidence for the existence of nucleated towns in the pre-dynastic period, though the overall size, layout, and organization of these early towns are much less clear than those of Mesopotamia. Where more extensive remains survive of a particular phase of an urban centre it is generally due to the town being of short duration on a virgin site (as at el-'Amarna or el-Lahun/Kahun), and the typicality of such sites must be doubted.

Nonetheless, the rich iconographic and textual record from Dynastic Egypt provides substantial contextual data on the function and organization of these urban settlements within a monarchical and highly hierarchical state. Some of the early phases of development have similarities with other urban civilizations of the Bronze Age Near East, with which Egypt was in certain periods closely connected, but Egyptian society was also uniquely structured in many respects.<sup>9</sup> Some towns and large villages had highly specific functions—providing housing for tomb and pyramid constructors or serving as regional administrative centres—many focused on monumental temple complexes or centres of royal power.

The continuation of urban forms of settlement through the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods added complexity and external influences to the ancient towns of Egypt. For the Classical world, the survival of extensive documentary records at sites like Oxyrhynchus provide a fascinating level of detail of life in such settlements, only rarely attainable for ancient urban centres. There is growing evidence to suggest that urbanization was transmitted from the Nile to the emerging oases of the Western Desert, as early as the 1st millennium BCE and that there was eventually a chain of such oasis settlements stretching into the Central Sahara. The oasis towns of the Egyptian Western Desert often betray Egyptian cultural influences in architecture, religion, and burial rituals and were politically aligned with Egypt.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see below, the oasis towns further out into central Sahara are less obviously modelled on Egyptian/Nilotic ideas.

Early urban development in the Upper Nile in Sudan related to the kingdoms of Kerma (2500–1500 BCE) and Kush/Meroe (c.800 BCE–350 CE). While these states were at one time seen as a pale imitation of Pharaonic Egypt to the north, it is now clear that they were sophisticated civilizations in their own rights.<sup>11</sup>

## THE RED SEA TRADE AND KINGDOM OF AKSUM

The discovery of the secret of the monsoon winds in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE led to the development of trade routes between the Red Sea and India and East Africa, gaining in intensity in the Roman period. Recent research has shown these commercial contacts to have been much larger scale and longer lived than previously imagined. One aspect of this trade was the creation of small mercantile towns on both sides of the Red Sea coast, as at Myos Hormos, Berenike, and Ardulis, and at Kané opposite the Horn of Africa.<sup>12</sup> Although these port towns were generally of quite small scale,



they were notable centres of population on a desert coastline, with cosmopolitan populations and material culture. Berenike, for instance, is thought to have had a maximum population of only *c.* 1000, but was an important centre for transshipment and regulation of cargo. By the late Roman period, some of these ports were in decline, though this may in part have been connected by the increasing power of an independent kingdom in Ethiopia, in control of the port of Ardulis.

The kingdom of Aksum had its origins in the 1st millennium BCE, with its capital an 8–15 day journey inland to the Ethiopian uplands at Aksum. The kingdom reached its apogee in the period between the 3rd and 7th centuries CE, when its political authority extended to southern Arabia, over a large part of the Red Sea and towards the Nile in Sudan. The coins issued by a succession of kings, Christian from the 4th century CE onwards, were widely distributed. The Red Sea outlet at Ardulis was highly significant to the economy of Aksum at all periods and linked the kingdom not only with the Indian and East African trade, but with southern Arabia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. Overland contact also existed with the kingdom of Meroe on the Upper Nile.<sup>13</sup> The monumental centre of Aksum, its initial capital, appears to have been founded in the early 1st century CE. Though it was eventually very extensive, its urban core has been less explored than its cemeteries and stelae field. These monolithic funerary stelae, the largest of which weighed 500 tonnes and stood 33 m tall, and the bases of more than two dozen stone ‘thrones’ spread around the capital, strongly evoke the political and sacred character of this city at its mid-1st millennium CE peak. Archaeological evidence reveals that Aksum would have housed a range of craft specialists including stone carvers, stone tool makers, rope makers, and glass makers (or re-workers) amongst others. To support this centre, particularly for grain and firewood, a strong network of supply would have been required from a hinterland which archaeological research has only recently begun to assess.<sup>14</sup>

## THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ITS HINTERLAND

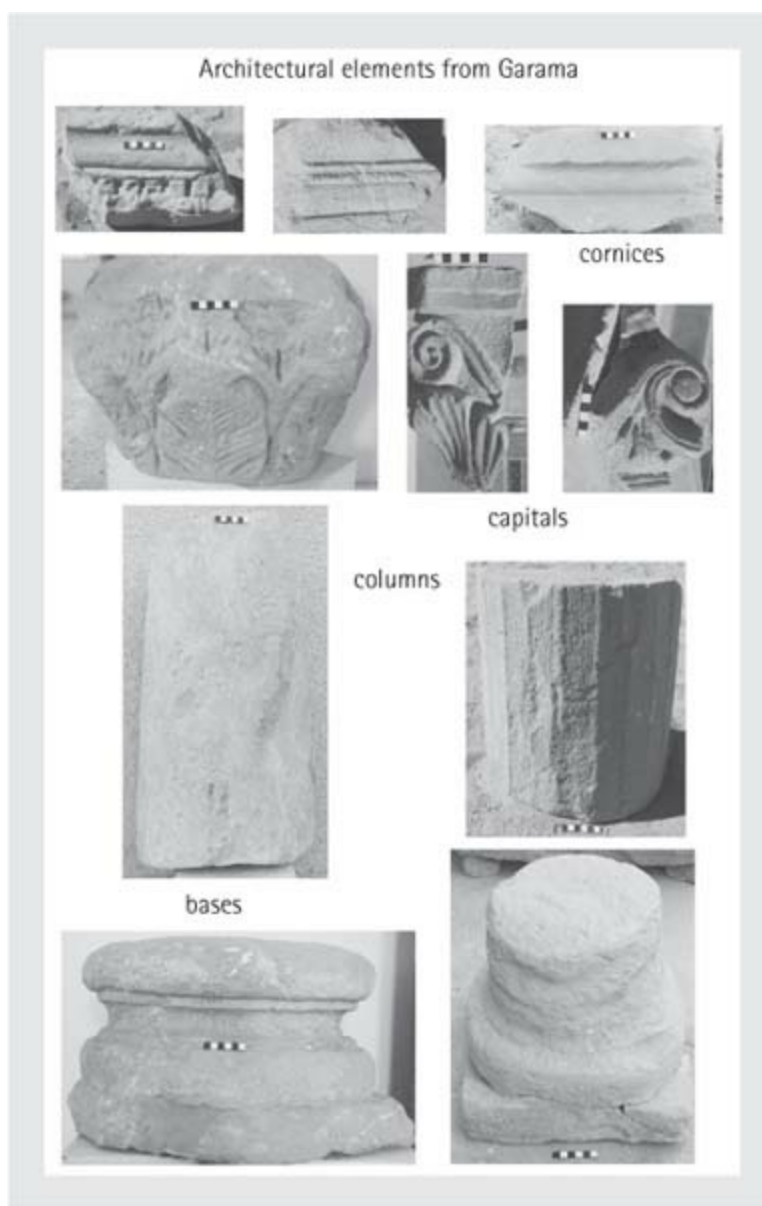
Classical Mediterranean urbanization is covered elsewhere in this volume and a few comments on the African specificities will suffice here. The North African littoral was affected at various times and places by Greek, Phoenician, and Roman colonization/ imperialism. The Phoenician/Punic contribution to North African urbanization has become clearer in recent decades as a result of extensive excavations at Carthage and a number of smaller emporia, such as Kerkouane.<sup>15</sup> The Roman province of Africa Proconsularis (roughly modern Tunisia) was one of the most heavily urbanized regions in the Roman empire, with more than 300 towns. Most previous studies have approached these settlements in terms of their conformity with Punic or Greco-Roman models. Less attention has been paid to their divergence from the Mediterranean norms and the extent to which they may be seen as African adaptations of the urban form.

Some early urban centres were colonies or emporia of external polities: Cyrene and Euesperides in Greek Cyrenaica; Carthage and Lepcis Magna in Punic and Roman Africa. However, the massive expansion of urban centres into the interior of Rome’s African provinces went far beyond colonial foundations, building on urban experiments relating to the Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms. While Greece and Rome provided some of the most obvious architectural trappings of these towns, the African character of many sites is apparent in matters of layout (the winding lanes of Numidian Thugga in contrast to the rigid checkerboard of the Roman military colony of Thamugadi), religious practices, and nomenclature. Nonetheless, in general the urbanization of Mediterranean Africa connected with the world to north and east and was a rather separate phenomenon to Saharan and sub-

Saharan urbanization.<sup>16</sup> There is substantial evidence to show that by late Roman times the nature of the North African city was undergoing profound transformations.<sup>17</sup> While such changes are paralleled elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the possibility that there are African peculiarities in what emerged has not been much considered hitherto.

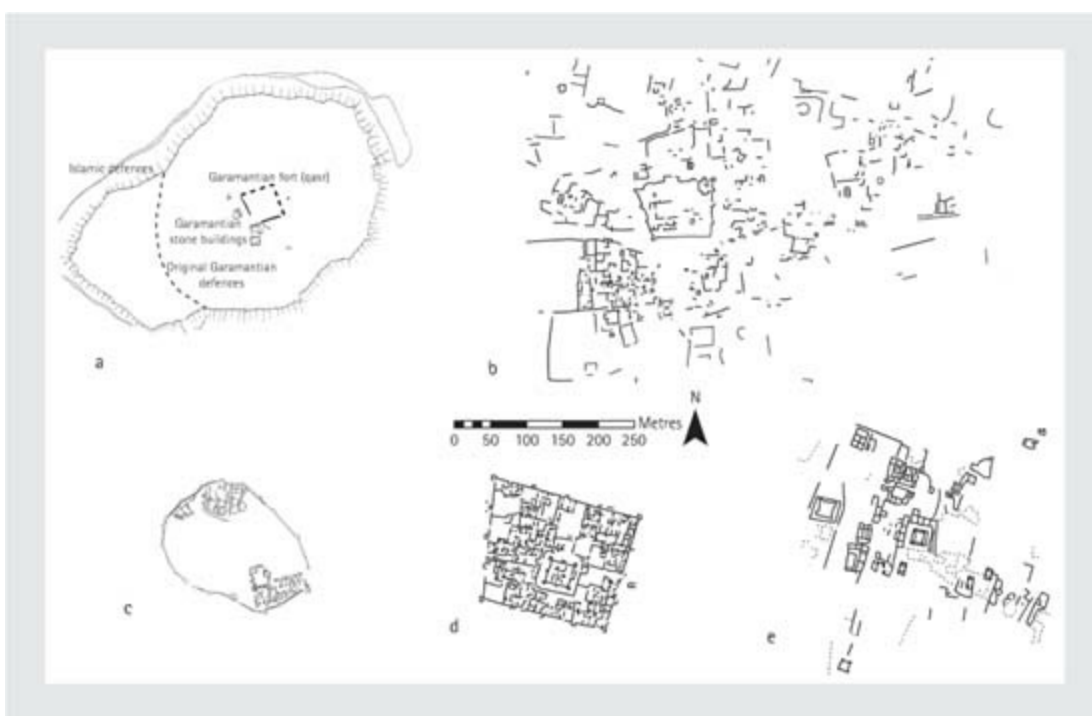
## THE CENTRAL SAHARA

The Garamantes of southern Libya are the best example of a pre-Islamic urban civilization in the Central Sahara. South-west Libya (Fazzan) appears blank on many historical maps of Africa, though the region contains one of the densest clusters of oases.<sup>18</sup> Modern perceptions have been framed around accounts of early European travellers of impoverished desert oases and the inhumanity of the trans-Saharan 19th-century slave trade. We can challenge such limited perceptions. In particular, it is now established that by the early centuries CE a people called the Garamantes controlled a powerful kingdom covering *c.*250,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Libyan Sahara. Far from being the stereotypical ‘nomadic barbarians’ suggested by the classical sources, the Garamantes lived in towns and villages and practised irrigated agriculture of considerable sophistication.<sup>19</sup> A convincing case can be made for identifying them as an early state, founded on the twin pillars of irrigated agriculture and urbanized settlement networks. Settlement in this region is concentrated today in three roughly parallel bands of oases (each of these 100–150 km in length), the Wadi ash-Shati, the Wadi al-Ajal, and the Zuwila-Murzuq-Barjuj depression. Archaeological work in the central oasis belt, the Wadi al-Ajal, has produced dramatic evidence of technical accomplishment and rich material culture in their heartland territory. The proto-urban origins of Garamantian towns have been traced in defended escarpment settlements (hillforts) such as Zinkekra, where nucleated settlements of simple oval buildings were transformed by the later 1st millennium BCE into large population centres utilizing complex, multi-roomed mudbrick dwellings. The Garamantian capital at Jarma (ancient Garama) was evidently founded *c.*300 BCE and typifies later sites, being located in the centre of the valley, away from the escarpment, but adjacent to the oasis cultivation zone. Studies around the Taqallit headland west of Jarma have revealed a pioneer phase of colonization of the landscape, with the simultaneous creation in the last centuries BCE of monumental cemeteries, irrigation systems called *foggaras* (equivalent to the Persian *qanat*), and numerous nucleated settlements.



**PLATE 4.1** Fragments of architectural elements recovered from the Garamantian town of Garama (Old Jarma, Libya) in the central Sahara (Photomontage © D. Mattingly).

There are clear indications of monumental developments in the architectural repertoire at Jarma—where major public buildings with ashlar footings and columnar screens were erected (see [Plate 4.1](#), [Fig. 4.2](#)). There is evidence that this was linked to large-scale trading connections to north and south of the Sahara and to technological sophistication in a range of manufacturing processes.<sup>20</sup> That this was a centralized political and military power is indicated by the disparity in material culture between the core and the periphery of Garamantian territory, by the large-scale erection of forts and urban defences, and by the simple consideration of the amount of work required just to construct the irrigation systems (estimated at *c.* 77,000 man years labour). The evidence now available supports the identification of the Garamantian Kingdom at its height as a macro-state, rather than one among a series of city-states, though it seems plausible that the rise and decline of the Garamantes involved first the incorporation and then re-emergence of smaller micro-states.



**FIGURE 4.2** Comparative plans of Garamantian towns and fortified villages: (a) Old Jarma, (b) Qasr ash-Sharraba, (c) Qasr bin Dughba, (d) HH1, (e) HH 6–8 (montage © D. Mattingly and M. Sterry).

Most work on Garamantian settlement to date has focused on the heartland area of the Wadi al-Ajal near their capital Jarma, with some reconnaissance work on Garamantian and Islamic settlement in the northern and southern oasis zones. These preliminary studies indicate that similar large-scale development of agricultural and village-based societies occurred in both the northern and southern oasis belts. The Murzuq area is of particular importance for understanding the transition between the Garamantes and the Islamic Fazzan, because, as the Garamantian Kingdom declined in late antiquity, the locus of power in the region shifted south-eastwards from Jarma in the Wadi al-Ajal to Eastern Fazzan. The successive capitals of medieval and early modern Fazzan were all located in this area: Zuwila, Traghan, Murzuq, and Sabha. The most direct route between Tripoli and the sub-Saharan kingdoms in the Lake Chad area (Bornu, Kanem) passed through Eastern Fazzan. The latest archaeological research has revealed a densely colonized Garamantian landscape of fortified villages, exhibiting planned layouts and with the largest sites verging on an urban scale (Fig. 4.2). The massive expansion of the oasis landscape in the Murzuq area appears to date to the early centuries CE, somewhat later than the similar process in the Wadi al-Ajal.<sup>21</sup>

Another Libyan desert site with huge potential to illuminate the theme of early urbanization is Ghadames (ancient Cidamus). Survey work has identified extensive pre-Islamic cemeteries, including monumental tombs of late Roman date, and the likely location of the early oasis town. There is a high probability that some other central Saharan oases that utilized the *foggara* irrigation system, for instance in southern Algeria, also originated in the pre-Islamic period.<sup>22</sup>

## THE MIDDLE NIGER

In the 1970s and 1980s Roderick and Susan McIntosh produced West Africa's first archaeological evidence of pre-Islamic urbanism, c.400–800 CE, at the tell complex of Jenné-jeno in the Inland Niger Delta of Mali. The definition of its urban status relied in part on concepts borrowed from 'New Geography', including the 'Rank Size Rule' and 'Central Place Theory'. Yet, Jenné-jeno's role as a regional hub of commerce and interaction, together with the size of its core mound (33 ha), and

evidence for the presence of many satellite specialist communities (an additional *c.*36 ha) have all become part of defining what constitutes an early African city.<sup>23</sup> This definition may be summarized as comprising a localized and concentrated economic diversity of population, the presence of craft and ideological specialists, evidence for a range of trade networks, and a size of central settlement which renders it dependent upon its hinterland for assured subsistence.

More recently, Roderick McIntosh has emphasized the ‘self-generated’—rather than state or hierarchically generated—nature of Middle Niger urbanism.<sup>24</sup> Deriving from his earlier ‘Pulse Theory’ for the genesis of economic specialization and symbiosis in the West African Late Stone Age, McIntosh proposes that Middle Niger urban centres were generated organically and gradually from localized networks of subsistence and occupational specialists who found means of maintaining diversified communities through economic symbiosis and heterarchical political organization. The most recent work at Dia, Jenné-jeno’s notional ‘mother city’, has provided evidence for a large-scale (*c.*23 ha) occupation with satellite sites, banco architecture, and iron metallurgy between 800 and 400 BCE; notionally pushing back dates for the advent of Middle Niger urbanism.<sup>25</sup>



**PLATE 4.2** Excavations at the early urban site of Dia (Mali) in 1998.

However, there remain questions as to whether Middle Niger tell sites such as Dia and Jenné-jeno are really the points of origin for urbanized settlement organization in West Africa, and whether heterarchical self-generation is the only viable model for early Middle Niger urbanism. The Late Stone Age or ‘Neolithic’ polity of Tichitt (*c.*1900–400 BCE) occupied a vast landscape, stretching across the south-eastern quarter of Mauritania and to the edge of the Middle Niger. Indeed, its distinctive pottery occurs in the earliest occupational layers of Dia (Plate 4.2).<sup>26</sup> Many of its sites comprise large dry-stone walled compounds, with traces of more ephemeral internal structures, including granaries. Its largest site, Dakhlet el Atrous, covers a remarkable 80.5 ha and comprises 540 compounds. Although words such as ‘urban’ or ‘proto-urban’ have not been mooted about Tichitt’s larger settlements, we could usefully ask why this is the case. Like Jenné-jeno, Dakhlet el Atrous was a large centre within a regional settlement hierarchy. Yet, such massive Tichitt settlements lack evidence for subsistence and occupational specialization (e.g. metallurgy) until late in their

existence and there is little concrete evidence for long distance commerce beyond a few handfuls of carnelian and amazonite beads.<sup>27</sup> Nor has the seasonality and contemporaneity of Dakhlet el Atrous' many compounds been satisfactorily resolved. Nevertheless, large-scale occupations ancestral to the Middle Niger's first generally agreed cities are worthy of more attention than they have received, and perhaps form part of a long process of demobilization of mobile, hierarchical pastoral societies at the advent of generalized aridity in the Holocene Sahara (3rd millennium BCE onwards).<sup>28</sup> In other words, living together in large settlements was not—in the sense of the *longue durée*—a new thing to the 1st millennium BCE populations of the Middle Niger.

Regarding the self-generation or political generation of large-scale settlements, one must also not lose sight of the fact that West Africa has a long history of statehood. Pre-existing polities such as Ghana and Kawkaw were recognized by the first Arabic visitors to the Sahel in the 8th and 9th centuries.<sup>29</sup> The origins of the earliest of these—the empire of Ghana (or Wagadu)—might extend back into the 4th century CE, with the possibility of still earlier antecedents such as Tichitt. Written histories attest that states such as Ghana, Kawkaw, and Mali had 'capitals'—although this term should not be understood in the classic sense of such localities acting in an administrative or economic sense for the entire state. Rather, they would have been places of royal courts, points of embassy, areas of sacred ritual spaces, and garrisons for core elements of the army. They do not appear to have served important mercantile functions. We can infer this both from primary sources and by the close study of more recent successors such as Segou (discussed above regarding issues of hierarchy and heterarchy). Such capitals may have been occupied for only a single reign and are very likely to have been abandoned at any point of dynastic rupture.<sup>30</sup> Subsequent to the shift of a capital there is normally either a marked reduction in size of the site (with merely a vestigial village-sized population) or a complete abandonment. Lifespan is thus a key factor separating large Middle Niger 'political' settlements from more stable mercantile centres. The organization of mercantile centres may well have been locally heterarchical, but the political structure of the larger polities which surrounded them, if we are to believe early Arabic sources and some archaeological traces, are likely to have had strong coercive elements, including slavery.<sup>31</sup>

## THE WEST AFRICAN FOREST

Although the beginnings of urbanism in the West African forest were, comparatively speaking, rather recent—*c.* 900–1300 CE—their individualistic and pristine nature makes them relevant to the present chapter. Ife, with its sacred groves, sophisticated art corpus, and concentric bands of bank and ditch fortifications covering over 1,000 ha, makes for a remarkable example. The city of Ife is one of several ancient walled Nigerian cities linked to the people today known as the Yoruba. Indeed, according to tradition it is not only Nigeria's first city, but the point from which the world was created.<sup>32</sup>

The origins of Ife may be traced to an enclosure within the current city known as Enuwa (meaning 'we see eye to eye'). Radiocarbon dates from excavations within the area fall between 600 and 1000 CE and probably relate to an initial agglomeration of local populations behind a bank and ditch wall.<sup>33</sup> Ozanne has effectively argued that Ife grew up as a series of roughly concentric walled rings around the sacred palace of its ruler, the *Oni*, whose descendants still reign in the city today.<sup>34</sup> Ife's vast enclosures were only partially filled with housing and would have included large open areas

with farmsteads, making any estimation of its ancient population difficult and low population density likely.

From early in its existence Ife would have participated in localized trade in agricultural resources, particularly yams, vegetable oils, and palm wine; however long-distance commerce was probably ongoing from *c.* 1000 CE with exports including ivory from forest elephants, kola nuts, peppers, and slaves. In terms of imports the most visible is a large-scale trade for copper alloys, notably brass bars of trans-Saharan origin which went to form the majority of cast objects manufactured at the city. Ife's metallurgical traditions grew out of a long legacy of sophisticated metalworking in Nigeria, dating from the 1st millennium BCE Nok culture, and the local copper alloy working traditions of Igbo Ukwu (*c.* 900 CE). There is no doubt that the concentration of metalworkers in the city was a key factor in the legitimation of its royal cult. The beginnings of Ife's naturalistic tradition of terracotta sculptural portraiture, which ultimately developed into famous examples in cast copper alloy, began sometime between 900 and 1100 CE. By the end of this same period potsherd pavement shrine areas are documented, probably dedicated to both ancestral and regal cults, and utilizing terracotta or copper alloy portrait busts as part of their focus.

The enormous scale of public labour evidenced by Ife's vast networks of bank and ditch boundaries is evocative of enslavement and coercion. Historically, we know that slavery existed in the region, and early Ife artistic renderings of gagged captives or sacrificial victims in terracotta sculpture exist. The social system of Ife was ultimately highly coercive, though it probably did not begin that way.

In searching for the impetus behind the foundation of Ife, we are tempted to appeal to ideological factors over economic ones. The sacred nature of Ife kingship appears to form part of a wider trend across the West African forest. As Asombang writes, 'it is yet to be demonstrated historically or archaeologically that... cities like Ife and Benin were military or administrative centers more than they were sacred centers.'<sup>35</sup> Using the historical example of Bafut in western Cameroon, Asombang describes a situation very much like that of Ife: a palace housing a king who is also chief priest of the cults, surrounded by quarters of lineages competing for influence, with further settlements radiating out from this sacred core. It is further argued that, as an alternative to economic incentives, the supernatural abilities of individuals to control natural forces (e.g. rain-making, as in Southall's segmentary state),<sup>36</sup> or occult forces, can form the core around which major settlement centres and polities can grow. Ultimately the trajectories of such centres and polities can evolve to include commerce and, with increasing power of the sacred ruler and closely allied lineages, elements of coercion. Ife thus potentially constitutes a marked alternative pathway to urbanism: from the centre of sacred cult to a city.

## CONCLUSIONS

Across early African cities, regionality is particularly marked in the degrees of mercantile, sacred, and political/military strategies mixed into each urban milieu. For the African forest the impetus of urbanism appears to have initially grown out of the gravitational power of a sacred cult (cult-generated urbanism?), eventually developing into a sacred kingship fed by long-range commerce in forest resources. Elsewhere in the sub-Saharan zone there are potentially profound contrasts. For instance, the citadel-focused character of many central Saharan sites looks very different to the unfortified 'self-generated' mercantile settlements of the West African Sahel in general and the

Middle Niger in particular. However such trends are not absolute, as even in earlier (1st millennium BCE) periods, fortified towns are now known from the Lake Chad Basin (e.g. Zilum).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, by the time Arabic geographers were first writing about the states of the Sahel in the late 1st millennium CE, it is apparent that they possessed substantial ‘capitals’ or state-generated urban centres.

Yet, despite the uniqueness of early African urban phenomena, there is clear evidence to indicate that many early urban societies were in contact and interacting with each other. This is particularly the case with the African Sahel and the central Sahara, where pre-Islamic commerce and the exchange of ideas and technologies appears to be increasingly likely.<sup>38</sup> The implications of such cross-regional contacts for the development of African urbanization remain to be explored.

## NOTES

1. G. Connah, *African Civilizations. An Archaeological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.
2. See A. LaViolette and J. Fleisher, ‘The Archaeology of Sub-Saharan Urbanism: Cities and Their Countrysides’, in A. B. Stahl, ed., *African Archaeology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 327–52; R. J. McIntosh, *Ancient Middle Niger. Urbanism and the Self-Organising Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
3. There is inevitably some overlap between our chapter and Bill Freund’s (Ch. 33) later in this volume.
4. See M. Hansen, ed., *A Comparative Study of 30 City-State Cultures* (Copenhagen: Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 21, 2000), 11–34, for an extended discussion.
5. R. J. McIntosh, *The Peoples of the Middle Niger* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).
6. K. C. MacDonald and S. Camara, ‘Segou, Slavery, and Sifinso’, in J. C. Monroe and A. Ogundiran, eds., *The Politics of Landscape in Atlantic West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 in press).
7. S. K. McIntosh, ed., *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
8. J. Baines and J. Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), on temple/funerary focus; Hansen, *Comparative Study of 30 City-State Cultures*, 14, on debate about Egypt as an urbanized state.
9. See B. G. Trigger et al., *Ancient Egypt. A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and papers by Hassan and O’Connor in T. Shaw et al., eds., *The Archaeology of Africa. Food, Metals and Towns* (London: Routledge, 1993), 551–86; see McMahon, Ch. 2, for Near Eastern comparanda.
10. On Classical cities in Egypt, see P. Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2006), 9; cf. also Osborne and Wallace-Hadrill, Ch. 3, this volume. On the desert routes and oases west from the Nile, M. Liverani, ‘The Libyan Caravan Road in Herodotus IV.181–4’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 43.4 (2000), 496–520; for the important recent work at Dakhleh oasis, see *inter alia* A. Boozer, ‘New Excavations from a Domestic Context in Roman Amheida, Egypt’, in M. Bommas, ed., *Cultural Memory and Identity in Ancient Societies* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 109–26.



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## SOUTH ASIA

CAMERON A. PETRIE

THE history of the city in South Asia stretches back more than 4,500 years, and includes two major phases of early urbanism. The first, known as the Indus Civilization, dates between *c.*2600 and 1900 BCE; while the second, known as the Early Historic period, dates from *c.*500 BCE to CE 500. The ancient cities of South Asia are often left out of major synthetic discussions and this chapter seeks to reinstate the Indus and Early Historic cities into considerations of processes of early urbanism.

The Indus Civilization extended across large parts of what is today modern Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, and it has been claimed that it spanned an area in excess of 1 million km<sup>2</sup> (see Regional Map 1.4).<sup>1</sup> Although typically described as being ‘urbanized’, only five Indus settlements are considered to be cities on the basis of their raw size ( $\geq 80$  ha): Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Rakhigarhi, Dholavira, and Ganweriwala (Fig. 5.1). These cities were situated considerable distances apart, and with the exception of Dholavira, they were located far out on the alluvial plains of north-western South Asia. The Indus cities that have been excavated display substantial fortification walls, platforms, houses, drains, and wells made of mud- and/or fired-brick, and appear to lack obvious palatial and religious architecture (Plate 5.1).<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that the Indus Civilization was dominated by its major cities, yet the majority of known settlements are small-, medium- and large-sized towns and villages that lie in the immediate hinterlands of the large centres and the extensive intervening regions. A number of what might be described as ‘smaller-than-city’ (<40 ha) Indus settlements were undoubtedly urban and potentially played a crucial role in the Indus world, yet they remain poorly conceptualized. The rural context similarly remains a vital yet poorly understood component of the Indus Civilization.<sup>3</sup> Comprehension of this earliest phase of South Asian urbanism is also hampered by unresolved debates about the status of the enigmatic and untranslated Indus script, a lack of consensus about Indus socio-political structure and organization, and a poor understanding of the major transformation that is marked by the decline and ultimate abandonment of the Indus cities during the early 2nd millennium BCE.

Following the decline of the Indus cities, there was a period of as much as a millennium during which there were no large-scale cities in South Asia, though there were a number of settlements that were essentially equivalent in size to the mid-range Indus settlements (*c.*30ha). Sizable cities did not reappear until the mid-late 1st millennium BCE, and this Early Historic phase of large-scale urbanization continued far into the mid-1st millennium CE. There are a number of overt similarities between the cities of the two urban phases, but the Early Historic cities were more numerous and developed in more varied locations and environments. The main focus of Early Historic urbanism was the Ganges plain, which was the heartland of the *Mahajanapadas* or great kingdoms (Regional Map 1.4), indicating that there was a major eastward shift in the concentration of urban centres between the two early phases. There were also important developments in the western borderlands of the subcontinent. The Early Historic cities are typically marked by their size, the presence of substantial fortification walls, and evidence for civic amenities, craft specialization, long-range

trade, palaces, and religious structures. This period also saw the rise of different types of cities, including centres that appear to have been at least partly operating as frontier cities or *entrepôts* engaging directly in overland and sea trade (Fig. 5.2). Early Historic cities were also important in a range of socio-political contexts, including the development of nascent states, and periods of imperial growth, expansion, consolidation, and collapse. However, for the Early Historic period in general, our understanding of life outside the city is limited.



**FIGURE 5.1** Plans of Indus cities and smaller centres showing evidence for semi-orthogonal blocks and discrete walled areas at settlements of different sizes, including: (a) Mohenjo-daro; (b) enlargement of HR area enclosed in a grey square at left; (c) Harappa; (d) Dholavira; (e) Kalibangan; (f) Banawali; (g) Lothal; and (h) Surkotada.



**FIGURE 5.2** Indus Valley. Comparison of plan of Mohenjo-daro and plans of Early Historic cities and smaller centres showing the variable size of fortified areas, including: (a) Mohenjo-daro; (b) Bhir (left), Sirkap (centre), and Sirsukh (right) mounds at Taxila; (c) Sravasti; and (d) Bhita.

In surveying these two major phases of early South Asian urbanization, this chapter will outline the ways in which cities in South Asia have been conceptualized in both the past and the present, and this will be followed by a discussion of the origin and structural makeup of the Indus and Early Historic cities. The environmental, landscape, and cultural context of these cities will also be examined.

### APPROACHING URBANISM IN SOUTH ASIA

Piotr Eltsov has argued that most of the scholarly literature on South Asian cities is descriptive rather than conceptual, and pointed out that the core question—what is the city?—is not coherently addressed.<sup>4</sup> He has also maintained that there cannot be a single and universally comprehensive definition of the city in the South Asian context, and argued that the ancient South Asian city was a complex socio-political and cultural phenomenon that can be studied and conceptualized in a multitude of ways. While Childe's ten criteria continue to be advocated as a useful tool for understanding South Asian cities,<sup>5</sup> Eltsov has proclaimed that such empirical definitions are inherently unsuitable in South Asia as they lack a mechanism for understanding the importance of

cities for ancient populations.<sup>6</sup> Eltsov views the city as a historical phenomenon that is inseparable from the idea of the city in the minds of the historical agents, and drawing on information from ancient Indian literature, has proposed that there are two critical factors for defining Indus and Early Historic cities: evidence for fortifications and authority.

In addition to there being conceptual issues to overcome, there are also significant constraints introduced by the nature of the archaeological record, and a focus on vertical rather than horizontal excavation. For both the Indus and Early Historic phases, there is also a lack of formal administrative and historical documents, which has meant that there has been reliance on literary texts of uncertain date compiled over many centuries. Furthermore, although archaeological surveys throughout South Asia have discovered hundreds of settlements of various periods, new surveys are showing that there are hundreds if not thousands of settlements that have not been recorded, making it difficult to understand the phases of urban development and decline, and substantiate any discussion of past urban/rural settlement dynamics.<sup>7</sup>

## **THE INDUS URBAN ‘EXPERIMENT’: THE RISE, FLORUIT AND DECLINE OF THE FIRST SOUTH ASIAN CITIES**

There are a plethora of publications discussing the Indus Civilization and its cities. The key elements will be outlined here, and a range of new perspectives that are challenging a number of well-established views will be highlighted in the hope of presenting an updated view of the Indus city.

The origin of the cities of the Indus Civilization has long been a topic of debate, but it is now generally accepted that they were the culmination of indigenous processes that began as early as the 6th millennium BCE. It should not be assumed that a linear developmental sequence can explain the appearance of Indus cities in the 3rd millennium BCE, as it is clear that there was considerable variation in life-ways throughout the regions that constituted the Indus Civilization during the pre-urban period, which does not sit neatly with normative patterns. For instance, it has long been believed that the Indus Civilization subsistence economy was based primarily on cattle-, sheep- and goat-based pastoralism and wheat- and barley-based agriculture supported by winter rain. However, the subsistence economy was most likely variable in its details and adapted to local environmental conditions. In this and many other ways, a pattern of regional variation continued through the Indus urban period and into the post-urban phase.

Only five Indus settlements developed into sizable cities and all appear to have grown to a substantial size over a relatively short period between *c.*2600–2500 BCE. This implies that the shift to large-scale urbanism was very swift, but limited to a small number of centres, and the precise socio-economic dynamics that led to the formation of these cities are debated. The urban phase is characterized by a distinctive assemblage of material culture that includes black painted red-slipped pottery, carved steatite seals, cubical weights, ceramic figurines, bangles made of various materials (clay, shell, copper, faience, and stoneware), and beads made from various semi-precious and precious stones. Beyond the cities themselves, this material epitomizes the Indus Civilization.

It has long been argued that the Indus Civilization is distinctive from other early civilizations. For instance, it is often described as being faceless as there is no overt evidence from burials, sculptural traditions, or elite structures for prominent individuals. This overlaps with unresolved questions about the nature of Indus elites, whether a ruling class dominated Indus cities, and whether there was significant monumental public architecture in the form of major religious buildings or palaces. An

absence of explicit evidence for warfare is also often noted.<sup>8</sup> These differences have contributed to ongoing debates about whether the Indus Civilization constitutes a state and if so, a state of what type. Our comprehension of all of these factors is perhaps irrevocably hampered by the fact that we lack readable texts that might provide insight into daily lives and practices. Knowledge of the city context is further complicated by the fact that only two of the major urban centres have seen both extensive excavation and subsequent publication: Mohenjo-daro and Harappa.

Mohenjo-daro is situated on the Indus plain in Sindh (Pakistan), to the west of the Indus River. It was the focus of several major phases of archaeological research during the 20th century and has seen the most extensive investigation of any Indus settlement.<sup>9</sup> In many ways Mohenjo-daro is the Indus city par excellence as it is the place where most of the salient features of Indus cities were first identified. The area of the two main mounds is *c.* 100 ha, but the overall occupied area may have covered *c.* 250 ha, making it the largest city of its day in the subcontinent and on a par with the larger contemporaneous cities in Mesopotamia (see above, [Ch. 2](#)). Mohenjo-daro is primarily comprised of a high brick platform topped by fired-brick structures; and a lower town comprised of distinct habitation areas that are also raised on brick platforms. It has been proposed that the city of Mohenjo-daro was a 'virgin' foundation built on platforms for flood defence,<sup>10</sup> but it is possible that there were pre-urban phases of occupation that were not reached during excavations because of the high modern water table.<sup>11</sup>

The high mound, which will be referred to here as the Mound of the Great Bath, was the locus of a number of the most unusual and compelling Indus Civilization buildings, including structures known as the 'Great Bath', the 'Granary'/'Great Hall'/'Warehouse', the 'College of Priests', the 'Pillared Hall', and a structure traditionally described as a Buddhist stupa that has long been presumed to date to the Early Historic period. A mud-brick fortification wall with at least one gateway surrounded at least part of this mound, and although many of these buildings may have been elite structures, several contained evidence for craft activities, including lapidary, shell, and leather working.<sup>12</sup>

The lower town at Mohenjo-daro is made up of several distinct sectors that appear to have been primarily comprised of houses of various sizes and workshop areas. The lower town also has a range of enigmatic structures, including at least one building that was identified by the original excavator as a palace, a building with a unique double staircase that has been described as a possible ritual structure (HR-A, House I; [Fig. 5.1](#)),<sup>13</sup> and several other buildings that have also been proposed as possible temples. There is, however, no consensus that any of these structures were anything more than houses.

Attempts to reinterpret two of the structures exposed during the early excavations at Mohenjo-daro have the potential to force a re-evaluation of several long-held ideas. The so-called Buddhist stupa and monastery was one of the first Indus structures exposed and has traditionally been attributed to the Kushan period (early 1st millennium CE) because of a coin hoard found there (see [Plate 5.1](#)). However, the placement and layout of this structure closely conforms to the neighbouring Indus period structures, and a reassessment of its architectural layout, construction techniques, and associated finds has indicated that it may be the remains of a large Indus period structure that stood at the highest and most visible part of the city.<sup>14</sup> The precise function of this building is still unclear, but Verardi and Barba have suggested that it may have been a sacred structure with repositories containing objects that may have been votive offerings that could no longer be used. The northern end of the Mound of the Great Bath may thus have been topped by a cluster of elite buildings, including two major ritual



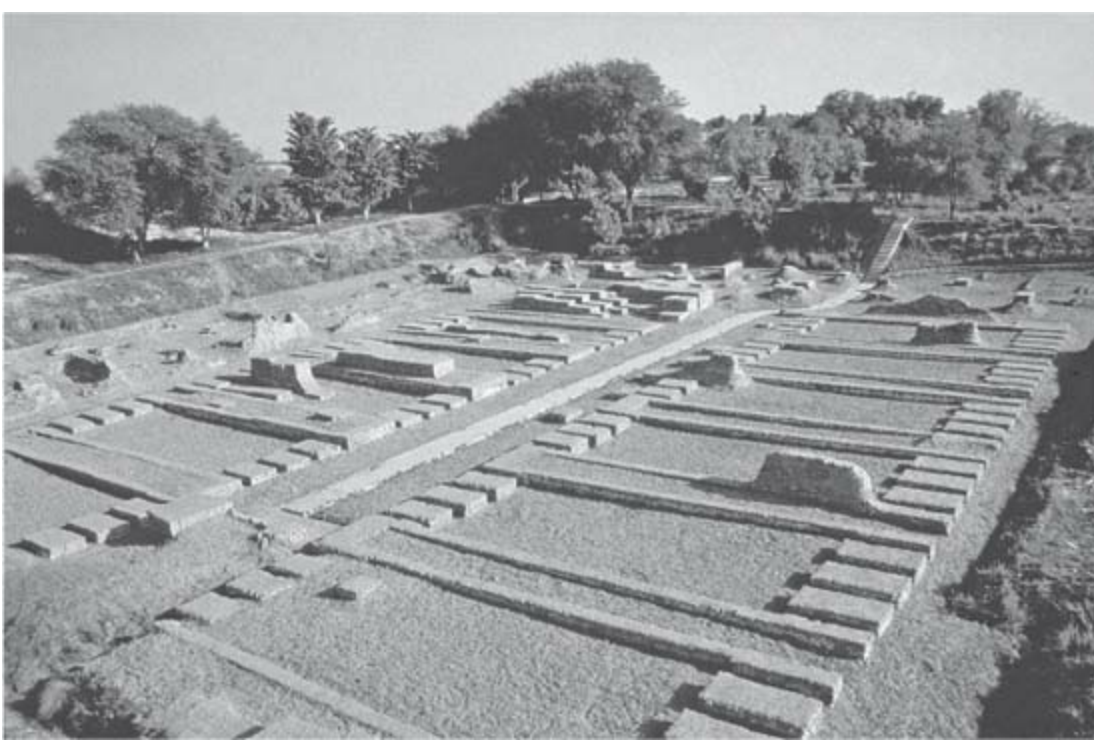
structures (the Great Bath and the ‘non-stupa’) that were separated by what may have been an elite residence (College of Priests) and flanked by some type of Great Hall (see [Plate 5.2](#)).

Block 2 in HR-B area ([Fig. 5.1](#)) was initially believed to have been comprised of seven separate houses, but Vidale has proposed that this entire block was actually a palace with a monumental entrance marked by massive columns made from yellow limestone ‘ring-stones’.<sup>15</sup> Vidale has also suggested that a small-scale emulation of the Great Bath, a Little Bath, was situated behind this palace ([Fig. 5.1](#)). If true, these reassessments have dramatic implications for our interpretation of Indus civic, socio-economic, and political organization, and suggest that evidence for Indus monumental religious and palatial architecture may have literally been staring scholars in the face since the 1930s.



**PLATE 5.1** Fired brick architecture at Mohenjo-daro, showing House VIII in HR-A area with the so-called Buddhist stupa in the background. This structure stands on the highest point on the site and dominates the Mound of Great Bath.

Harappa was the first Indus Civilization site discovered and has been the locus of archaeological investigation for almost a century. The settlement lies on a former bed of the Ravi River in the central Punjab (Pakistan), and at its maximal extent, Harappa was a large city (*c.*150 ha) comprised of at least four separate sectors, each of which was enclosed by walls, contained houses and workshops, and had access restricted by narrow gateways.<sup>16</sup> The only monumental building that has been exposed is the so-called Granary or Great Hall on Mound F, which is often compared to the so-called Great Hall at Mohenjo-daro (see [Plate 5.2](#)). The excavators have argued that the urban phase at Harappa represents the culmination of a protracted process of settlement growth, expanding resource acquisition networks, moves towards the standardized use of symbols and weights, and the increasing intensification and sophistication of craft production activities.<sup>17</sup>



**PLATE 5.2** The Granary or Great Hall on Mound F at Harappa, Indus Valley.

Dholavira lies on Kadir Island in the Rann of Kutch (Gujarat) and extensive excavations were carried out there during the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Dholavira is the most anomalous of the Indus cities as it sits on an island, is roughly rectangular in shape, and its structures were predominantly made out of cut and uncut stone. The city was comprised of a series of walled compounds, with a Middle Town, Ceremonial Ground, Bailey, and Citadel all nested within a Lower Town, and monumental gateways restricting access between each zone. Kenoyer has argued that this arrangement is indicative of a hierarchy of internal settlement and a need for defence against attack,<sup>19</sup> and the immensity and complexity of the fortification system at Dholavira has no parallel in South Asia.<sup>20</sup> The Middle and Lower Towns appear to have been comprised of houses and workshop areas arranged in blocks with streets and lanes, though there are numerous large open spaces within the walled area that were apparently devoted to irrigation-based farming. There are also several large reservoirs cut into the bedrock, emphasizing the importance of water storage.

The two remaining Indus cities have seen far less investigation. Rakhigarhi (*c.*80 ha) is situated on the plains of Haryana (India), and was discovered in the 1960s and excavated in the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> The settlement was comprised of several distinct mounded areas, but unlike Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, the largest mound was actually the highest. Enclosure walls have been observed around several mounds, but little is known about the civic layout beyond the exposure of platforms, mud- and fired-brick houses, workshop areas, and structures identified as fire altars and pits for animal sacrifice. Ganweriwala (*c.*80 ha) appears to have been a virgin foundation of the urban period in the desert fringe of Cholistan (Pakistan).<sup>22</sup> The site has never been subjected to formal excavation, but has previously been described as a city and has evidence for craft activity on the surface. Some doubt has been expressed as to whether it should be ranked at the same scale as Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Rakhigarhi, and Dholavira.<sup>23</sup> This possibility is supported by the fact that the settlement is situated at the southern limits of a cluster of urban-phase Indus settlements rather than as a central place and in satellite imagery the mounded area appears to be considerably smaller than the reported size.

The city has primacy in Indus scholarship, and although the existence of many other smaller urban

centres is often noted, they are imprecisely differentiated from the larger centres and usually only discussed in terms of their relationship with those settlements. However, these smaller urban centres potentially played a critical role in the Indus world. It is not feasible to discuss each in detail here, but a brief review of one of these settlements will be presented and comment will be made about several others.

The site of Kalibangan (*c.*11.5 ha) is situated on the southern edge of a dried river channel in northern Rajasthan (India), and was several hundred kilometres from the nearest city-sized settlement. During the urban phase, it was comprised of two walled mounds. The western mound appears to have been made up of two distinctive areas separated by a wall, with one being an elite residential area, while the other had several brick platforms, which the excavators argue had a ritual function. The lower eastern mound appears to have been largely residential.<sup>24</sup> Kalibangan presents much of the well-known Indus cultural material, but the ceramic types used by the pre-urban population continued in use for at least part of the later period of occupation, suggesting both continuity of the local population and a progressive emulation of non-local material. Similar evidence for the growth of a small settlement during the urban period and the use of a mix of the pre-existing local material culture and Indus material is also seen at Banawali (16 ha) and Farmana (9 ha), which both lie to the east of Kalibangan, within 60 km of the city at Rakhigarhi.<sup>25</sup> At smaller village sites in Haryana, the local cultural material is even more dominant, and only limited amounts of Indus-style material is present, predominantly small artefacts such as beads and bangles.<sup>26</sup>

A number of small settlements have been discovered in Gujarat that all have clear evidence for substantial mud-brick or stone fortification walls and the segregation of space within those walls, marking them out as being distinctly non-rural, including Lothal (5ha), Shikarpur (3.4 ha), Kuntasi (3 ha), Gola-Dhoro (2 ha), Surkotada (1.5 ha), and Kanmer (1 ha) (Fig. 5.1). Their form and contents make it probable that some of these settlements were fortified colonies involved in the extraction and processing of locally available raw materials.

The large-scale exposures at Mohenjo-daro set the model for understanding Indus urban layout by revealing houses arranged in coherent blocks separated by wide main streets, narrow side streets, and alleyways. To the uninitiated, it appears that one major phase of occupation at Mohenjo-daro has been exposed, but published plans show a palimpsest of multiple construction phases.<sup>27</sup> M. E. Smith has noted that the structures in the different parts of the lower town are arranged in semi-orthogonal blocks, which suggests that although the city appears to present a grid-pattern, the layout may not have been a result of centralized planning.<sup>28</sup> Such semi-orthogonal layouts are the product of the actions of individual builders who make additions to an existing rectangular house or build a new house adjacent to a standing structure rather than a central authority. The major streets and lanes appear to have been inviolate over time, but there is clear evidence for structures being remodelled and lanes being blocked off. There are similar patterns evident at Harappa. Detailed studies of the architecture at Mohenjo-daro have shown that the earliest phase of structures had massive walls and as buildings were rebuilt and remodelled, older walls were reused as foundations, and buildings progressively became more flimsy.<sup>29</sup>

Many houses at Mohenjo-daro had their own wells, and it has been estimated that there were as many as 700 throughout the city.<sup>30</sup> Examples have also been discovered at other settlements. Ready access to water within residential structures explains the presence of latrines and bathing facilities in many houses at Mohenjo-daro, which were drained by an elaborate system that linked houses with

drains running along or below lanes and main streets and ultimately off each platform.

Early interpretations suggested that Indus cities were characterized by a dichotomy between elite-dominated citadels and non-elite lower towns, implying the existence of a hierarchical social structure. However, the identification of multiple walled areas at Harappa and the acknowledgement that the 'lower town' at Mohenjo-daro was actually comprised of several distinct zones suggests that the situation was more complex. For Eltsov, the creation of three-dimensional and segregated worlds with restricted access and hidden monumentality was an ideological choice that served to demarcate socio-cultural groupings, be they religious or professional.<sup>31</sup> Vidale has argued that the presence of a palace and associated Little Bath in the HR area at Mohenjo-daro signals the existence of a social structure where each sector of the lower town was the preserve of a group or groups of elites that were socially, economically, and politically capable of building palaces and ritual structures that emulated and competed with those seen on the Mound of the Great Bath.<sup>32</sup> Kenoyer has proposed that the formal division of space at Harappa and the distribution of workshops indicate that there was competition between elites, merchants, landowners, or religious leaders in each sector.<sup>33</sup> Taken together, these views suggest that no one elite group dominated any of the Indus cities in a hierarchical fashion. Rather, these cities were polycentric and dominated by various elite groups that were broadly equal in terms of socio-economic status, competed with each other, and interacted in complex ways, which conforms to the definition of a heterarchy. This pattern may well hold for the smaller centres and towns where segregation within individual settlements is evident.

Although Indus cities and settlements are distributed across an area of around 1 million km<sup>2</sup>, large areas within that zone have not been adequately explored and there are innumerable settlements that remain undocumented. There are also no reliable counts of settlements dating to the urban phase and it is unclear whether all known sites were occupied contemporaneously, so it is not presently possible to discuss reliably the density and distribution of Indus settlements.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that the environmental and landscape context of each Indus city was distinctive, and each either benefited or suffered from different patterns of rainfall, vegetation, and proximity to natural resources. Perhaps the most notable but rarely addressed difference is that each city is supported by a dramatically different hydrological system. Rakhigarhi lies in the zone where both summer-monsoonal and winter rainfall systems operate today, whereas Harappa, Ganweriwala, and Mohenjo-daro are located further to the west, and each lie in different rainfall zones on the alluvial Indus plain. Dholavira is located in an area that today receives relatively limited rainfall, but is close to two seasonal rivers, and has several large stone-lined reservoirs that presumably helped compensate for unpredictable water supply.

The assumption that the Indus Civilization was dominated by a homogenous agricultural system is primarily based on the widespread exploitation of a similar base set of domesticated plants (wheat, barley) and animals (zebu, goat, sheep, water buffalo). However, variation in local environmental conditions, vegetation, rainfall, and water supply would have necessitated distinctive adaptations for successful farming in different regions, including strategies relying on summer crops like rice, and/or combinations of summer and winter crops. The level of variation in practices will only be clear when evidence for the proportional exploitation of individual animal and plant species in specific regions is more widely available, and several projects are currently aiming to determine the extent of variability in the subsistence practices of the Indus and neighbouring populations.<sup>35</sup> It might be presumed that perennial and ephemeral water courses were exploited when present, and when not, the inhabitants relied on canals, ponds, and rainfall, the latter particularly so in areas receiving enough winter rainfall to grow crops without irrigation. Although irrigation is frequently dismissed as a

contributing factor to Indus farming practices, Chakrabarti has long argued that it played a critical role.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the role of ponds during the Indus period is a factor worthy of consideration.

Chakrabarti has pointed out that there is no direct correlation between the planning and craft practices evident in Indus settlements and their size, noting that although Mohenjo-daro is as much as eighteen times the size of Lothal, both sites have fired-brick houses, aligned streets, drainage, evidence for craft production, etc.<sup>37</sup> In his words, ‘the distinction between a village, a town and a city is to some extent blurred among the Harappan settlements’.<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that the large-scale Indus urban centres were all considerable distances apart, ranging from 280 to 835 km.<sup>39</sup> These distances emphasize that the spatial dynamics and political organization of the Indus Civilization was different to that of contemporaneous Mesopotamia, where major cities were often within 25 km of each other (above, Ch. 2). Scale is in many ways the critical factor, and in thinking about the scale of the Indus Civilization as a whole and the nature of its political structure, it is important to consider whether so few urban centres actually controlled all of the available agricultural land and the settlements and populations that occupied it. In a landscape dominated by rural town and village sites, Indus cities appear to be the exception rather than the norm, and their distribution implies that small regional centres and towns played an important role in interactive processes and control structures.

Detailed analysis of the stone raw material acquisition networks that supplied Harappa and other settlements suggests that the Indus cities gradually expanded and intensified their reach over time, culminating in the existence of a network operating across western South Asia at local, regional, and long-range scales in the urban Indus period.<sup>40</sup> One of the motivations for the establishment of settlements in Gujarat, particularly small settlements like Gola-Dhoro, but also possibly Dholavira itself, may have been the desire for ready access to the wide range of stone and abundant shell resources in the area. Dholavira may actually have been incapable of feeding itself, and the entire enterprise may have been the initiative of groups of merchants.<sup>41</sup> Its integration into broader networks involving trade and raw materials acquisition may thus have been critical to its purpose and survival.

There is also clear evidence for the existence of an integrated trade and exchange network in finished goods operating at local, regional, long-range, and international scales. The evidence for local trade primarily comes through the distribution of craft products, which are often found on very small village sites with little outward sign of economic prosperity. The Indus settlements of Sutkagen-dor and Sutka-koh lie in the coastal region of Makran (Pakistan) on the overland route to eastern Iran, and Shortugai lies close to the source of lapis lazuli in northern Afghanistan. The precise *raison d'être* for these settlements is unclear, and they may have been frontier settlements that played a role in facilitating trade,<sup>42</sup> or implanted colonies that existed beyond the pale of the Indus Civilization *per se*, which may have been involved in long-distance extraction enterprises sponsored by large professional trading clans.<sup>43</sup>

Indus luxury craft products have been found in settlements spread throughout the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, including the famous Early Dynastic Royal Cemetery at Ur (c.2600–2400 BCE) (see above, Ch. 2), which attests to trade at the time of the initial flourish of Indus cities. There is, however, very little evidence for the movement of nonlocal or exotic goods into South Asia, which suggests that the goods traded for the high quality Indus products were perishable, or perhaps came in the form of raw or unfinished materials that were processed locally (e.g. copper). External trade was undoubtedly important economically, but the lack of imported goods suggests that Indus elites had

little need for foreign exotics to demonstrate status and prestige.

There is no consensus about the nature of Indus society, its religion, social order or its organizing principles. The perceived uniqueness of the Indus Civilization is largely based on the lack of evidence for prominent individuals and the perceived absence of significant monumental religious buildings or palaces. However, the possibility that there were prominent sacred structures and palaces at Mohenjo-daro invites new interpretations. Perhaps the most compelling factor of the new proposals is that these structures are not isolated in one part of the city, but appear to have been distributed in various areas, which indicates that economic and political control was non-centralized, at least within the city.

The degree to which the Indus Civilization was politically integrated is unclear. Arguments for integration largely stem from the belief that the distinctive assemblage of Indus material culture is present at various sites. However, it is likely that the degree of material homogeneity has been overstated, and that the widespread attestation of similar material is actually a veneer that overlies a considerable degree of regional diversity. When new sites are discovered, it is the 'Indus' material that is typically presented in reports, but a wide range of other cultural material is also recovered, which attests that regionally distinct material such as distinctively decorated ceramic vessels and figurines was also being used.

These observations are significant for discussions about whether or not the Indus Civilization was a state. Contrasting models have been proposed, ranging from a nonstate political structure based on chieftain-type control to a city-state structure envisaging Indus cities controlling enormous hinterlands as large as 150,000 km<sup>2</sup>. However, the interaction between individual cities and centres is not fully explained in either scenario. Without clear evidence to the contrary, it appears that each of the Indus cities was an independent polity. The smaller urban centres may have been subordinate to the larger cities, but were also potentially polities in their own right. The populations of individual cities appear to have been dominated by heterarchically organized competing elites who lived in socio-economically segregated areas. These groups and other members of the urban population made use of a range of distinctive material culture, including objects displaying similar iconography that were made from exotic or locally available raw materials and produced in various locations using similar specialized craft technologies. Finished goods were also widely traded and exchanged. The production, exchange, and use of similar material in the cities and smaller urban centres indicate that the urban populations may have been emulating each other. These factors all conform to Renfrew's model of peer-polity interaction, where the interaction between autonomous socio-political units is more significant than external links with other areas, and processes of transformation are brought about as a result of interaction between peer-polities in the form of competition (including warfare), competitive emulation, symbolic entrainment, the transmission of innovation, and increased flow in the exchange of goods.<sup>44</sup> The only element of this definition that does not accord neatly with common perceptions of the Indus cities is the role of warfare, but Cork has pointed out that evidence for warfare is particularly rare in ancient societies.<sup>45</sup> The main difference between the Indus Civilization and other contemporaneous societies may therefore be with the representation of violence, which could be related to both ideology and the distance between centres.

By the early 2nd millennium BCE, it appears that all of the great Indus urban centres had dramatically reduced in size or been abandoned, and there were shifts in the location of settlement concentrations. There is no consensus as to whether these changes represent a collapse or a transformation of the Indus urban system, and this is made difficult, as the specific reasons for these

changes are unclear. Possible causes of change include natural factors, such as declining rainfall, desiccation or increased aridity, resource exhaustion through brick production, population increases, and river shift; and human causes, including invasion, social evolution, and responses to natural change.<sup>46</sup> There has been considerable debate about the significance of a number of ancient riverbeds that stretch across the deserts and plains of northwest India and are believed to be the traces of a major glacier-fed river that once flowed parallel to the mighty Indus River. There are, however, substantial gaps in the evidence that might enable us to assess this process as a whole, including a shortage of focused research on the Late Harappan and subsequent periods, a substantial lack of detailed dating evidence, and little climatic and environmental evidence that is directly relevant. Perhaps most importantly, there is a lack of evidence about human interaction with and responses to the environment. There are clear indications of a shift towards occupation focused on smaller village/rural settlements, and there appears to have been an increase in the number of small sites distributed throughout north-west India in the post-urban period, but given that many of these were established during this period and not occupied subsequently, there is some likelihood that they were not all occupied simultaneously.

### FROM VILLAGE TO *MAHAJANAPADA* TO EMPIRE: EARLY HISTORIC URBANIZATION

The second great cycle of urban development in South Asia is referred to as the Early Historic period, and saw the appearance of cities in most corners of the subcontinent for the first time. The heartland of this second urban phase was the Ganges plain, where many of the capitals of the *Mahajanapadas* (great kingdoms) developed, including Rajgir and Pataliputra (the capitals of Magadha), Kausambi (Vatsa), Mathura (Surasena), Hastinapura (Kuru), and Sravasti (Kosala) (Regional [Map 1.4](#)). Major cities also developed at Taxila, Pushkalavati/Charsadda and Purushapura/Peshawar (Gandhara), Vidisha (Cedi), Ujjain (Avanti), Broach (Lata), Paithan (Asmaka), and Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. Other than the appearance of cities in different parts of the subcontinent, a major difference between the two phases of city life is the larger number of Early Historic cities, which suggests increases in general and urban populations and implies changes in socio-political organization. The Early Historic phase has been almost exclusively investigated through the excavation of city sites, which means that many local dynamics have not been adequately explored, and limits our understanding of how these cities subsisted and operated.

In many ways, the interpretation of what transpires with the decline of Indus urbanism is critical for understanding the origins of Early Historic cities. There is an interpretative tension in the views of those who see change and those who see continuity between the two phases. Several scholars have put forward arguments that there are significant elements of continuity. Shaffer, for instance, has noted similarities in the form of a food-producing economy (agricultural and pastoral units), emphasis on cattle, large urban settlements, mud-bricks, baked-bricks, and stone used as building materials, large public structures, hydrological features, a highly specialized craft industry, a widely distributed homogeneous material culture, an extensive internal trading network, a unified system of weights and measures, and the use of written script.<sup>47</sup> Differences include an increased reliance on rice, unquestionably military architecture, an increase in the quantity of weapons, the appearance of coinage, historical evidence for political and economic elites and warfare, and the emergence of a four-tiered settlement pattern. The suggestion that there was some type of tradition or legacy that carried over between the two phases has led scholars to draw on the extensive range of Early

Historic literature (e.g. *Arthashastra*) to develop interpretative models for the political organization of the Indus Civilization.<sup>48</sup>

There are other more fundamental differences between the two urban phases. Perhaps the most obvious is that the earliest known Early Historic cities appear in different environments, and were distributed in almost all quarters of the subcontinent, including areas that did not have Indus cities, which emphasizes that there were clear spatial differences between the two dynamics. Nor was there any consistent process leading to the growth of the various Early Historic cities, and it is not currently possible to comment on the rate at which urbanism took place other than to say in some instances it was rapid. The length of the interval between the decline of the Indus urban centres and the reappearance of cities is unclear, largely due to imprecise dating at both ends. The existence of a gap between the two phases means that questions should be asked about how traditions were transmitted through multiple generations that would have had no visible reference point for the city. Perhaps during periods when there were no major cities, the smaller centres took their place as foci for power and trade.

After the decline of the Indus cities a number of distinctive cultural assemblages appear in different regions throughout the subcontinent.<sup>49</sup> This material appears to have been used by inhabitants of small- to medium-sized agro-pastoral settlements that may have been organized as chiefdoms, and initially display no signs of urbanization, town planning, large-scale trade or writing. On the Ganges plain, there is evidence that the regionally distinctive assemblages of material are succeeded by the adoption of the so-called Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) pottery, which begins to appear in some areas by *c.*600 BCE, comes into common use around 300 BCE, and is typically associated with the growth of many settlements into major cities (e.g. Hastinapura and Ahichchatra).<sup>50</sup> At Kausambi, Erdosy has noted that the shift to the use of NBPW (*c.*550–400 BCE) appears to have coincided with the dramatic growth of the settlement (50 ha), the construction of major ramparts, and the appearance of secondary (12 ha) and tertiary (*c.*6 ha) centres in the surrounding area, all of which indicate a dramatic increase of population.<sup>51</sup> Relying heavily on the 3rd century BCE *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, Erdosy has speculated that this shift represents a move towards political and economic centralization, where at a regional level, villages engaged in agro-pastoralism, minor centres were involved in manufacturing, markets, policing, and tax collection, towns were involved with manufacturing luxury items, and the whole was controlled by the city.<sup>52</sup> The cities in the Ganges plain were well placed to carry out both summer and winter cropping, and appear to have been located close to strategic resources. For instance, Kausambi is surrounded by some of the poorest soils in the Allahabad district, but it is in close proximity to sources of iron ore, and the city of Rajgir is located in a similar context. The presence of fortifications and evidence for planning is also significant. The substantial walls that surround the Early Historic cities are usually taken as evidence for the existence of rivalry and conflict between centres, but they also suggest the existence of socio-economic hierarchies and were undoubtedly part of strategies used by elites to materialize power.

In addition to the developments that took place in the Ganges plain, there is evidence for important developments in other regions and different dynamics being in play. Large urban-scale settlements developed in the frontier regions at the extreme western edge of the subcontinent (Charsadda in the Peshawar Valley and Akra in the Bannu Basin) and the regionally distinctive material culture displays few overt signs of major change while this process was occurring. These sizeable settlements are located close to major routes that link the subcontinent with greater Central and Western Asia (the Khyber Pass, and the Kurram and Tochi passes respectively). The growth of these centres appears to



have taken place slightly earlier than the earliest cities on the Ganges plain, suggesting that it was an independent process. Double cropping was also being practised at sites like Pirak and Akra, which lie in arid or semi-arid zones that receive little or no summer rain.

Other regions saw various trajectories to urbanism. During the late 1st millennium BCE, cities appear to the south of the Ganges plain in places like Ujjain and Vidisha, and while the initial phases of development appear to have evolved out of pre-existing settlement systems, they seem to have been supplanted by influence and potentially people from the Ganges, as indicated by the appearance of NBPW. There is also evidence for the development of port cities during the early-mid 1st millennium BCE, including the settlement of Broach at the mouth of the Narmada River, Sopara on the Konkan Coast, and Chandrukhetgarh in the Ganges delta region. It has been proposed that the city of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka grew as a result of a specific theocratic process involving monastic institutions, though this has been contested.<sup>53</sup>

Evidence for Early Historic urban growth and planning is relatively limited because extensive horizontal excavations were only carried out in the early 20th century at sites like Bhita and Taxila. The layout of the earliest Early Historic cities largely appears to conform to natural landscape features such as rivers and hills (e.g. Rajgir, Mathura, and Kausambi). Probably the most characteristic element of the Early Historic city in South Asia is the fortification wall, which has been the focus of many excavations (e.g. Kausambi, Ujjain, and Sisupalgarh). These were typically built on a massive scale, often enclosing enormous areas of up to 250 ha, and were made of a variety of materials, including fired- and mud-brick, clay, and wood. They also incorporated various defensive features, including ramparts, revetments, towers, and gates. The earliest fortifications around Kausambi, Rajgir, Ujjain, and Rajghat have been dated to c.550 BCE, and the major phase of growth at most cities culminated around c.300 BCE. Notably, the birth of Gautama Buddha falls within the intervening period. The appearance of NBPW at cities is common, and is often accompanied by silver punch-marked coins. Early Historic cities in the Ganges plain also often have terracotta ring-wells, mud- and fired-brick architecture, and reservoirs.

Broadly contemporaneous with the rise of fortified cities on the Ganges plain, the regions at the western-most edge of South Asia were incorporated into the Achaemenid empire (c.520 BCE). This expansion of political influence from the Iranian Plateau saw the Achaemenids annex existing culturally distinct regions.<sup>54</sup> The limited excavations have revealed no evidence for the establishment of Persian administrative buildings or palaces in cities like Charsadda and Akra after they were incorporated into the empire, but there appears to be some evidence of the emulation of Achaemenid drinking vessels, which may indicate that local elites adopted some symbols of authority and certain culinary practices. Alexander king of Macedonia subsequently invaded this same region in the late 4th century BCE, but the major period of imperial expansion that impacted on urban life was the formation and expansion of the Mauryan empire during the late 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. This period saw a centralized political authority based in Maghada exert control across most of the subcontinent, and resulted in widespread economic interaction. The Mauryan period also saw the proliferation of Buddhism, and the carving of inscriptions, including the erection of inscribed edicts that outline appropriate behaviour. These elements may have been deliberately used as a political strategy. The Mauryans had two major capitals, Rajgir and Pataliputra (modern Patna), and it was under their rule that several deliberately planned cities were established, displaying distinctive square forms and symmetrical placement of gates, apparently conforming to the ideas espoused by *Arthashastra* (e.g. Sisupalgarh).

Following the demise of the Mauryans, a number of other nascent states expanded into the vacuum, including the Sungas and Satavahanas in northern and central South Asia respectively, and the Graeco-Bactrians (Indo-Greeks) who expanded east out of Central Asia into the north-west. The expansion of Indo-Greek rule into South Asia led to the foundation of several new cities that display hallmarks of orthogonal planning, indicating that they were built to an overarching vision (e.g. Shaikhan Dheri, Sirkap at Taxila, and Begram). Evidence for Sunga influence on cities is far less obvious, although there is evidence for royal patronage of religious establishments, particularly the embellishment of religious sites such as Bharhut and Sanchi. The final centuries BCE and the 1 century CE also saw the arrival of other incursive groups, including the Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians, and Kushans.

There are clear indications of local and medium-scale trading activities throughout South Asia during the Early Historic period. Chakrabarti has noted that there was movement of both products and raw materials, and knowledge of the products of specific areas is a feature of early literature (e.g. the *Arthashastra* assessed the regions of the sub-continent in terms of their important products).<sup>55</sup> This evidence suggests that a conception of a 'pan-Indian' economy existed by the 3rd century BCE, and there were undoubtedly connections to the networks of contact and distribution that existed in the Indus period. Material that was traded included NBPW vessels, beads of various types, silver punch marked coins, stone and finished sculpture, and various perishable products like grain, cotton, textiles, salt, spices, and wood.<sup>56</sup>

During the period in which the Kushans coexisted with the Western Satraps and the Satavahanas, there was wide-ranging commercial and cultural interaction across South Asia and throughout the Kushan empire. There are numerous distinctive examples of foreign goods appearing in the subcontinent during this period, indicative of long-range trade with the Roman world via the Persian Gulf, Arabia, Egypt, and the African littoral, overland interaction with China, and contact with South East Asia. Dramatically different economic and trading patterns were thus in operation during this second phase of urbanization. The specific relationships between ports are mentioned in historical documents such as the *Periplus of the Erythrian Sea*, which also allude to trading activities with the interior of the subcontinent.

During the 4th century CE the kingdoms and dynasties of northern India had been largely supplanted by the Gupta dynasty, whose rule is often viewed as a Golden Age and/or a Brahmanical Renaissance due to the canonization of a range of major works in Sanskrit and the production of high quality art. R. S. Sharma has, however, proposed that the Gupta period marked the onset of an urban decline that saw an increase in rural population, a decline in the use and circulation of coinage, and a reduction in the number of manufactured items. He suggested that this was caused by slowing down of Roman trade from 3rd century CE onwards.<sup>57</sup> There are, however, fundamental problems with the way that many Early Historic cities have been investigated that make it unwise to assume widespread abandonment of urban centres at this time. Therefore, rather than there being clear evidence for a widespread urban decline at the end of the Early Historic period, it is possible that there was a degree of urban continuity into the Medieval period and in some places up to the modern day.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has endeavoured to contextualize the two phases of early urbanism in South Asia by assessing the spatial, physical, environmental, economic, and political context of the Indus and Early

Historic cities. Although interrelated, the two phases of early urbanism appear to have been distinctive processes, separated by a protracted period when there were no large-scale cities. There is increasing evidence that the polycentric cities of the Indus Civilization were dominated by heterarchically arranged elite groups, which is distinct from the levels of state and imperial control that develop during the Early Historic period. There are also clear differences in the organization, operation, and significance of external trade between the two phases. By reconsidering old excavations and proposing new models (e.g. peer-polity interaction), it may be possible to make important progress in the understanding of the Indus socio-political order, particularly the relationships between urban centres of various sizes and the settlements that comprise their hinterlands. Similar approaches should be attempted for the Early Historic period, and must be supported by fresh approaches to excavation. The causes and effects of the disappearance of the Indus cities, and establishing whether there was urban decay at the end of the Early Historic period are key topics for future research.

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## CHINA

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IN scholarship as in the socio-political arena, China presents unique challenges for attempts at incorporation into global discourse. In part the causes are historical and geographic (see [Regional Map 1.5](#)). Although boundaries change, China has a continuous dynastic history of nearly 4,000 years and a core of provinces that stretch more than 3,000 km from east to west and between half and two-thirds that distance from north to south. No other nation or region whose ancient cities are discussed here is viewed in the 21st century as a continuation of such an enduring past. The language barrier is also in part responsible for China's isolation from global endeavours: China has a multi-millennial history of writings that address political systems, human relationships, and even urbanism, as well as an extensive bibliography of modern and current scholarship; to consider ancient cities without the Chinese literature is to short-change or circumvent key issues. Yet if any period of China lends itself to global assessment, it is the time here referred to as ancient, for China's most ancient urbanism is documented almost exclusively through archaeology and thus subject to the same kinds of assessment as preliterate civilizations worldwide. The archaeological record confirms that China's earliest cities: continue as important urban settlements over several millennia, some until today; most often developed on or near rivers; had rulers and ritual spaces, and houses, workshops, and cemeteries; and changed significantly with the introduction and then further development of bronze technology. Excavations also point to trade and commerce across vast regions.

The date of the beginning of urbanism in China is determined by one's definition of a city. Historically and linguistically, the clearest defining feature of the Chinese city is a wall. Most archaeologists in China today equate urbanism with walled settlements, so much so that not only is the wall the most important feature of Chinese urbanism, Chinese scholars trace the origins of urbanism to the presence of walls. The Chinese character *cheng* translates as either wall or city depending on context; when an actual enclosure does not exist, the intent of enclosure is implicit. Walls were erected earlier in China than in any other part of East or South Asia, several millennia before the Chinese writing system that survives from the 2nd millennium BCE. The oldest walled cities do not, however, predate Jericho's 10th millennium BCE wall.

The term ancient also has standard implications in China. In the context of Chinese architecture and urbanism, the word *gudai* (ancient or old [*gu*], age or period [*dai*]), translated as 'ancient period', and extends to the 1840s, a decade of encounters with the West such as the Opium Wars. For urbanists, the post-1840s is known as *xindai* (modern), the period after which China could no longer resist engagement with the West. In this book, as in most Western scholarly discourse, China is divided into logical, shorter periods. This first China chapter on the country's oldest cities begins with the earliest evidence of urbanism and continues until reunification of China under the Sui dynasty (589–618). Taking a period of six millennia, the discussion of early Chinese cities divides into five categories based on technological or political developments: Pre-Bronze Age, Bronze Age, Warring States, First Empires, and Period of Disunion.

## THE CHINESE CITY BEFORE WRITTEN RECORDS

Group settlements of extended families or larger units in which hunting, gathering, or planting may have been shared predate the formation or construction of cities in China by several millennia. Walled, pottery-producing settlements whose inhabitants used stone implements and buried their dead in cemeteries trace to the 6th millennium BCE. A village in Li county, Hunan province, where an earthen wall, 6 m wide at the base that narrowed to about 1.5 m at the top, roughly rectangular in shape, enclosed an area of 300 ha, is an example. The wall was enclosed by a ditch, perhaps anticipating the moats that would become standard in Chinese cities for the rest of the pre-modern period. Several thousand kilometres to the north, in Aohanqi, Inner Mongolia, a ditch, but without wall remains, encompassed another settlement of similar size. Dated 6200–5400 BCE, houses in the Aohanqi settlement were arranged in rows. Remains of what might have been more complex settlements, also without walls, have been found in Wuyang county of Henan province where nine pottery kilns, ten sacrificial dog burials, thirty-two urn burials, forty-five building foundations, 349 tombs, 370 ash pits, and thousands of other objects including a flute were found at a 550 ha site dated to 7000–5800 BCE. Semi-subterranean communal dwellings dated to the 5th millennium BCE were uncovered at Dadiwan in Gansu, China's westernmost province.<sup>1</sup> Also in the 5th millennium BCE, the world-renowned Yangshao culture settlement in Banpo, Shaanxi, just east of Xi'an, came into existence. A millennium later, the 500 ha site included houses of at least three sizes, three cemeteries, a pottery workshop, and animal pens.<sup>2</sup> A nearly circular wall, surrounded by a moat, enclosed a Yangshao settlement in Zhengzhou, Henan province, dated 3300–2800 BCE. The wall was framed by wooden planks between which earth was pounded into layers. Like the moat, walls of pounded layers (*hangtu*), used in China through into the 2nd millennium CE, are now traceable 7,000 years. One cannot conclude that circular settlements were preferred at this time, nor can one posit that round construction anticipates ritual architecture that would stand several millennia later in China, but Chengtoushan in Li county, Hunan, similarly was enclosed by a circular wall and moat.<sup>3</sup> Eight hundred ha in area, it is larger than any other known settlement in Asia at the time. Thus by 3000 BCE, terre pisé walled settlements enclosed by drainage canals with systematically arranged residential architecture, cemeteries, and sometimes workshops were erected all over China. Perhaps they were villages, or perhaps proto-cities.

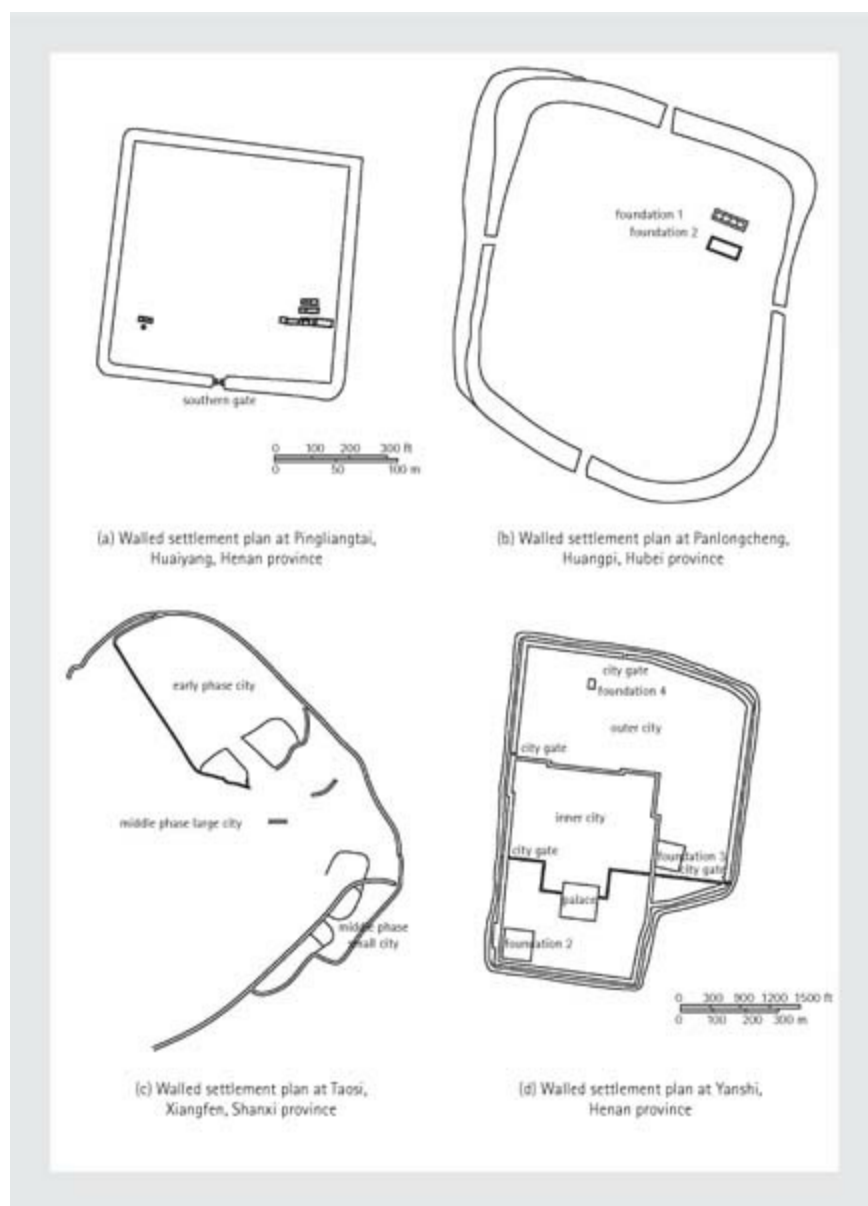
One can posit an urban revolution in China in the 3rd millennium BCE. The first major change was size. Cities served populations that spread as many as 90 km in either direction. Taosi in Xiangfen, southern Shanxi, is an example. Approximately 300 ha and with multiple walled areas, Taosi is a precursor or a very early example of a society organized around a state with an urban centre, a pattern that will continue in China for several more millennia. Without texts or adequate information from burials to guide us, one cannot label Taosi a city-state. The concept will be justified for a later period. The second aspect of the 3rd millennium BCE urban revolution was the 'great house' (*dafangzi*). A Chinese term used to designate a structure significantly larger than others in the same settlement, the presence of a *dafangzi* is understood as palatial or ceremonial space. Thereby one further assumes a kingly and/or priestly class.

Some of the most impressive evidence of 3rd millennium BCE urbanism in China is associated with the Neolithic culture known as Longshan. More than fifty walled, Longshan settlements from this period have been uncovered along the Yellow and Yangzi rivers. Three walls and several gates were found at Guchengzhai in Henan province.<sup>4</sup> Walls and building foundations were made using the



rammed-earth technique. Since its discovery in the 1920s, China's most famous Longshan city has been at Chengziya, in Zhangqiu county, Shandong province.<sup>5</sup> Dated *c.*2600 BCE, the wall was an irregular rectangle, roughly 445 by 540 m. The contemporary city Pingliangtai, in Huaiyang, Henan, is the earliest evidence of a square city, an idealized shape that would be specified for a ruler's city 2,500 years later. Only 185 m<sup>2</sup>, two other features of Pingliangtai would be part of many future Chinese imperial capitals: a prominent entry at the centre of its southern wall and the long avenue from it that divided the city into two sections. Noteworthy at Pingliangtai are pottery drainpipes. Their use is contemporary to the implementation of a drainage system at the ancient Indian city of Mohenjo-daro (Fig. 6.1).

Sites that flourished around the year 3000 BCE provide strong evidence of urban ritual architecture. A large, high mound of which more than 7 m remain in Niuheliang, Liaoning province, an example of Hongshan culture (*c.*4700–2900 BCE), is known as Female Spirit Temple because pieces of female statues were uncovered there. Also found were stone platforms and burial mounds covering objects of jade and other expensive materials.<sup>6</sup> In south China at Yushan, near Shanghai, and at other sites of Liangzhu culture (*c.*3300–2000 BCE), ritual altars and jade objects that attest to ceremonies integral to urban life have been excavated.<sup>7</sup> Liu Li proposed that remains from this period may be evidence of ancestor worship, yet another practice that will persist into 20th-century China.<sup>8</sup> Whether ancestors, gods, or kings were the focus of ritual, the presence of walls of terre pisé construction and altars from Mongolia to Zhejiang to the Yellow River confirms uniformity in practice across the regions that will unite as China approximately 2,500 years later.



**FIGURE 6.1** China: Walled settlements: (a) at Pingliangtai, Huaiyang, Henan province; (b) at Panlongcheng, Huangpi, Hubei province; (c) at Taosi, Xiangfen, Shanxi province; (d) at Yanshi, Henan province.

The entry into the 2nd millennium BCE is coincident with the period sometimes known as the Xia dynasty (*c.* 2070–*c.*1600 BCE). Following and more widely accepted as a dynasty is Shang (*c.*1600–1046 BCE). The manufacture of bronze objects predates Shang, and the pictographic writing system develops during it. China’s greatest cities of Xia and Shang were along the Yellow River.

### CITIES OF BRONZE AGE CHINA

Shang cities were huge by comparison with the past and some were certainly built by kings. K. C. Chang has argued that early Bronze Age Chinese cities were almost exclusively administrative centres constructed by and for the ruling elite.<sup>9</sup> Archaeological evidence continues to support his ideas. Texts of China’s 1st millennium BCE, coinciding roughly with the Zhou dynasty (1046–221 BCE), a bronze and iron age, inform us that the movement of the capital was a standard practice of Shang royalty. Written records also relate that orientation of a city was considered prior to construction, and that it was determined by the position of stars, rays of the sun, and construction tools such as a plumb-line.<sup>10</sup>

Erlitou, near Luoyang in Henan province, stretches 400 ha. So far, no wall remains have been

found. Its four cultural layers date from *c.*1900–*c.*1500 BCE. To date seven large, palatial complexes, bronze vessels of the shapes known as *jue*, *ding*, and *he*, bronze plaques inlaid with turquoise, as well as jade, lacquer, bone, and pottery attest to the complexity of urban life at Erlitou. The turquoise is believed to have been local, and thus not evidence of trade with other regions. It is surmised that Erlitou was the first of seven capitals used by the Shang kings.<sup>11</sup> There is little doubt that the Shang city at Erligang near Zhengzhou, today the capital of Henan province, was one of those capitals. The most important urban centre in the first half of the Shang dynasty, the Erligang outer wall measured just a few metres short of 7 km with parts as wide as 30 m at the base. Another 5 m of wall have been uncovered south and west of this main wall, suggesting either that the city was significantly larger or that it had multiple sections. The wall was constructed in the pre-Bronze Age technique of pounded earthen layers lined by wooden planks. The largest palace foundation uncovered so far is 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>12</sup> Two more walled cities in Henan dated a century or more later than the Erligang capital have been found.<sup>13</sup> North of Erlitou, in Yanshi, also adjacent to Luoyang, is a city dated *c.*1600 BCE. Sometimes referred to as Shixianggou, after a drainage ditch (*gou*) that runs through it, its outer wall enclosed an area of 100 ha, and inside another wall shared its southern and part of its western boundaries. A palace foundation was roughly centred in the inner city, so that the spatial configuration of this mid-2nd millennium BCE site can be viewed as three concentric entities. The outermost wall was more than twice as thick as the inner city enclosure, and was surrounded by a moat 20 m in width. Seven gates provided access to the outer city and wide boulevards ran through it. Ritual sectors for animal offerings, pottery workshops, and a drainage system were among the urban features.<sup>14</sup>

Cities that were not capitals flourished in many parts of China during the Shang period. Two of the best excavated are at Panlongcheng, near Wuhan, Hubei, and Gucheng in Yuanqu county, Shanxi. At Panlongcheng, a gate and two main buildings, believed to be a palace complex about 290 by 260 m on each side, stood in the northeast of the squarish city wall.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary to the capital at Erligang, the Panlongcheng city is evidence that a similar level of urbanism was present in the Yellow and Yangzi River Valleys in *c.*1400 BCE. The four wall segments of the city at Gucheng were between 336 and 400 m. The base of the wall was less than half the thickness of the Erligang wall, but portions along the south and west were double that size. The palace was roughly in the centre.<sup>16</sup> Palace areas of both cities had axially aligned structures. These examples of Shang urbanism beyond the capital may have been military outposts of Shang capitals.

Shang China's most important city was the last capital Yinxu (ruins of Yin), today north-west of the city of Anyang in Henan province. It spanned about 36 ha on either side of the Huan River. Excavation has occurred there almost every year since the late 1920s. Among the remains are more than 3,000 tombs, 2,200 sacrificial burials, and about 200 residential foundations, as well as thousands of artefacts in bronze, bone, ivory, jade, stone, pottery, and horn, and a few fragments of painting. A rectangular, Shang-period wall has been found. The site is best known for the area called Xibeigang, west of the walled area, the location of the royal cemetery where at least eleven large-scale tombs and countless small burials, many of them sacrificial victims, date from *c.*1250 until 1046. Much of the residential architecture is in another area, just north of the village Xiaotun and south of the walled enclosure. Xiaotun also is the location of the important tomb of Lady Hao, consort of King Wu Ding.<sup>17</sup>

Shang cities lend themselves to global assessments. Comparisons with Indus Valley and Mesopotamian cities focus on if Shang cities were city-states. Robin Yates argues that China had its

own version of the city-state model, and Liu Li argues, rather, that the largest Shang cities were capitals where centralized rituals were performed.<sup>18</sup>

From Yinxu on, we know the name of every primary capital, when it flourished, and who ruled there. The fall of Yinxu coincided with the end of the Shang dynasty. The Zhou followed as Western Zhou (1046–770 BCE) with primary capitals at Feng and Hao, both in the west near Chang'an (Xi'an), and then the Eastern Zhou (770–221 BCE) whose capital was to the east in Luoyang. No wall has been found at these cities or the Western Zhou capital at Zhouyuan, Shaanxi, even though the *Shi jing* (*Book of Odes*), dated to the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, states that Feng was walled.<sup>19</sup> Extensive knowledge about Zhou cities comes from written records contemporary to the cities themselves, including inscriptions on bronze vessels and philosophical treatises of China's classical age (the age of Confucius [c.551–479 BCE] through the Han dynasty), and from later official histories, local records, and scholarly discourse.

### THE RULER'S CITY ACCORDING TO 'KAOGONG JI'

One passage about the Zhou city has emerged as preeminent. It is a prescription for Wangcheng (ruler's city) in the 'Kaogong ji' (Record of [the investigation of] crafts) section of the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhou li*), first written in the Zhou dynasty but surviving probably from the period of Western Han. Wangcheng is a square whose wall positions are determined by measuring out from a mid-point according to the sun's shadows. Each side of the square wall is nine *li*, the number nine thereafter associated with Chinese royalty. Major thoroughfares cross the entire city from wall to opposite wall. The central thoroughfares, however, are blocked by the ruler's palace, positioned in its own walled enclosure. It faces south with markets behind it, a temple to the ruler's ancestors on the east and altars to soil and the five grains on the west.<sup>20</sup> A civilization of archetypical images, ever aware of and building on its past and resisting innovation, scholars of Chinese urbanism have cited this passage and defended its supreme importance in Chinese imperial urbanism for 2,000 years.<sup>21</sup>

Qufu, in Shandong province, where Confucius was born in 551 BCE, and Anyi in Shanxi were of this plan (as was the Shang city of Gucheng). They were only two cities of the second half of Eastern Zhou, the period known as Warring States (475–221 BCE). A time of unprecedented city building, every ruler of a state had a capital, and every ruler had his own army and aspired to extend his control. There were times in the last millennium BCE when one hundred or more cities coexisted. Although Warring States is the period for which the Greek concept of city-state is most applicable, intercity competition according to the patterns of ancient cities of the Aegean did not exist. A philosopher such as Confucius shared his knowledge peacefully from state to state among students as well as rulers, but the political goal of every state was conquest. To the extent competition existed, it was to have the most powerful army and become the single ruling power. No name could more aptly describe these 250 years than Warring States. By the mid-3rd century BCE, only seven states would survive.

Every Warring States city had an enclosed palace area distinct from the outer wall. Two patterns of urbanism dominated as alternatives to the Wangcheng model with the ruler's palace in the city centre. One, represented by Jiang in Shanxi, had palaces in the north centre of the city. Most common was the second: multiple walls that were not concentric. Adjacent walled enclosures positioned north and south, east and west, or at the corners of each other occurred, and occasionally there were more than two walls. The capital of the Yan state in Xiadu, the Zhao state capital at Handan, both in Hebei,

Linzi, capital of the Qi state in Shandong, and the capital at Houma in Shanxi all were multiply-walled cities of later Zhou. In spite of the textual emphasis on the centralized palace, cities with palaces in the centre, north-centre, and separate but adjacent to the larger city would persist in Chinese capitals for more than a thousand years.

The 'Kaogong ji' passage about Wangcheng also is important evidence of markets. Excavations have not confirmed that they were positioned 'behind' palaces. Several other texts of the period reinforce the integral role of commerce in later Zhou cities. Bamboo slips excavated in a tomb in Linyi, Shandong province, in 1972 contain sections of a document known as *Shi fa* (Rules about markets).<sup>22</sup> According to *Shi fa*, markets were administered by officials, specific products were sold in prescribed locations, and misconduct in the marketplace was punished. The text *Zuo zhuan* informs us that market officials were on duty in the pre-Warring States period of Eastern Zhou. The writings of 3rd-century BCE official Xunzi record that in the earlier part of Eastern Zhou market officers were largely responsible for maintenance, cleaning, traffic flow, security, and price control, and in later Eastern Zhou their roles expanded to merchandise inspection, settlement of disputes, loans, and tax collection for sales, property, and imported goods. One also learns from texts that each state market had its own name.

Archaeological evidence informs us about other aspects of commerce in and among Warring States cities. Seals that name officials in charge of state-controlled minting of coins and foundries for bronze weapons and vessels are almost invariably found in the vicinity of palaces, suggesting that these industries were tightly controlled by the state ruler. Other workshops for goods such as farming tools and pottery most often have been excavated farther from palaces, thereby suggesting more private control of manufacture and sales or distribution. More than 30,000 coins uncovered at the above-mentioned capital of the Yan state suggest sizable urban wealth and imply that currency was an important commodity. An early 4th-century BCE massacre in this city has led to the theory that the urban population increased dramatically, posed a challenge to royal control of the city's goods and production, and that the mass murder was an assertion of power by the ruler to regain control of his state.<sup>23</sup> Other archaeological evidence suggests that warfare was not only intra- and intercity, but among Chinese states and nomads at China's northern frontier. Gold objects almost certainly of Scythian manufacture have been found in Warring States period tombs. In addition, entwined animals, interlace patterns, and inlay, all characteristic of the art of peoples including the Scythians known as Animal Style, dominate Chinese bronze vessels of the Warring States period.

The seven states that survived the Warring States period were united by China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi (259–210 BCE) of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) in 221 BCE. Shi Huangdi's vision of empire and the role of the city in it would be carried forward for the next 400 years by rulers of the Western (206 BCE—CE 9) and Eastern (25–220) Han dynasties (and an interregnum dynasty Xin, CE 9–23).

### CHINA'S FIRST IMPERIAL CITIES

Shi Huangdi of Qin built his capital in Xianyang, north-east of the early Zhou capitals Hao and Feng. Remains of palaces and countless other foundations have been uncovered there along with the infamous pits that contained thousands of life-size warriors to guard him in the afterlife. The outer boundary of Xianyang has not been determined.

The two great capitals of Han China, like their Zhou predecessors, were located in Chang'an and

Luoyang. Each is copiously documented. Two features of the earlier (Western) Han capital are noteworthy. First, Chang'an's outer wall was more irregular in shape than any other capital city's, with only the eastern boundary a straight line. Drawings of the 25.7 km perimeter city, whose excavated dimensions are nearly the same as those recorded in texts, have been accurately rendered since the 11th century. Scholars have tried to explain the unusual shape variously, including as a representation of the two constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. More likely, the northern face of the 12–16 m thick wall was determined by the position of the Wei River. The second unique feature was the amount of palace space. Five palaces occupied most of the land inside the walls and an additional palace was beyond the western boundary. Although eight major streets emanated from city gates, palaces made it impossible for any one of them to extend the full length of the city. Changle Palace, built on the ruins of a palace from Qin times, was 6 km<sup>2</sup>. Opposite it to the west was the 5 km<sup>2</sup> Weiyang palace. The palaces inside the city walls occupied a full two-thirds of the capital, more than the space afforded to palace architecture in any previous capital. In the mid-2nd millennium BCE Shang city at Yanshi, for instance, the ratio of palace to the rest of the city was 1:4.3 and then it lessened to 1:6. At Qufu of the Warring States period, the ratio was 1:5.5; at the contemporary Anyi it was 1:5.1; and at Luoyang of the later Han period the ratio of palace to the rest of the city would be 1:10. When other imperial architecture such as altars is included, it is even more apparent that the first Han capital was a city almost exclusively for imperial concerns. Between Changle and Weiyang palaces was an imperial armoury. In the southern suburbs were a temple to the ruler's ancestors and other halls for imperial sacrifices. In addition, the mausoleums of nine emperors and empresses and funerary cities beyond each of them spread north of Chang'an, and two more pairs of royal tombs and funerary cities lay in the south-east.

Palaces, mausoleums, and ritual architecture were components of the imperial vision of a capital at its centre. Beginning at the central gate of the outer wall of Chang'an, a straight line can be drawn northward between Changle and Weiyang palaces, continue between the mausoleums of the founding emperor of Han and his empress, and onwards 74 km to a huge bowl-shaped depression believed to be the location of Tianqi Shrine. Continuing further, this line extends to the Han military commandery in Shuofang, Inner Mongolia. Southwards from the southern city gate, the same line connects to Ziwu (Valley) and eventually to the Han commandery at Hanzhong on the Yangzi River. Perpendicular to the north–south continuum from Inner Mongolia to the Yangzi is a cross axis that extends to the Yellow Sea at the Shandong coast where Qin Shi Huangdi had erected a stele to mark the eastern terminus of his empire.<sup>24</sup> Not only was Han Chang'an designed outward from the emperor's palaces and tombs, it was also the centre of a universe defined by four cardinal points at the farthest reaches of Han influence. By the 2nd century BCE, the imperial city was the vehicle through which the Chinese emperor could be viewed in the supreme position in the universe.

Although markets are a stipulation of the ideal Chinese city since Zhou times, Han is the first period from which one can confirm their presence. Western Han Chang'an had two, a western market of 250,000 m<sup>2</sup> and an eastern market twice that size. Together they occupied four wards of the 160 in which 250,000 inhabitants resided.<sup>25</sup> Whereas residential wards were walled, subdivided into twenty smaller sections, administered by supervisors and planned with the expectation that neighbours would watch and report on activities of neighbouring sectors, Chang'an markets were divided only into quadrants. Administered by officers in centrally located towers, and the loci for sombre reminders of the power of the Han government such as public beatings and executions, markets were still the rare places where urbanites could gather without constant watchful eyes.<sup>26</sup> Kilns, bronze foundries, and a

mint were located in the western market area.

A rare, intimate glimpse at Han Chang'an's markets and street life is found in a literary genre of Han and several subsequent centuries, the *fu*, variously translated as rhyme-prose, prose poem, and rhapsody. 'There was gaiety and pleasure without end,' writes Ban Mengjian in 'Western Capital Rhapsody' '... Shopgirls were dressed more lavishly than ladies.' And later in the same work:

The pedlars, shopkeepers, and common people  
Male and female vendors, selling cheap,  
Sold good quality mixed with the shoddy,  
Dazzling the eyes of the country bumpkins.  
Why exert oneself in performing labor,  
When devious earnings were so plentiful?  
The sons and daughters of these merchants  
Were more beautifully garbed than Xu and Shi  
[members of the most prominent consort clan].  
And about street entertainment the author tells us:  
They assembled the show wagon,  
From which they hoisted a tall banner on a pole.  
Young lads displayed their skill.  
Up and down doing glides and flips ...  
As for the tricks performed at the top of the pole—  
There was no end to their numerous postures.<sup>27</sup>

Han Chang'an was formally and symbolically a ruler's city, but it was equally a city of opportunities and activities not available in the Chinese countryside.

The later Han capital in Luoyang had a population twice Chang'an's, but it was less than half the size of the earlier capital. No text refers to the city as crowded. Rather, from inception the emperor intended that his capital be austere and his reign frugal, including imperial burial, compared to the earlier Han and Qin. This point is emphasized in the *fu* about Han Luoyang in which, when constructing his capital, the first Eastern Han emperor looked to the architecture of Chang'an, decided that it exceeded the norm, and 'reduced it again and again.' When 'those who saw it deemed it narrow and vulgar, the emperor... ridiculed it as too opulent and uncomfortable'.<sup>28</sup> It probably is no coincidence that the 'Eastern Metropolis Rhapsody' does not describe market activities or street life. With nearly straight walls, Eastern Han Luoyang had twelve gates, ten major street segments, and two palaces, but they were never used simultaneously. Luoyang also had the same ceremonial and sacrificial structures in its southern suburbs as Chang'an. The two palaces show Luoyang to be transitional in the course of Chinese imperial planning: whereas Chang'an was largely a city of palaces, after Luoyang, all Chinese capitals would have only one palace area. Beginning with the Eastern Han capital, palace sectors also would always be positioned along a central north-south axis through the city.

A strong national economy and active commerce gave rise to important cities outside the capitals in Han times. Some such as Linzi and Handan had their roots in cities of the Eastern Zhou period. Others, also with earlier building periods, such as Nanjing in Jiangsu province, Hefei in Anhui, and Chengdu in Sichuan, have remained important Chinese cities since the Han. Han military commanderies spread across the empire, from Xinjiang to Mongolia to North Korea, some with

fortified walls and defence systems that resembled castle towns of medieval Europe. Chinese art and other cultural models were disseminated together with the garrisons, providing a basis for four more centuries of Chinese-inspired urbanism while China moved into a period of division.

### CHINESE CITIES IN THE AGE OF DISUNION (3RD THROUGH 6TH CENTURIES)

It is already clear that beginning with Shang, the majority of information about China's early cities concerns those where rulers lived. Through the 6th century CE the situation is unchanged. In the four centuries that follow Han, more than thirty dynasties, kingdoms, and states had capitals. It was an age of fluid borders with Chinese-style cities from Central Asia to Japan. As a result, upon reunification in the 580s when the second essay on China picks up the story (Ch. 16), a Chinese city model has survived foreign incursions and is available for the long unity of Sui-Tang in the 7th–9th centuries.

Even before the fall of the Han dynasty, civil war broke out in Luoyang. The rebel Cao Cao (155–220) established a power base for the Wei Kingdom at Ye in southern Hebei province. In China's south-east, the Sun family set up a capital for the Wu Kingdom called Jianye, today Nanjing. In May of 221, Liu Bei (161–223) declared himself emperor of Shu-Han, ruling from Chengdu in Sichuan. Thus there were Three Kingdoms (c.220–280). There were also three urban schemes, each resonating a plan of the 1st millennium BCE: Ye had its palace area in the north-centre, Jianye's palatial halls were near the centre of the city, and Chengdu had multiple adjacent walled areas. Imperial ritual architecture of Han was maintained in all three. The aspiring empire builders also strengthened and acquired other cities. Cao Cao took Luoyang and Xu(chang) in Henan. Luoyang and Ye came to have fortified extensions in the northwest, known as Jinyongcheng (Golden Fortified City) and Santai (Three Platforms), respectively. Chengdu was one of the wealthiest cities of 3rd century China, but little is known about it except that it was accessed by seven bridges.<sup>29</sup> Wuchang, in Hubei province, was an auxiliary capital of the Wu Kingdom whose primary capital Jianye had a unique outer wall defined by wooden and bamboo fencing. Cao Cao's urban enterprises extended to a city beneath today's Xining, in Qinghai, built in 214. By this time, oasis towns spread across southern Xinjiang. They included Loulan, Niya, Miran, and Endere. Buddhist ruins survive at each one.

A dozen cities housed China's most important imperial and ritual architecture of the century from c.280 to 386. Luoyang, Jiankang, and Ye remained important throughout the period. Luoyang became capital of Jin in 265 and was burned in 313. Jianye became Jiankang under Jin in 313. Liu Yuan (d. 310) overtook Ye in 307 and named his kingdom Han. In spite of the changes in rulers and in some cases ethnicities, the cities changed little. Jianye's bamboo fence, for instance, was retained at its successor Jiankang.

Jiankang was an economically prosperous and beautiful city, bounded by mountains and encircled by waterways. Vermilion Oriole Road was lined with exotic plantings and flowering trees. It housed a national academy and ancestral altars, and its palace contained 3,500 bays of rooms. In 414 when the fall of Eastern Jin (317–429) was imminent, the imperial family moved into a residential area known as the 'eastern mansions' (*dongfu*).<sup>30</sup> Sixty km north-east of Jiankang, a city with eastern and western walled enclosures existed at today's Yangzhou, whose history traced to the early 5th century BCE.<sup>31</sup>

While Eastern Jin maintained power in Jiankang, Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439) rose and fell in the north. Their founders and shapers were primarily of non-Chinese origin, yet most sought to adopt or adapt Chinese ways to enhance their imperial ambitions. Walled cities and Chinese-style buildings



and ritual structures in them were important aspects in their visions. Cities of the age had at least two walled enclosures, outer and inner. Outer city walls often were fortified, sometimes with battlements that extended beyond the walls. Towers were positioned above walls for lookout and an advantage from which to shoot arrows. Rulers' cities had ancestral temples and imperial altars. Every city had water in, around, or directed to it. Noteworthy cities of the Sixteen Kingdoms were Pingyang in southern Shanxi, Xiangguo in southern Hebei, Tongwan in Shaanxi, and Ye, ruled by the strongmen Shi Hu and Shi Le from the years 331–384, and subsequently under the kingdom of Former Yan. Through this period Ye had heavily fortified walls with battlements every hundred paces.<sup>32</sup> The walls were brick-faced. Inside, the city had five parallel building axes along which palaces, government offices, and parkland were arranged. Chang'an also became important again in the 4th century. Little is known about the city, except that it had eastern and western palaces and wide boulevards.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most interesting of the Sixteen Kingdoms capitals was Reclining Dragon City (Wolongcheng), today Guzang, in Wuwei county of Gansu province. An intriguing passage in the 11th-century chronicle, *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government (Zizhi tongjian)* says the city had five 'clusters' (*cuanju*) of buildings, each with a palace.<sup>34</sup> The passage is clarified in the *Standard History of the Jin Dynasty (Jin shu)* in which one reads of a hall painted in five colours, with another hall on each of its four sides. The four halls were used in different seasons.<sup>35</sup> The relation of architecture to time and space and the emperor's progression through architecture as a metaphor for passage of time is a Chinese notion. The principle of centrality in a four-sided configuration traces to Wangcheng and had been reinforced in the plan of Han Chang'an.

In China's north-east and extending to North Korea, more than 150 walled towns of the Koguryŏ Kingdom have been identified.<sup>36</sup> The most important urban remains are in Huanren, Liaoning province, Ji'an, Jilin province, and P'yŏngyang in North Korea. The signature structure of Koguryŏ urbanism is the fortified mountain castle. Wunushancheng (Five Women Mountain Castle) in Huanren extended about 1,500 metres south-east to north-west, and between 300 and 500 m across. Guoneicheng (Palace-city of the State), in Ji'an, dates from c. 338 until 427. Rising on a plain, major north-south and east-west streets divided the city into six sectors. The palace-city has not yet been located. Two-and-a-half km away is Wanducheng (Circular City Mountain Castle), abandoned after the Murong-Xianbei captured it in 342. The topography of Liaoning, Jilin, and territory to the north-east lends itself to the integration of natural mountain fortifications and man-made walls, probably the reason mountain-cities are not known elsewhere in China. They are found in Japan in the 6th century.

Among all dynasties, kingdoms, and states of the four centuries following Han, the strongest impressions are of the city Luoyang in the Northern Wei that flourished for a mere forty-one years (493–534). The dominantly Buddhist city with 1,367 temples and monasteries is the one described by resident Yang Xuanzhi (d. 555?) in *Luoyang qielan ji (Record of Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang)*.<sup>37</sup> The city has proved an excellent case study in the sinification process of a non-native dynasty, in this case the Tuoba, whose emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) promulgated major and sweeping social and cultural reforms, as well as a construction program aimed at making his people and kingdom more Chinese. Thus was religious architecture institutionalized as part of the concept of a Chinese imperial city.

Luoyang followed Tuoba-Northern Wei capitals in Shengle in Inner Mongolia, established in 258, and Pingcheng (Datong) in Shanxi, established in 398. Although Pingcheng was only 100 km south of Shengle, the move there marked the end of a grasslands empire. Pingcheng, like Jiankang in the south-

east, was a city of walls, palaces, ritual altars, parks, gardens, major avenues, arsenals, granaries, government offices, and noble and aristocratic residences. Its Tuoba founder had seen Ye and had been influenced by that city as well as earlier Luoyang, and Chang'an. Between 423 and 470, tens of thousands of people were relocated to Pingcheng to aid in the construction programme.<sup>38</sup> A centre of Buddhism as well as government, Pingcheng contained nearly 100 Buddhist establishments with a total of 2,000 monks or nuns.<sup>39</sup> In the 460s, five Buddhist caves were opened at Yungang and the monastery Yongningsi was established. In 526, Pingcheng was destroyed in warfare.

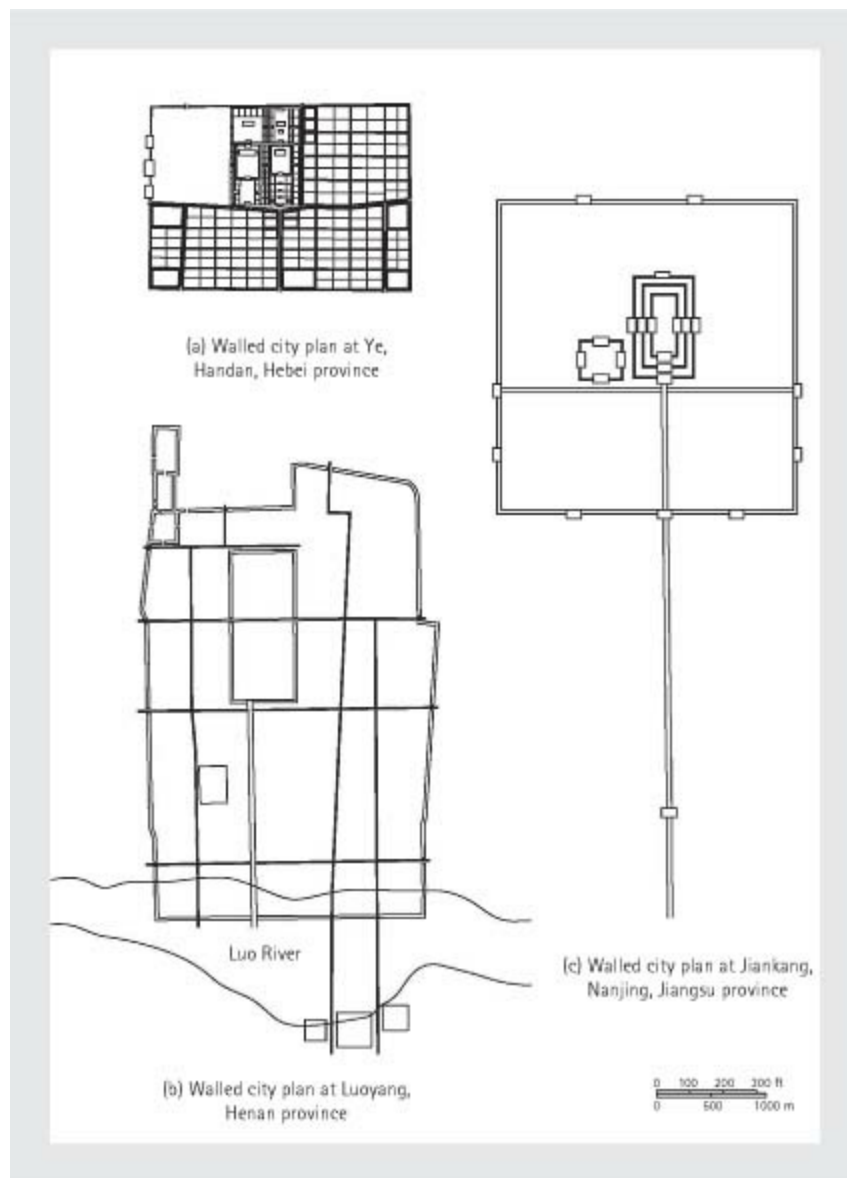
Emperor Xiaowen's move to Luoyang at the end of the 5th century was a time of tremendous optimism. Like the founder of his dynasty and aspiring Chinese emperors of the past, he began by building ritual architecture: ancestral temple, national academy, circular mound, and square pool. All were completed in 495 and 496. A fascinating passage in *The Standard History of the Wei Dynasty (Wei shu)* informs us that wood was diverted from used palace construction and used for boats, and alternate materials, such as pounded earth, were employed in royal residences. One further reads that walls were densely constructed, perhaps meaning they were made of closely packed pounded earthen layers used for the previous several millennia.<sup>40</sup>

Originally Xiaowen's city used the walls of Eastern Han Luoyang. His palace-city immediately expanded beyond the palaces of former times. The Mang Mountains in the north and Luo River in the south provided natural boundaries so that the city could only grow eastward and westward. The expanded Northern Wei city contained 220 wards for the population, estimated at more than 600,000.<sup>41</sup> Guizhang ward housed the official fish and turtle markets and one established by residents to sell seafood.<sup>42</sup>

In 534 when Northern Wei ceased to exist, those who had aspired to rule it and their population split into Eastern Wei (534–550) and Western Wei (535–557). Gao Huan (496–547) led the eastern wing to Ye where the former capitals of the 3rd and 4th centuries lie in ruins. Setting himself up in temporary quarters, he transferred buildings and materials, many by water, from Luoyang.<sup>43</sup> According to the *Standard History of the Wei Dynasty (Wei shu)*, Gao Huan's vision was that the northern part of the city would retain elements of the previous capitals, but the new city to the south would be more a reflection of Luoyang. As had occurred at Jiankang and Luoyang, palaces and ancestral temples were built before the new wall was completed. Beginning in the year 535, 76,000 labourers worked on the project.<sup>44</sup> One hundred thousand people worked on the imperial residences during the 9th and 10th moons of 539.<sup>45</sup> In the first moon of 540, after five years of construction, Gao Huan and his court moved into South City.<sup>46</sup> Ten years later, Eastern Wei fell to Northern Qi (550–577), and the Gao family officially ascended the throne with Ye as the primary capital. In 577, Northern Qi fell to Northern Zhou (550–581).

The strong influence of Northern Wei Luoyang on 6th-century Ye was not known until the late 1990s, although hints of the impact were suggested in excavations of the 1930s.<sup>47</sup> A major north–south axis through Ye led from Vermilion Bright (*Zhuming*) Gate to the south central entrance of the palace-city and from the north outer wall gate, a road continued straight northward. Inside and outside the palace were twenty-eight government bureaus, all similar to the offices of Northern Wei Luoyang and Jiankang. There was also an arsenal. The population of Ye resided in 400 wards. Mansions of the wealthy also were inside the city walls. Gao Huan's oldest son Gao Cheng had a mansion, as did imperial concubines and powerful officials. Scant information about a few of them suggests that residences of the wealthy consisted of multiple courtyards of buildings, those in the front for

entertainment and the back ones where the owners resided.<sup>48</sup> Back gardens with buildings and spaces for personal pleasure also were often part of the mansions of Ye's wealthiest residents. If records can be trusted, Northern Qi Ye had 4,000 religious establishments and 80,000 male and female members of the clergy.<sup>49</sup> These staggering numbers, even if exaggerated, probably indicate that men and women of the cloth, if not their institutions, moved with the transfer of the capital from Luoyang.



**FIGURE 6.2** China: Walled city plans: (a) at Ye, Handan, Hebei province; (b) at Luoyang, Henan province; (c) at Jiankang, Nanjing, Jiangsu province.

Meanwhile construction of the Northern Zhou (557–581) capital was underway in Chang'an. In 572, Emperor Wudi of Northern Zhou executed his guards and destroyed many of the beautiful buildings constructed before the formal establishment of his dynasty.<sup>50</sup> Promulgating an anti-elaboration policy for imperial construction, Wudi urged a return to past buildings, encouraging construction in earth and wood. He simultaneously ordered palatial architecture of the kind under construction by Northern Qi at Ye, an interesting directive since Northern Qi is known for flamboyance.<sup>51</sup> His successor, Emperor Xuandi, who reigned for only about a year between 578 and 580, encouraged the same kind of earth and wood construction.<sup>52</sup> Abdicating to his 6-year-old son, the empire was controlled by the boy emperor's grandfather on his mother's side, a man named Yang Jian, who took power and established the capital of his dynasty Sui at Daxing (Chang'an) in 581. The

new capital was south-east of the Western Wei–Northern Zhou ruins.

Excavation has not conclusively determined how much of Han Chang'an was used by the Northern Zhou or even how much of it remained when Northern Zhou took control. It is believed that three Han gates were still in use.<sup>53</sup> Certainly the Western Wei and Northern Zhou cities were smaller than Han Chang'an. The crown prince lived in the eastern palace and the main palace, enclosed by five gates, was on the west.<sup>54</sup> When the founder of the Tang dynasty entered Chang'an in 617, he stayed in Changlegong,<sup>55</sup> perhaps remaining from Qin-Han times.

Meanwhile in the south, wealthy aristocrats sought to improve their mansions even as the fall of Jiankang to the Sui was imminent. This led to an imperial directive in 579 prohibiting lavish spending on urban residences.<sup>56</sup> However, the emperors of Chen (557–89), the last of Jiankang's rulers, did not prevent private citizens from building Buddhist monasteries or other religious establishments. The founder of Sui destroyed Jiankang. When construction resumed in the vicinity under Tang and Southern Tang rule (923–36), new building was south of Jiankang (Fig. 6.2).

## CONCLUSION

Although the time period is considerably longer than for early cities discussed in other chapters, fundamental aspects of ancient Chinese urbanism are indeed traceable through six millennia. China, first of all, as an empire, at times of disunion, or in pre-imperial modes, could not exist without walled cities. The most important cities of early China were capitals, and although they were almost always on major rivers, they were not coastal. Conquest, empire expansion, and trade crossed the eastern side of the Asian continent via death-defying mountains and deserts, and in the mountain passes and oases silk travelled with Central Asian middlemen to Rome and luxury items were returned to China. Neither major battles nor trade took China across the sea before the year 600, with the exception of limited exchange between China and the Japanese islands in the Han dynasty. China produced and secured goods and services to sustain all its empires by land during this period.

In the preliterate period, China's cities distinguish themselves by enclosure, perhaps initially for protection but in the context of Chinese history as a perennial feature of self-definition. Pre-Bronze Age, preliterate urbanism in China also is distinguished by architecture that suggests kingship, slaves, and perhaps additional classes and by evidence of ritual. All three find parallels in the most ancient cities on our planet. The Shang and Zhou dynasties of China's Bronze Age are not just the period of weaponry and more structured ritual, but of capital cities ruled by kings of undisputed chronologies. The concept of the capital as China's most important economic and ritual centre, as well as where the ruler lives, begins in Shang and continues into the 2nd millennium CE. Even though Chinese emperors worship at sacred spots across China beginning in Qin, and after the year 1000 enormous wealth emerges from China's south-eastern coastal cities, the capital never loses its aura as China's premier city. The later Bronze Age of the Warring States period suggests comparison with city-state nations and economies of the Aegean, but different from those models, the drive during the Warring States to unify into one was successfully resolved by a Chinese empire that would view itself for the next 2,200 years as the continuation of those ancient polities. For that reason, urban historians have often viewed all post-Warring States cities as derived from the same plan; and philosophical understanding of the period expressed in Confucian texts guided China's bureaucratic organization for the same reason: the ruler's mandate to reign from the centre of the world and officials whose social role is subsidiary to his coincides with the concept of Wangcheng. The success of Han in implementing this

model gave rise to markets and entertainment, but even in Han, China never lost sight of the supreme city, the capital, and the supreme function of the capital as a service centre for the ruler. The image was so strong that when thirty kingdoms and foreign populations flooded China in the 3rd through 6th centuries, every significant city was a capital. The same strong image led rulers to punish unsatisfactory construction by death and to declare periods of urban austerity for the greater good of the state. The new feature of post-Han, pre-Sui urbanism was religious architecture. Like everything else in the Chinese city, Buddhist and Daoist temples became institutionalized monuments of the Chinese city, standing alongside Confucian temples and temples to local gods for the rest of pre-modern Chinese history.

The Chinese city was certainly a centre of production and services, but its more important role was to serve its state or empire. The space of the Chinese city was as ordered as that of any city discussed in this book, and the percentage of cities with regulated spaces including wards and markets was greater than that for any other geographic region discussed here. In ancient times, the greatest monumental architecture of China was in cities; later, most of it would be in cities and some would be at sacred sites, but urban or extramural, all of it would be exclusively for the ruler. The focus on emperor and empire and the resulting uniformity were the defining and distinguishing features of China's ancient cities.

## NOTES

1. On these three sites, see *Wenwu* 1996.12, 26–39; *Kaogu* 1997.1, 1–26 and 52; Henan Cultural Relics Research Institute, *Wuyang Jiahu*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Science Press, 1999); and *Wenwu* 1981.4, 1–8 and 2000.5, 62–73. Because readers of Chinese and Japanese are a small proportion of those for whom this book is written, and in the interest of providing the most extensive list of references possible in the space allotted to endnotes, citations from East Asian periodicals of wide circulation are given only by periodical title, issue, and page numbers. Book titles and references to more obscure East Asian periodicals are complete.
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3. *Wenwu* 1997.1, 36–41.
4. *Zhongyuan wenwu* 2000.5, 4–9.
5. Li Ji, *Ch'eng-tzu-yai; the Black Pottery Cultures at Lung-shan-chên in Li-ch'êng-hsien, Shantung* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).
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13. Tang Jigen, ‘The Largest Walled City Located in Anyang, China’, *Antiquity*, 74 (2000), 479–80 and *Wenwu* 2003.5, 35–44.
14. *Kaogu* 2000.7, 1–2; 1999.2, 1–22; 1998.6, 1–8; 1984.6, 488–506.
15. Hubei Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute, *Panlongcheng: 1963–1994-nian kaogu fajue baogao* (Report on Excavations at Panlongcheng from 1963–1994), 2 vols. (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 2001).
16. *Huaxia kaogu* 2000.2, 16–35.
17. Henansheng Anyangshi Difangshizhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, *Anyang shi zhi* (Record of Anyang), 4 vols. (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji Chubanshe, 1998).
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19. Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), 198.
20. *Guanzhong congshu* (Collected Writings of Guanzhong) (Taipei: Yiwen Publishing Company, 1970), *juan* 2/11a–12b.
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22. *Kaogu* 1975.6, 363–79.
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24. *Wenwu* 1993.4, 4–15.
25. Mark E. Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 160–6 and id., *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 81–5.
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32. *Kaogu* 1990.7, 595–600; *Wenwu chunqiu* 1995.3, 1–5 and 15; and Edward Schafer, 'The Yeh chung chi', *T'oung Pao* 76, 4–5 (1990): 147–207.
33. *Jin shu* (Standard History of Jin), *juan* 113, 2895.
34. *Zizhi tongjian*, *juan* 95, 2237.
35. *Jin shu*, *juan* 86, 2237–8.
36. Wang Mianhou, *Gaogouli gucheng yanjiu* (Research on Koguryo Cities) (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 2002).
37. Yang Hsüan-chih, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries of Lo-yang*, trans. Wang Yi-t'ung (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
38. *Wei shu*, *juan* 23, 604. Studies of Pingcheng include *Wenwu* 1977.11, 38–46; *Beichao yanjiu* 1992.2, 22–7; 1993.3, 53–8; 1995.1, 1–17; and 1995.2 9–14; and Li Ping, *Bei Wei Pingcheng shidai* (The Age of Northern Wei Pingcheng) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2000). See also Jenner, *Memories of Lo-yang*, 18–37.
39. Information about the Buddhist institutions is found in *Wei shu*, *juan* 114, 3030–9.
40. Ibid., *juan* 62, 1400.
41. Jenner, *Memories of Lo-yang*, 117, estimates the population as five persons in each of the 109,000 households recorded in *Luoyang qielan ji*, *juan* 5, 227; *Wei shu*, *juan* 18, 428; and in *Wei shu*, *juan* 8, 194.
42. Jenner, *Memories of Lo-yang*, 200.
43. *Wei shu*, *juan* 12, 297 and *juan* 79, 1766.
44. Sima Guang (1019–86), *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive mirror for aid in government), *juan* 157, 4867.
45. Ibid., *juan* 158, 4877.
46. *Wei shu*, *juan* 12, 303–4.
47. *Kaogu* 1997.3, 27–32 and Zhu Yanshi, 'Research on the Palace-city of the South City of Ye of the Eastern Wei and the Northern Qi', in *Between Han and Tang: Visual and Material Culture*, ed. Wu Hung (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 2003), 97–114.
48. Fu Xinian, *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* (History of Chinese Ancient Architecture), vol. 2 (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2001), 92.
49. *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* (Biographies of Eminent Monks, Continued) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 19), 4908, *juan* 10, first biography 510.

50. *Zhou shu*, juan 6, 107.
51. *Zhou shu*, juan 6, 103. On flamboyance in Northern Qi architecture, see Steinhardt, 'Xiangtangshan and Northern Qi Architecture', in *Echoes of the Past*, ed. K. Tsiang (Chicago and Washington, D.C.: Smart Museum and Sacker Gallery, 2010), 59–77.
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# EARLY CITIES

## *Themes*

## ECONOMY

DAVID L. STONE

EARLY cities of Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas frequently rose over a relatively brief time-span and produced many changes in the lives of their inhabitants. The onset of urbanization led to an intensification of agricultural production, an expansion of long-distance trade, the formation of a managerial class, the creation of a workforce producing specialized crafts, and the contraction of population in the territory surrounding the cities. The economic power of the ruling class tended to increase, but at the same time new opportunities to acquire wealth were created. When early cities regressed, as many did, one can often detect a reversal of the process of economic growth in their decline. The focus of this chapter is on what the arrival of cities meant for the economy—and most importantly the farmers, landowners, craftspeople, merchants, and managers, whose labour constituted it. The chapter first considers the ideas which have formed the basis of previous scholarship. It then shifts to an examination of the results of new scientific research and the parallel development of new theoretical approaches, both of which are making a profound impact on the study of early cities today. It explores these in relation to five areas of importance to the economy: stratification; the countryside; prestige goods and long-distance trade; specialist production; and decline. The definition of the economy adopted is ‘the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption for the provisioning of society’.

Three types of primary sources inform us about the economy of early cities. First, written texts frequently appeared at about the same time as early cities, as we can see in the discussions of Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean, and China in this volume (Chs. 2, 3, and 6), and as is also true of Egypt, the Maya, and other societies. Written texts provide much information about the administration of the economy, taxation, and staple crops, although they tend to privilege the perspective of elites. Second, the material remains of cities themselves attest trade, labour, and local production and consumption. Third, environmental evidence survives in the landscape around early cities, or in excavated remains, and can be used to study ecology, climate, and agricultural practices.

It is helpful to adopt a worldwide comparative focus in discussing the economy of early cities. Although cities have different features, they are not unique; comparison can identify similarities in the origins and functions of cities, assess what links them to and distinguishes them from small towns and villages, and posit reasons for their growth and decline. Equally, the comparative approach permits the identification of commonalities among cities which may not share the same culture or be located in a similar region, and the establishment of the range of variation among them. While certain approaches, such as Boasian anthropology or cultural relativism, may hold that comparison of this sort is impossible or unproductive, that does not appear likely, as I discuss below.

Comparison informed the earliest academic approaches to the economy of cities. Numa Fustel de Coulanges considered the right to own property a key element which divided Etruscan, Greek, and Roman cities from alternative forms of organization. Max Weber exercised the comparative approach further, analysing ‘Western’ and ‘Oriental’ cities and arguing that the former were characterized by citizenship and market orientation and the latter by despotism and redistribution.<sup>1</sup> As others have

noted, this view represented a colonialist and Orientalist perspective (cf. Liverani, Ch. 9, this volume). Later scholars pursued comparison as a means to study ancient cities, and the approach remains common today. It formed the basis of important works in the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st.<sup>2</sup>

What constitutes an ‘early city’? As many of the chapters in this volume propose (for example, Clark, Ch. 1), the definition of ‘city’ must not be absolute, but starts from the premise that individual cases vary and do not demonstrate all of the characteristic features. Generally speaking, it was a place with a population density well above nearby settlements. Its residents included upper classes and workers not directly involved in food production, although a large percentage of its other inhabitants may have been engaged in agricultural activities. The performance of non-agricultural functions distinguished a city from the surrounding countryside: in the urban centre, leaders made political and administrative decisions, religious rituals were performed, feasts were held, long-distance trade took place, specialized commodities were manufactured, and ideology was disseminated. Variation is evident in the main types of early cities: those which belonged to a larger cultural group of cities roughly equal to each other in power, and those which dominated other settlements within a cultural group and functioned as their capital. The former are considered ‘city-states’, a term which refers to a single political unit containing a built-up urban centre and its surrounding territory. Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece, and the Maya are cultures commonly described as composed of multiple rival city-states. On the opposite end of the spectrum lie ‘territorial states’, exemplified by Ancient Egypt, and ‘empires’, known from the Aztec, Inka, and Roman worlds.<sup>3</sup> At the core of these four complex early states lay cities at Memphis, Tenochtitlán, Cuzco, and Rome. These capital cities differed from city-states by being oriented towards the exploitation of geographically distant subjects and territories, which had been conquered through military action. In evaluating territorial states and empires we must consider the economy of individual cities, but also much larger economies dominated by cities. Nevertheless, the economy is instrumental in defining any type of city.

When the city-state Uruk reached a size of 100 hectares (3200–3000 BCE), agricultural surpluses from the surrounding countryside supported the production of specialized ceramics and the provision of services. Temples, and those who managed them, emerged as the largest entities in society, owning land, directing workers, as well as collecting, storing, and redistributing the surplus.<sup>4</sup> Uruk and other Mesopotamian cities which first emerged around 4000 BCE are regarded as the world’s first or most ‘pristine’ cities, and have often received the most attention. In some parts of the world, however, ‘early’ cities first appeared much later. A long chronological span and a broad geographical area are therefore both important for any comparative analysis. This chapter ranges from Mesopotamia to Egypt, China, the Indus Valley, the Mediterranean, Mesoamerica, and South America and covers from approximately 4000 BCE to 600 CE.<sup>5</sup> Emphasis also falls on later ‘secondary’ urban centres, as only a relatively small proportion of past populations inhabited the ‘first’ cities. Ultimately, the questions ‘what is a city?’ and ‘how does the economy contribute to its definition?’ are less interesting than the ones to which we now turn: ‘what did the economy of early cities consist of?’, and ‘how has the significance of economic development in early cities been interpreted?’

## THEORIES ABOUT THE ECONOMY OF EARLY CITIES

Consideration of previous theories is important for an understanding of the debates which have taken place about the economy of early cities. Many theories have emerged from studies directed at ‘state

formation', 'development of complex societies', or 'emergence of civilizations'. The terms chosen reflect a scholar's background and interests, but refer to the same process—that of the transition between pre-history and history.<sup>6</sup> These theories tend to consider the role of the economy at the time of a city's origins, but rarely how the economy functioned on a daily basis, or through time; thus, study of the economy has been somewhat neglected, especially by comparison to topics such as politics and religion.

Karl Wittfogel's 'hydraulic hypothesis' is perhaps the best-known theory about the economic growth of ancient cities. Wittfogel posited the emergence of cities and stratified societies in locations where low annual rainfall required people to control sources of water to produce dependable harvests (he named Ancient Hawaii, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Mesoamerica, Inka Peru, Byzantium, and Tsarist Russia among these). Wittfogel thought that irrigation must have begun in small-scale activities carried out by farmers, but once successful was exploited by rulers, who organized the mass labour necessary to build large-scale irrigation systems and then imposed taxes, from which they profited. Large irrigation works generated agricultural surpluses which gave rise to major cities through population growth, the formation of armies, and the employment of specialized craftspeople. As the surpluses grew, rulers became 'despotic' and 'totalitarian'. Wittfogel likened the rulers of hydraulic societies to the Communist leaders of mid-20th-century Russia and China, considering their 'total power' a threat to 'extend the system of bureaucratic state slavery to two-thirds of mankind' and to overturn the democratic freedoms of Western nations.<sup>7</sup> Although this work had clear associations with Cold War era politics, it had an important influence on the study of early cities for at least two decades. First, it encouraged archaeologists and historians to identify 'hydraulic societies' in the record of early cities. Second, it promoted a specific interpretation of the operation of these societies, in which rulers were said to have gained power and enriched themselves by instituting tribute and labour requirements on the peasantry, in accordance with Marx's 'Asiatic mode of production'. Third, it advanced 'neo-evolutionary' thinking, which held that societies progressed in a unilinear developmental sequence from primitive to modern. Neo-evolutionists, whose positions dominated anthropology and archaeological archaeology from the 1950s to the 1970s, found Wittfogel's views compatible, because he identified a pattern (i.e., the shift from small egalitarian communities to large repressive ones through construction of large irrigation works to manage scarce water resources) that arose independently in many societies across the globe. As greater attention was paid to the specific factors affecting individual societies, universal models fell out of fashion, and both neo-evolutionism and Wittfogel's hydraulic hypothesis were largely discarded in the 1980s.<sup>8</sup>

At root in another debate was the comparability of early cities to modern ones. The historian Mikhail Rostovtzeff put forth the view that ancient and modern cities were similar in his analysis of the classical world. Underscoring the colonialist conclusions present in Weber's work, Rostovtzeff regarded Roman cities as aiming 'at the largest possible comfort for their inhabitants; they looked like some of our modern Western cities rather than like the cities and villages of the East at the present day'. He attributed their wealth to features of capitalism such as world commerce, a market for cheap goods, the decentralization of industry, and influential men who amassed huge sums of money.<sup>9</sup> For Rostovtzeff, the Roman empire had achieved a high degree of prosperity in the 2nd century CE because its economy operated in a rational manner. This position has been described as a 'formalist' or 'modernist' one. The economic historian Karl Polanyi took a different view, commonly regarded as a 'substantivist' or 'minimalist' one. Noting that in early cities land was often owned by institutions or

groups rather than private individuals, and that merchant middle classes were very rare, Polanyi envisioned a powerful role for the government in the administration of land and trade. He thought the government redistributed to those in need and closely controlled the supply of luxury goods, while reciprocal or redistributive transactions were more significant than market exchange. Polanyi is associated with a Marxist perspective because he regarded the ancient economy as 'embedded' in social relationships and institutions. In this view, when past peoples acted, they aimed to create, maintain, or adjust relationships, and not to seek profit. He and his followers, such as Moses Finley who studied the economies of Greece and Rome, rejected the premise that capitalism was applicable to the economies of early cities. Finley took exception to Rostovtzeff's conclusions that commercial activities existed on a large scale, pointing to texts implying that landowners aimed to achieve self-sufficiency and to remain free from engagement with markets.<sup>10</sup>

The previous theories were influenced by modern political thought, and relied heavily on evidence found in ancient texts. In many parts of the world, however, cities originated at the same time as, or earlier than, the first writing, making archaeological material especially important for consideration of urban origins. When Gordon Childe compared archaeological data for ancient societies across the world, he isolated ten traits of early cities: large size and population; workers not engaged in full-time food production; taxation of agricultural surpluses; monumental public buildings; a ruling class; writing; counting systems; artisans; importation of scarce raw materials; and a political and economic community. For Childe, the presence of these traits indicated an 'urban revolution' which transformed social organization.<sup>11</sup> Childe's 'urban revolution' theory regarded technological advances and the development of irrigation as the likely stimuli for urbanism. Neo-evolutionists in the 1960s and 1970s pursued these ideas further while exploring how humans adapted to changing demographic and environmental conditions.<sup>12</sup>

More recent analyses of early cities by Bruce Trigger and Michael Smith have sought to deploy both textual and archaeological data in a much broader fashion. Trigger has gathered information about the political administration, class systems, agricultural regimes, tax and tribute systems, urban morphology, craft specialization, trade, religious practices, beliefs, legal systems, and writing systems of seven 'early civilizations' (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Shang China, the Maya, Aztec Mexico, the Inka, and the Yoruba). Through in-depth analysis of each feature in all seven civilizations, he concluded that, in politics, economy, and culture, there were many similarities among early civilizations, but equally many idiosyncratic traits.<sup>13</sup> Some of the similarities Trigger noted were: the presence of either of two forms of political organization (city-states or territorial states); a tendency for leaders to accumulate enormous surpluses of wealth; and an adherence to religious beliefs that required leaders to expend vast sums on temples, ceremonies, sacrifices, and cult paraphernalia in order to regulate supernatural forces to their advantage. Differences emerged in agricultural practices, since each civilization adapted to its own local conditions. Likewise, the population density of early civilizations exhibited much variation, and no specific density of population was found to spark urbanization. Trigger's conclusions provide grounds for rejecting overly deterministic neo-evolutionary views that similar adaptive human behaviours led to the rise of cities throughout the world. They also counter the relativist position that each culture (or 'early city') arose on its own terms and therefore cannot be compared. Trigger has instead shown that patterns do not fit neatly into a single explanatory framework, but nonetheless have much in common.

Michael Smith, in a review of 'ancient state economies', also emphasized variation. For him, the key differences were the type of political organization and the extent of 'commercialization' in the

economy, rather than the size of the state. He identified four types of political organization ('weak states', city-states, territorial states, and empires).<sup>14</sup> He also identified four commercial levels (uncommercialized, low, intermediate, and advanced pre-capitalist); these levels require explanation. Uncommercialized economies lack money, marketplaces, and independent merchants; they may have full-time craft specialists and long-distance traders working for the state. Government control is strong in economies with a low commercial level; they do not have private ownership of land, but they may have merchants and marketplaces. Intermediate commercialization can be characterized by the presence of money, markets, and merchants, but the absence of private property or control of labour. The final level is advanced pre-capitalist commercialization: it demonstrates widespread markets for goods, extensive private land ownership, and institutions such as banking and credit. By correlating political type and commercial level, Smith was able to graph the spectrum of complexity of economic activity in early cities. At the low end, one finds the Indus Valley and the Maya. At the opposite end are the Assyrian empire, the Roman empire, and Classical Greek city-states. In between, lie Ancient Egypt, the Shang Dynasty of China, early Mesopotamian city-states, Teotihuacán, and the Inka empire. Smith's concept of commercialization seems to me to take two important steps forward. First, recognizing the impossibility of separating economic matters from political ones in the study of early states, it offers a means of considering them together. Second, it compares states to each other, rather than to 'primitive' or 'modern' economies, as formalist and substantivist positions did.

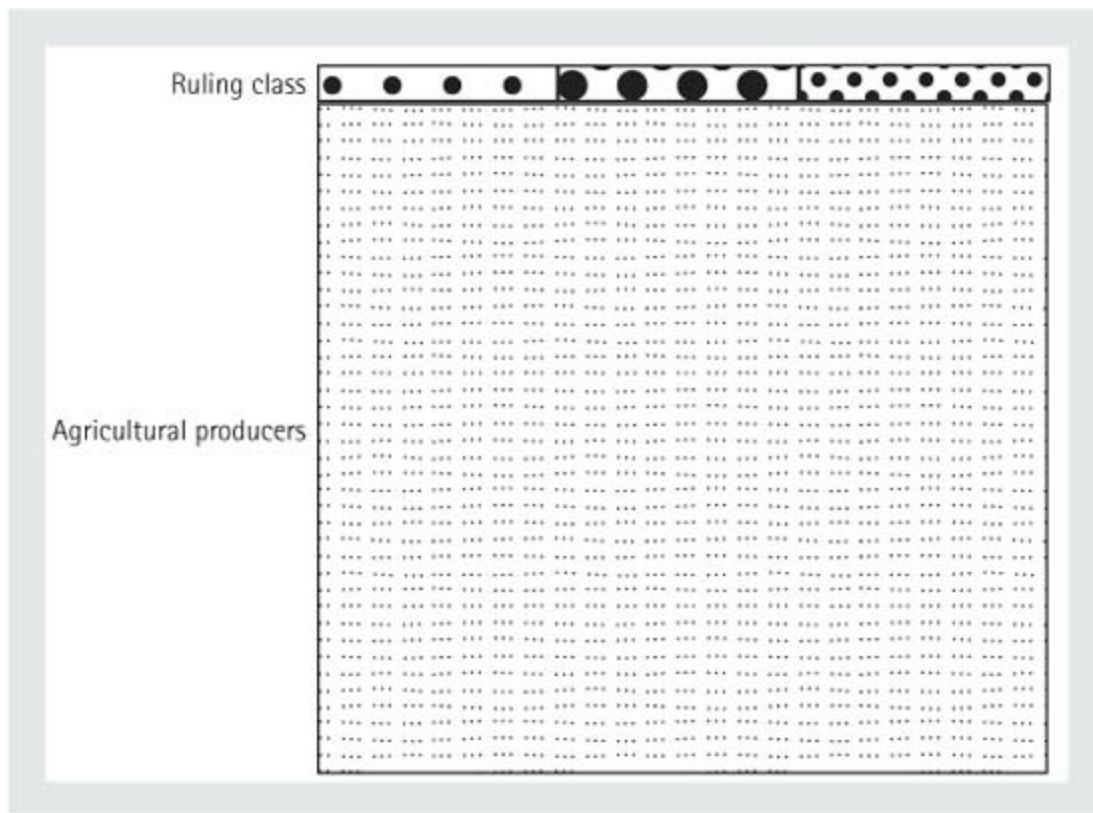
## NEW DIRECTIONS

The continuation of a broad-based archaeological and textual approach, along the lines articulated by Trigger and Smith, shows much promise. In recent years, interdisciplinary research has generated an enormous amount of evidence as well as new theories to address important subjects: environmental conditions, subsistence systems, trade, health, and activities of everyday life. This research has produced the sort of data and analytical frameworks that researchers long desired to examine the 'economic realities' of the majority of the population. In part, this is due to the orientation of field research and textual studies toward questions about the lower classes and away from traditional ones about elites through methodologies like archaeological surface survey. It is also due to scientific advances which have led to the use of new technologies such as stable isotope analysis, neutron activation analysis, and accelerator mass spectrometry radiocarbon dating. These techniques allow greater precision in identifying, sourcing, and dating components of archaeological remains. At the same time, theories generated within the social sciences have opened new avenues for the study of past societies. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss how a number of these studies have influenced five areas of importance to the economy of early cities: stratification; the countryside; prestige; specialist production; and decline. These areas are especially useful for considering how urban formation and the advent of new economic patterns affected the inhabitants of cities.

## CITIES AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The specific trajectory from hunter-gatherer band to village to city varied across the globe, but at key stages, economic factors, along with social and environmental ones, lay behind a series of 'revolutions' in human lifestyles that accompanied the rise of cities. Central to the urban revolution is the development of stratified societies. Early cities emerged in many parts of the world at

approximately the same time as exaggerated social stratification, which we may define as a combination of economic, social, and political inequality. Ernest Gellner's model of social structure in agrarian societies suits early cities, which drew their subsistence and primary source of wealth from agricultural surpluses (Fig. 7.1). The model depicts 'stratified, horizontally segregated layers of military, administrative, clerical and sometimes commercial ruling classes' positioned above 'laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers'.<sup>15</sup> Gellner's model nonetheless raises many questions about the economy of early cities, chief among them: how did stratification emerge and how was it maintained?



**FIGURE 7.1** The social structure of an early city: 'stratified, horizontally segregated layers of military, administrative, clerical and sometimes commercial ruling classes' positioned above 'laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers' (after Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 9).

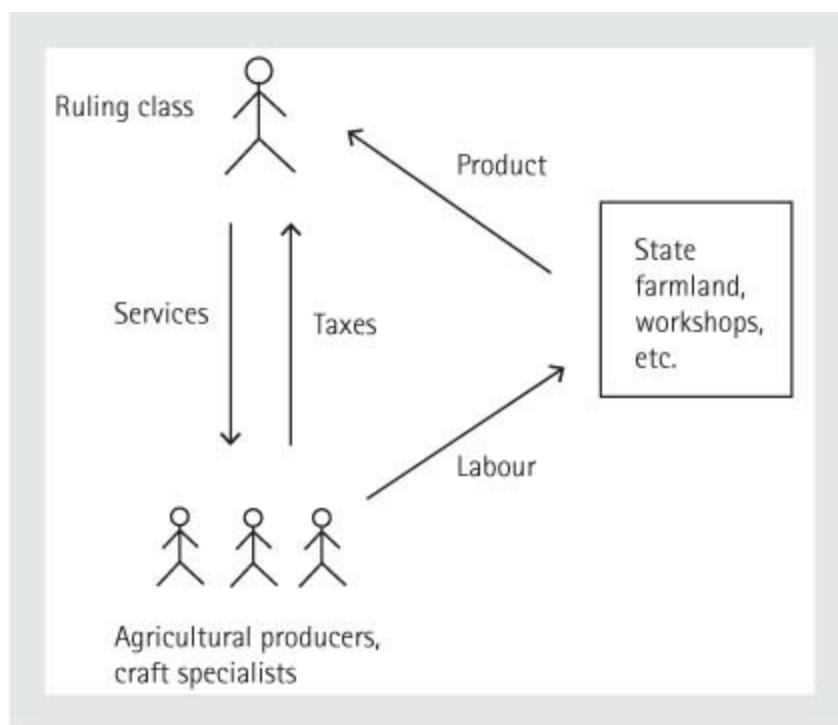
Stratification has been documented in the Upper Palaeolithic, among later Neanderthals (50–30,000 years ago), and anatomically modern humans (50–15,000 years ago). Recent studies have shown it to exist especially among hunter-gatherers in 'transegalitarian' societies, in which competitive behaviour in relation to the production and deployment of prestige goods and food surpluses was practised. Most commentators agree that stratification increased after people began to cultivate wild plants, bringing them back to campsites, and selecting those best suited for harvest each season (around 11,000 years ago in the Near East; independently, but later, in several other parts of the world).<sup>16</sup> As people grew to depend on domesticated plants for a larger portion of their diet, and also hunted and captured herd animals which could be tamed and domesticated, they occupied campsites for longer periods during the year, and these became the first permanent villages. The first farmers could support larger populations in their villages by exploiting land more intensively, and therefore became more powerful than smaller hunter-gatherer bands. Over time, some members of agricultural villages managed to produce more food than they needed either due to advantageous landholdings, more intensive cultivation techniques, or favourable harvests. In this way they accumulated a surplus of food—the basic form of wealth in both early villages and early cities. They

exchanged this surplus with other community members in return for goods or labour, or they gained prestige by offering food at feasts; over time they gained power, while other members of the community became dependent on them. Anthropological studies indicate that farming villages developed into early cities in a variety of ways, yet at the core of each was a small ruling class which had put into practice means of acquiring agricultural surpluses to support the growing population of a city. As the leaders of these communities gained more control, they could subordinate smaller, neighbouring villages, at times in warfare, and further increase population. This long-term view, from the earliest farming villages to the rise of cities, is important because the more we learn about the economy in agricultural villages, the better we can see how societies transitioned to cities. One of the key, and unresolved, questions here is whether this is best described as a 'progression' from one stage to the next, or a 'punctuated transition', which left the village unrecognizable.

## CITIES AND COUNTRYSIDES

Since farmers in the countryside created much of the wealth of early cities through production of agricultural surpluses, the appropriation of those surpluses from the countryside was an essential ingredient for control of 'economic power'. Trigger's cross-cultural examination has suggested that ruling classes in early cities appropriated a portion of the total agricultural surplus which varied from about one-tenth to one-fifth.<sup>17</sup> In Shang China (1600–1100 BCE), farmers handed over one-ninth of their crop to the king, regional governor or local official. They were also required to perform one month of labour (corvée) once the harvest was complete. Ancient Egypt had similar requirements for taxes and labour; its most famous monuments, the pyramids, were built by corvée labourers, as were irrigation channels along the Nile. Mesopotamians paid taxes or rents on harvests, and taxes on traded goods, and also had labour requirements. The Inka, on the other hand, collected agricultural surpluses entirely through a corvée system. In addition to working their own lands, Inka subjects were required to cultivate plots belonging to the state, to tend herds of llamas and alpacas, to perform military service, to build roads and bridges, or to manufacture textiles, pottery, and other goods. Collection of basic agricultural products which could be used to pay bureaucrats, skilled craftspeople, unskilled labourers, armies, and to nourish the rulers themselves, is often called 'staple finance'. That rulers needed to appropriate agricultural surpluses is clear, but it is not obvious why the inhabitants of early cities tolerated the imposition of taxes, rents, and labour. After all, staple finance arrangements may have existed in pre-urban villages, but were not equally burdensome. In return for these appropriations, the rulers of early cities provided 'services', generally in the form of urban administration, protection during warfare, and intercession with the divine on behalf of the community. The last of these was the the most important: as cross-cultural studies show, when inhabitants of early cities regarded the rulers as 'serving' the community, they were willing to hand over their surpluses.<sup>18</sup> Fig. 7.2 offers a simplified model of the economy of an early city, based on Mario Liverani's diagram of the flow of surpluses and services at Uruk.





**FIGURE 7.2** A simplified model of the economy of an early city (after Liverani, *Uruk*, 21).

In terms of new research on the countryside, we can turn to archaeological surface surveys, which have collected some of the most important data for examining the landscapes around early cities. The technique had long been practised, but increased significantly in the second half of the 20th century, and survey research now comprises a large percentage of archaeological investigation. Surveys often focus on a region, rather than a particular city, and study the long-term rather than individual periods, generating the sort of evidence that can evaluate how a city grew or declined over time with respect to its hinterland. Reporting on one of the earliest systematic surveys, Robert Adams wrote that ‘Mesopotamian cities grew at the expense of smaller rural settlements in their hinterlands’.<sup>19</sup> By this, he observed that the process of urbanization was accompanied by a contemporary, and opposing, ‘ruralization’. A sampling of results from Mesopotamia, the Basin of Mexico, Central Italy, and Peru shows that the process was common to several early cities.

In southern Mesopotamia, surveys have taken place around the city-states of Eridu, Umma, Ur, and Uruk. They document rapid growth in site numbers and population in the Ubaid period (4500–3500 BCE). But as the city-states grew in size, with Uruk reaching 70 hectares by 3200 BCE and 100 hectares by 3000 BCE, the number of rural sites diminished.<sup>20</sup> On opposite sides of the Basin of Mexico, Teotihuacán, and Cuicuilco developed in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE into large cities, with perhaps 20,000 people and as large as 400 hectares in size. Cuicuilco was buried by a volcano in the 1st century BCE, but Teotihuacán expanded, reaching 2,000 hectares in size with as many as 100,000 inhabitants. By the end of the 1st century CE, Teotihuacán was the only large settlement in the Basin of Mexico. In Early Iron Age Italy (900–700 BCE) the merger of smaller settlements on the Palatine, Esquiline, Oppian, and Caelian hills formed the city of Rome, and a similar process can be detected in nearby Etruscan city-states. During the Early Intermediate to the Middle Horizon 2 periods (200–800 CE) in Peru, the number of ‘towns’, ‘hamlets’, and ‘villages’ in the Ayacucho Basin decreased. Three sites merged into a single city, Wari, with a core, 250 hectares in size, that was situated in a larger archaeological zone stretching over 15 square kilometres. The expansion of Wari occurred—admittedly current evidence does not permit a precise chronology—as the city began to exert control over more distant territories. Katharina Schreiber described the process as one of the ‘emergence of

state levels of organization'.<sup>21</sup>

Changing patterns of settlement and the imposition of taxes, rents, and labour requirements had consequences for the lives of both urban and rural inhabitants. Many of the new urban residents continued to work as farmers, almost certainly journeying farther to the fields. In their spare time, they might find opportunities for part-time work: construction, weaving, ceramics, or basketry. A few would develop skills in jewellery, sculpture, and metalworking which they could use on a full-time basis. Others, perhaps by virtue of wealth or family connections, received positions as administrative officials, such as scribe, tax-collector, overseer, property manager, and military commander. For the population remaining in the countryside, there were different consequences. Greater productivity in the rural landscape was often required, and the result was frequently changes in patterns of landholding. It was not unusual for land to be removed from collective control and placed under the control of important 'interest groups' in private, temple, or state properties.<sup>22</sup> Rural landholdings near to a city appear to have undergone an 'intensification' of production, even as populations declined. Farmers may have worked land more thoroughly, through additional weeding, irrigation, ploughing, or fertilization, to maximize harvests close to the town, where transport costs were low. Land at a greater distance may have been exploited for grazing animals, since meat could be transported to urban markets 'on the hoof'. Such a process is considered 'extensification'. In this way, the formation of a city led to the development of its antithesis—a countryside.

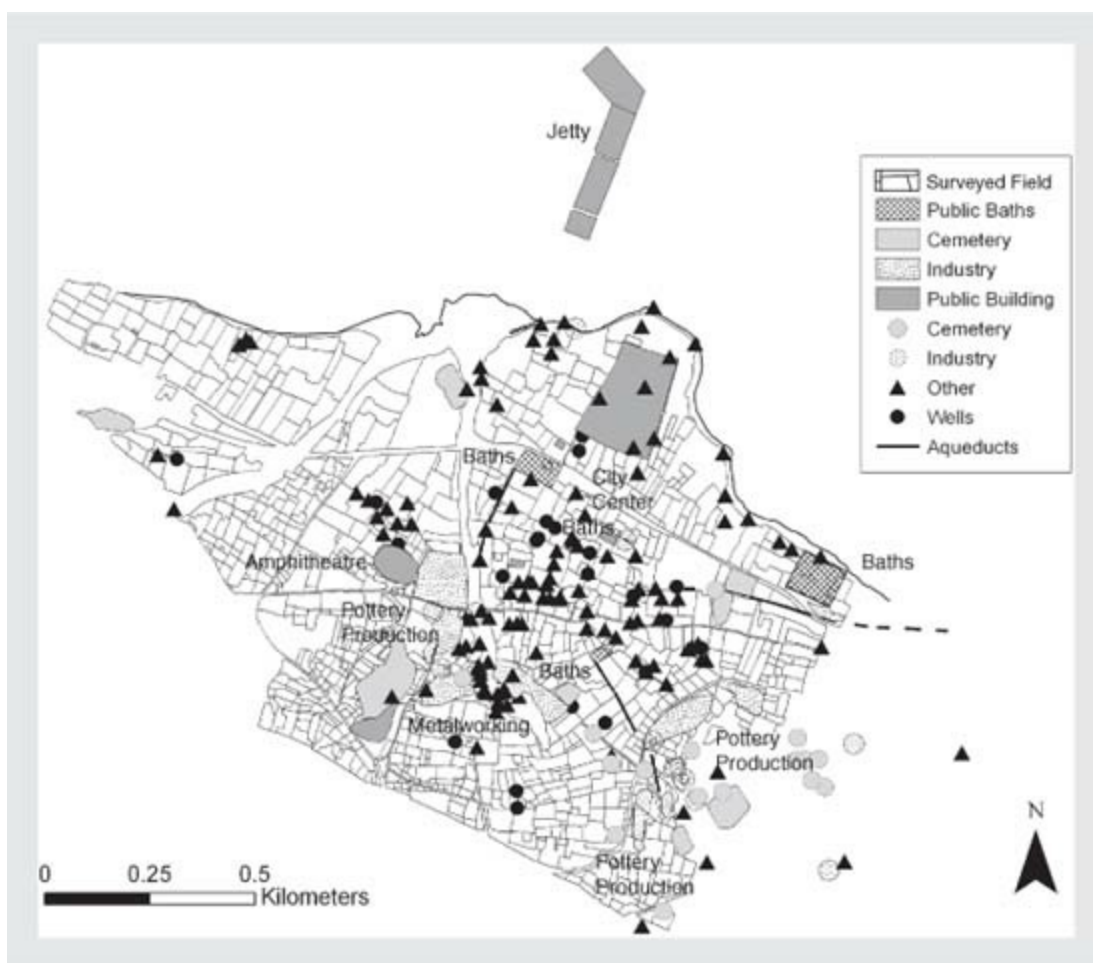
### **CITIES, LONG-DISTANCE TRADE, AND PRESTIGE ECONOMIES**

Long-distance trade was a second means of obtaining economic power in early cities. Many early cities were located in environments well-suited to the production of staple foods, but less well-endowed with valuable raw materials. To obtain scarce commodities, they needed to trade. Phoenicians sought metal ores from Spain and Italy; the Maya obtained obsidian from Central Mexico; and Egypt acquired gold and ebony from Nubia and cedar from Lebanon. Merchants could profit by buying goods where they were abundant and selling them where they were rare, as long as they could transport them at low cost. Cuneiform tablets of the early 2nd millennium BCE indicate that a Mesopotamian merchant from Assur (modern Ash Shirqat, Iraq) could purchase textiles in his hometown, transport them 900 kilometres on a caravan of donkeys to Kanesh (modern Kültepe, Turkey), and sell them for several times their value; the merchant could then return home with a load of silver and obtain twice the price. The same merchants also profitably exchanged tin, which was more plentiful in Assur than Kanesh, for silver. That the trade between Assur and Kanesh was market-oriented and motivated by profit, rather than 'embedded' in the economy as gift exchange between rulers who employed merchants to operate on their behalf, has been decisively shown.<sup>23</sup> Without detailed textual documentation of the sort present in Mesopotamia, it is difficult to ascertain that trade in other early cities was market-oriented. The position of merchants in Aztec society is strongly suggestive of their ability to profit from trade, but Egypt and the Inka appear to have controlled the activities of merchants more closely.<sup>24</sup>

Trade introduced both finished products and raw materials to cities. Goods that could only be obtained from distant sources had value, and gained additional significance when they were manufactured using complex technology or skills. 'Wealth finance' refers to the procurement and manufacture of prestigious luxury items, often via long-distance trade and by skilled artisans.<sup>25</sup> By employing artisans in urban workshops, rulers controlled the processing of valuable imported

materials into ‘prestige’ objects which could be tailored to send messages appropriate to their own societies. For a sense of how ‘prestige economies’ operated, we may turn to Late Bronze Age city-states in Greece (1500–1200 BCE).<sup>26</sup> Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes, and Pylos had large palaces with elaborate reception halls, massive storage facilities, and workshops. Magnificent tombs, such as the Grave Circles and Tholoi at Mycenae, surrounded the palaces. Both tombs and palace buildings have yielded extensive evidence of imported luxury goods: gold jewellery, bronze weapons, amber beads, rock-crystal bowls, glass ornaments, and inlaid ivory fixtures used to decorate furniture or cosmetic boxes. Paintings at Mycenae and Pylos depicted rulers employing prestige goods in ceremonial circumstances.<sup>27</sup> When rulers limited access to rare and valuable objects, and then appeared with them in public, they drew attention to their status. Rulers also distributed prestige goods to high-ranking officials as payment for their assistance in extracting surpluses and maintaining social order. While such distributions may not have been frequent, promise of them may have served to uphold the political system. The presence of imported objects in tombs at some distance from Greek Late Bronze Age city-states may indicate distributions of valued goods. Alternatively, individuals outside of the ruling elite may have tried to accumulate prestige goods in order to contest the system, as Bryan Burns has suggested. Similar processes of social differentiation have been documented in early cities in Mesopotamia, West Africa, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>28</sup>

Long-distance trade in prestige goods was common among many early cities, including those at all four of Smith’s stages of commercialization, but acquisition of staple foods via trade was restricted to advanced stages of commercialization. Procurement of staples was nonetheless an important economic strategy of large cities which could not meet the subsistence needs of their populations from their immediate hinterlands. Imperial Rome, with a population near 1 million for four centuries (100 BCE–300 CE), is perhaps the best-known example. Rome’s authorities developed a wide-ranging system to produce, extract, and import first grain, and later also wine, olive oil, and pork; it provided these to urban residents for free.<sup>29</sup> The supply originated in several regions of the empire, chief among them Egypt, Spain, North Africa, and southern Italy. The system spawned development of infrastructure within the empire (roads, ports, ships), as well as networks of officials and associations of merchants. While the system flourished, economic investment at provincial settlements contributing the staples was high. Leptiminus in North Africa offers an example of a port which produced and shipped staple commodities (olive oil, wine, and salted fish) to the capital. The core of the settlement grew from less than 10 to more than 40 hectares in size from about 50 BCE to 250 CE. Its residents constructed a gridded street plan, a 450 metre-long jetty, and two industrial districts (Fig. 7.3). At the same time, they imported ‘prestige goods’ (marbles, metals) and financed ‘prestige activities’ (bathing, and gladiatorial games in an amphitheatre). During this time, Leptiminus met the definition of a city (although it did not for most of its history), but it declined when the system supplying Rome shrank in the 4th century CE.<sup>30</sup> Leptiminus highlights the roles that cities with specialized economies, like ports, could play in wider trade networks (see below, Ch. 12). It also shows that Rome’s unusual ability to import staple crops for several centuries was facilitated by the relatively low cost of sea-borne transport in the Mediterranean. By contrast, both the Aztec and the Inka collected staple crops as tribute throughout their empires, but they were consumed locally rather than transported long distances, as this was not feasible over land.<sup>31</sup>



**FIGURE 7.3** Leptiminus in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, showing urban core surrounded by ‘productive periphery’.

## CITIES AND SPECIALIST PRODUCERS

Specialist craftspeople, the producers of metalwork, pottery, basketry, jewellery, textiles, and other items, provide information about the complexity of economic activities in early cities. They have long had a prominent place in scholarly analyses; Childe, for example, considered their presence essential to the ‘urban revolution’. He argued that cities could develop when farmers produced sufficient surplus to support full-time resident specialists whose products in turn would be more sophisticated as they attained skills in sculpture, painting, or metalworking that surpassed part-time workers in earlier societies. By virtue of their location in cities, access to raw materials traded over long distances would also improve. Childe’s ideas have subsequently undergone expansion and refinement. Reconsideration has been directed to issues Cathy Costin categorized as the ‘scale’, ‘context’, ‘concentration’, and ‘intensity’ of production.<sup>32</sup> Scale describes the organization and size of facilities for production, which can range from small (household) to large (factory). Context considers the economic affiliation of producers: do they work independently, or are they attached to patrons (as often in the case of specialists making prestige goods for rulers)? ‘Concentration’ refers to the loci of production and ‘intensity’ to the amount of time craft workers laboured. One example of a revision of Childe’s thinking comes from Uruk Mesopotamia. Liverani has argued that Childe overemphasized specialized labour in cities: while the production of prestige goods took place in the city under the strict control of a central authority, other common crafts such as pottery were manufactured in both villages and cities due to the widespread availability of raw materials and the prohibitive cost of transporting products even relatively short distances. It is now customary to think that much craft production, especially that of part-time workers, was not controlled by political

organizations, with the result that the economy appears more independent, and less ‘embedded’, than it formerly did.<sup>33</sup>

As our understanding of specialist production has been revised, studies have moved from rigid typologies (household/workshop/factory) to more flexible ones that acknowledge that production could be organized in a great variety of ways. Also, while prestige goods have also long been a focus of interest, attention is turning now to the importance of utilitarian goods. The Spanish conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s description of mats, sandals, cloth, baskets, gourds, and other utilitarian goods available in the market of Tenochtitlán, is indicative of non-elite exchange (see below, Ch. 20). A painted frieze from Pompeii probably reflects similar market exchanges; it shows textiles, shoes, bronze vessels, and other common crafts for sale.<sup>34</sup>

Concentration, intensity, scale, and context are variable, and therefore not simply to be identified, but also to be explained. One example of variability among early cities relates to the location of workshops for production. Archaeological survey at Mashkan-shapir, a southern Mesopotamian city of the early 2nd millennium BCE, identified a street across the centre of town along which copper fragments and slag were found; it appeared to be the locus of copper workshops. Pottery and lapidary production was concentrated in the south-eastern area of the settlement, within the city walls. In early cities of the Indus Valley, evidence suggests a more dispersed pattern of production. At Harappa (2600–2000 BCE), pottery-, copper-, and bone-production debris appear to be isolated and not intermixed with debris from other crafts, although chipped stone, ground stone, and shell-working debris have been found together. All five mounds in the city contained pyrotechnological debris. At Mohenjodaro, production of utilitarian pottery appears to be distributed across the site, but that of stoneware bangles concentrated in the south-eastern zone, suggesting elite control of a ‘prestige good’. The tightly controlled production of prestige goods in Late Bronze Age Greek city-states has also been shown.<sup>35</sup> A common factor in these studies is the preference for locating workshops for prestige goods in the urban centre close to the palace, and the desire to place polluting industries on the edges of settlements, but not so far from the urban centre that transport was difficult or expensive, or that goods could not be controlled.

## THE DECLINE OF CITIES

The economies of early cities could indeed be fragile. Urban rulers depended on continuous extraction of resources from farmers to maintain their positions (as discussed above). But such systems were by no means lasting, and they were vulnerable to contestations of authority from exploited subjects. Edward Gibbon’s study of Rome, the world’s largest early city, made the subject of the ‘decline’ famous. It has recently become a trendy topic, perhaps due to the instability, whether real or perceived, of early 21st century economies. Jared Diamond has proposed that, in the face of collapse, the key to success (or failure) is addressing (or neglecting) worsening environmental conditions. Patricia McAnany and Norman Yoffee have objected, arguing that societies rarely collapse utterly. Instead, according to Yoffee, ‘the most frequent result of the collapse of ancient states was the eventual rise of new states that were often consciously modeled on the state that had done the collapsing’.<sup>36</sup> The best-studied cases of decline are those of the Maya and Roman civilizations, to which we now turn.

A large subfield of Maya scholarship is focused on a ‘collapse’, whose nature, timing, and severity varied throughout the late Classic period (750–900 CE). Some one hundred explanations have been

offered for the contraction or disappearance of city-states, but many scholars now regard environmental or social theories as the most persuasive. There is detailed evidence for climatically- or anthropogenically-induced environmental destruction in several regions. Climatologists have identified recurring drought on the basis of stable oxygen isotopes in lake sediments in the northern Maya region, with the period 800 to 1000 CE as one of the driest on record. Ecologists have found sediment accumulation, soil erosion, and deforestation beginning with early Maya inhabitants and peaking approximately 850 CE in lake sediments of the central Petén region. At the southern city-state Copán, pollen cores show similar evidence of devastation: the landscape was cleared of pine forests, presumably to support maize fields as the estimated population rose from 5,000 to nearly 28,000 between 600 and 750 CE, and then fell gradually, reaching about 5,000 again around 1050. On the other hand, in the western Petexbatun region, skeletal analyses show no signs of stress, ecological studies indicate heavy land use but limited environmental deterioration, and stable isotopes indicate few changes in diets. Rather, urban decline appears linked to increasing elite competition for scarce resources and endemic warfare for control of neighbouring territories. After the destruction of the capital Dos Pilas around 761 CE, trade in the Petexbatun region diminished, pottery production became ‘balkanized’, defensive structures proliferated, and settlements were abandoned, so that by 830 CE few residents remained in the region.<sup>37</sup> Many of these ‘social factors’ have also been noted elsewhere, but have often received less weight than environmental ones. Another line of argument emphasizes that the Maya people were prone to neither environmental destruction nor warfare but ‘resilient’, citing the dramatic shift in population from city-states of southern lowlands to those of the northern coast after 900 CE.<sup>38</sup> While no consensus has yet emerged, Maya ‘collapse studies’ document the potential for very detailed economic, environmental, and social reconstructions of urban decline when a number of scholars direct their research toward these questions. That the interpretations of the results are the subject of vibrant disciplinary debate, is no doubt healthier than if a monocausal explanation were to be accepted as orthodoxy.

One scholar counted 210 explanations offered for the fall of the Roman empire; among them are suggestions ranging from the contradictory to the improbable, beginning with ‘abolition of rights, centralization, decentralization, and equal rights’ and running through the alphabet to ‘superstition, tristesse, useless eating, and vaingloriousness’. Many economic justifications have been offered, including bankruptcy, climate change, inflation, overpopulation, taxation, and under-development. They have some merit, although combinations of political, economic, and social factors tend to carry the most weight. Rather than proposing reasons for decline, which in the case of early cities can rarely be proven, we should be more concerned with investigating what happens when an urban society collapses. That is the aim of Bryan Ward-Perkins, who documents a decline in the standard of living during the 5th to 7th centuries CE which affected all of Rome’s subjects. He reached this conclusion primarily through the study of material culture (pottery, coins, glass, tiles, house and church plans) of the sort identified by archaeological surveys and excavations.<sup>39</sup> By comparing trends in the availability of these goods in several regions of the Roman empire, he charted widespread decline, which occurred at different rates, depending on events and supply networks in each region. For Ward-Perkins, the disappearance of material culture represents the decline of economic complexity in the lives of the inhabitants of the Roman empire, who had to become accustomed to poorer-quality cookpots and tablewares, fewer monetary transactions, and more cramped and less durable houses. In this way, the process of economic and urban growth within the empire ‘went into reverse’.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative approach taken in this chapter has shown that early cities created major changes in the economies of their wider regions. Their growth caused fundamental shifts in agricultural and craft production, in labour, trade, wealth, and stratification. We are better able to observe these changes as a result of new scientific research and the development of new theoretical approaches. We have also gained much by adjusting the focus of scholarship from the study of the origins of early cities to the dynamics of how individuals lived in them. To continue these developments, we need more research on aspects of early urban economies that are currently poorly understood: property; labour; non-elite consumption; and the roles of households and neighbourhoods. We also require more studies integrating environmental data with evidence from texts and material culture, as has been done well in Maya city-states, to assess changes in the standard of living. We need to consider evidence about the economy at multiple scales: household, neighbourhood, city, region, and interregion. With attention to these areas, and efforts to broaden the discussion beyond the subjects that have been considered in the past, the economy of cities should be better understood in the future.

## NOTES

1. Numa Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Durand, 1866), 69; Max Weber, 'Der Stadt', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 47 (1921), 621–772.
2. See most recently, Joyce Marcus and Jeremy Sabloff, eds., *The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008).
3. On the definition of city-states and 'territorial states', see Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 94–113. On 'empires', see Carla Sinopoli, 'Empires', in Gary Feinman and Douglas Price, *Archaeology at the Millennium: A Sourcebook* (New York: Plenum Publishers, 2001), 439–71.
4. Mario Liverani, *Uruk: The First City*, trans. Zeinab Bahrani and Marc Van de Mieroop (London: Equinox, 2006).
5. The chapter considers a few cities later than 600 CE, the intended dividing line between 'early' and 'medieval' cities in this volume. The date marks a division relevant to cities in Europe and Asia, but cities in the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa may arguably be termed 'early' even after this date.
6. Liverani, *Uruk*, 1.
7. Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 447.
8. On the neo-evolutionary model, see Marshall Sahlins and Elman Service, eds., *Evolution and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960). For a critique of neo-evolutionary thinking, see Norman Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States and Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8–15 and 22–33. For a critique of Wittfogel's conclusions, see Robert Adams, *Heartland of Cities: Surveys of Ancient Settlement and Land Use on the Central Floodplain of the Euphrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 243–8.
9. References from Mikhail Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*,

2nd. edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) 142–77.

10. Karl Polanyi, 'The Economy as Instituted Process', in Karl Polanyi, Conrad Arensburg, and Harry Pearson, eds., *Trade and Market in Early Empires* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), 243–70; Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 2nd. edn. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
11. Gordon Childe, 'The Urban Revolution', *Town Planning Review*, 21 (1950), 3–17.
12. For example, Charles Redman, *Social Archeology: Beyond Subsistence and Dating* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 218–19, citing earlier studies.
13. Here I summarize Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 279–406 and 653–88.
14. Here I summarize Michael Smith, 'The Archaeology of Ancient State Economies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33 (2004), 73–102.
15. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 9.
16. Transegalitarian societies: Brian Hayden, 'Richman, Poorman, Beggarmen, Chief: The Dynamics of Social Inequality', in Feinman and Price, *Archaeology at the Millennium*, 231–72. Beginnings of stratification: Douglas Price and Ofer Bar-Yosef, 'Traces of Inequality at the Origins of Agriculture in the Ancient Near East', in Douglas Price and Gary Feinman, eds., *Pathways to Power: New Perspectives on the Emergence of Social Inequality* (New York: Springer Science, 2010), 147–68.
17. Economic power: Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic State*, 35. Surpluses: Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 387.
18. Staple finance: see Karl Polanyi, *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi* (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday, 1968) 186–8, 324; Terence D'Altroy and Timothy Earle, 'Staple Finance, Wealth Finance, and Storage in the Inka Political Economy', *Current Anthropology*, 26 (1985), 187–206. Services: Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 490–4; Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic State*, 34–40.
19. Robert Adams and Hans Nissen, *The Uruk Countryside: The Natural Setting of Urban Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 17.
20. I follow Liverani, *Uruk*, 84 for city size and periodization. For results of Mesopotamian surveys, see Tony Wilkinson, *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).
21. William Sanders, Jeffrey Parsons, and Robert Santley, *The Basin of Mexico: Ecological Processes in the Evolution of a Civilization* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 98–129. Nicola Terrenato, 'The Versatile Clans: Archaic Rome and the Nature of Early City-States in Central Italy', in Nicola Terrenato and Donald Haggis, eds., *State Formation in Italy and Greece: Questioning the Neoevolutionist Paradigm* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 231–44. Katharina Schreiber, *Wari Imperialism in Middle Horizon Peru* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 90.
22. Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 283–4. On agricultural intensification, see Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965).
23. Robert Adams, 'Anthropological Perspectives on Ancient Trade', *Current Anthropology*, 15 (1974), 239–58; Yoffee 2005, *Myths of the Archaic State*, 150. On market orientation, see Klaas



Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and Its Terminology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), contradicting Karl Polanyi, 'Marketless Trading in Hammurabi's Time', in Polanyi, Arensburg, and Pearson, *Trade and Market in Early Empires*, 12–26.

24. Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 342–55.
25. D'Altroy and Earle, 'Staple Finance, Wealth Finance'.
26. While the status of Late Bronze Age settlements in Greece as city-states is debated, their classification is less important than their function.
27. See most recently, Bryan Burns, *Mycenaean Greece, Mediterranean Commerce, and the Formation of Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). The use of 'prestige' objects in political, ritual, and ceremonial contexts indicates the difficulty of disentangling the economy of early cities from other spheres of activity.
28. Elizabeth Brumfiel and Timothy Earle, eds., *Specialization, Exchange, and Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
29. Neville Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland: The City of Rome and the Italian Economy, 200 BC–AD 200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), citing earlier bibliography.
30. David Stone, David Mattingly, and Nejib Ben Lazreg, *Leptiminus (Lamta). Report No. 3: The Field Survey* (Portsmouth, R. I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2011).
31. Jeffrey Parsons, 'The Role of Chinampa Agriculture in the Food Supply of Aztec Tenochtitlán', in Charles Cleland, ed., *Cultural Change and Continuity: Essays in Honor of James Bennett Griffin* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 233–57; D'Altroy and Earle, 'Staple Finance, Wealth Finance'.
32. Childe, 'Urban Revolution', 6–16; Cathy Costin, 'Craft Specialization: Issues in Defining, Documenting, and Explaining the Organization of Production', *Archeological Method and Theory*, 3 (1991), 1–55.
33. Liverani, *Uruk*, 44–50. The debate originates with the views of Polanyi, 'Economy as Instituted Process', which have been criticized by, among others, Smith, 'Archaeology of Ancient State Economies', 74–6.
34. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Madrid: Instituto 'Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo', 1982), 190; Christopher Parslow, 'The "Forum Frieze" of Pompeii in Its Archaeological Context', in *The Shapes of City Life in Rome and Pompeii* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas, 1998), 113–38.
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University Press, 2010); Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic State*, 137.

37. Explanations: David Webster, *The Fall of the Ancient Maya: Solving the Mystery of the Maya Collapse* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 217, 328. Northern Maya region: David Hodell, Mark Brenner, Jason Curtis, and Thomas Guilderson 'Solar Forcing of Drought Frequency in the Maya Lowlands', *Science*, 292/5520 (2001), 1367–70; Petén region: Michael Binford, Mark Brenner, Thomas Whitmore, Antonia Higuera-Gundy, Edward Deevey, and Barbara Leyden, 'Ecosystems, Paleoecology and Human Disturbance in Subtropical and Tropical America', *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 6 (1987), 115–28; Copán: Webster, *Fall of the Ancient Maya*, 308–15; Petexbatun region: Arthur Demarest, *The Petexbatun Regional Archaeological Project: A Multidisciplinary Study of the Maya Collapse* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 95–109; Kitty Emery, *Dietary, Environmental, and Societal Implications of Ancient Maya Animal Use in the Petexbatun: A Zooarchaeological Perspective on the Collapse* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010), 264–73.
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## POPULATION AND MIGRATION

LUUK DE LIGT

It is extremely difficult to gauge the demographic dimensions of urbanism in Europe, North Africa, and Asia between 3500 BCE and 500 CE. One obvious reason for this is that the term ‘city’ can be used to denote completely different phenomena. During most periods of Chinese history the presence of an outer wall was seen as a distinguishing feature of ‘cities’ but if we use this definition even some very small settlements qualify as ‘urban’. In Classical Greece all agglomerations which were centres of self-governing ‘city-states’ can be regarded as ‘cities’, regardless of their size. Most of these centres were walled, but the basic criterion which sets them apart from other types of settlement remains political and administrative. Various publications on early Mesopotamia focus on settlement size and classify all settlements covering ten or more hectares as ‘urban’. While all these approaches can be defended, they make it almost impossible to draw general conclusions concerning the number of agglomerations qualifying as urban or about the approximate size of urban populations.<sup>1</sup>

On the practical front any attempt at quantification runs up against the difficulty that the written sources contain very few reliable population figures. This means that those interested in the size of the populations of early cities have to rely on a variety of indications supplied by archaeology. However, as we shall presently see, the archaeological data have been claimed to be compatible with a wide range of population estimates.

My discussion of migration to cities will be based on the familiar distinction between voluntary and forced migration. I shall also pay attention to the phenomenon of colonization in so far as this resulted in a lateral expansion of urban networks. Publications on migration to cities also distinguish between temporary and permanent migration and between rural–urban and inter-urban migration. Other important topics include chain migration involving relatives or members of various ethnic groups and integrative mechanisms facilitating the absorption of migrants into the social and economic structures of pre-modern cities. On many of these topics the surviving sources have nothing or almost nothing to say. This is especially true of temporary migration, step-wise migration between cities, and integrative mechanisms. In what follows these topics will either be passed over in silence or be dealt with very briefly.

However, even if methodological problems abound and many crucially important questions cannot be answered, it is still possible to draw some important conclusions about the size of cities, levels of urbanization and levels of rural–urban migration in certain parts of ancient Europe and Asia.

## MESOPOTAMIA

In the Near East the beginning of town life can be traced back all the way to Jericho in Palestine (*c.* 8000 BCE) and to Çatal Höyük in Turkey (*c.* 7000–5000 BCE). Nevertheless, the emergence of a recognizably ‘urban’ civilization across larger geographical areas seems not to have started before 4000 BCE (see above [Ch. 2](#)). Some spectacular examples of this development are to be found in South

Mesopotamia. Here the settlement of Uruk expanded from *c.*70 hectares in about 3600 BCE to *c.*100 hectares in around 3200 BCE. During the Early Dynastic Period (2900–2500 BCE) Uruk went on to expand to *c.*250 hectares.<sup>2</sup>

It remains difficult to use any of these figure as a basis for population estimates. In the early-modern Near East urban population densities of between 250 and 400 persons per hectare have been documented for various villages and cities. However, these figures refer to the number of inhabitants per hectare of domestic space. According to most specialists only about one-third of the built-up areas of the cities of Early Mesopotamia was occupied by houses. On this basis it has been suggested that Early-Dynastic Uruk may have had between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants.

In a publication which takes into account a large body of rural survey data, Adams argues that some 70 per cent of the population of the city-state of Uruk must have lived in settlements covering 10 or more hectares.<sup>3</sup> However, his estimate for the size of the city (400 ha) is widely regarded as too high. More importantly, the rural surveys carried out by his teams were not particularly intensive. It seems therefore likely that his hypothetical urbanization rate is too high. The other side of the coin is that Uruk was just one of a much larger group of substantial cities. On any view the simultaneous existence of many large cities in a relatively small area logically implies a high level of urbanization.

Where did the populations of these fast-growing cities come from? In the case of Uruk it has been suggested that the growth of the city cannot be explained unless we assume a ‘mass movement of the rural population into the south into the Uruk area’.<sup>4</sup> It seems, however, likely that we are also looking at a process of sedentarization in which large numbers of semi-nomadic people became farmers and took up residence in towns. The latter theory involves the assumption that the five-fold increase in aggregate settlement size which seems to have taken place between *c.*3000 BCE and *c.*2500 BCE does not reflect a five-fold increase in population because the semi-nomadic inhabitants of early times would have been archaeologically largely invisible.

Another important question is why a large proportion of the population of South Mesopotamia opted for urban residence. One possible explanation is that the 4th and early 3rd millennia BCE witnessed an increase in competition for vitally important resources (mainly land and water) and this resulted in a low level of rural security. It might also be speculated that in the specific context of pre-dynastic and Early Dynastic Mesopotamia taking up urban residence was seen as an effective way of expressing or claiming membership of the political, religious, social, and economic community of the early city-state.

In the absence of any direct evidence for urban fertility and mortality rates, little can be said about the demographic dynamics of the cities of Mesopotamia. However, since domestic quarters were tightly packed and were poorly drained, we can be reasonably sure that large sections of the urban population lived in insalubrious conditions and suffered from a high mortality rate. In all likelihood constant immigration from rural areas was needed to sustain the populations of these cities.

The late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE also witnessed the arrival of large numbers of Amorites in southern Mesopotamia. These immigrants belonged to a motley group of previously semi-nomadic tribes which had originally lived to the west of the Euphrates. In the course of time a considerable number of people (including kings) with Amoritic names begin to be found in major cities, such as Babylon and Sippar. This suggests that immigrant populations were not immune to the pull exercised by the large urban agglomerations of southern Mesopotamia.<sup>5</sup>

From the second half of the 13th century BCE the building of a series of new capital cities by the

kings of Assyria ushered in a new phase in the history of Mesopotamian urbanism. This policy seems to have started during the reign of King Tukulti-Ninurta I, who used war captives to build and populate the new city of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. The walls of this city enclosed an area of at least 240 hectares. Several kings of the Neo-Assyrian empire (934–610 BCE) followed this example by building a whole series of new palace-cities, such as Kalhu (360 hectares), Dur-Sharukkin (300 hectares) and Nineveh (750 hectares). Lack of information on the proportion of the walled areas covered with buildings makes it impossible to estimate the populations of these cities. In one text King Assurnasirpal II claims to have fed 69,574 people at Kalhu but if this figure is reliable (which is by no means certain) it may refer to the number of those participating in the inauguration ceremonies rather than to the number of urban inhabitants. The only certain conclusion that can be drawn is that some of the newly created cities of Middle- and Neo-Assyrian times were very large and that involuntary migration played an important part in their creation.

In the time of the Neo-Babylonian empire (626–539 BCE) Babylon became the largest city of Mesopotamia. Its outer wall enclosed an area of no fewer than 890 hectares but it is generally agreed that the majority of the urban population lived within the 400 to 500 hectares enclosed by the inner wall circuit. Even this area may not have been entirely built up. Again the number of inhabitants cannot be determined but the majority view is that Babylon is unlikely to have had more than 50,000 inhabitants during the 6th century BCE.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, little is known about the ethnic make-up of the population of 6th-century Babylon. Most of the Jews deported after the capture of Jerusalem (586 BCE) seem to have ended up in villages rather than in cities, but finds of seals bearing Jewish names suggest the presence of deportees or their descendants in the city. This clue might be taken to suggest that settlement of involuntary migrants in rural areas was followed by a secondary phase of voluntary migration to the city.

## ARCHAIC AND CLASSICAL GREECE AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

The early decades of the Archaic Period (750–500 BCE) witnessed the rise of the ‘city-state’ (*polis*) in many parts of mainland Greece, on the Greek islands, and on the west coast of Asia Minor (see above, Ch. 3). With the notable exception of Sparta, where a large proportion of the adult male citizen population lived in army tents, all of the city-states which emerged during the 8th and 7th centuries BCE had a recognizably urban centre. It remains extremely difficult to assess the amount of rural–urban migration implied by the appearance of these towns. Stories about new *poleis* being created by a decision to ‘live together’ (*synoikismos*) might be taken to suggest a partial abandonment of rural settlements in favour of a single political centre. Yet it is notoriously difficult to find archaeological evidence for widespread rural abandonment.

Perhaps the best argument in favour of the view that some degree of clustering must have occurred is the size of the urbanized *polis* centres of classical times. As recent investigations into the size and populations of the Greek cities of the 5th and 4th centuries have demonstrated, the size of the areas enclosed by the city walls of classical times implies the existence of a large urban population even if it is assumed that only between one-third and one-half of the walled area was used for habitation. Since assigning large populations to town *and* country would necessarily produce an absurdly large total population, the conclusion that at least 60 per cent of the population of the Greek world must have lived in cities cannot be avoided.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, the implication is not that 60 per cent of the Greek population was primarily engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The correct conclusion is

rather than a very large proportion of the farming population of Classical Greece preferred to live in cities. The resulting picture is intriguingly similar to that which emerges from the archaeological evidence from Early Dynastic Mesopotamia.

The Archaic Age also witnessed the emigration of large numbers of Greeks to colonies in Italy, Sicily, Cyrenaica (modern Libya), and the Black Sea region. The cities and city-states which emerged from this process strongly resembled those of the Greek mainland and western Asia Minor. There can be no doubt, for instance, that many of the Greek cities of Sicily, southern Italy, and North Africa had very spacious town walls which must have accommodated a large proportion of the citizen population. Examples include Syracuse (walled area 1,600 ha), Taras (530 ha), and Cyrene (750 ha). As a general rule only between one-fifth and one-third of the areas enclosed by the fortifications of these cities was used for habitation, but in the case of Syracuse domestic buildings occupied less than 10 per cent of the walled area.<sup>8</sup>

On the Greek mainland Athens is by far the best documented *polis*. Based on the number of hoplites which the Athenians could field at the start of the Peloponnesian War, it has been calculated that at this time Attica had a population of about 250,000. This estimate includes resident foreigners and slaves. The most recent estimates for the populations of Athens and the Piraeus are 35,000 to 40,000 and 30,000 respectively.<sup>9</sup> All these estimates come with a large margin of error. Nonetheless it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that Attica was characterized by a much lower urbanization rate than the average Greek *polis*. The obvious explanation is that Athens had a much larger rural territory than most other Greek cities.

It has long been realized that population movements within Attica can be traced with the help of funerary inscriptions. The reason for this is that the political reforms of Cleisthenes (c.508 BCE) had created a system in which membership of the urban and rural localities (*dēmoi*) had become hereditary. This means that any citizen who died after moving from a rural locality to Athens or the Piraeus was commemorated as still belonging to his place of origin. Using this type of evidence it can be shown that about 60 per cent of those citizens who received an inscribed gravestone in Athens, the Piraeus, or the urbanized districts along the south coast of Attica belonged to one of the rural demes. Either the recipients of these stones or one of their ancestors must have moved from the country to the city.

While the figure of 60 per cent may seem impressively high, it does not in any way contradict the view that most of those who had been born in the rural districts of Attica stayed and died in or near their home villages. It has been demonstrated, for instance, that of the twenty-one members of the rural deme of Kerameis c.62 per cent had themselves commemorated in or near their ancestral deme. In the case of the rural deme of Rhamnous (on the north-east coast of Attica) the corresponding figure is even as high as 76 per cent.

Interestingly, a completely different picture emerges from a series of 4th-century documents concerning the successful filing of manumission suits by slaves. Since the information provided by these texts includes demotics for citizen owners and place of residence for metic owners and for manumitted slaves, it is possible to establish how many ex-slaves lived in a deme different from the deme of origin or the place of residence of their former owners. In about 85 per cent of all cases the owner's demotic is different from the slave's place of residence, and the vast majority of the ex-slaves mentioned in these texts appear to have resided in or immediately outside the city of Athens. From these data it has plausibly been inferred that the majority of ex-slaves drifted to Athens and the Piraeus, for the obvious reason that the opportunities to pursue a trade or a commercial enterprise in

other parts of Attica were negligible.<sup>10</sup>

In Hellenistic times many new cities of the Greek type were founded in various parts of what had been the Persian empire. In many of the new cities founded by Alexander and his immediate successors groups of veterans formed the core of the population. A handful of cities is known to have received a significant number of civilian immigrants. We are told, for instance, that the core population of the Syrian city of Antioch, one of the capitals of the Seleucid empire, consisted of Athenians from the aborted city of Antigonía, some descendants of earlier settlers in the district, and a large number of Macedonian veterans from the army of King Seleucus I, with their wives and children. The male nucleus of the population comprised 5,300 men. Immediately after its foundation Antioch covered some 225 hectares. Within a century its population is thought to have approached 50,000.

With a walled area of no fewer than 825 hectares the Ptolemaic capital of Alexandria was even larger. Recent estimates of the population of this city range from 200,000 to 500,000, implying a density in the range from 240 to 600 inhabitants per hectare of walled space. The latter figure seems excessively high for a Greek city of this period.<sup>11</sup>

As in the case of Antioch immigrants from Greece and their descendants made up a large proportion of Alexandria's population. Interestingly, we happen to know that Alexandria also had an Egyptian and a Jewish quarter. The existence of these quarters proves that the city attracted large numbers of native Egyptians and immigrants from neighbouring regions.

## ROMAN ITALY AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Judging from the archaeological record Rome was already a substantial city during the 6th century BCE. In this period the city consisted of four 'regions' with a total area of 285 hectares. The latter figure is higher than that for any other city in Etruria or Latium at this date (the largest Etruscan city was Veii with 194 hectares). It must, however, be stressed that the walls or religious boundaries of Etruscan and Latin cities of the 6th century enclosed very large areas of which only a relatively small proportion is likely to have been built up.

Similarly there are no grounds for supposing that all of the 427 hectares enclosed by the so-called 'Servian' wall of the early 4th century BCE had public, religious, or domestic buildings on them from the beginning. It seems more likely that initially the walled area contained large empty spaces which were gradually filled up in the course of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. In any case, even in the final decades of the 3rd century BCE almost the entire population of Rome seems to have lived *intra muros*.<sup>12</sup>

As the Romans conquered Italy, one of the techniques they used to consolidate their grip on newly subjugated territories was the creation of 'Latin' colonies whose populations did not have Roman citizenship (see above, Ch. 3). Each Latin colony had a walled urban centre which must have performed a variety of administrative, religious, and undoubtedly also economic functions for the rural population. The areas enclosed by the walls of some Latin colonies of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE were very spacious. Most Latin colonies of the later 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE were much smaller. However, since there is evidence to suggest that only a small part of the walled areas of the early Latin colonies was built up, the smaller colonies of later times need not have had smaller urban populations. The only certainty is that in all periods the majority of the colonial population lived in



the country.<sup>13</sup>

Even if we make allowance for the fact that some Latin colonies were established in existing towns, it cannot be denied that Roman colonial policies resulted in the spread of Roman-style urbanism across large parts of Italy. From the viewpoint of migration history it is interesting that this result was achieved through state-sponsored rather than through voluntary migration. This is not to deny that voluntary migration to newly conquered areas occurred, but the almost complete absence of evidence makes it impossible to assess its importance.

During the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE the population of Rome grew to approximately a million inhabitants. An abundance of archaeological evidence shows that many smaller Italian cities also became much larger during this period. Some examples of urban decline can also be found but these are confined to certain parts of southern Italy.

As in the case of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia and Classical Greece, various scholars have tried to estimate the proportion of the Italian population living in cities. Although no consensus has been reached, the majority view is that in early imperial times the Italian urbanization rate was about 32 per cent if Rome is included and *c.*20 per cent if it is excluded. An urbanization rate of this order falls dramatically short of the rate of at least 60 per cent which has been calculated for Classical Greece. The explanation must be that, unlike the urban populations of Classical Greece, those of early imperial Italy did not include a large proportion of the farming population.<sup>14</sup>

Judging from the written sources, voluntary migration played an important part in the growth of Rome. We are told, for instance, that some 12,000 migrants of Latin status had moved to Rome between 203 BCE and 187 BCE. Writing about the changing composition of the population of Rome in the early 60s BCE, Sallust talks of 'the young men who maintained a wretched existence by manual labour in the country but, tempted by public and private doles, had come to prefer idleness in the city to their hateful toil'. Although the moral overtones of this passage are evident, the basic idea that the institution of free grain doles for up to 320,000 recipients acted as a powerful pull factor for migrants is plausible enough.

It remains difficult to assess the contributions made by other types of migrant. It has been suggested that in early imperial times the population of Rome included *c.*50,000 foreigners and estimates for the number of slaves vary from *c.*100,000 to *c.*300,000. Since a large proportion of urban slaves were manumitted, the Roman tradition of employing non-free labourers as domestic servants and as workers in the urban economy helped to replenish the free population of Rome. The other side of the coin was that large numbers of slaves had to be imported to maintain the urban slave population.

Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about migrant networks or about other arrangements which would have made it easier for migrants to obtain access to housing, food, and work. Some foreigners who came to Puteoli, Ostia, or Rome for business purposes must have benefited from the existence of associations and offices of merchants originating from particular cities or regions, and it has plausibly been suggested that the existence of certain diaspora communities, such as the Jews, made it easier for people of the same background to move around the empire. However, as David Noy has acutely observed, there is no unambiguous evidence for any concentration of individual nationalities anywhere in the city of Rome.<sup>15</sup>

While the fast expansion of Rome during the last two centuries BCE cannot be explained without assuming high levels of voluntary and forced migration, the role of migration in sustaining the very large population created by these processes is more controversial. According to one study,

demographic conditions in Rome are likely to have resembled those in 18th-century London where the difference between the crude death rate and the crude birth rate was about 10 per thousand per annum. On this view about 10,000 voluntary or forced migrants were needed to sustain the population of *c.* 1 million which Rome is believed to have had during the 1st century CE.

Against this theory various scholars have argued that sanitary conditions in early imperial Rome were more salubrious than those existing in the large cities of early modern Europe. This counter-argument is unconvincing. It has been shown, for instance, that the dates of death mentioned in early Christian epitaphs from Rome show a strong concentration of deaths in late summer and early autumn which is best understood as reflecting the deadly impact of falciparain malaria and its interaction with other seasonal infections.<sup>16</sup> On balance it remains difficult to avoid the conclusion that the city of Rome had a demographic regime similar to that of many other large cities of pre-industrial Europe and that a fairly high level of immigration was needed to sustain its population.

In recent years some attempts have been made to achieve a better understanding of levels and patterns of migration to Rome and other Italian cities by looking at isotopic material contained in skeletal and dental material. Using this approach, a ground-breaking study of a group of skeletons from the harbour town of Portus (to the west of Rome) revealed that about one-third of those who were buried here had been born elsewhere. By looking at oxygen isotope ratios between first and third molars this study was also able to demonstrate that a considerable proportion of migrants had come to Portus as children, thereby undermining the traditional view that migrants were typically and overwhelmingly young adult males.

Taking this type of analysis an important step further, a more recent study uses strontium isotope analysis of dental material to shed some light on the places of origin of those who came as migrants to the city of Rome and to the rural areas immediately surrounding it. The evidence analysed came from two cemeteries which were situated at a distance of 2 and 11.5 km from Rome respectively. It appeared that seven out of 105 individuals displayed strontium isotope ratios significantly different from the local range of Rome. Six of these immigrants could be assigned to various parts of Italy, but in one case a North-African origin is deemed most likely. Interestingly, a more detailed analysis which looks at strontium isotopes and oxygen isotopes contained in the molars of fifty-five individuals suggested that twenty of these were of non-local origin. Three of these immigrants were sub-adults and one of these had an isotope signature pointing to North Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Since one of the cemeteries used in this study is situated at a considerable distance from Rome, we must reckon with the possibility that some of its findings are valid for the rural parts of the *suburbium* rather than for the population of Rome. Another problem is that isotopic analyses cannot distinguish between free migrants and slaves. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that this is a very promising new line of inquiry which has the potential of revolutionizing the study of migration in (and beyond) the Mediterranean world.

From the late 2nd century BCE onwards migration also played a part in the emergence and growth of Roman-type cities in the provinces. In 122 BCE 6,000 Italian colonists were sent to repopulate the city and territory of Carthage (which had been destroyed in 146 BCE) and Julius Caesar settled tens of thousands of civilian colonists and veterans in colonies in Spain, southern France, North Africa, and various provinces in the eastern half of the empire.

After the transition from republic to empire large numbers of veterans continued to be settled in or near existing or newly founded cities in the frontier regions. In this period the Roman army numbered some 300,000 men and consisted of two components: citizens who had been recruited for service in

the legions and non-citizens who served as auxiliaries and obtained citizenship after completing twenty-five years of service. Since during the 1st century CE most people of citizen status lived in Mediterranean Europe and because most auxiliaries were stationed outside the areas where they had been recruited, the composition of the early imperial army implies a high level of interregional migration. Funerary inscriptions mentioning the places of origin of soldiers make it possible to follow some of these movements. It appears, for instance, that most of the men garrisoning the legionary base at Mainz up to 70 CE came from Italy and southern Gaul and that the first legion stationed at Chester (near the border with Wales) included recruits from the Balkan provinces and from northern Italy.<sup>18</sup>

Those who survived their twenty-five years of service often stayed in the province where they had served and were settled in civilian settlements which were set up as or developed into colonies. Most of these newly established cities had rigidly orthogonal street grids and had a strongly Roman appearance. However, while the moving around of soldiers by the state and the settlement of veterans played a crucial part in the growth of many cities in the frontier regions, the vast majority of the cities of the Roman empire seem to have grown as a result of local or regional processes of migration and as a result of elite expenditure on urban slaves.

## CHINA

Recent research suggests that the beginnings of Chinese urbanism can be traced back even earlier than the Neolithic period (3500–2600 BCE) when ‘proto-cities’ of modest dimensions started to develop in various parts of north-east China (for more on early Chinese developments see [Ch. 6](#) above). Such settlements were essentially fortresses with walls of stamped earth which enclosed 3.5 to 7.5 hectares. Larger cities began to develop in the Longshan period (2600–2000 BCE) which saw the emergence of sovereign states. The capital cities of these city-states typically covered between 20 and 35 hectares, although some larger agglomerations have been discovered. For the smallest cities (covering only a couple of hectares) archaeologists have proposed densities in the order of 250 inhabitants per hectare of walled space, but these estimates cannot be applied to the larger centres. Judging from the archaeological data up to one-third of the walled areas of the larger cities was occupied by palatial quarters and by temple/altar complexes, and there are indications that the remaining two-thirds was not fully occupied. This makes it extremely difficult to estimate the populations of these early cities.

The period of the Early Bronze Age (2000–1600 BCE) witnessed the emergence of large territorial states controlling up to 300,000 square kilometres. In 1959 the capital of one of these states was discovered at the site of Erlitou (not far from Luoyang). This city covered about 375 hectares. Of this large area only the palatial quarter (7.5 hectares) was protected by a wall. To the north, east, and south of the palace zone were kilns and workshops. As so often, we do not know how densely the remaining parts of the city were settled. According to some specialists, the number of inhabitants may have stood at between 18,000 and 30,000, which would imply an average density of between forty-eight and eighty inhabitants per hectare for the site as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

After the collapse of Erlitou, in the time of the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BCE), Zhengzhou, the centre of the Erligang culture, grew into a fortified city of no fewer than 2,500 hectares with an inner enclosed core of 300 hectares. According to one estimate this city might have had as many as 100,000 inhabitants. If this figure is of the right order of magnitude, Zhengzhou would have been the largest city in the world at the time of its existence. It should, however, be noted that some other specialists

have assigned Zhengzhou a population of less than 10,000. The discrepancy between these two estimates is enough to illustrate the enormous methodological difficulties which have to be overcome in deriving population estimates from archaeological data.

The tradition of building very large capital cities continued in the period of the Zhou dynasty (1046–403 BCE). The capital cities of this period included Zhongzhou (49 km<sup>2</sup>) and Chengzhou (near Luoyang; 15 km<sup>2</sup>). From the 7th century BCE the breaking down of the effective overlordship of the Zhou king paved the way for the emergence of regional territorial states, each of which had its own capital city. This pattern continued into the Warring States period (403–221 BCE) in which regional rulers ceased to pay nominal allegiance to the kings of Zhou.

The largest city of the Warring States period was Linzi, the capital of Qi (on the Shandong peninsula) which covered an area of about 15 km<sup>2</sup>. Linzi is an interesting case because it is the first Chinese city for which a population estimate can be derived from the written sources which report that it was home to 70,000 households. With four people per household this would imply a population of *c.*280,000. However, since the size of the residential area was only 300 hectares, a population figure of this order would imply a population density of more than 900 persons per hectare of domestic space.<sup>20</sup> This seems impossibly high. If the entire urban area of *c.*15 km<sup>2</sup> was occupied, we obtain a more plausible density figure of *c.*187 inhabitants per hectare, but the starting assumption underlying this alternative estimate is unlikely to be correct. The only possible conclusion is that the figure of 70,000 households is either unreliable or should be taken to refer to the population of a much larger area.

Similar problems surround the interpretation of the number of households which a list drawn up in connection with the census of 2 CE attributes to what seem to have been the ten largest cities of the Han empire. According to this list the capital city of Chang'an had 80,000 households containing 246,200 individuals. In this period the walls of Chang'an enclosed an area of 36 km<sup>2</sup>, but as in the case of the capital cities of earlier Chinese history only a small proportion of this area was used for habitation. For this reason various experts have concluded that the number of households reported by the list of 2 CE must have included those residing in the surrounding districts. On the other hand, it remains likely that a very high proportion of the population of the prefecture of Chang'an lived within the walled area and in the suburbs surrounding it. It must also be kept in mind that all officials and court members as well as the entire nobility and their relatives were excluded from the census. Therefore a population figure in the order of 200,000 can still be defended.<sup>21</sup>

With so little reliable information on the population of individual cities, it is more or less impossible to estimate overall urbanization rates. At the time of the census of 2 CE the Chinese empire had a population of approximately 60 million. The number of town dwellers can, however, only be estimated by crediting the capital and various types of administrative cities with notional average populations. Using this approach one specialist has assigned 27.7 per cent of the total population of Han China to cities with 10,000 or more inhabitants. However, by classifying the inhabitants of the smallest administrative subdivisions (*t'ing*) as rural, another scholar arrives at an urbanization rate of *c.*17 per cent. Even this figure seems on the high side, since the overall urbanization rate in Han China is unlikely to have exceeded that prevailing during the much later Song dynasty, when at most 13 per cent of the Chinese population is thought to have lived in cities with 5,000 or more inhabitants.<sup>22</sup>

Very little is known about the role of migration in creating the large cities of early Chinese history and in maintaining their populations. One of the few certainties in this area is that forced migration

played an important part in the growth of at least some major cities. We are told, for instance, that after defeating his last opponents in 221 BCE, the Qin emperor Shi Huangdi deported 120,000 wealthy families from all over the empire and resettled them in the area of Xianjiang, the capital of Qin. Not much later, in the early years of the Han dynasty, some 50,000 people were resettled in or near the city of Chengdu. Similarly, the city of Chang'an had large suburbs for housing rich families resettled from the rest of the country. As these examples show, a large proportion of these forced migrants were settled in the administrative districts controlled by these cities rather than within the city walls. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that the fast expansion of Chengdu and Chang'an could not have taken place without a large influx of forced migrants.

Occasionally we also hear of unfree migrants being moved to a capital city. One illustration of this is Sima Qian's account of the expansion of Chang'an in the early years of the emperor Wudi (141–87 BCE): 'The government offices became increasingly confused in function and were set up in greater and greater numbers, while the number of slaves moved from the provinces to the capital was so large that only by transporting 4 million *piculs* of grain up from the lower reaches of the Yellow River and adding to it the grain bought by the officials was the capital able to keep itself adequately supplied.'

Even rarer are references to voluntary migrants. Yet there can be no doubt that this type of migration occurred. In another passage also dealing with the city of Chang'an Sima Qian writes: 'People poured in from all parts of the empire to congregate in the towns established at the imperial tombs around Chang'an, converging on the capital like the spokes of a wheel. The land area is small and the population numerous and therefore the people have become more and more sophisticated and crafty and have turned to secondary occupations such as trade to make their living.'<sup>23</sup>

Far more is known about migration to the frontier regions. Using detailed information supplied by newly discovered wood and bamboo records, a study by Chun-Su Chang discusses the settlement of various types of migrants in the newly conquered region of Ho-shi in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BCE. After this area had been conquered by the emperor Wudi, tens of thousands of colonists moved in. These included regular garrison soldiers as well as large numbers of convicts. Most of these immigrants were settled as farmer-soldiers. However, after a couple of decades the largest fortresses became more civilian in character and developed into district capitals. Judging from the archaeological record, most of these cities remained quite small, with walled areas of between 8.75 and 17.1 hectares.<sup>24</sup> In the long run the outcome was a lateral expansion of the urban system of the Han empire rather than the emergence of an innovative frontier society.

## SOUTH ASIA

The history of urbanism in South Asia starts around the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE with the appearance of four or five large cities of which Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are the most famous (see above [Ch. 5](#)). Attempts to estimate the populations of these cities run up against the usual methodological difficulties. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa seem to have covered between 100 to 200 hectares and 80 to 150 hectares respectively. For Mohenjo-daro a population in the order of 40,000 has been suggested, but since it is impossible to ascertain what proportion of the city was used for habitation the basis for this estimate is weak.<sup>25</sup>

Since the written sources surviving from the period 600 BCE–500 CE contain no reliable population figures, we can hardly go beyond the conclusion that the second half of the last millennium BCE

witnessed the emergence of large numbers of recognizably urban settlements across India (above, Ch. 5). It is also possible to detect a widely shared consensus that in the period of the Mauryan empire (342–187 BCE) the capital city of Pataliputra was the largest urban agglomeration of the Indian subcontinent. The outer defences of this city are thought to have enclosed no fewer than 2,200 hectares and this figure has been used to support a population estimate of 270,000. According to some specialists, however, the vast majority of the population of Pataliputra is likely to have lived within the 340 hectares enclosed by the inner moat. On this view the city would still be the largest city of Mauryan India but its population would have been only *c.* 50,000.

At least ten other Indian cities are known to have had fortified areas of between 100 and 300 hectares before or after the creation of the Mauryan empire (above, Ch. 5). One example is the city of Kausambi (in the Ganges plain). In the period 600–300 BCE this city covered approximately 50 hectares, but in Mauryan times it had an outer wall enclosing 200 hectares of which about three-quarters was covered with buildings. Since Kausambi had extramural suburbs covering an additional 50 hectares, the total built-up area is estimated to have been *c.* 200 hectares. Operating with a hypothetical population density of between 160 and 200 inhabitants per hectare (based on the number of excavated houses per hectare of urban space), various experts have come up with estimates of 36,000 to 40,000 for Kausambi's urban population.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, the patchy archaeological record offers no basis for even a very approximate estimate of the number of Indian cities in early historical times. What is also extremely worrying is that estimates of the size of the population of the Mauryan empire (which covered most of India) vary from 15.5 million to a staggering 181 million. For both these reasons any attempt to calculate or estimate local, regional, or empire-wide urbanization rates seems doomed to fail.

One of the few certainties is that the phase of urban expansion which seems to have started in the 6th century BCE coincided with a period of general demographic expansion, but the exact relationship between these two phenomena remains disputed. Was population growth the prime mover which made possible urbanization? Did the emergence of states and cities stimulate demographic growth by promoting security? Or were the processes of state formation, urban expansion, and population growth simply inextricably intertwined?

Judging from the archaeological record the cities of early historical India expanded at a faster rate than rural agglomerations.<sup>27</sup> To some extent this differential growth rate can be explained as an optical illusion created by deficiencies in the rural data. Nonetheless it seems a safe inference that the simultaneous expansion of a large number of cities could not have happened without a significant level of rural–urban migration. It also seems likely that after the initial phase of urban expansion a certain level of migration from rural areas to cities was needed to prevent the large populations of cities like Pataliputra and Kausambi from declining. It must, however, be admitted that there is no concrete evidence to back up these inferences.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, city size and migration to cities in the period 3000 BCE–500 CE are difficult topics. Nonetheless it seems clear that in Mesopotamia and Classical Greece, and perhaps also in the Mauryan empire, even the largest cities typically had fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Some of the capital cities of the Hellenistic world seem to have had larger populations and in Han China the city of Chang'an may have had as many as 200,000 inhabitants; but in the period covered by this chapter

only the population of early imperial Rome grew to about 1 million. In many pre-modern states state-sponsored migration to colonies established in newly conquered areas was a major factor in the expansion of urban networks. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that the forced migration of war captives and slaves played an important part in the growth of many early cities. In view of the high urban mortality rates caused by insalubrious living conditions it is likely that the populations of large and densely populated cities could not be sustained without continuous immigration. The literary and archaeological evidence supports this inference, but unfortunately does not permit a detailed analysis of underlying migration patterns.

## NOTES

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2. Adams, *Heartland of Cities*; U. Finkbeiner, *Uruk Kampagne 35–37 1982–1984: Die archäologische Oberflächenuntersuchung (Survey)*, Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka Endberichte 4 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1991).
3. Adams, *Heartland of Cities*. Cf. A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 BC*, vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 31, for the suggestion that by 2500 BCE 80 per cent of the population of south Mesopotamia lived in cities of more than 40 ha.
4. Adams, *Heartland of Cities*, 90.
5. D. Charpin, D. O. Edzard, and M. Stol, *Die altbabylonische Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 57–8, 80.
6. Assyrian cities: M. van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1979). Babylon: T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 233.
7. Hansen, *The Shotgun Method*, building on J. L. Bintliff, 'Further Considerations on the Population of Ancient Boeotia', in J. L. Bintliff, ed., *Recent Developments in the History and Archaeology of Central Greece*, BAR International Series 666 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1997), 231–52.
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10. Urban gravestones: A. Damsgaard-Madsen, 'Attic Funeral Inscriptions. Their Use as Historical Sources and Some Preliminary Results', in *Studies in Ancient History and Numismatics Presented to Rudi Thomsen* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1988), 55–68. Rural demes: R. Osborne, 'The potential mobility of human populations', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 10 (1991), 231–51.
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12. T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome. Italy from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000–264 BC)* (London: Routledge), 203; N. Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland: The City of Rome and the Italian Economy, 200 BC–AD 200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 33–9.
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## POWER AND CITIZENSHIP

MARIO LIVERANI

THE relations between the structures of power and those of citizenship have long been linked to, and influenced by, the opposition of East versus West. Now that such an opposition is considered as outdated and distorting, we have to look for more objective factors in order to differentiate in time and space the long millennia of ‘Antiquity’ (c.3000 BCE to 500 CE). We have therefore to start with the history of studies, to eventually pass to a comparative description of the urban institutions as they are presently conceived, and finally to a description of the effects of the changing institutional features upon the physical form of the city.

## THE ‘IDEOLOGICAL’ MODELS

Until the mid-19th century, the only urban settlements known from antiquity were those of the Classical world, Greece and Rome, and even these were known rather from ancient literature (historians and geographers) than from archaeology. Apart from the urban exposures of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the visible remains of the Hellenistic and Roman cities in Asia Minor and North Africa provided the image of true urban settlements. On the contrary, the Oriental civilizations were only known from isolated palaces (Persepolis) or temples (Egypt). True urban excavations started only in the mid-19th century in Greece and in Mesopotamia, while we had to wait another century to have comparable activities in India and in China.

No surprise that the first book on the ‘ancient city’, by Fustel de Coulanges (1864)<sup>1</sup> was characterized by being devoted solely to the Classical city; by being mostly based on the literary evidence; by focusing on the urban community (*la cité*) in its socio-political and cultural (especially religious) sense, rather than the material structure of the urban centres (*la ville*); and by implicitly putting aside the ‘Oriental’ evidence, at that time already provided by the Assyrian capital cities. The Oriental cities were considered ‘different’, both by their admirers (Layard, 1853: ‘We must not judge of eastern cities by those of Europe’) and by their detractors (Burckhardt, 1870: ‘the rude royal fortresses of Nineveh’; 1898: ‘the enormous military encampments of the Assyrian dynasties’).<sup>2</sup> The Oriental cities were considered too big (well above the Aristotelian or the Hippodamian canons) and too much centred on the royal palace, while the structures connected with the communal life in the realm of politics (the *agora*), economy (the marketplace), and cultural communication (the theatre) were missing. Since the concept of ‘city’ was—so to say—occupied by the Classical model, the Oriental capitals could not be designated by the same term, which was perceived as a modern equivalent of the Greek term *polis*. The Oriental cities were something else, be they the Assyrian ‘military encampments’, or the Egyptian ‘temple-cities’.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation of the urban structure of the cities was just a consequence of the different evaluation of their socio-political institutions. The Western city being the seat of collective bodies (with the king located in extra-urban castles or residences), of political freedom, of democracy, of economic

enterprise, the Oriental city had to be characterized by the negative values of despotism, of generalized servitude, of economic dirigisme and redistribution. The ‘East vs. West’ syndrome, revived by the Greek war of independence of 1822–1830, was easily applied to the evaluation of the urban settlements—both the modern ones in the Ottoman empire or in China, and the ancient ones being progressively brought to light in the Near East.

The dichotomy would last an entire century, and its culmination can be identified in the works of Max Weber, since his *Agrargeschichte* (1909) providing two separate lanes for the progress of the Western city (from aristocratic to democratic *polis*) and of the Oriental royal palace (bureaucratic kingdom-city), and until his essay *Die Stadt* (1921) using Oriental cases (Israel, Islam, China, and Japan) to conclude that they lack the necessary requisites: they are not communities of citizens, they lack the very idea of citizenship.<sup>4</sup> He even classified the Western city under the heading of ‘illegitimate power’, to underscore its opposition to the seat of the political power. It also happened—most scholars being European and dealing with modern history—that the specific trajectory of the European city (as in Henry Pirenne’s influential *Medieval Cities*, 1925) from the Middle Ages to the modern industrial city, with insistence on the commercial origins and on the communal (anti-monarchic) attitude, was perceived as a normal paradigm to be extended back to previous history, and to non-European civilizations.<sup>5</sup>

## TOWARDS A PROPERLY UNIVERSAL MODEL

In the meantime, during the colonial occupation of the Near East and of India, archaeology discovered many cities all over the world and realized that Oriental civilizations and Oriental cities were so diversified in time and space that the traditional contraposition of East vs. West was untenable. Also in Europe, the growing interest in the Celtic and German cultures expanded the realm of cities well beyond the Classical (Mediterranean) scenery, and diversified their appearance. Also the uniqueness of the European and Near Eastern trajectory was challenged by the awareness of other trajectories in Asia and in the New World. Finally, the universality of the Greek model was challenged even inside the Greek world by taking into account the non-Athenian, non-democratic polities (kingdoms and ethnic states) that were prevalent also there.

The search for unbiased criteria for identifying cities (as opposed to villages) culminated in Gordon Childe’s article on *The Urban Revolution* (1950).<sup>6</sup> His ‘ten points’ have been criticized (and misunderstood) by later scholars, but still keep the merit of being archaeologically testable, and of being potentially universal in application.<sup>7</sup> The search for the origin of cities, where the ‘original characters’ of urbanization could be outlined in a simplified and evident way, had to admit at least three different locations: Mesopotamia (plus Egypt), China, and Mesoamerica.

During the same period, the study of the written documents, especially abundant in Mesopotamia, allowed configuration of the political structures in a more realistic and nuanced way, with a level of detail not inferior to that of the Classical world. A special role should be acknowledged to Leo Oppenheim and to the ‘Sippar Project’ in the Oriental Institute of Chicago.<sup>8</sup> The basic point in his approach was that, besides the central role of the ‘great organizations’ (royal palace and temples), the private sector too had its own political structures, its collective bodies: an assembly of all the (adult, male, free) citizens, and a restricted college of ‘elders’. The balance between large-scale organization and the private sector underwent several variations in time and space, but in general terms the image of the Oriental city became not very different from that of the Classical world, or of

the European trajectory.<sup>9</sup>

## FROM DECOLONIZATION TO THE 'END OF IDEOLOGIES'

Trends already operative during the 1960s and 1970s became pervasive when decolonization gave way to globalization, and the triumph of neo-capitalism brought about the 'end of ideologies' (if not of history). Some strong concepts of the old paradigms underwent notable variations and ended in a more nuanced configuration. The model of the 'temple-city', once conceived under complete (economic and political) control of the priestly elite, has been nuanced and even discarded. The role of the Palace, so evident both in the material remains and in the texts, has been downgraded in the frame of the anti-state trends of our time. The concept of a 'redistributive city' (Polanyi's model) is now refuted and a greater role is attributed to private enterprise and to trading houses.<sup>10</sup> Recent inventories of city-states, in a worldwide perspective, had to abandon the *polis* model in its institutional sense, to include every polity small enough to be centred on one city only—a trend already started by Colin Renfrew with his 'Early State Module'.<sup>11</sup> In the same vein, recent inventories of empires include 'shadow empires' and 'enlarged complex chiefdoms'.<sup>12</sup>

For sure, it is to be welcomed that concepts like 'Power' and 'Freedom', 'Despotism' and 'Citizenship', can no longer be considered as the exclusive patrimony of two opposed worlds, but as coexisting in both of them in different measure dependent on complex historical conditions and trends. Also the widespread use of graphic models, started by the New Geography, to visualize the structure of the city, the relations between cities, and between city and countryside, contribute to an undifferentiated and de-historicized appreciation of the phenomenon. The political influence of globalization is evident in the willingness to provide equal space and opportunities, even equal authorship, to each country.

Yet, a completely de-ideologized approach runs the risk of throwing away the baby of ideas and of historical peculiarities with the bathwater of ideological bias. Equal opportunities have nothing to do with an undifferentiated continuum through time and space. The historian's task is to point out changes over continuity; peculiarities over uniformity. 'Antiquity' lasts 4,000 years in a worldwide context, and we cannot accept either a monolithic model or the chaos of events without any interpretive structure. Since the 'total' and biased models of past centuries have been discarded as misleading, we have to work towards the identification of more objective and nuanced ones. A general, comparative approach to the problem is a difficult task, both because of a tremendous imbalance in the amount of sources and in the level of studies between the Classical and the Oriental worlds; and because of the imbalance of my own (but probably of everybody's) personal competence in just one of the several historical trajectories to be compared.

## POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: THE ANCIENT THEORIES

A presentation of the political theories in antiquity would be out of place here. A few words are, however, necessary because ancient theories, besides being first-hand testimonies, also exerted an influence on the modern appreciation of the inter-urban conflict between power and citizenship. In the ancient Near East there was no explicit theory about the city or the state, while a lot of texts of varied nature (myths, rituals, royal inscriptions, wisdom literature) were devoted to the origin and role of the kingship and of the temples. Whether the king be a god himself (Egypt) or the 'managing director' of

the state on behalf of the gods (Sumer, Assyria), the divine origin and overlordship of the state is the pivotal concept: temple and royal palace are on the fore, while the community of citizens receives no special attention. Urban exemptions and privileges are awarded by the king to ‘sacred’ cities (from Nippur to Assur), as an acknowledgement of the outstanding prestige of the city-god, not of the citizens.

The secular philosophers, historians, and lawgivers of Archaic and Classical Greece classified political forms of power as either monarchic, oligarchic, or democratic. The range of choices was even applied to the Persian empire (in Herodotus’ imaginary debate ending in Darius seizing the throne), but was mostly applied to the Greek city-states. Yet, since ‘pure’ forms were hardly identified in the real inventory of the Greek constitutions, a mixed form progressively took the fore, and was canonized in Aristotle’s *Politics*. The ‘mixed constitution’ is based on the presence and reciprocal conditioning of a unique leader (be it a king or a tyrant), a restricted council (be it hereditary or elective), and a general assembly. In its looser sense, every ancient constitution was mixed, to a greater or lesser extent, from Athens to imperial Rome. And in fact the constitution of ‘Oriental’ Carthage was one of the best appreciated by Aristotle. What is here of interest is the idea that power (represented by the leader) and citizenship (represented by the assembly) can and should coexist and cooperate. The theory of the mixed constitution was transmitted and adapted to Rome (Polybius), and was eventually rediscovered by European humanists, to exert a notable influence on later political theories, ending in the Enlightenment and Modern ‘balance of powers’.

It is to be mentioned here that, at the very time that Aristotle was writing his *Politics*, comparable treatises were being composed in Asia, exerting a notable influence on the later political thought of their countries. In China, the *Zhou-Li* (going back to the time of the Han unification) was mainly interested in the material form of the ideal city, a form however reflecting an institutional model.<sup>13</sup> In India, Kautilya (minister of the Maurya king Chandragupta) is the assumed author of the (rather later) *Arthashastra*, a treatise on the art of government, with much emphasis on power over citizenship, and on royal behaviour rather than urban forms. From India too, the utopian description of the city Ayodhya in the *Ramayana* entered the later tradition as an authoritative model.<sup>14</sup>

## THE MODERN VIEW: CITY VS. VILLAGE

In its original configuration, a city is the administrative centre of a territorial state, the seat of a palace (or else of a temple with political competences). This is the model of the city-state, including a central town, with a periphery of rural villages, hamlets, pastoral encampments. Even if the polity grows to become a ‘regional’ or a ‘national’ state, and includes several towns, each town remains the seat of its structures of power, with a provincial palace instead of the royal palace. We will provide more details below.

Besides the city, there is the village, which during the long millennia of pre-urban Neolithic was the only structured and permanently inhabited place, and also in later urbanized societies remained the seat of a substantial part of the population, obviously losing its independence and becoming linked to the city in an unequal relationship. A clarification of the difference between village and city is helpful to better understand both of them. In addition to the more evident differences in the realm of the material appearance—cities being bigger than villages, and being usually walled while villages were mostly ‘open’—what matters here is the institutional form. In terms of ‘Power’ vs. ‘Community’, we could say that the village has only communal institutions: collective bodies,

temporary officials, diffuse participation based on age and kinship. Differently the city, in addition to the communal institutions inherited from the village, is also endowed with administrative and political institutions: a palace and/or one or more temples. The power is usually monocratic, hereditary, extended to the entire territory (city plus villages). In its practical exercise, the power of the palace is based on technical competences (scribes, administrative officials, etc.) rather than kinship (which remains a paramount factor in the selection of the leader). A contraposition between the institutions of power and the community of citizens, while not affecting the village, could be a problem in the city—although the overwhelming power of the palace leaves little space to a separate strategy for the local community. From this point of view, the cities of antiquity seem different from those of the European medieval and modern times.

## THE COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS

In the 19th century the model of the village, originally based on Tacitus' *Germania* and on the colonial descriptions of villages in British India, was eventually applied also to those of antiquity, partly compensating for elusive primary evidence, and thanks to the assumed fixity of villages through time.<sup>15</sup> Both the villages and the communal sector of towns had a general assembly (gathering in case of emergency, or to solve strategic problems), a restricted body of 'elders' (in charge for judicial and inner political affairs), plus some public officials and a 'mayor', representing the community in its relations to the central government. In pre-urban villages these institutions were appropriate to cover all the needs of the community; while with the advent of urbanization and state formation political affairs were assumed by the palace, the local institutions being left with legal concerns. In the cities, the presence of the palace makes more evident the limited competence of the local institutions.

The specific details and terminology vary from case to case. For example, at Sparta there was a *Gerousia* (thirty elders), an *Apella* (general assembly), and five Ephors to run the inner affairs. At Athens the elders' council (*Areopagos*), became an elective body (*Boulē*), the general assembly was called *Ekklēsia*, and the officials *Archontes*. In pre-Classical Mesopotamia, the general assembly was called *puhrum* ('gathering') or simply *ālum* 'the city', the elders could be a restricted body of just five persons, while the 'mayor' (*hazānum* or *rabiānum*) was appointed by (or in accordance with) the royal palace. But in general terms, the institutional structure of the ancient Near Eastern cities was not too different from that of Archaic (pre-Cleisthenian) Greek *poleis*. In Rome the assembly was devolved into a plurality of *Comitia*, based either on census (*comitia centuriata*) or location (*comitia tributa*).

Yet, a critical point is provided by the very concept of 'citizenship'. In the Ancient Near East there was no difference between citizens and peasants: everybody living inside a kingdom (in cities or in the rural countryside) was a subject of the king. A basic difference existed between the 'king's servants' (the members of the palace administration) and the common 'free' subjects. The king's servants didn't own personal properties or means of production, while the free families did—therefore they were 'free' in the economic sense, while being subjects politically. However, the rank and wealth of the king's servants was higher than those of the free persons. The kings' servants were concentrated in cities, while the majority of the free families were in villages, so that the Western idea of a link between freedom and city does not hold true in the ancient Orient.

In Greece, on the contrary, citizenship was selective, reserved to free landholders living in the city,

to the exclusion of foreigners and of workers devoid of landed property. The restricted concept of citizenship, based on specific requirements, will become typical of the Western tradition, especially in medieval Europe, in connection with the model of cities devoid of (and opposed to) the royal palace.

## THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CENTRAL POWER

By definition, all cities contain central institutions running their activities that can be sorted into two general types: the palace and the temple. The palace is an institutional and architectural complex including: the abode of a secular ruler, the seat of the state administration and archives, the seat of the economic activities belonging to the state organization (workshops and stores). The palace is generally big, with monumental embellishments (for public admiration), and is often secluded and protected not only from outsiders but also from the common population.

The role and burden of the temple is more varied. It can include the political leadership, in the so-called temple-city, but this model is rare (Uruk period in early Mesopotamia) and questionable. The temple can be alone, without palace, in 'sacred cities' different from the 'administrative cities' and the capital city (e.g. in the 'second urbanization' of India). It can consist of a unique temple (in monotheistic religions: e.g. the Jerusalem temple; but large towns have a plurality of temples or churches for various quarters, or for 'saints'), or more often of a set of temples, the most important of them for the city god.

## THE ATYPICAL FORMS

The most frequent constitution of the ancient city, described above, corresponds to the urban form of a 'lower town', hosting the community, and an 'upper town' (citadel, acropolis) hosting the palace and temples. There are many varieties, of course, and the distinction between public and private space is better visible in newly planned towns than in those grown up disorderly. The citadel can be located in the centre, but also at the extreme periphery. The temples can be separated from the palace, and enclosed or not into a sacred precinct. In the Indus Valley, the 'public' quarter is a separate mound to the west of the main mound with the normal dwellings. In the 'second urbanization' of India the temple cities (with no palace) are different from the administrative cities (with palace but no temples). And so on. But a special mention is to be given to properly different models.

One such 'atypical' model could be defined 'Cities without Citadels': large towns, so large that the label 'village' sounds inappropriate, entirely built up of private houses, with no inner partitions, no urban planning, and no public (apart from cultic) buildings. Such settlements can be defined towns but not cities, and are enormously enlarged villages—with a demographic growth not balanced by an institutional adjustment. The best examples are located on the margins of the chronological limits of antiquity: either in late Neolithic cultures (e.g. the large settlements of the Tripolye culture in Eastern Europe), or in early medieval times (such as the pre- and early Islamic towns on the Middle Niger).<sup>16</sup>

The opposite case of 'Citadels without Cities' is more common in antiquity, from the palatine centres at the periphery of Mesopotamia in the Uruk period (best exemplified by Arslantepe), or the cities of the Oxus civilization in the Early/Middle Bronze Age Central Asia, to the Mycenaean citadels of the late Bronze Age, and the Median citadels of the 9th–6th centuries BCE.<sup>17</sup> In such cases the common populace was not living in a 'lower town', but dispersed into villages or nomadic



encampments, and the model seems best fitting into half-nomadic societies.

## URBANISM AND POLITICS

A confrontation of the political structures governing the city, and the material features of the urban setting, could contribute to a better balanced evaluation of the relations between power and citizenship—avoiding both the ideologically biased approach of the old theories, and the de-structured approach of the more recent trends. In fact, the various functions of urban life had necessarily to materialize into specific buildings or architectural complexes, so that the overall plan and appearance of towns should be a good proxy to identify the relationships between power and community that characterized the specific periods and cultures. Our survey of the presence or absence of the various public buildings will be unavoidably simplified, in an attempt to provide an immediate evaluation for the main historical cultures. A better detailed distinction into periods and areas, and attention to additional (not necessarily minor) cases (e.g. Etruscan or Celtic towns), would be welcomed, but could only be the result of a collective research programme, and cannot be improvised here.

Our attempt is to sort the public buildings in two sets: (*a*) the seats of power; (*b*) the seats of communal life. The distinction could be somewhat equivocal. All public buildings are generally built by the central power—with exceptions of private ‘*euergetism*’ in the Hellenistic to late antique milieu. But buildings of class (*a*), hosting the basic functions of government, were run by the central power, and were hardly accessible to common people; while those of class (*b*) were intended as services for the community, were run by the community itself, and were widely accessible. Intermediate cases do remain, and some buildings (especially the temples) can belong to either class according to periods. But a general heuristic value of our sorting can be maintained.

## THE SEATS OF POWER

*The palace.* The palace is ubiquitous, as implied by the very definition of city. It can be the abode of a king (in the ‘capital city’), or of a governor (‘provincial palace’) in extended polities including several cities. This happens because of technical and logistic factors: the administration of the economy, but also of the justice, could not be easily run beyond a limited extent, so that a regional state (even less an ‘empire’) cannot be but a multi-cellular organism.

The palace can be a small or a huge building, according to the relevance of its functions and of the size of its polity. It can either concentrate all its functions in a single building, or have separate seats for its different functions: the lodgement of the king (and his family), the ceremonial apparatus, the administration, the store-rooms, the workshops, the archives, etc. Its various sub-seats can be dispersed in the urban space, but are more often concentrated in a specific area. In several cases the palace complex is located on a ‘citadel’ or ‘acropolis’, or in an ‘inner city’—a model visible in the city plan, but also in descriptions of the ideal city (like the Zhou-Li for pre-Han China). The Indus Valley solution, with separate mounds for the ‘public’ buildings and for the common town, or the huge ‘Forbidden’ inner city of the Chinese capitals are extreme cases, but the extent of the ‘palace’ complex in Babylon and Nineveh, or in Persepolis, or in imperial Rome (from Nero’s *Domus Aurea* to Domitian’s *Palatium*), or in Byzantium, are quite impressive as well. The Greek (or better said Athenian) model of a city without a palace (whose functions have been devolved to city officials)

remains rather exceptional in a wider perspective encompassing the entire ancient world.

*The temple.* The temple is always present, at various levels of relevance and complexity, in every urban centre. Its role as seat of power is even older than that of the palace (the 'first urbanization' of the Uruk period had no secular palace), and the space it occupies is generally bigger, for various reasons. First, the polytheistic religions require a plurality of temples, one for each god or goddess. Second, the ceremonial function of the temples requires wide spaces in outer courtyards, for the admittance of large crowds. Third, in the ancient world the temple hosted important economic activities requiring additional spaces for administration, storing, and specialized workshops.

Temples are mostly concentrated in a 'sacred' area, be it an acropolis (the Athens model), or a walled precinct (from the Eanna of Uruk to the Esagila of Babylon), symmetrical to the palace precinct (Zhou-Li); but can also be partly dispersed in the urban texture. The size of the temple varies according to its functions: it is a small shrine if running only cultic affairs, a big complex if running also economic activities. It is smaller where it is a kind of palace annex, and bigger where it is an independent institution. Consider the case of the Jerusalem temples: the 'first' one being a small building (in the tradition of the Bronze Age Levant) dependent on the royal palace, while the 'second' one was a huge complex (on the late Babylonian model), the seat of economic and political power of the Judean temple-state. But even the space for properly cultic activities can range from quite reduced, if the cult consists only in the care for the divine statue, to a much wider area, if the common people are admitted to take part in public ceremonies.

Probably we should differentiate temples as belonging either to our class (a) when endowed with political power, or to our class (b) when running the religious life of the community. In the course of time, especially after the advent of the 'ethic' monotheistic religions, the economic role of the temple became less visible, oriented towards public assistance rather than profit, as with the *waqf* of the Islamic mosque and similar institutions of the Christian churches.

A separate discussion should be reserved for cemeteries, the disposal of dead bodies being a religious and civic affair, usually located in extra-urban spaces, even reaching a high level of monumentality for the sake of power legitimation and socio-political cohesion. This important topic cannot be reasonably dealt with here.

*Public granaries and storehouses.* In a simplified way, we can assign to the 'seats of power' the economic structures of the redistributive economies, but assign the market to the communal features. Obviously, whenever the royal palace and the temples owned large extents of land, they had to concentrate the product in central granaries, to eventually use it in providing with food rations their dependants and the corvée workers. Public granaries are also present in cities of non-royal states with democratic constitutions, since the food reserves are in any case needed as a public insurance against recurrent shortages and problems of provisioning. Among other kinds of public storehouses, those concerning military activities are especially important: from arsenals or armouries, to stables (for horses), to caserns (for the standing army), all of them more or less ubiquitous through the course of ancient history.

*Tribunals and jails.* In the ancient Near East, the tribunal can gather in whatever meeting point (at the city gate, in a square, in front of a temple, under a big tree), depending on the status of judges (the king's judges, or the elders), but in any case with no specific building. Tribunals have dedicated buildings in the Greek and Roman world. On the contrary, the jail is ubiquitous in antiquity, at an early stage as annexed to the palace, and becoming better visible in the Greek, Roman, and later worlds.

*Fortifications.* Ancient cities are usually walled—while rural villages are not. The exceptions are rare: the case of Sparta (with no city wall before Hellenistic times) is famous because quite odd. In some areas and periods, an entire region was naturally protected enough to make fortifications superfluous. This applies e.g. to the palaces of Bronze Age Crete, the island being protected by the Minoan ‘thalassocracy’; and could also apply to some periods of Egyptian history, the entire Nile valley being well protected by nature. Yet the archaeological evidence shows that the Egyptian cities were walled in the early and in the later stages of their history. The city wall was a complex structure, generally including a moat, a glacis, also a sequence of several walls, a lot of towers, and special arrangements for the city gates. It occupied an important percentage of the urban space and made up an impressive item in the urban landscape. The inner citadel, besides being raised at a higher level, was also provided with additional fortifications. Outside of the city wall, forts and redoubts could also implement the protection of the urban space.

### THE SPACES OF THE CITY COMMUNITY

*The seat of public officials.* In the ancient Near East, in ancient India and China, the identification of specific buildings hosting the community officials is quite rare: in Assur there was a ‘House of the Eponym-official’. We can just imagine that the officials, during their term of office, simply used their own house to receive people. In the Classical world, on the contrary, specific buildings for public officials are common: e.g. the Greek *Prytaneion*, or the Roman abodes of the various *praefecti*. But in Rome (also in Byzantium and in China) the officials in charge with various sectors of city life (public order, food provisioning, fires, etc.) were responsible toward the emperor and not the community.

*The place of the assembly.* In the ancient Near Eastern cities the college of elders did not need a specific meeting place, and the general assembly gathered (when it rarely did) in whatever open space was available. With the advent of Athenian democracy, the city assembly gathered so frequently as to require a specific (although not exclusive) meeting space, a large open area. The Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum* became focal points of urban life, hosting various activities, including the meetings of the assembly, but also economic dealings. Public meetings and activities took place also in special buildings (the Greek council could have a *bouleutērion*, the assembly could gather in the theatre), especially in spaces around the open area: both the *agora* and the *forum* were sided by covered columned porches, the Greek *stoa* or the Roman and Byzantine *basilica*, to be used for political, economic, and cultural activities. By contrast, in the cities of Asia—from Mesopotamia and Egypt to India and China—there were no relevant and structurally conceived squares. The model of a central open space surrounded by houses was rather common in villages.

*The marketplace.* In the redistributive economies of the ancient East, there was no need for a specific and permanent marketplace. The long-distance trade ended up by the palace or temple administration, and periodic fairs were accommodated in front of a temple, or outside the city gate. Local exchange took place in urban streets or inside the city gate. In coastal or river towns, the (un)loading wharf was a crucial site (its Akkadian name *kārum* designated the merchants’ quarter). In China (according to the Zhou-li treatise) the market was on the northern side of the palace, being not a space for free exchange, but an interface between palace and merchants. In Han and post-Han China, large marketplaces were used also for a variety of activities. In India (according to the *Artashastra*)

there was no marketplace.

Quite different is the organization of trade in the Greek and Roman towns, where the marketplace had a specific location and a relevant visibility in the city plan. The Classical organization was also transmitted to the East, since Hellenistic times, and thus became a normal feature inherited by the Islamic city, where the *suq* or *bazaar* is a specific and central quarter. Another architectural accommodation for the running of trade is the caravanserai, located at a distance from the city; missing in pre-Classical and also in Greek times, it was introduced in late antiquity to develop later into the Islamic *khan*.

*Public performances.* In the ancient Near East there were no special buildings hosting public performances, and the same applies to ancient India and China. In Classical Greece, the theatre became an independent institution and an important feature in the urban landscape, to be inherited by the Hellenistic cities and those of the Roman empire. In Rome, besides the theatre, the amphitheatre is also a prominent building (the Coliseum being an outstanding example). Sporting competitions and training were hosted in the circus; for chariot races there was the hippodrome. This entire set of buildings, characteristic of Hellenistic and Roman cities, was fostered by the Byzantine but not by the Islamic city. Also in India and in China there seems to be no space for similar buildings, which seem to remain—at least during antiquity—rather alien to the ‘Asian values’.

*Care of the body.* A similar trajectory is covered by buildings reserved for the physical care of common people, or at least an extended elite. Such buildings were absent from ancient Oriental cities (from Mesopotamia to China), while they grew up in the Classical Greek city, to become an outstanding feature in the Hellenistic and Roman cities, in the form of public baths (*thermae*), and of public spaces for physical training (*gymnasiums*) or also for sporting competitions (*stadiums*). From the Roman model, baths and gymnasiums would be inherited by the Byzantine city, and public baths (*hammam*) became an obligatory feature of the Islamic (and Ottoman) city. Some form of public assistance for diseases and epidemics had long been in existence, usually attached to the temples of the healing gods; but they became a consistent urban institution only in late antiquity, partly as a consequence of Christianity (and later of Islam). Urban parks or gardens (as distinct from private utilitarian ones) were generally an annexe of the palace, or a royal/ imperial gift to the community.

*Care of the mind.* The non-alphabetic writing systems of ancient civilizations were so complex as to require a long training, generating a specific class of scribes, working in the public administration. There was no literacy outside of the ‘great organizations’, no access to written documents by the common people, so that schools, *scriptoria*, archives, and libraries were only hosted inside the palace or temple complexes. The famous Nineveh library was located in the rooms of the palace, to be used by the king’s scribes. The concepts of non-administrative uses of writing, of ‘public schools’, and of an open access to literary compositions could materialize only after the advent of the alphabet. In Greece, teaching could be hosted in occasional locations, especially in *stoa*-porticoes around the *agora*. Huge libraries in Hellenistic cities (Alexandria, but also Pergamon and others) were always royal achievements, but were open to scholars for intellectual (not administrative) activities. On the contrary, the ‘Imperial University’ established in China since 124 BCE had the specific intent of instructing and selecting candidates for the state bureaucracy, and belonged rather to the ‘Power’ side than to the city. In the same vein, the first emperor Shi Huangdi (221–210 BC), most famous for ordering the destruction of all the past books, kept a copy of them in the palace library, to be consulted by the highest bureaucrats. In Han and post-Han periods, ‘academies’ became common in imperial cities.

*Water and garbage.* As to the availability of water inside the city, a necessity in case of siege, cisterns and tunnels (leading to springs) were a common feature in the Levant of the Iron Age. The need is less prominent in cities located along rivers, or in the alluvium, with wells reaching the water table. Cisterns inside the city walls will grow up in size and complexity through the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, and not only in arid lands. Aqueducts were a prominent feature in the urban landscape of Rome and Byzantium. Public fountains inside the urban texture are complementary to aqueducts.

Devices for the disposal of water and of liquid refuse are normally present in every urban settlement since the origin of towns, in the form of small sewers in the centre of each street, eventually interconnected into a true and proper sewerage system, in accordance with the size and the architectural sophistication of the town, especially in Roman and later periods. The disposal of solid waste (admittedly, not a big problem in antiquity) in the pre-Classical world seems to be left to private behaviour, with no 'public' intervention: heaps of refuse accumulated inside the city, in the streets, in non-built spaces, or around the city walls. Only when streets became paved did the disposal of solid waste require an intervention by the community as a whole.

### THE INTERNAL ARTICULATION

In between the installations of the 'total power' of the palace, and those of the local/ diffuse needs of the citizenship, we can locate some intermediate structures and institutions. In the ancient Near East and in Greece, the urban texture was marked only by blocks and streets, in an irregular or an orthogonal grid, with no special implication. Foreign merchants hosted in a separate settlement outside of the city wall provide a special case. Only in late antiquity separate quarters for different ethnic, religious, or working groups, often walled (and bolted during the night), became common. A similar development took place also in Han China, with separate quarters for artisans, merchants, and foreign communities. The need for protection inside the city, originally felt only by the ruling elite (walled citadel) became a necessity with the advent of multiethnic and multi-religious urban communities—yet the very same size of an imperial capital city generated the need for separate wards with separate supervisors (the Han capital was divided into 160 wards).

Besides separate quarters, special working groups could develop institutions of their own: guilds of merchants, specialized workmen, professional soldiers, once part of the palace administration, could have a seat for their self-governing bodies, especially in Late Antiquity (and later periods). It remains unclear whether the Indian castes were living (already in the Mauryan period) in separate quarters.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The traditional idea of a neat divide between an 'Oriental city' based on power and a 'Western city' based on citizenship seems to be discarded as a result of proper comparative analysis.<sup>18</sup> There is rather a divide between two major historical phases. The existence of a pan-Asiatic model of the 'administrative city' (stretching from Uruk Mesopotamia to Mauryan India and Han China) is also of doubtful value, originating well before there was any city in Europe, so that it is rather a matter of (Asiatic) persistence vs. (European) innovation. In a first phase, besides the 'residual village' of the private houses, the city hosted public buildings only for the sake of power, and not for the services of the common population. In a second phase, two trends changed the shape of the city: buildings for the

services and the institutions of the community came into being, and the temple sector moved its main pertinence from the sphere of power to the sphere of community.

Basically, we can say that the structures of power had always and everywhere been in existence, since the first urbanization. On the contrary, the communal institutions and their urban visibility grew up in the course of time, with a sudden upsurge in the mid-1st millennium BCE, centred in Greece. But most communal institutions will be inherited both in the West (Roman empire) and in the East (Hellenistic, Byzantine, but also Islamic cities). The case of the Islamic city, although outside the chronological limits of antiquity, is particularly diagnostic, being the heir of the Hellenistic and Byzantine city, not of the long outdated pre-Hellenistic cities. The existence of an 'Oriental city' as based on a continuity from the ancient Mesopotamian to the Islamic city, interrupted by the 'intrusion' of the Graeco-Roman city, is clearly an anti-historical construct.

The mainstream of modern studies has long been influenced by various distorting factors: the model of power as located outside of the city (in the medieval castle or in the early-modern residency), which has no counterpart in antiquity; and the model of the 'democratic' *polis* of Greece, which is so restricted in time and space as to be hardly universal or paradigmatic.

The presence of a strong political power in the city reduced the role of the collective bodies, and exerted an evident effect on the urban community, in various forms. The economic effects (taxation and corvée) are notorious, and also the juridical effects (law codes, royal edicts, granting of privileges) are notable. But quite relevant too are the effects on urban life, in the form of ceremonial structures and events that characterize cities as opposed to countryside. Ceremony, intended to legitimate power and enhance social cohesion, was located both in the palace proper and in the temples (festivals, parades, etc.).

Finally, the model of free and wealthy citizens, as opposed to enslaved and poor peasants, derives from the medieval and early modern conditions, but does not apply to most of the ancient world. Freedom was not a political discrimination: both the public dependants and the members of common families, were simply subjects of the king. The idea that free citizens (and peasants as well) should never lose their free status was very persistent, and protected by royal measures of debt remission. Terms usually translated as 'freedom' mean more properly 'liberation' (from temporary servitude), while at the level of an entire urban community, 'freedom' is a royal exemption from taxes and military service. Cities protesting their 'freedom' were just defending their privileges. In other words, we could not apply to antiquity the medieval dictum that 'Stadtluft macht frei'. People looking for personal freedom were more frequently fleeing from cities to the countryside, even in its extreme forms of wooded hills and arid steppe.<sup>19</sup>

## NOTES

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# RELIGION AND RITUAL

J. A. BAIRD

RELIGION is a slippery term. Whether we follow Durkheim's definition, that religion is 'a set of beliefs and practices by which society represents itself to itself', or we approach religion as a modern classification of an element of ancient life which ancient peoples might not recognize as distinct, no facet of life in early cities was unrelated to religion. Religious practice was one element in early urban organization, and a complex relationship between culture, power, religion, space, and society was what gave rise to the city itself.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will consider the relationship between religious practices and the built environment and how ritual and ceremony shaped movement through early cities. It will also explore the ways in which ritual and ceremony inscribed meaning onto the urban landscape, and how this dialogue fashioned religious activity in cities over time. This chapter will focus on the cities of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, but will also include comparative evidence from other early cities, including those of Mesoamerica and China.

One of the tasks facing those wishing to study early urban environments is how to reconcile the diverse evidence. This evidence includes ancient documentary sources, visual representations, and archaeological remains. Each of these presents a different aspect of ancient towns, and often the topographies are not reconcilable: the physical and the literary city were not necessarily one and the same. Cities were the foci for many religious practices, not only serving the needs of inhabitants but often also becoming places of pilgrimage by others. Cities are a useful scale at which to examine ritual and ceremony because they allow for an assessment of spatial patterning, and of the ways in which the religious life of the city was in dialogue with or constituent of other aspects of urban living.

This chapter will examine religion in early cities, and how cities shaped religion, by considering several themes. First, the spatiality of religion will consider where religion happened in early cities. It will then discuss the temporality of religion, and how religious calendars and festivals formed a framework for urban daily life. Space and time come together in the next section, which studies the religious organization of cities, how religious considerations shaped early urban forms, and looks at religious movement through and between cities in the form of festivals and pilgrimages. Finally, this chapter looks at urban religious communities, and how diverse religious communities coexisted within urban spaces, or made urban space a contested locale.

## THE SPATIALITY OF RELIGION IN EARLY CITIES

Religious spaces in early cities, both those recovered archaeologically and those known from texts, are one of the key ways in which we can seek to understand how religion functioned in early urban environments. The most obvious physical evidence for religion in early cities, of course, are sanctuaries themselves (see Liverani on the ubiquity of temples, above, [Ch. 9](#)). Sanctuaries are found in all early cities, but their form varied enormously. Mesopotamian temple complexes, an exclusively urban phenomenon, were large, included a number of structures, and had a role that encompassed much beyond what would now be considered 'religious', into the political, administrative, and

economic spheres (see above, [Ch. 2](#)).<sup>2</sup> The altar at which sacrifices were performed was the only indispensable element of Greek and Roman sanctuaries, and there was great variety amongst sanctuary forms, which could range from grand temples within bounded *temenoi*, to the pervasive religious topography of the city with simple altars in public spaces.<sup>3</sup>

Ancient religion might conjure images in the modern mind of the Parthenon and Pantheon, but religion infiltrated so many aspects of ancient urban life as to be inextricable. Generally, there is no ‘secular’ space from which we can differentiate the religious. Beyond sanctuaries themselves, religion was pervasive throughout urban environments. Each city had a patron deity. Processions, which formed part of religious festivals, of marriages and funerals, inhabited the streets. Shrines collected at crossroads. City boundaries were also ritual boundaries. Civic buildings, including archives, law courts, and meeting places, usually had their own patron deities. Households too were under the protection of gods, worshipped inside the house at family shrines, or embodied at the hearth.<sup>4</sup> Daily life and time itself were structured by the rhythm of the calendar of festivals held throughout the year.

One of the ways in which urban space acquired its religious connections was in the performance of rituals and ceremonies. From some of the earliest cities, religious festivals held in public spaces were one of the key events that formed ‘place’, and created sites of collective memory within cities. ‘Place’ is a locus of lived experience, not just a backdrop to human activity, but somewhere which has meanings that have become attached to it through the activities which have happened there and the people that inhabit it, meanings which accumulate over time.<sup>5</sup> In Mesopotamia at Babylon, the New Year’s festival of Akitu involved the parading of images of the deities, possibly the only time during the year in which these images were visible in a public space.<sup>6</sup> Such occasions were an opportunity not only to display the gods but for a collective experience between members of society in a shared space, space that then took on meanings associated with that experience. The importance of place in Roman religion, too, was crucial from its earliest periods. A well-known example from historical sources is an episode reported by Livy, writing in the 1st century CE, of Rome after the sack by Gauls in 390 BCE. Livy has the general Camillus give a speech which rejects the call to move the capital from Rome to another site, and the cornerstone of his argument is that the cults and gods and rituals are tied to specific places (5.52.2). On African early centres as foci of cult, see above, [Ch. 4](#).

The limits of cities were often invested with religious significance, and city boundaries or fortifications were often also ritual boundaries. Babylon had many city walls, including inner city walls and the outer defences, later described by Herodotus as being so wide that a four-horse chariot could ride, and turn, upon them (Hdt. 1.179). These walls not only protected the city, but separated it from the countryside, where barbarians, ghosts, and others roamed.<sup>7</sup> The symbolic and religious significance of city boundaries can also be seen in the *pomerium* of Rome, a sacred enclosure linked in myth to the city’s founding. The pomerium was demarcated physically on the ground by the imperial period, and this sacred boundary remained significant, and continued to be physically maintained, long after the city of Rome sprawled out far beyond this limit. In some ways it marked the boundary between the Roman and non-Roman, and when Augustus banned Egyptian cults within the pomerium, it was not out of hostility to foreign religious practices, but to emphasize that which was most Roman, in a time of turmoil, and use this to stress Roman identity.<sup>8</sup>

Cities were also the home of the gods. This could mean a city was under the protection of a patron deity, as Athens under that of Athena, the goddess having won the affection of the city in a contest

with Poseidon. In Mesopotamia, cities were the dwelling place of the god, and if a city's god was absent in Mesopotamia, either metaphorically or literally, when the sculpture of a god was physically captured by an enemy, the city was reported to fall into chaos. Conversely, military defeats were recorded in texts as the departure of the gods from their patron city. The city of Babylon itself, according to the 12th century *Creation Epic*, was built for the god Marduk as his reward for ascendancy over the other gods. When Marduk's statue was missing from Babylon, the New Year's festival could not take place.<sup>9</sup> Just as all cities had a patron deity, the city itself could become divine, in its personification. Thus we have sculpted reliefs showing Roma, the personified Rome, and the female Cyrene, or Antioch with her mural crown appearing in sculpture which embodied the city's virtues and created the city itself as something which could be worshipped.<sup>10</sup>

Religious activities and festivals could also produce contested spaces in cities. For instance, the festival of the Thesmophoria, part of the cult of Demeter in Athens and elsewhere, inverted gender norms by creating women's spaces in public places rather than in the home.

### THE TEMPORALITY OF RELIGION IN EARLY CITIES

Ancient calendars were religious in structure, and punctuated by religious festivals, giving urban life its annual rhythm, and coordinating the rhythm of daily life with that of the gods and of the natural world.<sup>11</sup> Festivals, broadly, tied together the calendar, the gods, the political (for instance in the issuing authority of the calendar), and the natural. The New Year's festival at Babylon, whose timing included the spring equinox, embodied the time of creation, being cyclical in its annual repetition, and demonstrated the eternal in the presence of the temple.<sup>12</sup> Beyond the formalization of time in calendars, the repetition of religious rituals was a way in which quotidian existence was bookmarked and structured by religious activity. Sacred time bled into daily life in myriad ways. For instance we might consider the production in Athens of black-figure amphorae which was associated with the festival of the Panathenaia, and how such production of the ceramic vessels and their contents would have been generated by an increase in the labour of craftsmen and farmers.<sup>13</sup> The repeated religious actions of the festival calendar thus reaffirmed social actions well beyond the religious sphere.

Festival days were not rare: the combined total of annual and monthly festivals at Athens amounted to 120 days of each year being demarcated for religious activity at a community level. The rhythms of life generally were integrated with religious rhythms—Athena's festivals at Athens were tied to the grain cycle, as well as being linked to the annual movement of the constellations visible in the night sky.<sup>14</sup> Because the calendar was based around the city's religious festivals, each Greek city had its own, and they served to structure daily life and reinforce community identity, dividing urban time not only by lunar months but also into spaces between religious festivals.<sup>15</sup>

All early cities had a foundation myth, on which they built their religious legitimacy as a social entity and as a locale in the landscape. This was one of the bases on which urban identity was constructed, and by which a city was distinguished from others. In Rome, time was measured *ab urbe condita*, from the foundation of the city. This legendary founding of Romulus and Remus was one of the touchstones used by Roman society to define its identity by reference to its past, and a way in which the physical city was rooted in the legendary one. The myth emerged at precisely the time, in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, when Rome itself was creating orthogonally planned colonies.<sup>16</sup> And while we cannot know if *haruspices*, religious officials who interpreted the entrails of animals, were

often genuinely responsible for deciding the location for new cities and their temples (Vitruvius, *On Architecture* I.4), it is noteworthy enough that a 1st-century writer would report that they were instrumental to a city's foundation, alongside considerations such as temperature, air quality, and water supply. We do know that votive deposits were a part of the creation of new urban centres, and that city foundations were religious as well as practical events.<sup>17</sup>

The Roman calendar, known from many cities' copies, listed the festivals which made up the year. These documents, which included festivals from Rome's deep past, not only listed festivals, but also controlled when public bodies, such as the courts and senate, could meet. The priests that delineated the calendars thus ensured a religious control of public time.<sup>18</sup> By the mid-4th century CE, a Codex-Calendar of the city of Rome lists pagan holidays and Christian holidays, as well as the Depositions of Bishops and Martyrs, brought together by a common aristocratic culture. Christianity would come to dominate by the late 4th century, and old festivals disappeared from a calendar which now included Easter. While some pagan festivals were tenacious, and the boundaries between Christian and pagan blurred, urban life increasingly became dominated by the Christian preferences of the emperors.<sup>19</sup>

## THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION OF CITIES

The boundaries of cities were not the only way that religion had an impact on the form of cities. The movement of processions, for instance, was one way in which ritual activity was shaped by, and shaped, the topography in which they occurred. The processional way at Babylon, for example, led from the New Year's temple outside the city and formed a long straight thoroughfare that passed through the Ishtar gate to the Marduk temple complex within the city. The route was a key part of the procession that happened as part of the New Year's festival, which not only marked the New Year, but also marked Marduk's place as patron deity and the king as his high priest. This was probably the only time that the city's inhabitants would see the statue of the god or the king, and the procession included statues of deities from other cities, conveyed on chariots, as well as war booty and offerings. The city was not only the backdrop to the procession as it occurred, but was also the reminder of it after it had finished. Inscriptions on the side of paving slabs along this route, invisible to those walking above, recorded that this, the street used for Marduk's procession, was paved with limestone by King Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>20</sup> The physical city, state, and religious power, were inextricable; such processions reinforced social cohesion, demonstrated authority, and imbued the streets with meaning (see above, [Ch. 2](#)).

Religious processions, which often formed an important part of broader religious festivals, were one way in which meaning was inscribed onto urban topography. Conversely, movement itself could be formative in the development of physical urban topography. Religious processions within cities were one means by which civic and religious authorities could display their power. For example, at the Roman city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, a long Greek inscription of the early 2nd century CE, that of Salutaris, details among other things a procession in which statuettes are carried along a specific route through the city at certain points throughout the year. The statuettes include those of Roman emperors, the legendary founders of the city, and the city's patron goddess Artemis. Such processions not only displayed the gods, but were a means by which knowledge of Ephesian religious heritage and civic institutions was transmitted across generations, as is probably evidenced by the fact that the participants in the procession were largely *ephebes*, adolescent males. The procession described in

the Salutaris inscription happened frequently, and the procession was a place-making practice. For instance, when parts of the ritual performance of the procession took place in certain parts of the city, it followed a topography which enacted the history of Ephesus in reverse, starting in the state agora and ending near the site of its mythological foundation.<sup>21</sup> Just as the procession inhabited the city's existing ritual, mythological, civic, and historic landscape, it also added to these, becoming part of the urban landscape itself.

Greek sacrificial processions which moved from the margins to the centre of the city, such as the Panathenaia, symbolically conquered the urban space as they moved through the polis. Others, such as Dionysiac processions, moved from the town outwards, to, for example, liminal sanctuaries, inverting this formula by leading followers from the civic spaces of the urban environment into wilder spaces.<sup>22</sup> Some cults linked the city and its territory, like that of Demeter; the processions held during the annual festivals of the Eleusinian mysteries moved from the city of Athens to Eleusis, fourteen miles outside Athens' gates.<sup>23</sup> The Panathenaic Way of Athens, a thoroughfare with its eponymous festival, traced a path through the agora, the civic centre of the city, before mounting the Acropolis, the city's religious focal point. The famed Parthenon marbles are generally thought to show parts of this procession and the many participants, from those bearing offerings, to civic officials and the gods themselves.<sup>24</sup> Such processions through the city brought together many elements of the population, showing an idealized version of the populace, from civic leaders to artisans, displaying and solidifying hierarchies within the community.<sup>25</sup> Greek religion was a communal activity, and 'the polis constituted a formal expression of religious cohesion'.<sup>26</sup> Festivals like the Panathenaia allowed the participation of otherwise marginalized groups that were part of the polis, including women and resident foreigners. Processions allowed the physical engagement of religious communities, between their members, and between those members and the urban built environment.

The route and form of processions could be shaped and constrained by urban forms, but it is likely that they also shaped urban environments as well. For instance, the colonnaded streets in eastern cities of the Roman world such as Palmyra have been interpreted as material crystallization of processions, with processional ways becoming monumentalized over time.<sup>27</sup> In Athens, the Propylaia, the monumental gateway to the Acropolis, was constructed partly to frame the Panathenaic procession as it mounted the Acropolis.<sup>28</sup> At Rome itself, processions are reported from an early date. The triumphal processions of Rome were related to the form of the urban environment, with the route drawing significance from local places and spaces, and the city itself then becoming the site of memory of such processions.<sup>29</sup> Beyond having an impact on the built environment, the physical, bodily, process of moving through a city, repeated over time, was a means of transmitting social memory, as was the practice of inscribing and using a time-reckoning system, as discussed above.<sup>30</sup>

Processions were not the only way in which ancient urban topography became entwined with ancient religion. Religion had an impact on settlement within urban zones, and probably on the layout of planned towns. At Palmyra in Syria, the original settlements that would come to form the Roman period city were nucleated around sanctuaries: the eventual topography of the town preserved the memory of these irregular settlements in the plan of its streets and buildings. The city's plan also preserved to a certain extent the chronology of the arrival of different cults at the site, with local and Mesopotamian cults in the older part of the city and more recent arrivals on the outskirts.<sup>31</sup> The Marduk temple at Babylon, beyond being simply part of how the city was organized, conceptually became interchangeable with the city itself.<sup>32</sup>

Rome was organized by Augustus using religion as a basis: regions of the city were divided into *vici*, or neighbourhoods. In the centre of these were *compitum*, crossroads, which had shrines to the Lares, the tutelary spirits of the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood religious practices are also evident in the altars that dotted cities like Pompeii, many of which have paintings of the Lares above them, and which seem to have marked the boundaries between *vici*.<sup>33</sup>

If we turn to early cities in Mesoamerica, it has been argued that Maya city layouts were cosmologically significant, and that the civic plans were created so as not just to embody political authority but also the universe (with the city's axes representing the paths of the sun and the Milky Way), giving urban space sacral power.<sup>34</sup> The plan of Teotihuacán, in central Mexico, has been argued to have been conceived to deliberately convey the worldview of its founders. The central site in the basin of Mexico, the city was many times larger than any other in the region, reaching its peak population with as many as 100,000 inhabitants by the 3rd century CE. Its plan includes the division of the city by a canalized river which separated a 'watery underworld' in the south and, in the north, 'the earthly representation of the passage from the underworld to the heavens', with the Sun pyramid at its centre in the civic-ceremonial core of the site.<sup>35</sup> The orientation to which many structures of the city conform is 15.5 degrees east of the astronomic north, which is probably linked to the sacred calendar's astronomical qualities.<sup>36</sup>

Cities are always, to a certain extent, an *imago mundi*, a representation of the cosmos, in that their structures and layout reproduce the beliefs of their inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> Ancient Chinese cities have also been argued to have a deliberate cosmic symbolism in their layout, and ceremonial centres were the precursors and hearts of cities. Religious ceremonies were a key activity in China's earliest cities, and it is significant that Chinese city plans, with controlled walled areas, were structured so as to place the ruler in the spatial and physical seat of ritual and political power. The four sides of the city were the earthly counterpart to the square universe, and the parts of the city were heavily imbued with cosmological significance (see above, Ch. 6).<sup>38</sup>

The cities of ancient Egypt, too, had such symbolism in their plan.<sup>39</sup> In Thebes, Egypt's southern royal capital, considerable building work was carried out during the reign of the pharaoh Amenhotep III in the 14th century BCE. This included modifications of the city that were related to two annual festivals, both of which included processions: the Festival of Opet and the Festival of the Valley. At Karnak, which played a role in both festivals, elaborations were made to the temple façade and the processional ways. The topography of Thebes as a whole seems to have been conceived of as a cosmogram, with its monuments representing different elements of the cosmos. The Nile divided Thebes into halves representing the terrestrial and celestial; the festivals, whose processional routes crossed the river, linked these.<sup>40</sup> The city as a whole thus linked the earthly world with that of the heavens; making such urban modifications was one way rulers could cement their own power and display their relationship to the divine, using the physical built environment to monumentalize their worldview, which ritual activities and processions brought to life. Thebes is not the only example of the religious nature of Egyptian settlements—Akhenaten's capital Amarna was founded in the 14th century BCE, and this capital was planned, in part, to celebrate the focus of Akhenaten on the worship of a prime deity, Aten. In the stelae which bounded the city, the Pharaoh demarcated the entire space of the city as sacred to Aten, a city of palaces, tombs, and temples.<sup>41</sup> Overarching plans in which cities were *imago mundi* were the exception, however, and it was the mundane, quotidian, religious practice that had a real impact on urban landscapes, through festivals, processions, and other facets of

religious life.

Movement, such as that of religious processions, was not only important within cities, but also between them. Networks of cities also played a part in the religious and political life of cultures. For instance, the Panhellenion, a network of cities established in the 2nd century CE under the Roman emperor Hadrian, played on perceived mythological connections between Greek *poleis* and centred on the worship of the deified emperor. It was a cultic network of cities that also created and promoted economic and cultural ties between them.<sup>42</sup> Some early cities acted as sites of pilgrimage; pilgrimages, like festivals, took place at certain times in the year, or during particular seasons, and so movement between cities also had a religious rhythm. Hatra was an important Mesopotamian city in the first few centuries CE, and its very reason for existing seems to have been its function as a religious centre:<sup>43</sup> many temples have been discovered there, as well as cultic objects, inscriptions with an overwhelmingly religious character, and at the city's centre a walled and fortified sanctuary, which served a regional nomadic population and to which pilgrimages were made.<sup>44</sup>

In earlier Mesopotamia the city of Nippur, like Babylon, was a religious centre, associated with the god Enlil. Pilgrimages were made to the city, and its character as a holy centre seems to have been the central reason it survived from the 5th millennium BCE into the Islamic era, despite the lack of any real political or economic dominance. The tenacity of its religious life can be seen in the incredible longevity of some of its temples, including that sacred to the goddess Inanna, whose history can be traced over several thousand years.<sup>45</sup>

Representational evidence can also illuminate religion in early cities. A large mosaic found in a small church in Arabia, and known as the 'Madaba map' preserves representations of the cities of the Near East in late antiquity. Dating to the 6th century CE, it depicts Jerusalem as situated within a world of cities.<sup>46</sup> The cities and smaller towns on the mosaic are shown from above, nestled within their walls, with their central monuments depicted, including the colonnaded street running through Jerusalem itself. The mosaic might have been drawn on maps intended for pilgrims, and it displayed the sacred geography of the region. Movement between cities was not only about moving through space, but between places, and the importance of cities as religious places is demonstrated on the mosaic. The sacred landscape of late antiquity was a world of cities, and representations of cities were potent enough symbols to warrant paving church floors, laying out for the view of the faithful the religious world they inhabited.<sup>47</sup>

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

In many cities of the ancient world, great numbers of different cults and religious practices coexisted. This was true even into the period in which some major cults were monotheistic, including Judaism and Christianity. In Dura-Europos, on the Syrian middle Euphrates, the 3rd century CE saw a synagogue, a Christian house-church, a Mithraeum, and a number of Mesopotamian and local cults including those of Zeus Megistos and Atargatis all being practised within the city at the same time. While some of these religious communities were exclusive in their membership, there is no evidence that these communities did not otherwise coexist within the city walls, and there is no evidence that these communities were segregated in daily life. Some residents partook of multiple cults: for example, the community of merchants and soldiers that was resident in the city of Dura-Europos but came from the city of Palmyra across the Syrian steppe not only worshipped its own ancestral gods,

but was also involved in Greek and Roman cults.<sup>48</sup>

The synagogue of the Jewish community at Dura-Europos was at a minimum bilingual, and texts were found in both Greek and Aramaic.<sup>49</sup> Latin inscriptions are also known from the site, including from within religious structures used by the Roman military which was present there in the 3rd century, during which time the Christian and Jewish communities were worshipping in their respective structures. All of this points to a multilingual and multicultural city with many cults coexisting. At Dura-Europos, rather than a city plan which reflected a particular religious outlook, as with several of the sites discussed above, there is a relatively homogenous plan which masks the religious diversity that can only be recognized from a more microscopic analysis.<sup>50</sup> This is not to say that religion did not make itself visible in Dura's urban landscape, and indeed the towers incorporated into most sanctuaries made them visible throughout the city.<sup>51</sup>

While such religious pluralism seems to have succeeded in some cities, it failed in others. This was the case in Roman Alexandria, where Jews were segregated to particular parts of the city, and where anti-Semitic riots occurred in the 1st century. Jews were then denied access to the theatre and market, and the public spaces of the city became the arena for humiliation of their leaders. Transgressions on the segregated urban space were brutally punished.<sup>52</sup>

Religion also played other roles in communities. For instance, the sacrifice of animals as part of urban festivals not only honoured the gods and brought communities together, but enabled access to meat, an expensive and calorie-rich commodity, for a much broader part of the community than would otherwise be able to afford it. The Panathenaia, for example, included slaughter of cattle on a large scale, and fed the participating citizens. Such civic sacrifices of animals, *thusia*, provided occasions for communal eating, both reaffirming civic bonds between participants and the bond between the dedicants and the gods.<sup>53</sup>

In late antiquity, the way in which Christianity adapted to urbanism was one of the things that ensured its survival, and some cities survived precisely because of the existence of the Church. Eastern cities, as opposed to those of Western Europe, were more successful in the late antique period, and while the physical character of cities was transformed in this region, their urban character was often preserved well into the Islamic period (see below, [Ch. 14](#) on Islamic cities). Some important urban religious sites remained in use over many centuries: in Damascus, a 1st-century Roman temple to Jupiter, itself built on an earlier cult site, was transformed into a church of St John the Baptist in the 4th century, and in the 7th century when the city was taken by the Arabs, Christians and Muslims both worshipped at the site. It eventually became the Umayyad mosque as it stands today, and the mosque still incorporates classical stonework of the Roman temple's enclosure in its outer wall, and a shrine to St John the Baptist within.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Religion was key to the development and form of early cities. Religious sanctuaries and temples were central parts of the urban landscape, and religion permeated many other aspects of urban living. Religious processions moved through the streets of cities as diverse as Babylon, Antioch, and Rome, each one unique but alike in the way the movement of people together shaped, and was shaped by, the city. Diverse religious communities could be found in some cities, as at Dura-Europos, but elsewhere, including Jerusalem and Alexandria, the coexistence turned to intolerance and violence.



This chapter has discussed religion in ancient cities, and to a great extent we cannot consider ancient religion without the city: Mesopotamian cities were centres of cult, and no temples are known outside them. In classical antiquity, too, despite a population that was overwhelmingly rural, Graeco-Roman cities were foci within a landscape which had many religious sites outside the urban environment; even supposedly rural sanctuaries depended on the city.<sup>55</sup>

The diversity of religions in early cities, and the differences between cities, is striking. Even within the Classical world, there is staggering variety, from Athens' focal point on the Acropolis, to the temples neatly nestled in the orthogonal plans of the Greek cities in Magna Graecia, to Dura-Europos with its range of temples to Mesopotamian, Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian deities scattered throughout the city. Mesoamerica, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean are not directly comparable in many ways, but it is notable that in many early cities it is possible to relate some aspect of the urban form writ large, whether in the layout of streets or the placement of temples and other structures, to underlying religious beliefs and religious practices.<sup>56</sup> Processions as part of religious festivals were also a common form of communal religious activity. The civil population and the physical city were the body of ancient religion, the streets its veins, and the calendar and festivals its beating heart.

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# PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

RAY LAURENCE

A key feature for the characterization of early cities is that of a centrally organized structure, often associated with a planned grid of streets, or the identification of different areas of the city as residential or associated with craft manufacture. The discussion in this chapter takes as its starting point our understanding of the planning of the Greek and Roman cities of the Mediterranean region, but moves from this familiar ‘Western’ tradition of urban planning to the less familiar territory of the cities of imperial China. The approach is comparative and seeks to place the cities of the Mediterranean and of the wider Roman empire in juxtaposition to the cities of the Chinese empire (for surveys of Mediterranean and Chinese city development, see above, [Chs. 3](#) and [6](#); also [Regional Maps 1.1, 1.5](#)). The comparison works for periods in which writing on cities survives alongside some archaeological investigation of the city. The approach cannot be mapped onto cultures that lack a written account of urban planning or representation of the urban environment in texts. The cities of the Classical Mediterranean and those of the Chinese empire come from quite different cultures, it should be said at the outset, yet shared planning priorities to produce outcomes that are spatially similar but at the same time relate to a quite different set of political and social priorities. There are difficulties in making this comparison. Chronologically, the Graeco-Roman city ranges from the 6th century BCE through to the 6th century CE; whereas the Chinese city in this discussion ranges from the 6th century BCE through to the 9th century CE. We need also to take account of chronological differences in technological development; for example the widespread adoption of window glass occurred in the 1st century CE in the Mediterranean, while it is associated with the 7th century CE in China. There are also fundamental differences in demographic growth, with China and Rome having a similar population of 60 million in the 2nd century CE, but subsequently China’s population continued to grow to 80 million in the 9th century CE; whereas Rome experienced a population decline that we can today associate with the effects of ‘plague’ in the century following 160 CE.<sup>1</sup> However, in making this comparison, as we shift from west to east and back again, it is possible for us to set out the significance of planning to the organization of urban form in these two imperial contexts. From this examination of thinking on planning, the chapter then looks at variation in the urban environment of the small city of Pompeii when compared to the city of Rome.

## FROM ANCIENT TOWN PLANNING TO URBAN DYSTOPIA

It would be nice to be able to say that those studying the ancient city have managed successfully to link planning in relationship to an ancient understanding of the environment. However, this simply has not been the case. Planning, in particular the development of a grid of streets in new cities, has been seen as a positive force; whereas the environment and a critique of urban living in that environment is regarded in the metropolis as being simply awful. What needs to be recognized is that there are no documentary sources surviving from antiquity that link planning to environmental conditions. This factor creates a situation by which the relationship of planning or its absence to be connected to

environmental conditions is not based on primary evidence, but by interpretative frameworks of modern writers on the ancient city. This disjuncture in the form of surviving ancient texts might suggest that there was not a relationship between planning and existing urban form. Instead, planning is seen as a process associated with the foundation of new cities.

Following the 1910 Town Planning Act in Britain, the Royal Institute of British Architects held a conference on town planning alongside an exhibition organized by Patrick Geddes. This event marks the first moment in which the subject of planning was connected to the ancient city and deserves some comment to reveal how this event shaped discussion of planning in antiquity. As part of the conference, there was a session on ancient town planning that was illustrated by projected slides of the plans of ancient cities, drawing on recent excavations that had sought to define the extent of cities and their street grids (for example at Silchester). Francis Haverfield, the Camden Professor of Ancient History, drew together material on both Rome and Greece to include in his book, *Ancient Town Planning* published in 1913. Fundamental for his definition of planning was the straight line of the streets and the meeting of streets at right-angles.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, cities had existed in Classical Greece that were not defined as planned and, on the authority of Aristotle, Hippodamus of Miletus in the 5th century was the first person to develop planning of a city as a grid of streets centred on an *agora* (market-place).<sup>3</sup> This planned city was recovered at archaeological sites across the Mediterranean, and was particularly associated with the cities founded in the wake of Macedonia's conquest of Asia Minor under Alexander. For Haverfield, the Romans took this Hellenistic ideal of a planned city and developed it further, dividing the city by two major through-routes (the Decumanus Maximus and the Cardo Maximus) into four quadrants. Interestingly, Haverfield looked also at the plans of cities recovered in China, admittedly in an Appendix, and saw that these plans had some convergence with developments in Macedonian and Roman cities. Importantly, he did not see the presence of rectilinear cities with grids of streets in these distant parts as directly connected to developments with a common origin. Instead, he regarded the two phenomena as developing under similar historical conditions: civilized empires that faced barbarian enemies.<sup>4</sup>

Allied to the development of a conception of ancient town planning was a literature on the living conditions of the inhabitants of early cities, and in particular Roman cities. Lewis Mumford in his famous *The City in History* created the Roman city as a metaphorical reference point for distinctions between the post-war new towns (such as Stevenage) and that of the modern metropolis; the planned colonies of Rome were mapped onto the perceived virtues of the new towns, whereas ancient Rome was seen to encapsulate all that was or would become rotten in the modern metropolis.<sup>5</sup> Through the careful deployment of Latin literature that was critical of life in the metropolis (and designed to amuse), Mumford created a dystopian Rome that was too big, overcrowded, and insanitary. It is a theme also picked up by historians—not least Alex Scobie's comparison of the anti-urban Latin literary texts and a modern definition of poor living conditions.<sup>6</sup> The problem of working from literature and envisaging historical conditions from that literature can be found in the very genre that underpins these interpretations: literature is not statistical, is subject to whims of survival, and its relation to actual living conditions remains an unknown. This is not to say that living in Rome, with its population doubling every century from 200 BCE through to the 160s CE, was an environmentally pleasant experience. Yet, people continued to migrate to Rome and presumably perceived it as a better place for them than where they had come from. It is significant that the urban environment in Rome, at least, was subject to a series of legal measures; for example to ensure that the streets were cleaned, that drinking water was not polluted, and that the height of buildings restricted.<sup>7</sup> How we



measure the legal evidence against that derived from literature remains less than certain.

## THE GRID AS A CULTURAL FORM IN EARLY EMPIRES

Plans produced of cities with streets meeting at right-angles and blocks of city housing arranged around courtyards and/or gardens are a feature of books on the ancient cities of Greece and Rome. The cities founded by Rome were laid out from a central point by a surveyor using a *groma*—a surveying instrument with four cardinal points arranged at right-angles to each other. By sighting along these, the surveyor could set out a rectilinear grid and align that grid with topographical features—such as rivers (e.g. at Bordeaux). There were, of course, other ways of achieving a similar result. The final section of the Chinese work *Zhou li* called ‘Kaogong Ji’ discusses the foundation and design of cities and includes an account of ancient Chinese urban surveying.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese process was very similar to that adopted by Rome, but orientated the grid with respect to the cardinal points of a modern compass. Initially, a vertical post was established at the centre of the city, so that the sun’s shadow could be observed. The rising and setting sun provided the eastern and western cardinal points; whilst at midday the position of north was observed and then confirmed at night from an observation of the pole star. The process could be repeated to provide orientations for cities across China. The verification of this process via archaeology of the more than 200 early Chinese cities identified is less than certain, since the building materials were predominantly of wood.<sup>9</sup> The text of Kaogong Ji discusses the division of space within the city itself: the carpenters demarcated the city as a square with sides of nine *li*, with each side having three gateways and, within this demarcated urban space, there were nine east–west and nine north–south avenues—each being nine chariot-tracks in width.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on orientation to cardinal points of a modern compass is quite different from the orientation of Roman cities and, instead, places a stress on winds, good and bad air, which flow through the city. The *groma* was a development from the vertical post that allowed for a greater versatility in the orientation of a grid of streets from the cardinal points, which were also associated with the unhealthy flow of air through the Roman city.<sup>11</sup>

The production of rectilinear urban space in the Roman and Chinese empires is strikingly similar, but differences should be noted: the Chinese city had rather more gates than did Rome’s colonies (such as Timgad in Algeria). The use of numbers in the layout of the idealized imperial capital in the text of ‘Kaogong Ji’ has been explained thus: nine streets relates to the nine provinces of the empire; three gates on each side of the city relates to the conception of the universe as comprised of three elements: heaven, earth, and man; and a total of twelve gates relates to the twelve months of a year.<sup>12</sup> The formal geometry and relation of land division to a wider conception of both the empire and the universe found in this text with regard to city foundation is somewhat different to the Roman tradition, that focuses on texts and images on coins (minted for example by the Augustan colony of Mérida) and on the delineation of the city through the ploughing of a sacred boundary or *pomerium*.<sup>13</sup> The relation between this boundary and that of the empire was made explicit in that the *pomerium* could be expanded if the boundary of the empire was pushed forward through conquest of new territory. What is perhaps more interesting is the possibility of comparison between Roman and Chinese mentalities with regard to the gates of cities. These were points at which there was movement between two spaces and the crossing of the sacred boundary of the city, hence their placement needed consideration.<sup>14</sup> It is notable that these points could be marked by monumental arches, for example that at Rimini (Italy) that marks the passage from the Via Flaminia (restored by the emperor Augustus)

into the city itself.

The urban effect of the formality of the planned city is a subject on which no text survives from antiquity in the west. However, texts do survive from imperial China that represent or attempt to describe cities. Bai Juyi, the prefect of the city of Suzhou describes his view in the 9th century:

Far and near, high and low, emerge temples,  
From east to west, from north to south, gazing upon each other are bridges,  
On the arteries and veins of the waters the boats are lined up like fish scales,  
Within the oblong city walls residential wards are arranged like a chess-board.  
Filled with houses and trees leaving no gaps.<sup>15</sup>

This city unlike many of its Roman counterparts featured canals and waterways (but consider the presence of water in towns such as Canterbury), but the emphasis on a grid of streets filled with houses and trees, with temples positioned across the space of the city, is a vision that is convergent with the archaeological evidence for Roman cities. What is apparent though in looking at the distribution of cities with rectilinear plans is that they occur predominantly on level or flat land, for example in the north China plain; this can be contrasted with planning in the south of China that could link, via concepts associated with *feng-shui* developed in the 4th century CE, features that could include ravines, hills, mountains, and tributaries of canals and lakes.<sup>16</sup> The very different philosophies of city foundation according to the nature of the site found in China would seem to rationalize the nature of a variety of urban forms, in a similar way to the Graeco-Roman debate over the application of orthogonal planning at sites that were not level and featured hills.<sup>17</sup>

## THE PLANNED CITY FROM REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE

Formal public squares were a feature of Graeco-Roman urbanism, yet these do not appear in other ancient cultures (e.g. Han China). The shift from a republic to an empire in Rome was associated with an expansion of these public spaces and new cities tended to have a forum. Scholars studying Han China suggest that public spaces of this kind did not develop, since they would promote public meetings and potentially question the rule of the emperor. The argument is a logical one, but if shifted to the context of the Roman empire, we need to ask the question what purpose did these new forums serve? There is a sense that their public nature allowed for actions that took place within them to be observed, watched, and contained within them. This architectural containment is a feature of other aspects of Roman society—the bath-house as the sensory space of collective nudity, the dining room as a place for elite inebriation, and the bedroom and brothel as the sites of sex. The forum contained legal disputes, political meetings, markets. (See [Plate 11.1](#).)

The activities are controlled through observation. Thus, the public ‘square’ at Rome becomes also the place to demonstrate power through the erection of statues and monuments—statues tended to be exclusively of freeborn males; whereas monuments were erected by freeborn women as well as men. The people excluded from exerting their power in this space were the slaves and citizens who were freed slaves. Thus the presence of public space in cities of the Roman empire need not cause us to think that the power of the emperor was any the less all-embracing than in China. Power relations that are based on monarchies can produce quite different configurations of urban space that can be seen to serve and reinforce the power of the ruler. At Rome, the power of the emperor was mediated through spaces derived from a republican past and a Hellenistic history of monarchy that overlay a

knowledge of Greek democracies, especially that of Athens, and oligarchies within which a place for the meeting of citizens was seen as an essential feature. The power of monarchy at Rome was founded on the takeover of these spaces of politics and their multiplication as *loci* for the expression of the emperor's power.



**PLATE 11.1** Roman Fora: The Imperial Fora in Rome were enclosed spaces: here the wall constructed between the monumental centre and the housing of the Subura restricts access and re-routes traffic.

The transformation of the forums of cities under the Roman emperors caused each city to become very similar and have a very similar focus of attention—the figure of the emperor as ruler of the Roman state. Although the cities of the Roman empire were corporate entities with a legal and political structure that marked them as independent of the state, the changes to the spatial and visual arrangement of their central places of legal and political decision make direct reference to their relationship to the state and the figure of the emperor. These changes cause the cities of the Roman empire to have much in common with the Chinese city that was established from its origins as an instrument of the imperial government, and part of the ‘one world’ in which the existence of the city was interwoven with the state with the former subordinate to the latter.<sup>18</sup> In the central area of the Chinese city was the Hall of the Ancestors and important altars to gods. The centrality to the city of the ancestors and cults can be seen at the conquest of the Ch'en state in 547 BCE, when the surrender of the city was made by the ruler and chief of staff bearing the image of the God of the Soil and the ritual vessels used in the temple of the ancestors.<sup>19</sup> The importance of gods and ancestors found in Chinese urbanism can also be seen in Roman thinking. Anyone reading the account of the destruction of Veii in Livy's fifth book of his history of Rome will see that both Rome's and Veii's ongoing survival depended on the rituals associated with temples and the gods.<sup>20</sup> The accommodation of these gods in the central part of the Chinese city spatially maps onto the Roman patterns of commemoration of gods and prominent citizens (deceased) in the forums of cities. The superimposing of the figure of the Roman emperor/s onto the space of these forums altered the very nature of the relationship between the Roman city and the Roman state, with the result that the relationship has far more in common with the walled markets found in cities within the Chinese Empire.

## THE PROLIFERATION OF PLANNED CITIES

The process by which cities were created in newly conquered territories by China and Rome requires some comment. The conquest of territory by Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty in 581 to the south of the Yangzi River was an impetus for the construction of a new capital at Chang'an that would encapsulate the imperial ambition of the dynasty, with dimensions of more than 9 by 8 km to be surrounded by a wall 36.7 km in length with a moat surrounding the walled area that would be 9 m in width.<sup>21</sup> The scale is impressive in terms of human labour, but the palace at the centre of the city was completed in two years and the city provided the setting for the exercise of the emperor's power. Underpinning this claim to power was a connection between the design of the city and the cosmos—with the southern gate called the Gate of Luminous Virtue as a key entry point to the city that led those who crossed the city's boundary directly to the emperor's palace.<sup>22</sup> The gate had five entranceways (the central one reserved for use by the emperor) and leading from it to the palace 5 km in the distance was a 155 m wide street lined with trees. This was effectively, like many other streets in Chang'an, a processional way to be used by members of the palace not so that they might be seen by the inhabitants of the city, but so the inhabitants might go inside and not look upon them.<sup>23</sup> There was a distinct hierarchy of streets within the grid plan, in which those streets that were wider and led to the principal gates of the city from the imperial city were dominant and on which the two markets were situated. The spatial structure divided the city into the imperial and palace cities of the emperor and the rest of the city. A 9th-century traveller, Abu Zeid al Hasan, accounts for this feature and notes the division between the part of the city inhabited by the emperor, his ministers, his soldiers, judges, eunuchs, and the imperial household and the other part of the city associated with people, merchants, and markets. Interaction between the two parts of the city occurred, when members of the imperial household visited the markets to purchase goods.<sup>24</sup> However, there was a prevention of contact and, even, sight of higher officials as they moved in procession through the city.<sup>25</sup> The markets were regulated and were planned entities with precisely demarcated spaces for each seller, even if the markets could become places of entertainment, the assertion of authority was present and seen in the execution of criminals.<sup>26</sup>

The efforts of the Roman state to promote urbanism in its newly conquered territories was on a much smaller scale than the Chinese foundation of new capital cities. Tacitus, famously, writes of the efforts of his father-in-law, Agricola, the governor of Britain, to encourage the recently conquered barbarians to adopt the architecture of the Roman city: forums, houses, baths, porticoes, and the like are seen as promoted to them.<sup>27</sup> There was certainly an uptake of these architectural forms that can be mapped across the western provinces of the Roman empire alongside the spread of Latin inscriptions. In all cases, it was the locals who paid for the construction of these structures and it was only encouragement from the Roman governor (as a representative of the state) that was an impetus to produce urbanism. Underpinning the adoption of these new forms of urban living was a desire to utilize architecture that would have been alien to these people 50–100 years earlier. The archaeological recovery of towns in Britain and Gaul has gone on at a pace over the last century to produce atlases and handbooks that can include plans of cities with grids in some cases and as ribbon developments in others. Looking across the empire, we also see in the first two centuries CE a proliferation of theatres and amphitheatres across the cities of the Mediterranean—an architectural form that had been absent from cities for the most part in 50 BCE. The emperor might build some of these structures, but for the most part it was others who altered the cities of the Roman empire to

include features that we feel today to be symptomatic of Roman urbanism. In contrast, at Rome, it was the emperor who built all new features—as seen with the construction of the Colosseum by Vespasian and his son Titus ‘in the centre of the city’.<sup>28</sup>

The number of cities in both the Chinese and Roman empires was far from constant. In the case of the Roman empire, the foundation of new settlements has been a focus of archaeological investigation. However, the contraction of this number of cities over the long term has been less thoroughly investigated. The outline of the processes of expansion and contraction are broadly documented in Chinese historical records with reference to administrative units within the empire: the 1,580 administrative cities of the early Han period by 143 BCE were reduced to 1,180 and equally the 1,550 administrative cities of the early Tang period were reduced to 1,235 by 713 CE.<sup>29</sup> What this suggests is that many towns were founded that did not survive or were required to be reorganized or were subject to refoundation at new sites. This observation points to a characteristic of urban systems in both empires: the foundation of cities was a shared phenomenon, but was also associated with a degree of instability within the settlement pattern of these early states. However, there was a major difference in the built form of these cities—unlike their Roman counterpart, the Chinese city was not established with monuments for eternity.<sup>30</sup>

### CITY SIZE AND URBAN ENVIRONMENT

It needs to be recognized that cities in the ancient world varied in size from less than 10 hectares with a population of a few thousand to the metropolis of Rome or Shanghai occupying over 7 km<sup>2</sup>. Scale and size created fundamentally different urban environments: in Pompeii a walk of a kilometre or so took an inhabitant into the countryside; while in Rome urban journeys of 6-km roundtrips were the norm, with the urban environment in view throughout the journey. The scale of the metropolis was an object of wonder and critique by writers who had migrated to it; whereas the smaller towns were idealized as places that did not suffer from urban malaise: dirt, noise, crowds, and other features of urban literature—satire and epigram that populates Rome with an environment of malcontents and citizens to match the malaise of the environment.

Within the walls of Pompeii, there is an area of 66 hectares of which two-thirds has been excavated. What we see today is a city composed of buildings and open spaces. The buildings account for 64.6 per cent of the excavated city; whereas the streets comprise 17.7 per cent and gardens and cultivated plots of land a further 17.7 per cent.<sup>31</sup> Thus, one-third of the area of the city was given over to spaces, where inhabitants might simply be outside in contact with plants or with other inhabitants of the city. We should also add here that, from the time of the emperor Augustus, Pompeii had been supplied with water by an aqueduct; this, and the presence of raised water-tanks to store and/or slow the flow of water, point to the abundance of the supply. This supply could be supplemented by rainwater collected in cisterns and by the earlier wells with a supply extensive enough, at one point, to supply water to the complex known as the Stabian Baths. As a consequence, we should view Pompeii both as well-provisioned with outside space, particularly given that houses did not rise above two storeys, and that the city was well supplied with drinking water. There is a proviso, the earthquake of 62 CE and/or those after it may have disrupted the supply of water to the city.

The animals found in the Roman city are difficult to reconstruct, from Pompeii for example, we know of donkeys, dogs, and even a cow kept in houses; whilst skeletons of pigeons are said to have

been found in the forum. The mosaics of Pompeii present a vast range of flora and fauna, but much of it is set to create an illusion of a different environment: a bucolic ideal set at a distance from the city. However, it is worth noting that pigeons are well represented compared with other birds, alongside mallard ducks, domestic fowl and parakeets.<sup>32</sup> The birds appear in still-life frescoes with other species drinking from a bowl/bird bath, in the hands of children. These seem to be domesticated scenes and we should remember that the Latin word *columbarium* (tomb) comes from the Latin *columba* (pigeon). These birds also crop up in Nilotic mosaics and the famous Alexander Mosaic. Their ubiquity would attest to the presence of the feral pigeon, an unwelcome pest found in most urban environments; pigeons are also depicted on mosaics from Pompeii, and are recorded too in literary texts, inhabiting for example the gables of house roofs.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that the excrement of pigeons may have been used to produce ammonia for fulling or the final finishing/cleaning of clothes.

There is a difference in the scale of urbanism found in Pompeii and most other cities of the Roman empire when compared to the metropolis—Rome or Alexandria. The urban environment of the metropolis was a thing of wonder and produced a literature that places urbanism at its centre. Many of the writers of the city were migrants, such as Martial from Babilis in Spain, and positioned themselves and Rome in their own writing.<sup>34</sup> It has to be said that this is a subjective literature that measures the city through the enumeration of elaborate bath buildings or *thermae* (three in total) and forums (four in total), alongside the measurement of the city in terms of an urban journey to visit a patron of some 6 km for the round trip.<sup>35</sup> Urban realism was achieved through the deployment of key monuments and places within the city to create a sense of movement within the texts, whilst at the same time juxtaposing images of aged prostitutes contained within a specific region of the city (the *Subura*) with the rest of the city to its edge that included temples, sacred streets, and the emperor's palace.<sup>36</sup> The realism of Latin writers is achieved through the allusion to a sensory experience of motion through the city: wet and dirty streets, dripping arches of the aqueducts, and crowds of pack animals and people.<sup>37</sup> This subjective realism that is found in Martial, and is also adopted by Juvenal in his famous third *Satire*, provides evidence for the development of an urban environment that envelops its inhabitants in a different sensory experience, in which inhabitants could, for the first time, undertake journeys of more than an hour in length without leaving the city—a marked contrast to journeys in other Roman cities where, as we saw in the case of Pompeii, within twenty minutes a journey would lead the inhabitant to the city's edge and into contact with the countryside. The narration of the city in these texts depends on the gaze upon the city, whether from a vantage point on the Quirinal Hill or on the Janiculum—but with the important difference that from the former the viewer was within a home within the *urbs*; whereas in the latter he was outside of it and in the countryside or in his *rus* (rural dwelling).<sup>38</sup> Embedded within this literature is an environment that is endlessly urban, that was to be viewed from a vantage point, and captured within the brief lines of an *Epigram* or cumulatively as a series of scenes in Juvenal's *Satire* 3.<sup>39</sup> The authors can place themselves on the streets as clients walking on wet and dirty streets behind a patron in his litter, and point to their perspective of the city—somewhat different to that of their patron looking down from his litter and disconnected from the city's inhabitants in his home that was effectively a *rus in urbe* or country residence within the city. Rome, as the largest metropolis in the west, had an urban environment that was shared by elite and populace, but the lives of these two groups was differentiated through type of residence and mode of travel through the city. As a consequence, the elite (who were effectively urban managers) created forms of urban experience that facilitated public interaction—the building of forums, baths, and temples; yet at the same time largely ignored living

conditions of the inhabitants of the city.

## INFORMAL PLANNING AND THE LAW

The account to this point has privileged formal planning and seen the grid of streets and institutions of the city taking on a significance in shaping the city. However, there is more to planning than this. Within any city, individuals take action to shape the way inhabitants, including themselves, use the city or provide rental accommodation for others. Few ancient cities are open to the detailed analysis needed to encapsulate the full range of individual interventions that shape the experience of the city. Chinese cities were built in wood and, as a consequence, little evidence even for houses exists today in the archaeological record. Conversely, cities built from stone in the Mediterranean and Europe were subject to a whole range of recycling strategies in later ages that has resulted in a loss of evidence to the point where knowledge of where the thresholds to houses were at eludes us many sites. The unique preservation of Pompeii through the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE has provided archaeologists with an urban laboratory in which to investigate everything from traffic circulation via the study of wheel-ruts in the roads through to the deployment of benches on which people might sit and view the public street.<sup>40</sup>



**PLATE 11.2** Street intersection in Pompeii: on the left an altar to the gods, in the centre crossing stones raise the feet of pedestrians off the filth of the street, to the right a bar is located at the crossroad.

The most remarkable feature of the Pompeian streets is that many of them are quite simply blocked off to wheeled traffic, it is as though the people of Pompeii wished to prevent wheeled vehicles not only from entering their forum or going near their amphitheatre, but also from traversing numerous side-streets. Rather than facilitating traffic flow, it would seem that impeding and controlling traffic was the essential feature of urban planning. The restriction of traffic caused it to become concentrated on the major routes through the city leading from the gates to the central core of the city. It was also on these major routes that were open to traffic that public water-fountains, neighbourhood shrines to the local gods, and the majority of shops were placed—with a profound concentration of such features at

the street junction or intersection (see [Plate 11.2](#)). The location of the larger houses was similarly drawn to these major routes through the city, with the result that the imposing façades of these houses could alter the flow of pedestrians through alteration of the pavement of the streets to create steps and by the raising of the pavement in front of houses.

These factors all altered or disrupted the smooth flow of people and traffic.<sup>41</sup> We can infer from them that wheeled traffic and the flow of traffic were given little consideration in the management of the urban environment. This is perhaps not surprising, in a city of only 66 hectares and urban journeys on foot of less than twenty minutes. The point is that through traffic was not an issue in the ancient city as it was to become in later periods.

The dislike of traffic was not unique to Pompeii: a late 1st century BCE statute makes clear what restrictions existed in Rome. For the first nine hours of the day, large carts (*plaustrum/plostrum*) were banned from the city, with the important exception of those carts supplying builders working on temples or material to be used by priests.<sup>42</sup> The statute also instructs the owner or householder to take on responsibility for the maintenance of the street in front of their property, which included the prevention of standing water which would impede the use of the road. The householder was also responsible for the maintenance of drains that were regarded as a threat to health if blocked, as well as emitting smells. Interestingly, it is drains, sewers, and roads, alongside aqueducts, that impressed the Greek writer Strabo when looking at Rome.<sup>43</sup> The city planned for a flow of water into the city to its citizens and then out again via drains. However, streets, in contrast, were less about the flow of traffic than about providing a space for citizens to use. The upkeep of the streets was an essential duty of magistrates under the statute discussed above, including street cleaning (removal of dirt/mud from the paved surface) and the paving of sidewalks. The emphasis of the law was to create a street that was maintained for use, but that use prohibited the use of the largest carts, whilst not prohibiting smaller vehicles, pack-animals, litters, or other forms of traffic. The application of the law was subject to local factors and interpretations that could produce the format of the streets of Pompeii that we see today. However, the intention is clear: streets were public space to be used and the law planned for this. The application of the law with regard to streets included the roads leading into Rome, up to a mile from the city. These roads were lined with tombs—as can be seen on the Via Appia today. The owners of tombs adjoining the road would have been responsible for the upkeep of the road. The earliest Roman law code, the Twelve Tables, included provision that burial should take place outside the city of Rome. Roman law was keen to protect the right of a person to carry a corpse to the point of burial outside the city. This provides a distinct feature of the Roman city, in that the ancestors were buried and commemorated outside of the boundary of the city itself. Tombs were owned in the manner of houses and, like houses, could be developed by their owners however they saw fit.<sup>44</sup>

The need to create cities with streets with water-fountains connected to aqueducts that were free from dirt, standing water, and stench caused by blocked drains were priorities that were acted upon by a combination of macro-scale supply and dependence on the urban inhabitants to maintain the fabric of the city. This allowed for a degree of flexibility that could reconfigure the grid of streets into new formats, and might prevent traffic encroaching on pavements via the construction of masonry benches in front of houses. The enactment of the law was piecemeal and subject to interpretation with the result that what appears in plan as a grid of streets could become a dissected whole with streets shut off. The closure of streets was a planned action that affected the entire urban network of streets—whatever the plan may look like on paper. The application of the law and these informal responses to



traffic by householders has a closer relationship to planning found in later periods that links with a need to control activity in the urban environment.

## CONCLUSION—PLANNING THE ENVIRONMENT OF ANCIENT CITIES

Similarities between the early cities of Rome and China examined in this chapter lead to some conclusions about the relationship of planning and the environment in early cities in general. The grid-plan was the basis, in many cases, for the internal division of space in new cities and created a formal structure within which property could be distributed, alongside the assignation of spaces from which power could be exerted (palaces, markets, forums). Grid-plans were symptomatic of new city formation and the proliferation of the city under the direction of a central authority. However, once established, the urban environment was altered through the development of new public monuments or new destinations or centres of activity, or through the closure of streets to wheeled traffic. The environment beyond the street in Rome or Pompeii was comprised of houses, apartment blocks, and gardens (or courtyards). The combination created an environment for indoor and outdoor living, alongside domesticated and feral animals (including pigeons). Rome was supplied with clean water in abundance, as well as free grain for long-term male residents. This form of provision sustained a larger population in Rome with an unplanned impact on the environment of the city that has been recorded through a literary discourse that depicts streets that were crowded, noisy, and dirty.

## NOTES

1. George William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1977), 19; Walter Scheidel, 'A Model of Demographic and Economic Change in Roman Egypt after the Antonine Plague', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 15 (2002), 97–113. On the recent vogue for comparison of Rome and China in antiquity, see papers in Walter Scheidel, *Rome and China. Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
2. Francis Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913).
3. Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.1267b, 7.1330b distinguishes the modern planning beginning with that of the Piraeus and earlier cities that did not have straight streets. See Guy Métraux, *Western Greek Land-Use and City-Planning in the Archaic Period* (New York: Garland Press, 1978) for earlier forms of planning.
4. John Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy: Planning in Classical Antiquity* (New York: G. Braziller 1974), 8–9; has much in common with Ferdinando Castagnoli, *Ippodamo di Mileto e l'urbanistica a pianta ortogonale* (Rome: De Luca, 1956); Eddie J. Owens, *The City in the Greek and Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1992), 100–2.
5. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961); on this see Ray Laurence, 'Writing the Roman Metropolis', in Helen Parkins, ed., *Roman Urbanism* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1–20.
6. Alex Scobie, 'Slums, Sanitation, and Mortality in the Roman World', *Klio*, 68 (1986), 399–433; see Ray Laurence, 'Writing the Roman Metropolis'; Walter Scheidel, 'Germs for Rome', in Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, eds., *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) for reaffirmation of Scobie (1986).

7. O. F. Robinson, *Ancient Rome: City Planning and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1992).
8. Yinong Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time. The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 11–56 for full discussion of material in this section. See also A. F. Wright, ‘The Cosmology of the Chinese City’, in Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*, 33–73 for wider discussion of texts and traces of this process going back to the 7th century BC.
9. Kwang-Chih Chang, *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
10. Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters. A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 411–18.
11. Vitruvius’ *De Architectura* begins with discussion of temples in book 3 as the first element of architecture of a city, but the location of other public buildings is found in book 5 with reference to wind, heat, summer, winter, and so on.
12. Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 34–6.
13. Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town* (London: Faber, 1976); Paul Wheatley, *City as Symbol*, (London: H. K. Lewis, 1967) makes the comparison in his Inaugural Lecture given at University College London on 20 November 1967. There are other areas of comparison with reference to foundation rites that include sacrifice to god of the soil, see Wright, ‘The Cosmology of the Chinese City’, in Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*, 36–7. Compare now, Ray Laurence, Simon Esmonde Cleary, and Gareth Sears, *The City, in the Roman West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
14. Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 50.
15. Quoted in *ibid.* 23.
16. Wright, ‘The Cosmology of the Chinese City’, 53–4.
17. Ray Laurence, ‘The Image of the Roman City’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 10 (2000), 346–8.
18. Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 2.
19. Wheatley, *City as Symbol*, 14.
20. Livy, *History of Rome*, 5.1–24.
21. Chye Kiang Heng, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats. The Development of Medieval Chinese Landscapes* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 2–3. Wright, ‘The Cosmology of the Chinese City’, 43–4 on Han foundation of the first imperial capital at Chang’an about 5 by 6 km.
22. Heng, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, 3–4.
23. *Ibid.* 11 quotes Ebn Wahab on this subject.
24. Eusebius Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts of India and China by Two Mohammedan Travellers* (London: S. Harding, 1733), 58–9; see also M. Reinaud, *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l’Indie et la Chine dans le IX<sup>e</sup>s. De l’ère chrétienne* (Paris: not stated, 1845), for French translation and Arabic text.
25. As detailed in Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts of India and China*, 48–9.
26. Heng, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, 19–23, 33–6.

27. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 19–22.
28. Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian*, 9.
29. Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*, 21.
30. Wright, ‘The Cosmology of the Chinese City’, 33–4.
31. Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*, vol. 1 (New Rochelle: Caratzas, 1979).
32. Antero Tammisto, *Birds in Mosaics* (Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 18, 1997), for figures, and for a very full treatment of the representation of birds.
33. All of these locations can be identified in texts, see Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), 258–9 for references.
34. Victoria Rimmell, *Martial’s Rome. Empire and the Ideology of Epigram* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
35. Barbara K. Gold, ‘*Accipe divinitas et vatum maximus esto*: Money poetry, mendicancy and patronage in Martial’, in A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik, eds., *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 591–612.
36. Martial, *Epigrams*, 1.70, for full discussion see Ray Laurence, ‘Literature and the Spatial Turn: Movement and Space in Martial’s 12 Books of Epigrams’, in Ray Laurence and David Newsome, eds., *Rome, Ostia and Pompeii: Movement and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
37. Martial, *Epigrams*, 5.22; R. E. A. Palmer, ‘Jupiter Blaze, Gods of the Hills, and the Roman Topography of *CIL* VI.377’, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 80 (1976), 43–56.
38. Martial, *Epigrams*, 4.64. Paolo Liverani, ‘Ianiculum’, in Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, M. Grazia Granino Cecere, and Zaccaria Mari, eds., *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae Suburbium III* (Rome: Quasar, 2005), 82–3 on location. Also, Martial *Epigrams*, 7.17, see Guillermo G. Vioque, *Martial, Book VII. A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 136–43.
39. Paul A. Miller, ‘“I get around”: Sadism, Desire, and Metonymy on the Streets of Rome with Horace, Ovid, and Juvenal’, in David H. J. Larmour and Diana J. Spencer, eds., *The Sites of Rome: Time, Space, Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 138–67.
40. Ray Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (Routledge: London, 2007); papers in David J. Newsome, and Ray Laurence, *Rome, Ostia and Pompeii: Movement and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) develop the concepts of individual and collective action in the shaping of the city.
41. For full accounts see papers in Laurence and Newsome, *Rome, Ostia and Pompeii*, and Marina Weilguni, *Streets, Spaces and Places. Three Pompeian Movement Axes Analysed* (Uppsala: Boreas, 2011).
42. O. F. Robinson, *Ancient Rome. City Planning and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1992); Michael Crawford, *Roman Statutes* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996), 372–8 for translation of *Tabula Heracleensis*.
43. Justinian, *Digest of Roman Law*, 43.23; Strabo, *The Geography*, 5.3.8.
44. Justinian, *The Digest of Roman Law*, 11.7–8; on the Twelve Tables Cicero *On the Laws*, 2.23.58, 2.24.61.

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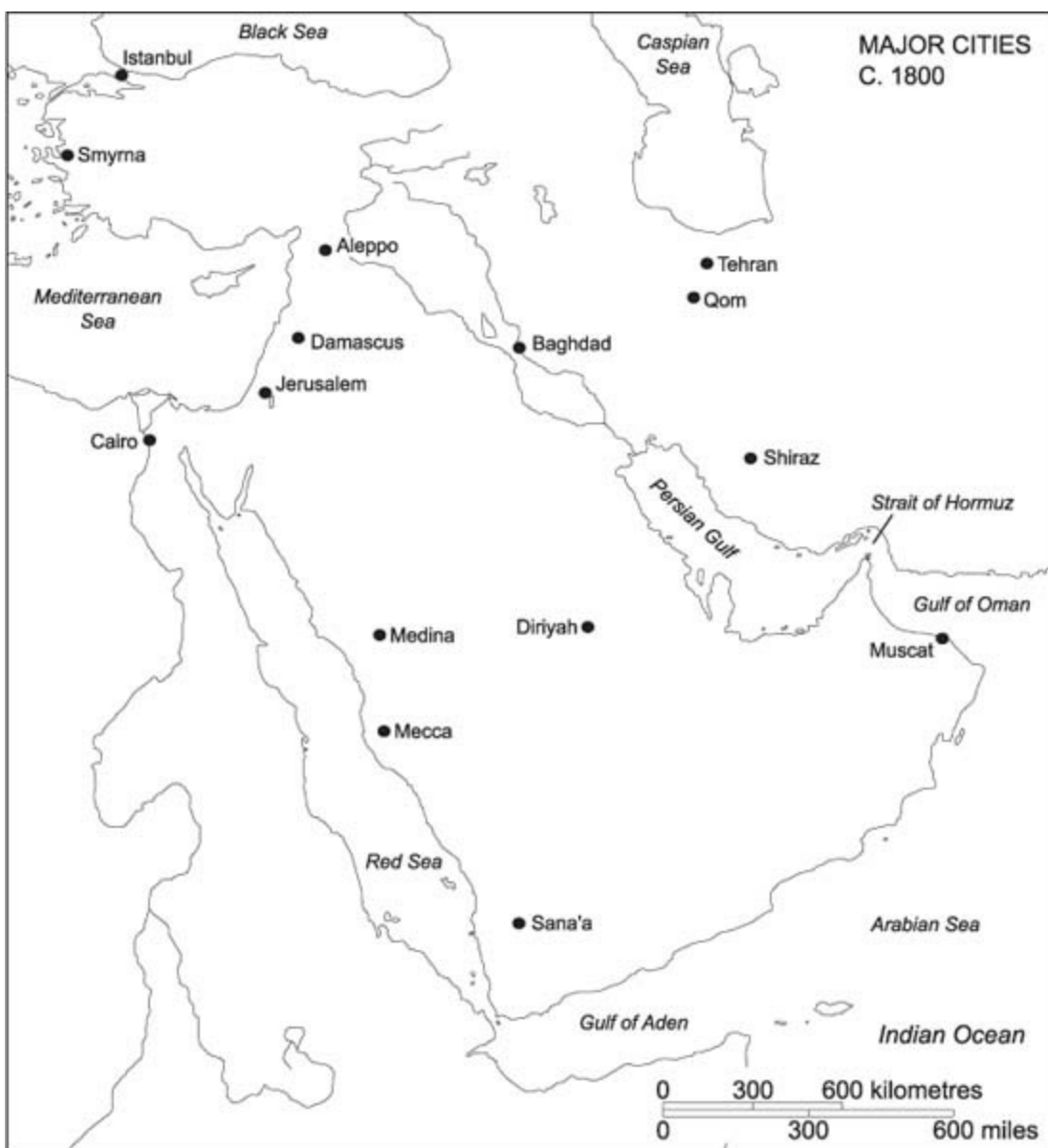
PART II

**PRE-MODERN CITIES**

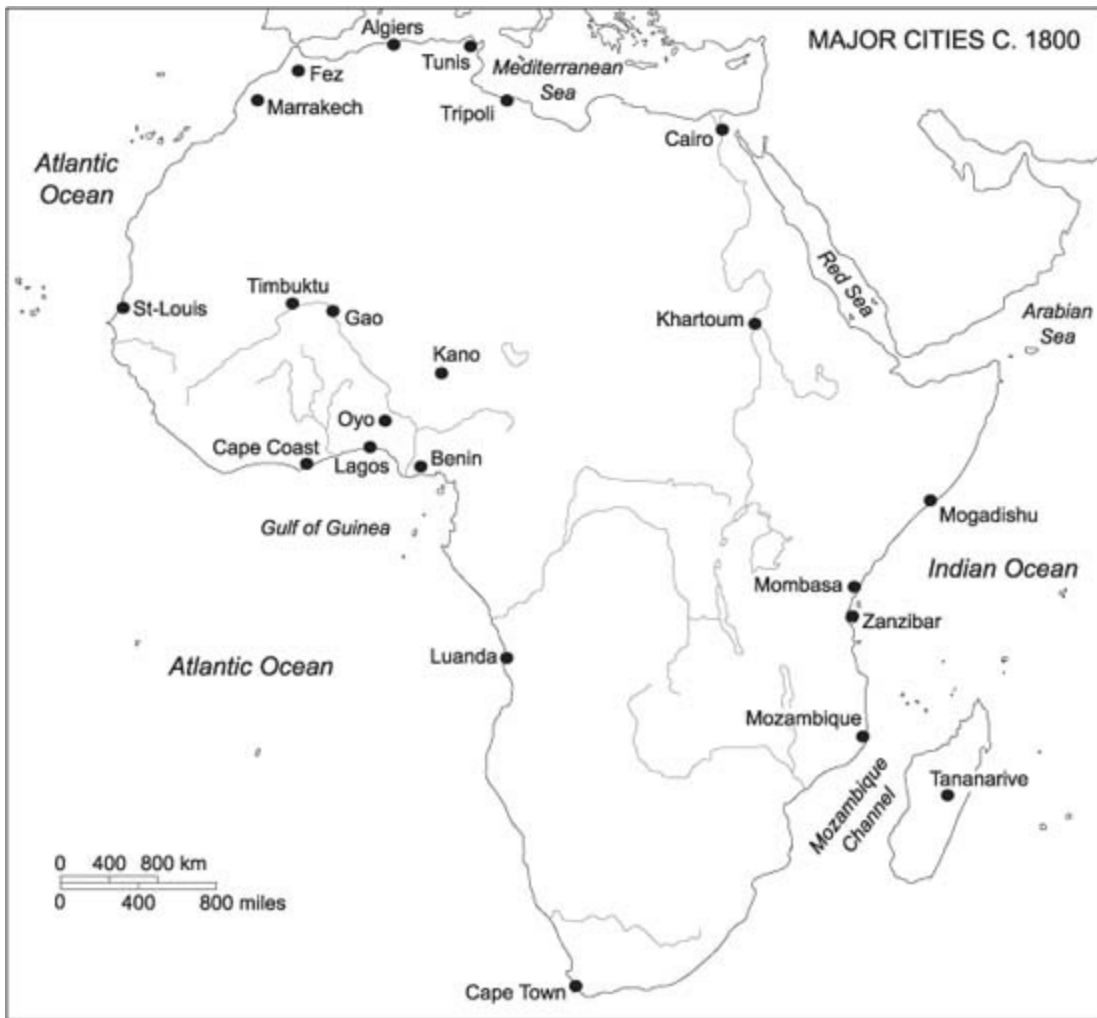
*Surveys*



Regional Map II.1 Europe



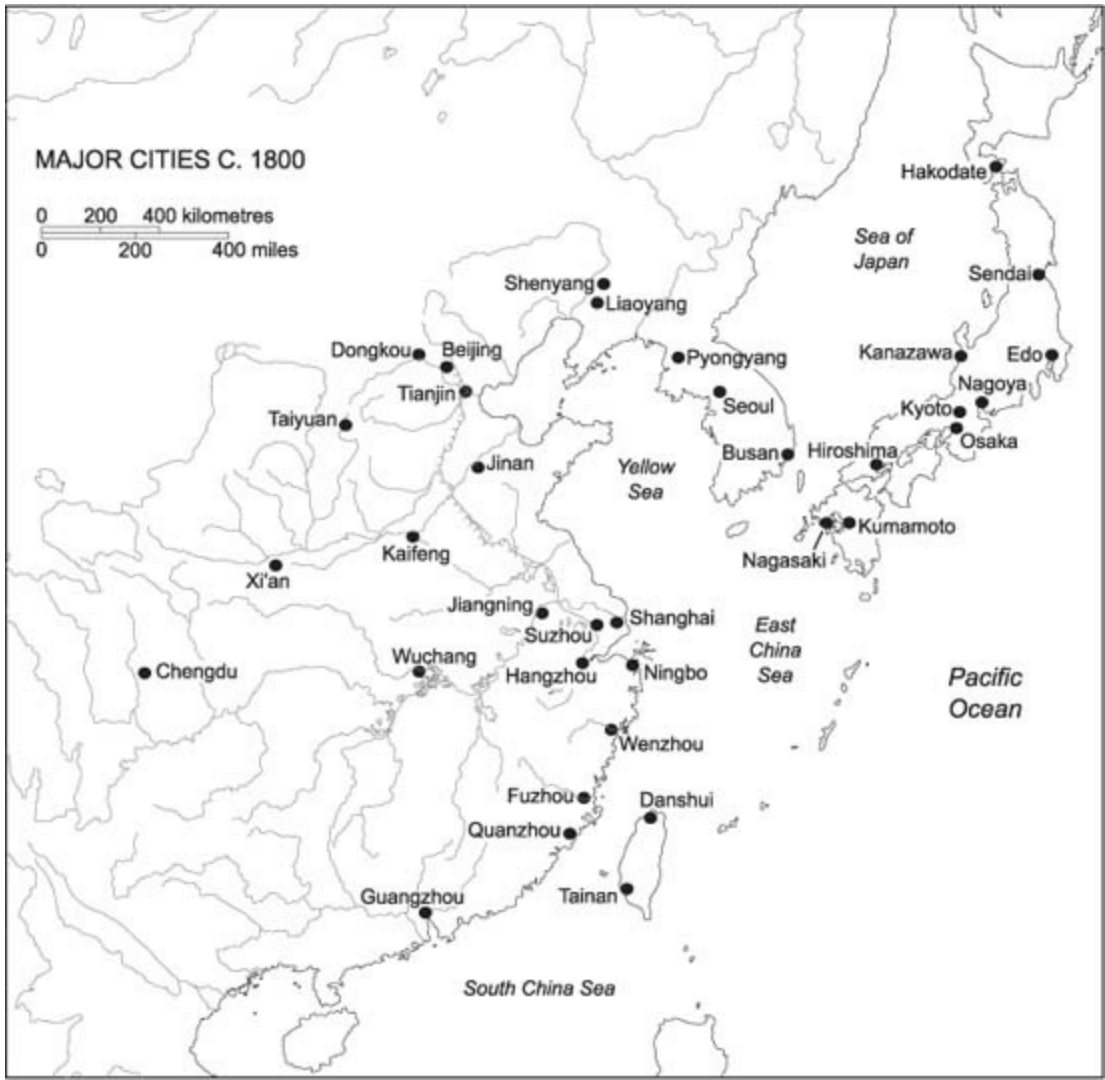
**Regional Map II.2 Middle East**



**Regional Map II.3 Africa**



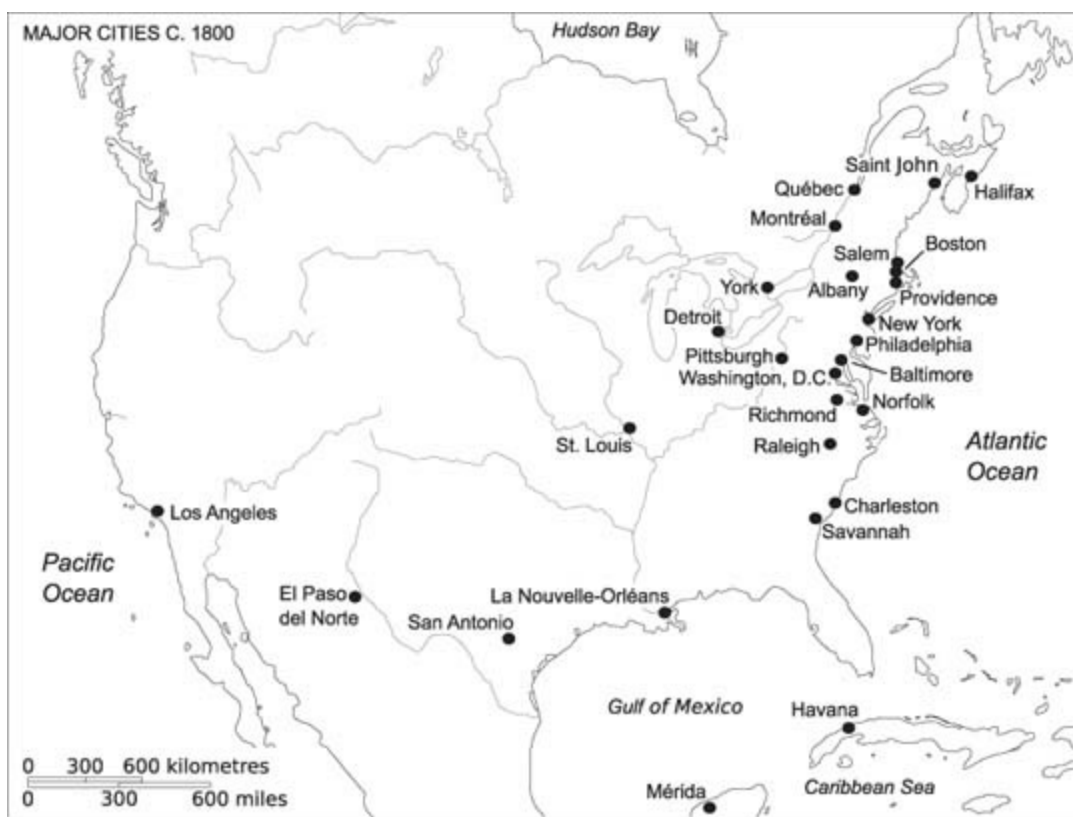




**Regional Map II.5 East Asia**



Regional Map II.6 Latin America



Regional Map II.7 North America

## MEDIEVAL EUROPE

MARC BOONE

THIS chapter starts by identifying the chronology of European urbanization in the Middle Ages beginning with the murky origins of urbanity before 1000 and taking into account the different periods of town foundation and the factors influencing them. There follows a more thematic description of the different functions of cities during the golden era of urban growth in the high Middle Ages, before the discussion turns to the late medieval crisis and changes affecting towns. Attention is then given to the development of municipal communalism, which since Max Weber has often been seen as distinctive for the European medieval city. The final section looks at how this urban ideology evolved and spread. The central argument of this chapter stresses the mutual influence of demographic, economic, and political variables that resulted in a vibrant and resilient urban landscape, sustaining a drive towards a first ‘modernity’.<sup>1</sup>

### THE ORIGINS OF MEDIEVAL URBAN EUROPE (LATE ANTIQUITY–11TH CENTURY)

Broaching the subject of the origins of medieval urban Europe may wrongly suggest that the city was a totally new phenomenon in European history. In fact, in many cases medieval urbanity was built on a solid urban tradition, at least in those parts of Europe heavily influenced by the Roman empire or ‘romanitas’<sup>2</sup> (see above, [Ch. 3](#), also [Regional Map i.1](#); for later developments see [Regional Map ii.1](#)). The urban legacy of Roman antiquity remained most pronounced in the organization of the Catholic Church, which took over the network of Roman ‘civitates’ when developing its own circuit of bishoprics. Hence the extremely unbalanced territorial division of bishops’ sees across Europe that the Church maintained throughout the Middle Ages. This ranged from an impressive number in Italy, the core land of Roman antiquity, where even small cities could still be the seat of a bishopric and the latter’s presence proved decisive for the nature of a city ‘*ubi episcopus ibi civitas*’, to an almost nonexistent phenomenon, as in the Low Countries where important medieval cities such as Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, Lille, or Douai in Flanders or Antwerp, Brussels, and Malines in Brabant never had a bishop’s seat within their medieval walls, but had to wait until the Counter-Reformation to see the ecclesiastical map adapted to urban realities. Outside the Mediterranean region, urban archaeology testifies to the presence of centres of habitation in many places during the pre-Roman Celtic period and Roman era, but those settlements did not necessarily develop or maintain an ‘urban’ character. In the eastern parts of Europe, and in the first place beyond the banks of the Rhine and Danube, urban development was barely influenced by the territories’ later incorporation by Christianity. On the contrary, the remarkable development of urban life in the Rhineland was heavily affected by Roman antecedents, which gave cities such as Strasbourg, Worms, Speyer, Mainz, Cologne, and Utrecht and their bishops—several of them becoming prince-bishops and imperial electors—an important role to play in the centuries to come. Ecclesiastical power was enhanced by secular power, since the Holy Roman Emperors bestowed on many bishops control over the territory covered by their dioceses. In Italy this gave birth, at least in the Po valley, to the *contados* controlled by the cities.

In the centuries following the demise of the power structures of late antiquity, during the 5th to the 7th centuries, urban life often decayed and was reduced to the level of squats in large public buildings. As a result, a form of ‘privatization’ of earlier public buildings took place: the Coliseum in Rome, the arenas in Verona, Lucca, Nîmes, and Arles as well as many temples, mausoleums, theatres, basilica, baths, and big patrician dwellings were divided into separate apartments, as they housed people who fled raids.

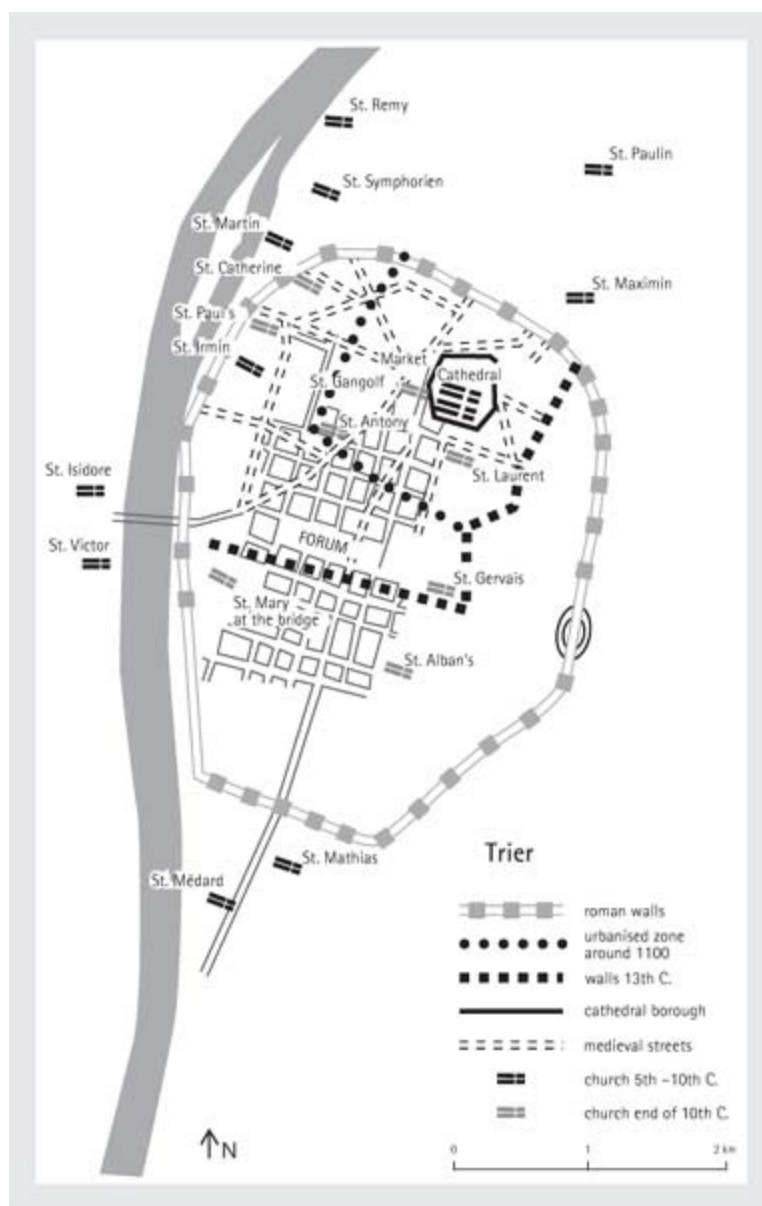
The general threat to public order and the insecurity resulting from the incessant incursions first of Germanic tribes (from the 3rd century on) and later of the Vikings, Huns, or Saracens in the course of the 9th and 10th centuries, gave birth to the trend of fortifying urban centres. Even abbeys and the suburbia around abbeys were fortified and became little walled and garrisoned settlements, as examples in northern France show: Saint-Géry in Cambrai, Saint-Rémi in Reims, Saint-Médard in Soissons, Sainte-Colombe in Sens, Saint-Denis near Paris. In the Mediterranean part of ancient Gaul and in northern Italy, the eclipse of territorial power led to the establishment of armed contingents often under noble command within city towers (as in Carcassonne, Toulouse, Béziers), in arenas (as in Nîmes and Arles), and in public baths (as in Aix). The very presence of these *milites* and *boni homines* created a special relationship between city and nobility, profoundly different from that in many other parts of medieval Europe.<sup>3</sup> At the very same time, a remarkable urban civilization developed in the Muslim Iberian peninsula (711–1492) and in Muslim Sicily (827–1091). In both cases the highpoint was reached during the 11th century. Córdoba, after 929 the capital of the Umayyad caliphate, developed its twenty-one boroughs and two palatial quarters into an agglomeration numbering between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> Palermo became the new capital of Sicily under Islamic rule and, in the course of the 10th century, also reached the threshold of 100,000 inhabitants. In both cities a remarkable cultural effervescence based on Islam merged with Greek (Byzantine) and ancient traditions, allowed the flowering of a rich urban civilization able to compete with the splendours of Baghdad. Meanwhile, urban life in western Europe shrank, as the map of Trier (Fig. 12.1) illustrates; here the ancient city had contracted by around 1100 to a defensible centre around the cathedral, the bishop’s palace and its dependencies. Even the subsequent growth and new walls constructed up to the 13th century did not reoccupy the abandoned space of the ancient city. The great number of parish churches in cities like Trier by 1200 also implied an equal number of urban graveyards, bringing to mind Jacques Le Goff’s statement that contrary to antiquity the medieval city has ‘urbanised the dead and the city is henceforth also the city of the dead’.<sup>5</sup>

The development of abbeys often proved to be decisive for the emergence of a local and/or regional market node that could evolve into an urban settlement or trigger the development of a suburb. In the case of England, this path was followed in Canterbury, Worcester, and Winchester. Agrarian growth and the commercialization of agrarian surpluses produced by ecclesiastical landowners allowed for the development of islands of growing market significance during the so-called ‘Carolingian renaissance’ of the years 770–900. More than the effects of long-distance trade that Henri Pirenne once emphasized, it was the internal economic and commercial dynamics in Europe that produced the main impetus for urban growth.<sup>6</sup> This was far from being a linear development; setbacks were always possible, as is shown by the fate of the early commercial settlements around the North Sea coast of Europe, the so-called ‘*emporía*’, such as Quentovic, Domburg, and Dorestad in the Low Countries, and Hamwic, Ribe, Haithabu, and Birka on the coasts of England and Scandinavia. Their activities faded away quickly in the wake of Viking incursions from the 9th century, leaving only archaeological evidence as witness to their once important role.

After this problematic era for European cities before 1000, there was a remarkably long period of continuing urban growth ranging from the 11th until the late 13th–early 14th centuries. Not all urban landscapes were affected in the same way, and important shifts within urban networks were the outcome.

### **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (11TH–13TH CENTURIES)**

In Max Weber’s typology the medieval city stands out as a producer (or industrial) city, in contrast to the consumer city of ancient times. Yet the structural processes affecting the European city in the high Middle Ages resulted in very different regional and local outcomes. Even the much-quoted resemblance between the two most urbanized parts of Europe, northern and central Italy on the one hand, the southern Netherlands on the other, with a density of almost 30 per cent of the total population living in cities, has been recently challenged by Chittolini.<sup>7</sup> The varied strategies of urban settlement need to be discussed, as they characterized the long period of medieval economic growth stretching from the 11th to the late 13th centuries. Similar trends however are evident in the different parts of Europe, following roughly a pattern and chronology moving from west to east, with Islamic Spain (Al Andalus) the most important exception. Regarding the factors at work in the making of urban Europe, economic development, power, religious interests, and intellectual developments stand out and need attention. What remains striking is the resilience of the most urbanized regions which continued to enjoy a high level of urbanity, even if absolute numbers of town dwellers fluctuated sharply. The regional context is also important in the relationship of cities to political and dynastic powers, and the question of dominance by a city over a larger territory (both in terms of individual property as well as in terms of collective rights) is again crucial. Towards the end of the long period of urban growth, when the internal colonization that Christian Europe had set in motion around the new millennium reached as far as the continent’s northern and eastern borders, as many as 300 new cities were founded per decade between 1240 and 1300 in the Holy Roman empire.<sup>8</sup>



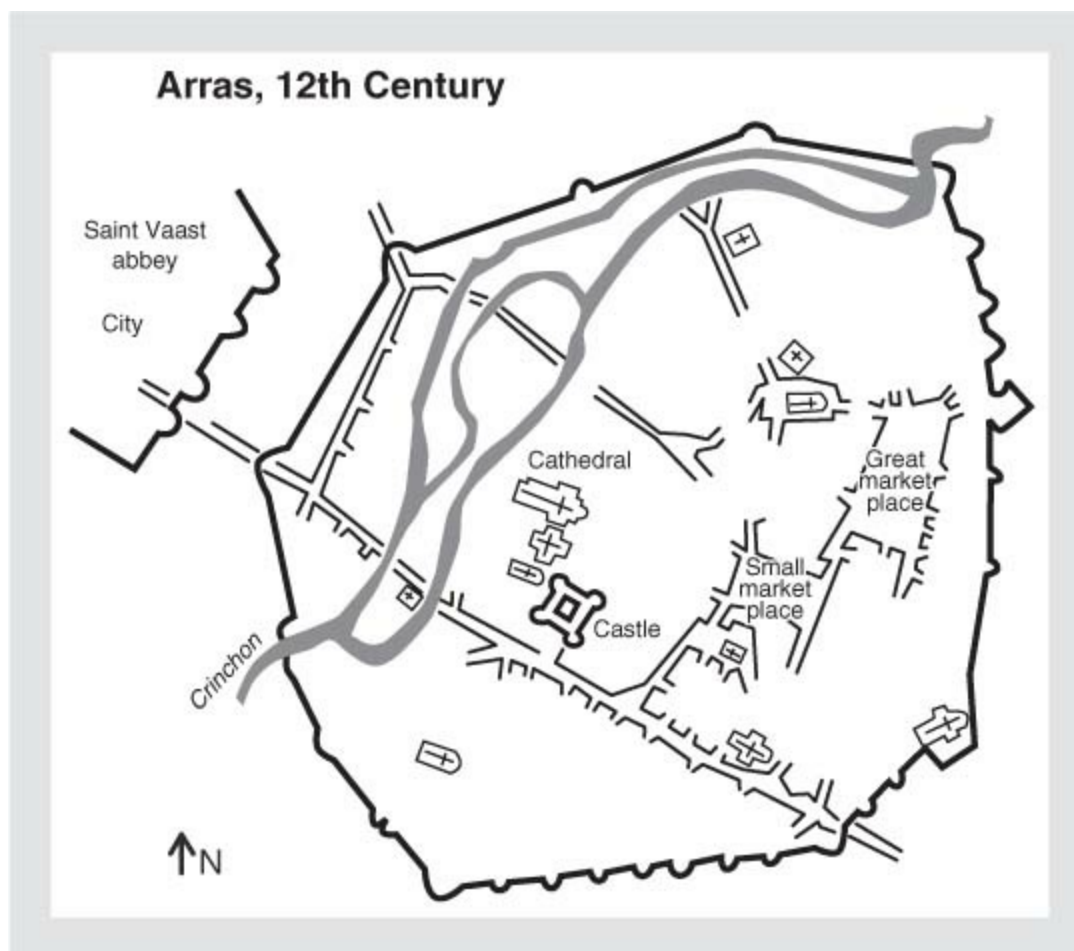
**FIGURE 12.1** Map of medieval Trier, late antiquity to 13th century, based on J.-L. Pinol, ed., *Histoire de l'Europe urbaine* (2003), part 1.

Looking first at economic development, agricultural surpluses and the existence of urban markets able to distribute and commercialize them were of decisive importance.<sup>9</sup> Large landowners had a clear interest in promoting the development of nodal centres of commerce to take advantage of agrarian growth and the general land reclamation which often accompanied it. From 1080 onwards in western parts of France peasants were asked to pay their rents and tenant dues no longer on important religious feast-days, but at the time urban fairs took place. The way a bi-polar city like Arras developed in the course of the 12th century makes clear how regional economic and commercial growth was the driving force behind urban development (see Fig. 12.2). The old city nucleus of the 'civitas' continued to harbour the bishop and his clerics on one bank of the Crinchon, the river whose hydraulic power sustained several activities linked to the cloth industry, while on the other bank alongside an old Roman road a burgh developed around the abbey of Saint-Vaast, with two marketplaces in its immediate neighbourhood: a smaller one where grain, cloth, and leather were traded, and a bigger one where ironwork and hides were exchanged. Both marketplaces were the pride of the city over the centuries for they remained a critical nexus where agricultural production from the rich surrounding countryside found its outlet to local and (inter)regional markets.

It is clear that the feudal world and its production system coexisted with the urban world without



difficulty. This explains the remarkable willingness of princes and lords to promote the development of markets and to grant urban rights, confirm staple rights, and accord exemptions from toll rights, in order to facilitate the organization of markets and the safeguarding of those who participated in them. As we saw in the case of Arras, often an ecclesiastical element was also present, since many cities or boroughs developed in the proximity of a monastery or other ecclesiastical community which needed to market surplus goods (wool, for instance) produced on its estates. Regional economic exchange was integrated within broader urban networks, very often reinforced and formalized in the various cycles of fairs (Champagne, England, Flanders, central Germany) which operated with the support of rulers, and were connected to growing international trade, especially along the coasts of the Mediterranean and northern and Baltic Europe.<sup>10</sup> With the intensification of trade, the need for networks of port cities connecting inland trade with the sea increased. In the county of Flanders, count Philippe of Alsace (1157–1191) founded new ports along the Flemish coast facing England: Calais, Gravelines, Dunkirk, Nieuport, Damme, and Biervliet enabled inland production centres of cloth such as Saint-Omer, Ypres, Bruges, and Ghent to have maritime links to the English wool market. The Atlantic coast of northern Iberia developed from around the middle of the 12th until the early 14th century through the creation of dozens of new harbours and port towns in the Basque, Galician, and Cantabrian territories.<sup>11</sup> The growing economic development of the Baltic area and the political desire of city merchants to control the coast of a rich agricultural part of Europe stretching from Germany across Poland to the Baltic area led to the formation of the German Hanseatic League. Started formally in the late 13th century as an association of merchants, it grew gradually into a league of cities. The membership of over a hundred cities allowed it to become a major political force during the medieval period which maintained well-organized connections to ‘foreign’ hubs such as Novgorod in Russia, Bergen in Norway, and London and Bruges in western Europe.



*In terms of the impact of power*, many new cities were the direct result of the political and economic ambitions of princes and feudal lords or of ecclesiastical lords, who sought to demarcate their respective territories by granting 'urban' rights to new or existing settlements. The latter were thus turned into strongholds helping to defend a territory from the ambitions of other lords. In Aquitaine where the Capetian kings of France had created new towns of the 'bastide' type in an attempt to contain the heretic movement of the Cathars, the growing tensions between the regional lord, the count of Toulouse, and the king of France led to a wave of new bastides or 'villes neuves'. Count Raymond VII (1222–49) of Toulouse was responsible for the creation of around forty of this type of new town whose typical morphology and urban grid plan would re-emerge in early modern and modern times in newly founded settlements in the colonial world. When the region of south-western France became the frontline during the confrontation between the French and English kings, both sides tried to consolidate their grip on newly conquered territory by founding new towns as regional strongholds. Between the foundation of Cordes in 1222 and of La Bastide d'Anjou in 1370 no fewer than 450 new bastides have been counted, 350 of them between 1230 and 1340. Their creation was often due to a contract between the owner of the land (in many cases an abbey) and the political overlord. A similar movement, though on a lesser scale, occurred in medieval England; the crown, mainly during the reign of Edward I, created about ten new towns in Wales, populated by English 'colons', with the ambition to create urban strongholds on the Welsh border. In the Holy Roman Empire important regional dynasties like the Hohenstaufen in the Rhine valley and Alsace, the Wittelsbach in Bavaria, and the Zähringen in what was to become Switzerland, took initiatives to underpin their regional impact and to affirm their political identity in the face of imperial power, by creating towns as strongholds. In inland Germany local political and often religious rulers created or developed a city around the centre of their secular (*Burgstadt*) or ecclesiastical powerbase (*Domburg*). At Würzburg, Erfurt, Münster, Osnabrück, Bremen, Hamburg, Paderborn, Halberstadt, and Magdeburg the new bishoprics created after the 8th century developed into important urban centres, since the organization of the empire meant the (prince-)bishops exercised important political and military power.

In northern Germany the coastal area between Kiel and Riga saw the creation of hundreds of urban settlements such as Lübeck, founded in 1143 by Count Adolph II of Holstein reusing the name of an abandoned Slav *grad* Liubice. In the Nordic and Baltic area more than a hundred towns received a constitution based on that of Lübeck which facilitated their integration into that economically but also politically important network of cities, the Hanseatic League. In the eastern part of central Europe where the German and Slav influences met and merged, the motor of urbanization consisted of the implanting of mainly German 'colons' using the formula of the *locatio civitatis*. The new settlements received the rights of Magdeburg or Lübeck and were crucial in the spread of German cultural and political domination. As in other fields, Europe experimented in the organization of urban centres and in the way that different social and ethnic groups were accommodated. A striking example were the so-called 'fondaci' in the big Italian merchant cities, foremost in Venice. The word is derived from the Arabic 'funduq' meaning a quarter reserved for housing foreign (Christian) merchants and often spatially separated from the surrounding city and thus very recognizable.<sup>12</sup> As a model it spread all over the European western world.

Cities themselves were involved in the creation of new urban settlements, as for instance in those heavily urbanized parts of Italy where many older and bigger cities took the lead. The procedure

became established once the peace treaty of Constance with the German emperor (1183) gave the cities the right to self-government. In the Po valley, the Veneto, and Lombardy, new urban centres, often with the civic recognition of existing agrarian settlements, were established. In many cases they were recognizable by their designation as '*borgo franco*' or '*castelfranco*'. In Piemonte alone around 200 borghi franchi have been identified. On the island of Sardinia, the maritime powers of Genoa and Pisa developed new foundations, often reusing older sometimes Roman urban structures in order to develop the strongholds that their commercial expansion in this part of the Mediterranean needed. The way the Pisans restructured the city of Cagliari illustrates this kind of action which was very close to a 'colonial' enterprise. On the mainland, in Tuscany, the competing cities of Florence, Siena, Lucca, and Arezzo put new cities on the map, in order to reinforce their grip on their contados at the expense of other major Tuscan cities.

*In terms of religion*, the cult of saints and the widespread practice of pilgrimages all over Christian Europe resulted in the establishment of urban settlements in order to facilitate the transit of great numbers of pilgrims. Along the roads leading to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, an important number of new burghs appeared between the Pyrenees and Santiago during the late 11th and first half of the 12th century. These new cities, which attracted a great number of immigrant '*francos*' or settlers, developed where the '*camino*' crossed a river, or in the neighbourhood of a monastery or Episcopal see, while some older cities, like Pamplona, Jaca, Estella, Burgos, or Leon were revitalized and grew considerably because of their pivotal location on the '*camino*'. The kings of Leon and Castile and later of Portugal used the Church and the Catholic '*reconquista*' of Islamic territories to expand their power with important implications for the spread of urban settlements and urban rights. In Catalonia, the count-kings and the kings of Aragon combined initiatives for economic growth with the desire to protect the new Christian population through bastide-like foundations, a strategy repeated when Christian influence reached further south, towards Valencia and Murcia.

Lastly, *intellectual developments* such as the presence of a reputed school, attached to a chapter of canons or to a monastery, attracted outsiders to many cities, as well as meeting the growing urban demand for better trained administrative personnel. Moreover, the advent of that other European medieval legacy, the university, meant for certain cities a fundamental evolution. Already in the older university towns (such as Bologna, Paris, Oxford, or Montpellier, gradually developing into genuine universities in the years 1200 to 1215) the relationship of the ecclesiastical and university authorities with the host municipalities was complex and often problematic, since the universities' masters and students claimed extensive privileges which often conflicted with the city's interests. Pressure on cities by emperors, kings, and princes meant that in some cases a city was forced to host a university, while other cities competed among themselves to obtain one. A pattern however emerges: the majority of medieval universities were situated in the cities of southern Europe, reflecting a higher level of urbanization and an earlier presence of lay public life and written law. Economic development and the awakening of nationalist sentiment accounted for another wave of new universities in the later medieval period with the foundation in 1347 of the University of Prague marking a turning-point for central and eastern Europe.<sup>13</sup>

### CRISIS AND DECLINE (14TH–15TH CENTURIES)

The Western world around 1300 has been described by the demographer Pierre Chaunu as '*un monde trop plein*'. It was a time that saw a profound crisis which changed fundamentally the course of

economic and urban development. The long phase of sustained and generalized economic growth after 1000 gradually came to a stand-still in the last quarter of the 13th century, with direct and important consequences for urban society. The crisis provoked a number of severe and long-lasting social and political conflicts that were acute in the great urban centres of the Flemish, northern Italian, and Catalan regions. The big concentrations of the urban workforce in specialist sectors, notably textile production, meant that falling living standards led to serious political disturbances. As a result, a first wave of generalized unrest spread through Europe's urban society from around 1275 onwards, and continued with variable intensity until *c.* 1320. More of these waves of urban revolts were to follow—around 1380 for instance. Such protest movements were also indicative of the fact that by the start of the 14th century the Malthusian limits of the economy had been reached; in the years 1315–1317 a general famine hit the north-western part of Europe, the first of a long list to come. In some cases we can measure the death rate, highest in the cities; thus the industrial city of Ypres in Flanders lost 10 per cent of its population between May and October 1316. In the following years in certain cities of Lithuania, England, and Poland scenes of cannibalism were mentioned, a biblical *topos* undoubtedly, but nevertheless testimony to the social chaos that famine provoked.<sup>14</sup>

There was more to come. The Black Death of 1347–1350 hit Europe and was responsible for the loss of at least one-third of the total population, not least in cities. More important still, bubonic plague became endemic and outbreaks recurred almost every ten or fifteen years, which meant that until the middle of the 15th century every generation had to face once or more of the effects of excessive mortality. Critically, young adults, that is the most productive groups, were the worst hit. They did not have time to develop any form of immunity and the fact that they were often under-nourished made them extra vulnerable to the repeated outbreaks of the disease. Contrary to what happened in the countryside where many villages were abandoned, cities continued to attract a new and fresh population from their hinterlands and urban networks showed a remarkable resilience, albeit on a much reduced demographic scale. Depopulation had very important effects: the sharp fall of the value of houses and property, for instance, together with a substantial redistribution of wealth, all of these were responsible for an urban society in which social relations were redefined. Although precise indications remain scarce, an exceptional source such as the first general survey of Florentine families in 1427 made for fiscal purposes, the *catasto*, allows us to see a growing difference in the age at which people first married: around 25–30 years of age for a man, while a woman was much younger when she entered into marriage.<sup>15</sup> The result was an urban society in which the remarriage of widows and prolonged adolescence of young males posed serious social problems and created a turbulent political atmosphere.

One effect of decline was visible in the townscape; in many cities buildings were left uninhabited which resulted in the abandonment of whole quarters, often in the suburbs. This was only partly offset by higher immigration from the countryside towards cities or between cities. Only in the second half of the 15th century did a slow demographic recovery set in, though urban Europe had to wait until industrialization accelerated after 1800 to recover fully and reach the population levels attained already around 1300. The commercial hubs of western Europe so important in the early modern period (Antwerp, Amsterdam, and London) escaped economic recession up to a point, buoyed up by diversified international trade, including to the Baltic, and by 1500 enjoyed increasingly high living standards that attracted newcomers.<sup>16</sup>

General insecurity, and more precisely war and famine, were responsible too for renewed attention to fortifications and the need to defend the city and make it less vulnerable to attacks from the outside.

Hence revived investment in walls, gates, and fortifications, which had important consequences not only for the built environment, but also for the creation of a more effective financial structure (taxes and loans) to fund these works. The latter development in its turn contributed to the redistribution of wealth and the growth of social inequality, which provided fuel for new social conflicts.

If, in general, cities withstood the effects of the repeated demographic disasters of the late Middle Ages, some fundamental shifts are evident in the European urban system. Due to new and better techniques of communication and exchange, the traditional overland trade route between northern and southern Europe, centred on the Champagne fairs, had already declined rapidly from the late 13th century in favour of the development of the Atlantic seaboard whose many port cities were drawn into the general commercial upswing. The cities on Spain's north coast, on France's Atlantic shore and on both the south and south-eastern coast of England and on the coastline of what became from the late 14th century the Burgundian Low Countries created a network of commercial and economic strongholds in which urban interests and urban policy were the driving forces, as the reasons behind the gradual shift between Bruges and Antwerp as the leading emporia in north-western Europe at the very end of the medieval period suggest.

New shipbuilding methods, sailing techniques, and advanced insurance, originally developed in the great Italian maritime cities of Genoa and Venice, and also in Florence and Milan, gradually spread to the Atlantic coast of Europe and helped to underpin the early colonial enterprises of Portugal and Spain, and later of England and the Netherlands. Older historiography considered the Hanseatic area of northern Germany and the Baltic as lagging behind in the new financial developments but, on the contrary, that part of medieval Europe adapted their commercial methods to support the growth of their bulk trade in grain, wood, hides, and furs.

The structural adaptations in both textile and metallurgical economic activities highlighted another pole of remarkable urban growth during the 15th century in southern Germany, where inland cities like Nuremberg, Augsburg, and Ulm flourished, enjoying direct commercial links through Venice to the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Despite recurrent warfare from the time of the Crusades in the 11th century, the Arab ports and commercial cities in the Middle East, such as Aleppo, Alexandria, and Cairo, continued to function as major entrepôts for trade with the West. The exchange rate between East and West may have been to the advantage of the East throughout the Middle Ages, but the commercial activity of merchants from Genoa and Venice (but also from Catalan or Provençal ports) maintained the importance of intercontinental traffic in luxury goods, both imports (spices, silks) and exports (mainly textiles and silver) that linked European cities through the Middle East to Asia. Trade with the Middle East and beyond also enabled the accumulation of experiences that would prove useful when Europeans started their colonial adventures to Asia and the Americas.

## THE MEDIEVAL CITY AND ITS LEGACIES

Behind this survey of urban society, its long era of growth and subsequent crisis, however differentiated in its impact in different parts of medieval Europe, the question remains what were the legacies of the European medieval city. Inevitably some of the ideas proposed by Max Weber come to mind. Here the medieval communal ideal, nurturing the emergence of the 'burgher', the typical inhabitant of a *burgus*, rejoicing in a set of individual rights, and at the same time engaged in a collective enterprise with a set of duties and responsibilities, may have been the most striking theme.

Gourevitch pointed out how the medieval burgher was a quite exceptional phenomenon that appeared in European history, and was as such not present in contemporary Byzantine or Islamic societies.<sup>17</sup> Recent historiography has argued that ‘communalism’ deserves as much attention as more traditional topics like ‘feudalism’ or ‘parliamentarism’ in the analysis of Europe’s medieval past. The communal element in urban history came to the fore—and was identified as such—when cities reached a level of economic and political influence that put them in a special relationship vis-à-vis traditional powers whether the Church or the princely state (kings and emperors). This different level of development explains why communes were abundant in northern and central Italy from the 12th century onwards, while they remained absent in the south. In the latter region, the Norman conquest, followed by the repression of the communes (as in Messina in 1232) by Emperor Frederick II, prevented a similar flowering of a communal movement, which was potentially on the cards given the advanced urban development of the preceding Byzantine and Islamic period. For similar reasons, cities on the northern German coast were precocious in developing urban autonomy, while this barely affected eastern European cities. The first wave of communes touched the Flemish and Picard area and northern Italy in the years 1070–1130 and were commonly based on a mutual oath between free burghers, a ‘*conjuratio*’ meant to guarantee freedom and peace within the cities.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from its relationship with the outside world, the commune redefined the internal organization of cities. In many cases, the commune took over or was based on earlier associations. A very early example in north-western Europe was the ‘ghilde’ in the city of Saint-Omer, in place at the end of the 11th century already and which evolved from an association aiming at the protection and mutual support of the city’s merchants to being an organization open to all formal burghers of the city. In Novgorod the association of merchants, the so-called ‘Hundred men of Ivan’ (from the 13th century onwards), fulfilled a similar role. Novgorod and Moscow were the two Russian towns which participated in the communal movement because of the presence of active associations of merchants.

This brings us to another crucial element of Weber’s archetypal European city: the effects of self-governing urban institutions. In Arezzo, for instance, a private deed of 1098 had already mentioned the presence of two urban consuls, while a formal letter of Pope Pascal II in 1111 addressed to the ‘*universitas civium*’ of the same Tuscan city allows us to conclude categorically that an autonomous urban body politic in which consuls were active existed by that date. In many cases the juridical proof of the existence of an urban organization was preceded in time by the reference to civic officials at work.

Political disorder and the fragmentation of power in the feudal Europe of the high Middle Ages reinforced in a decisive way the communal movement. In many cities, the power of the local bishop proved no longer capable of imposing the peace that commerce needed so badly. One of the oldest communal statutes known, that of Pistoia of 1117, obliged the local consuls to guarantee peace in the city and in the surrounding *contado* covering more or less the territory of the diocese, the ‘*civitas*’ of old times. No surprise that the oldest communes in northern France all developed in the context of episcopal cities: thus Cambrai (1077), Saint-Quentin (1081), Beauvais (1099), Noyon (1108–1109), and Laon (1110–1116). Communes reflected the growing distance between the interests of the economic elites within the cities and the feudal power of the bishops. Their close link to the peace movement did not prevent them from providing an armed response to lords threatening their cities. By the end of the 12th century, however, a shrewd ruler such as the French king Philip Augustus, grantor of no fewer than twenty-eight communal charters between only 1180 and 1190, succeeded in combining his own political agenda with that of the urban peace movement. Some decades earlier, in

the years 1127–1128, a major political crisis in the county of Flanders was resolved in such a way that enabled urban interests, in this case of the great Flemish cities of Ghent, Bruges, Saint-Omer, and Lille, to coincide with those of a new dynasty of counts, that of the house of Alsace. The latter took power at the expense of a candidate put forward by the French king, while in return the cities took some steps on the political scene for the first time. A century later, the representatives of the same cities advanced to political centre stage and played an important role as ‘*scabini Flandriae*’ (aldermen no longer of a single city, but of the county of Flanders) in international politics, above all in relation to making commercial treaties with England. Typical urban institutions, such as the aldermen, could in other words expand their representative role and functions, so that their action embraced the whole of the local region and beyond.

According to Weber, the right to civic administration was characteristic of the medieval commune. Below the level of civic power personified by the aldermen, consuls, or other office holders who acted both as local judges and political administrators, a sometimes complex multi-layered system of organizations combining religious, charitable, or occupational associations evolved. It provided a reservoir of ambitious men—women remained excluded from public functions—active in the public sphere because they felt responsible for what became the leading principle of the commune, the ‘public good’ or ‘*bono commune*’.<sup>19</sup> The wish of the inhabitants of a city to constitute a *universitas*, a corporative association free to meet and to have internal consultations, was so fundamental that in many cases the portraits of the consuls or aldermen became the image par excellence the city displayed to the outside world, representing them on their seals for instance (see [Plate 12.1](#): seal of the city of Meulan, 1195). Older historiography may have over-emphasized the differences between cities governed by aldermen and those under the regime of consuls, for instance. Ultimately the form of urban government, the way the aldermen, consuls, *jurats*, *échevins*, *regidores*, and the like were designated and the relationship between the different levels of authorities that intervened in the process, responded to one fundamental guiding principle derived from Roman law: ‘*quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet*’ (‘what concerns all has to be negotiated and approved by everybody’), a principle originally conceived in order to settle claims on private property.



**PLATE 12.1** Seal of the commune of Meulan, end of 12th century (after B. Bedos-Rezak, *Corpus des sceaux français du Moyen Age. Tome premier: les sceaux des villes*, Paris, 1980, n° 413, p. 323).

In reality, many urban governments tended to become dominated by a small oligarchy. The complex

rules and procedures guiding and directing the many elections rarely guaranteed an outcome that corresponded to the early 20th-century liberal dream of 'urban democracy'. Of course, urban governments were based on the mandate that office-holders were invested with after a successful election. But the fluctuating number of electors, the preliminary elections on the level of parishes, quarters, guilds, corporations, confraternities, the way decisions were reached, preferring votes sometimes by the '*major pars*' (majority) and on other occasions by the '*sanior pars*' (the wiser part of the electorate), all these elements ensured that a straightforward 'democratic' process was almost never realized. The complex system of selection and decision-making was reflected in communal political structures that in an overwhelming number of cases had a three fold aspect. At the basic level, a general assembly composed of all male inhabitants or burghers having full political rights, a meeting that had in theory sovereign and decisive power but in practice seldom convened; on the second level a more or less limited council which could in certain cases number several dozen, if not more participants, composed of representatives of guilds and similar bodies; and finally an executive body, consisting of the aldermen or consuls who were supposed to handle daily political and financial affairs. Architecturally, this political structure was reflected in the oldest civic palaces in the northern Italian communes: in Brescia (1187), Verona (1193), Bergamo (1200), and Cremona (1206) where in each case a big loggia at floor level, open to market activities and ready to receive the popular mass meetings, was surmounted by a series of rooms where the council and the lord mayor and the aldermen could convene, supported in an almost literal way by the underlying bigger meeting of the 'populo'.<sup>20</sup> In a later phase around the middle of the 13th century, both in the big urban centres of central Italy (Bologna is a well documented example) and Flanders (Lille, Ghent, Bruges), a new central market square was 'constructed', often an important and costly enterprise which resulted in an open public space available for public political meetings.

The city not only acted as a positive force assembling and uniting the strength of its individual burghers, but also defined the limits of citizenship and regulated the influx of newcomers and their access to the social, juridical, and political protection it offered. Indeed, even in the harsher times of demographic crisis, the city continued to attract newcomers, despite the urban graveyard effect it exercised. To many, therefore, the advantages of living in a city clearly outweighed the disadvantages and inherent risks. The attitude of cities to newcomers was discriminatory and restrictive; already in the 1191 Ghent charter it was said newcomers could be expelled if they were judged to be '*toti oppido et universitati inutilis*' ('of absolutely no use to the town and mankind').

From urban accounts appearing in the 14th century, we can see that special taxes were levied on those who were judged unprofitable to the city. If these measures did not drive them away, then banishment or expulsion from the city could follow. Banned individuals who dared to transgress such measures put their lives in jeopardy. Thus the medieval city not only offered urban-based amenities able to make life easier and respond to social needs, but it also drew clear lines as to who might share in them, and thereby shaped and modelled social behaviour, the labour market, and economic opportunity. It generated its own marginal class and the collective fear of marginal behaviour that went with it, leading to repressive behaviour towards lepers, homosexuals, Jews, beggars, and the like.

Whether or not one was a burgher, and as such had access to the rights and duties associated with it, was a cornerstone of the European urban community and profoundly influenced the later development of European society in a way that other urban civilizations with a different approach to the rights of individual inhabitants did not.<sup>21</sup>



## THE CONSTRUCTION OF CIVIC MEMORY AND IDEOLOGY

The most precious object preserved in many urban palazzi would have been the *arca communis*, containing both the archives and the financial documents of the commune. Urban emancipation in the central and late Middle Ages and urban (self-)government were epitomized by the organization of urban memory and the breach it created in the clerical monopoly on the written word. This urban pragmatic literacy is testified to from the 12th century, first in the northern Italian cities, where each development of the body politic of the city (from *podestà* towards a popular regime) went hand-in-hand with a quantitative and qualitative advance in the documentary power of the city. This ever more coherent documentary power became a potent tool in the hands of urban politicians and administrators, powerful since it also successfully underpinned the grip cities exercised on the surrounding countryside. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber had good reasons for considering the Florentine catasto of 1427 as a renaissance monument, intellectually as impressive as many famous works of art.<sup>22</sup> In this respect the example of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's 'good government' in the town hall of Tuscan Siena comes to mind.<sup>23</sup>

Together with pragmatic literacy, a great tradition of urban ideology evolved in which inspiration from Roman and canon law, as well as intellectual thought from the universities and clerical reform movements, came together to give birth to new ideas of civic power focused around the shared responsibility for the 'common good'. From the 13th century onwards the Franciscan and Dominican friars developed this urban ideology further.<sup>24</sup> Marsiglio of Padua's famous *Defensor pacis* of 1324 demonstrates how an Aristotelian view of the origin of power looking for its source in the free communal meeting of citizens became embedded in the urban experiences and practices of the Italian city.

Prior to this quite a singular practice developed in Italy after the late 12th century that aimed at pacifying internal feuds and conflicts within the urban elites by confining governmental authority in a city to a so-called '*podestà*', an itinerant judge, recruited from among the leading families of the time and trained as a professional mediator. The remarkable circulation of *podestàs* among north Italian cities had a unifying effect on political ideas and practices and became an effective tool for developing a very urban approach towards governance. A similar movement in the diffusion of codes and practices can be observed in the spread of urban chartered rights: for example, the charters of Louvain in the Low Countries, or of the modest German town of Soest, which were adopted by much bigger cities such as Cologne or Lübeck, the latter in turn influencing the charters of hundreds of urban centres along the Baltic coast. This was a powerful cultural and political manifestation of the importance of imitation and emulation among European cities.

A temporal dimension was added when the political contract among citizens and between the body politic of the city and its ruler, be it a bishop or a secular prince or sovereign, was re-enacted at each dynastic succession and on the occasion of the yearly swearing in of magistrates.<sup>25</sup> The mutual set of rights and obligations was read aloud and oaths taken and if necessary discussed and debated. In this respect again, the European city was a hotbed of liberties but in the medieval sense: not of individual citizens, but of collective enterprises. The medieval *civitas* was a variant of the *universitas*, in which justice, peace, and concord were but manifestations of divine love. A community was above all a religious community; belonging to a city meant not being an infidel, heretic, or dissident. In sum, the two-fold nature of the medieval European city emerges: an urban community that creates and reinforces bonds among its members, but excludes without compassion those who do not comply.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, the medieval city paved the way for important developments of the European city in the early modern period. The urban network created during the Middle Ages, the urban space within the walls and many medieval civic institutions continued to distinguish pre-modern European urbanity, albeit subject to change and fashion and the growing influence of external forces. As we have seen, several medieval developments had quite different outcomes depending on the part of Europe affected, with some regions lagging behind in time, and this regionality would continue in the following centuries. Clearly certain ideas, of the individual burgher, of collective responsibility, and the near religious experienced feeling of belonging to the community of burghers were vital for and characterized the urban medieval experience. It is in the field of ideas, of cultural expressions, that the European cities would be confronted by the greatest challenges after 1500. What response would be given to religious upheaval, economic hardship, new techniques of warfare, totally new consumer products, and new exotic cultures, new technologies in production and consumption, and the growth of ever more centralized and powerful 'states'? The nature of that response is discussed in the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. I am very much indebted to several people with whom I discussed this text, some of whom deserve special thanks: foremost among them Martha C. Howell (Columbia University), Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan (Paris Sorbonne), Claire Billen (Université libre de Bruxelles), Peter Arnade (University of Hawaii). The editor kindly helped revise the text and Susie Sutch helped improve the English.
2. The question of the origins of cities (and of 'what' defines a city) is a much debated one: recent attempts to synthesize our knowledge, greatly influenced by urban archaeology, are Adriaan Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
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4. F. Miranda Garcia, Y. Guerrero Navarrete, *Historia de Espana. III: medieval, territorios, sociedades y culturas* (Madrid: Silex Ediciones, 2008), 47–53, 64–5.
5. Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire de la France urbaine. II: la ville médiévale des Carolingiens à la Renaissance* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1980), 15.
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7. Giorgio Chittolini, 'Urban Populations, Urban Territories, Small Towns: Some Problems of the History of Urbanization in Northern and Southern Italy (Thirteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)', in Peter C. M. Hoppenbrouwers, Anteon Janse, and Robert Stein, eds., *Power and Persuasion. Essays on the Art of State Building in Honour of W. P. Blockmans* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 234–5.
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and Ferdinand Opll and Christophe Sonnlechner, eds., *Europäische Städte im Mittelalters* (Innsbruck-Wien: 2010).

9. For the dialectic relation between a city and its direct hinterland: Paulo Charruadas, *Croissance rurale et essor urbain à Bruxelles. Les dynamiques d'une société entre ville et campagnes (1000–1300)* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2011).
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11. Beatriz Arizaga Bolumburu, 'Las actividades económicas de las villas marítimas del norte peninsular', in *Las sociedades urbanas en la España medieval. XXIX semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella 2002* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2003), 195–242.
12. See below, Ch. 15, and further: Donatella Calabi and Derek Keene, 'Merchant's Lodgings and Cultural Exchange', in id., ed., *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, vol. 2: *Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/ ESF, 2007), 318–31.
13. Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, ed., *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
14. William Chester Jordan, *The Great Famine. Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
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16. See below, Ch. 14.
17. Aaron Gourevitch, *Les catégories de la culture médiévale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983) (original Russian edn. 1972).
18. Knut Schulz, 'Denn sie lieben die Freiheit so sehr...' *Kommunale Aufstände und Entstehung des europäischen Bürgertums im Hochmittelalter* (Darmstadt: 1992); Peter Blickle, *Kommunalismus: Skizzen einer gesellschaftlichen Organisationsform*, 2 vols. (Oldenbourg: 2000).
19. Cf. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, eds., *De Bono communi. The discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (13th–16th c.)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).
20. An overall view in Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Les villes vivantes. Italie XIIIe–XVe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2009).
21. Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, *Living in the City. Urban Institutions in the Low Countries, 1200–2010* (New York: Routledge, 2012) (in press).
22. See above, n. 15.
23. Patrick Boucheron, "'Tournez les yeux pour admirer, vous qui exercez le pouvoir, celle qui est peinte ici'". La fresque dite du Bon Gouvernement d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti', *Annales. Histoire sciences sociales*, 6 (2005), 1137–99.
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## EARLY MODERN EUROPE: 1500–1800

BRUNO BLONDÉ AND ILJA VAN DAMME<sup>1</sup>

## A TIME OF CRITICAL TRANSITION?

In 1683 the Antwerp-based Father Hazart complained that ‘our ancestors, who were powerful, rich and righteous, would not be able to recognize their offspring’.<sup>2</sup> His ‘historical trauma’ was one of failing to comprehend the changing lifestyles of his flock, a sentiment that gathered broader momentum after 1700 among the Catholic circles within the cities of the southern Netherlands. Several decades later another priest articulated more clearly what was so particularly disturbing about the wealthy citizens of Ghent:

They pass their nights in balls or assemblies; they sleep a good part of the day; awakened... they hurry to have a tea, coffee or chocolate... Instead of praying to God, mass is considered leisure time, a moment during which they talk, laugh, greet each other, and admire the newest fashions in clothing... afterwards they hurry to home to have a long lunch, after which they pass the afternoon by paying or receiving visits: and so their days, years and lives are flying away.<sup>3</sup>

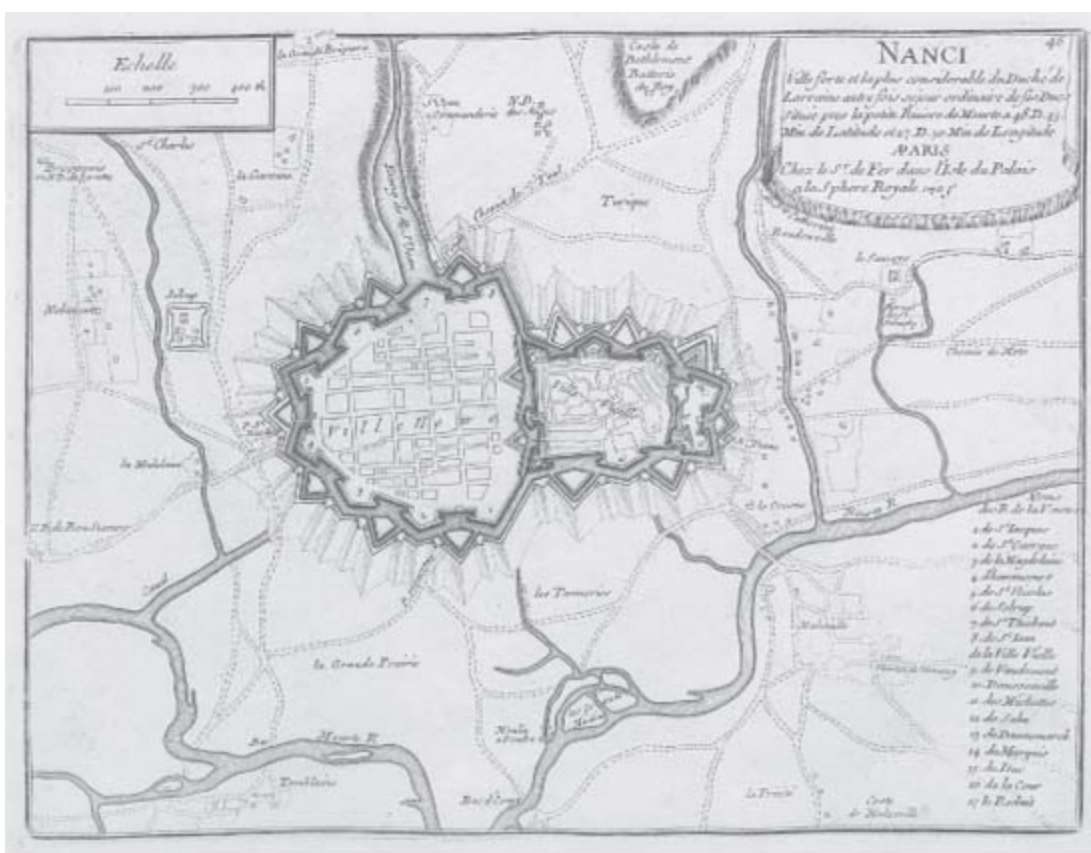
With these descriptions of an outspoken metropolitan and genteel consumption pattern, contemporary moralists bear witness to the rapidly changing urban lifestyle in 17th- and 18th-century Europe.

Without a doubt early modern times were a period of ‘critical transition’ for urban Europe.<sup>4</sup> In this period cities developed an ‘urban’ way of life that would become the leading behavioural code for society, eventually spreading beyond the city walls and still inspiring the urbanized world of today. Moreover the early modern era may be credited with having finally drawn and consolidated the map of major urban settlements and networks upon which the present-day European urban world is still largely modelled (see Regional [Map II.1](#)).

Yet, in many respects the early modern urban achievements were anything but spectacular. This holds as true for the urban world as a whole, as for the micro level of towns. Indeed, the centuries between 1450 and 1750 can be suspected to have altered the course of ‘European urbanization’ by degree rather than kind. In nothing was the early modern European urbanization process comparable to the ‘revolutionary’ achievements of the high Middle Ages and the 19th century (see [Chs. 12, 25](#)). However, such a teleological view of European urban history is not the track we intend to follow in this contribution. On the contrary, this chapter will make the claim that any artificial search for newness and ‘modernity’ in early modern urban Europe is blurring, rather than clarifying and contributing to a better understanding of the unique and singular early modern urban experience. Hence ‘early modern’ is referred to in this chapter as a chronological identification tool, not as a concept. However, the early modern period was no immobile, long stretched yawn, as will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs on the morphology of the early modern city, its economy, culture, and –in a concluding paragraph- its social structures.

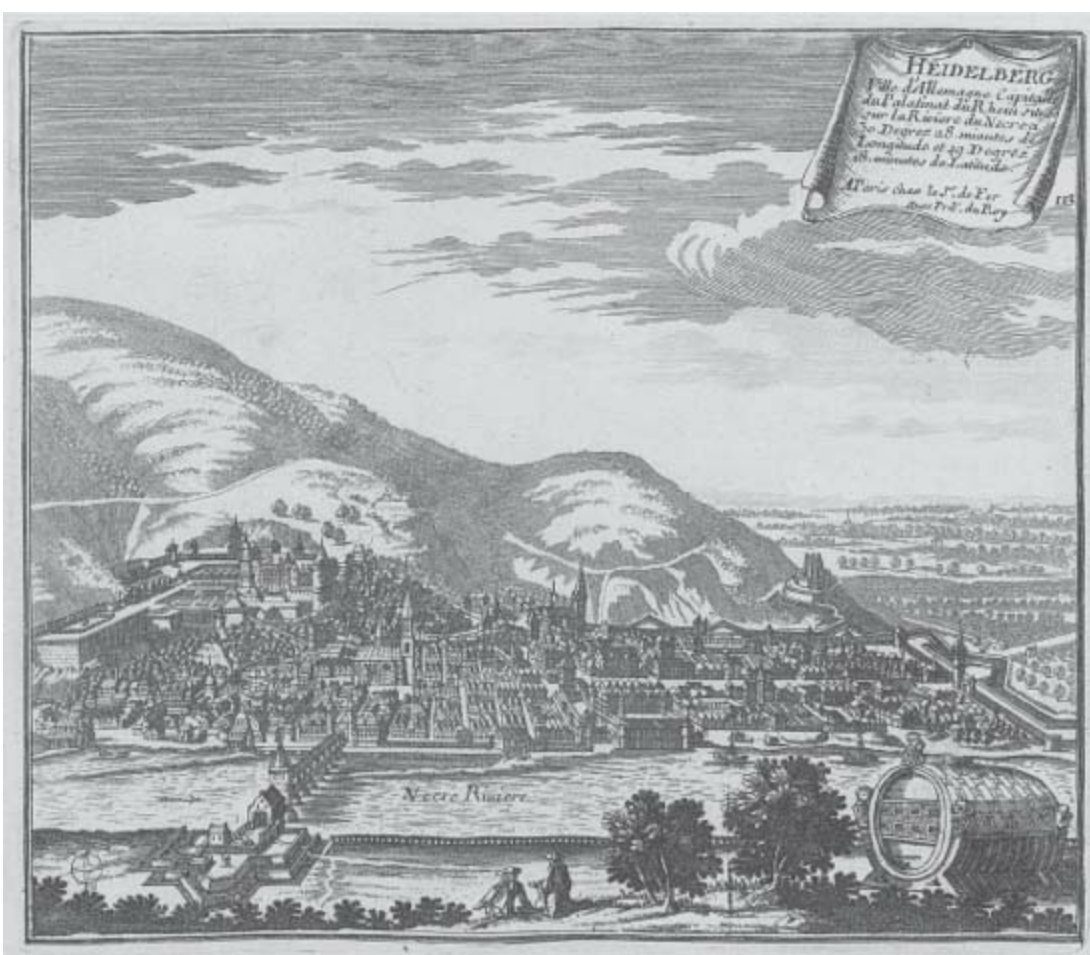
## THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

The medieval grid of most early modern cities did not alter significantly in the period under study. Walls and gates remained essential features of the urban landscape: in Germany, for instance, all cities of over 5,000 people possessed walls.<sup>5</sup> Yet, everywhere in Europe their slender and high-rise shape was remodelled by the introduction of the sturdy *trace italienne*. Such bastioned enclosures were equipped to face changes in military warfare, and could be used as elegant tree-lined promenades during peacetime. Passing through the town gates of the early modern city, the streets often spread out in narrow, irregular, and winding shapes, reflecting the organic origins and morphological path dependency of most cities. Renaissance, and later, Baroque ideas on geometrical town planning and renewal were only haphazardly implemented within existing towns, usually focusing on important economic and representative civic spaces, such as squares, city and trade halls, exchange buildings, churches, and avenues leading to noblemen's *palazzi*. The impact of political or religious power was especially important, as the refashioning of Nancy after 1590 under the reign of Charles III, Duke of Lorraine amply illustrates (see [Plate 13.1](#)). Yet, few authorities were willing or capable of deliberately destroying existing streets and fighting with engrained property rights, focusing instead on suburban areas just outside the historical centre, or close to the city walls, where population growth was anticipated. Heidelberg on the Rhine was fairly typical, keeping its traditional image despite repeated military attack (see [Plate 13.2](#)). When devastating catastrophes intervened, however, existing cities could be entirely rebuilt, as was the case in the Val di Noto in Sicily, after the earthquake of 1693. In cities like Noto, Modica, and Scicli, the town government took the opportunity to start from scratch and design a homogeneously baroque style city with a clear social plan. All in all, however, surprisingly few new cities were erected. The ones that did take shape emphasized, again, specific religious ideals or political-military schemes, such as the small, 'healing' city of Scherpenheuvel, erected by the Hapsburg Archdukes Albrecht and Isabella during the religious wars in Brabant (1609), or the capital city of St Petersburg, erected by ambitious Peter I the Great in Russia (1703). Some of them, such as the French military town of Brouage (erected in 1555), proved vulnerable and unfit for future urban growth, and in doing so, they bear witness to the 'fixed nature' of the European urban system by that time.



**PLATE 13.1** Nancy, early 18th-century map showing the difference between the organically grown *ville vieille*, the old city, and the later, more geometrically structured urbanizations, culminating around a central square (from Nicolas de Fer, *Table des forces de l'Europe, avec une introduction à la fortification* (Paris: Chez J. F. Benard, 1723), University of Antwerp, Preciosa-library).

It was only in the 18th century, and for most parts of Europe after 1750 at the earliest, that something of an ‘urban renaissance’ really did take root. England especially wrapped its conservative, medieval townscape in neoclassical attire, and it did so while putting emphasis on new leisure and entertainment spaces, like coffee houses, concert halls and opera houses, theatres, parks, and sports grounds. In this period too, western European cities started to refurbish their basic infrastructure according to an enlightened taste for order and cleanliness, leading to changes in drainage systems, street lighting, pavements, and pedestrian walkways, installing uniform street names, and silencing rattling shop signs. Such dynamism remained, however, isolated and of limited quantitative importance. Urban improvement in the period before the 19th century remained first and foremost a slow, modest, and predominantly incremental process.



**PLATE 13.2** View of Heidelberg, early 18th century. The German city was famous for its old university, but was severely besieged during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), and again at the end of the 17th century, by the armies of Louis XIV. The mostly Protestant affiliation of its citizens made the city especially vulnerable to religiously inspired warfare (from Nicolas de Fer, *Table des forces de l'Europe, avec une introduction à la fortification* (Paris: Chez J. F. Benard, 1723), University of Antwerp, Preciosa-library).

While for a large number of cities walls served the purpose of drawing a boundary between the city and its surroundings, the economy and society of town and countryside intermingled closely. The spatial boundaries between the city and the outside were contested, among others, by the pigs, chickens, goats, and other animals that could be found almost everywhere in town. Meanwhile, the necessity to feed the city led to a constant influx of farmers, congesting urban streets and squares on an almost daily basis, but especially during market days. Parts of the urban landscape became even more ‘ruralized’ in the early modern period, since expected demographic growth happened only in fits and starts. Thus, most cities sported mills and city greens, fruit, and vegetable gardens on empty building lots inside its walled enclosures. But just as the countryside crept into the city, so urbanization swallowed surrounding fields, forests, and meadows. Inns and taverns nestled alongside the ribbon development of tenements leading to the city gates, providing space for public auctions, drinking, and gambling. Gardens outside the city walls offered citizens opportunities for leisurely Sunday walks. Larger cities, like Paris or London, developed near uncontrollable suburban *faubourgs*, boasting a high diversity of professions allured by the economies of agglomeration.

Again, however, such ‘urban sprawl’ remained the exception rather than the rule. For most early modern regions the question needs to be asked inversely: what was the lowest threshold of cities to demarcate urbanism from a predominant agrarian society? Size and density were certainly no guarantee for settlements to be perceived as towns. Previous waves of urbanization had dotted the European landscape with thousands of small towns, firmly embedded in a rural economy, but with distinct and multifaceted economic, religious, and service functions. Semur-en-Brionnais, a south



Burgundian small town at the end of the 18th century, for example, was commonly perceived and recognized as a *ville*. This settlement was populated by barely 400 inhabitants, but, despite its narrow economic base, the town fulfilled some administrative and tax-raising functions. Hence, Semur-en-Brionnais was gifted with a small but distinctive social elite of office holders, *rentiers*, lawyers, and no visitor passing through the gates of this walled settlement would have cast doubts on the urban nature of its social and physical fabric.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, the urban network was almost exclusively made up of small towns. On the north European periphery, Norway, by 1530 counted scarcely three towns, of which Bergen with 6,000–7,000 inhabitants stood far ahead of Trondheim and Oslo, with about 1,000 inhabitants each.<sup>7</sup>

If the early modern period was a period of crucial transition in urban Europe, it certainly did not show in the outlook of its cities, nor in the continuing importance of the rural dimension of its landscape.

### THE URBAN ECONOMY

From the viewpoint of the economic historian the city in the centuries between 1500 and 1800 looked anything but spectacular. Indeed, early modern urbanization ‘crept upwards at a snail’s pace’, as Jan de Vries put it.<sup>8</sup> Yet, while overall achievements were modest, it would be entirely wrong to dismiss changes in the early modern urban world as insignificant. Relatively stable population and urbanization figures at an aggregate level often hide important differences in individual urban trajectories. Indeed, over the course of the early modern period the fate of urban settlements often diverged significantly and it did so following a combined logic of chronological, geographical, functional, and hierarchical divergences. Moreover changes in the urban system also enhanced major qualitative developments.

**Table 13.1 Estimated Mean Urbanization Levels in Europe, 1500–1800**

	1500	1700	1800
Mediterranean Europe	17	19	17
Western Europe	15	21	21
Outer Northern Europe	2	5	8
Eastern Europe	5	5	6

(Source: Peter Clark, *European Cities and Towns, 400–2000* (Oxford, 2009), 128)

During the ‘long’ 16th century stretching from 1450 to 1650, urban growth was fairly evenly distributed. Driven by Malthusian economic and demographic forces, towns across Europe gained in population. In this period, both landowners and farmers could profit from rising agricultural prices and rents, transferring resources from countryside producers to property owners. Whether these lived in town or countryside did not matter, they enhanced urban production and market activities through spending. Throughout this period landownership by citizens increased considerably, and so did income flows from countryside to town. Both structural developments as well as short-term crises contributed to transferring rural property to citizens, as happened on a large scale in the Italian peninsula. By the end of the 16th century Venetian urban property, for example, was heavily intertwined with the surrounding *terra ferma*. Citizens investing in the rural economy often proved

eager to secure their personal provisioning (cereals, wine, olive oil, and such like), and longed for stable rent incomes while safeguarding their personal wealth from pressures of inflation. Moreover, in old and densely urbanized regions, like Italy or the Low Countries, it can even be argued that almost the entire countryside became part of an urban economy, fundamentally intertwined with a network of small and bigger cities. In any case, the high degree of specialized and commercialized husbandry in regions like Flanders or Holland was attuned to an essentially urban culture. Almost everywhere an urban lifestyle penetrated the countryside via summer resorts or the *villa rustica*—a safe and prestigious (‘quasi-castle’) refuge where the urban elites avoided the sweat and filth of a suffocating, sun-drenched city during summer time.

All in all the ‘urban prosperity’ of the ‘long’ 16th century owed much to the complex interplay of urban economies with an expanding countryside, and cities profited in a variety of ways. While some gained as commercial gateways or industrial production centres, others performed well as market towns or as centres where agricultural surpluses and proto-industrial produce were collected. Yet, by the end of the century the first signs of a nascent urban crisis came to the fore. While European agriculture increasingly fell victim to diminishing returns, the same social and Malthusian forces that had fostered economic growth for the larger part of the late 15th and 16th centuries trapped the urban system. Moreover, in many areas religious warfare aggravated the urban crisis. France and the Netherlands were heavily affected in the late 16th century; German towns paid a high price during the Thirty Years War. The city of Mainz, for instance, was severely hit and lost almost half of its population between 1629 and 1650.

In addition, the end of the 16th century also marked a turning point in the geographical redistribution of the European urban population. For centuries Italian towns had taken the lead in European urbanization, but from the end of the 16th century onwards they had to step aside for cities in northern countries. For sure, even at the end of the 18th century places such as Palermo, Rome, and Venice with about 140,000 to 150,000 inhabitants each, and Naples with more than 400,000 town dwellers, figure near the top of the European urban hierarchy. By that time, however, north-western Europe had taken the lead, with an astonishing population figure of close to a million inhabitants for London as the clearest sign of this geographical shift in urban potential.

During the 16th century Italian cities had still continued to perform remarkably well. Notwithstanding the Spanish and Portuguese competition in global trading, cities like Venice continued to function as major producers of luxury products and as gateways for Levantine trade products such as spices and silks that were exchanged for European semi-luxuries reaching Italy via the still buoyant overland trade routes. However, a conjunction of set-backs heavily affected the Italian pole position in the late 16th century. A slowing down of the agricultural productivity curve went hand-in-hand with mounting fiscal pressures, uncompetitive wages, de-industrialization, and loss of market share in trade with the Levant. Similar forces affected towns on the Iberian Peninsula. Though it would be wrong to generalize, English and Dutch competition in the Atlantic trade and mounting problems in the local market through an imbalanced agro-system, social polarization, and heavy taxation eroded the economic growth potential of much of the Spanish and Portuguese urban system. Thus already during the early 16th century the heartland of European urbanization had moved to the north. In particular Antwerp and a mesh of cities in Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zeeland were taking the lead, following a basically Smithian model of economic development. Antwerp grew as a major trade hub at the crossroads of English, German, Italian, Spanish, and local trade and industries. Though the urban pressure on the countryside of the Low Countries was considerable,

increasing imports from the Baltic region circumvented the bottleneck of grain provisioning.

While the peace treaties of Münster and Westphalia in 1648 brought the (short-lived) political stability Europe had longed for after the exhausting Thirty and Eighty Year Wars, it also marked the beginning of a cyclical shift in the relationship between urban economies and their rural base. However, a 'crisis' comparable to the one of the late Middle Ages did not take root. Though the major growth spurt of the urban economy came to a standstill after 1650, and some individual cities even lost in population and performance, the achievements of 16th-century growth were largely maintained. This stabilization at a high level owed a lot to the involvement of urban elites in rural land-ownership and state finances. By providing relatively stable incomes to wealthy inhabitants, it helped cities to cushion income losses stemming from de-industrialization or decreasing market shares in international trading. Moreover, while the process of state formation incrementally narrowed the margins for political autonomy of individual town governments, and warfare and vestige construction very often also imposed heavy tax burdens upon the populace, urban communities were not just on the debit side of the balance sheet (see below, [Ch. 23](#)). More often than not the main beneficiaries of the increasing state debt were urban residents. Consequently, tax flows, often stemming from the rural economy, were pumped into the urban economic system again. Many cities found support in the expanding state machinery, and towns profited greatly from the growing administration of surplus extraction and state control. Even though soldiers were not always the most pleasant group of inhabitants, garrison cities like Maastricht gained in importance during the early modern period. The impact of the growing cadre of tax collectors and state officials clearly surpassed their measurable importance in numbers or income. As members of the higher middle ranks and elite these state officials added considerably to the attractiveness of towns as centres of culture and consumption. In doing so, they contributed indirectly to a cultural climate that was pulling increasing numbers of landowners into town. Even very small towns made an important part of their living from the presence and expenditures of *rentier* households, but in this respect the major capital cities and metropolises by far outstripped the rest of the urban hierarchy in economic and cultural importance (for Japan see below, [Ch. 18](#)).

The list of capital cities that flourished during the second half of the 17th century is impressive. By the end of the 18th century Madrid, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, Warsaw, St Petersburg, and Naples figured at the top of the European urban hierarchy. Thanks to a brilliant court life and an extended bureaucracy, these capital cities managed to attract and concentrate there members of the high nobility, alongside military staff and numerous administrators. The social and economic momentum engendered by this spin-off of state formation was enormous (see below, [Ch. 21](#)).

More limited in scale and impact, but with a clear importance as well, several Atlantic ports could be identified as nuclei of growth and development. From Lisbon to Liverpool a handful of European harbour cities engaged in the expanding Atlantic and East Asian trades and profited from global interconnections with other urban systems. Compared to the older Mediterranean trades, the fleets that sailed to the Atlantic ports innovated in combining Asian and American luxuries with growing volumes of cheaper cargo such as sugar, tobacco, tea, coffee, and the like. While the rapid expansion of gateway port cities jumps to the eye, the hinterland effects were no less substantial. Via a complex transportation and distribution web, colonial groceries stimulated growing transport flows and favoured retail outlets and pedlars as the last part of a long chain in the supply of a growing army of consumers of tea, coffee, tobacco, sugar, and fashion across the continent.

Though it is dangerous to generalize, most medium-sized towns, with the exception of English

provincial towns, faced slower growth or even experienced absolute decay in the centuries under scrutiny. The majority of small towns in the era 1650–1750 lost momentum as well. From a geographical viewpoint, the constant ‘redrawing of the map’ as Braudel would formulate it, induced a shift towards Dutch towns in the 17th century and English ones in the 18th century. While Amsterdam captures a lot of attention, it is probably more correct to talk of the integrated Randstad network of Holland-Zeeland towns as an urban unity. Dutch urbanization levels soared to a tremendous 42 per cent by the second half of the 17th century. Among the elements that help explain this ‘Dutch miracle’, the following need mention: cheap and accessible energy provisioning, high agricultural and industrial labour productivity, advances in shipping technology, easy access to cheap capital, state violence through the rapid expansion of military naval capacity, an aggressive trading policy, and, last but not least, the very nature of the polycentric urban network itself, which allowed for local specialization and intensified exchanges. While Delft grew famous due to its pottery industry, Haarlem and Leiden specialized as textile centres. By 1700, however, the Dutch had to give up leadership to England, the most dynamic 18th-century economy. In a way London combined all assets necessary to the growth of a balanced metropolitan development (see below, [Ch. 21](#)). The city functioned as a gateway to internal, international, and even colonial trade, hosted the political, juridical, and administrative power of the country, and developed into a major consumer centre for the landowners who were increasingly seduced by metropolitan manners. By 1700 around 600,000 inhabitants lived in London, a figure that gradually rose to nearly a million at the end of the Age of Enlightenment. While concentration of wealth and economic power in the metropolis was undeniable, a great number of small and regional towns prospered as well. Remarkably, the country also gave birth to a range of new specialist towns.

The era after 1750 witnessed a strong new wave of urbanization, but this time European urbanization was marked by an ‘urbanization from below’ again. Across Europe small towns with industrial, specialist, and rural market functions recovered a significant, albeit small, share of their lost positions in the preceding centuries. Obviously, while industrialization played a role in this—especially in England and the southern Netherlands—it was population and agricultural growth that contributed most to this vigorous new dynamism at the bottom of the urban hierarchy. Moreover, the period saw the breakthrough in specialist seaside resorts and spa towns.

All in all, however, the limited and selective economic growth potential of urban Europe before 1800 was reflected in unequal and slow urbanization achievements, especially in the later part of the early modern period. Indeed, compared to the oft-praised modernization and change that characterized the 18th century, the European-wide urban achievements of the long 16th century were more impressive. Generally speaking, changes in the early modern urban world owed more to income redistribution than to income generation. The absence of strong economic growth was, at the micro level of the artisanal workshop, paralleled by patterns of remarkable stability. Though a modest tendency towards greater production units is discernible, the economic townscape was characterized first and foremost by small workshops where guild-based artisans processed raw materials with limited capital and modest technological means. In spite of their omnipresence, it is extremely difficult to generalize about the functions, the specific conditions, or the relevance of guilds as economic institutions. In some cases, such as the Lyonnais silk industry, guilds seem to have been at the forefront of technological and organizational progress and innovation. Elsewhere, such as in 17th-century Venice, textile guilds failed to grasp the importance of changing consumer preferences. By continuing to stress the old ‘quality’ constructions of their products, these guilds traditionalized and eventually marginalized themselves. On top of their economic activities, guilds also offered

opportunities for representation, mutual support, sociability, and conviviality, but these functions varied from guild to guild, place to place, and time to time.

With overall stability reigning, three major significant transitions need closer attention still. First and foremost, late medieval and early modern cities did not hold the monopoly of industrial production. On the contrary, industries increasingly ruralized even giving birth to specific proto-industrial regions. However, the strong growth of rural industrial production, often only in the form of secondary employment, did little to erode the economic potential of the town. Between town and countryside a division of tasks evolved in which urban entrepreneurs and merchants specialized in providing capital, and took care of the organization of production and the marketing of the semi-luxury products made in the countryside. Meanwhile, urban centres continued to specialize in top-end luxury products requiring the fashionable skills and resources that only urban settlements could provide.

Second, while historians have devoted considerable attention to the large industrial export sectors, most early modern cities, especially the successful ones, relied upon highly diversified occupational structures. Indeed, a large part of the social and economic resilience of early modern towns was located in the myriad of artisans and professionals that provided local populations and their hinterland with food, shoes, pots and pans, paintings, entertainment, professional services, and religious comfort. Within this complex economic and social web of goods and services a clear tendency towards the growth of the tertiary sector can be discerned over the course of the early modern period. Not only did the commercialization and commodification of culture contribute to the growth of cultural industries, such as the eye-catching theatre and opera, but in particular the retail sector performed strongly. Overall the number and relative importance of shopkeepers in urban societies grew and this phenomenon was not confined to expanding economies only. Though the sector, from an economic viewpoint, achieved only modest productivity gains—hardly a ‘retail revolution’—the increasing number of traditionally organized artisanal shops seems to have eclipsed retailing in an open market or fair-like ambience, and this for durable goods especially.

Third, the growing concentration of urban activity in the larger centres of the urban hierarchy exerted profound influences on the economy. Metropolitan cities were notorious for absorbing the demographic potential of large hinterlands. As will be discussed elsewhere in this volume, early modern cities were marked by long-lasting ‘graveyard’ effects; the coincidence of high mortality rates with low birth rates drove them to continuously renew the local population with immigrants (see below, [Ch. 22](#)). Though some enjoyed the prospect of social upward mobility (below, [Ch. 24](#)), immigrants to a large degree reproduced the problems they came to solve: lots of them immigrated temporarily, postponed marriage—if they married at all—and hence contributed to lower birth rates. But the combined effect of rapidly growing metropolises and their precarious demographic solidity was to cream off a considerable part of the demographic surplus of the countryside. The most spectacular, though perhaps not most representative, example is provided by the case of London which ‘earmarked’ one in six births in England for a metropolitan experience.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the need to provision these big cities with food, timber for construction, and fuel, was a major stimulus to the improvement of the transportation and communication system. Obviously, maritime and inland river navigation were superior in terms of cost/weight freight ratios. With their integrated network of barge canals the Dutch took the lead in integrating their poly-nuclear urban system in the 17th century. But tellingly enough in many European areas road transport improvements served the integration of regional markets from the late 17th century onwards. The English turnpikes

contributed to falling carrier rates, increasing transport efficiency, and expanding commodity markets. But similar improvements also affected the Parisian basin. Elsewhere technological progress was sometimes superior, such as in the Austrian Netherlands. Needless to stress that advances contributed to a reduction in the costs of transportation, increased knowledge exchange, and industrial specialization.

With knowledge exchange, another major achievement of primate cities needs to be discussed. Paradoxically, while distorting the urban hierarchy in its favour, the metropolitan model also possessed a major centripetal potential. Very often towns and countryside in the vicinity of the metropolis stagnated in population terms, but gained in economic performance through specialization and integration in the provisioning chain of the metropolis. Among the ‘soft’ but no less potent consequences was the development of metropolitan culture as an extremely powerful influence in the provinces. While Louis XIV had varied fortunes on the battlefield, the attractions of the French court and the Parisian consumer model was enormous. Throughout the 18th century taste leaders in the French provinces and abroad turned to Paris for the latest fashions. Ironically enough, when the Comte de Bergeyck, one of the fiercest advocates of a protectionist policy in the Spanish Netherlands, travelled to Spain, he halted for weeks in Paris to buy the haberdasheries his household needed for keeping up appearances.<sup>10</sup> Those who could not afford a visit to the famous ‘Rue Saint Honoré’ turned to local fashion shops. Under the pretext of selling the latest French fashion these then seduced customers hundreds of kilometres away from Paris to spend large sums for apparently superfluous and frivolous consumption purposes. What holds true for Paris can easily be repeated—*mutatis mutandis*—for other metropolitan cities. Even though many Frenchmen and Englishmen never went to the capital, the metropolitan models that percolated deep into society heavily influenced their culture and consumer preferences. The growth potential of capital cities was not confined to well-established major cities, as the example of St Petersburg makes clear. Newly founded by Peter the Great at the start of the 18th century the city in no time achieved a leading position in the European urban hierarchy, an evolution exemplified by the almost 95,000 inhabitants that lived there in 1750 and the 220,000 by 1800.

In sum, while the aggregate urbanization trends point to the failure of the early modern city to set in train a process of modern-style economic growth, the shifting rank/size hierarchy reveals important qualitative changes. No less important, the consolidation of an urban cultural model and behavioural code was possibly the most significant contribution to an urban transition in the centuries prior to industrialization.

## URBAN CULTURE

If urban Europe experienced a critical transition in the early modern period, a good case can be made that it needs to be sought first and foremost at the level of urban culture. Between the end of the 15th and the dawn of the 19th centuries, urban Europe saw the final consecration of a distinctive metropolitan and genteel lifestyle. From the late Middle Ages the city turned into the main stage of consumer change and cultural innovation. Though the consumer society did not leave the countryside unaffected, it was primarily the evolving material attitudes of townspeople that became crucial in consolidating a ‘consumer society’ with an explicit bourgeois behavioural code. Starting in the late Middle Ages houses turned into homes, and goods into gods as the fondness of citizens for possessions began to alter the physical outlook of towns, its internal dynamic, and the social behavior

of its inhabitants.

The most visible of all these changes maybe concerned the ‘petrification’ of town dwellings. Although each European region had its own building conventions and preferred construction materials, cities around 1800 were generally made of stone and brick, and no longer from wood and thatch. This process proceeded gradually from the Middle Ages onwards, or accelerated abruptly when destructive fires intervened, as was the case after the Great Fire of London (1666). Some regions, such as Scandinavia, needed to wait for the modern period to witness wooden structures being replaced by stone houses, but prosperous Italian towns such as Genoa, Florence, or Venice boasted a prestigious stone-built cityscape from very early on.

In Italy and the Low Countries unsurprisingly, the first stirrings of something resembling a ‘material renaissance’ were discernable: it is within the *casa* and *palazzi* of the Italian urban elites that one witnesses the dawn of a more comfortable and diverse domestic interior in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries. The share of the household budget devoted to ‘material things’, or at least the diversity thereof, was clearly on the rise: furniture, paintings, majolica, different goods for everyday use, and ‘superfluous’ products as well. Moreover, these highly furnished abodes became characterized by versatility, as interiors closely followed the rising tide of fashion. In the 17th and 18th centuries the craze for porcelains, glassware, tea and coffee-sets, clocks, curtains, and so on, gained broader social appeal in capital cities like Paris and Amsterdam. Their spread was also apparent in cities facing economic difficulties and decay such as Chartres or Delft and even in the urban periphery of northern and eastern Europe. The material divide between the ‘new consumer pattern’ that arose in the 17th and 18th centuries and the late medieval one was probably not that pronounced. While durable, ostentatious, and expensive consumer patterns still played a large role in the earlier period, they did not cease to be of crucial importance thereafter. Again, the printing press, new draperies, majolica, cheaper and mass produced paintings, already showed the way towards the affordable middle-class ‘consumer pattern’ that scholars consider to be typical of the later early modern period.

Meanwhile throughout the entire period the ‘urban nature’ of highly commodified behavioural patterns jumps to the eye: not only articulating social positions, but also reflecting concerns for values such as ‘comfort’, ‘pleasure’, ‘respectability’, and ‘domesticity’. Obviously, as has been stressed before, cities owed a lot to the attraction of noblemen and courtiers, but, on closer inspection, it was the town that changed the mental framework of these elites rather than the opposite.<sup>11</sup>

Such proliferation and growing sophistication in material culture run alongside a diversification in domestic space. In early 17th-century Augsburg around 70 per cent of all families lived in homes containing four or more households.<sup>12</sup> This was more or less typical for most European cities: even the houses of the wealthy counted servants or tenant families in attics, cellars, or back rooms. What changed, however, was a specialization of the rooms in which these families intermingled and stacked their household possessions. Stricter notions regarding gender segregation and privacy manifested themselves, leading to a fundamental reorganization of the medieval open hall house. Partitions, ceilings, and staircases brought new subdivisions in the home, allowing individual family members to retreat into their ‘own’ room. Some chambers began to be fitted up for specific domestic leisure, like reading, dining, dressing, and so on. In elite houses, halls and parlours upholstered with cushions, leather chairs, and prestigious status goods, provided a warm welcome for visiting guests. Indeed, semi-public spaces in the house gained in significance as an urban ‘culture of respectability’ developed: tea and coffee breaks began to structure the day, just as visits for playing card and board games, or musical entertaining coloured the life of 18th-century town dwellers.<sup>13</sup>

Consumerist behaviour not only permeated the private household, it also took centre stage in public space. Medieval urban Europe boasted a highly commercialized town-scape already, with a myriad of fairs, markets, street peddling, and rows of (craft) shops—normally the first room of the house, with an immediate entry from the street. Clearly, this high degree and diversity of material provisioning continued to underpin the attractiveness of early modern cities. No rural context had a comparable range and quality of goods on offer. In 18th-century metropolitan areas like Paris or London, the elaborate design and furnishing of fashion shops became subjects of both awe and ridicule. Famous *chroniqueurs* of 18th-century Paris etched fine descriptions of attractive *magazins*, lavishly decorated with mirrors, glittering chandeliers, exquisite nests of drawers, and handsome counters. And in 1727 Daniel Defoe criticized London shopkeepers for investing their money in frivolous furniture, gilded cornices, and glass-fronted cases, simply to make ‘a show to invite customers’. The grumblings of Defoe aside, visiting such metropolitan shopping streets became a *sine qua non* of travel guides, advising upper tier readers to delight in leisurely window-shopping and polite browsing at ease. However, most urban shopkeepers still operated from fairly traditional abodes, building a customer base on older forms of mutual trust and long-term personal relationships. Retail numbers were growing not because most premises became smarter or sale methods more seductive. Rather, growing numbers of European citizens were throwing off religious and moral shackles for an unapologetically materialistic view of life. The idea that the private vices of those who could afford them could have public benefits was being adopted long before Mandeville praised it, but it was in the metropolitan context that it gained wider moral and social acceptance.

By 1800, middle-class inhabitants of European cities ate, dressed, and lived differently from their predecessors in 1400. The ‘commodification’ process of the European city not only altered urban space, but changed the very notion of time as well: leisure and non-working hours were ‘consumed’ by strolling in shopping streets and visiting recreational places for theatre, music, reading, drinking, walks, and sports. The urban *flâneur* needed only to speed up his pace to become that much talked about *persona* of the 19th-century city.

Thus, consumer changes were paralleled by increasingly shifting boundaries of behavioural refinement and codes of social conduct.<sup>14</sup> The urban nature of this process was mirrored in the way citizens depicted and described countryside manners as rough, rude, and unrefined from at least the late medieval period onwards. Much has been written about the courtly origins of major behavioural changes, but it was no coincidence that both Castiglione and Erasmus, the two most influential educators of their time, while addressing courtiers, thought and wrote from urban contexts. It was the urban world that acted as the prime mover in the behavioural refinement that gradually ‘progressed’ in shifting boundaries of ‘shame’, ‘privacy’ and ‘increasing bodily self-control’. Access to and education in the appropriate behavioural code was unevenly distributed within the confines of urban society. In the highly urbanized area of central Brabant in the southern Netherlands, for instance, even shooting confraternities and chambers of rhetoric in small towns and large villages were by the 15th century heavily influenced by the pressure of urban manners and refinement. Members behaving inappropriately, by reckless spitting or insulting, for example, were expelled. In the same vein, one could even make the argument that declining European homicide rates were not so much the result of institutional progress, but rather the specific outcome of a growing culture of urbanity, which increasingly condemned and marginalized violent behavioural patterns.<sup>15</sup>



In a fictional story of the early 15th century Gentile Sermini invented the character of a rich farmer, called Mattano. The latter is not only very rich, but is also eager to make his way in the political world of Siena. Unfortunately however, Mattano quickly loses any political and social respectability. His ambition to exchange economic for political capital fails, when his peers discover that, when seated at table, Mattano lacks the essential social skills and appropriate urban manners for eating.<sup>16</sup> The story is illustrative of the cultural threshold immigrant countrymen faced when they arrived in town. Moreover, it also sharpens our awareness of the degree to which the cultural repertoires of the city helped in reproducing social inequality. Moreover sumptuary laws forbidding class-transgressing consumption—though probably rather ineffective in their observance—remind us how closely manners, commodities, and social positions were interconnected, especially in the relatively anonymous world of the very large city.

It is precisely this complex social fabric with its patterns of access and exclusion that lies at the very heart of some of the most essential features and dynamics of early modern town development (see also below, [Ch. 24](#)). Upon their arrival in the city, the endless army of rural immigrants faced a social world that was far more complex and unequal than the one they had left behind in their villages. The specific shape and character of this social complexity owed a lot to the size and the functions fulfilled by towns, but also related to cultural, institutional, and other contextual elements that could differ greatly from town to town and region to region. Hence, from a social viewpoint, ‘the early modern town’ simply did not exist. Generally speaking household, kinship ties, and local community, embodied in the urban neighbourhood—key building stones of village society—also played a significant role in town life. In addition to these ‘traditional social circuits’ bonds were also forged in institutions such as citizenship bodies, guilds, civic militia, chambers of rhetoric, shooting guilds, and religious confraternities, to name but a few. Later in the early modern period clubs and societies added to the complexity of the social fabric and civil society. Moreover, informal bonds were created by credit, gifts, god parentage, gossip, and a multitude of other reciprocal relationships that were shaped in markets, in churches, in the vicinity of the water pumps, and near laundry basins, in alehouses, taverns, coffeehouses, theatres, ball rooms, and other social venues. In sum, in spite of the differences between towns across time and space, cities were marked by the simultaneity of multiple social and cultural circuits, both formal as well as informal, and individuals circulated in multiple circuits. Some of these settings provided opportunities for building social capital, others contributed more to bonding, but taken together the complex interplay of chains of interdependency added to the overall social stability of a potentially unstable and even violent social environment.

Wealth and income distributions were always extremely skewed. Whether in 16th-century Frankfurt, or 18th-century Paris, social inequality was the most visible social characteristic of urban communities across early modern Europe. Little more than a tiny group of officeholders, *rentiers*, and merchants claimed the lion’s share of urban wealth. Yet, while these virtual millionaires have attracted attention, perhaps the most distinctive feature of urban society was shaped in the densely populated middle classes. Professionals, shopkeepers, innkeepers, and affluent artisans, in short ‘the middling sort of people’, earned decent incomes and fully participated in the construction of a distinctive urbanity. The lower one moved down the social scale, however, the less important the intellectual and manual skills and/or the importance of capital in running a business. At the bottom of the social ladder one encountered a huge mass of unskilled labourers, transport workers, washerwomen, and so forth; in short, people with little more than their manual labour to hire out, often employed on a very irregular basis as well. Such people owned and earned a meagre proportion

of urban property and income.

The persistence (and very often even aggravation) of social inequality did not prevent social mobility on the individual level, however. Especially when combined with marriage strategies, wealth accumulation could cleverly serve social ambitions. Yet, opportunities for personal social mobility were unequally distributed and—on balance—upward and downward social mobility largely cancelled each other out. Chances for life chance improvement were constrained by access to social circuits, institutions, religious affiliation, education, and capital. In this way a large part of urban society was excluded from a variety of strategic networks. Women for example gained status and social position primarily through marriage and often they managed to keep this position after the death of their husbands. Widows, for instance, were allowed to continue running the workshop of their deceased partner. Yet, while both women and men gained status through marriage, society in itself was resolutely patriarchal. Single women were welcomed as retailers, and merchants' wives often acquired considerable autonomy through the frequent absence of their husbands, but in general guilds were anything but woman-friendly. In towns women were completely excluded from any formal political or administrative power. They also experienced an educational gap aggravated by the increasing importance of university training, though towards the end of the early modern period the differential narrowed between female and male illiteracy.

Political power was unequally distributed as well, and here, once again, the mutual interests of a nascent modern state on the one hand and a local urban oligarchic elite on the other came to the fore. While early modern cities lost enormously in autonomy and city rulers were often supervised if not appointed by princes, they were increasingly recruited according to oligarchic and plutocratic principles.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, at the local level, city authority was undisputed and, with the support or cooperation of the churches, it increasingly invaded the private lives of city dwellers. This growing concern with the lives of citizens and inhabitants of different kinds is reflected in ordinances forbidding ale-house visits during religious services, for instance, but also in the concrete strategies by which poor people were marginalized and eventually criminalized. The failure of the early modern city to generate substantial economic growth was paralleled in its overall social inertia and especially in its failure to overcome the major social challenges confronting it, poverty above all. Not only did the mounting pressure on the poor relief system compel town governments and poor relief administrators to increasingly exclude able bodied men from relief, but relief itself was made subject to conditions, including strict rules regarding the religious and moral conduct of the destitute. Early modern cities, thus, brought little, if any, betterment to the multitude of have-nots that populated them.

## CONCLUSION

On a macro level, the endurance of poverty and social inequality in the early modern town matches the absence of sustained economic growth. Put more precisely, though urban and economic growth set in again after 1750, the 18th-century achievements were comparatively meagre. This observation has far too often been obscured by the exceptional and well-documented achievements of England, often in combination with a teleological perspective on 19th-century industrialization and urbanization. England, indeed, is the major exception to the general rule of modest economic growth and slow urbanization. Throughout the early modern period this country accumulated income gains at almost every stage, and urbanization developed hand in glove with this, as did the elaboration of a distinct social structure and a culture of urbanity. This dynamic cocktail eventually resulted in a cluster of

‘urban innovations’ at the end of the early modern period, such as the proliferation of specialist towns, a pronounced commercial culture, and an urban architectural and planning renaissance. Elsewhere in Europe stability was the rule, however. Few inhabitants of 16th-century towns, returning two centuries later, would have experienced much difficulty in finding their way around and making a living there. Yet, beyond this apparent stability, the combined effect of state formation, income redistribution, and the ‘urbanization of the nobility’ shaped an urban network that offered the economic platform upon which modern urban Europe would be built. Moreover and more importantly it also provided the ingredients for an ‘urban way of life’ that still lie at the heart of contemporary European culture. In this respect, the early modern era was, undeniably, a time of critical transition for the European city.

## NOTES

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14. See also below, Ch. 24 for cities as cradles of civility and urbanity.
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## MIDDLE EAST: 7TH–15TH CENTURIES

DOMINIQUE VALÉRIAN

THE medieval Middle East mainly corresponded to the territories under Muslim rule, occupied mostly during the first period of conquests between the mid-7th and mid-8th centuries in the East but also in the West (the Maghreb, Spain, and later Sicily). This Muslim domination was not complete, however, since the Byzantine empire preserved large territories in Anatolia, and Constantinople resisted until 1453. Furthermore, from the end of 11th century onwards, the crusades allowed Latin Christians from Western Europe to settle in the Orient—in the cities of Syria but also in colonial emporia such as Cyprus and Phocea, or in the seaports of the Black Sea. If all these cities display certain common characteristics—due in particular to environmental constraints and the configuration of regional trade networks—Islamic cities were strongly influenced by the spread of new models of development and other trends.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Orientalist scholars tried to define the specific characteristics of *the* Islamic city, which would have been relevant from central Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the 7th to the 20th centuries.<sup>1</sup> This essentialist vision, which was mainly inspired by what they knew of the traditional that is Ottoman city, is now abandoned. Instead, historians stress the great diversity of conditions and developments, sometimes inherited from the empires which preceded Islam, but also due to the regional evolutions of Islam. Most of them have now given up the idea of a city whose main characteristics are seen as intrinsically related to the Islamic religion.

FROM POLIS TO MADINA<sup>2</sup> (7TH–11TH CENTURIES)

When Muslims began the conquest of the Byzantine empire, they only had a limited urban tradition, essentially forged in the caravan cities and the oases of Arabia—mainly Mecca and Medina. A majority of the invaders belonged to the nomadic, non-urban Bedouin world. Thus, it is mainly through contacts with the newly conquered countries, which were often strongly urbanized, that Muslim Arabs adapted to city life, developing in their turn a brilliant urban civilization. Several conquered regions like Syria, Egypt, the eastern Maghreb or Yemen already had a long urban heritage, though the desert of the Arabian peninsula remained little urbanized because of the natural constraints. In these occupied areas Muslim rulers founded few new cities and maintained the existing urban network, although modifying its hierarchy.

Structural factors remained significant for the localization of the main centres of settlement. The first was environmental, in a climatic zone marked by a lack of water resources. Cities can only develop when the water supply is great enough to feed the population and to irrigate the cultivated lands. Thus the main rivers, but also the small ones, contribute to the development of urban life: the Nile of course, but also the Orontes in Syria, and even minor rivers like the Barada in Damascus. In the same way the presence of springs allowed the development of oases in the desert, such as Medina or Sijilmâsa.

The main communication axes constitute the second element of continuity in the location of cities from antiquity to the Middle Ages. If land routes are subject to change, they are nevertheless partly fixed by natural constraints. Some termini of merchants' caravans were privileged, as in the case of Aleppo. In the same way the ports continued to be places of important exchanges, as on the Yemeni or Mediterranean coasts. One change occurred however in the Mediterranean: the Muslim ports became frontier cities (*thaghr*), threatened by Byzantine fleets, and their role tended to decrease during the first centuries of Islam. On the other hand large cities developed along another zone of contact, separating the cultivated areas from the steppe and the desert. Thus the main capital cities were no longer Alexandria, Antioch, or Carthage, but Fustât (Cairo), Damascus, or Kairouan. Without completely turning its back on the Mediterranean, Muslim space became reoriented more towards the interior, an evolution confirmed by the foundation of Baghdad by the Abbasids in 762.

If at that time the majority of the population of the region remained non-Muslim, Islam was the religion of the conqueror and of the rulers, who settled in the cities. Whether they were capitals of the empire, like Medina or Damascus, or provincial chief towns, cities served as the focus of Muslim power and military force, organizing the territory around them. Newly founded cities, like Fustât (Cairo) in Egypt, Ramla, founded at the beginning of the 7th century as capital of the province of Palestine, or Kairouan in the Maghreb, had a double function as centres of defence and control of the conquered territory. They were city-camps, intended to welcome the various Arab tribal contingents, and located on strategic crossroads making it possible to control effectively the conquered areas. Their plan, as often for new cities, was characterized by a grid of streets separating the lots conceded to the tribes and their clients.<sup>3</sup> Only gradually, when control by the conquerors grew stronger, did the military camp become a real city, with political and religious institutions which led to the construction of new monuments (palace, mosques, treasury) (see [Plate 14.1](#)).<sup>4</sup> Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid caliphate, was founded with a circular plan, centred on the caliph's palace and the great mosque, proclaiming its ambition for universal domination. A number of cities however were inherited from pre-existing civilizations: in Damascus, capital of the Omayyad caliphate (661–750), Alexandria, Tripoli, or Córdoba, the Muslims used the ancient cities. Their settlement did not cause a brutal change, and changes in the organization of urban space were slow. Continuing an evolution already visible at the end of the Byzantine period, public spaces (*agora*, broad commercial streets) were gradually built over. But in Palmyra for example, the Omayyad *sûq* remained along the main colonnade's street, preserving the commercial function of this axis.<sup>5</sup> Also in Damascus, as in Córdoba, the Muslims began by sharing the main church with the Christians, before destroying it a few decades later in order to build a mosque. Without causing any brutal upheaval of urban space, the Muslims maintained some continuity and only gradually imposed a more visible mark of the presence of Islam.

In these older cities the administrative and political domination of the new rulers was progressively organized, with the help of local elites carrying on a Byzantine or Sassanid administrative tradition. As a result, the new rulers resided in old urban palaces, sometimes in reserved neighbourhoods, but always inside the city. Sometimes the great mosque, where every Friday the sermon (*khutba*) was pronounced in the name of the caliph, was linked to the palatial complex. The administration remained however, at least at the beginning, in the hands of the local elites, often newly converted.



**PLATE 14.1** Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tûlûn, Cairo, 876–879.

The military function was more strongly represented in those cities defending the border, in northern Syria facing the Byzantine empire, or in coastal cities. Here was organized a frontier society, more strongly militarized, with governors enjoying greater autonomy and volunteers to carry out the holy war. Those cities were also characterized by more developed defensive structures, in particular the presence of convent-fortresses, or *ribats*, where the combatants of the faith lived, as for example in Soussa (Tunisia). The organization of a fleet, by the Omayyad, led to the construction or the reuse of arsenals, benefiting here again from the naval experience of coastal populations.<sup>6</sup>

The city was the key vehicle for the affirmation and diffusion of Islam, the religion of the new rulers, who did not immediately form the majority of the population. Mosques were very soon built in order to assemble Muslims for prayer and the Friday sermon, even if initially they were not as monumental and triumphant as they seem today. At Damascus, for example, the great Omayyad mosque was built only at the beginning of the 8th century, replacing the old cathedral. The Muslim conquest led to an Islamization of society, whose rhythms and forms are still poorly known, but which was faster in the cities. The result however was the emergence of a Muslim scholarly milieu related to religious sciences, that is the study of the Qur'an and prophetic traditions (*hadiths*), but also of law, theology, and Arabic. Some cities, because of the proximity of rulers or of their sacred character, became great centres of science and learning: for example, Medina, which was important in the development of juridical sciences, Damascus, or Kairouan. This phase of development of the Muslim religion was characterized by internal divisions whose sources were both religious and political. If the majority of the rulers belonged to Sunnism (in particular the two Omayyad and Abbasid caliphates), others recognized Shi'ism, the other important branch of Islam. This was the case with the Zaidi in Yemen, and above all with the Fatimid caliphate, which established its capital in Cairo in 969 and made it a great intellectual and religious centre. Less important, the Kharijits were present in Oman and in the Maghreb, where the Rustamids founded the city of Tahert, and the Midrarids Sijilmâsa.

Moreover, urban intellectual activity was not limited to religion. The Muslims, but also Christians and Jews, took part in a vast cultural movement which inherited the Greek and Persian traditions and

developed them by translating an important corpus of texts and also by producing an abundance of new ones. The entourage of rulers played a major role, as at Aleppo under the Hamdanid dynasty, which attracted to its court scholars, poets, and scientists.

The formation of a vast Muslim empire, which extended from central Asia to the Atlantic, in particular embracing all the southern side of the Mediterranean, strongly contributed to the creation of an immense economic area unified by a single power, and above all by shared language and culture.<sup>7</sup> The same money circulated from one end to another of the empire, facilitating trade and exchange. In the same way, the rulers' concern for the road network facilitated the mobility of men and goods. That gave a further impulse to trade, from which cities profited especially. Cities served as regional markets, which organized trade with their hinterland, and often played an important role in structuring extended trade networks. Some were particularly important, namely those located on the edges of the desert or the sea, or on crossroads, for example cities like Aleppo or Damascus, or in the East Samarkand. After 900, Bukhara became a major entrepôt for the trade of eastern products such as spices of India or incense of Arabia, redistributing them in the Mediterranean. Likewise Sohar, close to the straits of Hormuz, played an important role at the entry of the Persian Gulf, while in the Maghreb Tahert and Sijilmâsa became major cities during the 9th century profiting from the trans-Saharan gold trade.

New trade networks and expanding commerce led to the rise of a new merchant class, which occupied a prominent place in urban society. The most important merchants, sometimes linked to the political regime, have to be distinguished from the smaller retail merchants of the *sûqs* (markets). The great merchants developed extensive networks and established in the main cities *funduqs* (closed buildings used at the same time as inns), as well as places of storage, exchange, and taxation. Users included Muslim Arabs, in particular those in the caravan trade, but also people belonging to religions tolerated by Islam, mainly the Jews (who thanks to the Diaspora participated in a vast commercial network)<sup>8</sup> and the Christians.

Local trade was concentrated in the marketplaces. These, which included sometimes artisanal activities, were situated in the busiest places of the city, in the centre (as in Damascus in the Straight Street), or close to the gates of the city. Trade activities were clustered, by streets or groups of streets, foodstuffs being sold close to the city gates, in easy contact with the countryside, while books or textiles were traded near the mosque. This world of the *sûqs*, once portrayed as disordered, was actually very structured. It was controlled by an official agent, the *muhtasib*, who was in charge of the enforcement of rules regulating trade and acted, for instance, to prevent fraud in weights and measures. But more generally he supervised urban life, dealing in particular with problems of public hygiene and the protection of public spaces.<sup>9</sup> However, Islamic cities at this time lacked the autonomous corporations such as the guilds that developed in the medieval cities of Christian Europe, and the labour market, even if organized, remained under the control of the *muhtasib*.

One of the features of Islamic cities was indeed that, with a few and brief exceptions, there was no urban autonomy and they did not have a legal existence identified by their own distinctive institutions or civic space. The city was ruled by its governor (*wâli*), in the name of the sovereign, with the assistance of his administrative and judicial officials who depended on him. In particular the *qâdî* judged under the Islamic law (*sharî'a*), which was not peculiar to a city or even to a region, but functioned for the whole Islamic world—even if there was a certain diversity in the interpretation of the law and local customs.

The only groups officially recognized by the regime were the non-Muslim religious communities.



These *dhimmi*s (Christians and Jews essentially) were tolerated as believers of a religion of the Book (the Bible). In return for recognition of Muslim rule, they could worship and organize themselves according to their own laws and with their own leaders. The latter had authority over members of their communities, and were used as intermediaries by Muslim rulers, in particular over fiscal matters. Religious community organizations were not visible in the urban landscape, however, and there were no specific neighbourhoods associated with them, even if certain churches or synagogues could serve as a social focus.

Nonetheless, there were certain social groups which, even if they were not juridically recognized, could play a role in urban life. This was the case for example with neighbourhoods, which were organized around small markets and oratories (*masjid*). Here solidarities emerged, sometimes with the added ingredient of religious or geographical identities, and these resulted in confrontations between neighbourhoods. We also find groups of young people (*fityân*), sometimes more or less 'delinquent', linked by bonds of solidarity and friendship, and shared values. In Syria from the 10th century there were organized bands of urban militia, the *ahdâths*, who were in charge of public order under the direction of a *rais*, a chief often descended from a great family of notables. These groups claimed an identity, sometimes linked to the city, which they defended in case of external attack, but they could also rise up against the regime when its policies conflicted with the interests of the city or at least of the wealthiest inhabitants. Never however did these organizations lead to durable political structures nor did they exercise direct urban power.<sup>10</sup>

The picture of the Islamic world given by Arab geographers of the 10th to 11th centuries shows strongly urbanized areas, structured around urban centres connected by a dense network of roads (for later see Regional [Map II.2](#)). Some of these cities had considerable dimensions: at the beginning of the 11th century the area of Baghdad is estimated at between 50 and 70 km<sup>2</sup>, and its population at between 600,000 and 2 million, and for Córdoba 49 km<sup>2</sup> and between 100,000 and 500,000 people. At the same time, Kairouan may have covered 14 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of around 100,000, and Toledo 10 km<sup>2</sup> and 37,000. This urban network included both older pre-Islamic cities and also many new foundations, generally linked to the settlement of Muslim armies or, later, to new dynasties. In such cities the new Muslim rulers settled, which led to a progressive Islamicization, not only of urban populations, but also of the surrounding countryside. Thus cities appear as the principal vector of the spread of the new Islamic civilization within the conquered areas.

### CITIES OF BYZANTINE ANATOLIA

In spite of Muslim efforts to overthrow the Byzantine empire, it resisted in Anatolia until the Turkish Seljuq conquests of the second half of the 11th century. These cities maintained a Byzantine urban tradition, largely inherited from Rome, which was fully displayed in the capital Constantinople, an imperial megalopolis with a surface of 8.3 km<sup>2</sup> and, in the 10th century, between 200,000 and 300,000 inhabitants. Power was represented there by the emperor, whose palace, in the centre of the city, was not far away from the Saint Sophia basilica and the orthodox patriarchate. The Church occupied an important place in Byzantine cities; powerful and rich churches or monasteries played a major religious, cultural, and economic role. Thus certain neighbourhoods developed around large monasteries, which served to structure urban space.

Cities maintained close connections with the adjoining countryside serving as important markets

for agricultural products.<sup>11</sup> They had important fairs such as at Ephesus or at some large ports like Smyrna or Trebizond, where an active international trade took place. In these cities the authorities played an important role for fiscal reasons, with imperial civil servants levying the commercial tax, the *kommerkion*. But cities were also the place of residence of landlords, who sometimes owned distant estates. The Byzantine aristocracy was, above all, an urban one, and exercised major administrative and political offices, particularly in the capital. It also possessed large properties inside the city.

The rest of the urban population was primarily occupied with craft industries and trade, which was based on the *ergastèrion* (both workshop and shop). Some activities were strictly controlled by the regime, through the *eparch* or urban prefect, a civil servant responsible for the regulation and control of the guilds, and more generally of public order. He regulated, for example, the production of silk, a luxury closely related to the imperial court, and the trade in certain foodstuffs, to ensure effective urban provisioning. While these trades were narrowly controlled, this was not the case for the majority of commercial or artisanal activities, and it is wrong to talk of a centrally planned economy.

### ELEVENTH–FIFTEENTH CENTURIES: THE ‘CITY OF THE RIDERS’

The 11th century saw the start of a period of great changes in the Muslim world, due to the arrival of new peoples, in particular the Turks in the East, followed by the Mongols after the 13th century, and in the West the Almoravid Berbers coming from the Sahara and the Hilali Arabs from Egypt. These migrations and the new political forces they created caused growing insecurity in the region, at least initially, and changed the political organization and position of rulers in the city. Moreover the 11th century was also the beginning of European expansion in the Mediterranean, both through military intervention (the crusades, the *reconquista* in the Iberian peninsula, conquest of Sicily by the Normans) and through growing commercial activity.

One consequence of all these upheavals was the transformation of the political and military map of the area, including regional hierarchies. The Seljuq conquest brought most of Anatolia under Muslim rule after 1071, a process completed in 1453 with the capture by the Ottoman sultan Mehmet II, of Constantinople, which became the new capital of the empire. Previously, several Anatolian cities like Konya or Bursa became the seats of independent Turkish rulers, while all the cities of that area were gradually Islamicized. The irruption of the Mongols from the mid-13th century caused major urban destruction, sometimes forced displacements of populations, and brought about the fall of the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad in 1258. Consequently Cairo, where the Mamluks took power and fought off the Mongolian wave, consolidated its position in the urban hierarchy of the Middle East and became the leading city in the area. Rapid urban development gave birth to a metropolis covering 21 km<sup>2</sup> with a population estimated in the 14th century at 270,000 inhabitants. More generally the old Iraqi urban network lost vitality, to the advantage of the Syro-Egyptian area.

A second result of these political upheavals, in particular of the failure of the caliphates (the Abbasids of Baghdad and Fatimids of Cairo) was a decentralization of power and the rise as capitals of a number of sometimes middle-rank cities, locked in fierce competition among themselves. This was the case for Aleppo (in the 12th–13th centuries with 50–85,000 inhabitants) and Damascus, in Anatolia Bursa and Malatya, and in the West Bugia, Tlemcen, and Seville, which became administrative and cultural poles, and above all bases for the new military rulers.

Finally, in the 11th–12th centuries we see the development of new economic and, to a lesser extent,

political centres in the ports. This first affected the Mediterranean seaboard, which was both a frontier zone vis-à-vis the Christian threat, but also an essential commercial interface, given the strong growth of shipping and European trade in the Mediterranean. Thus Alexandria became a major hub for international commerce, supported by the Fatimid policy of diverting the trade routes from the East through the Red Sea, to the detriment of the Persian Gulf.<sup>12</sup> The Syrian ports, under Christian control for a time following the Crusades, remained after the fall of the kingdom of Jerusalem (1291) important centres of maritime trade, especially Beirut. As for the Maghreb, its coastal cities flourished and some of them became political capitals like Bugia<sup>13</sup> or Tunis, and others important emporia like Ceuta, Oran, and from the 14th century, Algiers. In all these ports Italian, Provençal, and Catalan merchants came to do business and establish important trading communities. South from the Mediterranean, growing traffic en route to India and the Far East stimulated the development of the Red Sea ports (Aydhab, Jedda, Aden).<sup>14</sup> All these port cities became places of exchange and hubs of trade networks on an intercontinental scale, with the growth, at least close to the harbours, of a multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan society.

As well as these changes in the urban hierarchy and network across the Middle East, another important and general development was the installation in Muslim cities of professional military rulers. Turkish, Kurdish, or Daylamite, then Mamluks emirs in the East, as the Berbers in the West, imposed as urban rulers new military elites, often newcomers, sometimes recent converts to Islam. This trend was boosted by the recurrent warfare in the area, by the need in the East for effective military resistance to the Frankish and later the Mongolian threat, which conferred on the militarized Turks and Mamluks a new political legitimacy, in the context of declining caliphal authority. These new leaders claimed also to be the champions of Sunnism against Shi'ism.

This militarization of political authority gave birth to what Jean-Claude Garcin has termed the 'city of the riders'.<sup>15</sup> Cities were flooded by soldiers, whether mercenaries or, more and more, military slaves (Mamluks) from central Asia and eastern Europe, converted and trained as soldiers. As already noted, Mamluks seized power in the mid-13th in Egypt and Syria. They not only exercised political and military control, but also secured the majority of economic resources. As emirs they took charge of all urban institutions, especially those concerning public order and safety: thus the police, and the *qâdîs*, or judges, who were nominated by them and acted as their delegates. As for the *muhtasib*, named by the *qâdî*, his powers were extended to the control of social life and the enforcement of Islamic rules in urban public space.

The new military elites served to reshape and modify the urban landscape. The city ruler resided in a citadel (*qal'a*, casbah), which was now built outside the urban centre, in order to defend it but also to protect the ruler from the urban population. For example, in Cairo Saladin ordered the construction of a citadel on a hill, away from the main urban neighbourhoods. This transfer of power away from the centre of the city meant that the governor of the citadel was distinct from that of the city. Meanwhile, urban space was more heavily militarized, by the construction of new walls, especially at times of external threats. Hippodromes and places for training soldiers were set up, generally close to the citadel outside the city. Finally the palaces that these emirs built for themselves helped to restructure urban space, creating large axes of circulation in the city according to military and parade needs.

Intervention in the urban fabric also extended to pious foundations, with new ones founded by these rulers, often foreigners and recent converts, to strengthen their legitimacy. In this way, they could demonstrate their piety and their role in the defence of religion, especially Sunnism. Muslim cities

were covered with new mosques, religious schools (*madrasas*), convents for mystics (*khanqas*), and also with hospices (*maristâns*), like the one built in Damascus by the emir Nûr al-Dîn in the 12th century. Elite philanthropy also included hydraulic works, to try and resolve (via fountains, channels) water shortages caused by a growing population, as in Aleppo during the Ayyûbid period or in Tunis under Hafsid rule. Monumental urbanism celebrated the memory of the founders, who were sometimes buried in mausoleums associated with their foundations, and whose buildings boasted engraved inscriptions recalling their generosity.

The privileged instrument of elite philanthropy was the *waqf*, a foundation which made properties inalienable, preventing any sale, division or, even more important, confiscation. This legal structure was perfect for financing charitable works and was used by the civilian and military elites, including women who, in Cairo for example, were the originators of many pious foundations. The founder ensured the construction of the building and its maintenance, by providing permanent income from markets, shops, baths, or lands in the countryside. The *waqf* strongly contributed to urban development from the 11th century, through these new foundations and the districts which grew up around them. In Ottoman Turkey, in particular, imposing complexes were built, composed of a mosque, a hospice, educational establishments, libraries, and around them facilities necessary for the maintenance and financing of the foundations, thereby giving birth to new neighbourhoods. In Bursa for example, the great mosque, founded in 1399, became the centre of the spiritual and economic life of the city, with its three *madrasas*, a convent for mystics, several caravanserais for merchants, and a *hammam* (public bath).

Other new population groups fuelled urban growth after the 11th century, and contributed to the evolution of the urban social structure. First there was strong rural migration, in particular during times of insecurity: as in the late 11th century in the Maghreb, when the arrival of the Hilali nomadic tribes caused an exodus of populations to the coastal towns; in the 12th century during the military campaigns in the Levant linked to the crusades. In Anatolia from the end of the 11th century, the Turkish Muslim population settled and developed a new urban network on the ruins of the Byzantine empire. In the same period, the cities of the Syrian and Egyptian regions became a major demographic attraction for people coming from across the Muslim world, notably from the Maghreb and the Iberian peninsula, and from Iraq after the Mongolian conquests of the mid-13th century.

The result was a large-scale mixture of populations from very diverse origins, which tended to erase the old social divisions generated by the first Muslim conquest. This urban reconfiguration was accentuated by the progressive Islamicization of the urban populations, which made Islam the majority religion in most Middle Eastern cities, and in North Africa indigenous Christianity completely disappeared. Previously the dominant groups in cities were composed of Arab tribal clans benefiting from the conquest, along with their clients (Arab or not) converted and closely related to them. Henceforth, these distinctions lost their relevance and other criteria of social differentiation emerged. Elements of ethnic differentiation did not completely disappear, not least for the recently arrived military populations, who were only partially integrated with the rest of the population. This was the case with the Circassian Mamluks from the end of the 14th century who brought their families from eastern Europe and formed a closed aristocratic group, largely isolated from the rest of the urban society. However the main variables shaping social status were now derived, above all, from political and social proximity to the rulers, wealth (land, but also commercial activities), and participation in the world of knowledge which gave access to administrative and religious careers.

The prominence in society of the urban civilian elite (*khâssa*), came not just from its wealth, but, even more, from its access to knowledge. Such notables possessed property inside the city but also in the countryside, even if they were in competition with emirs belonging to the military and political elite. They also took part in trade, at least within the Muslim world and in the Indian Ocean. Wealthy as they were, these elites were defined rather by their access to knowledge, and by the jobs which flowed from it. The biographies of the most prominent scholars underlined not only the knowledge, but also the piety of these men, and in this way helped to celebrate the memory of the city and of its civilian elite.

Syria and Egypt became from the 11th century major centres of culture, taking advantage of the influx of scholars from Iraq, but also from the Maghreb and Muslim Spain. Cities like Cairo, Aleppo, or Damascus, collected the Muslim and Arab cultural, scientific, and literary heritage. They played an essential part in the conservation and transmission of this legacy—more than in the development of a new and original knowledge.

This privileged access to knowledge involved strong social continuity within the learned class through the transmission of cultural and scientific capital over successive generations of the same families. However social mobility was still possible to some extent, thanks to the institution of the *madrassa*, which developed from the end of the 11th century, initially in Iraq and Persia, then in Syria, Egypt, and Anatolia and, later from the 13th century further west. These religious schools, financed by foundations (*waqfs*), aimed to give young people basic knowledge and skills facilitating their entry to religious and legal posts, or to government offices in the chancellery. *Madrassas* were also an ideological tool for the defence of Sunnism against Shi'ism, since the Sunni founder and his descendants controlled the teachers, whom they appointed and paid. The students from all social groups got free education, and in this way the *madrassas* promoted the limited renewal of learned elites.

Their monopoly of knowledge guaranteed a prominent position for religious scholars (*'ulamâ'*) in urban society. These men, conscious of embodying the city's identity, had a moral authority over the rest of the population, which came from their social and economic status, but also from their day-to-day work in the city including its regulation. They fulfilled the functions of *imams* (who led the prayer), preachers in the mosque (*khatîb*), and also judges (*qâdîs*) or *muhtasibs*. They also took part in urban philanthropy, through their pious foundations. Their role in urban society was however largely linked to the ties they maintained with the military elite, on which they depended closely.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, during times of political crisis and sometimes of power vacuum, members of this *khâssa* could perform an important political role, leading sometimes to the autonomous government of a city. Civilian elites succeeded in banding together and organizing the inhabitants over whom they had authority, replacing temporarily the princes. For instance in Ceuta, following the collapse of the Almohad caliphate, members of the city's commercial elite managed to seize power.<sup>16</sup> However this never led to real collegial power, nor to the formation of 'communes' as in western Europe during the same period, and when civilian elites did rule the city, they tended to establish a personal urban seignior. Moreover, these great families generally sought to share power with the weakened princes or governors. At Damascus in the early 12th century the *rais* (chief) led a militia of townsmen able (if needed) to defend the city against external threats, while also active in furthering its own interests—but the *rais* never completely rejected the authority of the prince.

Once there was the return of political stability and the arrival of powerful dynasties (Zengids in Syria, then Ayyûbids in Syria and Egypt, and in the West Almoravids and Almohads) local elite

leadership was soon undermined. Often, as one can see with the Mamluk regime and the sultanates that succeeded the Almohads in North Africa and Spain, dynastic rulers exploited these local notables, with their authority over the population, and got them to serve as intermediaries with the populace. Narrowly controlled, these notables came to owe their careers and fortunes to the emirs, who gave them posts of *qâdîs*, professors of *madrasa*, or administrators. A balance of power was thus established, varying according to area, the authority of the emirs being stronger in Mamluk space.

Much less is known about the rest of the urban population, although they formed the majority of inhabitants: the sources about them emanate exclusively from the elite and present a very limited and partial view of the world of small craftsmen or tradesmen. The latter emerge from the texts when revolts occurred, but their social ranking is not easy to establish. They are to be distinguished however from the marginal, floating, and dangerous population of outcasts, even if the boundaries between the two groups were blurred. The oral literature derived from this milieu of craftsmen and tradesmen, now beginning to be studied, reveals a lively world, often fearful of the menace of impoverishment and social insecurity. Craftsmen and traders developed their own culture, distinct from the erudite one of the elites educated in the *madrasas*.

Social change and the new socio-economic divisions brought about the disappearance or weakening of old tribal and regional solidarities. New alignments appeared, first of all of a religious nature. Religious identities were more strongly asserted, in a context where Islam was now the majority religion and increasingly influenced the urban landscape and social organization. Minority religions (Jews and Christians) tended to cluster in certain districts, but without constituting homogeneous confessional ghettos. In Damascus, for example, Christians and Jews gathered around the city gates of Bâb Tûmâ and Bâb Sharqî, in the east of the city. In the same way, new groupings developed around the four main legal schools or *madhabs* of Sunni Islam, and even more around mystic movements. The rise of Sufi brotherhoods led them to organize social activity around initiatory religious rituals and the worship of the saints, some of whom became the patrons and protectors of the city.

The neighbourhood also became the focus of a new type of solidarity. Contrary to older ideas of the 'traditional Muslim city', which portrayed urban space as anarchistic, in reality it was highly structured with broad streets delineating well-defined zones. Inside those neighbourhoods space was organized through a maze of small streets, sometimes with dead ends or cul-de-sacs, sometimes under private and family control. In effect, there was a double organization of space: on the one hand, the city centres that accommodated public places and common institutions (the great mosque or *jâmi* ' , *madrasas*, *sûqs* specialized in long-distance trade), and were structured by open thoroughfares; on the other hand, neighbourhoods, more closed and introverted, where activities were more strictly local, and where most of the everyday life took place, creating their own loyalties.<sup>17</sup>

Neighbourhoods, like the city itself, did not have any legal status, and did not correspond either to administrative or tax units. However they bore names which testify to a certain identity, that could surface on the occasion of quarrels or brawls, between inhabitants of different neighbourhoods. In newer districts (in particular the suburbs) the origin of the population could be relatively homogeneous, because of recent migrations. In times of disorder, these districts were enclosed by walls and gates. Similarly, urban infrastructure might demarcate the population of a district, like the oratory where Muslims met for the prayer (*masjid*), or tombs of a saint, or a *sûq*.

Urban occupations were extremely diversified, with a significant division of labour.<sup>18</sup> Many trades

were linked to the rural and agricultural world, such as those dealing with the processing of agricultural produce (soap factories, sugar refineries). There were also glass factories, dyeing works, and textile workshops. Small traders might double as craftsmen, but others were specialized, like the brokers (*simsars*), who brought together vendors and purchasers, and we also find a wider world of porters and deliverymen.

There was no clear spatial separation between residential and business areas. Houses could, for instance, shelter textile workshops, and only a few manufacturing activities were located far away from houses, for functional or nuisance reasons. Thus the tanning industry was usually based outside the city, because of the pollution it caused but also to be close to an abundant water supply. The same was true of the potters or paper manufacturers. Otherwise, most business activity was organized along the main thoroughfares, where the shops and the markets were located. Certain trades were found close to the great mosque, such as the booksellers and also those selling luxury goods like spices or fine textiles. But more recently created *sûqs*, such as those set up to finance pious foundations, attracted business activities to new districts, contributing to the emergence of new economic zones.

Particularly important were the great warehouses, called *funduq*, *wakâla*, or *khân*, often built outside the city or close to the gates, where goods had to be taxed before being traded in the markets or the shops.<sup>19</sup> These buildings presented a rather uniform aspect, with a closed interior yard, surrounded by rooms for storage (in the basement) and for lodging foreign merchants (on the upper levels). Similarly, the *qaysâriyyas* were large buildings with a central passage, surrounded by shops, the whole being closed by a gate. Some of the *funduqs* were reserved for non-Muslim merchants, especially European Christians. Often located outside of the walls (for example the Venetian *fondaco* of Aleppo in the 13th century), for safety and fiscal reasons, they formed autonomous enclaves where the merchants lived apart from the rest of the population, under their own consul and rules, and with privileges guaranteed by peace treaties signed with the Christian powers. Residents could worship with complete freedom and have the use of taverns, and sometimes a few workshops. But most were itinerant, except for the consul, chaplain, and some longer stay merchants. In any case, all was arranged to minimize direct contacts between these Christian merchants and the local population.<sup>20</sup> Gradually however, particularly in the 15th century, some of these merchants settled for longer, learnt Arabic and had closer relationships with the local merchant society.

If most urban business activity was purely local or regional, certain cities of the Muslim world were part of a vast network of commercial exchange. Thus Janet Abu-Lughod could speak of a 'world system in formation' between 1250 and 1350, composed of several interconnected subsystems—from East and South Asia to the Middle East, and from the Middle East to Europe.<sup>21</sup> The silk road in particular profited from the Mongolian peace from the middle of the 13th century onwards. The latter permitted the development at the same time of large caravan cities like Tabriz, the capital of the Ilkhanid sultanate frequented by European merchants, and the ports of Anatolia such as Ayas or Trebizond. Commercial prosperity flowed especially to Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria, but also Qûs in the south) and to the Red Sea route (with the development of the port of Aden, as the main arrival point for spices, porcelain, and silk from the east). This maritime trade in the Indian Ocean was dominated by wealthy Muslim merchants, such as the Karimi who specialized in the spice trade. Such traders maintained close connections with the military elites, who also took part in this business. In the same way, Maghrebi ports were the terminus of trans-Saharan caravan trade for gold and, mainly in the 15th century, slaves, connecting West Africa with Mediterranean networks. In the

Mediterranean, most trade was handled by Italian, Catalan, or Provençal merchants. In spite of conflicts in the medieval Mediterranean, notably the crusades, trade never stopped completely, and these merchants played an essential part in the economy of the large port cities like Alexandria or Constantinople. In addition, Genoa and Venice controlled certain towns of the eastern Mediterranean like Famagousta, Chio, or Caffa, which developed as colonial societies, closely linked to the maritime trade of their rulers.



**PLATE 14.2** Wakâla of the Mamluk sultan, Cairo, 1504–1505.

However, Abu-Lughod's idea of the failure of this economic integration after the middle of the 14th century is contestable, even if the crisis caused by the great plagues after 1347 led to a the disruption of trade exchanges and the depopulation of cities. Some cities were severely and repeatedly struck by the epidemic: in the case of Constantinople, twelve times between 1361 and 1470, and for Cairo fifty-five times between 1363 and 1514: here, during the winter of 1430, 90,000 inhabitants, a third of the population, disappeared.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries, the conquests of Tamerlane ruined the cities of the region through sacking by armies (for example Baghdad and Damascus in 1401) and heavy taxation. But some of these cities were rapidly repopulated by the immigration of people from the countryside. At the same time, it led to a ruralization of the urban population, the large-scale replacement of elites, and important changes in the urban landscape, with numerous ruined buildings and deserted areas.<sup>23</sup> Some cities benefited from their status as capital, such as Cairo, the largest Islamic city with more than 200,000 inhabitants in 1517 (see [Plate 14.2](#)); Constantinople when it was chosen as the new capital of the Ottoman empire after 1453; and the Timurid Samarkand and Herat. The reconstruction of new trade networks at the beginning of the 15th century, when the economic prosperity returned, brought new activity to port cities like Algiers (see [Plate 14.3](#)), Tunis, or Beyrouth, but also to inland cities like Aleppo and Damascus, frequented by the Venetian merchants, where the Levant trade was more flourishing than ever, or Fès in Morocco where the Genoese were present at the end of the 15th century: in this world economy, the cities of the Middle East remained essential intermediaries between Christian Europe and the eastern markets of India and China or the sub-Saharan regions.





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## THE OTTOMAN CITY: 1500–1800

EBRU BOYAR

IN contrast to the medieval cities of the Islamic world or the Middle Eastern cities of the nation states or the colonial cities of the modern age (see [Chs. 14, 32](#)), the Ottoman city was defined by two factors: its situation within an empire and its hierarchical subordination to the imperial capital Istanbul. Within this framework, however, the cities, although conforming to varying extent to a general pattern, demonstrated regional differences and reflected the traditions of the local region, something not surprising in view of the enormous extent of the empire which in the early modern period stretched from Hungary in the west to Iran in the east, from Crimea in the north to Yemen in the south and along the North African coast to Morocco. The conquest of Cairo by Selim I (r. 1512–1520) in 1517 did not, thus, introduce a complete break with the city's past, a Mamluk architectural heritage being evident, for example, in the mosque of Süleyman Paşa, built in 1528, which was based on an Ottoman architectural plan but which displayed many Mamluk architectural characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

Despite any regional differences, however, the position of Istanbul, Braudel's 'urban monster',<sup>2</sup> remained dominant. The imperial capital was the central reference point for all other Ottoman cities, not merely because it was the capital but because it was the largest Ottoman city, the most populated, the seat of political power, and the centre of commerce and consumption. Istanbul was for many the pinnacle of existence and to leave it was like 'a fish leaving the sea'.<sup>3</sup> Even for Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566), known in the West as Süleyman the Magnificent, conquerer of the great cities of Baghdad and Buda, Istanbul was a city which bore comparison with no other.<sup>4</sup> Exiled in 1703 for his role in the Edirne Incident, in part a popular reaction to the sultan's *de facto* move from Istanbul to Edirne, the *şeyhülislam* (the head of the religious establishment), Feyzullah Efendi, commented despondently about his departure from the capital: 'It is better to die than to go to Erzurum.'<sup>5</sup>

While Istanbul was firmly situated at the peak of the urban hierarchy of the empire, there were, however, other major cities whose importance was undisputed, such as Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Baghdad in the Arab provinces, Bursa, Amasya, Manisa, Kütahya, Trabzon, and Diyarbakır in Anatolia, and Edirne, Thessaloniki (Selanik), and Belgrade in the Balkans (for a map of the Middle East about 1800 see [Regional Map II.2](#)). Other cities rose in importance at certain periods, İzmir (Smyrna), for example, becoming a major international trade hub in the 18th century. During the 16th century Ottoman cities experienced considerable expansion both in geographical area and in population. This trend continued in the following century. Although data available to us makes it difficult to be precise over population figures, Istanbul's population in the late 15th century was around 100,000 while by about 1580 it had risen to 700,000. In the same period the population of Bursa was around 71,000, that of Edirne was 30,000 and Ankara around 29,000. In 1537 the population of Aleppo has been estimated at 80,000, rising to something in the region of 115,000 by 1683. In the 17th century the population of Istanbul was probably in the region of 700,000 to 800,000, thus making it the largest European or Middle Eastern city of the period.<sup>6</sup> The 16th century saw a

great expansion in the size of Ottoman cities due to population increase and rising trade. While this trend continued in the 17th century, though not at such a rapid rate, the growth and prosperity of cities gradually became more linked to the outside world rather than to factors within the Ottoman empire, a trend that became more pronounced in the 18th century.

All Ottoman cities, regardless of their power or size, were firmly differentiated from their rural hinterland, for there was a strict and embedded urban–rural divide in the empire, reinforced effectively by the Ottoman policy of controlling any population movement from rural areas into the cities. Such movement was prevented, to the extent that the state was able to do so, for peasants abandoning land resulted in a loss of both production and revenue, while the influx of rural populations into the cities destabilized urban security and caused disorder, something which the Ottoman government strove at all times to prevent. Much rural land was owned by the urban elite whose wealth came from their landed property, a system strengthened by the change in land holding practices in the 18th century.

While they might be strictly divided from the population of their rural hinterland, Ottoman cities were often closely interconnected through internal trade networks and linked, too, to the world beyond the Ottoman frontier. Cairo was thus the most important buyer of soap produced in Jerusalem, which was also in demand in Yemen. Trabzon, the most important port city on the Black Sea coast, owed its position both to being a transit port for silk from Iran and to its trade relations with the important commercial centres of the empire, Istanbul and the Crimea.<sup>7</sup> The rise or fall of Ottoman cities could also depend on external links, for the empire was an integral and active participant in international trade and a central player in the Mediterranean basin, both exporting its own commodities and acting as a major transit zone for east–west and north–south trade, as well as being a major import market. Ottoman cities thus responded to shifts in international and internal trade patterns: rising, in the case of İzmir, which, due to its geopolitical position on the coast of western Anatolia and its relative distance from the control of the Ottoman centre, developed in the 17th and 18th centuries as a result of the increase in foreign commercial activity in the region; but declining, in the case of Jeddah, adversely affected by the change in the spice route after the Portuguese entry into the Red Sea. The decline of trade with Iran, especially in silk, weakened the position of Aleppo as an international trade centre in the last quarter of the 17th century. The decline in demand for cloth by foreign merchants on the Aleppo market had a direct impact on the cloth workers of Antep whose sales to merchants, who bought their products for resale in Aleppo, correspondingly fell.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from trade networks, pilgrimage, too, acted as a link between cities and the importance, development, and expansion of Damascus was very much related to its being a centre for the pilgrimage route along which pilgrims from Rumeli (the European territories of the empire), Anatolia, Persia, and Iraq travelled together with ‘high Ottoman officials and the sultan’s family’, which was why it was also known as the ‘Imperial Way’.<sup>9</sup> The interconnectedness of Ottoman cities, or their being part of an imperial structure, was, on occasion, essential to their very survival, as was the case during the famine of 1783–1784 when the people of Cairo did not ‘succumb to hunger’, according to the chronicler Al-Jabarti, thanks to God’s mercy and to the grain brought from Anatolia and Syria.<sup>10</sup> Even in less difficult times one city could be dependent on the support of another. Part of the income of Medina came from various *vakıfs* (*waqfs* in Arabic: pious foundations) in Egypt and if such assistance failed to arrive, the people of Medina could be ‘defeated by the hand of grief and hardship’.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter looks first at the landscape of Ottoman cities; then at the pressures and problems cities faced; urban governance; and, finally, city relations with the sultan and imperial government.

## MORPHOLOGY

In one of the earliest extant chronicles of the Ottoman empire written in the second half of the 15th century, the author, Aşıkpaşazade, describes the deeds of Osman (r.?–c. 1324), the eponymous founder of the Ottoman state, after his conquest of Karacabey, a town near Bursa, from the Byzantines. Osman converted churches to *mescits* (small mosques), set up a market, appointed a *kadı* (judge) and a *subaşı* (government agent), issued *kanuns* (laws) and had the *hutbe* (the Friday sermon) read in his name.<sup>12</sup> These actions established what was to form the essential elements of Ottoman urban rule. As an Ottoman land register put it, the town was the place where ‘Friday prayer is held and a market stands’.<sup>13</sup> Ottoman urban life thus revolved around the mosque complex and the market. One should add another important public edifice, the public bath, which was considered so integral to the Ottoman townscape that the absence of a public bath was a mark of urban backwardness in the estimation of Evliya Çelebi, the famous 17th-century Ottoman traveller.<sup>14</sup> This urban pattern of the nuclei of market, mosque, and public bath is evident in the first Ottoman capitals of Bursa and Edirne and again in Istanbul after the conquest of 1453 when Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) ordered the construction of ‘magnificent markets and bazaars and places for merchants, and great caravansaries for those coming and going’<sup>15</sup> as well as ‘splendid and costly baths’ and aqueducts ‘to bring into the City from the countryside an abundance of water’.<sup>16</sup> In Cairo, after the conquest of 1517, Ottoman elites built such structures as mosques, shops, and fountains, which stimulated the development of the city and around which commercial and residential areas grew.



**PLATE 15.1** Izmir: street scene (from Robert Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (London and Paris, 1839?))

A further feature of the geography of the Ottoman city was its military buildings, foremost among which was the castle which dominated many of the cities of the empire. The Ottomans restored castles in towns and cities which they conquered or built new ones according to their security requirements, which varied from town to town. Ottoman central authority maintained, or sought to maintain, a tight control over military installations, having reports constantly sent through to Istanbul on the condition of castles, the activities of the soldiers, and the conduct of military affairs. While under normal conditions the military were under direct state control and thus the defence of the cities was orchestrated from Istanbul, in times of revolt defence was undertaken by the cities themselves, as was the case, for example, during the Celali revolts, which had a major impact in Anatolia at the end of the 16th and in particularly in the first half of the 17th centuries, when various cities in central Anatolia between 1602 and 1607 requested permission from the central government to repair or extend castles or build *palankas* (forts) at their own expense.<sup>17</sup>

Another defining characteristic of the Ottoman city was the *mahalle*, the city or town quarter into which all Ottoman urban space was divided. *Mahalles*, which were established around a mosque, church, or synagogue, formed residential areas which contained structures such as water fountains, public baths, primary schools, *tekkes* (dervish lodges), graveyards, and small shops which met the daily needs of the area (see [Plate 15.1](#)). They were both important administrative units used by the central authority to register the population for taxation, for example, and fundamental to the social structure of the city. The population of a *mahalle* could be made up of people from the same rural area, profession, income bracket, or religion. In the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman empire, they could also be composed of people from different religions, and mixed-population *mahalles* were not restricted to the large cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, or Damascus, but also existed in medium-

sized towns in Anatolia such as Ankara where Jews, Christians, and Muslims were found living together.

## CHALLENGES

While the Ottoman city, like its medieval Islamic predecessor, was thus constructed around a nucleus of mosque, market, and public bath together with military buildings and divided into *mahalles*, its urban landscape was ever changing as the city's fortunes rose and fell, affected by central government policy, conflicts and warfare, natural disasters, as well as patterns of commerce. Many Ottoman cities were in active earthquake zones and parts or even entire cities could be devastated and their populations decimated by earthquakes, 'huge domes reduced to heaps of dust and ancient buildings ruined and devastated',<sup>18</sup> in the words of the 16th-century chronicler Kemalpaşazade (İbn Kemal) describing the effects of the great earthquake which hit Istanbul in 1509. All Ottoman cities were prey to fire. The one following the major earthquake in İzmir in 1688 which reduced the newly built Sancakburnu Castle to rubble, burnt uncontrollably, the flames whipped up by the violence of the wind, and left the city a smouldering heap.<sup>19</sup> In Gelibolu (Gallipoli) fire in 1564/1565 consumed as many as 1,000 houses and destroyed a great part of the cloth market. Süleyman I sent orders to the *kadı* there to investigate how the fire broke out and to discover who was responsible.<sup>20</sup> If not buried under rubble or burnt to a cinder, city populations could also be wiped out by plague. Contagious diseases spread particularly quickly in cities where commercial activity, and thus constant movement in and out of the city, was extensive, or at settlements on main trade arteries. In the great plague which struck Istanbul in 1778, one-third of the population died, according to some sources, while 300 people died per day in the 1781 plague which broke out in Thessaloniki, an important commercial centre with a population at that time of 80,000. Another port city, Acre, lost half its population to plague in 1785.<sup>21</sup> Such decimation had a devastating effect, reducing the population, and thus the labour force, disrupting trade, and decreasing tax revenue.

In the early modern period, when the Ottoman state was either expanding or reinforcing its frontiers, many Ottoman cities, in particular those in the border zones, were raided, plundered, or sacked. Tokat, an important central Anatolian town on the silk road, was so devastatingly sacked by the forces of the Akkoyunlu ruler, Uzun Hasan, that, according to the 16th-century chronicler Neşri, 'those cruel oppressors did five times more damage to Tokat than Timur had done to Sivas'.<sup>22</sup> Ottoman cities on the border with the Safavid state of Iran, pivotal centres for trade between Persian and Ottoman merchants, were constant targets of attack and plunder in the 16th century, and the destructive wars of the 17th and 18th centuries affected many cities throughout the empire, hit either by violence, plunder, or waves of migration.

Internal revolts drove rural populations into the cities, as was the case during the Celali revolts, while brigandage forced the rural population to take refuge in walled cities, or drove townsmen to abandon city districts for the more secure shelter of the town castle. Local power struggles in 1783/1784 led to the peasants finding themselves under a crushing burden of exactions, to which they responded by fleeing to Cairo, where, according to the contemporary chronicler Al-Jabarti, they lived in degradation and misery eking out a living on the streets of the city:

The peasants abandoned their villages because of a lack of irrigation and because of the oppression and spread out in the city



with their wives and children, crying out with hunger and eating melon rinds and other refuse scattered on the streets, so that the garbage collector could find nothing to sweep. So great was their distress that they devoured the carcasses of horses, donkeys and camels. Whenever a dead donkey was thrown out, crowds would crowd around it, cut it up and grab the pieces. Some devoured the meat raw – so intense was their hunger. Many of the poor starved to death and, in addition, the cost of living continued to rise and prices went up enormously. Cash became scarce, business transactions were mostly carried on by barter in foodstuffs. Conversation turned exclusively to food, grain, butter and the like.<sup>23</sup>

Migration into cities was sometimes the result of increased urban prosperity, as was the case with Istanbul in the 18th century when the numbers of migrants, attracted by the economic possibilities the capital offered, threatened the internal order of Istanbul. Orders were given for searches to be made of the city's public baths and *hans* and those found living there illegally were to be removed from the city.<sup>24</sup> When this measure proved insufficient, orders were despatched to the provinces that movement to the capital should be prevented. In 1747 a *ferman* (an imperial order) was sent to the officials in Maraş requiring the *imams* of the *mahalles* to identify migrants who were to be arrested and that the reasons for their movement be established. Those who had incited or caused them to migrate were to be punished.<sup>25</sup>

Population transfer, which affected the urban fabric of Ottoman cities, was not always the result of warfare, for the Ottoman state pursued a policy of 'sürgün', enforced migration, by which it forcibly removed troublesome or potentially dangerous elements from one part of the empire and placed them in another. Bayezid I (r. 1481–1512), for example, moved population from Anatolia to what is now southern Greece,<sup>26</sup> while his father Mehmed II transferred the rebellious population of Karaman in Anatolia to Istanbul, an event recorded by the 15th-century Ottoman historian Kemal, who commented that Mehmed had 'brought the whole of the province of Karaman all together and placed it in Istanbul'.<sup>27</sup> Populations could also be moved because they were needed, rather than rebellious. Mehmed II, determined to bring Istanbul 'back to its former prosperity', sent 'an imperial command to every part of his realm, that as many inhabitants as possible be transferred to the City, not only Christians but also his own people and many of the Hebrews,'<sup>28</sup> those affected were to move 'on penalty of death'.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from factors such as warfare or population transfer, the physical structure of Ottoman cities also grew and changed as a result of increasing commercial prosperity or due to the whim of rulers. In the same period as rich Cairo merchants, including Abu Taqiyya, were building 17 new merchant warehouses in an increasingly prosperous Cairo, whose commercial centre was expanding,<sup>30</sup> the sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617) was ripping down the palaces of various *vezirs* in central Istanbul because they stood in the way of his plans for a major mosque which was to rival Ayasofya. This mosque, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, popularly known in the West as the Blue Mosque, and its mosque complex was completed in 1617 and now forms part of the distinctive skyline of the city. In the 18th century the urban rich of Cairo built new luxurious residential areas in the western part of the city,<sup>31</sup> and both Cairo and Istanbul saw an increase in the building of public fountains by middle-ranking wealthy city dwellers.

## RUNNING THE CITY

The administration of the Ottoman city, with the exception of Istanbul and Edirne in the later 17th century when the sultans made it their *de facto* capital, centred round a troika of Istanbul-appointed

officials: the *bey* (the top provincial official), the *kadı* (judge/administrator), and the *subaşı* (the official in charge of security). Other important officials appointed by the centre were the *muhtesib* (the market inspector) and the *mültezim* (tax collector), together with the *mimarbaşı* (the buildings inspector). Below them came the deputies (*naib*) and other administrators, locals appointed by the Istanbul-appointed officials. Apart from these officials, there were also non-official elements which played an essential role in the running of the city: the guilds and religious bodies, the *mahalles* and the *vakıf* (the pious foundations). Presiding over this structure sat Istanbul, by virtue both of the central appointments and of the fact that appeal could always be, and frequently was, made to Istanbul and to the sultan personally, either through the *kadı* or directly by individual petition.

For the Ottoman government, the primary need in administering the cities was to maintain order, a concept not restricted merely to the general security of the city but which also encompassed the ordered conduct of affairs with each individual conducting his life within a framework of duty and obedience both to the state and to the social norms. To ensure such order the state needed to fulfil three basic requirements: to feed the city's population, to protect it, and to provide it with a secure market with fair prices, guaranteed quality of goods and effective controls, because, for Istanbul, a well-functioning market meant a calm population.<sup>32</sup>

The *bey*, whose exact title, *sancakbeyi* or *beylerbeyi*, varied according to the size and importance of the province he administered, was the top provincial official, responsible not merely for the overall security of the province under his charge or for carrying out the orders of the centre, but also for the development and improvement of the cities under his control. It was from the highest ranking *beys* that the officials were chosen to run major provincial centres such as Cairo and Damascus.<sup>33</sup> The day-to-day running of the city and the relations with the local population, as well as the legal administration was handled by the *kadı* who functioned both as administrator and judge. Appointed by the sultan from the ranks of the *ulema* (the religious establishment), he was not under the authority of the *bey* but of the sultan. In the Ottoman legal system there was a plurality of courts, Christian, Jewish, and those of various Sunni *mezhebs* (schools), all of which came under the overall supervision of the Hanafi *kadı*. City security was under the *subaşı*, whose job it was to ensure order and to handle any unrest. He was assisted by security forces who were part of the janissary corps stationed in the provinces.<sup>34</sup>

While the *kadı* was chief judge and ran the overall administration and the *subaşı* handled security, it was the *muhtesib* who was in charge of the commercial life of the city and whose responsibility it was to ensure that trade ran smoothly and according to the law. Even if not always successful, as was the case, for example, in Jerusalem in the 16th century, the state placed great emphasis on supporting, facilitating, and stimulating urban commercial activity and the interregional and international trade of Ottoman cities. The security of the markets and the *hans* was a priority, and the regulation of a smooth-running commerce was strictly enforced. The *muhtesib* patrolled the markets, checking the quality of goods sold, inspecting, for example, the quality of bread, that the correct weights and measures were being used and that stolen goods were not being traded. Anyone caught not complying with the regulations was handed over by the *muhtesib* to the *kadı*. Urban markets (see [Plate 15.2](#)) were controlled by the *narh*, regarded as one of the 'great affairs' of state,<sup>35</sup> the mechanism by which the state controlled market prices, setting them at what were regarded (though not always so and not by everyone) as equitable levels, and also maintained the standard of commodities. In the provinces it

was the *muhtesib*, together with the *kadı*, who set the *narh* prices, as opposed to Istanbul where the *narh* was fixed by the grand *vezir*. Outside Istanbul in the provinces, the *ayan* (powerful notables), the *eşraf* (important and respected notables) and the guilds played a role in the setting of the *narh*.



**PLATE 15.2** Istanbul: covered bazaar (from Robert Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (London and Paris, 1839?).

Two other important officials central to the running of the city were the *mültezim* whose job it was to collect tax both in the city and in its hinterland, and the *mimarbaşı*, who inspected all buildings, not merely those of the state but also private constructions, to ensure that the correct materials were being used, that the buildings were being built to the correct standard, the workers performing their functions as they should, and that there was no corruption involved.

Although the top officials in the hierarchy of urban organization were appointed by and sent from Istanbul, local people were also involved at lower levels. While Istanbul-appointed officials could move on quickly, sixty-two *kadı*s being appointed to Bursa between 1650 and 1700, the deputies (*naibs*) and scribes (*katibs*) of the *kadı* were locals, and they represented an important continuity of personnel.<sup>36</sup> *Mültezims* often recruited locals to work for them as tax collectors creating a strong local element in the provincial tax collection system.

Apart from officials, local or Istanbul-appointed, another sector of city administration was occupied by different local groups among the population. Among these were the guilds, which played an important role in urban commercial life. The number of guilds varied from city to city and period to period according to the diversification of labour and the size and location of the city. While there were between 160 and 180 guilds in Damascus and Aleppo in the 17th and 18th centuries, and slightly fewer in Hama, the numbers in Cairo, a much larger and richer city, reached 240 or 250 in the same period.<sup>37</sup> Guilds, which operated with their own hierarchical structure, contributed to the

economic stability of the city, controlled competition, and protected their members, while at the same time responding to changes in consumption patterns. They were collectively responsible for the actions of their members. Thus merchants or artisans operating in the same market could be held responsible for crimes, such as robbery, committed there. All traders in the old cloth market in Istanbul were thus arrested and tortured in 1591 when money was stolen from the market's security safe.<sup>38</sup> The guilds also played a highly visible role in the social life of the city, taking part in festivities such as those for the circumcision of Prince Mehmed, who later became Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603), the son of Murad III (r. 1574–1595), or in those ceremonies arranged for the return to the capital of a victorious sultan or for the ruler's departure on campaign.

As already noted, a further element in urban administration was the *mahalle*, the city quarter, which enabled the local population to become intimately involved in the actual running of the city. The concept of collective responsibility, which operated in the guilds, was also applied in the *mahalles* where the local population was similarly held responsible for the actions of its inhabitants and inhabitants were the guarantors of each other's good behaviour. An unsolved murder or the immoral behaviour of individuals became the responsibility of the entire *mahalle*. Problems were handled within the *mahalle* and only when the issue proved insoluble internally did the *mahalle* appeal to outside authorities, as the inhabitants of the Sultangircamii *mahalle* in Istanbul did in 1565 over five women of bad moral character whom they wanted expelled. Initially a group of inhabitants led by the *imam* had gone to the house of one of these 'unruly' women, Balatlı Ayni, the wife of a janissary, to warn her about her unacceptable behaviour or, perhaps, in an attempt to drive her out of the *mahalle*. The group, however, was repulsed, as a result of which they appealed to the sultan who ordered the sale of the houses of four of the five women and their expulsion from the *mahalle*, while Balatlı Ayni was imprisoned until her husband returned from campaign.<sup>39</sup> Unlike Balatlı Ayni, most people did not dare to stand up against the *mahalle* but preferred to surrender in the face of such pressure. This 'self-policing' played an important and effective role in ensuring urban order and in preventing crime or unruly behaviour among the city population. Functioning as an effective and cohesive unit, the *mahalle*, headed by the *eşraf* (elders, respected inhabitants) and the heads of the religious groups, the *imam*, the *rabbi*, or the priest, who also acted as the link between the *mahalle* and the outside authorities, controlled its own affairs to a very great extent, policing its inhabitants, collecting money from its own population, and servicing its own needs.

The institution which met the most basic needs of the city's population and thus played a fundamental role in the life of the city was the *vakıf*, already important in the medieval Islamic city (see Ch. 14). Although usually translated as pious foundation, the *vakıf* was much more ubiquitous and a central pillar of the urban fabric than this might imply, for the income and the buildings of the *vakıf* formed the welfare organization of the city, providing it with its water supplies, medical care, and education and fulfilling its religious needs. It also played a key role in the urban economy with its public baths, shops, and *hans*, which provided employment, generated income, and generally stimulated the city's commercial activity. *Vakıfs* were not just the preserve of the sultans, members of the royal family or high-up officials appointed by Istanbul, for city inhabitants of lesser social rank also established *vakıfs* and set up cash *vakıfs*, according to their financial means. Men of modest substance could thus contribute to the welfare provision of the city. In 1783 Çilingir (locksmith) Elhaç Hüseyin had a large fountain erected in the market of Balıkesir. The water from this fountain in turn fed smaller fountains in six *mahalles*. Çilingir Elhaç Hüseyin also set up a *vakıf* from the income of two shops and a mill for the maintenance and repair of these fountains.<sup>40</sup> The *vakıf* institution also

provided food for the poor, and in 1545 the soup kitchen of the Fatih mosque complex in Istanbul, completed in 1470 by Mehmed II, handed out food to between 2,500 and 3,000 people daily, regardless of religion, an approach followed by many *vakıf* soup kitchens throughout the empire.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from providing welfare, the *vakıf* also provided much of the infrastructure for urban commerce. It was often *vakıf* money that was invested in building large markets and *hans* or in repairing or rebuilding commercial structures damaged or destroyed by earthquakes, fires, and the like. Apart from erecting buildings itself, the *vakıf* could rent out land for building. Many smaller commercial buildings, such as public baths, bakeries or other shops, were part of a *vakıf*, which thereby provided employment for city inhabitants.

The role of the local population in running the city, the impact of the guilds, the *mahalle* and the *vakıf*, ensured that the hold of Istanbul over its provincial cities was never complete or absolute, for there was always a process of negotiation between the state and the city population over the implementation of central control. While the imperial government might have wished for greater control of its provincial cities, it was hampered in this by problems such as distance and communications. Moreover, the Ottoman policy of limiting the term of appointments to local government, aimed at preventing Ottoman officials from establishing a power base in the areas where they held office, undermined effective central control. Over time the centre found it increasingly difficult to impose its authority over provincial cities and local administrators became more and more independent. In the late 18th century, for example, Tepedelenli Ali Paşa gained control of the administration of Ioannina and made the city the capital of his own 'autonomous' region.

Controlling the cities was a major challenge both for the centre and for the local authorities. Economic pressures often produced results which were uncontrollable and the violence of the janissaries, who caused great disruption in Istanbul after the death of Mehmed II in 1481, and again in the revolts in 1703 and 1730 and whose excesses triggered a popular revolt against them in 1804 in Belgrade as well as the flight of many of the *eşraf* from Antep in 1792,<sup>42</sup> meant that urban order was always a delicate balance. The paucity of certain products, such as grain, could lead to speculation, as was the case in the last quarter of the 16th century during the Ottoman–Safavid wars when sharply rising prices encouraged speculators in Istanbul to hoard foodstuffs and to try to monopolize provisions entering the city. The volatility of the market could make enforcing the *narh* prices, which did not necessarily respond quickly to changed circumstances, difficult, and shifts in consumption patterns could lead traders to ignore them, despite threats of floggings or fines, for the profits from a rising market or the losses from a falling one were considerable. Thus the increase in demand for olive oil, the main ingredient for the much sought-after soap of Jerusalem, towards the end of the 16th century, led traders to disregard the regulations concerning the price and place of olive oil sales.<sup>43</sup> In this context the flexibility of the *vakıf* was a considerable advantage: since the *vakıf* was not necessarily bound by its original foundation deed and its function could be redefined, it could respond quickly to market trends or to disasters such as the destruction of commercial property by fire or earthquake. The ability of the *vakıf* to divert funds and invest in immediate rebuilding made a significant contribution to the continuity of urban trading.

## THE SULTAN AND CITY

All Ottoman cities throughout the empire, regardless of regional differences or of their own regional

importance, were, in the final analysis, always tied to Istanbul, by direct imperial orders, through the high officials sent from the centre and by the constant appeals and reference back to the capital and the sultan through the *kadı* or by individuals of the city themselves. This system meant that Istanbul and the person of the sultan retained an actual and hands-on hierarchical dominance over other cities of the empire and there remained a level of direct intervention from the centre, which fluctuated from period to period and locality to locality. Imperial orders could and did have a direct impact on the structures of the city, Sultan Mehmed III, for example, ordering the removal of tanneries to an area outside central Cairo in 1600 as he wished to build a mosque in their place.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Süleyman I sent an order to the *kadı* of Smederevo (Semendire) in 1545 instructing him that the houses to be built in an area of the city destroyed by fire, were to be constructed at some distance from the castle and not directly against the castle walls in order to prevent damage to the fortification. He followed this up by despatching Mehmed, the *sipahi ođlanları kethüdası* (cavalry corps commander), to check that the order had been carried out.<sup>45</sup> In times of war, the imposition of the *avarız*, an extraordinary levy (later to become an ordinary tax), had a direct impact on provincial cities. Thus in 1534 the population of the province of Karaman was ordered by Süleyman I to provide the funds necessary for hiring camels from Aleppo for the Ottoman campaign against the Safavids.<sup>46</sup> Sultans could also concern themselves with the provisioning of cities. In 1545 Süleyman I sent an order to the *kadıs* in Rumeli concerning the scarcity of mutton in Istanbul and Edirne. He ordered the *kadıs* to ensure that the *celeps* immediately sent all the meat they had to these cities. If there was any delay, the *kadıs* would be held responsible and would lose their jobs. Indeed, according to Süleyman, this paucity was the result of the *kadıs* failing to do their duty in the first place.<sup>47</sup>

Istanbul's position at the pinnacle of the Ottoman urban system was not merely the result of power but was also a matter of prestige. What made Istanbul, and Edirne in the later 17th century, different from all other Ottoman cities was the presence of the sultan and it was this that made Istanbul the capital, and made it the centre of the empire.

One of the sultan's roles traditionally, and throughout the life of the empire was that of provider of justice. In the early years of the Ottoman state, people could present their petitions directly to Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402), who 'listened to people's complaints and conducted justice sitting in the early morning in an open space raised above the people'.<sup>48</sup> This practice of accessibility continued with later sultans and people could deliver petitions to the sultan as he moved around the city or as he was on his way to or from Friday prayer, as they did in great numbers to Murad III, for example.<sup>49</sup> While people could travel from the provinces to present their grievances in person, petitions could also come via the *kadı* or be sent by individuals for the sultan's consideration. Petitions could cover a multitude of matters, from complaints about corrupt officials, unjust punishment, or violence (the inhabitants of Medina asking the sultan in the 1760s to bring an end to the crippling attacks of the Bedouin),<sup>50</sup> to economic hardship, irreligious behaviour, and unjust enslavement. A petition from a *zimmi* (non-Muslim Ottoman subject), who claimed that she was from the Ottoman *reaya* (subject population), that she had been married but then sold to someone else in Edirne, resulted in instructions from the sultan that her case be investigated by the *beylerbeyi* (the governor) of Temesvár (Timișvar) and by the *kadı* of Lipova.<sup>51</sup> In response to a complaint about wine houses made by the people of Ankara, who viewed wine as the source of evil, and about drunkards assaulting women going to *hamams* and boys going to school, Murad III ordered the closure of all wine houses in Ankara, commenting piously 'let wine not take hold of the Muslims'.<sup>52</sup> The inhabitants of a *mahalle*

in Thessaloniki likewise complained in 1646 about a wine house near the *mahalle* mosque where non-Muslims drank, a practice which distressed the Muslim residents of the *mahalle* who were prevented from going to the mosque to pray because of such infidel behaviour. In response, Sultan İbrahim (r. 1640–1648) ordered the wine house to be closed.<sup>53</sup> Many petitions related to commercial matters such as fraud, taxation, property sales or, in the case of shoemakers in Ankara in 1571, the provision of raw material when the relevant guilds complained to the *kadı* of Ankara about the tanners' practice of selling leather to 'outsiders' without first satisfying the needs of the shoemakers. The *kadı* forwarded the case to the sultan who forbade the export of leather from the city until the needs of the shoemakers were met.<sup>54</sup>

The sultan also took a direct part in the running of Istanbul and kept himself informed about the situation there, which he did in part through the practice of touring the city in disguise accompanied by a special bodyguard. During such tours of inspection, sultans examined military installations, checked the conduct of the markets, whether goods were being sold at the correct prices and weights and currency regulations were being enforced, and made sure that social behaviour was as it should be. They were not always pleased with what they saw. When Murad IV (r. 1623–1640), a sultan famous for his severity, came across people disregarding commands about social behaviour, such as smoking or walking in the streets at night without a lantern, he had them killed on the spot.<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the 16th century Ottoman cities in general experienced a period of rapid growth, as the empire expanded territorially, trade and commercial prosperity increased, and the overall population rose. While in the 16th century, Ottoman cities prospered or declined according to the internal dynamics of the empire, over the 17th and 18th centuries, this was gradually to change as the impact of the world beyond the Ottoman frontier became more intrusive. As well as growing European military pressure and the rise of the oceanic long-distance trade routes, there was increased penetration by western European merchants of regional markets and mounting international competition for Ottoman urban industries. Yet Ottoman cities in general, led by Istanbul, continued to enjoy modest prosperity and growth until the last decades of the century.

Despite shifts and changes over time, what made an Ottoman city throughout the early modern period was its position within the Ottoman empire; what made it work was the flexibility of the Ottoman system of governance, the local conditions within which it operated, the negotiation of power between the urban population and the authorities, and the role of the *mahalle* and the *vakıf*. The characteristics of the cities varied considerably across the empire, marked by the different cultures and religions of their own localities and by their distance from the centre, but, despite their differences, they formed part of a cohesive Ottoman whole, for, in the end, all roads in the Ottoman empire led to Istanbul.

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## CHINA: 600–1300

HILDE DE WEERDT

## DEFINITIONS AND PARADIGMS

Following the emergence of large settlements surrounded by square walls and featuring ceremonial structures in the 3rd millennium BCE, the development of an urban system of city-states in the 1st millennium BCE, and the construction of the first imperial capitals during the 3rd century BCE, planners and builders could draw on a repertoire of morphological and structural features that would characterize Chinese urban design for centuries to come (see above, [Ch. 6](#); also [Regional Map 1.5](#)). Square walls, ritual structures, markets, grids superimposed on lived space, and the physical centrality of central or local administrative headquarters are elements of an ideal type that has also come to define the distinctiveness of Chinese cities in a comparative perspective. This chapter first examines new criteria by which medieval Chinese cities came to be defined and then traces this redefinition back to the commercialization of local and regional economies. It outlines the expansion and diversification of urban society that accompanied economic and demographic growth and then turns to the transformation of urban space, one of the most visible markers of the adaptation of state power to urban life.

Perhaps the most frequently cited and the most pertinent difference in comparisons between Chinese and other (especially European) cities is their embeddedness within an administrative hierarchy that theoretically denied the separation of city and countryside. Throughout imperial Chinese history urban centres were always part of a larger jurisdiction (county or prefecture) that jointly controlled rural areas and urban centres and that incorporated local communities in a hierarchy of administrative places that culminated in the court located in the main capital. The bureaucratic logic behind such a division of social space would appear to render impossible not only the existence and recognition of an urban–rural divide but also the very idea of the city itself.

Yet the difference between city and countryside was at the core of late imperial fiscal policy and articulated in a broad range of textual genres. This difference became all the more pronounced and visible across the extent of the Chinese territories in the radical socio-economic and cultural changes that took place between the 8th and the 12th centuries covering the end of the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–960), and the Song Dynasty (960–1276).

By the mid-11th century the general population was divided into two types of households for taxation purposes: those living within city wards (*fangguo*) and those living in villages (*xiangcun*). By the end of the century some observed that cities appeared to have become tax havens as corvée duties were only regularly demanded of rural households. In defence the senior statesman Sun Sheng (1038–1099) noted that the distinctive functions of cities were essential to the wellbeing of both the state and the countryside: ‘This [difference in taxation] does not imply that we are unaware that city dwellers have it easy while the people in the villages are suffering; however, in good times we let city dwellers engage in business day and night without pause, they circulate goods and so sell off all produce and nurture the villages.’<sup>1</sup> Sun Sheng articulated a common perception that cities were places

where stores were packed together, and traffic was busy at all times. By Song times this perception no longer pertained to capital marketplaces or the big trading centres only; lesser known county and prefectural seats as well as market towns, whose number mushroomed, were described in similar terms. The process of urbanization which will be outlined in this chapter was encapsulated in a changing and expanding definition of what cities were (for later see Regional [Map II.5](#)).

Urban settlements had been traditionally defined by the walls that marked them off from the surrounding countryside. The term used by Sun Sheng and his contemporaries, ‘persons within the walls’ (*chengguo zhi ren*), still reflected the significance attached to walled enclosures in the collective consciousness. However, those classified as urban households included not only those living within county and prefectural seats with walls (or the large number of those without or with defective walls)<sup>2</sup> but also those living in the suburbs that emerged on the outskirts of the more populous cities and even those resident in market towns in which the government’s presence was limited to a small number of minor officials whose main duty was the supervision of commercial tax collection.

The substitution of socio-economic criteria for formal ones in defining urban spaces in native classification schemes, the recognition of socio-economic change and historical trends in rural–urban marketing networks found its parallel in 20th-century interpretations of Chinese urban history. William Skinner replaced the Weberian ideal type of the Chinese city with cyclical histories of regional marketing systems which consisted of a nested hierarchy of central places. Skinner, following central place theory, defined urban settlements by functional criteria, foremost by the extent to which they fulfilled economic functions such as the provision of a wide range of goods and services, and linkage to communication networks and to other economic centres; to a lesser extent urban centres were shaped by the concentration of administrative, religious, and cultural functions servicing the surrounding hinterland. Even though Skinner’s model was predominantly based on the last centuries of Chinese history, he endorsed the view of contemporary economic historians like Shiba Yoshinobu and Mark Elvin that an ‘urban revolution’ took place between the Tang and Song Dynasties characterized not only by the substantial increase in central places (which he estimated to have risen from 1,500 to 6,000) but also by bureaucratic retrenchment, an overall trend towards the retreat of official involvement in marketing, commerce, social regulation, and administration itself.<sup>3</sup>

The linearity and extent of bureaucratic retrenchment during this period may have been overstated—the government’s interest in registering urban households and setting up commercial tax stations across the empire suggests that the court and scholar-official elite developed the infrastructure to maintain control over market forces. However, the recognition and development of the social, economic, and cultural specificity of urban centres, in addition to, and in some cases over, their administrative and ritual prominence, is a new phenomenon. This chapter seeks to explain how rapid, dramatic, and uneven urbanization across the Chinese territories resulted from major demographic shifts, ‘marketization’, and commercialization fostered by local and central government policy and practice as well as private initiative. The various types of cities (capital, maritime, garrison, and provincial) examined here overall supported the administrative structure of the empire. They did so, however, not because they were replicas of the ideal imperial city, but because the interaction of central and local governments and diverse social groups resulted in socio-economic changes and the expansion of cultural production in and about the city that allowed for both urban specificity and empire-wide integration.<sup>4</sup>

## MARKETIZATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION DURING THE TANG–SONG TRANSITION

Chinese society went through major changes in the centuries spanning the Tang and the Song Dynasties. Demographically, there was a major shift in the distribution of the population from the north to the south. North China had historically been the most heavily populated part of the Chinese territories. The capitals of the unified Chinese empires (Qin, Han, Sui, and Tang) had been located in the north. During the 1st millennium CE, there were several waves of migration from the north to the south but none with such lasting effect as the migrations set off by the period of civil unrest that started in the mid-8th century. Whereas an estimated 23 per cent of the registered population lived in the south in 606 and 43 per cent in 742, by 1078 65 per cent was resident in the south.<sup>5</sup>

This shift in the population distribution went hand-in-hand with a substantial increase in the total population. Government numbers suggest that the total population living in the south under the Song regime in 1223 (13,349,322 households; 69,416,474 people using the ratio of 5.2 persons per household) was higher than the total population ruled by the Song when it governed both north and south (12,196,307 households in 1102). This number was also higher than the total population numbers recorded for the Tang (e.g. 8,973,634 in 742). This increase was only in part due to the Jurchen occupation of the north; there appears to have been an upward trend in the north as well. Available numbers suggest that the population there increased from roughly 7 million to about 10 million households between the late 12th and early 13th centuries.<sup>6</sup>

More significant within the context of urban history are the relatively high numbers and percentages of urban residents compared to rural households for the prefectures and counties for which such statistics have survived for the Southern Song period (1127–1176). For the small number of larger (over 50,000 households), and the larger numbers of midsize (5,000–49,999 households) and standard (1,000–4,999) prefectures and counties the percentage typically ranges from 3 to 14 per cent but several counties and prefectures were home to populations of which 30–40 per cent were situated within urban cores. Larger cities of 20–30,000 households were more common along the Yangzi River and the coast, but cities of this size spread across the extent of the Southern Song empire.<sup>7</sup>

Increasing levels of urbanization are also evident from the growing numbers of market towns (*zhen*). The number of *zhen* first rose sharply in the 10th century, but these settlements were then more akin to garrisons which had become prominent features of the landscape under the Wei (386–534) and Tang Dynasties. Small settlements consisting of military contingents had been set up along major transportation nodes, along maritime borders, and near the periphery of some prefectures for defensive purposes. After the first Song emperors unified the kingdoms set up across the Chinese territories in the 10th century, garrisons were officially removed as part of a larger effort to centralize military power. Some had already made the transition into market towns, their residents providing manufacturing, commercial, transportation, and other services. Between the 11th and the 13th centuries new market towns appeared, typically at a modest distance from county and prefectural cities, and they began to occupy a crucial role in a hierarchically structured marketing network that linked rural communities to nonresidential markets (*caoshi*), market towns of various sizes, and the larger cities which were incorporated into the hierarchy of administrative jurisdictions. The geographic distribution of the market towns was uneven; in Liangzhe Circuit, for example, they tended to cluster near the northern plain and along the coast. Judging from the commercial taxes generated, the size and wealth produced also varied considerably depending on proximity to major transportation routes.<sup>8</sup>

Besides the demographic change and the process of urbanization, Chinese society also experienced economic changes that were quantitatively and qualitatively so extensive that economic historians have called them revolutionary. A telling indicator of the extent of economic transformation as well as the court's attitude towards it is the changing proportion of agricultural and commercial taxes in the Song state's revenue. Traditionally, since the classical empires of the Qin and Han, the Chinese imperial government supported itself through the income derived from agrarian taxes, in the form of both land and poll taxes. In the 11th century income derived from commercial taxes and state monopolies like liquor and salt more or less equalled the income derived from agrarian taxes.<sup>9</sup> Commercial taxes were taxes levied on transactions in local markets, in interregional trade, and also included customs levied on international trade at frontiers and ports. In the next two centuries income derived from commercial taxes continued to rise in the south whereas the significance of agricultural taxes (even though absolute numbers may have increased) declined proportionally from about 56 per cent of total revenue in the mid-11th century to about 20 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In addition, taxes were regularly levied in cash. By 1085 an estimated 70 per cent of taxes were collected in cash.<sup>11</sup> The monetization of the economy provided further incentive to bring produce and goods to the market.

This change in the state's fiscal basis suggests that the Chinese economy was going through a process of commercialization. Farmers in various parts of the Song state were no longer self-sufficient. In southern areas like Guangnan, for example, many specialized in rice cultivation, and basic staples were carried north along maritime and riverine routes. The development of an interregional rice market allowed market towns and cities to specialize and gain reputations for particular types of produce and manufactured goods. The coastal prefectures of Fujian, whose populations increased substantially,<sup>12</sup> were dependent on rice imports but thrived through the export of sugarcane, cotton, hemp, fruits, fish, porcelain, iron, timber, paper, and books.

Urbanization was a relatively widespread phenomenon in the sense that mid-size and large cities could be found across the Chinese territories. An estimated 31 per cent of them were located in the north suggesting that the commercialization of Chinese society was then not a predominantly southern or, more specifically, lower Yangzi phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> These cities were the major consumers of commercial goods and were at the core of integrated local, regional, and interregional systems. Most studies suggest that a modified version of the Skinnerian paradigm would apply to the Chinese economy between 600 and 1300. The boundaries of the discrete macroregions into which Skinner divided the Chinese territories based on physiographic criteria have been redrawn and made somewhat more porous, but it is by and large accepted that, rather than an empire-wide integrated market, most commercial activity centred on regional centres such as the capital cities of Chang'an (through 900), Kaifeng (950–1130), and Hangzhou (12th–13th centuries), and commercial nodes such as Chengdu or Quanzhou.<sup>14</sup>

Urban centres along the eastern coast were also tied into wider maritime trade networks that connected cities, city-states, and entrepôts in Europe, Africa, West Asia, the Indian peninsula, and South East and East Asia (see below, [Ch. 19](#)). Tang cities located along the coast and the canal routes hosted foreign merchant communities including Koreans, Javans, Malays, Arabs, Indians, Jews, and others. In Song times Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Mingzhou became the major trading centres for East, South East, South, and West Asian merchants who also set up foreign communities in these cities. Embeddedness in cross-cultural urban networks played a tangible role in the development of cities and hinterlands along the coast, although the impact of such trade on the overall Song economy remains unclear. By supplying goods that could be trans-shipped from Quanzhou, southern Fujian was

gradually transformed from a frontier zone into a highly commercialized and integrated region with a handful of large cities and several dozen manufacturing and marketing towns.<sup>15</sup> Exports included aromatics, minerals, metal products, ceramics, precious stones, textiles like silk, and consumables such as sugar, wine, and salt. Imports included raw materials such as metals, indigo, textiles, and timber.<sup>16</sup>

The case of Quanzhou suggests that agricultural and commercial developments were not related to each other as a simple cause and effect whereby more advanced agricultural techniques and new seedlings led to surpluses and marketization. Central and local governments and local elites including entrepreneurs, smaller merchants, and literati contributed towards better infrastructure and to the conditions that led to a tighter integration of the region. Bridges were built and roads paved within urban cores and along transportation arteries. In Suzhou Prefecture the number of bridges reportedly increased three fold from sixty-three to 288 between the 1010s and the 1190s.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, trade between distant places was to an extent facilitated by the development of paper currency and credit institutions. Chronic shortages in copper coin led to the government's eventual adoption of paper currency, a policy that mimicked earlier private and regional attempts to limit the risk of cash loss in long-distance transactions.

## URBAN SOCIETY

Commercialization affected all strata of Chinese society. Rural markets, held at periodic intervals averaging about once every ten days, appeared throughout the Song empire. Some markets were held near Buddhist monasteries. Other market sites, first held in open fields, became the site of permanent stores and inns and developed into towns. The markets not only offered a meeting point for the sale of agricultural surplus but also stimulated labour diversification. Apart from farming, commoners were put to work in oil shops, tea plantations, paper factories, fish-rearing ponds, watermills, rice shops, and orchards and vegetable plots providing fresh produce to urban residents. Individual families specialized in the cultivation of particular crops, the manufacturing of particular products, or in transportation. Labour diversification was more pronounced in the bigger cities. Apart from the hired labourers in agriculture, processing, and transport, all sorts of clerks and servants were for hire there, ranging from pawnshop clerks, porters, and attendants, to actors, musicians, and chess players.

Commerce, premised on the maximization of private profit, remained a suspect occupation in the estimation of many elite families. Obtaining an education, passing the civil service examinations, and so entering the bureaucracy became the preferred track for ambitious elite men since the examinations had become the most prestigious track to officialdom in the 10th and 11th centuries. Given that the odds of success were never good and continued to decline, particularly in more densely populated and urbanized prefectures, families diversified their strategies for obtaining status and power. Commerce became an attractive alternative. In guidebooks of family etiquette and household management elite men presented business and manufacturing as suitable alternatives to avoid the ever-present threat of downward social mobility. Despite the unfailing critique of the pursuit of private gain, literati families and government officials were actively involved in business ranging from joint long-distance and overseas trading ventures to real estate letting in desirable cities such as the capitals or the booming cities in the Yangzi delta.





**PLATE 16.1** Scene from ‘Life along the River during the Qingming Festival’ (‘Qingming Shanghe tu’), attributed to Zhang Zeduan, 12th century. The scene by the bridge captures the hustle and bustle of life in the northern Song capital of Kaifeng. Kaifeng streets became public spaces where all manner of vendors and peddlers sold their wares around the clock and private multi-storey buildings proliferated.

Elite families were drawn to investment prospects in urban cores but also to better opportunities for socialization in public schools and private academies, teahouses, restaurants, entertainment quarters, temples, and gardens. The cultural life of the capitals of Kaifeng (see [Plate 16.1](#)) and Hangzhou has become immortalized in the Song and Yuan Dynasty memoirs written by some of their residents, and similar public spaces drew the upwardly mobile or culturally engaged to cities and market towns. Literati bought homes or rented space near administrative, cultural, or scenic sites. The absentee landlord became a common phenomenon in the countryside and the floating population included students and unsuccessful examination candidates, some of whom settled down taking on teaching, medicine, clerking, litigation, and other service occupations. Prosperous counties in prefectures like Wenzhou and Fuzhou (Fujian) whose sons consistently outperformed competitors in the civil service examinations attracted hoards of students and thus gained regional and empire-wide reputations as centres of learning.

Cities were also home to administrative personnel, military families, clergy, entrepreneurs and small business owners, artisans, entertainment and menial workers. The number of administrative personnel ranged from a handful in market towns, to a few dozen or a few hundred in county and prefectural seats, to several thousand in the capital cities. They either lived near the *yamen* (government offices) or rented space in established or up-and-coming parts of the city. The military, numbering from several thousands to tens of thousands in prefectural cities, lived in barracks clustered in particular corners of the inner city or the expanding suburbs of the larger cities. Even though life in the barracks was theoretically more regimented, some observed that in the capital and in prefectural cities the rules, set by the first emperors who were keen on keeping soldiers removed from the luxury and entertainment of urban life, were bent to the extent that military families lived intermixed with civilian residents.

Buddhist and Daoist clergy occupied the temples and monasteries that provided a focal point in the lives of all residents. They hosted fairs and festivals, provided ritual services, and the sound of their drums registered the passage of time. Local gazetteers recording Song and Yuan religious sites usually list multiple sites per city; with the number of monks per monastery estimated at a few dozen or a few hundred, the clergy were a significant social force in Chinese cities.

Merchants of different types played a pivotal role in the daily operations of the city. Larger cities like Suzhou attracted travelling entrepreneurs active in interregional trade and big merchants who owned businesses in multiple locations. Their streets were lined with locally owned workshops and stores of varying sizes and frequented by hawkers and peddlers who set up stalls or sold foodstuffs and small goods on the move. Commercial hubs were also home to an expanding class of real-estate brokers, wholesalers, and middlemen. They rented out residential or storage space and acted as go-betweens in the purchase and sale of local and imported goods and services. Such services could

often be obtained directly from or through the mediation of inns. Stories from the late Tang onwards suggest that men and women of both lower and higher social ranking could be imagined in such roles, with some of the success stories trying out the entire range of business opportunities in their lifetime.

Artisans could be found in great numbers in market towns and cities. They were put to work alongside men in military service in government workshops where necessities such as military equipment, printed materials (books, forms, calendars, and money), ships for the transportation of tax grain or for naval defence, textiles, ritual implements, and decorative goods were manufactured. Besides the mid-size and large-scale government workshops, large numbers of small-scale, often family-run, workshops dotted the streets and alleys. There were silk weavers, smiths and metal workers, shoe makers, tile makers, carpenters, construction material providers, fan manufacturers, and those who set out to meet the demand for just about any daily use item imaginable.

Judging from the available evidence, it appears that workshops were not clustered in industrial zones, but were spatially relatively dispersed. For practical reasons such as access to raw materials workshops in the same line of business were often concentrated in the same neighbourhood. Place names served as an index of the importance of particular trades in some quarters; 'bottle workshop alley', 'silk stores bridge', 'paper corridor alley', and 'straw shoe bridge' all located in Suzhou between the Song and Yuan periods, are typical examples.<sup>18</sup> Artisans were not exclusively engaged in production but could also sell their products directly to consumers. Towns and cities specialized in the manufacture of goods such as copper artefacts or porcelains, printed materials or textiles. Such sites of specialization were target areas for middlemen and entrepreneurs supplying goods in demand elsewhere in the empire and overseas.

The cities were crowded with armies of porters and servants who assisted wealthy households, government offices, granaries, workshops, stores, or visitors in their day-to-day activities. Troupes of entertainers and individual artistes provided a bewildering variety of entertainment options in the capitals of Kaifeng and Lin'an (Hangzhou). By the mid-13th century there were more than twenty entertainment districts in Hangzhou. They featured theatres, arenas where spectators were treated to storytelling, operas, musical performances, dance, puppeteering, shadow plays, and acrobatics. Performances also took place on the streets, around restaurants and teahouses, and in pleasure quarters where female and, to a lesser extent, male entertainers treated their guests to singing, dance, polite company, and sexual services. Many of those working in the pleasure quarters were government entertainers registered to provide services on official occasions, others operated privately. Even though the entertainment in the capital cities continues to loom large in the perception of Song urban culture (as shown in the Song Dynasty City theme parks in Hong Kong and Hangzhou), entertainment quarters and public performance spaces existed in many Song, Jin, and Yuan cities including Dadu, Pingyang, Dongping, Zhending, Huzhou, Wenzhou, Xingyuan, Suzhou, Zhenjiang, Chengdu, and Yuanzhou. As in the case of local products, cities in north and south gained fame for regional performance styles and genres.<sup>19</sup>

Mobility characterized all urban social strata. Scholars travelled to find better educational opportunities and to take examinations locally and in the capital. Officials were rotated regularly, usually every three years; military families were rotated as well. Clergy travelled to other monasteries and temples. Merchants, artisans with specialized skills such as woodblock cutters and sculptors, and entertainment troupes moved about in search of business or on commission. Porters and servants, and occasionally women and children, accompanied other travellers.<sup>20</sup>

The living standard of those in the cities was perceived to be luxurious, and some have estimated

that living standards in Song cities were relatively high in comparison to later centuries and other places.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, contemporary evidence suggests that the majority of the urban population, 50–60 per cent, may have lived in poverty, barely able to make ends meet in good times and unable to do so during times of bad harvest, inflation, cold weather, or war. In cities with hundreds or thousands of beggars on the streets, beggars were organized by leaders who could liaise with the government and charities when food or clothes were distributed in times of the greatest need.

A similar organizational structure was adopted among practitioners of other trades. In Tang cities trades of the same type were already concentrated in particular market areas, but whether the physical concentration of particular businesses also led to guild formation is still under debate. By the 11th and 12th centuries evidence of guild activity is abundant and unambiguous. In Hangzhou there were guilds for manufacturers of combs, jewellery, hats, boots, and for traders of all types of products including fish, rice, crabs, chickens, wine, vegetables, and antiquities. The guild warden fixed prices with wholesalers and long-distance traders, and ensured that guild members supplied the government with goods and services which were irregularly levied in lieu of corvée duties. Traders were expected to join and may have benefited from the protection against profiteering and direct government interference that guilds provided. As organizations that thrived on the interaction of local elites and local government, they have, however, also been accused of collusion with corrupt government personnel.<sup>22</sup>

Protection against other kinds of life challenges was available from a range of welfare institutions run by the government, privately, or as a joint venture of local elites and local officialdom. In the city of Suzhou there were homes for those who belonged to the specially protected groups of the elderly and abandoned women and children, an apothecary providing free drugs for those in need, and a charity that provided free coffins for those who could not afford them. In other cities too there were hospitals, pharmacies, and orphanages, mandated by official policy or established through the donations of residents. Even though the lifespan of these institutions was in some cases short, evidence suggests that they were built, rebuilt, and discussed continuously.<sup>23</sup> Like today, there is little doubt that social welfare was one of the areas where the demand always outstripped the supply. Drainage systems and fire protection in the form of the placement of large vats of water at regular intervals also benefited public health and safety. In Hangzhou, hygiene workers reportedly came by on a daily basis to collect human waste and others cleared garbage. In the capitals police stations were dispersed across the city, and magistrates of lesser jurisdictions were assisted by smaller numbers of public security personnel.

The history of urbanization and urban society in medieval China did not follow a linear path. Population growth occurred in many areas, but these same areas and others also witnessed population decline. The city of Kaifeng, once one of the largest in the medieval world, witnessed a downturn after the 1130s and never regained the prominence amongst Chinese cities it had once held. Coastal Quanzhou went through cycles of expansion and contraction throughout this period depending on the arrival of foreign merchants, the regional economy, and governmental privileges. After it emerged at the core of a highly commercialized urban system, it went through a downturn in the first half of the 13th century but recovered under Mongol rule in time to impress the foreign merchant whose stories went into received editions of Marco Polo's travels. While some urban cores, like Tingzhou in Fujian, went through spectacular growth, higher population density in urban cores also resulted in population decline in rural and mountainous hinterlands.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN SPACE

Population growth, commercialization, and the diversification and mobility of labour coincided with a gradual transformation of urban space. The gradual loosening of spatial and temporal restrictions on commercial activities, the breaking down of the walls of the ward system and their replacement with non-discrete urban districts, suburban sprawl, and the erection of multi-story structures for residential or commercial use are most evident from the history of the capitals of the dynasties that ruled between the 7th and the 13th centuries but similar developments also characterized the growth of cities across the Chinese territories.

In contrast with the domineering aspect of Han Chang'an's imperial palaces, contemporary witnesses described the same capital as a chequerboard after its reconstruction in the late 6th and 7th centuries. During the Tang Dynasty the capital of Chang'an was subdivided into just over 100 wards, walled rectangular neighbourhoods formed by fourteen east–west and eleven north–south streets. As in the classical model described in [Ch. 6](#) on China's early cities, the city's main streets reached straight across from one end of the wall to the opposite side. Smaller lanes and alleys further subdivided each ward in a grid-like manner. Access to the wards was through guarded gates and curfews were imposed to facilitate the maintenance of public order. Contemporary visitors noted the social segregation within the ward system as aristocratic families and high officials congregated in the fashionable wards in the north-eastern quarter. Commoners and Central Asian residents, on the other hand, were more likely to live in smaller crowded neighbourhoods in the west.<sup>24</sup>

In the new capital the growing number of residents (up from an estimated 200,000 in Han times (see [Ch. 8](#)) to no less than 1 million in Tang times) took up a proportionally larger area (an estimated seven-eighths) of the city's increased size. The centrality and authoritative position of the administrative part was, nevertheless, clearly articulated in the urban plan and in the architectural landscape. The city's most impressive road, Zhuque Dajie (Vermillion Bird Road), was over 5 km long and 155 m wide. It led straight to the central south gate of the imperial and palace cities and cut Chang'an into two roughly symmetrical east–west halves. Most of the houses in Chang'an's vast residential space were dwarfed by the 10 m high walls surrounding the administrative city and the even greater heights of the gate towers providing access to it. Present-day reconstructions of the city allow us to envision a mostly flat urban landscape extending for about 84 km<sup>2</sup>, dotted with religious landmarks such as the Small and the Big White Goose Pagoda reaching 45 m and 64 m high respectively, and set off against the massive proportions of the palace structures behind the walls of the administrative city.

Chang'an was especially well known at home and abroad for its markets. Located at one of the ends of the silk roads that connected traders in Tang China with their counterparts in Central and West Asia, it was a gathering place for those keen on selling and acquiring products, fashions, and news from across the Asian continent. The two principal markets, the East and West Market, were located just south of the main road that skirted the southern periphery of the administrative city and at symmetrically opposite sides of Vermillion Bird Road. The markets were about twice the size of a large ward but were similarly enclosed by gated walls and subdivided in blocks through a grid of intersecting streets and lanes. Streets and alleys were packed with shops of various sizes selling goods ranging from the very basic such as meat, steamed buns, low-grade silk, and calendars to the luxury goods transported from distant parts such as rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, or ginseng. Chang'an's markets further provided its residents and visitors with a range of services from courier

transport and lodging to text copying, mourning, and entertainment. The first teahouses appeared; tea had just recently become a more widely appreciated brew. In an effort to maintain fair trading standards and to enforce compliance with trading hours (from noon until one and three-quarter hours before dusk), all transactions and activities were supervised by the market director and his staff.

The design of the planned city, resonant with cosmological significance and regulated to maintain the supremacy of the Son of Heaven and his court, was not strictly enforced; trade was conducted within some wards at all times and over time more and more trading sites appeared. Commercial activity was bustling just outside the main gate of the imperial city where hordes of officials and the emperor's sizeable entourage were the major customers. Other traffic nodes also became trading centres including the gates to the external city wall and the main granaries in which food supplies from all over the empire arrived to provide for Chang'an's population.<sup>25</sup> Enterprising individuals, whose homes were originally meant to front onto the streets and alleys of their ward only, pierced its external walls in order to bring in business from the main avenues or to enjoy a more spacious view. As commerce spilled over from the wards into the streets, a phenomenon that successive governments acknowledged to be unstoppable, Chang'an's wide avenues and streets lost some of their real estate to encroaching merchants and residents and, some regretted, some of their grandeur as well.

When foreign envoys and overseas merchants arrived in the new capital of Kaifeng from the late 10th century onwards they would have been impressed, no longer by the vast empty avenues and the invisibility of daily life behind the walls of the blocks of wards as early visitors to the Tang court might have been, but by the open and not so squarish layout of the city in which narrower streets, lined with shops and linking neighbourhoods without walls, became a dominant feature of urban space. The size of Kaifeng's administrative centre was much reduced in comparison to Tang Chang'an. Modern estimates suggest that its imperial centre was even further reduced in size and occupied only one-tenth the area of just Chang'an's palace city in Tang times. Kaifeng bore the signs of a socio-economic transformation that heightened the discrepancy between the classical ideal of city planning and the realities of urban development. Among the nine cities that served as capitals in imperial Chinese history, Kaifeng was the first to be chosen in large part for economic reasons.

Unlike Chang'an which was surrounded by mountains yet accessible by river transport, this city located in the Yellow River plain was from a purely military strategic perspective a questionable choice. Situated near the confluence of the Yellow River and the Grand Canal it was, however, a central node in the commercial networks that tied the booming economies in the south-east to the less prosperous central and northern parts of the Song empire. After deliberations the first Song emperors sided with more pragmatic advisers who argued that Kaifeng could more easily provision the court and the military stationed there.<sup>26</sup>

Compromises extended beyond those noted earlier and led to a new urban regime characterized by the relaxation of restrictions on commercial activity and its dispersal across urban space. Even though wards still existed in name, they no longer looked or functioned as symmetrically arranged encampments controlling the comings and goings of their residents. Similarly, commercial activity was no longer focused on the officially designated and controlled market areas or the small number of additional sites that opened in Chang'an over time. Kaifeng streets became public spaces where all manner of vendors and peddlers sold their wares around the clock and private multi-storey buildings proliferated. Markets still existed but they sprang up in squares and on street corners across the city. As in the case of the meat market by the Zhou Bridge or the horse market by the Helelou Tavern, smaller markets specializing in specific goods were held at specific locations attracting vendors and

customers.

For those who reminisced about the attractions of the capital after its annexation by Jurchen armies in present-day north China, Kaifeng was above all a city of entertainment. Apart from round-the-clock business, it also offered the best in dining and theatre. Restaurants and taverns, some of them several stories high, numbered in the thousands and had on offer delicacies from across the Song empire. The pleasure precincts were host to brothels and dozens of theatres and provided a venue for comedians, storytellers, musicians, dancers, and puppeteers. Even though Chang'an also boasted pleasure quarters in less than a handful of its wards and theatres existed on the grounds of several Buddhist temples, the contrast with the dozens of such sites in Song capitals is telling. Judging from contemporary urban literature, the expansion and dispersal of the entertainment business went hand-in-hand with a diversification of its clientele. Visitors still included the capitals' administrative and cultural elite, but stories about the adventures of other city residents and parvenus testify to the newly gained prominence and mobility of traders, middlemen, and the floating population.<sup>27</sup> Such entertainment was enjoyed by emperor and commoner alike.

What the Song imperial administration lost in real estate, it gained in presence. Government offices spilled out from the administrative centre across the city. Government officials as well as emperors and their entourage were also visible participants in annual celebrations, religious events, and urban entertainment. Street processions had always held a certain mystique and proven a potentially powerful legitimating exercise, but from the 11th century onwards they gained added significance as it seemed appropriate to increasing numbers of officials and scholars that the emperors' virtue and concern for the people be on display.

Population growth exacerbated social tensions and environmental pressure in cities like Kaifeng, Hangzhou, and others which originated as provincial walled cities centuries earlier. In Kaifeng new enclosing walls were built at first to encompass the tens of thousands of officials and even larger numbers of military families. When even the expanded inner city could no longer hold the hundreds of thousands working and living in the metropolis, large suburban districts were added. In one recent estimate, by the mid-11th century the total population may have been as high as 1,400,000 with 300,000–400,000 living in the nine suburban districts.<sup>28</sup> The population density and continuing appeal of Kaifeng led to high real-estate prices and ensuing questionable appropriations by the rich and powerful. Such confiscations were in one critique targeted as a problem to be addressed because 'this is particularly inappropriate at a time of prosperity'.<sup>29</sup> In Hangzhou City, whose population grew from around 500,000 to around 1 million between the mid-12th and the mid-13th centuries,<sup>30</sup> encroachment escalated beyond what magistrates had experienced in Chang'an as residents began to fill in canals and other bodies of water on their own accord in order to construct dwellings. Local governments attempted to reverse the trend and uncover old streams in view of the fact that in other cities in the region encroachment upon waterways had led to traffic problems, dearth of access to water during fires, and the disappearance of historic sites. The trend proved to be difficult to stop and by the mid-13th century several streams in Hangzhou had been filled in.<sup>31</sup>

Peripheral cities point to both the varieties of urbanization and the continuation of the ideal urban archetype during the Tang–Song transition and beyond. Hundreds of fortified settlements were built by all sides in the 11th century as part of both defensive and offensive military planning. Song efforts focused on the construction of an urban defence network in the region of the Loess Plateau (roughly covering parts of the provinces of Shanxi, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, and Qinghai) where Xia forces had been building hundreds of fortified settlements.

Archaeologists have proposed that the border settlements replicated the ideal features of the mid-size Chinese city: a small number of city gates opened up onto the main thoroughfares which divided the city into distinct functional parts. They tended to be comparable in size to cities and towns further removed from the border and typically housed up to several thousand soldiers. Even though military personnel and preoccupations dominated layout and life here, tax records suggest that many of them were also actively engaged in trade, both domestic and cross-border. A more relaxed urban regime with plenty of room for trade thus seems to have reached all the way to the artificial urban boundary network in the north. However, the implementation of the ideal of the planned city in Zhongdu and Dadu (capitals of the Jurchen Jin and Mongol Yuan dynasties)<sup>32</sup> and the fact that all fortified settlements uncovered in northern Shaanxi and eastern Qinghai boasted solid square walls powerfully underscores the continued significance attached to the perfectly enclosed square. Whereas urban residents no longer lived in cities that matched the classical ideal, its continued hold on the planners' imagination is attested not only in the cities along the periphery but also in the idealized plans of cities with a distinctively different footprint reproduced in local gazetteers and encyclopaedias. Contemporary urban blueprints are to modern readers not gateways to the realities of past urban life but rather to the varieties of cultural production in which it was represented.<sup>33</sup>

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Between the 7th and 14th centuries the Chinese territories contained some of the largest if not the largest cities in the world. Chinese society was also among the most urbanized in medieval times. Several cities held populations of several hundreds of thousands and the population of a few cities numbered over a million. In both north and south China large and mid-size cities with tens of thousands of people proliferated and new towns emerged first for predominantly military reasons and, increasingly from the 11th century onwards, also as nodes in expanding networks of production, transportation, and consumption. Even though the overall percentage of urban households was low in what continued to be an agrarian empire (5–10 per cent), in some areas, particularly along the Yangzi and along the south-east coast, it ranged between 30 and 40 per cent. Southward migration, the development of regional specialization in agricultural and manufactured goods, interregional and cross-cultural trade, and the active engagement of both central and local governments and urban residents in commercial development all contributed to an 'urban revolution'.

Within the cities the ward system inherited from earlier dynasties gradually broke down and spatial and temporal restrictions on business and entertainment were loosened. The concentration of social welfare, religious, educational, and cultural sites became, alongside business and entertainment, the defining characteristics of urban space. The city did not have autonomy, but its distinctiveness was acknowledged in government policy. Urban life was also the object of a variety of other textual and visual discourses. Printed maps or maps carved on stone depicted the ideal of the administrative city. Songs, plays, urban memoirs, or the increasing number of notebooks presented different facets, different experiences, and different readings of particular cities. The expansion of urban space was complimented by an expansion of literature about the city but unlike its socio-economic history, the cultural and political history of the medieval Chinese city remains to a large extent unexplored.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps herein lies one of the greatest differences between European and Chinese medieval urban history: even though Chinese society may have been the most urbanized of medieval societies, its cities have been less well studied than its European counterparts. Future research may redress this

imbalance in the global history of cities as Chinese historians turn to a wider range of cities, the relationship between cultural production and the city, and urban archaeology.<sup>35</sup>

## NOTES

1. Li Tao, *Xu 'Zizhi tongjian' changbian* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2004), 394.9611–12. Quoted in Umehara Kaoru, 'Sōdai no kotōsei o megutte', *Tōhō gakuhō*, 41 (1970), 378. See also Liang Gengyao, *Songdai shehui jingji shi lunji* (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 1997), 592–618; Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 164–78.
2. On the ups and downs of wall construction in Jiangnan cities, see Shiba Yoshinobu, *Songdai Jiangnan jingji shi yanjiu* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin, 2001), 291–321. For a 13th-century description of the poor state city walls in the Huai region, see Hua Yue, *Cuiwei nanzheng lu, beizheng lu he ji* (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 1993), 172–3.
3. G. William Skinner and Hugh D. R. Baker, eds., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 24–7.
4. For an extended analysis of Ming urban history along these lines see Fei Si-yen, *Negotiating Urban Space: Urbanization and Late Ming Nanjing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).
5. Shiba, 'Urbanization and the Development of Markets in the Lower Yangtze Valley', in John Winthrop Haeger, *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 16–18.
6. Wu Songdi, *Nan Song renkou shi* (Beijing: Renmin, 2008), 97; Liang, *Songdai shehui jingji*, 496; Liang Fangzhong, *Zhongguo lidai hukou, tiandi, tianfu tongji* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin, 1980), 121, 230. On the conversion from households to population numbers see Wu, *Nan Song renkou*, 105–14, and Kubota Kazuo, *Songdai Kaifeng yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 2010), 90–7.
7. Liang, *Songdai shehui jingji*, 507–37; Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, 175–6; Shiba, 'Urbanization and the Development of Markets', 20–3; Liu Guanglin, 'Wrestling for Power. The State and Economy in Later Imperial China 1000–1770' (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2005), 200.
8. Chen Guocan and Xi Jianhua, *Zhejiang gudai chengzhen shi yanjiu* (Hefei: Anhui Daxue, 2000), 173–81; for a list of Song market towns, see Fu Zongwen, *Songdai caoshi zhen yanjiu* (Fuzhou: Fujian Renmin, 1989).
9. Qi Xia, *Songdai jingji shi* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin, 1987), 406.
10. Qi Xia, *Songdai jingji shi*, 443–4.
11. Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 248.
12. Billy So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946–1368* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 142.
13. Liu, 'Wrestling for Power', 230–1.
14. Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China*, 24; Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, 170–1; Shiba, *Songdai Jiangnan*, ch. 3; So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, esp. ch. 6.



15. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, 138–9.
16. *Ibid.* 62–7.
17. Liang, *Songdai shehui jingji*, 553.
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20. On mobility in Song times, see Zhang Cong, *Transformative Journeys: Travel and Culture in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).
21. Liu, ‘Wrestling for Power’, 197–204.
22. Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 209–10; Quan Hansheng, *Zhongguo hanghui zhidu shi* (Taipei: Shihuo, 1978); Liang Guoying, ‘Lue lun Songdai chengshi gong- shangye hanghui de xingcheng’, *Dezhou xueyuan xuebao*, 20, no. 5 (2004): 37–40; Wei Tian’an and Dai Panghai, *Tang Song hanghui yanjiu* (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin, 2007).
23. Liang, *Songdai shehui jingji*, 444–5.
24. This section is in part based on Hilde De Weerd, ‘Les centres du pouvoir impérial: les premières capitales de la Chine’, in Jean-Paul Desroches and Ilse Timperman, *Fils du ciel* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2009), 98–115.
25. Ning Xin, *Tang Song ducheng shehui jiegou yanjiu: Dui chengshi jingji yu shehui de guanzhu* (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2009), esp. 211–316.
26. Kubota, *Songdai Kaifeng*, ch. 1.
27. Ning, *Tang Song ducheng*, 133–50.
28. Kubota, *Songdai Kaifeng*, 109.
29. Zhao Ruyu, *Song mingchen zouyi*, Siku quanshu edn. (vols. 431–2) (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983), 100.17b. Quoted in Kubota, *Songdai Kaifeng*, 81; West, ‘The Confiscation of Public Land in the Song Capital’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 2 (1984), 321–5.
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## CHINA: 1300–1900

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As Ch. 16 by Hilde De Weerdts has established, China by 1300 hosted several of the largest cities in the world, and was arguably the world's most urbanized society. These cities did not enjoy nor had they explicitly sought 'autonomy' from encompassing political regimes, but they did enjoy a modest amount of practical communal self-management. China's urban history under the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) empires continued these developments in particular ways. The spectacular commercialization of the countryside contributed to ongoing urbanization, but especially at the lower end of the urban hierarchy, with the proliferation and growth of market towns. The intensification of internal diasporas of local-origin groups involved in long-distance domestic trade led to more cosmopolitan urban populations, and contributed to innovations in urban culture. And the vastly more complex urban societies and economies led to a massive wave of both private and quasi-public association building, greatly enhancing urbanites' capacity for self-management, and ultimately contributing to the perceived irrelevance of the imperial state.

## PROLOGUE: EARLY MING

Modern Chinese nationalist metanarratives long depicted the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) as a black hole in Chinese history and a dramatic set-back in particular to the urban achievements of the Tang and Song. Recent work by Richard von Glahn and others, however, instead suggests growing urban prosperity through most of the 14th century. Cities, notably those along the coast, were stimulated in their development by Mongol policies unusually sympathetic to private wealth and encouraging of maritime trade. As von Glahn concludes, 'The real rupture in Jiangnan's urban and commercial development occurred not under the much-maligned Mongols... but rather after the restitution of autocratic rule in the early Ming.'<sup>1</sup>

The early Ming indeed constituted a critical setback for Chinese urban-commercial growth. The Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang (Ming Taizu) held great animus against the mercantile lineages of the lower Yangzi region, who had opposed his rise, and systematically destroyed them as soon as he was able, impressing their members into artisan or menial labour service. In 1371, he instituted a ban on maritime travel that, at least in the short term, severely constricted the trade along the coast and with South East Asia that had sustained many previously thriving coastal ports. The general practices of taxation in kind and in labour service offered active disincentive for commerce.

Early Ming society was minutely regulated. The population was divided into hereditary occupational groups, initially there were many of these (medical doctors, scholars, etc.), but they quickly reduced to three: soldiers (*junji*), artisans (*jiangji*), and other commoners (*minji*). Each of these were under the control of a separate central government agency, had distinct fiscal and labour service obligations, and were as much as possible residentially segregated. Although there was large-scale government relocation of the population, personal travel was largely prohibited. Commoners were assigned to small tax assessment and mutual responsibility groups under the *lijia* (canton)

system, which under normal conditions they were forbidden to leave. An exception was made for professional merchants, whose need to move goods around the empire was recognized but minutely monitored; away from home, they were required to stay and register at semi-governmental hostels, whose records were turned in monthly to the local official for inspection. Occupational and geographic mobility, in short, were prevented with reasonable success under the first several Ming reigns, and so too were market-driven commercial development and urbanization.<sup>2</sup>

The most significant urban innovation of the early Ming was the construction of its two imperial capitals, Nanjing and Beijing. There was nothing spontaneous about the growth of Ming Taizu's Nanjing. Within two decades following his first capture of the city in 1356, he transformed a modest Yuan prefectural seat of perhaps 100,000 persons into an imperial capital of a million or more. An army of builders under Taizu's command constructed a new palace city, Altars of Heaven and Earth, a temple to the imperial ancestors, and what remains today 'the largest space enclosed by a city wall, and the highest, longest, widest, firmest, and most impressive city wall in China.' The city was divided into an administrative grid of wards with residence assigned by occupation. The existing population, which had backed one of Taizu's competitors for power during the Yuan collapse, was deported to the malarial south-west, and a new population conscripted to take its place.

Early Ming Nanjing was dominated by a force of state employees that included 15,000 central government officials and clerks, some 8,500 stipended students, and as many as 200,000 soldiers. The mushrooming urban population was fed not primarily by the market but by commandist means; the surrounding lower Yangzi prefectures, among the most agriculturally productive in all the empire, were subjected to fiscal extraction that left even the wealthiest households in perpetual tax arrears that were still a problem for centuries thereafter. By the last century of Ming rule, Nanjing would re-establish itself as a major hub of interregional trade, and as a cultural and entertainment centre with its famous riverfront pleasure quarters of Qinhuai. But this was not evident under the prurient and anti-commercial Ming Taizu, whose new capital was a unifunctional garrison and administrative city on the ancient imperial model.<sup>3</sup>

Zhu Yuanzhang died in 1398, succeeded as emperor by his grandson. Almost immediately, however, Zhu's younger son began moving to usurp the throne from his nephew, and in 1402 successfully proclaimed himself the Yongle emperor. He then began plans to move his active seat of governance away from Nanjing, filled with enemies of his usurpation, north to the city that would become modern Beijing. Under the name Dadu this had served as the capital of the Yuan dynasty, and under Ming Taizu, as Yan, it had served as the future Yongle emperor's princely fief. After two decades of frenetic construction Yongle moved there in 1421, though Nanjing, with its wards half-vacant and its population dramatically reduced, remained officially the secondary 'southern' capital.<sup>4</sup>

Its setting allowed imperial Beijing to be laid out much more regularly on the squared-off classical model than had Nanjing, with a true north-south orientation along its central Imperial Way flanked by the Temples of Heaven and Agriculture, the palace located in the north-central section, and strict bilaterality. Every detail was carefully thought out to make it the cosmological *axis mundi*.<sup>5</sup> And yet, from the start Beijing was more an organic product of its environment than had been Taizu's Nanjing. Conscripted played a role in its population growth as capital, but voluntary urbanization seems to have been at least as important, and a far larger percentage of the city's existing elites and commoners remained after its designation as capital than had been the case in Nanjing. Taizu's Nanjing had been something of a multi-ethnic city (as much as a fifth of its population may have been Muslim) but Beijing, even after the removal of thousands of Mongol tents and their replacement by Chinese-style

courtyard townhouses, was genuinely multinational. And in spite of the key role of the Grand Canal in supplying lower Yangzi rice to feed the new capital's imperial clan, officials, and military, Beijing remained somewhat more tied in to north China's wider regional economy than had been the first Ming capital. Metropolitan demand for luxuries, coal, and building materials made Beijing something of an engine of growth. But given the continued enforcement of the Ming founder's commandist economic legislation, the advent of a genuine commercial 'revolution' would lag at least another century or so.

## THE SECOND COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

China's modern urban history—and, I would argue, Chinese early modernity—genuinely begins with what I have called the 'second commercial revolution', beginning in the mid-16th century and centred on the era nicely dubbed by one Chinese historian 'from Wanli (reigned 1573–1619) to Qianlong (1736–95)'. This second commercial revolution differed qualitatively from the first, under the Song. Among the key differences was the fact that whereas the first, although it pioneered long-distance interregional private commerce in a significant range of commodities, was essentially in luxury goods carried between urban centres, the second involved huge quantities of low value-per-bulk staples. Thus it deeply involved rural as well as urban populations: the average farm household in many areas of the empire began to produce for extra-regional markets and rely for basic consumption on goods produced extra-regionally. Regional commodity specialization emerged. And a far greater number of sojourners began routinely to move around the empire, not merely as merchants but also as the porters, carters, animal drivers, and boatmen involved in the greatly expanded transport labour force.

Why at this time? In part, it would seem that we see here merely a natural development and geographic extension of trends that were well underway before the imposition of the early Ming command economy, abetted by the dynasty's growing inability to enforce its restrictions on occupational and geographic mobility. But late Ming government policy also actively contributed to long-distance commercial development. For example, increasingly threatened by non-Chinese peoples on its north-west and northern frontiers, the Court sought to solve its logistical problems by commissioning private merchants to move large quantities of grain and war materiel from central China to the frontiers, offering them in recompense highly lucrative franchises in the interregional salt distribution network.

Stimulus also came from the massive introduction of New World silver. Beginning in the 16th century, Ming China became the great vacuum sucking in upwards of one-third of the silver from Mexico and Peru, in exchange for its exports of silk, porcelain, and other manufactured goods (and later tea) to Europe and North America; the lubricative impact of the silver influx on the empire's silver-based monetary economy was incalculable.<sup>6</sup> When the imperial government, beginning in the late Ming and incrementally into the mid-Qing, undertook the so-called 'Single Whip' fiscal reform, assessing the land and head tax in silver rather than kind, rural households had further positive incentive to shift from subsistence to cash crops, fuelling the rapidly expanding domestic interregional trade.

The leading sector of this interregional trade was cotton. As Philip Huang tersely notes, 'In 1350, no one in China wore cotton cloth; by 1850, almost every peasant did.'<sup>7</sup> The Yangzi delta, formerly the empire's breadbasket, rapidly transformed itself from a rice-surplus to a rice-deficit region as farm households switched from rice to cotton cultivation; by 1775 a provincial official estimated that

only around a quarter of the region's farm population grew any grain whatsoever. The region's cotton processing industries developed even more rapidly, by the Qing period necessitating further imports of raw cotton from new cultivation areas in north China and the middle Yangzi. Cotton required greater fertilization, eventually spawning an interregional coastal trade of soybean cake fertilizer from Manchuria. And the newfound need to feed non-food producers in the densely populated lower Yangzi turned regions ever further upriver, in Jiangxi, Hunan, and eventually Sichuan, into specialized producers of export rice.

By the 19th century, the central riverine entrepôt Hankou oversaw massive transshipments of rice, salt, beans, specialty foodstuffs, tea, medicinal herbs, raw cotton and silk, finished textiles, timber, animal hides, coal, copper and other metals, paper, and countless other goods, and hosted a sojourner population of extreme regional diversity. One hint of the interregional trade's impressive size is offered by the rice trade from Hankou to the Lower Yangzi, estimated at between 1 and 1.5 billion pounds per year by the 1730s.<sup>8</sup> By about 1800 over 10 per cent of the empire's rice, a quarter of its raw cotton, over half of its cotton cloth, more than 90 per cent of its raw silk, and nearly all of its tea and salt production was marketed rather than consumed by the producer household.<sup>9</sup> Even private maritime trade, generally prohibited by the Ming, was decisively encouraged in the wake of the Kangxi emperor's lifting of the last 'sea ban' in 1683, and favoured coastal ports including Shanghai—*well prior* to the 19th-century 'Western impact'—began to grow significantly.<sup>10</sup>

## URBANIZATION IN EARLY MODERN CHINA

As De Weerdts notes above, [Ch. 16](#), in 1977 G. William Skinner revolutionized our understanding of the urban system of late imperial China, demonstrating that China did not possess a single integrated urban hierarchy, but instead separate hierarchies contained within the empire's ten 'physiographic macroregions.' Over the early modern era, as the volume of commercialization and routine population movement intensified, this was reflected in the smoothing out of most macroregional rank-size curves. That is, smaller and mid-sized cities grew faster than did regional metropolises, as the regional markets in goods and urban hierarchies became more effectively integrated.<sup>11</sup> For a map of the principal urban centres see [Regional Map II.5](#).

As the command economy of the early Ming, under which urban elites were fed primarily by fiscal and rent extraction from the countryside, gave way to commercialized agriculture and marketized exchange between city and hinterland, the empire's largest cities tended to remain roughly the same size that they had been centuries earlier, but intermediary urban places such as county seats and non-administrative market towns, now charged with managing the market exchange between metropolis and hinterland, experienced growth in numbers, size, and prosperity. Periodic markets multiplied in rapidly commercializing regions such as Fujian, Hunan, Sichuan, and even the less commercialized North China Plain. Permanent market towns were newly founded as well, throughout the empire but nowhere more dramatically than in the Yangzi delta, which became effectively an 'urban region,' with no rural household more than a half-day's journey from a substantial market town. Such towns gradually developed more complex street plans, with neighbourhoods specialized by product, and populations growing to the tens of thousands. Late imperial Chinese urbanization, in other words, was nearly the inverse of that occurring in Western Europe, with the most dramatic action taking place at the lower levels of the urban hierarchy.

This in part reflected the differing nature of early modern population growth in Western Europe

versus the Qing empire. Both ends of the continent experienced newly accelerated growth, due in some measure to the introduction of New World crops—China’s population probably tripled over the course of the Qing. But whereas much of the European growth was observed in major cities (the result of migration from the overpopulated countryside), in China the areas experiencing greatest growth were peripheral rural ones, especially highlands and marshlands newly reclaimed for settlement. Since much of the agriculture in these areas was commercial from the outset, new small-scale marketing centres (*xiao shizhen*) were a necessary complement.<sup>12</sup>

## THE WESTERN IMPACT AND THE ‘RURAL–URBAN GAP’

Western merchants began to call at Chinese coastal cities in progressively greater numbers over the early and mid-Qing era, but after the 1760s were legally confined to Guangzhou (‘Canton’). This changed in the wake of the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, which ended the first Anglo-Chinese ‘Opium War’, and opened several cities farther north along the coast to Western trade and residence. Subsequent treaties progressively opened additional ports in north China and inland up the Yangzi River. The era of the ‘treaty port’ and the foreign ‘concession’ was born. After a period of experimentation with a range of ports, Shanghai emerged as the single most important entrepôt of Sino-Western trade and beachhead of Western influence in the empire. Its growth was phenomenal: by 1910, Shanghai’s population was 1.3 million, and it had really only begun its rise to the roughly 15 million it housed in the 1990s.

Extravagant claims were long advanced about the uniqueness of the treaty ports, especially Shanghai, within China’s urban history, and their transformative role in China’s ‘modernization’. These claims have been much qualified by more recent scholarship. The great sociologist Fei Xiaotong declared in 1953 that prior to its opening as a treaty port, Shanghai was ‘only a small fishing village occupying an insignificant role in the traditional economy’.<sup>13</sup> We now understand, to the contrary, that Shanghai had been a centre of the domestic interregional cotton trade since the Ming, a major trading partner of South East Asia and Japan, and location of a major maritime customs station after 1736. By the eve of its opening to the West, it already had a population of around 200,000, and probably managed a volume of shipping equal to or greater than that of London.

Socially and culturally, there is no question that the treaty ports did eventually come to host a new hybrid population and provide Western and Japanese cultural models of great significance. However, this too is subject to over-generalization. Prior to the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki which ended the Sino-Japanese War and first legalized the establishment of foreign industrial factories in open treaty ports, none of these ports other than Shanghai had foreign populations numbering much over a hundred. For another, the populations of these vital commercial cities were already highly hybridized, with highly diverse populations of Chinese from all parts of the empire, and this remained true during the era of opening to the West. Moreover, even the extreme case of Shanghai was not as extraneous as nativist writers would suggest; it was, rather, simply the latest incarnation of a particular segment of indigenous society—an ‘other China’—that had always been outward-looking and highly interactive with other global cultures.<sup>14</sup>

## URBAN SOCIETY

Who lived in early modern Chinese cities? The answer depended very much on the *type* of city we

are looking at. Since the marketing hierarchy only very imperfectly overlay the administrative hierarchy of county seat, provincial capital, and imperial capital, the population and social structure of a given central place varied systematically between a city like Kaifeng (a provincial capital of only localized commercial importance) and Shanghai (a modest county seat with very important domestic and maritime trade functions), or Nanjing (in which administrative and commercial functions were of relatively equal importance). Bureaucrats, sub-bureaucrats, and military were both more numerous and more socially important in the Kaifeng type of urban place than the Shanghai type. Moreover, while nearly all major late imperial cities were ports of some type, the port function, with its huge concentration of transport workers, was clearly more salient in a riverine transshipment point such as Chongqing (Sichuan), or a centre of maritime trade such as Xiamen (Fujian), than in other cities. There were also a number of specialized manufacturing cities, such as the ceramic factory city Jingdezhen (Jiangxi), the ironworking town Foshan (Guangdong), and the salt mining city Zigong (Sichuan). In the first decade of the 20th century, the advent of the railroad created new industrial cities such as Shijiazhuang (Hebei), along major railway lines.

Early modern Chinese cities were strikingly multi-ethnic, hosting multiple communities of more or less ‘foreign’ Chinese persons from diverse local cultural and linguistic areas. In important commercial centres such as Chongqing, Hankou, Jiujiang, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Foshan, there could be dozens or even scores of such local-origin communities represented. By law every late imperial subject had a registered native place (*hujia*), but under Qing at least this was no practical obstacle to sojourning behavior. Many commercial sojourners, indeed, had been born and lived all their lives in cities far from their registered native place. Identity of these sojourners tended to be nicely balanced between distant native place and their place of daily work and residence. Diaspora consciousness, moreover, could be strong, reinforced for example by opera troupes who travelled along circuits of commercial cities, performing operas on familiar local subjects in familiar dialects wherever they went. There were countless such commercial diasporas, the grandest of which were those from Huizhou (salt and rice dealers) and Shanxi (remittance bankers), later joined by tea dealers from Guangdong and Ningbo (Zhejiang), but also including merchants from Jiangxi, Hunan, and many other local areas.<sup>15</sup> Host cities, where these diasporic sojourner groups coexisted and routinely interacted, were truly cosmopolitan urban centres.

In some heavily commercial cities such as Guangzhou and Yangzhou, which also hosted long-standing concentrations of wealthy literati, the gentry/merchant status distinction remained significant; in other cities such as Hankou, where an indigenous literati was lacking, the merchants were essentially *the* urban elite.<sup>16</sup> Even among merchants, however, there was a long-term trend toward acquisition of classical education and, if only through marriage or one’s children, gentry status. By the latter 19th century in many commercial centres a hybrid ‘gentry-merchant’ (*shenshang*) class—perhaps best thought of as ‘businessmen’—had emerged.

Urban commoners—shopkeepers, petty traders, and artisans—formed the core population of most large cities. The latter could be impressively numerous: around 1750, for example, there were no fewer than 30,000 silk-weaving looms in operation in Nanjing. A wide range of handicraft trades was represented—over seventy have been counted in Suzhou alone. Every major city had its own range of widely marketed local speciality products. An energetic process of economic specialization and niche-seeking led to continual subdivision of artisanal enterprises, so that, for instance, Suzhou’s papermakers eventually divided themselves into eight discrete speciality trades.<sup>17</sup>

The intense commercialization of early modern China spawned a large urban proto-proletariat.



This group comprised both permanent local residents such as warehousemen, longshoremen, and intra-urban porters, and a transient population of boatmen, carters, and long-distance porters, who assembled in ‘people markets’ (*minshi*) in search of work. Both local and intercity transport workers were routinely organized into labour gangs (*bang*) recruited—typically from a common rural district—by a labour boss (*baotou*).

Major commercial cities were also home to a substantial and clearly growing underclass. Beggars were a long-standing feature of urban life; in the early modern period they were usually organized and sought their own exclusive turfs, just like other labourers, and often engaged in primitive protection rackets, avoiding shops and households that paid them off on a regular basis. Rural refugees from flood and famine periodically swelled the beggar population, and existed in an uneasy relationship with the permanent practitioners of this trade. While beggars and refugees were both male and female, and might live in familial circumstances, another underclass element was more troubling: the cities’ growing population of unmarried males, or ‘bare sticks’ (*guanggun*). In a society dominated by a familial ethos, the existence of these men was *prima facie* a threat. They derived basically from the unbalanced sex ratio of the society overall—a society which routinely practised female infanticide as a ‘preventive check’ on population growth—but they tended to congregate especially in cities.<sup>18</sup> In many cities their numbers grew dramatically in the third quarter of the 19th century. Chronically unemployed, these ‘toughs’ (*pigun*) were widely feared for their unaccountability (*wulai*) and for their love of intimidating other urban residents.

Urban neighbourhoods tended to combine commercial and residential functions; journeys to work were minimal. Beijing was known for its grand courtyard houses (*siheyuan*), fronting onto cramped and unimposing alleyways (*hutong*); in treaty-port Shanghai, much of the immigrant population lived in new-style tenement houses (*shikumen*); in more typical commercial cities, shophouses (*shifang*) with commercial space below and family space above were the norm. Neighbourhoods were often dominated by a single ethnic or occupational group, but, except for the shanty towns of rural refugees and ‘shed people’ (*pengmin*) on the urban perimeter, were usually mixed class. Neighbourhood solidarity could be strong; Lu Hanchao, in fact, convincingly depicts an ‘urban village’ effect even in late Qing Shanghai.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from escalating problems of crime and interpersonal violence, early modern Chinese cities were host to a rich repertoire of conflict and collective action. In lower Yangzi cities of the late Ming, including Nanjing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou, extremely complicated patterns of protest and violence resulted basically from the clumsy effort of the tottering Ming regime to impose new tax burdens and alleviate its own fiscal crises. These actions brought together urbanized lower gentry, shopkeepers, artisans, and even the military in uneasy alliances against privileged ‘patrician’ urbanites, the rural elite, and agents of the state. The most violent of these, in Hangzhou in 1582, saw crowds numbering in the thousands demolishing the walls and gates of the town and setting fire to marketplaces.<sup>20</sup>

The late Ming actions were striking in the way they united disparate elements in what seems to be a solidary expression of urban consciousness, vs. what Chinese Marxist scholars term the ‘feudal’ political-economic regime. If so, this did not continue into the Qing, when urban disorders were nearly always expressive of the interests of a particular social group within the city, and as often directed at other urban social elements as against the state. Artisans’ strikes were common, including those by mint workers at Beijing in 1742 and 1817, cloth calenderers at Suzhou in 1730, potters at Jingdezhen in 1736, and iron workers, timber workers, and weavers throughout the era. Merchants

struck on scores of occasions to protest against the imposition of new commercial taxes. At least a dozen boatmen's riots took place in commercial ports during the later 18th century.

But probably the most ubiquitous genre of urban collective action, in this era when urbanites increasingly relied on market purchase of staple food, was the rice riot. As in contemporaneous Western Europe, food riots had a 'moral economy' basis and a routinized style. Customary targets were government granaries and the warehouses of rice merchants; the actions were coercive and destructive, but not especially violent; local officials were frequently sympathetic and lenient with the rioters. Rice riots took place in many cities, especially throughout central China where the rice market was most developed; they occurred in cities of grain-importing regions like Jiangnan, but were most common in cities of rice-exporting regions such as Hunan, where the high prices offered by interregional exporters were seen as unfairly driving up prices for local consumers. Rice protests clustered temporally in periods of unusually rapid population growth and commercialization, such as the 1740s, and in periods of state breakdown, such as the early 20th century.<sup>21</sup>

Arrayed against the chronic threat of violence, in cities other than the well-policed imperial capital of Beijing, were a very thin layer of local constables (*baojia*) and a handful of imperial soldiers assigned to the local administrative office. Early modern Chinese cities were remarkably under-policed, and local law and order in peacetime was left largely to volunteer militia and hired guards in the hands of the urban population itself.

## URBAN CULTURE

Despite the arguments of some earlier scholars,<sup>22</sup> the culture of early modern Chinese cities differed dramatically from that of the countryside, and urban populations were highly conscious and proud of this difference. Ming-Qing cities were replete with sites of sociability and cultural expression, many of which, including the streets themselves, were open-air. Not only local residents taking the air and conversing, but also hawkers and peddlers, street singers, puppeteers, medicine shows, and martial arts displays vied for space in the street. In the residential neighbourhoods of Shanghai, 'tiger-stove' shops that opened onto the street, dispensing boiled water and other daily necessities, were gathering places for the exchange of gossip. Temple fairs, while common to both town and country, were much more bustling and elaborate in the larger cities, with active guild participation and provision of wider ranges of non-local exotic goods.<sup>23</sup>

But the most characteristic site of sociability was the teahouse. Teahouses existed as early as the Tang, at least in the imperial capitals, but proliferated greatly in the more commercialized and urbanized late imperial era. Like the London coffeehouse or public house, they were a distinctively early modern urban institution. In major Qing cities there was a teahouse on nearly every street, numbering in the hundreds. The teahouse was the centre of a wide range of communications and social relationships. They served as headquarters of numerous semi-formal social organizations: poetry clubs, protolabour unions, chapters of 'secret societies'. They served as business offices for merchants, landlords, doctors, and scribes, as well as purveyors of services such as barbers and ear-wax removers. Teahouses hosted elaborate rituals of dispute resolution, known as 'tea debates' (*jiangcha*), with dozens of participants on either side, witnesses called in sequence, and sometimes adjudication by the teahouse proprietor—often as not ending in a brawl.

Teahouses were venues of entertainment. Chengdu's teahouse waiters, with their distinctive patten and long-spouted teapots, were elaborate showmen. The teahouse was a site for gambling over bird

fights and other competitive events, and a stage for professional drum-singers and storytellers; in some cities, specialized ‘storyhouses’ (*shuchang*) emerged out of these. Teahouses often doubled as bathhouses or as venues for opera performances.<sup>24</sup>

Qing cities were the great gestation ground for Chinese opera. In major commercial centres such as Yangzhou, wealthy merchants competed in sponsoring their own troupes, which performed in guildhalls for large and disparate urban audiences. Temple courtyards hosted open-air performances on the feast days of their deities. In the 18th century, under princely sponsorship, these lower Yangzi operatic traditions were drawn together in the capital to emerge as what we know today as ‘Beijing opera’ (*jingxi*). In Guangzhou, four grand opera theatres were constructed in 1891, by merchants copying the model of theatres built three decades earlier by fellow Cantonese in San Francisco’s Chinatown.<sup>25</sup>

Early modern Chinese cities were also centres of the sex trade. Especially in maritime and river ports, there was a minutely graded spectrum of prostitutes, from desperate streetwalkers to the most refined courtesans. The latter, like the better-known Japanese geisha, were not merely seductive, but also accomplished in music and literature. The empire’s most celebrated pleasure quarters migrated slowly, from Nanjing’s Qin-Huai riverbank in the late Ming, to the painted canal boats of Yangzhou in the mid-Qing, to booming Shanghai in the late 19th century. These centres of courtesan culture attracted male tourists from all over, who engaged in elaborate courtship rituals with their famous inhabitants, which in the opinion of some scholars contributed to a new vogue of companionate marriage among males who wanted their spouses to offer the same cultivated pleasures they found in courtesans. A large and profoundly ambivalent popular literature sprang up around the pleasure quarters.<sup>26</sup>

But perhaps the most distinguishing cultural feature of early modern Chinese cities, in contrast to those of earlier periods, was the ubiquity of print. Functional literacy rose dramatically in this period, and this rise was very largely an urban phenomenon, spreading down the social scale to include ‘petty urbanites’ (*xiao shimin*), female as well as male. One index of this was the rapid proliferation of shops selling eyeglasses in the 18th century. A new commercial publishing industry emerged, dealing in a wide range of new genres and inexpensive editions that served a new middle-brow reading public. Through such intermediaries as professional scribes, storytellers, and public lecturers, this new print culture interfaced with and enriched the older oral culture. A variety of new white-collar professions on the fringe of literati society emerged in the process: editors, proofreaders, and blurb writers. The stuff of this new print culture included popular romantic, pornographic, and martial arts fiction, but also a plethora of cheap how-to books: crib-books for the civil service examinations, handbooks on the conduct of weddings and funerals, chapbooks, manuals of model contracts, merchant and tourist route guides, art collectors’ handbooks, do-it-yourself medical texts, sex manuals, sectarian religious scriptures, ledgers for recording daily merits and demerits, and so on. The commercialization and democratization of these realms, taken altogether, had monumental implications for the development of late imperial culture, society, and even politics.

Related to the rise of urban literacy was that of commercial advertising, and with that of a new, highly fashion-conscious, consumer culture. Trademarks and brand names proliferated; shop signs, while around since the Tang, added written characters and were joined by welcoming couplets tacked to shop doors; ‘encyclopaedias for daily use’ (*riyong leishu*) explained and promoted the speciality goods from other localities now available in each city. In the later 19th century the advent of the journalistic press greatly expanded the reach of advertisers. Fashions in women’s clothing, hairstyles,

and cosmetics succeeded each other in lower Yangzi cities ‘with dizzying rapidity’, while distinctive styles from such fashion centres as Suzhou and Yangzhou competed with each other within the broader regional market.<sup>27</sup>

## ASSOCIATION-BUILDING IN EARLY MODERN CHINESE CITIES

The combination of increased population pressure and an expanding structure of economic opportunity made early modern Chinese cities intensely competitive environments. One response—and I would suggest the emblematic social trend of the entire period—was the pursuit of solidarity via a creative and expansive process of association-building, across a wide range of functional areas. Most central of course was the kinship group or lineage. Although lineage organizations were usually centred in market towns or in the countryside, kinship ties were critical in many aspects of city life. Kin groups underwent a very creative process of organizational innovation during the early modern era, and almost certainly this provided the model for expansive association-building in various areas of urban life.

Larger scale business enterprises were one example. The typical retail store remained a small mom-and-pop operation, but huge family enterprises like Hankou’s Yekaitai Medicine Store expanded greatly through the establishment of chains of branches, each managed by lineage member households. In 1863 the Meng family of traditional textile merchants opened the huge dry-goods emporium Ruifuxiang at Beijing’s main commercial intersection, eventually adding more than fifty branch stores in cities like Tianjin, Harbin, Suzhou, and Hangzhou. Unprecedentedly large handicraft workshops (*zuofang*) appeared in a wide range of products, with individual artisans concentrated under a single entrepreneur, who supplied their raw materials and paid them piece-work for their output; Suzhou, for instance, had more than 450 cloth dyeshops, averaging around two dozen workers apiece.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of a robust commercial credit market or an established company law, creative ways were found to accumulate business capital. In the salt-mining town of Zigong, entrepreneurs built upon a highly refined regime of written contracts, mobilized private capital via lineage trusts (*tang*) to create partnerships of great scale and flexibility, set up centralized management bureaus to oversee diverse operations, and, through interlocking investments, achieved remarkable vertical integration of supply chains, stages of production, and networks of marketing.<sup>29</sup>

Surplus males without the benefit of domestic or kinship ties formed associations of their own, in brotherhoods and gangs that we sometimes refer to as ‘secret societies’. Bachelor participants in the steady migration to Taiwan and the south-east coast, in large part to defend their interests vs. organized lineage groups, formed a loose federation of lodges known as the Heaven and Earth Society, or Triads, carving out niches for themselves as salt and opium smugglers, and eventually dominating the underworld of Guangzhou and other south-eastern cities. An offshoot of the Triads, the Society of Elder Brothers (Gelaohui) similarly ran the rackets of Chengdu and other upper Yangzi cities. Boatmen carrying tribute grain along the Yangzi and the Grand Canal formed mutual-nurturance labour gangs with hostels in each major port along the way; gradually adding a folk-Buddhist overlay, they morphed into the Green Gang (Qingbang), controlling both the crime and the police force of 20th-century Shanghai.<sup>30</sup>

Other urban social organizations centred on more orthodox religious practice. Towns and cities of any scale had anywhere between a handful and many score of neighbourhood temples. Managed by boards of trustees and with assets invested in local markets and real estate, these temples held

processions on their annual feast day, during which their chief deity left his or her place on the altar and progressed (*xun*) on a sedan-chair around the perimeter of the parish. Usually these feast days were synchronized, so that curious urban residents could attend many of them according to an annual schedule. There was usually also a larger temple, typically that of the ‘city god’, whose parish was the municipality as a whole, and the directors of whose temple association were drawn in rotation from the boards of the larger neighbourhood temples. The organizational hierarchy was cemented by the deities of the smaller temples paying annual calls to be reconsecrated by ‘passing through the incense’ of the larger temple. In times of local stress, such as epidemic or warfare, the directors of all the city’s temples might unite to organize a mass parade of exorcism (*jiao*) to protect the city against the onslaught of demons and hungry ghosts.<sup>31</sup> Another type of religious organization was the pilgrimage association (*xianghui*), formed by urban residents to visit famous temples in the city’s surrounding hills; for the pilgrims, frequently women, these events combined piety and recreation, and teahouses and souvenir stands grew up along the routes.<sup>32</sup>

Communities of sojourners in early modern cities set up local origin clubs (*huiguan*) in their host communities. The first of these were established by examination candidates in the imperial capital of Beijing, but, with the proliferation of commercial diasporas in the late Ming and Qing, such clubs were more commonly set up by merchants. As such, they overlapped with the older institution of the commercial or artisanal guild (*hang*), a familiar feature of major Chinese cities since the late Tang. Commercial entrepôts of the Qing era invariably hosted many guilds, some more than a hundred. In cities like Shanghai, Hankou, and Chongqing smaller components often amalgamated into large umbrella organizations—numerous common-trade guilds linked into an overarching common-origin club (say, the ‘Cantonese Guild’), or vice versa. Over time more stratified guilds such as those of brokers (vs. wholesale dealers or retail shopkeepers) or of journeymen (vs. master artisans) also appeared. Guilds had a broad range of functions, both economic (regulating entry into the trade, setting standards and prices, making the local market in a given commodity) and more broadly social, cultural, and religious. They were financed by subscription of the members, but some also had wide-ranging financial interests in markets, piers, shops, and other urban rental property.<sup>33</sup>

If guilds were the most powerful socio-economic organizations in most early modern cities, potentially the most politically significant were charitable enterprises. The modern history of urban charity in China begins with clubs of like-minded ‘philanthropists’ (*zishan ren*) in lower Yangzi cities of the 16th and early 17th centuries, sometimes specifically for the attainment of Buddhist merit by the donors by purchasing and releasing birds and small animals (*fangsheng hui*), but sometimes for a broader range of largely symbolic good deeds (*tongshan hui*). During the Qing, especially under the Yongzheng emperor in the second quarter of the 18th century, the state regained the initiative in popular nurturance, mobilizing local elites in the establishment of orphanages (*yuying tang*) and poorhouses (*puji tang*) in every county seat, financed by a mix of private contribution and ‘public’ funding (*gongfei*). Even here, however, the size of the institutions relative to the magnitude of the need suggests that the intent was more exemplary than pragmatic.

This changed over the course of the 19th century, when the renewed weakness of the imperial administration and the manifest need for provision of social services in larger and more complex cities led to a wave of philanthropic entrepreneurship. Initially there was a wide variety of specialized institutions: waste-paper collection agencies and virtuous widow homes, bureaus to bury unclaimed corpses, lifeboat agencies, gruel kitchens, and so on. But by the 1830s and 1840s in many cities, and in many others in the wake of the mid-century rebellions, these various functions were

merged into a new kind of charitable institution, the ‘benevolent hall’ (*shantang*). In Hankou there were at least thirty-five neighbourhood-based benevolent halls in operation by the 1890s. In their mature heyday, *shantang* were broadly multifunctional, managed by paid professionals, and financed by a combination of subscription by neighbourhood businesses and urban and rural property endowments.<sup>34</sup>

## THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN LATE QING CITIES

Observing the proliferation of numbers and types of voluntary associations in cities over the course of the late imperial era, and their assumption of an ever greater range of quasi-governmental social service functions, some historians came to see in this the rise of a distinctively Chinese ‘public sphere’ (for a comparative discussion of the public sphere see below, Ch. 23). This conceptual leap was encouraged by noting the increasing use in early modern Chinese discourse of the word *gong* (public), as opposed to both *guan* (governmental) and *si* (private), to describe new arenas of elite activism.<sup>35</sup> While there has been a scholarly reaction against the invocation of this Habermasian term to describe Chinese realities, there *was* an undeniable acceleration in the assumption of urban public service functions by ostensibly non-governmental organizations in the empire’s final half-century. These activities were increasingly functionally encompassing and municipality-wide. An early example came in the iron-working city of Foshan, where a collegial body of local literati in the late 18th century set up a *de facto* town hall adjacent to a major downtown temple. These notables acted with local government acquiescence, but not in the name of the state, and without state financial support. The range of ‘public affairs’ (*gongshi*) in which they engaged included running schools and a municipal granary. Funding for these activities came from fees they imposed on the city’s wharfs, and from a profitable ferry service. In the Shandong treaty port of Yantai, a single city-wide benevolent hall was constructed in 1889 on the basis of public subscription.<sup>36</sup>

In times of local crisis, a city’s guilds or local origin clubs could act collectively with great initiative, assuming at least for the moment unequivocal governmental functions. In Chongqing (Sichuan), in the face of a Taiping rebel assault that caused the local officials to flee, an ad hoc alliance of eight extra-provincial commercial guilds undertook comprehensive governance of the city; two decades later, the same guild alliance ransomed the city from bombardment by French gunboats following the murder of a French missionary. The Qing’s final decade was marked by an ever more formal institutionalization of city-wide extra-bureaucratic ‘public’ management, culminating in the founding of the Shanghai City Council in 1905, an organization led by the heads of the Chamber of Commerce and the city’s leading guilds. This was ‘urban autonomy’ with little ambiguity about it.

## SOME CONCLUDING COMPARISONS

By the close of our period of study, Qing China enjoyed an extraordinarily developed commercial economy, and a sophisticated urban politics and culture. And yet it was still primarily an agrarian society. G. William Skinner estimates that in 1893, at the close of our period, there were 877 cities of 4,000 or more inhabitants, an overall urbanization rate of between 5 and 7 per cent of the empire’s population.<sup>37</sup> This rate was far lower than that of Europe, where, according to Andrew and Lynn Hollen Lees, 14.5 per cent of the population in 1800 lived in towns and cities of 5,000 or more, shooting up to a remarkable 43.8 per cent in 1910. This discrepancy reflected not a small urban

population in China (Skinner puts this at more than 23.5 million in 1893), but rather the fact that China's phenomenal early modern population growth had occurred less in cities than in the countryside, in marginal lands newly developed for agriculture, and in small market towns. Indeed, the urbanization rate in Tang and Song China was very likely higher than that in 1893.

As James McClain underlines (below, [Ch. 18](#)), urban form and function in Ming and Qing China and Tokugawa Japan were distinctly different. Both empires hosted very large capital cities (Beijing and Nanjing, Edo and Kyoto), and both were strewn with a mesh of smaller administrative places (county seats in bureaucratic China and castle towns in feudal Japan). But beyond these similarities the higher level of agrarian commercialization in China created an urban system in far different ways than Japan. Osaka, an overgrown castle town, completely dominated Japan's national market in rice and cotton, within what was largely a command economy, whereas in China there were numerous regional metropolises within which market exchange vied with administration for functional primacy, as well as some very large commercial and industrial cities which performed no administrative functions whatsoever.

More politically decentralized than either China or Japan, Europe basically lacked the mesh of administrative cities common to East Asian societies (cathedral towns within the ecclesiastical hierarchy played this role only to a lesser extent). Until the rise of national states and what Bas van Bavel and his colleagues (below, [Ch. 21](#)) call 'the capital city effect', political authorities played less of a role in determining the urban system than in China. Rather, in Western Europe—like China but unlike Japan—trade, especially water-borne trade, was the major driver of urban development. The largest cities in early modern Europe tended to be those linked to overseas trade (Venice, Amsterdam, London); this was not the case in China—that is, until the phenomenal growth of Shanghai in the later 19th century.

And yet, cities of early modern Western Europe, Japan, and China displayed many common features. Culturally, consciousness of urban difference from the countryside increased in all three. In all three societies, rising literacy and the 'print revolution' gave birth to the novel and to various kinds of how-to manuals, while sites of sociability such as the coffeehouse and teahouse flourished, and the theatre enjoyed a great efflorescence. Geographic mobility accelerated (more in Europe and China than in Japan), urban sojourning and transiency became more routine, social organization became more complex and finely articulated, and associations of urbanites greatly expanded their range of self-nurturance tasks. To this extent, early modern urbanism was indeed a Eurasian, if not global, phenomenon.

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# JAPAN'S PRE-MODERN URBANISM

JAMES MCCLAIN

IN the summer of 1590, the great warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu moved a vanguard of samurai regiments into the expansive Kanto Plain, the most fertile rice producing area in Japan. There, on the site of a small fishing village situated on the innermost reaches of Edo Bay, Ieyasu established a fortress-residence. A decade later, in 1603, the Heavenly Sovereign, whose family had reigned as Japan's monarchs since the mid-7th century, appointed Ieyasu to the office of shogun, a position that delegated to him (and his family successors) governing responsibilities over the country, as well as the specific tasks of maintaining law and order and overseeing the samurai class. His family's future secure, Ieyasu eventually settled his entire army of warrior followers—tens of thousands in number—around his castle residence. As merchants and artisans moved into the community to tend to the needs of the military estate, the small town of Edo grew into a metropolis of well over 1 million people, becoming by 1700 the world's largest city, and the forerunner of modern Tokyo.

The emergence of Edo as a major conurbation was not a singular event. Across Japan in the decades marking the turn into the 17th century, powerful regional lords—daimyo—were constructing their own fortress-residences. Those warrior leaders, approximately 220–250 in number at any given moment, possessed lands that covered about three-quarters of the country, swore oaths of allegiance to the Tokugawa military hegemon, and agreed to administer their territories in accordance with broad policy dictates laid down by the shogunate. Soon, those daimyo headquarters, like Edo, became the nuclei for vibrant communities composed of samurai, merchant, and artisan neighbourhoods. Their growth ignited one of the world's great urban revolutions. In the brief span of years between 1580 and 1610, nearly half of today's largest cities came into existence as castle towns—from Sendai in the north, to Kanazawa and Nagoya in central Japan, and on to Hiroshima and Kumamoto in the south and west (see [Regional Map II.5](#)).

The size of the castle towns was as impressive as their numbers; approximately 140 boasted populations of at least 5,000 persons, and the giants Kanazawa and Nagoya topped the 100,000 mark (as did Edo, the imperial city of Kyoto, and the commercial city of Osaka). By 1700, when the process of castle-town construction had run its full course, only the Netherlands and England–Wales had urban densities as great as Japan. It was a remarkable century of urban growth, and the new urbanity both drew deeply from the lessons of the past and provided enduring legacies for future Japanese, well into the modern epoch.

## CONTOURS OF THE PAST

Despite the startling dimensions of Japan's 17th-century urbanization, not everything in the early modern urban experience was new. Nor, of course, were cities themselves. In the middle of the 7th century, the so-called Sun Line, a powerful clan located in central Japan, subdued its rivals and proclaimed the Taika Reform Edict asserting dominion over the Japanese islands. In subsequent decades, successive heads of that lineage redefined themselves as the Heavenly Sovereign,

commissioned a mytho-history that testified to the family's divine origins, established central and provincial bureaucracies to extend imperial authority across the land, called into being an aristocracy to staff the new offices, issued legal codes and tax decrees, and built a capital to serve as the headquarters for the new government. After early attempts at urban construction in the Asuka valley and at Nara proved too confining, the Heavenly Sovereign in 794 created an expansive, and permanent, community that he named Heian-kyō, the Capital of Tranquility and Peace, the city that later became known as Kyoto.

From its inception, Kyoto was designed to make physically manifest the pretensions of the Heavenly Sovereign. Following Chinese models, planners laid out a grid of grand east–west avenues intersected by north–south streets and reserved a generously proportioned enclosure in the north of the city to house a bureaucratic compound and imperial residence (the better to enjoy the warm sunlight streaming from the auspicious south). Around that palace site, the Heavenly Sovereign allotted residential tracts to his service aristocracy and laid out a scenic garden for strolling and entertainments. In the southern quarter of the city, he erected the imposing Rashōmon entrance gate that opened onto Suzaku Ōji, the 300-foot wide central axis that ran 2.5 miles to the palace compound, underwrote the construction of two towering guardian temples, and provided for the establishment of marketplaces. A 9th-century lyrical poem captured the grandeur of early imperial Kyoto: ‘Light green they shine; Dark green they shine; Stretching into the distance as far as the eye can see; They glitter like jewels. Oh, how they glitter—those low-hanging boughs; Of the willows of Suzaku Ōji.’<sup>1</sup> In subsequent centuries, Kyoto would experience its ups and downs, just as the imperial line itself would relish moments of shining brilliance and suffer the despair of near poverty. Whatever the vicissitudes of time, however, Kyoto would stamp upon Japan's urban history an enduring legacy—that political elites could endeavour to design cities that expressed their claims to power and authority.

Kyoto also became Japan's leading centre of economic consumption and production. Throughout the medieval period, from the end of the 12th century through much of the 16th, Kyoto's population probably fluctuated between 100,000 and 150,000 persons. Typically, about 10,000 of these were members of the extended imperial family and the socially prominent aristocratic households; roughly 30,000 (or even double that number upon occasion) were the warriors (and their families and attached service personnel) who were entrusted with maintaining law and order, even as they increasingly encroached upon the civil administrative prerogatives first exercised by the nobility; and another 10,000 or so were Buddhist priests and nuns. This multiple-layered urban elite, in turn, depended on farmers who tended gardens within the city for fresh vegetables and fruits and on local artisans and merchants to produce and distribute the manufactured goods—clothing, footwear, bedding, dishes, combs, needles, brooms, lamp oil, saké, soy sauce, and so forth—that were essential to daily life. On a somewhat different level of production, highly skilled artisans proudly turned out a variety of luxury items for the city's privileged classes: crowns, silk robes, folding fans, fixtures for Buddhist altars, richly textured paper for calligraphy and ink drawings, and implements for use in the tea ceremony.

During the medieval period, most notably from the 14th century onward, an increasing number of towns began to dot the Japanese mapboard. Strung necklace-like around Kyoto were satellite communities—Sakai, Ōyamazaki, and Hiranogō quickly come to mind—that provided supplemental

goods and services to the capital's residents, including textiles, Buddhist icons, and lumber, as well as commodities (medicines, paintings, religious texts, incense, and fragrances) acquired from Chinese and Korean sources. Further afield were local towns that often specialized in particular products (processed seafood, dried fruits and vegetables, salt, and lacquerware), which were then distributed through marketing centres and ports (notably Obama on the Sea of Japan, Onomichi overlooking the Inland Sea, and Hakata on the coast of Kyushu) that functioned as important nodes in the emerging nationwide commodity trade. Interspersed among the commercial settlements were religious communities (Tennōji near Kyoto and Zenkōji in mountainous north-central Japan are prominent examples) that grew up in front of important regional shrines and temples to provide food, lodging, and other services to hearty, wayfaring pilgrims. In all, twoscore or more communities boasted populations of at least 10,000 persons in the early 16th century, and the largest among them (Tennōji and Hakata) were three times that size.

In the late medieval period, the commoner populations of numerous towns and cities forged another legacy: the self-management of urban affairs. Kyoto itself was scarred by violence in the late 15th century; most notably in the 1460s and 1470s when tens of thousands of warriors battled each other in the city's streets. 'Across our charred land,' one person wrote, 'all human traces have been extinguished. For blocks on end, birds are the sole sign of life.'<sup>2</sup> In response, ordinary residents began to gather themselves into communal organizations known as *machi*, a neighbourhood grouping of households that faced each other along the opposite sides of a street. In turn, *machishū*, the merchant and artisan residents of those dual-natured social and topographical neighbourhoods (perhaps as many as 200 in the 1530s), assumed responsibility for crime prevention, the resolution of civil discord (marital infidelity, commercial disagreements, and so forth), fire-fighting duties, the disposal of sewage and garbage, mutual aid in case of illness or when some unexpected crisis struck a member household, and even self-defence as the structures of state authority atrophied over the course of the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

Kyoto was not unique. At the turn of the 16th century, self-governing bodies appeared across Japan—in Uji and Yamada in the capital region, Ōminato near Ise Shrine, Hyōgo on the Inland Sea, and Hakata in Kyushu, to name just a few. In all those towns, leading citizens (moneylenders, saké brewers, and shipping agents who transported rice and other commodities from the countryside into Japan's urban centres) constituted themselves as councils of elders to oversee local affairs. Documents tell us most about the city of Sakai. Located on the shore of Osaka Bay not far distant from Kyoto, Sakai emerged during the late 15th century as a leading centre of ironwork and textile production and as an important entrepôt for trade with China and mainland Asia. By the 1530s, almost all of its 40,000 or so residents earned a living through commercial enterprises (and a significant number were among the wealthiest individuals in the country). Moreover, contemporary European observers sometimes hailed this maritime city as kin to the autonomous urban polities of Europe. Jesuit travellers were among the first to deploy this image; in a letter dated 17 August 1561, the Portuguese Jesuit, Gaspar Vilela wrote 'Sakai is a large city and there are many powerful merchants. It is governed by the consuls like Venice.'<sup>3</sup>

Vilela, unfortunately, did not specify exactly what he meant by the term merchant consuls. Nonetheless, the first reliable account of the city in Japanese, dated to the 1480s, contains publicly issued legal notices, thus suggesting that the city had a governing council.<sup>4</sup> By the 1530s, a generation

before Vilela set foot in Japan, Sakai was divided into about ten *machi*, each administered by an oligarchy of powerful neighbourhood merchants. Above that, a representative council of wealthy townsmen known as the *egōshū* (literally, ‘the group that meets together’) had begun to exercise self-declared responsibility for pan-community affairs such as tax collection, the preservation of law and order, the regulation of markets, the mediation of local disputes, the construction and maintenance of public works, and the sponsorship of local religious festivals.

Understandably, modern-day historians grew intrigued with the possible historical significance implied by the simultaneous appearance of supposed urban independence in late-medieval Japan and Europe.<sup>5</sup> As comparative questions entered the scholarly discourse, Japanese scholars found themselves facing a welter of perplexing issues. In the first place, they had to contend with a confusing variety of European examples, ranging from apparently sovereign municipalities such as the city-state of Venice that Vilela had famously evoked, to ‘chartered’ settlements such as Lucerne and the Westphalian towns of Dortmund, Minden, and Münster, and then on to municipalities like Marseille in the late 16th century, where civil war had weakened the crown before a new overlord, Henry IV, reasserted outside control. Second, the need to devise new analytical vocabulary in Japanese complicated attempts at historical analysis. As debates unfolded, *jiyū*, typically rendered as ‘free’ and ‘freedom’ in modern translation, was applied to city-states, whereas *jichi*, even in Japanese a vexingly ambiguous term, was deployed to cover the remaining multitude of urban experiences, from chartered to ‘self-governing’ and ‘self-managed’. Finally, the notion that Europe ought to be held up as the ‘norm’, as the standard, even universal, pattern against which other traditions ought to be measured, weighed increasingly heavily on scholarly debates.<sup>6</sup>

In the end, the frustration of ambiguous terminology, the competing array of European examples, and the oppressive burden of the European experience made it difficult to locate Japanese and Western communities in the same historical orbit. Eventually, a general consensus emerged that Japanese town councils did not challenge traditional structures of governance; Japanese burghers continued to pay taxes to the imperial court or levies to locally powerful military overlords, basically in exchange for being left alone to manage their own internal affairs. Consequently, Japanese merchants never set themselves the task of obtaining charters or constructing city-states that would confirm their complete independence from outside authority. Thus, it is perhaps most appropriate in the Japanese case to speak of ‘self-management’ and ‘self-governance’ rather than ‘autonomy’ or ‘free cities’. Nevertheless, the appearance of local self-rule by commoners in the late medieval period, taken within the context of Japanese history itself and free from the obligation of outside comparison, did establish another important legacy for the subsequent development of Japanese cities as we shall see next.

## EARLY MODERN EDO: THE PHYSICALITY

Tokugawa Ieyasu was conversant with the contours of the Japanese past. When he first moved into the Edo region, he constructed a military citadel, a strongpoint defensible against outside attack. After the Heavenly Sovereign appointed him as shogun in 1603, Ieyasu then set about designing a city that additionally could house Japan’s new administrative headquarters and pay homage to his *de facto* position as the country’s day-to-day ruler. Just as Kyoto had embodied the Heavenly Sovereign’s exulted claim to occupy the legitimizing apex of Japanese political culture, Ieyasu intended Edo

physically to represent his pretensions to power, to rule in the here and now.

Edo Castle, expansive and magnificent in design, served as the geographic and psychological lynchpin for the new community. In a remarkable engineering feat, during the decades that bridged the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th, Ieyasu's construction teams (at times numbering tens of thousands of conscripted workers) levelled hills to fill in low-lying areas near Edo Bay, quarried massive granite boulders from Izu Peninsula nearly ninety miles away and transported them by barge to the construction site to erect impregnable walls, and redirected rivers to form a system of protective concentric moats. Internally, Ieyasu's designers divided the castle into several discrete citadels, each protected by its own moats, walls, and gates. Those sanctuaries provided space for bureaucratic offices as well as storehouses for weapons and the supplies necessary to withstand any possible siege. A central enceinte, known as *honmaru* and located at the secure heart of the castle complex, served as the residence for the shogun and his extended family.

When completed, Edo Castle dominated its surroundings. Its massive stone walls soared more than fifty feet into the air and stretched along a perimeter nearly eleven miles in length. A great five-tiered donjon rose up from the inner complex. Visible from miles around, that great keep stood as a symbol of the strength and majesty of the regime. For those privileged enough to enter the castle grounds, graceful bridges, and landscaped gardens, purportedly laid out by the famous tea master and garden designer Kobori Enshū, delighted the eye.

Ieyasu and the sons who succeeded him also imposed a particular design on the warrior neighbourhoods around the castle. To begin with, the shoguns provided residential plots for their own direct vassals to the west and north of the castle. Locating those several thousand trusted vassals on that fan-like wedge of land provided a wall of defence against possible attack from the Musashi Plain, a point of natural vulnerability. By the 1630s, the Tokugawa shogunate had imposed the 'alternate residence system' on the regional daimyo. Each of the 200 and more regional lords had to spend every other year in Edo and, additionally, each had to leave permanently his principal wife and heirs in the city as hostages. To this end, the shogun assigned land immediately east of the main gate to Edo Castle, a location of considerable prestige, to the most loyal of those daimyo, the so-called 'allied lords' who also held bureaucratic appointments in the shogunate. Finally, the shogunate provided the remaining daimyo, the less-trusted 'outside lords', with plots somewhat more distant from the citadel; still, this was choice land on the sunny slopes of the hillsides that rolled away to the south of the castle.<sup>7</sup> Historians have conceptualized this as a deliberate pattern, a 'spiral', intentionally designed to station samurai in a configuration that protected the city while acknowledging the prestige and authority of the regional lords.<sup>8</sup>

As should be expected, the shogunate also invested enormous sums to provide an infrastructure that would permit the warrior class to enjoy life on their Edo estates. Engineers, for instance, diverted rivers and drew water from the suburban Inokashira Pond to provide drinking water for the warrior spiral. Then, as the city's population expanded in the 1650s, the shogunate constructed a complex set of canals, sluices, and underground conduits to carry water from sources more than thirty miles outside the city.<sup>9</sup>

## Ō-EDO, MERCHANTS' EDO

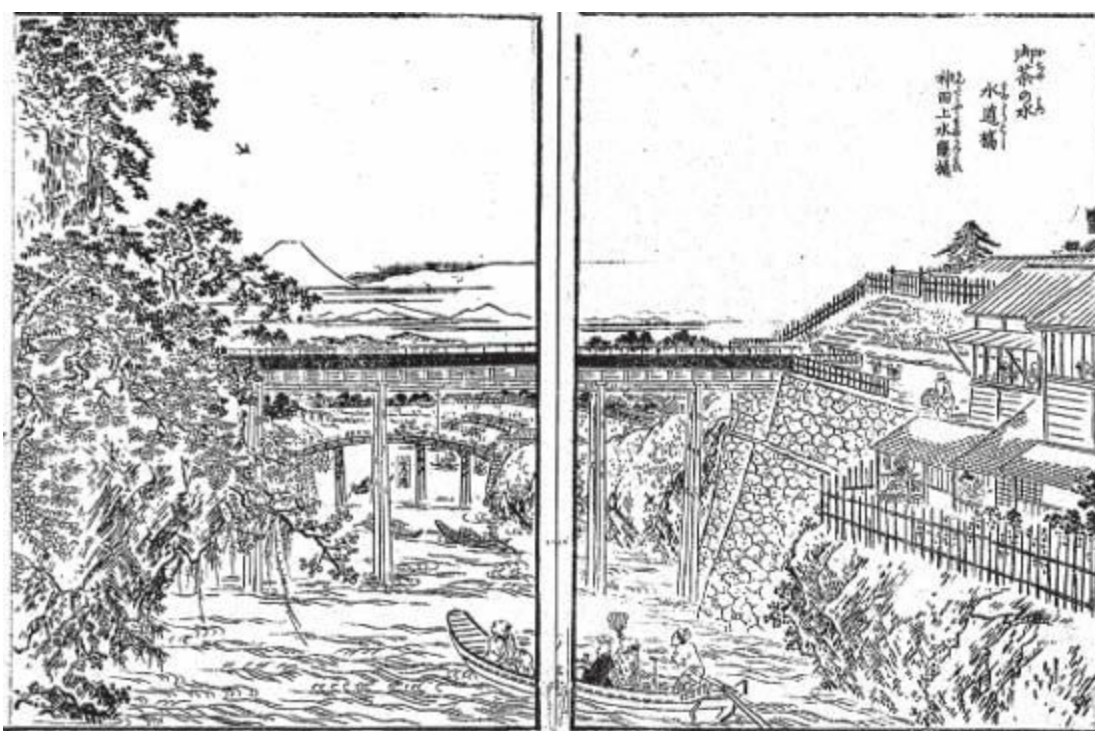
Although the initial shogunal efforts to construct Edo and shape its physical contours brought into

being a privileged urban warrior class, by the early 18th century as many—indeed, countless more—commoners lived in Edo as did samurai. The shogunate's initial decision to locate its vassal warriors in Edo and its requirement that regional lords maintain residences in the city created a core population of perhaps 500,000 persons. Those samurai needed food, building materials, clothing—everything under the sun. So, too, did the warrior populations of Japan's castle towns. The enormous consumption demands generated by the urban samurai across the country touched off a commercial revolution that stimulated the production and distribution of commercial goods on an unprecedented scale, several multiples beyond anything imaginable in the medieval period. Everywhere during the course of the 17th century, men and women left their farming villages and moved into the new urban centres, especially Edo, and by the 1720s it is likely that at least 800,000 commoners—merchants, artisans, day labourers, entertainers, prostitutes, and priests—lived in the shogun's capital.

This great influx of merchants and artisans during the 17th century made a shambles of the early city plan, converting a samurai-dominated castle town into what the commoners referred to as Ō-Edo, 'Great Edo', the people's city. Conspicuously, they pushed the physical contours of the metropolis in entirely new directions. Increasingly, the immigrant population settled into vacant spaces along the roadways and waterways of the city and in the valleys beneath daimyo estates, giving birth to the notion of a 'high city' of warriors and government officials and a 'low city' of commoners. After the devastating Great Meireki Fire in 1657, thousands of merchant and artisan households turned farmland into urban sprawl as they sought new, and less dangerous, living space across the Sumida River, which had defined the eastern boundary of 'Ieyasu's town'. As other commoner families accumulated wealth and capital, they pushed westward, into formerly suburban areas such as Ichigaya, Yotsuya, Akasaka, and Azabu (all of which are at the heart of modern-day Tokyo), adding to the spontaneous movement and churning that imparted to Edo a geographic contouring at odds with the old notion of an orderly, samurai-centric spiral.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, townspeople appropriated space that the shogunate originally had reserved for public use. The shogunate financed the construction of bridges across Edo's major canals and waterways and ordered that the approaches to them be kept clear and open so that people would have an avenue of escape when, as commonly happened, fire broke out in the cramped merchant quarters. Fear of conflagration also prompted the shogun's officials to designate certain areas within the city centre as firebreaks, tracts of land intentionally left vacant in order to retard the progress of a blaze. But, from the merchants' point of view, this was valuable commercial space, and they could not resist the temptation to encroach upon it. Following the 1657 disaster, officials created a major firebreak at Edobashi, a triangle of land stretching for about 200 yards along a major waterway adjacent to Nihonbashi in what was the emerging heart of merchant Edo. Despite the best intentions of the shogunate, rather quickly merchants slipped in and opened up shops, wholesalers put up warehouses and storage facilities, and entertainers held forth in storytelling halls.<sup>11</sup> The appropriation of free space could be seen, as well, at the approaches to Edo's major bridges, such as the great Ryōgoku Bridge—a 200m span constructed in the wake of another major fire in 1703—which enterprising merchants turned into Edo's foremost centre of popular amusement.





**PLATE 18.1** ‘Ochanomizu’: the former moat around Edo Castle became a commercial waterway and sight-seeing spot (from Saitō Gesshin, *Edo meisho zue*, vol. 1).

Commoners converted Ieyasu’s town into the merchants’ city in other ways as well. The earliest written references to Ochanomizu, an area just north of Edo Castle, explain how civil engineers in the 1620s levelled a small mountain, redirected rivers, and carved out a channel tens of metres deep so as to provide a new outer moat for the shogunal headquarters. In time, however, as peace settled over the land and Edo emerged as the mercantile heart of Japan, the waterway’s military significance retreated into memory. A famous set of guide books published in the early 19th century by Saitō Gesshin depicts the moat passing through Ochanomizu as a commercial thoroughfare with merchants poling flat-bottomed boats loaded with all matter of cargo (see [Plate 18.1](#)).<sup>12</sup> Spontaneously, mercantile wealth and initiative had undermined the planned geography of the official Edo cityscape and reshaped it into Ō-Edo, the Great City, the city of commoners.

### **EDO: GOVERNING THE METROPOLIS**

As Ieyasu and his successors—particularly his grandson Iemitsu (1604–1651, shogun 1623–1651)—established Edo as Japan’s administrative nerve centre, they also fashioned ways to rule over the people of the city. In final form, urban governance reflected the bifurcated nature of the capital. After all, by Iemitsu’s day, Edo had become the thriving nucleus of an emerging system of nationwide commercial production as well as the focal point of the country’s government, and it had evolved in response to the conjunction of an original masterplan with the more unstructured, organic impulses generated by merchant capital and wealth. As such, it had become a zoned city, with clearly demarcated residential districts set aside in the ‘high city’ for samurai and in the ‘low city’ for merchant and artisan commoners. Edo’s governing apparatus paid heed to such dualisms, just as it married innovation with tradition by balancing authority from above with self-management from below.

After some initial experimentation, Iemitsu crafted an administrative system that delegated the

responsibility for overseeing Edo's warriors to officials who staffed upper-echelon offices within the national administrative structure. More precisely, the senior councillors (*rōjū*), who constituted the chief policy-making board in the shogunate, oversaw the districts occupied by daimyo estates within Edo, whereas the neighbourhoods inhabited by the shogun's direct vassals came under the jurisdiction of the junior councillors (*wakadoshiyori*), a second important executive board. Those shogunal bureaucrats wrote and disseminated legal codes, such as the 1615 'Regulations concerning Warrior Households' (*buke shohatto*) that established guidelines for the conduct of the regional lords, and the 1632 'Regulations concerning Vassals' (*shoshi hatto*) that applied to the shogun's direct retainers, both of which were periodically revised and supplemented by sumptuary codes that regulated the deportment, dress, and housing styles of all warriors, even the entertainments that they could enjoy. Enforcement of such decrees rested with several layers of lower samurai appointees such as the *ōbangumi*, or 'great guard units', that patrolled the warrior residential districts near the castle and reported to the senior and junior councillors.

In similar fashion, the shogunate authored legal codes and established an administrative structure designed to articulate its dominion over the merchant and artisan quarters within the city. In 1655, for instance, shogunal officials issued a legal code entitled the *Edo machijū sadamegaki* and followed up in 1742 with the *Kujikata osadamegaki*, a comprehensive compendium of laws, punishments, and judicial procedures pertaining to all commoners. A host of sumptuary regulations sharpened the distinctions between warriors, on the one hand, and merchants and artisans on the other, by granting warriors the privilege to bear arms and have surnames (merchants merely took a shop name, such as Aburaya Jinbei, 'Jinbei the Oil Dealer'), by permitting samurai to wear clothing made from fancy silks while limiting commoners to cotton and cruder hemp and ramie, and by allowing the warrior estate to consume special foods on fête days. Enforcement of this growing body of legislation was entrusted to the senior councillors who, in turn, relied on a variety of samurai functionaries, most notably the city magistrates (*machi bugyō*; two in number from 1631), to oversee day-to-day activities in commoner neighbourhoods, punish violent criminals, and sit in judgement on important civil lawsuits and petitions.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the increasing centralization of power in the hands of higher state authorities, however, the merchants and artisans of Edo enjoyed considerable latitude to self-manage their own neighbourhoods. Throughout the early modern period, the veneer of samurai administration remained thin, and the shogunal state entrusted many important functions to the merchants and artisans themselves. To this end, an elaborate set of supporting offices came into existence in Edo's commoner neighbourhoods. By the early 18th century, Edo's three-quarters of a million or so commoners lived in more than 1,500 distinct residential quarters. The shogunate instructed the landowners (or their agents) within each individual neighbourhood to organize themselves into so-called five-family groups (*goningumi*) charged with tending to the welfare of the neighbourhood and with insuring that everyone obeyed all laws. For each group of roughly five to seven neighbourhoods, the shogun's senior councillors appointed one leading merchant as a neighbourhood chief (*nanushi*). Numbering about 260 in all, those commoners in turn reported to three city elders (*machidoshiyori*). Serving on a hereditary basis, those heads of three prominent merchant households stood at the point of articulation between state and neighbourhood by assisting the samurai-level magistrates and elders while working with neighbourhood chiefs and the five-family groups to make certain that they fulfilled their responsibilities.

The aggregated body of merchant delegates and agencies exercised a number of important prerogatives. Among other duties, the city elders allotted and collected tax assessments, supervised criminal investigations on behalf of the city magistrates, and adjudicated non-violent quarrels and disputes. The neighbourhood chiefs, working at a level that perhaps had the most immediate impact on ordinary merchant and artisan families, maintained property and census records, publically recognized persons who exhibited exceptional citizenship, supervised firefighting squads, ironed out minor neighbourhood disputes, oversaw festivals, maintained local streets and bridges, arranged relief for local families suffering through illness or financial hard times, and cared for abandoned children and travellers who fell ill. They even played a hand in policing by keeping in good repair the gates that shut off each residential quarter from dusk to dawn, by arranging for night patrols through neighbourhood streets, and by taking custody of petty criminals.

Despite the obvious visibility of the shogun's bureaucracy, and the apparent intrusiveness of written legal codes, in many ways shogunal authority found it difficult to penetrate the walls that surrounded warrior enclaves. Daimyo compounds were cut off from the rest of the city by high walls and elaborate gates. Within those privatized spheres, each individual daimyo lord enjoyed a considerable measure of independent authority—he was free to decide the incomes of his vassals, manage the affairs of his wives, concubines, and children, and even define what constituted criminal misbehaviour on his property and mete out punishments to wrongdoers. Similarly, the residential plots provided to the shogun's direct retainers were divorced from the rest of the city by gateways that demarcated entry into a special realm where it was possible for those samurai to supervise personally the lives of their family members and servant personnel. The guardhouses established by shogunal directives during the course of the 17th century to provide a police presence in samurai Edo stood as physical testimony to such neighbourhood autonomy. Some 900 in number, shogunal police manned only a handful of the sentry posts; the overwhelming majority were financed and staffed by individual daimyo and by associations of direct vassals to maintain law and order, peace and stability, in the 'high city'.

In the end, governing Edo was never a simple proposition. To be certain, the Tokugawa shoguns did not disavow power—they issued codes designed to articulate an overarching set of civil and criminal conventions for all who lived in Edo, just as they squeezed power into administrative structures whose purpose was to exercise authority on behalf of the ruling centre. But even if the Tokugawa shogunate was able to intrude more deeply into the lives of people than any previous governing agency in Japanese history, gradually accumulating prerogatives unto itself, it also left space for the warriors and commoners to manage many aspects of daily life. That local autonomy—the license to act independently within one's own neighbourhood—was a nod to the past; the fulfillment in a way, of the medieval legacy of self-governance and, as well, an important bequest to modern Japan.

### **CULTURAL PRODUCTION AT EDO**

Edo emerged as a leading centre of cultural production during the early modern epoch. Like the quilted geographic, economic, and administrative fabric of the city itself, Edo's culture was a mosaic of contributions made up from the various status and class groupings that lived in the city. The samurai, for their part, positioned themselves as the heirs of two great elite traditions. On the one hand, they strove to keep alive the martial ethics that shaped samurai behaviour during past episodes

of warfare. Thus, even as the Great Pax Tokugawa settled over Japan after 1600 and battlefield exploits receded into the hazy memory, Edo's warriors practised horse riding on courses set up at locales such as Takadanobaba (a neighbourhood in modern-day Shinjuku) and got together on sunny afternoons to fight mock battles with wooden swords and blunted arrows. The more well-to-do also made excursions to the hunting grounds on the fringe of the city, where they netted birds and used their firearms and bows to shoot deer and wild boar.

Manliness for Edo's warriors meant more than proficiency in the martial arts and a passion for the blood sports, however. *Bubun*—a yin-yang combination of literary and military accomplishments—became the catchphrase of the day. Thus, the samurai studied Confucian texts to cull lessons about how to be capable administrators and, like generations of Kyoto aristocrats before them, put pen to paper to compose *waka* poetry, a genre of classical verse that had been around nearly as long as the Heavenly Sovereign's capital itself. Early modern warrior elites also dedicated themselves to landscape painting—a traditional art form associated with Zen and medieval life—and patronized Noh theatre, drama that valorized the Heavenly Sovereign and warrior ethos. Art and the state, at least as encoded in the representations of an elitist ruling class, were inseparable, and, as the country's privileged status group, Edo's samurai engaged in cultural pursuits that simultaneously sought congruence with a venerated past and cast themselves as the undisputed exemplars of contemporary society.<sup>14</sup>

The merchants and artisans of Edo created new cultural pursuits. *Haikai* poetry, the forerunner of today's *haiku*, became all the rage among commoners. By 1670, for instance, publishing houses had printed 133 *haikai* anthologies, and at the century's end one literary figure noted, '*haikai* have grown so popular in our society that every last apprentice and scullery maid tries his or her hand at them'.<sup>15</sup> The short poems, quickly written, were intended to combine comic playfulness with provocative flashes of personal intuition as a way of opening up new understanding about the values and experiences of urban commoners. During those same decades, commoner-orientated theatre and prose literature also flourished. Edo became home to dozens of kabuki theatres, which staged new productions throughout the year. Perhaps the most renowned novelist, and purportedly the first to support himself solely by income from writing, was Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693), the son of a merchant and author of dozens of tales about urban life.

The new poetry, prose, and drama both valorized the lives of commoners and offered a cultural critique of samurai society. Saikaku, for instance, waxed most eloquent on topics that touched the hearts of his merchant readers—making love and making money. 'The pine, bamboo, and plum', as he began one story with a reference to three symbols from classical poetry that heralded endurance and the beauty of renewal, 'no longer count for anything. What matters now are bags filled with gold, silver, and copper coins.'<sup>16</sup> In a related vein, the kabuki drama *Sukeroku*, which played to packed houses at the beginning of the 18th century, praised merchant youth who protected their neighbours from arrogant and bullying samurai and condemned shoguns who in the medieval past had not ruled in the best interests of all of the people. Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), the most famous of all *haikai* poets, celebrated mundane happenings in daily life (writing of one travel experience: 'Bitten by fleas and lice | /I slept in a bed | /A horse urinating all the time | /Close to my pillow') that were the antithesis of classical *waka* and also forecast the declining profile of samurai, increasingly overtaken by the energy and exuberance of the urban commoners:

A thicket of summer grass

Is all that remains  
Of the dreams and ambitions  
Of ancient warriors.<sup>17</sup>

The visual arts offer the clearest depiction of the shifting fortunes of the samurai and commoners. The *Edoju byōbu*—the famous ‘Illustrated Screens of Edo’—pays homage to elite warrior culture. Measuring about thirty-six feet in length and six feet in height, the screens provide an extensive panorama of life in the city around the year 1630, with sections dedicated to merchant activities and early theatrical productions. But the unknown artist crafted the overall layout to draw attention to the ‘high city’. Daimyo estates, with stylish entry gates, handsome internal residences, and splendid landscape gardens, immediately arrest the viewer’s eye. Centre-stage sits Edo Castle with its towering donjon—vast, imposing, dominating the cityscape. A procession of ambassadors from Korea bearing gifts for the shogun is shown entering the castle, a visual suggestion that the political legitimacy of the Tokugawa shogunate extended even beyond the shores of Japan.<sup>18</sup>

Woodblock print artists, in sharp contrast, immortalized the world of merchants and artisans, who were their chief customers. Although *ukiyo-e* prints embrace a range of sub-genres, Hiroshige and other highly regarded artists intentionally discarded the official metaphor of Edo as the physical representation of benevolent government and high culture and, instead, carved out new images of a commoners’ city, Ō-Edo, where ordinary people could take pleasure in the good life.<sup>19</sup> An especially famous recasting of Edo can be seen in the epic ‘One Hundred Famous Views of Edo’ (*Edo meisho hyakkei*), begun by Hiroshige near the end of his long and productive career.<sup>20</sup> Most of these prints focus on prosperous merchant shop-residences in the ‘low city’, depicting commoners as they enjoy the fruits of commercial success and participate in festivals and other leisure activities. These prints typically place the built environment of the shogunate and samurai elites in the background. The print ‘Hibiya and Soto-Sakurada from Yamashitachō’, for instance, shows kites flown by commoners at New Year sailing majestically above daimyo estates and Edo Castle.<sup>21</sup> Like the moat at Ochanomizu, the lord’s home and the centre of warrior government has become a relic of the past, a backdrop to the commoner appropriation of the city.

## OTHER CITIES

Edo is the shining star that catches the historian’s eye and illuminates trends visible across the galaxy of Japan’s more than 200 castle towns. Those cities had their own distinct regional personalities, of course. Some, like Aizu-Wakamatsu, were landlocked and situated in mountainous northern climes where people learnt to celebrate long winters and treasure short summers; others, such as Kagoshima, were sultry, maritime communities that looked outwards to neighbouring peoples. Urban geographies also varied, some castles almost abutted the sea (as at Tokushima), many were sandwiched on high ground amongst river-threaded deltas (Hiroshima), and others were tucked up against rising highlands some miles from the ocean (Sendai).<sup>22</sup> All those distinctions notwithstanding, the archetypal landscape of Edo could be seen in Japan’s castle towns, as could the arc of historical evolution. Everywhere across Japan, each daimyo chose the most defensible point for his redoubt-residence and surrounded it with walls and moats. There, he marshalled his samurai and encouraged the immigration of merchants and artisans, created warrior quarters that were located near the castle and

geographically separate from commoner neighbourhoods, constructed an infrastructure of public services that privileged the samurai but addressed the needs of all, issued laws and ordinances that established the lord as the pre-eminent political authority but delegated to warrior households and ordinary people duties that allowed them to shape their daily activities, and tolerated (and even encouraged) cultural activities that satisfied the psychological needs of each status group.

Joining Edo at the apex of Japan's urban pyramid were Kyoto and Osaka, two other populous cities of national significance. Throughout the early modern era, Kyoto continued to serve as the residence of the Heavenly Sovereign and his attendant nobility. But the Tokugawa shoguns took deliberate steps to bring the ancient imperial capital into the new political mainstream. Thus, in 1615, the warrior government established its unquestioned pre-eminence by issuing the 'Regulations concerning the Royal Court and Nobility', whose seventeen clauses regulated the daily lives of the Heavenly Sovereign and his court and confined them to purely ceremonial activities ('The Heavenly Sovereign is to be engaged in the arts, the first of which is scholarship', read the initial clause).<sup>23</sup> Lest there be any misunderstanding about the court's subordination to the military overlords, a decade later the Tokugawa shoguns garrisoned their samurai in the massive, newly constructed Nijō Castle, located in the middle of the city and a palpable manifestation of warrior authority.

For all of the shogunal posturing, however, Kyoto also was a city of commoners. Throughout the early modern period, it retained its standing as a leading centre for the production and consumption of traditional fine arts and luxury goods, with perhaps as many as 10,000 persons engaged in the manufacture and sale of silk textiles at the end of the 17th century. In addition, a 1689 occupation register lists the names of fifty-four 'money changers', namely businesses that advanced loans, issued letters of credit, and supplied other banking services that facilitated the growing nationwide distribution system. Notably, several retailing emporiums first opened for business in Kyoto, including the future Daimaru (1673) and Takashimaya (1829) department stores. Additionally, for all its aristocratic trappings, Kyoto was the original source of many commoner cultural pursuits. Kabuki, as is well known, evolved from the bawdy and risqué skits first presented on the banks of Kyoto's Kamo River by Okuni, usually described as a rouge shaman associated with one of Japan's most famous shrines. Similarly, so-called *kanazōshi*, a loosely-defined genre of essays, travel guides, warrior tales, and religious tracts written in an easy-to-read phonetic alphabet that made them the first widely read and sold books in Japan, originated in Kyoto in the early 1600s and presaged the bursting forth of commercial publishing at the century's end.

Osaka, just south of Kyoto, self-consciously promoted itself as a city of merchants. Few would dispute that claim, for Osaka was the central rice and wholesale market for central Japan (the 'country's kitchen' in the words of the time), and 90 per cent plus of its 380,000 residents at the beginning of the 17th century were merchants and artisans. In their leisure moments, they, too, participated fully in the new commoner pastimes; Saikaku, after all was the son of a wealthy Osaka merchant, and the puppet theatre, which shared playwrights and dramatic themes with Kabuki, flourished there as nowhere else. But, like Kyoto, the shogunate ruled Osaka directly. It constructed a major castle in the 1620s—sprawling over nearly 175 acres it was one of the grandest shogunal projects in an epoch of architectural indulgence—and the samurai officials stationed there issued legal codes and governed through an administrative structure similar to that being crafted for Edo. But like Edo and Kyoto, and the castle towns, the commoners of Osaka also were organized into neighbourhood clusters, overseen by their own representatives, that took care of their own day-to-day

affairs.

## BEQUESTS TO MODERN JAPAN

In the middle of the 19th century an imperialistic West thundered into Asia. Entering through the region's urban centres and port cities, that predatory and violent intrusion, according to one common thread of analysis, eventually compelled Japan and other traditional societies to abandon their pasts and embrace a new, imported, and foreign modernity. The equation, however, was never that simplistic. By the 1850s, Japan had a long, rich, and variegated urban history that served as a bridge between past and future. Simply stated, no uncrossable fissure tore through Japanese history in the middle of the 19th century. Rather, Japan's century-old urban experiences provided a wellspring of legacies that ordinary Japanese could draw from as they faced the challenges of a new day.

Of course, Japan's past did not predetermine its future. As Paul Waley writes (below, [Ch. 29](#)), modernization, industrialization, and Westernization (to which could be added Japan's own efforts to assemble a colonial empire) wrought enormous changes in the closing decades of the 19th century and the opening years of the 20th. There can be no doubt that the Meiji era constituted a truly transformative experience. But, just as surely, the new never completely obliterated the old. The heritages passed down by the forefathers of modern Japan included multiple paradigms and competing legacies. Japan's pre-modern cities had been the loci of political authority, the pulsating nuclei of manufacturing and capital accumulation, and the starting point for cultural creativity. Within the urban centres, political elites asserted their claims to lordship even while ordinary men and women quietly managed the day-to-day affairs that most impacted their own lives. Cities in traditional Japan could be planned from above, just as they could grow spontaneously from below in response to the dictates and desires of merchant wealth; they were sites of 'regime-supportive' cultural performances, and the hotbed of artistic innovation that glorified commoners and subversively placed them on an equal psychological footing with society's elites.

Given the manifold bequests from the past, it is small wonder that in modern times some Japanese tried to impose a plan on the urban environment, while others preferred to trust the invisible hand of individual will; that some advocated authoritarianism and wished to craft powerful bureaucracies, while others put their faith in democratic forms of governance that echoed the citizen participation of the past; that some continued to stage elaborate rituals that paid homage to age-old values surrounding imperial and martial ideals, while others used popular culture to express dissatisfaction with what they saw of the inequities of the present. In all these ways, Japanese modernity has blended together the traditional with the new, the native with the imported.

## NOTES

1. Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Kodansha America, 1994), 23.
2. Cited in Mary Elizabeth Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 29.
3. 'Gaspar Vilela: Between Kyūshū and the Kinai', *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, 15 (2007), 23, with reference to Luís Fróis, SJ, *Historia de Japam*, ed. Josef Wicki JS (Lisbon:

Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976–1985, 5 vols.), vol. 1, 234.

4. Kikō Daishuku, ‘Shoken nichiroku’ in Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Dai Nihon kokiroku*, vol. 4 (Tokyo, Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, 1964), 66.
5. Wakita Osamu, *Kinsei hōken shakai no keizai kōzō* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 1963), 284–312; Wakita, ‘The Social and Economic Consequences of Unification’, in John W. Hall et al., gen. eds., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 4: Hall, ed., *Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 110–21; and Wakita, with James L. McClain, ‘The Commercial and Urban Policies of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi’ in John Whitney Hall et al., eds., *Japan before Tokugawa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 231–7.
6. Cf Wakita Haruko, with Susan Hanly, in Hall et al., eds., *Japan before Tokugawa*, 295–326, and Sasaki Gin’ya, ‘Nihon chūsei toshi no jiyū-jichi kenkyū o megutte’, *Shakai keizai shigaku*, 38 (October 1972), 96–111.
7. Several maps of Edo testify to these allotments; see the East Asian Library at the University of California, Berkeley, available at [www.davidrumsey.com/japan/view.html](http://www.davidrumsey.com/japan/view.html).
8. Naitō Akira, ‘Edo no machi kōzō’, in Nishiyama Matsunosuke and Yoshiwara Ken’ichirō, eds., *Edo jidai zushi* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1975), and his *Edo, the City That Became Tokyo: An Illustrated History*, trans. and ed. H. Mack Horton (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2003), 34–5.
9. Hatano Jun, ‘Edo’s Water Supply’, in James L. McClain et al., eds., *Edo and Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 234–50.
10. Jinnai Hidenobu, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, trans. Kimiko Nishimura (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 61–4. The changing contours of Edo can be traced in the evolution of city maps; see, for instance, McClain et al., eds., *Edo and Paris*, 20, 26, and 44.
11. James L. McClain, ‘Edobashi: Power, Space, and Popular Culture in Edo’, in McClain et al., eds., *Edo and Paris*, pp. 105–31. For the Ryōgoku example, see Jinnai, *Tokyo*, 87–91.
12. The loss of Ochanomizu’s military significance and its redefinition as a site of commercial and amusement activities can be appreciated by comparing the pen-and-ink sketch of the engineering project in Naitō, *Edo, the City That Became Tokyo*, 54–5, with the drawing in Saitō Gesshin, *Edo meisho zue*, illustrations by Hasegawa Settan, in the collection at the Waseda University Library and accessible at [http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ru04/ru04\\_00409](http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ru04/ru04_00409) (image 53), and the Hiroshige print in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and available at [www.mfa.org/collections/object/ochanomizu-from-the-series-famous-places-in-edo-edo-meisho-237605](http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/ochanomizu-from-the-series-famous-places-in-edo-edo-meisho-237605).
13. The city magistrates also had about fifty constables (*yoriki*) and another *c.*200 patrolmen (*dōshin*) to police merchant and artisan neighbourhoods; see Katō Takashi, ‘Governing Edo’, in McClain et al., eds., *Edo and Paris*, 51.
14. This linkage between elitism and cultural production parallels the familiar notion that the state could be a work of art and art a work of state, an idea that goes back at least to Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).



15. Ihara Saikaku, *Some Final Words of Advice*, trans. Peter Nosco (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1980), 128.
16. Ihara Saikaku, 'Nihon eitaigura', in Asō Isoji and Fuji Akio, eds., *Taiyaku Saikaku zenshū*, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1975), 1–2.
17. Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, trans Nobuyuki Yuasa (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), 118–23.
18. The *Edozu byōbu* is in the possession of the National Museum of Japanese History (Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan) and can be accessed at [www.rekihaku.ac.jp/gallery/edozu/index.html](http://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/gallery/edozu/index.html). There is considerable controversy about dating the screens, but general agreement is that they are intended to portray Edo in the 1630s or perhaps 1640s; see Suwa Haruo, 'Edozu byōbu no gaisetsu', in Suwa and Naitō Akira, eds., *Edozu byōbu* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1972), n.p., and Suitō Makoto, "'Edozu byōbu" seisaku no shūhen —sono sakusha • seisaku nendai • seisaku no ito no mosaku', *Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan kenkyū hōkoku*, 18 (1991), 27–43.
19. Any number of museums have made their print holdings available online, but the collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston noted above is especially comprehensive.
20. The Brooklyn Museum owns a complete series and has made them available at [www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/research/edo](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/research/edo). Illustrative of points raised here are the prints 'Hibiya and Soto-Sakurada from Yamashita-chō' (number 3), 'Suruga-chō' (8), 'Nihonbashi Bridge and Edobashi Bridge' (43), 'Suidō Bridge, Surugadai' (48), and 'The City Flourishing, Tanabata Festival' (73).
21. William Coaldrake, 'Metaphors of the Metropolis: Architectural and Artistic Representations of the Identity of Edo', in Nicolas Fiévé and Paul Waley, eds., *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective: Place, Power and Memory in Kyoto, Edo and Tokyo* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 143–6.
22. Classical analyses of castle towns include Harada Tomohiko, *Nihon no hōken toshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1973), Toyoda Takashi et al., eds., *Kōza: Nihon no hōken toshi* (Tokyo: Bun'ichi Sōgō Shuppan, 1983), and Yamori Kazuhiko, *Toshizu no rekishi* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1970); for a more recent overview, see Yamamura Aki, 'Capitals and Towns in Early Modern Times', in Kinda Akihiro, ed., *A Landscape History of Japan* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2010), 89–112.
23. The full code is analysed in Lee A. Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467–1680* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2002), 113–14.

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## PORT CITIES OF SOUTH EAST ASIA: 1400–1800

LEONARD BLUSSÉ

IN his pioneering *Observations Concerning Early Asian Trade*, written in the early 1930s, Jacob van Leur philosophically addressed the fact that many famous Asian port towns of the early modern period had faded away: ‘The chain of great Asian ports of the present day, from Suez to Kobe, preserves only a few old names and even then the memory is only a sound, no tangible, appreciable remainder. In the dead towns of Zeeland and West Friesland [of Holland’s Golden Age] it is hard to imagine a past of international shipping and world trade.... So it is too with the shabby remains of shipping trade and ancient fame in the East, in Achin, Malacca, Palembang, Bantam and Tuba, in Pegu and Cambay, in Hormuz and Malacca.’<sup>1</sup>

Between 1400 and 1800, many of the now almost forgotten Asian port cities contributed to what has been designated the development of ‘archaic’ globalization and the transition to proto-globalization. Indeed it would be very difficult to overestimate the instrumental role that these ports cities have played in the globalization process. In his monumental study on *Civilization and Capitalism*, Fernand Braudel singled out a sequence of European port cities—Venice, Antwerp, Genoa, Amsterdam, and London—which he considered the prime movers in the making of the modern European economy.<sup>2</sup> In *Before European Hegemony*, Janet L. Abu-Lughod has persuasively argued that at an even earlier date, between 1250 and 1350, an intercontinental trade economy, that stretched all the way from Europe to China, emerged in Monsoon Asia.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that within the pre-modern maritime world of Asia, port cities of all sizes also played a pivotal role by catering to either the coastal or the long-distance trade of the Monsoon seas. As a result of the steep increase in European and Chinese demand for tropical commodities and spices, island South East Asia witnessed a spectacular development in maritime trade between the 15th and the 17th centuries, an era Anthony Reid has aptly termed ‘The Age of Commerce’.<sup>4</sup>

## THE RHYTHM OF THE MONSOON

In the era of sail, the prevailing wind system of the monsoons, which blew for about six months alternately from the north-east and the south-west, determined the rhythm and organization of the voyages of the ships that plied between the port cities of the China Seas, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. A wide variety of merchant communities was involved in this extended trade network. Most port cities of Monsoon Asia functioned as nodal points in coastal and inter-island traffic, but some of the larger ports at strategic locations along the intra-Asian sailing route served as entrepôts for the longdistance shipping that connected the discrete seascapes of the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Bengal, the Java Sea, and the South China Sea. The seaborne commerce functioned, as K. N. Chaudhuri has remarked, in three natural segments: the stretch from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to Gujarat and Malabar; from the Indian coast following the annual voyages to the Indonesian archipelago; and from there the South China Sea connecting the tropical island zone with the ports of

China and Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 7th century this maritime vector of goods, peoples, and ideas was held together by the urban pull of nodal cities like Quanzhou (Marco Polo's Zaiton) and Guangzhou (Canton) in south-eastern China, Sri Vijaya bordering on the Malacca Straits, Calicut, and Cambay on the Indian subcontinent, and Hormuz and Aden, at the entrances to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea (see Regional Maps II.2, II.4, II.5). Significantly, the latter Middle Eastern ports were linked by coastal traffic and overland routes with the trading world of the Mediterranean. As did the much older overland caravan trade via the desert regions of Central Asia, the maritime silk route connected the economies of the European Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and China in the Far East.

In the 1st millennium, Hinduism and Buddhism spread from the Indian subcontinent to the coasts of mainland South East Asia and the islands of the Indonesian archipelago in the wake of trading ships, with profound implications for the lifestyles of the peoples living there. Ancient Chinese travel accounts by Chinese monks, who travelled by ship to India to collect holy texts and receive instruction, note that the kingdom of Sri Vijaya in Sumatra, commanding the thoroughfare between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, provided a home for thousands of Buddhist monks who had built monasteries there.<sup>6</sup> The monumental religious structures of Angkor Wat in Cambodia or the stupa Borobudur and the Prambanan temple complex in Central Java still bear witness to the overseas expansion of India's religions.

At the outset of the 2nd millennium, Islam was carried eastwards by merchant adventurers from Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Gujarat. In the island world of South East Asia, the new religion moved in via the sea ports and, with the exception of Bali, everywhere it became the dominant creed, almost completely supplanting Buddhism and Hinduism. Only in mainland South East Asia did Buddhism hold out.

In his ground-breaking study of the creation of the Indo-Islamic world, André Wink has sketched the larger developments in the Indian Ocean trade after the maritime silk route came into being.<sup>7</sup> Between the 7th and the 11th centuries the Middle East acquired economic supremacy, but between the 11th and the 13th centuries, Europe and China were in the ascendant. Between the 14th and the 16th centuries, Islam consolidated in and around the Indian Ocean and a new Asian world economy emerged with India at its centre and the Middle East and China as dynamic poles. The 16th and 17th centuries witnessed the building of new empires under Muslim dynasties, and the entry of the first European trading powers combined with a steep increase in the maritime country trade within Asia and the intercontinental trade with Europe around the Cape of Good Hope. In the 18th century, the large territorial Islamic empires began to disintegrate and were replaced by smaller successor states and the nascent European colonial empires.

We see these developments more or less mirrored in the island world of South East Asia. The ancient kingdom of Sri Vijaya in Sumatra was bypassed by the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit in Java in the 11th century. In its turn it was weakened by the emergence of new Muslim port polities on the coast and finally gave way to the newly emerging Islamic kingdom of Mataram at the end of the 16th century. To what extent the decline of the port polities on Java's north coast that followed in the 17th century was the result of the land-grabbing policies of Mataram or Western intervention, or both, remains a hotly discussed subject.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the case may be, in the early modern period the European seaborne empires of the East India companies based on intercontinental trade began to put their stamp on the region. By the middle of the 18th century, the administration of the Dutch East India

Company in Batavia was in control of most of the north coast of Java and by wielding a policy of divide and rule was dismembering what was left of Mataram into the sultanates of Yogyakarta and Surakarta.

### **TYPES OF PORT SETTLEMENT**

The gradual symbiosis of the regional trades of the various maritime sub-systems of the Indian Ocean created hierarchies of port cities which varied from feeder ports, serving as outlets for products of the hinterland or imported foreign goods from abroad, to colonial entrepôts for intercontinental trade where goods would be unloaded, stored, and shipped to further destinations. Generally speaking, they all shared the same basic features including a stronghold representing the local regime, mosques, churches or temples, a customs house, where the commodities were weighed, and a marketplace in which the money merchants and pedlars plied their business.

Ports came in all sizes and types. Citing Rhoads Murphy, Indu Banga has remarked that ‘most ports have poor harbours and many fine harbours see few ships’. He points out that if a port is a gateway where goods and people are transferred between land and sea, a fine harbour—i.e. a sheltered area of deep water—does not necessarily function well as a port if it is lacking a hinterland.<sup>9</sup> Often ports were indeed little more than roadsteads and trading beaches along the sea coast that, owing to the prevailing monsoon, could only be approached for a few months of the year. Elsewhere territorial regimes exercised some degree of control over the overseas trade at ports cities situated inside river estuaries that offered sheltered anchorages. It has been observed that most of these port cities were subject to an almost cyclical movement of rise and decline because of environmental reasons. Hydrological instability, soil erosion, and a continuous process of delta formation combined with frequent tropical storms created the massive flooding or the silting up of estuaries, and frequently cut port cities off from the sea. Consequently, by and large Indian Ocean cities were insubstantial and lacked continuity, a phenomenon Wink has described as ‘labile urbanism’.<sup>10</sup> Some port cities without any hinterland of consequence owed their existence merely to their strategic position along the Monsoon routes. As trans-shipment points they basically served as entrepôts for the long-distance trade.

Leaving aside environmental reasons, local politics were closely intertwined with the rise and decline of port cities in island South East Asia. Communities of foreign merchants who felt that their safety was not properly guaranteed or believed that they were not being given a fair deal by local rulers would frequently move en masse to neighbouring ports that offered better prospects. There were many examples of such rivalry on both the west and east coasts of the Malay peninsula: in the Malacca Straits the kingdoms of Aceh and Johor were locked in perpetual rivalry, vying to attract foreign merchants by offering favourable conditions. Sonkhla and Pattani competed likewise on the east coast of the Malay peninsula. As a matter of fact, in order to function as safe havens where visiting merchants could engage in trade without too much intervention from inland authorities, port cities had to preserve a certain level of political autonomy. Only in the autarkic world orders of China and Japan could strictly regimented gateway ports such as Canton and Nagasaki be observed.

### **URBAN PORT SETTLEMENTS OF SOUTH EAST ASIA**

A glance at the map of the Indian Ocean shows that the island world of South East Asia lies across

the intra-Asian navigational route. In the age of sail, two corridors were convenient for ships navigating between the Indian Ocean and the eastern seas: the Straits of Malacca between the Malay peninsula and Sumatra, and the Sunda Strait between Sumatra and Java. At the entrances to these thoroughfares where shipping in both directions had to wait for the change of the monsoon to return home in the same year, urban entrepôts could be found where the cargoes were unloaded, stored on land, and shipped again. These emporia dominated intra-Asian shipping between South West, South and East Asia, and in due course also the cabotage of the entire Malay world.<sup>11</sup> On the Malacca Straits, in the early 15th century Sri Vijaya in Sumatra was replaced by the port principality of Melaka on the Malay peninsula, and 100 years later the Portuguese seized this town. In the vicinity of the Sunda Strait, a succession of entrepôts arose in western Java: Sunda Kelapa, the major port of the Hindu Kingdom of Pajajaran, was replaced in the 16th century by the Islamic port principality of Banten, which in turn was supplanted by Dutch Batavia in the 17th century.

If the sultanate of Melaka reigned supreme in the 15th century, to be replaced by Portuguese Malacca in 1511, it in turn was bypassed in the 17th century by Batavia (1619), the new headquarters of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Java.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the Malacca Straits were traditionally the main conduit of the shipping between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, the Sunda Strait was advantageously positioned for the VOC ships sailing to and from Europe via the Cape of Good Hope. Both Portuguese Malacca and in later years Dutch Batavia sat like spiders in a far-flung web of feeder ports located in the Spice Islands (Maluku), the *Pasisir* or the northern coast of rice-producing Java, and various Malay port principalities at the mouths of rivers that penetrated deep into the tropical forest regions of the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. Spanish Manila, built from scratch in 1567, served both as the terminus of the trans-Pacific galleon trade and as a nodal point in the Chinese *Dong yang* (Eastern Ocean) corridor that stretched from the south-eastern coastal province of Fujian all the way to the Spice Islands in the eastern periphery of the Indonesian archipelago.

### THE MALAY PORT POLITY

At the end of the 1st millennium, two types of political systems emerged in South East Asia, represented by the Indo-Chinese peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago respectively: inland agricultural societies based on alluvial river plains (such as Majapahit or Mataram in Java) and port principalities along the coast focused on the trade of the rivers and the sea (such as Melaka on the Malay peninsula). Occasionally a city combined these functions, serving both as sea port and as inland capital for an agriculturally oriented society. A good example of this was the city of Ayutthaya in the estuary of the Chao Phraya, the capital of the kingdom of Siam. In the 17th century it stood at the apex of a hierarchy of port cities around the Gulf of Siam, but simultaneously served as the administrative and ritual centre of the rice and deerskins exporting territorial kingdom of Siam, with its many rivers that extended far into a hinterland of game preserves and tropical forests. Because of its ideal location, the Siamese king was able to subordinate the trading activities of Ayutthaya to his own interest in ruling vast territories.

In this analysis the 'ideal type' of the Malay port principality is our principal concern. In terms of location, these ports, connected with each other in a hierarchical relationship, had specific functions: they were either urban entrepôts strategically situated along the sailing routes of the long-distance monsoon traffic connecting the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea, or they were port towns serving river systems, regional cabotage and inter-island shipping. All traditional ports of any size in

this region initially developed in the form of Malay port principalities and varied from the early Hindu-Buddhist state of Sri Vijaya, which straddled the Malacca Straits between the 9th and the 12th centuries, to the famous port principality of Melaka, whose ruler converted to Islam at the beginning of the 15th century. The evolution of the Malay port principalities has been analysed in detail by Kenneth R. Hall who describes the rise and fall of these urban centres in terms of a state-formation process linked to the fortunes of maritime trade.<sup>13</sup> Inevitably, the Islamization of this type of cosmopolitan port town thoroughly influenced its structure and morphology. The position of the mosque became as important as that of the palace, *istana* or *kraton*, of the local ruler and the institutionalized harbour activities such as the levying of anchorage dues, fees for the weighing house and the charging of import and export taxes were introduced from abroad and fairly evenly spread over the whole maritime region extending from the Middle East to the Indonesian archipelago.

### THE PORT PRINCIPALITY OF MELAKA

Legend has it that the entrepôt of Melaka was founded in 1402 by Parameswara, a prince from Palembang, who had been forced to leave his homeland after an attack by Javanese troops of the Majapahit Kingdom in 1391–1392. The ruler is thought to have converted to Islam around 1413. As an Islamic port sultanate, Melaka emerged as the ultimate Malay harbour principality which was visited by merchants from scores of nations from all over Monsoon Asia who lived and traded at peace under the benign administration of its ruler. Considered a model because of its well-organized civil and military bureaucracy and its sea laws, the *Undang undang Melaka*, the sultanate of Melaka was widely admired and emulated by other port principalities in the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>14</sup> Tomé Pires, who visited Melaka in 1511 immediately after its conquest by the Portuguese, estimates that no fewer than eighty-four different languages were spoken in this cosmopolitan town, whose justly celebrated administrative institutions were uniquely geared to the needs of the maritime trade of Monsoon Asia.<sup>15</sup> Portuguese Malacca became like its predecessor the centre of the all-important traffic in spices: ‘whoever is Lord of Malacca has his hands on the throat of Venice.’<sup>16</sup>

The prime function of Melaka was to facilitate the maritime trade by providing a safe entrepôt where commodities from East and West could be temporarily stored and transshipped. The ruler of this emporium professed to provide a safe anchorage and protection for the sojourning traders of various ethnic origins. This Malay urban port settlement was not protected by walls like many of its sister cities in Europe or China but appeared in the eyes of most foreign visitors to be a dispersed aggregate of villages situated around an administrative center which consisted of a royal compound where the sultan and his courtiers lived. Although Islamic society looks in various ways after the welfare of its believers, those typical urban social institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the destitute—institutions which at a later date figured so prominently in the European colonial port towns—were absent.

Most foreign traders were seasonal sojourners who stayed in the port settlement only a few months in order to carry out their trade while they waited for the next monsoon to return home. Surrounded by tropical forests, Melaka lacked a hinterland with an agricultural production that could feed its approximately 20,000 citizens plus many tens of thousands of sojourning merchants.<sup>17</sup> Consequently it depended on large quantities of rice shipped in from Java, Siam, Pegu, and Bengal. In this respect the city had instead of a territorial hinterland a coastal hinterland.

Personal alliances between the local rulers based on patron–client relationships played an

important role in the maritime trade which radiated up to 200 miles in every direction. This reciprocal exchange economy provided the basic commodities for the town's inhabitants and the coastal populations living on the periphery of the entrepôt. As vassals, neighbouring port principalities like Kedah and Selangor supported the continuation of Melaka's leadership and the sea people or *orang laut* could always be relied upon in times of war—they were formally incorporated in the navy, serving under a *laksamana* or admiral appointed by the sultan. Then as now, piracy represented a persistent disruption in the region of the Malacca Straits.<sup>18</sup>

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

When Vasco da Gama anchored at the roadstead of Calicut 'in search of Christians and Spices' in 1498, it did not take him and his followers a long time to work out how the trading world of the Indian Ocean operated. Within a decade Afonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515), the architect of the *Estado da India*, set out to conquer the most strategically situated port cities of the Indian Ocean. Within another decade he and his successors had laid the groundwork of the Portuguese seaborne empire in Asia, acquiring Hormuz at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, Daman, Diu, and Goa on the north-east coast of India, Cochin on the south-east coast, and Colombo in the island of Ceylon. He managed to install a system of passes (*cartazes*) requiring all Asian traffic passing these ports to pay custom duties and to obtain the right of safe passage. In 1511, Albuquerque conquered Melaka, expelled its ruler and turned this port into the 'business centre' of the Estado da India's Indian Ocean trading network. The *Estado da India* heavily fortified the port and thus was able to control all maritime traffic passing through the Straits of Malacc.<sup>19</sup> From Malacca, the Portuguese fanned out eastwards to the Spice Islands where they succeeded in obtaining a share in the highly coveted clove and nutmeg trade at their production sites. Canton in China was reached in 1521 but it took fifty more years before shrewd diplomatic manoeuvres enabled the Lusitanians to gain footholds in Macao and Nagasaki in Japan. Both Far Eastern ports had typical features not seen elsewhere in Asia. At Macao, a secluded peninsula jutting into the Pearl River, the Portuguese were allowed to trade with the provincial capital of Guangzhou (Canton) at set intervals every year. In Japan, the Jesuits were invited by a local *daimyo* to concentrate all Portuguese trade from Macao in the bay of Nagasaki, but after the unification of Japan in the last decade of the 16th century, this fledgling seaport was encapsulated into the emerging Japanese world order of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Catholic priests and eventually also the Portuguese traders from Macao were evicted in 1639, leaving the Dutch East India Company servants as the only westerners that were allowed to trade in Tokugawa Japan.

After the fall of the sultanate of Melaka, neighbouring Islamic port principalities such as Aceh, Johor, and Bantam constantly vied with each other to be recognized as the legitimate heir and to achieve primacy in the hierarchical pecking order of the archipelago. After Iskandar Muda, the charismatic ruler of Aceh had gained the position of undisputed leader in north Sumatra through a series of conquests in Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, he led (in the 1620s) several expeditions against Christian Portuguese Malacca in the name of Islam, but each attempt was repulsed. On the west coast of Java, the port principality of Banten, production site of pepper, made a meteoric rise in the 1580s and 1590s. This port also served as terminus of the 'western ocean' (*xiyang*) corridor of the Fujianese junk shipping, which skirting the coasts of Vietnam, Cambodia, Siam, and the east coasts of the Malay peninsula and Sumatra stretched all the way from South China to Java.



An excellent contemporary description of the traditional trading networks with which the Portuguese interfered has survived: Tomé Pires' *Suma Oriental*. He says:

all the things and lands and districts were nothing in comparison with Malacca, because Malacca is the port at the end of the monsoons, whither large numbers of junks and ships come, and they all pay dues, and those who do not pay give presents, which are much the same as dues; and for this reason, because the king of the country puts his share in each junk that goes out, this is a way for the kings of Malacca to obtain large amounts of money; and hence there is no doubt that the kings of Malacca are very rich indeed.<sup>20</sup>

He goes on to show that the sultan relied on the help of Mandarins, such as the *Bendahara* or Chief Justice in all civil and criminal affairs and the *Lasakmana* or admiral of all the fleet at sea. The *Tumenggong* acted as the chief magistrate in the city who relied on four *syahbandar* or harbour masters who administered the various trading nations living along the coast: one for the Gujarati merchants, another for all other merchants from the West, the third for Malay traders from the archipelago, and the last for China and the Ryukyu archipelago (most of whose traders were Chinese).<sup>21</sup> This is evidence that the heterogeneous population washed by the monsoon on the shores of Melaka was divided up into ethnic groups living in discrete residential areas under their own headmen and governed by their own law codes, in fact a kind of extraterritoriality before such a concept existed.

During their century-and-a-half administration of Malacca—the city was surrendered to the Dutch after a one-year siege in 1641—the Portuguese built a mighty fort that also protected a colonial city within its walls and introduced a number of typical European institutional features to its make up. As in all other Lusitanian settlements, the church and its institutions took a central place in town. The *casa de misericordia* provided crucial social and economic services, taking care of orphans and administering inheritances in colonial society and extending loans to merchants. But as in Goa, the capital of the Estado da India, indigenous merchants continued to provide the bulk of the revenue by paying customs duties and other taxes. The trade of both cities was based largely on coercion, because the Portuguese administration forced indigenous traders to call at these ports and pay tolls. In Portuguese colonial society two types of settlers, the unmarried *soldados* and the home-making *casados* formed the pillars of urban society. Perhaps the best contemporary participant observer of Portuguese colonial port cities was Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, secretary to the bishop of Goa, who painted a lively but not very flattering portrait of the social life of Goa's decadent citizenry at the end of the 16th century in his *Itinerario*.<sup>22</sup>

## SURVIVING MALAY PORT POLITIES

Emulating the administration of the original sultanate of Melaka, but much smaller in scale, was the typical Malay polity or *negeri* consisting of a local ruler and his followers who had appropriated a river estuary as their power base. The *raja* gathered around himself a mercantile elite of *orang kaya* (lit. rich men) who had a considerable say in government.<sup>23</sup> The character of this type of settlement, most often studied by anthropologically inclined authors like Barbara Andaya (Jambi), James Warren (Sulu), and Muridan Widjojo (Tidore), was often more or less predatory. Their rulers engaged in endemic slave traffic and raids, and monopolized the in- and outgoing traffic on the river in a manner not unlike robber barons.<sup>24</sup> Until the advent of modern times, the island world of South East Asia was sparsely inhabited and consequently suffered from a permanent shortage of manpower. This also

affected the port cities and their hinterland. Indigenous rulers of these hierarchically organized societies based on patron–client relationships often engaged in overseas slave raids to buttress their labour force and man their ships. As a result, the port principalities of South East Asia were served by large slave populations from various regions across the archipelago where they had either been kidnapped or purchased.<sup>25</sup> For the most part situated away from the major thoroughfares of long-distance trade, these port towns—characterized by their particular mode of production and organization—rose and declined spasmodically in the regional pecking order, surviving far into the 19th century as semi-autonomous principalities until finally being overtaken by the expansion of Western imperialism. In some port principalities the *orang kaya*'s status seems to have been akin to that of the ruling merchant elites in European port cities. In the kingdom of Patani, for instance, several queens reigned in succession. This was seen as a device used by the local elite to limit the despotic power of the ruler. In other ports such as Banten and Makassar the local rulers progressively tightened their grip on the port cities and turned into what Anthony Reid has called 'absolutist rulers'.<sup>26</sup> Whatever the political situation may have been, the marketplace was dominated by women to the surprise of foreign traders. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was quite frank about it: 'It is usual for the husband to entrust his pecuniary affairs entirely to his wife. The women alone attend the markets, and conduct all the business of buying and selling. It is proverbial to say the Javanese men are fools in money concerns.'<sup>27</sup>

Because of its particular characteristics, the South East Asian port principality in no way mirrored the privileged source of social change Fernand Braudel identified in the ports of early modern Europe. In fact there was no such thing as civic consciousness and the sojourning merchants all experienced and had to deal with the pressures of despotic power.

### THE EUROPEAN IMPACT

The structure of the traditional emporia trading network and of the port cities themselves had to face new challenges with the discovery of the shipping route around the Cape of Good Hope, which subsequently was to lead to the emergence of the Portuguese, Dutch, and English seaborne empires in Asia. As the Danish historian Niels Steensgaard has shown, by 1600 the oceanic route directed the Asian trade with Europe away from the traditional Maritime Silk Road. The European square-riggers that, driven by the trade winds of the Atlantic Ocean, sailed to and from the Indies via the Cape of Good Hope, almost completely replaced the transcontinental caravan routes from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, thereby dealing to the once famous entrepôts in western Asia a heavy blow.<sup>28</sup>

The European newcomers built themselves such fortified colonial port settlements as Portuguese Malacca, Spanish Manila (1567), and Dutch Batavia (1619), choosing strategic locations along the sailing routes. Erected on easily defensible islands or on the ashes of Asian predecessors, these strongholds served as the headquarters of the European seaborne empires in South East Asia, creating new hierarchical relations with the feeder ports in these regions, either by contract or by force.

By degrees, the European colonial port city constituted a new type of syncretic port settlement combining many aspects of the traditional Malay port principality with Western concepts of morphology, architecture, and urban administration. For visiting Asian traders harbour arrangements remained largely unchanged. They were still represented by *syahbandars* of their own ethnicity and the colonial administrations strove to house them in their own quarters; but what made a difference

was that, under the colonial umbrella, after European property laws were introduced and applied to European and Asian settlers alike in the form of notarial deeds, they could engage in their activities ensured of greater security for their property. As European bridgeheads in Asia, cities like Portuguese Malacca, Dutch Batavia, and Spanish Manila played a nodal role in the early stages of globalization. In the absence of an adequate supply of colonists from the European home countries, Chinese settlers soon formed the middle class in both Manila and Batavia. As J. P. Coen, the founder of the latter city remarked: ‘no people serve us better than the Chinese.’ The unbridled influx of Chinese illegal immigrants led to frequent ethnic clashes, especially in Manila where the Spanish carried out no less than six pogroms against the Chinese settlers. Dutch Batavia also experienced one such massacre of genocidal proportions in 1740, unequivocally laying bare the problematic relations between the various ethnicities in the town.<sup>29</sup>

### QUEEN OF THE EAST: BATAVIA AS IDEAL TYPE OF THE EARLY MODERN COLONIAL PORT CITY

The early history of Batavia, the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Java, was similar in many respects to that of Portuguese Malacca. In the 15th century, this port town, then called Sunda Kelapa, served as the principal outlet for pepper from the Hindu kingdom of Pajajaran. In 1527, the sultan of Cirebon dispatched a military expedition under the command of Prince Fatahilah to conquer Sunda Kelapa. In honour of his victory, the new ruler renamed the town Jayakarta and a few decades later the town became the vassal of the nearby sultanate of Banten. After several failed attempts to conquer Malacca in the first decade of the 17th century, the directors of the VOC decided that its headquarters should be established in Java near the vital passage through the Sunda Strait. Tightly ruled Banten, where the VOC and the English East India Company (EIC) both had large factories, did not provide the wished-for freedom of operation and security for the Dutch to further develop their trading networks in the archipelago. In 1619 the Dutch Governor-General, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, expelled the local ruler of Jayakarta, razed his palace and founded the colonial town of Batavia on its ashes. The new city—basically a strong fort by the sea with a carefully planned walled city at its rear—became the *rendez-vous* or hub of the VOC trading network and in time developed into the most prominent South East Asian port city of the early modern period.

Batavia was situated on the shore of a bay between the sea and a mountain chain. The perpendicularly shaped town, laid out in a geometrical pattern and measuring 2,250 by 1,500 metres, was protected by walls made of coral stone, which contained twenty-four bulwarks, and surrounded by a deep moat. Its commercial nature was emphasized by the extraordinary amount of space allotted to the warehouses and the wharves in town. The VOC annually sent an average of some twenty-five ships to and from Asia and had about forty ships plying the Asian trading routes at any one time. The Dutch merchant elite was originally housed in the imposing castle that overlooked the roadstead, while the town itself was designed in such a way that it included company personnel, Dutch free-burghers and those nations on whose military assistance (free Christian burghers of Asian extraction, the so-called ‘Mardijkers’) and on whose industry (the Chinese) its survival depended. This contrasted sharply with Manila, where the Spanish maintained a strict segregation between themselves and the Chinese settlers, who lived separately outside the city walls in their own China town, the *Parian*. In Batavia Dutchmen, Asian Christians, and Chinese lived *intra muros* served by large numbers of domestic slaves from around the Indonesian archipelago and the Indian subcontinent. A decade after its foundation Batavia already counted 8,000 inhabitants of whom 1,375 were

European free-burghers and 1,912 company servants.<sup>30</sup> Because nearly all company servants came to the Orient unmarried they had to find themselves local brides of Asian descent. As a result most of the European citizenry was of mixed descent.<sup>31</sup> In the first half of the 18th century, the total number of Asian and European inhabitants of Batavia and its suburbs was estimated to be 100,000 people (about 15,000 *intramuros*). Almost half of the town population consisted of domestic slaves.

Quite remarkably, until the middle of the 18th century the Portuguese language continued to be the *lingua franca* in town. Again the role that Asian and European women played in this trading city was significant. If company officials were forbidden to engage in private trade, their wives often were involved in all kinds of business adventures.

In the *Ommelanden*, the direct surroundings of the city, the company allocated plots of land in which the 'martial nations' were concentrated in *kampongs* of their own. These were the Balinese, Bugis, Madurese, and Ambonese who, when called upon, provided troops for the military campaigns waged by the VOC elsewhere in the archipelago. Some fifty years after the foundation of the city, when relations with the nearby sultanate of Banten had been stabilized and the surroundings of the town were considered secure from incursions, members of the merchant elite moved outside the town and built themselves elegant mansions in the countryside. Chinese and Dutch entrepreneurs vied with each other in cutting down the tropical forests in the hinterland and preparing the land for sugar plantations. As was true of Portuguese Malacca, in its early phase Batavia was unable to provide for its own necessities such as foodstuffs, timber, and so on and had to be provisioned by shipments from feeder ports along the northern *pasisir* coast of Java. By the turn of the century the city had created a hinterland of its own. Chinese and Javanese gardeners and peasants supplied foodstuffs for the city and the fleets anchored at the roadstead. Sugar and coffee plantations were established for export purposes in the neighbouring plains and the promontories.

What about the port facilities? Ships calling at Batavia first had to navigate their way through a maze of islands—the Thousand Islands or *Pulau Seribu*—before they arrived at the well-protected roadstead, where East Indiamen, indigenous vessels, and Chinese junks lay at anchor about a mile from Batavia Castle and the walled city situated near the estuary of the Ciliwong River. Established on islands such as Pulau Onrust (Unrest Island), wharves and ship chandlers had all the materials and expertise at hand needed for repairing the VOC vessels arriving after the more than six-month-long voyage from Europe or returning from the typhoon-ridden China Seas. Two long breakwaters extended into the sea from the coast to channel the muddy waters of the Ciliwong River. Smaller Indonesian craft sailed in and out along this canal to find a berth in the inner harbour, the so-called Fishmarket or *Pasar Ikan*.

In Batavia the VOC authorities replicated all the well-developed municipal institutions of their burgher society in the home country—the town hall, hospitals, a law court, the churches, corrective institutions, and an alms house. A *boedelkamer* was established, a relief institution specifically geared to the needs of colonial society and not unlike the Portuguese *Casa de Misericordia*. Local social institutions such as orphanages, old people's homes, hospitals, burial grounds for the poor were based on examples in Holland but, owing to the high mortality in the tropics compounded by the absence of direct kin who could offer direct assistance, these institutions served even more urgent social needs in the East. More than 8,000 volumes of notarial papers in the *Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia* testify to the crucial role that notaries played in noting down legal transactions among Batavia's multi-ethnic citizenry.

Interestingly enough the Dutch urban buildings and institutions were matched by typical Chinese

urban institutions such as a Chinese hospital, common descent associations and the *yamen*-like dwelling of the Chinese captain, the *Kong Tang*, the office where he and his fellow Chinese officers convened every week. Directly outside the city walls were Chinese temples and large cemeteries where Chinese citizens could be buried.<sup>32</sup> Because Chinese women were strictly forbidden by the imperial government to go abroad, the Chinese males living in Batavia had to seek local partners locally. They showed a preference for Balinese women both for their beauty and dietary habits. Thanks to their Hindu creed these consorts did not, as did their Islamic sisters, object to pork, the staple food of the Chinese menu. Out of the mixed marriage of Chinese husbands and indigenous wives emerged the so-called *peranakan* group, which came to represent the large majority of the Chinese population of Batavia. Demographic data of the Chinese citizenry in the *Kong Koan* archives dating from the 1780s show that on average the bridegroom was twice as old as the bride, i.e. 28 years vs. 14 years old. This seems to imply that males did not marry until they had acquired enough wealth to support a family.<sup>33</sup>

Eventually Batavia served as the centre of an extended network of intra-Asian trade, making use of an exceedingly sophisticated information network that enabled the Governor-General and Council of the Indies to keep well informed about price developments and political affairs throughout Asia. Whereas in the past the inner seas of the Indian Ocean consisted of a series of networks with trajectories that could be covered in one monsoon, now for the first time a closely interlocking system, incorporating all the shipping movements of the VOC into one single synchronized trading network, was created. The trade-oriented character of the Batavia, its strong defences, its ethnic mix, and its neat replication of civic institutions made some visitors think that the town represented 'Holland in the tropics'. Others looked through that veneer and marvelled at the Chinese component of this colonial town, idealizing the Chinese community as representing an alternative kind of life and social organization.<sup>34</sup> In accordance with the tradition in South East Asian societies, the (mostly mestizo) wives of the Dutch company servants also played a very important role in holding the fabric of society together and providing the channel for the inheritance of money, property, and trading partnerships. This showed in various ways. Wealthy Batavian widows who had survived two or three husbands were much sought after. Almost all company servants came to the East unmarried and because patronage was vital to advancement in the company hierarchy, marrying a wealthy widow or the young daughter of a high rank company employee was observed to be a ticket to success.<sup>35</sup> As Jean Gelman Taylor has pointed out: 'At the heart of the Indies clan were women, locally born and raised, who brought men into relationships of patron and protégé as father-in-law, son-in-law, and brothers-in-law... the crucial family links were not those between father and son but between a man and his in-laws.'<sup>36</sup>

Although the city of Batavia was a complex plural society informed by both Dutch and Chinese colonization, it continued to preserve many features of the indigenous port principalities of the region. The Governor-General and the Council of the Indies in Batavia Castle continued to honour the traditional ritual and the ceremonial order in their external relations, as if they were indigenous rulers seconded by *orang kaya*. Every visiting indigenous merchant to the town could assess that matters of trade just as elsewhere in the archipelago were initially dealt with by a *syahbandar* or harbour master, who would not only provide translators in matters of trade but would work in close tandem with the Captain of the Malays in drafting the diplomatic letters to the neighbouring port principalities.

As the capital of a hegemonic regional maritime power, Batavia became involved in intensive

diplomatic traffic with its vassals around the Java Sea, regularly receiving envoys from abroad who would be received with pomp and circumstance and ceremoniously escorted to Batavia Castle where the letter from their ruler would be presented to the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies present there in their official capacity.

There was one big difference between Batavia and its Portuguese predecessor, Malacca. Whereas the *casados* in the Estado da India had considerable freedom to engage in private trade, the contrary was true in the VOC establishments. This has generally been judged by historians to be the undoing of the mighty Dutch trading company in the face of strong English competition in the 18th century. Viewed as a threat to the wellbeing of the VOC, large-scale private enterprise was forbidden. This issue of free trade for Batavian burghers was contentious from the very founding of the city. When Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen pleaded with the directors of the company that room should be made for a free burgher society that could operate in business as freely as the Portuguese of Estado da India, he was actually recalled to *Patria* to explain his views. He failed to do so. In 1648, twenty years after Coen's death, the free burghers of Batavia addressed a petition to the States-General of the Netherlands in which they complained that the government of their city lacked all the liberties of free Dutch society. They claimed that the politically powerless Chinese citizens of the town actually enjoyed more benefits than they did.<sup>37</sup> The company, with some 25,000 employees in its service, like its sister corporations jealously maintained its monopolies, not only on the route between Asia and Europe, but also in its urban establishments in Asia itself. Eventually this undermined the position of Batavia as the centre of commerce in Asia and, by the beginning of the 18th century, the city had become a loss-making proposition.

In the eyes of the company directorate in the Low Countries, Batavia turned into a parasitic consumption city, a drain on the company organization, not only financially but also because it was a devourer of men. Owing to epidemic diseases that raged in Batavia from the 1730s, no less than one-sixth of the personnel died each year. But probably the greatest set-back to the local economy was the ghastly massacre of the Chinese population inside the town in 1740, victims of reprisals by their fellow townsmen after an ineffectual rebellion by Chinese vagrants outside the town. Consequently, the urban economy of Batavia, which its free Chinese citizens had gradually come to dominate, received a blow from which it never fully recovered, even after Chinese immigration resumed. Environmental factors also contributed to the decay of the port town and led to the administration moving its offices and housing several leagues inland, away from the castle by the sea. The city reconstructed on higher grounds was effectively turned into the modern capital of the Netherlands Indies showing the same features as many of its colonial sister cities elsewhere in Asia (see below, [Ch. 43](#)).

## CONCLUSION

Even if the early modern European colonial port cities made a great impact on the distribution of trade in South East Asia, the traditional Malay port principalities survived remarkably well right into the period of high imperialism of the 19th century, when at long last they had to give up their political independence. The end of Batavia as the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company was more abrupt. By the end of the 18th century, the port city's function as a distributing trade entrepôt was essentially bypassed by the English country trade between India and China. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) and the Napoleonic Wars led to the downfall and bankruptcy of the Dutch East

India Company and sounded the death knell of the emporium. While the English East India Company and its port settlements in India were saved by the profits accrued from the country traders and their connections with the booming China trade, the Dutch East India Company suffered an ignominious end protecting its own monopolies. Ironically the headquarters of the British administration in Bengal, Calcutta, although confronted with similar health hazards, malaria and other epidemics, survived and thrived because, in contrast to Batavia, it was a commercial town providing abundant opportunities for its citizens to engage in their own business affairs and academic pursuits.

In addition to this because of deteriorating ecological factors, early modern colonial port cities like Goa and Batavia had become breeding grounds of malaria and other deadly epidemics and were no longer fit for habitation. They simply had to be moved farther inland, and thereby lost their original character. The rise of the country trade, the demise of the East India companies as key players on the scene, and the retreat of the colonial administrative centres from the malaria-infested coast to higher ground, led to the establishment of new types of colonial cities, with different morphologies (see below, [Chs. 31](#) and [40](#)). Then, at the turn of the 19th century, a new type of colonial port city with man-made harbours and docks emerged in which the colonial governments facilitated in the organization of maritime trade and passenger traffic but intervened as little as possible; witness the establishment of Singapore in 1819.

## NOTES

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6. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese, Studies in the Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), 40–4.
7. André Wink, *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 1990–2004), 3 vols.
8. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. II, 281–9.
9. Indu Banga, *Ports and Their Hinterlands in India 1700–1950* (New Delhi: Manohar 1992), 10.
10. André Wink, 'From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean: Medieval History in Geographic Perspective', *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, 44 (2002), 416–20.
11. Dietmar Rothermund defines the emporium as 'a market place in which a variety of goods is more or less continuously available and in which a plurality of buyers and sellers can meet without undue restraint under predictable conditions of supply and demand.' See: 'Asian Emporia and

European Bridgeheads', in R. Ptak and D. Rothermund, eds., *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, ca. 1400–1750* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1991), 3.

12. VOC is the commonly used acronym for *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, the United Dutch East India Company.
13. Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).
14. Liaw Yock Fang, *Undang-Undang Melaka: The Laws of Melaka* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976).
15. Tomé Pires, *Suma Oriental* (Complete Treatise on the Orient), 2 vols. (London: Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, second series, LXXX, XXC, 1944).
16. Ibid. 287.
17. Anthony Reid produces tables showing incredibly high population figures for Malacca (as many as 100,000 inhabitants) while others speak of 20,000 persons.
18. Luis Filipe Thomaz, 'Melaka et ses communautés marchandes au tournant du 16e siècle', in Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin, eds., *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine, 13e–20e siècles* (Paris: Editions d'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1988), 39.
19. The *Estado da India* or the State of India was the name given by the Portuguese Crown to the Portuguese imperial enterprise in Asia. This state was not a unitary state but a collection of forts, fleets, and communities which stretched from East Africa to Japan.
20. Pires, *Suma Oriental*, vol. 2, 251.
21. Ibid. 265.
22. H. Kern, ed., *Itinerario, Voyage ofte schipvaert van [Jan Huygen van Linschoten] naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien 1579–1592* (Itinerary, The Voyage of Jan Huygen van Linschoten to East or Portuguese India 1579–1592). Linschoten Vereeniging LVII, LVIII, LX (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955–7), 3 vols.
23. In the course of the 17th century, the rulers of port principalities like Aceh, Banten, and Makassar who were originally *primi inter pares* showed, according to Anthony Reid, increasingly 'absolutist' tendencies as they tried to defend themselves against Western incursions into their domains.
24. Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993); James Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898* (Singapore: NUS, 2007); Muridan Satrio Widjojo, *Cross-Cultural Alliance-Making and Local Resistance in Maluku during the Revolt of Prince Nuku, c. 1780–1810* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
25. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 1, 133.
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*Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986), 73–96.

30. Hendrik E. Niemeijer, *Batavia. Een koloniale samenleving in de 17<sup>de</sup> eeuw* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2005), 39.
31. Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia, European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 33–51; Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 32–49; Blussé, *Strange Company*, 156–71.
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37. Blussé, *Strange Company*, 83.

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## LATIN AMERICA

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO

EVEN before they saw the New World, explorers filled it with imaginary cities. Among speculative islands that speckled the Atlantic in late medieval maps was the ‘Isle of Seven Cities’—so called in Portugal in tribute to the legend of seven fugitive bishops, who supposedly founded sees beyond the ocean when Muslims invaded Hispania. An early edition of Columbus’ first report featured a map of Hispaniola, full of spired and turreted skylines. The expectation that a world of cities lay across the Atlantic was too strong for reality to dispel it. In Río de la Plata, Spaniards heard delusive rumours of cities in the interior. In 1540, tales of ‘Cíbola’ and ‘Quivirá’ kept Francisco Vázquez de Coronado spurring northwards from Mexico to a disappointing assemblage of grass-topped huts in Kansas.

The anticipation that the New World would disclose many cities was exaggerated, but not altogether fantastic. In parts of the Americas there really were indigenous cities, in the sense of self-defined places with densely clustered populations numbered in thousands.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish monarchy managed to engross almost the whole urban indigenous world, leaving unurbanized zones to Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English rivals. This accident shaped the empire. By annexing the regions of densest population, Spaniards founded the only great empire of both land and sea in the early modern world, while other Europeans kept to coastal toeholds, and the traditional empires of Asia and Africa stayed land-bound. Portugal’s American colonies hugged the shore until the late 17th century, when the gold of Minas Gerais made inland city-building feasible. Slavers raided the interior from São Paulo, which received its charter as a city in 1711, but it was only forty-odd miles from the sea. It remained small and dependent on the nearby port of Santos throughout the colonial period.

My focus is therefore on Spanish (with some reference to Portuguese) America (see Regional [Map II.6](#)). After reviewing indigenous urban traditions—and those colonists brought—I describe the physical and social fabrics of colonial cities, with the major economic, political, and cultural changes they experienced. A coda deals with innovations between independence and the impact of global industrialization, which is the subject of the next chapter.

## INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

Evidence of monumental building shows that formally organized concentrations of population had a long history in the Andean region and Mesoamerica. In the former, urban life is detectable in remains from the 3rd millennium BCE in the arid coastal zones and low valleys of Peru. The earliest convincing Mesoamerican evidence dates from a little later in moist lowlands in Veracruz and Tabasco. Urban life then spread to where settlers could exploit the ecological diversity of mountains and plateaux.

Though precarious and subject to periodic ruin or abandonment, the early cities inaugurated a genuine tradition. In central Mexico Spaniards found city-builders who looked with nostalgia—resembling, perhaps, that of some medieval Europeans for Roman ruins—to the downfallen

metropolis of Teotihuacán, which, to judge from the size of the built-up area, housed perhaps over 100,000 people in the mid-1st millennium CE, but was abandoned 300 or so years later. In Peru, Chavín de Huantar, the earliest city recorded at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, lasted for about 700 years from around 1200 BCE, and remained a model for later highland ambitions. Coastal Chan Chan, which housed up to 30,000 people for perhaps four or five centuries before destruction by highland invaders late in the 15th century CE, continued, on an expanded scale, earlier methods of sustenance and building. Its conquerors, the Inca, seem to have looked admiringly on the ruins of Tiahuanaco, which sustained a similar population at over 12,000 feet above sea level in the second half of the 1st millennium CE.

Urban life ceased at that time in Tabasco and Veracruz, but in nearby lowlands to the south the first builders of Maya cities (which new finds date to the 4th century BCE) continued or revived some techniques and aesthetics. From the 2nd century CE onwards, Mayan builders seem to have learned from the ruins of the first metropolis, El Mirador, abandoned as a result of ecological constraints. In the rainy Usumacinta valley, the Guatemalan Petén, Belize, and northern Honduras, hundreds of city-states, many of between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants, waged war on each other for five centuries until a baffling and relatively sudden transformation, during the 9th and 10th centuries, dethroned their elites, depopulated their fields, and ended monumental building.<sup>2</sup> But new or renewed cities in Yucatán and the Guatemalan highlands preserved many of their traditions.

Spaniards first saw concentrations of urban life in Yucatán. Bernal Díaz claimed to be an eyewitness of the first city explorers spotted from off the coast in 1517. They called it ‘El Gran Cairo’, perhaps in allusion to its gaudily painted pyramids.<sup>3</sup> It was probably one of two major trading towns of the area, Edná and Tulúm, where laden canoes beached for barter on the cabotage route from the Aztec-dominated shores of central Mexico towards what is now Panama. Arrayed along streets in rough grids, instead of among the free-flowing plazas typical of earlier eras, they were products of a recent revival. For the cities of the region had a troubled history in an almost rainless tableland, reliant on underground water-sources and covered with unyielding yet unproductive scrub. Cobá, inland from Tulúm, had been abandoned for centuries. Wars between rival dynasties had vacated two of the greatest cities, Chichén Itzá in the 13th century and Mayapán in the 14th.

In the Guatemalan highlands Spanish invaders, arriving in the 1520s, encountered impressive stone cities. Iximché, from where the invasion dispersed the population, was the courtly centre of the Caqchiquel, with ‘fine public buildings and houses’, according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who stayed in the empty husk of the city in 1526, ‘as luxurious as those of the chiefs who ruled all the neighbouring provinces’.<sup>4</sup> Cumarkaj, capital of the rival Quiché, was comparably ambitious: Pedro de Alvarado evacuated and burned it as part of his terror campaign to subdue the region in 1526. Here the layout—temples topped by pavilions or ceremonial chambers, and ascended by steep stairways, around intercommunicating plazas with ball courts and elite residences—more resembled the abandoned cities of the ‘classic’ age than the contemporary trading settlements of the Yucatán coast.

The same kind of plan, broadly speaking, characterized cities throughout Mesoamerica. The biggest, grandest assemblages of buildings were in the valley of Mexico. Tenochtitlán, which became the site of Mexico City, represented the apex of a complex structure of exchanges of tribute that included over 300 communities. It was a huge metropolis, incapable of sustaining itself, with a population of debated dimensions, probably of at least 80,000, in the middle of a lake, with farmland laboriously dredged from the lake bottom. At an altitude of over 7,000 feet, many products essential

to the inhabitants' ways of life were unobtainable locally, including cacao for elite symposia, rubber and incense for rituals, jade and gold for display, quetzal feathers for divine disguises, and—above all—cotton for everyday apparel and for the quilted armour warriors needed. Long-range trade and predation were vital. Tribute lists almost certainly surviving or copied from the pre-Hispanic archives of the Aztec state show how exchanges of products meshed the ecology of the valley of Mexico, supplying cities with products from afar according to a hierarchy of entitlement established by warfare.<sup>5</sup> With modifications, the system survived Spanish conquest and enabled Spaniards to maintain large cities.

The old native centres were recognizably civic to European minds. They had economic functions but, overwhelmingly, owed their existence and characters to the presence of chiefly courts. In Maya cities, ruling dynasties were so dominant that surviving inscriptions hardly mention anyone else. Tall roof-combs, sometimes blazoned with the masks of kings, topped temples and proclaimed the city to travellers—inducing trade, perhaps, and deterring attack. In the Mixtec world, which occupied much of what is now south-western Mexico, where settlements were relatively small and sprawling, the only surviving documents are genealogies of kings and queens. The palace, typically signified by an entablature of ring-like symbols, was often the most impressive building, or was exceeded only by a temple. Most cities expressed identity in multiple ways. Many housed shrines, drawing pilgrims from other cities. All probably possessed 'sacred bundles' of mementos and relics of heroes or deities.<sup>6</sup>

Urban models spread from Mesoamerica. Casas Grandes, a trading post in Chihuahua where macaw feathers were processed, was a major outpost.<sup>7</sup> When Spaniards penetrated what are now the south-eastern United States from the 1520s they found substantial agrarian settlements grouped around stone-faced mounds.<sup>8</sup> The culture-area shrank from its greatest extent, at around the 13th century, when the city of Cahokia, near present-day St Louis, may have had a population of around 15,000. Perhaps because of pathogens Spaniards introduced, which were deadly to unimmunized people, continuing urban life seems to have undergone a precipitate decline from the 1540s. In the North American south-west, meanwhile, a distinctive urban tradition scattered the land with what Spanish observers called pueblos. Vázquez de Coronado, who led the first major incursion in 1540–1542, described them: between 200 and 1,200 houses strong, of up to four stories, built of adobe, with timber frames and walls half a yard thick, set with mortar made of 'ash, coal and dirt'.<sup>9</sup> More than a century and a half elapsed before Spaniards built significantly more ambitious settlements in the region, where rainfall was scanty and agriculture depended on irrigation.

Cities also abounded in the Andean region, especially in the Muisca culture-area, in what is now Colombia, where states were relatively small and city-centred, and in the enormous Inca empire, which, at its height in the early 16th century, stretched from what is now northern Ecuador to the vicinity of the River Bío-bío in Chile. In the Andes, as in Mesoamerica, cities combined courtly, religious, and economic functions, housing dynasties and shrines and serving as emporia for what might be called ecological imperialism. They shifted labour and products across the many environmental zones encompassed in the vast latitudinal extent of the Inca world, or located at different altitudes, where climate and the incidence of sun and rain varied startlingly along precipitous slopes or from side to side across valleys.<sup>10</sup>

In the rest of pre-Hispanic South America, there is no strong evidence of city-scale settlements. The first Spanish expedition along the Amazon, however, in 1540, reported huge assemblages of wooden, stilt-raised dwellings and temples at intervals along the riverbank. At the largest, which they

called Omagua, observers reported 50,000 inhabitants. Conventionally, historians have dismissed the claims as ravings of travellers maddened by a taxing and unfamiliar environment, but the region had potential for dense habitation, with farming in the silts of the *varea* and aquaculture in channels. It is possible that, as in southeastern North America, European diseases obliterated urban life.<sup>11</sup>

## THE FABRIC OF THE COLONIAL CITY

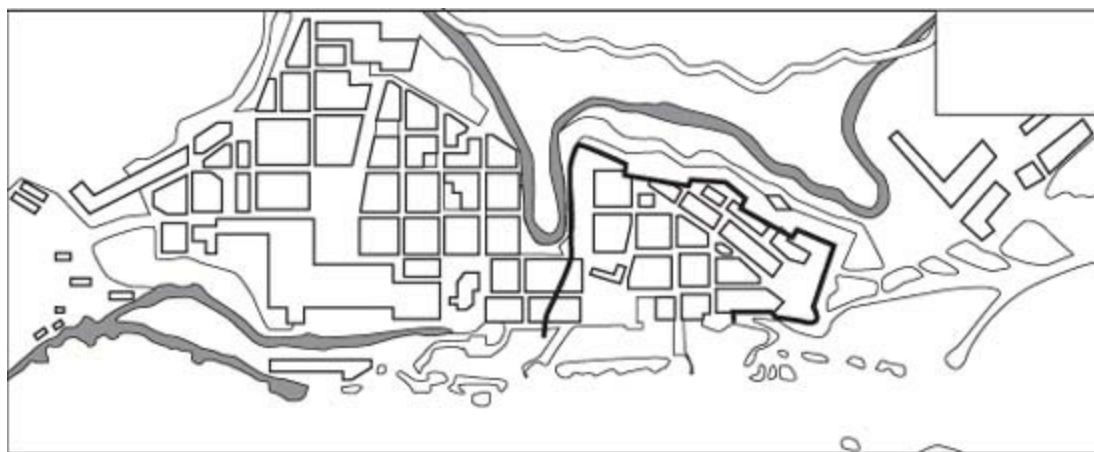
Where there were no cities, Spanish and Portuguese settlers resolved to build them, inspired by imaginations so extravagant that reality could hardly match them. The first Spanish settlement was Navidad, decreed by Columbus: a rough stockade of timbers from the *Santa María*, which foundered off the eastern tip of Hispaniola on Christmas Day, 1492. The engraver depicted Navidad as an extravagance of dressed stone and proud towers, with a crane hoisting an emergent roofscape. When Columbus returned to the site in 1493, the garrison had been massacred. The following year, efforts to establish a city he called Isabela proved unavailing in a swampy, unhealthy site. Jauja, the first Spanish foundation in Peru, was too sterile and indefensible to survive. The sequence of over-ambitious foundation, rapid disillusionment, and abandonment recurred countless times, though there were cases of heroic persistence, as in Guatemala, where successive versions of the first capital, Santiago de los Caballeros, took shape under the volcano. The final destruction of 1743 bequeathed the picturesque ruins of Antigua.<sup>12</sup>

Founding a city seems almost to have been a reflex action. If, when two Englishmen meet on a savage frontier, they start a club, Spaniards in similar circumstances found a city. In Spanish-ruled America, two urban traditions met: the indigenous and the intruded, for urban values dominated Spanish notions of civility. Spain's aristocracies from the late Middle Ages onwards were almost entirely town-dwelling. The history of the reconquest of territory by Christian kingdoms, including Portugal, can be told largely in terms of charters granted to frontier settlements. Although Spanish cities did not typically evince the strong continuity with antiquity—or the corresponding impulse to autonomy—found in Italy (above, Ch. 12), they tended to enclose powerful identities and civic pride, manifest in the revolt of the comuneros—a failed, widespread movement of resistance against royal and aristocratic encroachment in town government in the 1520s—and a long, painful history of lawsuits over the limits of urban jurisdiction throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The first thing Cortés did when he landed in what is now Mexico was to found the city of Veracruz. His motives were mixed, because the authority of mayor gave his otherwise piratical enterprise a cloak of legitimacy;<sup>13</sup> but the device arose from a long history of urban habits of thought.

Town plans, which, if they were realized at all, often took generations or centuries to take shape, reflected reconquest traditions. As in foundations such as Santa Fe, from where Ferdinand and Isabella oversaw the siege of Granada in 1490–1492, the military camp, rather than the classical city, seems to have been the model, with rows of dwellings aligned at right-angles, and a central square for military exercises, surrounded by spaces for worship and government. Early town plans were extemporized by conquistadores or—in his capacity as the least uneducated person present—a priest; they were not the work of professionals. The grid pattern, though from the 1570s the crown repeatedly issued ordinances endorsing it, seems to have come almost without thought to untutored minds.<sup>14</sup> Pizarro, who could barely read, designed Lima himself, as a grid of 137 symmetrically arrayed blocks.<sup>15</sup> Cuzco was exceptional in retaining its pre-conquest street plan, but the image of the colonial grid was so powerful that when the engravers of *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* depicted the city, they

stamped it, erroneously, with the common pattern. To Brazil in 1549 with Tomé de Sousa, governor of Salvador de Bahia, came numerous artisans who developed the city, confined by the surrounding topography, in a triangular but grid-like layout (see Fig. 20.1).<sup>16</sup>

Though designs conformed typically to European norms, Spanish and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese settlements could usually be established only with indigenous consent. This is the untold story of conquest: how, for every violent episode, hundreds of peacefully negotiated relationships developed between natives and newcomers by virtue of the ‘stranger-effect’—the willingness of some cultures to welcome strangers as arbitrators, holy men, elite marriage partners, and even kings.<sup>17</sup> To build Lima, Pizarro negotiated with the local chief for land and labour. Even in Tenochtitlán, conquered in a protracted, destructive siege, Cortés signified respect for the political status quo, by enthroning the defeated Aztec paramount, Cuauhtemoc, saluting him and—in the Spaniards’ standard gesture of reassurance—stroking his hair. Once Spaniards were entrenched in power, they commonly repudiated agreements. Cortés put Cuauhtemoc to death when they were away together on an expedition in Maya territory. The *cabildo* of Lima never formally acknowledged the local contract.



**FIGURE 20.1** Salvador, based on a watercolour plan by João Teixeira Albernaz, c.1616.

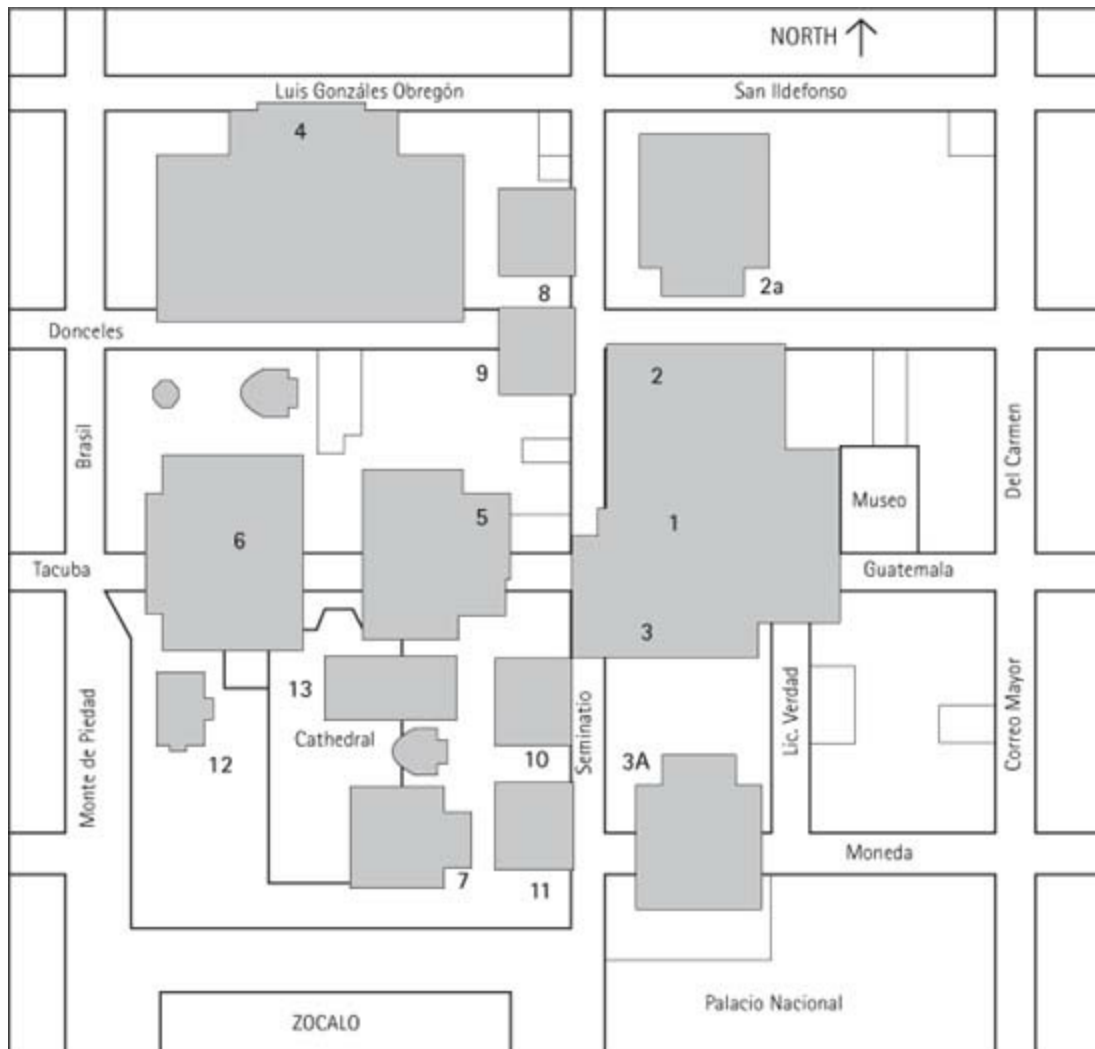
By tearing down structures and reconstructing from scratch, Spaniards could emphasize a break with the past (see Fig. 20.2) and build in what—to the natives—was a new aesthetic, daringly erecting frail arches in an earthquake-convulsed environment. Three conditions encouraged such ambitions: the apparently providential nature of the conquest, effected against overwhelming odds; the novelty of the setting, which inspired new departures; and the availability of labour.

In 1554, barely a generation after the conquest of Mexico, a guidebook described the effects.<sup>18</sup> ‘How the approach to the city makes the senses and spirit exult!’ the imaginary visitor exclaims. ‘The houses are... such as the richest and noblest cities deserve.’ Noise and traffic made a mere street seem a marketplace, under the richly decorated balconies of the Viceroy’s courtiers. ‘Nothing in either world,’ the visitor continues, ‘can equal’ the main square—the ‘forum’, as he calls it. Slack-jawed, he passes the pox hospital, the ‘Domicile of Minerva, Apollo and the Muses’ and the schools respectively for boys and girls of mixed Spanish and native parentage. Exotic elements are revealed—the indigenous population, the native foodstuffs in the market. ‘Unheard-of names!’ exclaims the visitor, ‘and fruits never yet beheld!’ The writer even makes imperfection virtuous: when the Augustinians’ house is finished ‘it could join as the eighth of those wonders of the world.’

By the 1590s, Mexico City had universities, bullrings, theatres, hospitals, libraries, printing presses, metropolitan sees, and a population big enough to rival major urban centres in Europe. The

streets were paved at the end of the century. In 1604, Bernardo de Balbuena, the unofficial laureate, declared:

Es México en los mundos de Occidente  
una imperial ciudad de gran distrito,  
sitio, concurso y poblazón de gente.  
(Mexico, in all the worlds of the West,  
For empire, size, and place is best,  
With concourse of great peopling blessed.



**FIGURE 20.2** Central Mexico City: the colonial street plan with the locations of major pre-colonial buildings, redrawn from Ignacio Marquina and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma in *Arqueología mexicana* (October, 1995). Key: 1. Templo mayor: dual temple dedicated to Huitzilpochtli and Tlaloc; 2. Quauacalli (House of the eagle); 2a. Oratory of Tezcatlipoca (Oratory of the warriors ascribed to Quauacalli); 3. House of the jaguar; 3a. Temple of Tezcatlipoca; 4. Calmecatl (School of priests); 5. Temple of Quetzalcoatl; 6. Tlachtlí (Ballcourt); 7. House of the sun; 8. Coateocalli (House of the serpent); 9. Temple of Chichuacoatl; 10. Temple of Chicomecoatli; 11. Temple of Xochiquetzal; 12. Tozpalatl (Fountain); 13. Tzompanti (Skull rack).

For Arias de Villalobos, grammarian, poet, priest, and theatrical impresario, who maintained a school in the 1610s and 1620s, ‘no courtly city, except Madrid’, was greater.<sup>19</sup>

Lima acquired similar amenities and encomiasts. Antonio de León Pinelo was first. The outstanding jurist and man of letters devoted much of the last four decades of his life, from the 1620s, to vindicating the glories of the New World against the indifference or detraction of sneerers in Europe. He never completed his projected history of Lima but his sense of the city’s grandeur informed his monumental work, published in 1656, arguing that God had located Eden in America. In

1687, just before a major earthquake halved the population to about 40,000, the limeño creole, Rodrigo de Valdés, called the city ‘the Rome of the Americas’. For his compatriot and contemporary, Juan Meléndez, Lima was ‘queen of the cities of the westernmost world’.<sup>20</sup>

Maybe the eulogists protested too much. But the idea of America as *tabula rasa* inspired churchmen’s dreams of apostolic purity and citizens’ of antique virtue. Both impulses animated urban ideals unrealizable in Europe. Utopians could apply Vitruvian nostrums and erect cities with broad, straight streets, right-angled intersections, spacious plazas, hierarchically ordered spaces, and perfect geometry. There were no walls, except for seaward defences. Thomas More located Utopia in the New World just before Mexico was revealed, and Mexico really became the most perfect city of its day, according to the prevailing aesthetic. It remained the model for other colonial foundations, including most of those in North America.<sup>21</sup>

Three features helped ensure that Mexico City’s artistic and scientific life would be vibrant throughout the colonial period: the viceroys’ court, the many religious orders that provided artistic patronage, and an emulous town-dwelling aristocracy descended from the conquistadores and native dynasties. Shortly before ruinous revolts ended in independence and inaugurated Mexico’s era of relative stagnation, Alexander von Humboldt hailed the capital as ‘one of the finest cities ever built by Europeans in either hemisphere.’<sup>22</sup> By then the city housed, by Humboldt’s count, 137,000 people.

What one might call metropolitan aspirations were widely diffused among cities with regional institutions of government and of clerisy, especially *audiencias* (tribunals of last resort, save for appeal to Spain) and episcopal cathedrae or houses of religion with provincials in residence. All citizenries tended to have pretensions disproportionate to their size or economic success, besieging the crown for charters and for concessions of authority over neighbouring settlements. Though colonial cities differed widely in functions and origins—encompassing what might originally have been missions, garrisons, administrative centres, local or regional markets, mining camps, oceanside trading posts, indigenous centres, and shrines—development typically followed the original plans, which appealed to the enlightened successors of the early colonial elite.

Despite the ordered appearance of urban grids, the social fabric of cities was tangled and unpatterned—nowhere more so than in the mining towns of Zacatecas and Potosí, which sprouted alarmingly to house over 100,000 people within a few years of its foundation.<sup>23</sup> A painting by the most fashionable artist of late 17th-century Mexico, Cristóbal de Villalpando, was frank about the social problems that accompanied madcap growth. Unassimilated Native Americans, beggars, lepers, and lowlifes throng his canvas. Cities had quarters definable in ethnic and class terms. Most of Salvador’s ‘indio’ residents lived and worked in the *Rencôncavo* along the bay. By 1630 Lima had eight hospitals in different parts of the town, and each served a particular sector as well as a peculiar clientele: natives, Spaniards, lepers, clergy, naval personnel, orphans, women, and convalescents. Santiago de Guatemala in the mid-18th century had quarters identified with Spaniards, mestizos, ‘indios’, and ladinos—linguistically Hispanicized natives, who supplied the artisans that thronged the towns in many regions, including native towns. Ordinances of Xochimilco, a native town on the outskirts of Mexico City, listed carpenters, masons, woodcutters, metalworkers, fishermen, featherworkers, and sandalmakers in 1563—ample evidence of the interpenetration of traditional and colonial economies.<sup>24</sup>

Even in cities that natives and colonists shared, the policy, which New Spain’s first viceroy espoused, of maintaining two distinct *repúblicas* of ‘indios’ and Spaniards, left an enduring imprint.



Many cities excluded, or tried to exclude, ‘indios’ with varying success. Quarters reserved, in effect, for different ethnicities were spaces where identities formed, sometimes in rivalry or conflict. Villalpando’s painting celebrates the discrete realms of ethnic diversity. In the foreground, the elite appear, with elegant carriages and elaborate manners, parading wealth, status, and European taste. Around a fountain, where the water-carriers gather, the thatched stalls of native vendors spread neatly, while native women—many in European dress—sit under fashionable umbrellas.

Blacks were rarely numerous enough, in Spanish-ruled lands, to form quarters of their own, and even when freed tended to live dispersed among other populations. An 18th-century painting of Mexico City’s Alameda shows a bourgeois family promenading with every affectation of civility: white parents, proudly accompanying their little black boy. A caption explains insouciantly that such variations of pigmentation were often the innocent product of throwbacks. Blacks did occupy discrete quarters in mining towns and in Portuguese-founded cities, where they supplied industrial as well as domestic labour on large scale. They also established ‘maroon’ towns of their own, typically in defensible fastnesses. Occasionally these could attain substantial dimensions: Palmares, in northern Brazil, probably exceeded 10,000 inhabitants before its destruction by Portuguese forces in the late 17th century.<sup>25</sup>

Environmental influences helped shape cities. Behind Mexico City’s main square, as Villalpando painted it, a volcano looms: a reminder of splendour at the mercy of God. Architects became adept at designing for seismic instability. In Antigua, their ingenuity is visible in the arcaded 18th-century cloisters of the convent of Santa Clara, protected by massive, squat supports. Water supply tested Spanish engineers. ‘To serve the common good and health of the people’, reported the city council of Lima in 1552, ‘it is necessary to construct a fountain or fountains where the people can get clean water’, since snow-melt from the sierras arrived ‘cloudy and spreads illness’.<sup>26</sup> Aqueducts—as in the Roman empire that Spanish imperialists often saw as their predecessor and model—became symbols of the supposed benignity and efficiency of Spanish rule. By 1600 Mexico City had two. In the 1560s, Lima began to build an aqueduct when physicians suspected that the Rímac River bore disease. Some environmental problems proved intractable.<sup>27</sup> In Mexico City, most notably, the lake-bound location condemned the city to flooding and slow sinking. Repeated efforts to drain the lake failed.

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE

Equally testing were problems of attracting settlement and supplying labour, not least because, as colonial cities emerged, struggled and grew, indigenous populations experienced one of the most sudden, severe, and enduring demographic collapses ever recorded: 90 per cent within a couple of generations, with recovery following very unevenly and not generally until the 18th century. Urbanization in the context of demographic collapse seems paradoxical. (Reliable statistics for cities in the colonial period are rare, but [Table 20.1](#) shows some census-supported figures.) Spanish authorities periodically attempted what they called *congregación*, relocating depleted populations in an attempt to preserve large-scale urban groupings. Natives, however, tended to resist these initiatives.

In partial consequence, Spanish administrators were always yearning for freedom from dependence on natives for labour and maize for food. The relationship between the Spanish-populated settlement of Puebla de los Ángeles, established in 1531, and the older, neighbouring, indigenous city of

Cholula, illustrates the problems. The crown established Puebla for self-sufficient Spanish farmers. Franciscans chose the first few dozen ‘very poor and deserving’ settlers. Crown and clergy hoped settlers would do without *corvéés*: the crown resented the alienation of royal rights, while many friars deplored the morally debilitating effects of a system that supposedly exploited natives and enfeebled or corrupted Spaniards. Here, however, as everywhere, dreams of Spanish cities independent of native help proved illusory. Authorities brought in natives to build Puebla. A year later, rains destroyed the adobe buildings and for more than a decade ‘temporary’ levies resumed annually. Indians who worked for Spaniards were exempt from tribute. Chiefs made individual contracts to supply settlers with manpower. Everywhere, in promoting settlement, local initiatives tended to work better than imperial policies. Lima emerged as a cosmopolitan city from the chaos of mid 16th-century civil wars thanks to committed residents, including *encomenderos*, Spanish women, blacks, and artisans.<sup>28</sup>

The major influences that European intruders brought were economic. In some ways, the tenacity of the pre-Hispanic economy was remarkable: throughout the 16th century tribute lists disclosed undisturbed patterns of rural production, with the same goods, recorded in the same ways, and often with the same notation, in the form of pre-Hispanic glyphs, as in the old pre-conquest archives. Gradually, however, new production intruded. Tlaxcala, a wholly indigenous city in the valley of Mexico, diversified into pigs, quinces, and peaches in the mid-16th century. The Mixtec town of Santa Catalina Texpán in the same period specialized in silk, saddlery, and sheep—all unknown in the New World before Spaniards arrived. Ranching and pastoralism absorbed indigenous elites, shifting economic focus out of the cities and immediate hinterlands into the under-populated, remoter countryside. Sometimes, however, new activities overlapped city limits: the *cabildo* of Lima ordered sheep out of the city. Wheat, olive oil, and grapes infiltrated fields and marketplaces. Cochineal assumed a new importance as a dye for global markets, provoking complaints that merchant plutocrats were supplanting traditional aristocracies.<sup>29</sup> Spanish presence meshed New World cities into longer-range trades than had been possible under native rule. Major ports, such as Havana, Veracruz, Cartagena, Acapulco, and Callao, grew up, linked with transatlantic and, from the 1560s, transpacific routes, and thence with growing global networks. As well as Spanish exports of bullion to Europe, Manila after 1571 became the destination for large-scale shipments of Spanish dollars and silver from Acapulco, in return for Chinese silks, porcelain, bronzes, and jade (see above, [Ch. 19](#)). Spanish colonial ports had large military and marine establishments, dominant merchant patriciates, and waterfront cultures that were unimaginable before the 16th century.

**Table 20.1 Population of Selected Latin American Urban Centres (according to Census Reports or Official Estimates), 16th–18th centuries<sup>a</sup>**

City	Date	Population
Buenos Aires	1522	1,203
	1744	10,056
	1773	24,363
Havana	1608	c. 10,000
	1741	c. 18,000
	1791	51,037
Lima	1599	14,262
	1614	25,434
	1700	37,234
	1755	52,627
Mexico City	1599	c. 50,000
	1742	c. 98,000
	1772	112,462
Panama City	1610	4,831
Pernambuco	1570	c. 6000*
	1585 (c)	c. 12,000*
Potosi	1572	c. 120,000
	1610	c. 160,000
	1700	c. 70,000
	1780	c. 22,000
Quito	1582	5,448
	1650	15,750
	1670 (c)	c. 40,000
Santiago de Chile	1613	10,617
	1758	c. 21,000
	1800	c. 30,000
Salvador de Bahia	1570	6,600*
	1585	c. 12,000*
Santo Domingo	1520 (c)	c. 3,000
	1606	c. 5,000
Zacatecas	1608	4,510

\* White population

\* Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 37; Jorge Hardoy and Carmen Aranovich, 'The Scale and Function of Spanish American Cities around 1600: An Essay on Methodology in *Urbanization in the Americas from Its Beginnings to the Present* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1978), 72–9; H. B. Johnson, 'Portuguese settlement, 1500–1580', in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Colonial Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Cynthia Milton, *The Many Meanings of Poverty: Colonialism, Social Compacts, and Assistance in Eighteenth-Century Ecuador* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27; Richard M. Morse, 'Urban Development', in Bethell, ed., *Colonial Spanish America*, 178, 183, 189, 192.

Economic innovation affected the distribution of power. Puebla, for instance, with its secure labour supply and increasing immigration and economic support from Spain, outpaced Cholula as a centre of commerce. From the late 16th century large-scale and long-distance trading forced Indian traders to yield to Spaniards whose mules and carts were more efficient than native bearers. Although Puebla exercised no official jurisdiction over neighbouring Indian towns, Spaniards achieved considerable control over the indigenous countryside and its resources, acquiring extramural land from the 1530s. In what became widespread and characteristic complaints, the council of Xochimilco began complaining as early as the 1560s of the loss of jurisdiction over traditionally subject towns in the hinterland, where local elites were 'attempting to free themselves and become independent'. Indigenous nobilities buckled under the combined pressure of loss of tributaries to demographic collapse and loss of business to upstart or intrusive competitors.<sup>30</sup>

Indigenous institutions, however, survived conquest with remarkable tenacity. In ethnically mixed towns, native quarters were in varying degrees self-governing, often until well into the 17th or even 18th centuries, and in some cases throughout the period of Spanish rule. In Puebla, for instance, where Indians from Cholula, Texcoco, Totomehuacan, Tlaxcala, and Mexico congregated, self-governing native communities inhabited their own neighbourhoods. The case of Tlaxcala shows how Spanish power gradually eroded indigenous institutions. Traditionally, four districts, each under its own ruling

dynasty, rotated supreme responsibility. When Spaniards arrived, they became the obvious choice as arbitrators whenever internal disputes arose, and with every intervention innovations intruded—most notably in 1535 when a Spanish arbitrator imposed two-year terms for leadership of the *cabildo*—and a little of the traditional autonomy was sacrificed. In some places, moreover, native nobles, unless recognized as close collaborators in Spanish conquests, struggled to enjoy the fiscal exemptions associated with aristocrats in Spain. While Xochimilco complained, for instance, of loss of jurisdiction, the council begged relief for the city's 'four hundred natives who are gentlemen, cavaliers and free nobles'. Generally, the decline of native institutions happened despite official Spanish efforts, as a result of remorseless, impersonal economic and demographic change.<sup>31</sup>

## GOVERNMENT AND THE CREOLIZATION OF URBAN CULTURE

Government outside Indian towns followed European models, often modified by the crown's conscious efforts to avoid creating seigneurial elites with hereditary jurisdiction. In Brazil, the king established the *Ofícios da Câmara* (municipal councils) made up of councillors, magistrates, attorneys, royal representatives, and inspectors. Although there were annual elections, most of the leadership came from the local sugar-planters and aristocracy.<sup>32</sup> The *cabildos* that ruled Spanish towns were more tightly controlled from Madrid, staffed by royal nominees.

In Portuguese territory, where no indigenous urban traditions survived, economic change affected the distribution of wealth and power between regions from the late 17th century, when parts of the interior began to be exploited for gold and, later, diamonds. Demand for textiles summoned the first factories into existence in towns in Amazonia and Minas Gerais. In the north, far from the new economic opportunities, Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon, which had officially become a city in 1655, struggled to survive, despite attempts to found new towns and forts in Amazonia as a precaution against Spanish encroachments. In Minas Gerais, on the other hand, glamorous cities, decorated with the sculptures of Aleijadinho, emerged at Ouro Preto and Congonhas. Rio de Janeiro prospered as a suitable port for hinterland products and replaced Salvador as the largest city, attaining a population of perhaps 25,000 by the mid-18th century. The main institutions of colonial government moved there in 1763, by which time coffee production had begun. The population quadrupled over the next couple of generations. During Napoleon's invasion of Portugal Rio became the courtly centre of the royal family in exile, confirming its supremacy and embellishing it with grandeur to rival that of Lima or even Mexico City.<sup>33</sup>

Satisfaction with the presence of royalty radiated throughout coastal Brazil, and helps to account for why urban elites there were relatively sympathetic to the 'mother country'. In most Spanish colonies and in Brazil's interior towns nourished yearnings for autonomy and even independence. They were usually a long way from rival centres of authority. Slow communications kept the parts of the monarchy out of touch with each other for long periods and insulated civic elites. Increasingly in the 17th century and precipitately in the 18th, cities became cradles of creole identity and devolutionist, even sometimes secessionist politics.

Fiestas were enactments of how elite residents felt about their cities. Lima was a place of devotion to the immaculate conception almost as soon as that of the Virgin became an official cult of the Church. In 1656 and 1657 the city authorities supplemented masses and religious processions with fireworks and a secular parade of floats with seven-headed serpents, wild men, floral displays, representations of the king and mini-ships equipped with working cannon. Black bandsmen supplied

musical accompaniments. The university floated a huge version of its coat of arms, followed by six more floats manned by 1,500 variously costumed attendants. The tailors' and ironmongers' guilds erected a castle in an artificial lake, assailed by four model galleys. Black confraternities paid for a bullfighting spectacle. Every city celebrated anniversaries of its foundation with festivals specified in royal ordinances and self-proclamatory local variations. In Santiago de Guatemala, for instance, the descendants of the conquistadores' indigenous allies mounted a parade. Civic coats of arms, representations of celestial patrons and re-enactments of events of the history of the city concerned were generally included to construct and celebrate a virtuous, heroic narrative.

By the mid-18th century, elaborations of civic rituals and their rising costs were often conscious contributions to what Antonello Gerbi called 'la disputa del Nuovo Mondo'—the debate initiated by the geographers De Pauw and Buffon, who condemned the Americas as inherently inferior to Europe and evoked extravagant counter-claims from increasingly strident and assertive creole intellectuals.<sup>34</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that, while rural areas supplied millenarian rebels, cities nourished the elite political movements that led to independence. In some ways, the Spanish and Portuguese Americas in the 18th century were informal 'federations of cities', like the late Roman empire as Ferdinand Lot conceived it (above, Ch. 3), where urban leaders exerted effective autonomy and made decisions with a resolutely inward-looking focus. They tended to resent interference in inverse proportion to the distance over which it was exercised. In Minas Gerais, Ouro Preto, chief of the eight officially designated towns, nurtured an independence movement in the late 18th century, and São Paulo had a history of truculence and disdain for commands from Rio. The catalogue of proclamations of independence in the kingdom of New Granada is representative of civic particularism, with each city proclaiming its independence of others as well as (sometimes rather than) of the monarchy.

Quito was first, on 10 August 1809, with a repudiation of the authority of the viceroy in Lima, followed a few days later by Cartagena, where the cabildo disavowed obedience not to Madrid but to authorities in Bogotá. The cabildo of Cartagena dismissed the city's governor on 14 June 1810, and the following month the city fathers of Cali—today the self-proclaimed 'Pioneer-city [*ciudad precursora*] of independence'—rejected the viceroy, while Socorro denounced him in the name of the king 'for the sake of the sacred and inalienable rights of man'. Similar events occurred in Pamplona, Quibdó, Neiva, Nóvita, Mariquita, Casanare, Girón, Popayán, Citará, and numerous other cities, all asserting mutual independence. Not until November of the following year, in Cartagena and Santafé, did the insurrectionists expressly disclaim Spanish rule 'without the free and spontaneous concurrence of this people.' Even then, mutual jealousies maintained tension and provoked severance between rival cities, while their language preserved the fiction of a single 'Spanish nation' on both sides of the Atlantic. Santafé and Tunja set themselves up as capitals of mini-republics. In 1812 the patricians of Santa Fe de Antioquia proclaimed the 'Estado de Antioquia' and the 'resumption' of its own sovereignty.<sup>35</sup>

### INDEPENDENCE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE FICTIONAL CITY

In the early to mid-19th century, cities began to feel, in patches, the impact of accelerating economic and demographic change elsewhere in the world. Lima and Callao, for instance, thrived on increased world demand for guano as a result of intensified agriculture, while trade in gold boosted the towns of Minas Gerais. In the second half of the century demand for rubber in Amazonia turned Manaus,

formerly an upriver fort and mission, into a boomtown with every amenity of bourgeois life, including the famous opera house, laboriously constructed from 1884 onwards. In general, however, independence did not inaugurate a new era. Only the beginnings of global industrialization—with the growth of massive exports of primary products—and mass migrations in the late 19th century did that, introducing factories, suburbs, slums, parks, terrace cafés, and nocturnal street life.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the *plaza mayor* (or the *largo*, its Portuguese equivalent) and the alameda remained the focal public spaces where people socialized and community formed. The growth of the public sphere continued in the early and mid-19th century, and the press multiplied. Newspapers, pamphlets, and part-works provided a context in which imaginative writers trained and found outlets for their work. In workshops and public spaces, audiences grew despite poor levels of literacy.<sup>37</sup>

The first great Latin American imaginative prose writers chronicled the lives of the cities they inhabited. Cirilo Valverde's novel, *Cecilia Valdés*, published in 1839, narrated incest and murder in Havana against the background of intersecting races,<sup>38</sup> while a nostalgic world of dances, fiestas, school scenes, crimes, sporting events, and duels fills the pages of José María Cordovez Moure's *Reminiscencias de Santafé y Bogotá* from the 1840s onwards. In 1848 in Peru Narciso Aréstegui Zuzunaga published *El padre Horán: escenas de la vida de Cuzco*, a work in which the narrator's memory distortedly retrieves a real episode of a few years earlier in the provincial city, when a crazed friar raped and murdered a girl. The depiction of the urban background indicts divisions of race and wealth. The following year, in Argentina, *Facundo*, by Diego Sarmiento—a work often assigned defining status in the Latin American novelistic tradition—bore the subtitle, 'Civilization or Barbarism'. The dilemma was lively for frontier dwellers on the margins of the Atlantic world, and the city was the arena of their struggle for urbanity and civilized life.

On the whole, the urban novelists of the mid-19th century revealed cities composed of new, independent spaces barely discernible in the documents of the colonial era. Matriarchs ruled introspective, zealously guarded bourgeois homes, in which the male breadwinners were birds of passage between destinations in the public sphere. Lovers desperately sought niches outside morally policed spaces and arranged marriages.<sup>39</sup> With increasing pace in the second half of the century, the movement known as *costumbrismo*, shared by painters and novelists, exalted rural values—the independent spirit of the Argentine or Venezuelan or Brazilian cowboy, the romance of Guaraní peasants, the national symbolism of mountains and other grandiose feats of nature, the sublimity of the picturesque. The Colombian romantic, Luis Segundo de Silvestre, for instance, actually named one of his anti-heroes 'Urbano', while extolling the sympathy of truly civilized urbanites for the natural virtue of rural folk in novels of the 1880s.

Brazilian books evinced similar themes. Although the characters of Aluísio de Azevedo long for the city, they are, by implication, at least, happier in an unspoilt romanticized rural idyll. *Casa de pensão*, of 1884, fictionalizes a real murder among deracinated apprentices or rural backgrounds in their Rio de Janeiro pension. *O cortiço*, published in 1890, was perhaps the first Latin American novel set in what is recognizably a slum. The early work of Joaquín María Machado de Assis deplores the misery of an emerging urban bourgeoisie. His novella of 1882, *O alienista*, is set in a provincial town madhouse, which gradually engrosses the sane along with the mentally infirm.

Costumbrismo was, in short, a sign that the effects of global industrialization were in the offing or had already begun, forging new cityscapes described in [Ch. 26](#) and reversing the urban values Sarmiento and his disciples had inherited from the colonial and pre-colonial past.

## CONCLUSION

The urban history of Latin America follows a path picked among ghost towns, ruins, and failed imaginings. Yet, over such a long period, across such a vast area, amid hostile environments and destructive lurches—the collapse of indigenous civilizations, the transformations and revolutions that followed—the continuities seem remarkable. Indigenous urban traditions, which outlasted so many extinctions and crises in pre-colonial times, survived selectively well beyond the conquest. The range of urban types, however, expanded as Spaniards and Portuguese added new forms, such as settler communities, missions, and mining or bonanza-towns, to the existing range of courtly centres, markets, garrisons, and ports, and hugely increased the numbers of cities, while integrating them into global networks of exchange. As in pre-colonial times, cities remained kernels of power and incubators of political change. Though independence made little difference to urban life, perceptions changed, as cities became settings for fiction and—ultimately, for the first time—objects of elite reproach.

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# PRE-MODERN CITIES

## *Themes*

**ECONOMY**

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**INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Towns fulfilled several vital functions in the pre-industrial economy and society. First, they were often centres of administration, justice, and religion, providing services in these fields. They could also act as centres of exchange, providing services in trade, transport, and finance, and industries were often concentrated within the towns.<sup>1</sup> As a result, older views often portrayed the towns as the sole location of the new, dynamic sectors in the pre-industrial world. These were modern islands in otherwise backward, stagnant rural economies.<sup>2</sup> In its strict form, this view is largely outdated now: rural areas and scattered locations in the countryside could also host some of these functions and be the setting for innovation, as shown in the debates about agrarian capitalism, village markets, and proto-industrialization. Despite this nuance, however, the role of the towns is clear: most of these non-agrarian functions were generally concentrated in the towns.

Following on from this, one could say that the more developed and sophisticated the urban functions were and the bigger the non-agrarian sectors, the bigger the towns would be. These big towns would also require a highly productive agricultural sector, able to generate the surpluses to feed the non-agricultural population. Therefore, and in the absence of reliable economic data, it is often assumed that the level of the urbanization rate and the presence of big towns are a proxy for the level of economic development of the society in question or even for the potential for ongoing, future development.<sup>3</sup> In a very general sense at least the first probably holds. High levels of urbanization indicate the capability of societies to generate large agricultural surpluses, to transport these surpluses over long distances to the cities, and they—indirectly—indicate the often advanced functions these cities exercised in order to attract the agricultural surpluses. In this way, high levels of urbanization show an advanced development of both agriculture and the transport sector, and perhaps by implication, the urban industrial and services sectors.

The preceding is reflected by the fact that in the pre-industrial period the highest levels of urbanization were found in what are considered the focal points of economic development, from the Yangtze area to the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and from the Nile delta to the northern shores of the Mediterranean and the North Sea area. In the late medieval and early modern period, Japan, parts of China and India, Iraq, Egypt, Spain, and Italy, and the Low Countries and England all had urbanization levels of perhaps 15 per cent or even 20 per cent, and a few regions (Iraq during the 8th to 10th centuries, northern Italy during the Renaissance, the Low Countries in the 15th to 18th centuries) actually exceeded this level.<sup>4</sup>

The high levels of urbanization in those areas can indeed be considered indicative of the advanced development of the economy there. But it is unclear whether these high levels also show great potential for further economic growth, as is sometimes assumed. With respect to this potential the situation is more complicated, as can already be seen from the different development of urbanization

levels in the long run. Some of these areas saw a further growth of urbanization rates, such as the North Sea area, while others stagnated, such as Iraq; a divergence already starting in the high medieval period.

This divergence can only be understood if we acknowledge that the underlying mechanisms sustaining these levels of urbanization were not uniform. Understanding and explaining the process of urbanization and the divergence observed thus requires us to look at these underlying mechanisms and to place this process in the wider context of economy and society. How did the economy, and especially the main sector of the pre-industrial economy, the agricultural sector, sustain this urbanization? And how did the surpluses produced in the agricultural sector flow to the towns? The latter question involves both the physical instruments enabling these flows, that is, the transport facilities, and also the social and institutional instruments. Towns were able to attract these surpluses in very different ways, both economic and non-economic. And the ways these towns were able to attract surpluses to a large extent determined whether this would stimulate further development, or not.

This links up with the distinction between consumer and producer cities, already made by Weber. Weber contrasted the industrial or producer cities of medieval Europe with the consumer cities of Antiquity,<sup>5</sup> a distinction which invites further elaboration—for instance, by investigating whether the surpluses of the population of consumer cities were expended on local or extra-regional products, or on luxury goods or mass-produced articles<sup>6</sup>—but still has been rather fruitful, for understanding both the economic history of Antiquity and that of the Middle Ages. In order to adapt Weber’s classifications to our analyses we have denoted his producer cities with the term ‘market-oriented’ and called his consumer cities ‘coercion-oriented’, since the latter implies some type of coercion channelling the surpluses from the countryside to the town. Moreover, we have added a further distinction, that is, between centralized and decentralized systems. The result is a matrix, and we will use this as an instrument of analysis (see Fig. 21.1).

	Coercion	Market exchange
Centralized system	Centralized coercion: Madrid, Moscow, Delhi, Edo (Tokyo)	Osaka and London in 17th and 18th centuries
Decentralized system	Decentralized coercion: Tuscany, Rhineland and Flanders in the 14th and 15th centuries	European cities in the High Middle Ages, North American cities

**FIGURE 21.1** Model of economic and political systems in the pre-modern era.

Centralized coercion is found with the classical state-oriented city. This is a centre of government and military protection (or occupation), which supplies services—administration, protection—in return for taxes, and its position is intimately linked to the state and the sovereign. The flourishing of his realm and the expansion of his territory and its population will lead to urban growth, in particular of the capital city, which is the sovereign oriented city par excellence. Moreover, the most efficient location of such a city tends to be in the middle of the territory it controls; capital cities such as Baghdad, Damascus, Madrid, Delhi (the centre of the Mogul empire) or Moscow can be considered typical examples. Closeness to the main transport corridors is not a necessity, as the underlying rationale of such a city is not to exchange goods at relatively low transaction costs. Commercial activity will of course take place—for the feeding of the city and the supply of other consumption goods it has to resort to its surroundings—but this function is secondary, derived from its political

and military role.

Decentralized coercion is found in situations where central states are weaker, capitals less important and taxes are not the main way of extracting surpluses from the countryside. This kind of city can be labelled urban elite oriented. These cities often fulfil roles in administration and particularly in production and services, but add a particular element: the control over agricultural surpluses by way of a coercive hold over rural properties or agricultural output, by way of force or more often by property rights, that is, by economic coercion. This can be in the form of ownership of land or tithes, manors or slave estates. Often, this is combined with the control of non-agricultural activities and market exchange in the countryside, and the exclusion of possible urban or state contenders in these fields, if necessary by military force. In the extreme, the urban elites can succeed in developing a city-state under their control and develop its own fiscal system to add to the instruments used to channel rural surpluses to the town. Epstein has for example argued that the stagnation of the Tuscan urban system and its economy at large after its flourishing in the high Middle Ages was caused by the emergence of such a structure, and van Bavel has made the same point for Flanders—dominated by three large cities—in the late medieval period.<sup>7</sup>

The economic basis of the market-oriented city, on the other hand, is the production and exchange of goods and commercial/marketed services for and with its immediate hinterland and other (market-oriented) cities at a greater distance. International trade is an important element in the flourishing of these towns. Their links with the ruler or his state are typically less close, and their fate can to some extent be more or less independent of the political entity they are part of because they have an economic basis of their own. There is clearly no reason to be in the spatial centre of a state, and in fact a strategic position on important trade routes—profiting from trade flows there—is more likely to be a good location for such a city. Given the importance of access to long-distance markets, the ideal ‘market-oriented’ city will therefore be located either near the sea, on a navigable river, or at a hub of overland trade routes. The ‘ideal type’ of the producer cities of Europe in the Middle Ages, already analysed by Weber and Pirenne, is the example that comes to mind most easily—what we would like to know is how exceptional such an urban system was in the pre-1800 world economy. Because these cities are based on market exchange with the countryside, such an urban system will be able to generate processes of specialization and commercialization there, which will form the basis for ongoing economic change and ongoing growth of the cities involved, whereas the coercion-based cities will be much more dependent on the life cycle of the state they are part of. Ideally, the dominance of the market-oriented type within a society produces a balanced urban system, associated with an open market hierarchy, which may give rise to the dominance of one central city within this hierarchy. London’s role in the British economy is a case in point, and Osaka is another: it was a truly ‘market-oriented’ city which however acquired its central role partly as a result of the structure of the state (see below).<sup>8</sup>

As the latter example shows, these categories do not exclude each other, of course, and some cities combine some of the characteristics of each. Nor are societies composed solely of one type of city. Still, we think chronological and particularly spatial patterns can be discerned and they will bring us further towards understanding long-term developments of urbanization. We argue that the difference between these types of cities also generally expresses itself in the structure of the urban system. Capital cities are typical state-oriented cities. A possible proxy of the degree to which the urban system is dependent on the state is the share of the largest—often the capital—city in the urban population. For recent times, Ades and Glaeser, for example, demonstrate that this measure of urban

primacy is linked to the political economy of the country involved: ‘Urban giants ultimately stem from the concentration of power in the hands of a small cadre of agents living in the capital. This power allows the leaders to extract wealth out of the hinterland and distribute it in the capital.’<sup>9</sup> A high level of urban ‘primacy’, that is, a high share of the largest/capital city in the total urban population, therefore suggests that cities are state-oriented, whereas a system of typical market-oriented cities is relatively balanced, with only a relatively low level of urban primacy.

These ideas will be used in this chapter to analyze the patterns of urbanization found in various parts of the globe and link them to differences in economic performance. In the following sections we contrast first the different urbanization patterns in North and South America and then the more mixed systems of China and Japan. Thirdly, thanks to better source material and recent investigations a more in-depth comparison is possible of the different long-run trajectories of the Middle East and Europe. Lastly, we zoom in on trajectories within Western Europe, where diversity is great and can be illuminated by way of the extensive source material. Conclusions follow.

### AN EXAMPLE: URBAN SYSTEMS IN THE AMERICAS

Let us first take a short trip to the Americas, where one can find very striking differences in urban development in the early modern period. Elliot, in his study *Empires of the Atlantic World*, carefully compared the urban systems of the Spanish and the British Americas.<sup>10</sup> From the beginning, the Spanish Conquistadores used cities—both old and newly established ones—as the centres of control of the acquired territory and its population. In 1500, the Spanish parts of Latin America were already much more urbanized than the north of the continent, thanks to complex civilizations of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in the Andes.<sup>11</sup> The capital cities of these empires—Tenochtitlán (with perhaps as many as 100,000 inhabitants) and Cuzco (with 80,000)—were among the largest cities in the world.<sup>12</sup> This continued during much of the early modern period—in a way Spain took over many institutions of the two empires and added European bureaucratic procedures to them. Typically, the big cities (Mexico City itself, Cuzco, Quito, Potosí) were located inland (Lima is the most notable exception, being a city newly established by the Spanish). Various forms of coerced labour played a large role in the extraction of the surplus, much of which was transformed into silver filling the coffers of the Spanish state. The Spanish occupiers explicitly used cities as an instrument to rule the newly acquired territories, and founded new cities where this was required (and also concentrated the population in the countryside in larger units to facilitate control and taxation). The systems of coerced labour that they used were not entirely new, however—in both the Aztec and the Inca empires, various forms of coerced labour had been usual (for the Incas, who did not use money and market exchange, this had been the principal way of organizing specialization and production of a surplus for the cities). The Spanish used these institutions and added their own. After about a century they slowly switched to more market-oriented forms of control, but without fundamentally changing the political structures of the regime. The cities of the viceroyalties of New Mexico and Peru are therefore among the classic examples of ‘coercion-oriented’ cities within a centralized system of control.

The North American urban system was completely different: it was almost nonexistent in 1500. The Mississippi culture produced some sizable urban concentrations, but not much was left of this after the collapse of the population there. In 1700 the largest city in the north was Boston with only 7,000 inhabitants; only in the 18th century did cities start to grow, but the level of urbanization

remained very low indeed. In 1800, New York and Philadelphia were the largest cities with about 65,000 inhabitants, still only half the size of Mexico City. The North American cities were, however, located near the sea and formed important transport links between their hinterland and the world market. These were producer cities in their purest form, operating—especially after 1776—within a decentralized system of political control.

Were we to measure economic success on the basis of the level of urbanization only, then Spanish Latin America would be a ‘success story’, and North America a ‘failure’. In about 1800 still only about 3 per cent of the population of the North lived in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, whereas this share was between 7 per cent and 10 per cent for both Mexico and the Andean region. It is clear that the long-term dynamics of these urban systems—in Spanish Latin America and in British North America—were totally different. They provide an example of a ‘reversal of fortune’, where the region with initially the highest level of urbanization (and societal complexity), the South, develops only very slowly, whereas the North starts to overtake the South quickly, and in the long run does this in a spectacular way. There is an intense debate going on about the causes of this change, whether it was, for example, linked to the institutions implanted by the colonizers (as argued by Acemoglu et al., 2001), or to the available resources and endowments (Engerman and Sokoloff, 1997).<sup>13</sup> The fact that in Spanish America silver was found in certain ‘central’ locations facilitated a centralized control over the economy; the resources that were extracted from the North (from beaver skins to timber) were dispersed throughout the whole continent and therefore did not allow for such a centralized system of extraction. Even more important, however, was that the Spanish colonial state was grafted on pre-existing socio-political structures based on intensive forms of surplus extraction, whereas almost nothing comparable existed in the North, and the British and French colonies that were established there started from scratch—or more accurately adopted European institutions and market systems. It is clear that the structure of the urban system clearly reflects these divergent developments in economic performance.

### **MIXED SYSTEMS: JAPAN AND CHINA**

The North and the South of the Americas were more or less ‘pure’ versions of ‘market-oriented’ and ‘coercion-oriented’ urban systems. In other parts of the world, we often do not find such ‘ideal types’, but more mixed systems. Japan is a good example, because its large cities represent the two extremes. Under the Tokugawa regime (1603–1868) it experienced an urban boom and the country became one of the most urbanized parts of the world (with more than 10 per cent of the population living in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants). The urban structure was dominated by three cities: Edo (present-day Tokyo), with perhaps as many as 1 million inhabitants, was probably the largest city in the world in the 18th century, but Osaka and Kyoto, with between 300,000 and 400,000 inhabitants, were also quite large. This urban boom reflected centralization of political control under the new regime in the first place. After bitter civil wars during the late 15th and 16th centuries, political control was centralized in Tokyo, where the shogun lived and all feudal lords were obliged to have a house and to spend part of the year (and, to ensure their loyalty to the ruler, some members of their families had to live there all the time). Tokyo was therefore a classical consumer city, as was Kyoto, where the (politically impotent) emperor was living.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Osaka emerged as the central marketplace of the country; a large part of the rice crop, which was marketed here, consisted of taxes paid to the state. With the centralization of state power and the increased efficiency of the taxation



system, the importance of Osaka as a central market increased, and it began to develop all kinds of supplementary activities: merchant houses emerged and expanded into banking, for example. The efficiency of the markets further improved due to all kinds of innovations (such as futures contracts at the rice market), and the rice markets in other parts of Japan became closely integrated into the marketing networks that developed around the Osaka market.

Similar forces were at work in China. During the late Ming it underwent (as [Ch. 17](#) above demonstrates) a second ‘commercial revolution’ with important consequences for its urban system. As a result of the centralization of political power under the first Ming emperors, a rather imbalanced urban system had emerged, with a very strong ‘capital city effect’: when Nanjing became the capital again, its size immediately increased from fewer than 100,000 in 1300 to about 500,000 in 1400—to fall back to about 150,000 in 1500 after the transfer of the capital to Beijing in 1421. Beijing, conversely, increased its size from 150,000 in 1400 to about 700,000 in 1500 and 1.1 million in 1800—thereby overtaking Tokyo as the largest city in the world.<sup>15</sup> The commercial revolution of the 16th century led to the emergence of a much more balanced system, however, due to the growth of many (relatively small) market towns, in particular in the lower Yangtze delta, where there were also large cities such as Hangzhou (with a population increasing from 250,000 to 400,000 between 1400 and 1800), Suzhou (growing from 120,000 to 240,000), Shanghai (which would expand markedly during the 19th century), and of course Nanjing. These were large commercial cities which dominated the economy. In the extreme south, Canton was another hub of trade, which may have had as many as 800,000 inhabitants in 1800. Each of these large towns had an individual urban network in one of these regions of which the gigantic Chinese empire was composed.<sup>16</sup>

Still, measured in terms of urban primacy—the share of the total urban population living in the largest city—China and Japan were not that different. In Japan in 1800 about one-third of the urban population lived in Tokyo, which is extremely high; in China this share was about 19 per cent (Beijing), which is also very high considering the fact that China was a much larger country. This reflected the different political economies of the two states: on a per capita basis, Japan was mobilizing more resources than China. The high level of primacy was similarly linked to the political economy of these states, which were quite centralized by early modern standards. The result was an urban system that was quite different from that found in Europe, a difference which may be relevant for understanding the dynamics of these two parts of Eurasia and whose implications within the Great Divergence debate may be further explored.<sup>17</sup>

## EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: DIFFERENT TRAJECTORIES

The examples of the Americas and East Asia demonstrate the differences in urban structures found in the world economy before 1800. These brief case studies are based on rather impressionistic evidence and comprehensive datasets charting the urban development of these regions are not (yet) available. A much more detailed analysis can be presented of the urban development of Europe and the Middle East (including North Africa), thanks to ongoing research on this topic. This region is of particular interest, as it saw a dramatic ‘reversal of fortune’ in the centuries before 1800. At about 900, the highest levels of urbanization in the world were probably attained by the Middle East, perhaps not accidentally the region where the first cities had emerged (in Mesopotamia and Babylonia), and where, after the Arab conquest of the 7th and 8th centuries, a new urban boom led to the emergence of large cities such as Baghdad, Damascus, and Basra. In what is now Iraq, about one-

third of the population lived in cities (in 900), and by far the biggest cities were found there. By contrast, Europe in 800 or 900 was a region with almost no (big) cities—Rome and Constantinople excepted (but even Rome had shrunk to about 5–10 per cent of the size it had during the Roman empire). The other large cities in Western Europe (Córdoba, Seville, and Palermo) were part of the Islamic world.

Between 800 and 1800 this changed dramatically: Western Europe moved forward and became the most urbanized part of the world, whereas levels of urbanization in the Middle East stagnated. This obviously reflected the divergent trends of the economies of the respective regions: Western Europe saw an almost continuous growth of income and population, whereas the economies of the Middle East hardly increased in either respect. To illustrate this with estimates of total population: in the Middle East/North Africa total population in 1800 was with 27.2 million only marginally higher than in 800 (24.2 million); in Western Europe the same period saw a five fold increase (from 19.3 million to 107.8 million).<sup>18</sup>

To explain these divergent trends, we have put together a detailed dataset of the urban population structure for the period 800–1800, covering three regions: the Middle East and North Africa (from Morocco to Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, but not including Iran), Western Europe (including Germany, Switzerland, and Italy and all countries to the west), and Central and East Europe, which covers the rest of Europe—from Austria to the Urals. These three regions are more or less comparable in (population) size: in about 800 East/Central Europe is the smallest of the three with about 10 million people (the other two have about 20 million), but this part of Europe also grows most rapidly—in 1800 it has almost 75 million inhabitants, or three times the number in the Middle East.

[Table 21.1](#) presents the basic features of the development of the urban system of the three regions. It shows that the level of urbanization in Western Europe was extremely low in 800 by all international standards, that it increased quite a bit during the Middle Ages, but that it overtook the level of the Middle East only in the 16th century. The total urban population grew dramatically from less than a quarter of a million in 800 to almost 14 million in 1800. Initially, during the Middle Ages, urban growth in East and Central Europe was also quite promising, although levels remained lower than in Western Europe. But after about 1400 the process of urbanization stagnated there, and the gap with Western Europe widened. In the early modern period, some big cities emerged there, but these were almost solely capital cities, which dwarfed the rest of the urban landscape in their territories. Associated with their roles as capitals and/or seats of government these cities grew to sizes of 100,000 inhabitants or more, including Moscow and Vienna, and later also Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw. The most extreme example is St Petersburg, capital of Russia since 1713 and created out of virtually nothing only a decade earlier.

As explained already, a third pattern can be found in the Middle East, which started with a level of urbanization of about 6 to 7 per cent, increasing only to about 9 per cent in the 17th and 18th centuries. Its total urban population in 1500 was only marginally higher than in 800, and the increase during the early modern period is to a large extent concentrated in Istanbul, which saw its population explode to about 700,000 in 1600 (and in the process became one of the largest cities in the world, in the West overtaken only by London in 1800).

As the example of Istanbul demonstrates, in the Middle East the ups and downs of cities and of the urban system in general were intimately linked to the rise and decline of large states in the region—the early Islamic caliphates and the Ottoman empire in particular. The relatively high urban primacy

of the region reflected this: in particular between 800 and 1000—with the flowering of the Abbasid empire—and again after 1500—when the Ottoman empire is doing well—the capitals of those empires have a large share of the total urban population (Table 21.1). This is also the case in 8th- or 9th-century Europe, but the explanation is different: there are only a few cities, which means that the biggest city easily takes a large share of the total urban population. When the urban systems of these regions start to expand after 900, the primacy share declines sharply to levels that reflect a balanced, decentralized urban structure. The fall in the primacy share in Western Europe occurred in a period of political fragmentation—the gradual disintegration of the Carolingian empire and the formation of a very fragmented political system consisting of many small ‘feudal’ states. It is one of the indications that the structure of the European urban system is fundamentally different from that of the Middle East.

Interaction between the two urban systems—the system in Western Europe and that in the Middle East and North Africa—was very limited. There is little evidence of any significant structural interaction (negative or positive) between the two regions across religious lines, particularly in border areas.<sup>19</sup> The mechanisms behind the economic development of these urban systems are largely endogenous. As argued in a previous study, however, the difference in development between Europe and the Islamic world in the period 800 to 1800 was not due to a difference in agricultural potential of either of the areas. Instead, we find that the variations in long-term economic development can be largely explained by differences in the local institutions and in the local modes of transport.

**Table 21.1 Key Indicators of Urban Development in Europe, the Middle East, and East/North Africa, 800–1800**

	800	900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800
<i>Urban Population ≥ 10k (in millions)</i>											
Europe: west	0.23	0.35	0.79	0.96	1.73	3.27	2.45	3.73	6.20	7.69	13.84
Europe: central/east	0.07	0.20	0.32	0.32	0.45	0.74	0.71	0.92	1.29	1.45	3.39
Middle East/North Africa	1.52	1.83	1.77	1.88	1.84	1.70	1.60	1.71	2.36	2.45	2.45
<i>Total population (in millions)</i>											
Europe: west	2.9	3.3	3.8	4.6	6.4	9.9	7.6	10.4	13.5	14.8	23.8
Europe: central/east	10.1	11.2	12.5	15.7	21.0	25.3	21.6	28.8	36.3	43.2	74.8
Middle East/North Africa	24.2	25.2	26.3	23.3	23.7	25.7	20.3	22.1	27.4	25.1	27.2
<i>Urbanization Rate (per cent)</i>											
Europe: west	1.2	1.6	3.4	3.4	4.7	6.1	6.5	7.2	9.5	10.2	12.8
Europe: central/east	0.7	1.7	2.5	2.0	2.1	2.9	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.4	4.5
Middle East/North Africa	6.3	7.3	6.7	8.1	7.8	6.6	7.9	7.8	8.6	9.7	9.0
<i>Largest City (1000 inhabitants)</i>											
Europe: west	75	95	100	80	80	120	100	150	300	575	948
Europe: central/east	30	60	45	42	40	75	95	70	100	130	300
Middle East/North Africa	350	450	300	250	200	220	250	280	700	700	500
<i>Urban Primacy (per cent)</i>											
Europe: west	33.2	26.8	12.6	8.3	4.6	3.7	4.1	4.0	4.8	7.5	6.8
Europe: central/east	42.9	30.8	14.2	13.1	8.9	10.1	13.5	7.6	7.7	9.0	8.8
Middle East/North Africa	23.1	24.6	17.0	13.3	10.9	12.9	15.7	16.4	29.6	28.6	20.4

In Europe, having direct access to the sea spurred urban development. European trade was very much focused on water transport. In the Islamic world the proportion of cities located on the coast is higher than in Europe, but these cities do not generally fare better than their landlocked counterparts. Really large Muslim cities, including Baghdad, Damascus, Fès, Marrakech, Cairo, and Córdoba, are all located away from the sea and often even far inland (Istanbul is a notable exception, but it becomes a Muslim city only in 1453). Mediterranean trade in the Islamic world was of only marginal importance compared to Muslim trade across the Sahara and the Indian Ocean. The caravan trade was more efficient in the Muslim world than trade by horse, oxen, and/or wheeled cart. However, this camel-based form of transport did not allow for any further efficiency gains over time in contrast to Europe’s focus on water-based, in particular seaborne, trade. Water-based transport proved very beneficial in the long term by allowing large gains in productivity due to (technological) innovations in shipbuilding, sailing techniques, and improved navigation.

The second important explanation for the differences between the growth of cities in Western Europe and the Middle East/North Africa can be found in a number of institutions. Being a capital city has a big positive impact on a city's size. Interestingly, this effect is very similar in both Europe and the Islamic world. Also, cities that held a prominent position in the ecclesiastical organization are larger than other cities, and more so the more important their status within the church. Especially in Europe, (arch)bishops did not confine their role to church affairs, wielding considerable political power, and at times playing an important role in the local economy. The positive (and large) effect of having capital status and/or an important role within the church hierarchy confirms the consumerist nature of these cities.<sup>20</sup> Being the seat of a ruler and/or (arch)bishop attracts people and capital alike as public expenditure or royal privileges are likely to be biased towards these cities, creating jobs and business opportunities. However, the evolution over time of the capital city effect differs greatly between Europe and the Islamic world. Capital cities dominated the landscape of the Muslim world from its start. Despite substantial changes in the political map of the Islamic world, the extent of the capital city's dominance did not significantly change over the period 800 to 1800. In contrast, in Europe, we find a rise of the capital city effect over time, starting without a significant capital city bonus at the beginning of the sample period. From the 13th century onwards we start observing a capital city bonus, and only from the 16th century do capital cities dominate the European urban landscape to the same extent as in the Muslim world, or even more so. Their increasing dominance clearly reflects the (slow) process of state formation in Europe.<sup>21</sup> After the collapse of the Carolingian empire, Europe was heavily fragmented politically, resulting in a complex patchwork of political entities that often exercised power regionally or consisted of a single city only. Eventually however, successful regional or city-states were able to consolidate ever larger territories, resulting in the formation of new and strong territorial states (France, Spain, and Britain) with large centralized governments principally located in their capital city. Cities like Madrid, Berlin, and Vienna were almost completely dependent on such functions, but the same can be argued for St Petersburg and Turin, for example.<sup>22</sup>

One of the major explanations of the different long-run urban development patterns in Europe and the Middle East/North Africa is the representative institutions: local participative government and/or parliamentary representation. This does happen in Europe, but never takes hold in cities in the Islamic world that remain ruled by a strong central bureaucracy.<sup>23</sup> The development of these participative institutions in Europe carries very significant direct positive benefits for city development there, for instance by allowing economic actors to develop favourable market institutions. Overall, the findings in Europe regarding the importance of local participative government stand in sharp contrast to the absence of such a process of bottom-up institution building in the Islamic world. Eventually, in both Europe and the Islamic world, the period of political fragmentation was followed by the rise of strong (nation) states. However, the European cities, by virtue of their influence in local and national policy-making, managed much better to withstand any 'predatory actions' undertaken by these new powerful states. It may therefore also be no surprise that the centre of Europe's urban development shifted to exactly those regions (notably the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, but also for example Switzerland and Sweden) where in contrast to France or Spain, for instance, cities were able to maintain their local authority and/or strengthen their position in national representative institutions.

Compared with the Middle East, the trajectory of West European urbanization becomes quite clear, but when we zoom in more closely on what was happening in Europe, its western part appears to be characterized by a patchwork of very different urban constellations. In part, this impression is perhaps the logical result of the state of our knowledge; the relatively greater availability of sources and studies, making us more aware of the nuances there than is possible for other parts of the world. Still, there are also real, fundamental elements in this West European diversity. A main one is the political fragmentation, since this area was covered by dozens or even hundreds of political units, of very different types.<sup>24</sup> Conspicuously absent there, at least between the Roman era and the early modern period, are large, well-organized central states. The empires found there were ephemeral and more formal than real in their power, and the same applies to their capitals. This left more scope for towns, or federations of towns, to acquire political power. In this respect there is a big contrast with other parts of the globe, where the most advanced and urbanized areas—the Nile delta, the lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates or the Yangtze delta—were exactly those most clearly dominated by a sequence of large empires.

A second striking aspect is that various parts of Western Europe had only a weak tradition of urbanization, or no tradition at all. The latter applied especially to the northern parts which had remained outside the Roman empire, while the parts within it saw their towns decay and their urban populations being decimated after the fall of this empire in the West. At the start of the 2nd millennium, urbanization was therefore a relatively new phenomenon in many parts of Western Europe. Elites there were to a large extent based in the countryside, in their rural abbeys, castles, and manor houses. This is in contrast to the south of Western Europe, where urban continuity was weak but still existed, and towns had retained some of their administrative functions and elite groups were more urban-based, as in many other parts of the globe.

A final aspect, associated with the preceding two factors, is that—as argued already in the previous section—economic functions, in trade and industrial production, generally play a bigger part in the rise of these towns than in many other parts of the world. The acquisition of political or coercive power by the towns or the urban elites is mainly a secondary development here, following their economic rise.

Since the three aspects are present in Western Europe to different degrees, and show chronological variations by region, this resulted in a variegated mosaic, which displays several patterns. In this sense, Western Europe is a microcosm of different urban constellations. We sketch this for the successive centres of European urbanization: northern Italy, the Low Countries, and England. After about 1000, three core regions of European urbanization appeared, which showed certain similarities. In northern Italy, the Rhineland, and the Low Countries, central power was relatively weak, also in part due to the rising powers of the cities themselves.<sup>25</sup> The development of these towns was driven by the flourishing of trade and export industries, within more or less decentralized systems of market exchange. These areas were also the ones where, in a secondary development, the towns and urban elites themselves started to acquire coercive power, mainly exercised over the surrounding countryside by way of privileges, monopolies, staple force, jurisdiction, fiscal levies, and ownership rights, and started to build city-states, especially from the 13th century onwards. Often these coercive instruments were used within markets for goods and also for land, labour, and capital, not outside them, as most conspicuously in the cases of Cologne, Ghent, and Florence, for instance.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand urban elites and urban markets helped to break the power of manorial lords and contributed to increasing freedom, and the rise of wage labour, but on the other hand urban elites

dominated the land and lease markets, and also coerced rural labour.

Towns and urban elites in the central and northern parts of Italy were most successful in this, resulting in a system of decentralized coercion. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the large towns also succeeded in eliminating smaller urban rivals, often by military force, and in building larger political entities, as Florence did in Tuscany (conquering Pisa in 1406, for instance) and Venice in its hinterland. This was reflected in the growth of urban primacy within those regions, with Florence accounting for more than 50 per cent of the top ten cities' population in late medieval Tuscany.<sup>27</sup> According to Epstein, the associated institutions impeded further economic growth, reduced the productive power of the countryside and blocked any further growth of urbanization.<sup>28</sup> The urbanization rate peaked around 1300, and then stagnated and even slowly declined.

In the southern parts of the Low Countries and the northernmost parts of France, but later also in Lombardy, processes like these were halted halfway by the rise of princely power: the count of Flanders and the king of France in the late Middle Ages, and the duke of Lombardy in the 15th and 16th centuries. Although some instruments of coercive power were acquired by the towns, the patriciates, and the urban guilds, as most clearly present in the city of Ghent, the Flemish towns did not succeed in building true city-states.<sup>29</sup> Still, here too, one can observe a rise of urban primacy and stagnating urbanization from the 14th century on, as the urbanization rate had reached some 33 per cent, but in the 15th century declined to about 25 per cent.

In the northern part of the Low Countries, where the urbanization process only really took off during the 14th and 15th centuries, towns were confronted with already well-established principalities and they did not acquire any coercive means. Here, the process of urbanization proceeded furthest. In a decentralized market system numerous medium-sized towns held each other in balance, and were politically checked by princes, who in their turn were unable to subdue the administrative position and political autonomy of the towns. In this context, lasting from the 14th century to the 17th, towns kept on growing, resulting in the highest urbanization rates recorded up to then, exceeding 50 per cent of the total population, without any city overshadowing the others. Urban primacy was low.<sup>30</sup> This only started to change from the late 16th century on, as Amsterdam grew spectacularly, based on its economic success and its position as a hub of European trade, but increasingly in the 17th century also mixed with elements of coercion, as most clearly exercised overseas. At the same time, in the late 17th century, population numbers in Amsterdam peaked at 210,000, followed by stagnation and decline, lasting into the 19th century. In all these cases, both in northern Italy and in the Low Countries, the growth of very big cities was not necessarily indicative of further economic potential.

After Amsterdam, London took over as the most dynamic urban centre of the North Sea area. Within the framework presented here, it can be labelled as an example of centralized market exchange. In the high Middle Ages, England was still moderately urbanized. Recent estimates give higher percentages than the earlier ones, but no more than 10–15 per cent of English people lived in towns at the time. In the later Middle Ages, with the figure at 15–20 per cent, England was still not very urbanized compared to other parts of Western Europe.<sup>31</sup> Within England, however, London stands out ever more clearly as urban centre, building on its role in (international) trade, helped by its strategic location on the River Thames and benefiting from its role as capital in an ever more centralized kingdom, resulting in a long urban growth spurt from the 11th century to the 13th. Around 1300, it held perhaps some 80–100,000 inhabitants, a large number for England, and almost comparable to the big northern Italian towns for instance. Still, within England its position was

unrivalled, the nearest city being only half as large and the nearest big towns being 100 km or more away. The rest of the urban population was scattered in many provincial towns and hundreds of small market towns. More than most other parts of Western Europe, England was characterized by dispersed urban populations.

The late medieval period in England was one of stagnating or even declining urban population numbers. This also applied to London, although the city easily retained its prominent position within England and its relative wealth, built on international trade, internal trade, manufacturing, and services. London ever more clearly became the hub of English international trade and saw its role as political capital of England strengthened. The 16th and 17th centuries saw renewed urban growth, and again London was in front during this process, with a huge population spurt from some 75,000 in the 1550s to 400,000 in the 1650s. At that point, London had become the biggest city in Western Europe (only Paris was of a comparable size). Moreover, London sustained this process of rapid growth into the late 17th and 18th centuries, with its population rising to almost a million around 1800. The overall urbanization rate in England rose simultaneously, to 33 per cent or more around 1700, and to 42 per cent around 1800.<sup>32</sup> London in the early modern period did not build or strengthen its position by force or coercion, but rather by the same elements which pushed it forward in the medieval period: its central position in international trade, in distribution, in services and industries, combined with its position as capital of an ever more powerful nation. From the late 17th century, however, this nation and its elites started to use force overseas, as a colonial power, most clearly in the use of slave labour on British plantations and the application of forms of indentured labour.

The case of London, and the other West European cases discussed, show two additional patterns to the ones observed earlier. First, the rise of towns and acceleration of urbanization in pre-industrial Western Europe mostly took place in forms of intensive market exchange and decentralized political power, within a balanced urban system with low urban primacy. This applies to all areas which at a certain point took the lead in the urbanization process. Second, all of these areas subsequently saw an increase in centralization, mostly linked to a growing role of coercion; often led by the urban elites, as most clearly in the case of Italy.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter argues that the relationship between urbanization and the size of towns on the one hand and economic development on the other is not a straightforward one. The presence of big cities is not necessarily an indicator of economic growth, let alone one of future growth. Towns certainly need agricultural surpluses, and therefore a productive agriculture, and they need an advanced physical and institutional infrastructure to bring these surpluses to town. This can be done, however, within different systems: within a market system or within systems of tribute or taxation, and within centralized or decentralized systems. It is the exact arrangement of these systems which promotes or obstructs further growth. The relationship between economic development and urbanization is thus mediated through institutional and socio-political arrangements, as is illuminated by looking at the experiences of different parts of the globe. Generalizing, we find that balanced urban systems generate the best conditions for further economic development. As soon as power, whether political, military, or religious, becomes too much concentrated in one or a few cities and their elites, only these cities will continue to grow, often at the expense of the other, smaller, cities and the countryside. Globally, in the context of the increasingly urban-oriented debate over the so-called Great

Divergence between East and West at the end of the pre-modern period (see below, [Ch. 34](#)), the various historical settings that we discuss show that the long-run fate of coercion-oriented urban systems is much less favourable than that of more balanced urban systems in which cities share the benefits of urban and economic development through the exchange of goods, people, and ideas.

## NOTES

1. Adriaan Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
2. Classical examples: Paul M. Sweezy, *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1976); Philip T. Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society. The French Countryside, 1450–1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
3. Paul Bairoch, *Cities and Economic Development. From the Dawn of History to the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
4. The population threshold for a town used here is a settlement with 10,000 inhabitants or more. The term ‘urbanization’ is used as: the percentage of the total population of a region or country living in towns above this threshold.
5. Max Weber in 1922: Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Moses I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985).
6. See David R. Ringrose, *Madrid and the Spanish Economy, 1560–1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
7. S. R. Epstein, ‘Town and Country: Economy and Institutions in Late-Medieval Italy’, *Economic History Review*, 46 (1993), 453–77; Bas J. P. van Bavel, *Manors and Markets. Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 600–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
8. Masahita, Fujita, Paul Krugman and Anthony Venables, *The Spatial Economy: Cities, Regions and International Trade* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999) present a very useful overview of the theoretical economic literature on the (endogenous) emergence of (different types of) city systems under different economic circumstances.
9. Alberto F. Ades and Edward L. Glaeser, ‘Trade and Circuses: Explaining Urban Giants’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110.1 (1995), 199–258, esp. 224.
10. J. H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
11. See also above, Ch. 20.
12. The estimates of the sizes of cities are based on Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
13. Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson, ‘The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation’, *American Economic Review*, 91 (2001), 1369–401; Stanley Engerman and Kenneth Sokoloff, ‘Factor Endowments, Institutions and Differential Paths of Growth among New World Economies: A View from Economic Historians from the United States’, in Stephen Haber, ed., *How Latin America Fell Behind* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 260–304.



14. See above, Ch. 18.
15. Based on Chandler and Fox, *3000 Years of Urban Growth*.
16. G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977).
17. Urbanization hardly plays a role in K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
18. All estimates in this section are based on Maarten Bosker, Eltjo Buringh, and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'From Baghdad to London, Unraveling Urban Development in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, 800–1800'. Cf. above, Ch. 13.
19. Bosker et al., 'Baghdad to London'.
20. Weber, as in Roth and Wittich, *Economy and Society*.
21. See e.g. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).
22. Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500–1800* (London: Methuen, 1984).
23. See below, Ch. 23 for an overview.
24. W. P. Blockmans and J. -P. Genet, *Visions sur le developpement des états européens: théories et historiographies de l'état moderne*. Actes du colloque organisé par la Fondation européenne de la science et de l'École française de Rome, Rome 18–31 mars 1990 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1993).
25. W. P. Blockmans, 'Voracious States and Obstructing Cities', *Theory and Society*, 18 (1989), 733–55.
26. Bas van Bavel, 'Markets for Land, Labor, and Capital in Northern Italy and the Low Countries, Twelfth to Seventeenth centuries', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 41 (2011), 503–31.
27. Epstein, 'Town and Country'.
28. Ibid.; for urbanization rates: P. Malanima, 'Urbanisation and the Italian Economy during the Last Millennium', *European Review of Economic History*, 9 (2005), 97–122, esp. 101–3.
29. D. Nicholas, *Town and Countryside. Social, Economic and Political Tensions in Fourteenth-century Flanders* (Brugge: De Tempel, 1971).
30. Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization*. For later developments: see below, Ch. 25.
31. C. Dyer, 'How Urbanized Was Medieval England?' in J.-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen, eds., *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe. Studia in honorem Adriaan Verhulst* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1995), 169–83.
- 32 Peter Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2 (1540–1840) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

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## POPULATION AND MIGRATION: EUROPEAN AND CHINESE EXPERIENCES COMPARED

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THIS chapter deals with the demographic, spatial, social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of migration to late medieval and early modern cities. It will examine European experiences from the 13th to the 18th centuries, and explore parallels and contrasts with Chinese cities from the Song to Qing dynasties (see also above, [Chs. 12, 13, 17](#)). Source limitations and language barriers hinder the systematic pursuance of a truly ‘symmetrical comparison’ as advocated by Bin Wong.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the chapter undertakes a first comparative exploration informed by insights derived primarily from European experiences. After discussing the overall demographic importance of urban migration, the chapter turns to comparing and juxtaposing different types of migration, before considering aspects of migration regulation and overall implications for patterns of urban integration. Notwithstanding its methodological limits, the comparative approach may inform new perspectives for looking at migration patterns in other parts of the world, for instance in the Middle East, during the pre-modern era.

### A VITAL COMPONENT OF URBAN LIFE

Migration was vital to urban development and urban growth in pre-industrial Europe and China alike. In the wave of urban expansion that characterized Western Europe in the first three centuries after the turn of the 1st millennium of the current era, the establishment and growth of settlements was fed by the immigration of new town dwellers. Likewise, active recruitment policies were mobilized to people the newly founded cities in the wave of eastward expansion in Slav and Baltic territories.<sup>2</sup> Even after acquiring a certain critical mass, medieval and early modern European cities required a permanent replenishment of their populations. With death rates as a rule exceeding birth rates—a phenomenon associated with the so-called ‘urban graveyard effect’—cities depended on a constant influx of new inhabitants to maintain their populations, and multiply that to grow. With the precarious demography of pre-industrial cities at times devastated by catastrophic drops in numbers due to epidemics or other mortality crises, influxes of new residents from the countryside represented nothing less than the lifeline for their continued existence. According to calculations by Jan de Vries, any unit increase of the total urban population of early modern northern Europe required on average twice as many people permanently moving from the countryside to cities, which frequently took place in trajectories of stepwise migration via smaller centres. Since most moves to town were in fact temporary, a much larger number still was involved in patterns of urban migration at some point in their lives. It is for instance estimated that up to 10 per cent of the rural adult population eventually got a taste of city life in 17th-century northern Europe.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, substantial urban decline, as in Córdoba after the Spanish *Reconquista* or in Antwerp after 1585, was generally associated with substantial *emigration*.

Even in an early modern city with a relatively stagnant population, therefore, on average around 30 per cent of its inhabitants was born outside the city boundaries. Conversely, rapidly growing cities, such as 17th-century Amsterdam, were made up predominantly of recent immigrants. Obviously, in such conditions the composition of migration streams in terms of age, gender, family composition, religion, or schooling, had a decisive impact on the structure of the urban population at large. Since most urban migrants tended to be young, single adults in their late teens and twenties, their stay in town inflated the middle range of the urban age pyramid and stirred the urban marriage market. Although many left again after completing their training or saving up enough money to set up their own households, immigrants still supplied more than half of all urban marriage partners and regularly married local spouses—albeit at a slightly later age than local-born counterparts—which with a time-lag also contributed to urban fertility rates, and eventually death rates.<sup>4</sup>

Source particulars make it more difficult to assess urban demographic regimes in pre-industrial Chinese cities. Because population registration took place at the level of districts, compounding urban and rural populations, it is often not possible to systematically differentiate and compare urban and rural growth, fertility and mortality rates nor to assess overall migration rates. Frequent references to the presence of sojourners—residing outside their ‘native place’—in late imperial cities indicate that migration was a familiar experience, but because sojourner status became hereditary this also included descendants from earlier immigrants. Existing data in any case demonstrate that migration played a vital role in realizing geographic shifts in the distribution of the Chinese population, and in enabling urbanization spurts. The urban growth spurt in the lower Yangzi valley in the period from late Tang to Song, for instance, was associated with a large-scale migratory movement of population from the northern plains to the mountainous south and the south-east coast. The presence of sojourners also clearly moved in tandem with the demographic and economic fates of cities: dominant in booming centres such as late imperial Shanghai, modest in cities experiencing a downgrading of their economic importance such as Linqing and Yangzhou in the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Both in Europe and China, then, migration and mobility was a pervasive characteristic of urban life, and a prime factor in determining the ups and downs in the population curve of individual cities. Comparing the overall *incidence* of urban migration for both regions is however a complicated matter. While direct data on gross migration dynamics are absent for the pre-modern era, even urban population figures and vital statistics—the best indirect measures available—are of an approximate nature at best, of unequal quality, and not easily comparable through space and time. Available estimates suggest that the first centuries of the 2nd millennium of the current era set the scene for marked urban expansion in both China and Europe, resulting in what appears to have been roughly comparable aggregate levels of urbanization of around 10 per cent by the 13th century—when using the benchmark of 5,000 inhabitants to define a city—although China counted more big cities (with more than 100,000 inhabitants) than Europe. While Chinese urbanization might have progressed somewhat further, from the 16th century onwards the urban proportion of the population started to decline, to reach a level of only 5 per cent by the early 19th century, by which time the comparable figure for Europe stood at 13 per cent. The *relative* decline in Chinese urbanization during the late Ming and especially Qing periods went hand-in-hand with a very strong expansion of the overall population, concentrated mainly in rural and frontier areas, and did not imply any decrease in the *absolute* size of China’s urban population.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, important regional differences existed—with urbanization in the most developed European and Chinese regions surpassing levels of 30 per cent. Yet given that migration was vital to urban population development in the pre-modern era, the

divergent trends noted from at least the 16th century onwards suggest that the overall proportion of people involved in urban migration was lower in Ming-Qing China than in contemporaneous Europe.

The long-term increase in the proportion of Europeans living in cities implies a structural shift in the relative attractions of urban vs. rural income opportunities, a shift driven by long-term dynamics of peasant marginalization and increasing wage dependency. While only part of the resulting labour mobility was directed towards towns, and many moved from cities back to the countryside, the *net* result of these shifts was a cumulative increase in the absolute and relative importance of urban residents vis-à-vis rural dwellers in the long term.<sup>7</sup> The overall smaller proportion of urban dwellers in China throughout the early modern period, indicates that structural dynamics fostering long-term shifts in population distribution from the countryside to cities were less at play, as Chinese agriculture remained dominated by small-scale independent peasant households to a much larger extent than in Europe.<sup>8</sup> This does not imply that Chinese society was less mobile: rather, state-supported dynamics of territorial expansion and internal colonization provided important *rural* migration alternatives for the build-up of lowland population pressure. Yet while long-distance colonization patterns might have functioned efficiently as labour allocation mechanisms, there was no trend comparable to the increasing proletarianization observed for Europe, with its implications for rural–urban migration patterns.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the types of migrants involved, the routes taken by them, and the degree of concern or regulation induced by their movements could differ substantially.

### FORCED AND VOLUNTARY MIGRATION

While migration was a pervasive characteristic of pre-industrial urban life, migrations could differ considerably in terms of purpose, distance, intended duration, or the types of migrants involved. The distinctions involved are however rarely clear-cut, and are often better considered as poles of a continuum than as dichotomies. A case in point is the oft-made distinction between forced and voluntary migration.<sup>10</sup> Warfare, persecutions, personal unfreedom, and deportations could seriously limit if not completely curtail the room for free choice, as in the most extreme case of the slave trade. Yet even migrations instigated by force, could harbour elements of choice, for instance in deciding on eventual destinations. When the Marranos were persecuted and all but expelled from the Iberian peninsula in the 16th century, their preference for commercial hubs such as Florence, Venice, Milan, Constantinople, Salonika, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Hamburg as destinations demonstrates the importance of economic considerations in their migration decisions. Another illustration of this ambiguity was the large-scale northward movement of an estimated 100,000 residents from the southern Low Countries in the course of the Dutch Revolt, where they ended up peopling the mushrooming cities of the Dutch Republic and providing an important stimulus to textile industries and commercial undertakings. While military upheaval and religious persecutions obviously were an important instigator of their move, existing research has demonstrated that the pursuit of better economic opportunities was often also a stimulating factor.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, even migration decisions made in less pressing circumstances were often severely limited by incomplete information or limited income opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Although it is therefore difficult to categorize moves as either voluntary or forced at an individual level, disparities in the incidence and nature of warfare as well as of personal unfreedom fostered differences in aggregate migration volumes and patterns. In medieval and early modern Western Europe, large-scale displacements occurred mainly in the context of religious persecutions and

warfare, as during the late medieval crusades or the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the context of Europe's competitive state system, cities and governments elsewhere were often quick to seize the opportunity of attracting wealthy or skilled refugees, who in many cases ended up reinforcing mainly urban populations, adding to the ethnic diversity of cities—such as the Huguenots in Prussia, or the Iberian Jews in Venice. In Eastern Europe, however, the ubiquity of personal unfreedom in the context of 'second serfdom' acted as a brake on urban migration.<sup>13</sup> In pre-industrial China, large-scale population movements and deportations often took place in the context of military upheaval and regime changes, as with the large-scale move southwards in the wake of the takeover of northern China by the Jin dynasty, or the repopulation of Sichuan after the massacres during the late Ming. Imperial expansion in turn went hand-in-hand with colonization and settlement policies involving large-scale migrations to frontier regions and the forced removal, concentration, and/or dispersal of ethnic groups over sometimes great distances.<sup>14</sup> While the incidence and efficiency of coordinated and forced movements varied considerably through space and time, state intervention appears to have played a more important role in realizing large-scale displacements in China than in Europe. Only in Russia do we see large-scale deportation and forced settlement, particularly to the new towns established on its eastern borders.

### THE URBAN MIGRATION PYRAMID

Another cluster of distinctions that help to differentiate among urban migration patterns concerns the duration and distance of the moves involved, which tended to correlate with the social background of the migrants involved. Existing research for *ancien régime* Western Europe has uncovered the existence of distinct migration circuits, whereby the direct hinterland was often the main supplier of apprentices, domestic servants, day labourers, and other relatively unspecialized labour, while specialized artisans and white-collar workers generally moved between different cities and over greater distances. The migration flows from the surrounding countryside formed part of a set of broader social, economic, and political relationships and interactions linking a city to its hinterland—including market relations, land ownership, and jurisdiction, which in effect functioned as the main purveyors of migration information for most country dwellers. Migrants recruited from beyond a city's rural hinterland were generally more likely to move along the networks of trade and administration connecting different cities. Generally higher skilled and/or socially superior to their rural counterparts, they were engaged in more exclusive social networks providing them with migration information of a more selective and efficient nature and a wider spatial scope, such as artisans' associations, merchant networks, or state bureaucracies.<sup>15</sup>

Schematically, then, migration to cities resembled a pyramid. The broad base consisted of rural migrants with few skills covering relatively short distances. By supplying the hands necessary for carrying out the unspecialized labour-intensive activities, hinterland migration was vital to the functioning of urban economies. This was because in a pre-industrial setting based on organic energy even specialist activities required a multitude of unspecialized hands for auxiliary tasks such as hauling, packing, unpacking, maintaining fires, or turning wheels. Even a modest bakery in 17th-century London provided work for six pairs of hands, several of them unskilled. In addition, rural migrants could often exploit comparative advantages in basic activities such as food processing industries, retailing, or carpentry, and often possessed sufficient skills for lowly specialized trades such as spinning, knitting, tailoring, or construction work. Social networks and recruitment carousels

could help them gain access to the urban labour market and establish certain occupational niches.<sup>16</sup> While many moved in seasonal and temporary patterns of migration, a substantial proportion of hinterland migrants ended up marrying and settling in their city of destination, providing a vital contribution to the urban population—hence the dubbing of their recruitment area as the city’s ‘demographic basin’. The observation that the spatial contours of demographic basins were characterized by long-term continuity, attests to the strong social ‘embeddedness’ of migration channels between a town and its hinterland.<sup>17</sup>

The top of the urban migration pyramid, in contrast, consisted of specialist and upmarket migrants travelling between cities over longer distances. Not bound to a specific destination and oriented towards specialist income opportunities, long-distance migration patterns were less durable than those over short distances: swift to emerge when new opportunities opened up, but equally swift to disappear when perspectives elsewhere proved better. Merchant, artisan, and ethnic networks often provided important institutional frameworks for channelling their movements, as with the medieval Hanse, the Italian merchant associations, the French *compagnonnages* or the Huguenot diaspora. Keen to exploit the scarce skills and resources of specialized artisans, merchants and rentiers, urban authorities often competed with one another over attracting and retaining these groups by granting them special privileges, protection, and benefits.<sup>18</sup> More than these policies of attraction, which by themselves produced short-term effects at best, the density of commercial and interpersonal connections tying a city to an urban network appears to have determined the durability of inter-urban migration patterns. The textile producing urban network of late medieval Flanders, for instance, fostered the emergence of a durable inter-urban migration circuit of skilled textile workers up until the Dutch Revolt, which was subsequently expanded and to a certain extent displaced to the textile cities of the Dutch Republic and England.<sup>19</sup> The importance attributed to their presence by urban authorities, their higher social standing, and their higher degree of ‘exoticism’ due to the covering of longer distances, help to explain why long-distance migrants have often received considerably more attention in historiography. Notwithstanding the crucial role they sometimes played in the diffusion of new industrial and commercial technologies and the integration of urban networks, however, their quantitative importance remained limited when compared to hinterland migrants, and by definition played no part in the observed long-term increase of *total* urban population. A particular place in the urban migration pyramid was taken up by landowners, whose immigration to the cities proved an important dimension to late medieval urbanization patterns, and who increasingly erected town houses for temporary residence all over Europe—especially in capital cities.<sup>20</sup>

Women occupied a particular position within the urban migration pyramid. On the whole, the longer the migration distance, the lower the proportion of women. Single women’s migration occurred primarily within circuits of unspecialized hinterland migration, recruiting young women to work as domestic servants in urban households for a few years. Given the labour-intensive nature of household chores, the sizeable demand exerted by urban middle- and upper-class families for female domestic servants often caused women to outnumber men at the bottom of the migration pyramid. Indeed, most female immigrants entered the city as domestic servants.<sup>21</sup> Many if not most left the city again after working and saving for a few years, but a significant proportion ended up marrying and settling in the city, moving on to unspecialized jobs that were compatible with a married status, such as laundrywoman, spinster, innkeeper, or shopkeeper. In addition, vulnerable women such as widows or single mothers were attracted by greater possibilities for combining different income strategies, including charity, in urban settings. Another group contributing significantly to the presence of female

immigrants in cities, was that of prostitutes—who often moved between different cities.<sup>22</sup> On the whole, however, women were under-represented in inter-urban migration circuits, and those women present at the top of urban migration pyramid often belonged to the households of artisans, merchants, landowners, or officials.

We are less informed on the variety of migration patterns in the Chinese case. Due to the nature of population classification and registration at district level, migration from the surrounding countryside to a city was often not recorded as a move at all, and was not necessarily considered as such by contemporaries. Therefore, direct evidence on the volume and nature of hinterland migration is scarce, hindering detailed comparisons with European urban migration patterns. Most references to urban migration encountered in contemporary sources and historical literature in the Chinese case refer to migration of a more ‘exotic’ kind, involving migrants moving over relatively long distances, originating from beyond administrative boundaries, speaking specific dialects or languages, and carrying with them their distinct beliefs, habits, and customs. Many of them displayed forms of occupational specialization along native-place lines, as the observations of a Presbyterian missionary on late imperial Hangzhou attest:

Practically all the carpenters, wood-carvers, decorators, cabinetmakers, and medicine dealers are from Ningbo. The tea and cloth merchants, salt dealers, and innkeepers are from Anhui. The porcelain dealers are from Jiangxi, the opium traders from Guangdong, and the wine merchants from Shaoxing. Many of the bankers and money-changers are also from Shaoxing, as well as many of the blacksmiths;... Suzhou furnishes a large number of the official class, the ‘sing-song’ girls, and restaurant keepers.<sup>23</sup>

That most of these migrants belonged to the circles of merchants, artisans, or officials, corresponds to migration patterns encountered at the ‘top’ of the migration pyramid identified for European cities. An equivalent to the immigration of landowners to European towns can also be found. As in Europe, the migration of artisans and merchants between Chinese cities over long distances seems to have played an important part in the spread and integration of interregional markets and the diffusion of new technologies. Likewise, diasporas and migrant networks could provide a successful institutional framework for the development of inter-urban merchant and artisan networks bound by kinship and ethnicity, as with the salt merchants from the Shanxi and Shaanxi regions in the city of Yangzhou.<sup>24</sup> In many cases, the urban merchant guilds of the late Qing period can be traced back to the establishment of fraternal native-place associations (*huiguan*) among migrants in the early Ming, although other and longer-standing origins have been attested in the literature.<sup>25</sup> Differences in local autonomy and migration policies, at the same time imply that urban ‘attraction policies’ played a considerably smaller part in channelling up-market migration patterns than in the European case.

The scale and specificities of the Chinese urban network implies that inter-urban migration channels operated at different levels than in Europe. Whereas Jan de Vries observed an increasing integration of the European urban network in the course of the early modern period, exemplified by a transition from a polynuclear to a single-centred system, Skinner argued that China’s urbanization took place in the context of a number of distinctive macro-regional economies.<sup>26</sup> Even most of the ‘exotic’ migrant groups identified by Cloud in late imperial Hangzhou had travelled a few hundred miles at most. While some migrants moved between different regions and the capitals attracted migrants from all over the empire, most inter-urban migration in China probably occurred within the boundaries of macro-regional urban systems. Although difficult to quantify and important exceptions notwithstanding, median distances of inter-urban migrations were therefore not necessarily larger than



in Europe. Yet whereas they generally took place within one empire, in Europe the most mobile and up-market inter-urban migrants frequently transgressed state boundaries.

Although Chinese sources are more sparse, it seems likely that labour contracting systems, apprenticeships, and personal networks functioned as migration channels linking city and countryside, and point at the existence of hinterland recruitment patterns similar to those tying European towns to their 'demographic basins'.<sup>27</sup> Given the above observations on the overall incidence of rural–urban migration over the long term, however, they probably operated on an overall smaller scale than in Europe. Another apparent difference, related to the former, was the lower participation of women in patterns of migration and labour mobility, which was in turn related to women's nearly universal and earlier marriage in China than in Europe—late teens rather than late twenties. With no life phase like that of 'early adulthood' in Europe, the Chinese case shows no institution comparable to that of female domestic service so decisive for women's migration in Europe. More broadly, female labour *outside* the house was considerably less customary. Although the pleasure districts of major cities attracted female prostitutes, entertainers, and courtesans, overall urban migration of single females appears to have taken place at a much lower scale, and often only as a pendant of male or family migrations.<sup>28</sup> With family and male migration comparatively more important, migrants' impact on urban nuptiality and fertility patterns must have in turn been mitigated.

Hinterland migration, then, no doubt played an important role in maintaining urban population figures in China as in Europe, yet is more difficult to quantify and typify due to source problems. Overall, the long-term *net* gains of rural–urban migration were smaller in relation to total population in China than in Europe. Structural causes may have lain in different rural and agricultural environments, while proximate causes probably included the lower participation of women and single migrants, lowering migrants' direct and indirect contributions to urban demography. Migration circuits over longer distances are better documented and show clear resemblances to inter-urban migration patterns identified in Europe, involving mainly artisans, merchants, and officials with relatively scarce skills and resources, connected by professional, ethnic, or kinship bonds, and displaying patterns of occupational specialization. In Europe as in China, urban migration patterns were an important vehicle for the exchange and blending of cultural habits, customs, and beliefs, the circulation of technological innovation, the supply of the urban labour market, and the renewal of ruling elites. While the inter-urban circulation of artisans, merchants, and other migrants was a vehicle for the development of urban cosmopolitan culture in larger cities, the constant population exchange between a city and its hinterland was an important conveyor belt for the spread of urban mores.<sup>29</sup> Urban migrants, whether short-distance or long-distance, young or old, male or female, were rarely on their own, but made use of social connections and interpersonal networks when contemplating and effectuating their moves.

## REGULATING URBAN MIGRATION

Although migrants were vital to the urban economy and demography, they were not necessarily looked upon favourably by local or supra-local authorities, and several regulations were devised to limit, control, or contain their movements. The motives for intervening in migration patterns were manifold and could vary considerably through space and time, but often centred around concerns over social and political stability, the protection of local resources, and the regulation of supply channels and urban markets for labour, goods, and services. Because migrants by reason of their mobility could

complicate attempts at registration and control, they could be considered hazardous to political order, especially in times of social upheaval or regime changes. Unregulated movements of ethnic minorities could challenge political projects centred on ethnocentric or nationalist policies, while large-scale influxes of impoverished rural folk risked straining public services and resources such as poor relief up to breaking point. At the same time, migrants were vital supply channels: mobile merchants formed crucial trade links between cities and regions, travelling artisans were instrumental in diffusing new technologies and conquering new markets for urban products, and both short-distance and long-distance workers were vital to fuelling the urban labour demand. Migration policies were therefore often a mixed outcome of restrictive regulations designed to limit their potentially destabilizing effects in terms of social mobility and the protection of local resources on the one hand, and supportive policies aimed at attracting the most 'valuable' migrants on the other hand: some migrants were clearly more 'wanted' than others. Because the costs and benefits of migration tended to be distributed unequally between different interest groups, however, the eventual outcome and definition of 'wanted' and 'unwanted' migrants depended upon local power relations as well as those between local and supra-local authorities.<sup>30</sup>

Among regulations affecting urban migration patterns, we can distinguish three types: those limiting overall freedom of movement, those restricting entry, and those regulating the settlement process proper. Major differences in all three types existed between the regions discussed here, related to disparities with regard to the political autonomy of cities on the one hand and to personal freedom on the other hand. In Western Europe, the rise of cities that began during the high Middle Ages was intimately connected to the retrieval of personal freedom. While an uninterrupted urban residence of a certain length of time could literally free a former serf of his personal obligations to the feudal lord, the overall decline of serfdom in the wake of the 14th-century crisis removed the remaining feudal limits on personal mobility.<sup>31</sup> Although specific categories such as those in receipt of poor relief could be required to stay put and certain minority groups were at times forcibly removed, most were legally free to move about in the early modern period. This freedom of movement contrasted with the limits to personal mobility imposed by the concomitant rise of 'second serfdom' in Eastern Europe, curbing urban growth dynamics. In Ming-Qing China, freedom of movement was contained by the imperial household registration system, assigning each household to a specific district. Stringent under the early Ming, however, migration restrictions were subsequently relaxed and transfers of registration facilitated.<sup>32</sup>

When we move on from restrictions on overall freedom of movement to those pertaining specifically to urban immigration, again important differences emerge. In Western Europe, the political autonomy and 'freedom' most cities enjoyed implied that they could pursue their own policies of attraction, restriction, and expulsion with regard to immigration. Urban ordinances designed to stimulate the influx of those considered valuable and useful and to prevent the entry of 'idle strangers', are therefore a familiar and recurring theme to anyone studying late medieval or early modern urban policies. It is worth remarking that these often ran counter to the wishes and endeavours of central authorities, for whom considerations of social stability and political control tended to predominate over the economic considerations that motivated urban authorities. National restrictions on labour mobility in Tudor England, which were inspired mainly by concerns for societal stability, were for instance actively circumvented by urban authorities seeking to recruit an adequate labour supply. Conversely, the authorities of 18th-century Lyon sought to reserve the *Hôpital Général* for local silk workers during periods of unemployment, rather than having to accommodate

the economically useless riff-raff as envisaged by royal policies that aimed to curb the incidence of vagrancy.<sup>33</sup>

Because cities did not enjoy any similar degree of political autonomy in China, and were often administered jointly with their hinterland at the district level of imperial administration, there was considerably less scope for autonomous policies of entry, while urban residence did not entail any particular personal freedoms or privileges. This helps to explain why migration policies devised by central authorities, often eschewing mobility, had considerably more impact on the fate of individual cities in China than in Europe. A case in point is the anti-migration and anti-urban policies pursued under the early Ming that produced a set-back in urban growth.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a higher degree of voluntarism characterized imperial policies to favour one particular city over other cities, producing significant shifts in population figures from one city to another—for instance when capitals were founded or transferred by a new dynasty or ruler, or when whole urban populations were transferred for political reasons.<sup>35</sup> And whereas travel legislation was in principle uniform throughout the Chinese empire, Europe's competitive state and city system allowed far more possibilities for voting with one's feet.

Further regulations on urban migration pertained to issues related to settlement, specifying certain conditions for migrants' residence in town: where they should live, whom they could live with, what type of work or activities they could perform, whether they enjoyed access to relief provisions, etc. The city government of 16th-century Ulm for instance specified in great detail that resident aliens had to work from the tolling of the work-bell in the morning until it rang in the evening, and were not allowed to keep dogs, to drink alcohol outside their own homes or to enter taverns or gamble during the workweek, and were prohibited from assembling after dark—at the risk of expulsion. Limits of policing and control however imply that stringent rules often functioned more as a stick behind the door to deal with problematic cases rather than as a universally implemented policy.<sup>36</sup> Regulations pertaining to guilds and citizenship were among those that could indirectly limit newcomers' economic options: to the extent that certain activities were reserved for members of a certain guild and/or burghers of the town, the associated entry conditions—financial or otherwise—could represent differential barriers to migrants. Newcomers' access to the carpenters' guild in early 16th-century Ghent, for instance, was comparatively more difficult due to considerably lower entry fees for masters' sons and local-born citizens. Ethnic minorities were at times relegated to specific sections of the city, as in the case of the Jewish ghetto in Venice.

In a similar way, a combination of urban policies, chain migration networks, and occupational specialization produced the often ethnically differentiated neighbourhoods so characteristic of the morphology of early modern Chinese cities. The characteristics and functions of 'guilds' in Chinese cities differed from the producer-centred associations in Europe: developed out of native-place associations and grouping mainly officials and merchants, their social and commercial functions tended to predominate over any interventions in the regulation of product and labour markets. Yet native-place associations, merchant guilds, and neighbourhood associations (*hui*) did fulfil important functions as to the socialization of migrant groups, assuring their compliance with local norms, settling disputes, and acting as a political lobby vis-à-vis established groups.<sup>37</sup>

## INTEGRATION

Variations in the duration of migration, the social background of newcomers, the channels of

migration used, the types of regulations in force, and the local opportunity structure produced distinct modes of integration and incorporation in the urban fabric. The notion of integration is often understood in daily language as referring to the assimilation of ‘alien elements’ into a relatively stable environment—but this misrepresents the challenges associated with early modern urban migration patterns. These can be understood better in the original sense of the concept ‘integration’ as the interdependences and interrelationships of different groups and individuals at various levels of social interaction: challenges that work in many directions, and are determined at least as much by the structure and dynamics of the urban fabric as by the agency of migrants themselves.

The question of integration in early modern European cities confronts an interesting paradox: while the ideological rhetoric associated with urban government stressed notions of local belonging to an urban *communitas*, exemplified by local citizenship, a large proportion of urban residents were in fact immigrants and non-citizens. Urban citizenship could often be acquired by marriage or purchase, yet remained out of reach and/or beyond the aspirations of many immigrants. Urban populations have therefore often been characterized as consisting of a stable core of citizen-residents on the one hand and a ‘floating population’ of temporary migrants on the other hand.<sup>38</sup> Although many migrants stayed only temporarily, too strong a distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is misleading. Certain newcomers rapidly acquired a place among urban elites, while poor ‘locals’ were in many respects excluded from the political *communitas*. Migrants were not socially disconnected, but often embedded in social support networks that provided them with various connections to the urban fabric. Rather than distinguishing between local ‘insiders’ and migrant ‘outsiders’, then, more research is needed to lay bare the different intersecting modes and layers of integration and incorporation characterizing urban society as a whole.

The density of non-kinship ties connecting individuals to urban society has been identified an exceptional feature of early modern Europe, a result of the demographic characteristics of urban life. Because high mortality and migration rates produced many individuals with few family ties to rely on, voluntary associations developed to take over both affective and supportive functions of kinship networks. The density of fraternities, sororities, associations, clubs, and societies in urban contexts not only provided newcomers with manifold entries to local social networks, but also fostered the development of civil society.<sup>39</sup> There is no doubt that various social, political, cultural, economic, and religious associations fulfilled important functions in integration trajectories, and in some cases were directly related to aspects of migration regulation, as with guild membership determining whether newcomers could carry out certain trades. At the same time, it is important to realize that membership of these associations was socially stratified and diverse, and that they employed different criteria of both inclusion *and* exclusion, both formally and informally. To gain entry to the Hospital of Saint Sixtus in late 16th-century Rome, for instance, one had to demonstrate a long-standing residence in town, while access to the butchers’ trade in 18th-century Antwerp remained quasi hereditary. Dynamics of exclusion could at times also favour immigrants: journeymen in 17th-century Amsterdam for instance complained that master cloth shearers, many of whom originated from Hamburg, preferred to hire compatriots, while the chimney sweep guild in 18th-century Vienna was completely dominated by immigrants.

Associations were complemented by less formal integration mechanisms that were at least as important in structuring integration patterns, such as living-in arrangements, marriage patterns, and neighbourhood networks. Because many immigrants were young, single adults, lodging arrangements—with their employers, other households or lodging houses—provided a first point of entry to

elaborate social ties in their new environment.<sup>40</sup> Although immigrants married at a slightly later age and more frequently with fellow immigrants than their local-born counterparts, marriage was a powerful integration mechanism—one that often determined which young adults eventually settled in town and who moved on. When measured in terms of interactions with local-born residents, for instance with regard to lodging arrangements or marriage patterns, most research shows that hinterland migrants were more ‘integrated’ than the more upmarket migrants from the higher regions of the urban migration pyramid. The latter were in turn involved more often in ethnic or supra-local networks extending far beyond the urban environment, such as merchant associations or religious diasporas. Because many intended to move on when better prospects opened up elsewhere, maintaining such distant contacts was often more important to them than developing local ties. In that sense, integration in the sense of ‘local embeddedness’ should not necessarily be taken as a measure of success, but rather as an indication of limited migration horizons.

Chinese cities did not cultivate a sense of urban *communitas* similar to that in Europe, where it was bound up closely with a notion of an autonomous political body.<sup>41</sup> Yet urban and neighbourhood identities were nurtured by local customs and beliefs, such as the worshipping of the city god. This was complemented by a strong sense of local and kinship identities, exemplified and fostered by the great political, social, and cultural importance of native-place registration and surname groups.<sup>42</sup> Although it is difficult adequately to compare such different institutional structures, it appears that networks and institutions related to migrants’ geographical and ancestral origins were considerably more important for longer lengths of time than in the European case. While both formal and informal conceptions of local belonging in Europe tended to be based mainly on the place of birth or residence, for instance, the institution of native-place and surname lineages in China implied that urban residents could still be considered part of a ‘migrant community’ even after living in town for several generations.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, native-place associations often constituted newcomers’ most important point of entry into the urban fabric. It is telling in this respect that the origins of most Chinese guilds went back to native-place associations founded on a common ethnic background among urban immigrants, who felt the need to strengthen their position in town by asserting their geographical origins—endeavours explicit in the preamble to the statutes of the Ningbo merchants’ association in Wenzhou:

Here at Wenzhou we find ourselves isolated; mountains and sea separate us from Ningbo, and when in trade we excite envy on the part of Whenzhouese, and suffer insult and injury, we have no adequate redress.... It is this which imposes on us the duty of establishing a Guild.<sup>44</sup>

The greater continued importance of native-place and surname lineages among migrants in cities in the absence or under-development of other urban-wide networks and services is therefore likely to have contributed to a far stronger cultivation and confirmation of origin-based differences in Chinese than in European towns.

## CONCLUSIONS

Comparing urban migration patterns and trajectories in late medieval and early modern Europe with those in contemporaneous China, is complicated by dissimilar source materials, language barriers, and distinct historiographical traditions. While this chapter represents only a first comparative exploration, it has yielded a number of differences and similarities that may provide important leads

for future research. A first crucial difference is that rural–urban migration appears to have been less important in China than in Europe, at least when measured by its net results in the long run and for the totality of the region, as is borne out by the tendency of Chinese urbanization levels to decrease and those in Europe to increase over the period in question. While systematic comparisons of hinterland migration patterns are hindered by the scarcity and variability of direct source materials, part of the explanation probably lies in the greater resilience of small-scale farming, the overall lower age of marriage for women, dissimilar household patterns, and rural migration alternatives, which reduced rural push forces and peasant marginalization. Other important differences are situated at the level of intervention and regulation: in China the impact of central policies appears to have been greater and by definition more uniform, while the lower level of local autonomy and absence of different states precluded the type of urban competition for ‘valuable’ migrants often encountered in Europe. Large-scale transfers of population groups or general travel restrictions, in contrast, appear to have been realized more easily in the Chinese context than in Europe.

Similarities in migration patterns and trajectories are identifiable for upmarket categories of wealthy and skilled migrants, moving between cities along the top of what we have termed the urban migration pyramid. Both in China and in Europe, merchants, officials, and artisans predominantly made use of professional or ethnic migration networks connecting different cities. While only detailed comparisons can provide conclusive insights on the matter, it appears that overall migration distances for these inter-urban migrants were not necessarily much higher in China than in Europe—although the capital of course attracted migrants from over the whole empire.

Patterns of incorporation and integration, however, again appear to have differed considerably. Striking in most Chinese studies and sources on migration is the great significance attached to origin and ancestry, nurtured by the imperial household registration system and exemplified by the important role played by native-place associations in Chinese cities. The latter were often the first meeting points for newcomers, providing economic, social, cultural, and political support, overlapping with neighbourhood, occupational, and religious associations, and catering both to migrants and their offspring for several generations. This contrasts noticeably with patterns of integration in European cities. Although ethnic minorities could in exceptional situations persist over several generations, the political concept of urban *communitas*, the abundant supply of formal and informal associations and integration mechanisms that were not origin-based, and the importance attached to place of birth or residence in conceptions of belonging, all contributed to a far greater and faster blending of newcomers into the urban fabric of European towns.

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## POWER

WIM BLOCKMANS AND MARJOLEIN 'T HART

The exercise of power, the capacity to limit other people's freedom of action and to curb their behaviour, even against their resistance, evidently depends on each party's available means. These means range from persuasion and economic incentives to threat or effective use of physical coercion. The quality of the means of power changes with technological development, the quantity varies as a function of the possibilities, at any given time or place, of concentration and accumulation.<sup>1</sup> These factors depend on a society's value orientations and the technology available to it to exploit the physical environment, but also on the degrees of stratification and differentiation.

Numerous towns of medieval Europe developed in a period of rapid commercialization; they thus commanded rich and new types of resource extraction within a non-centralized society. This created excellent conditions for the rise of the self-governing European city, defined by Max Weber by an exclusive citizenship that was grounded in written charters. He argued for the distinctive importance of communal civic institutions for the cohesion, identity, and economic development of Western cities, above all their 'at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, thus also administration by authorities in the election of whom the burghers participated'. This he contrasted to the relative weakness of Oriental cities vis-à-vis the power of the state, even when professional associations did exist there that were self-administered, since no legally protected burgher stratum functioned as such.<sup>2</sup>

Based upon the power of the Western cities, new forms of political participation arose that included representation from below. Yet this kind of urban self-governance did not exist in all of Europe; in addition, following the process of state-formation, the majority of the typical Weberian self-governing cities had to yield most of their powers to the newly unified territorial states. This chapter aims to clarify the variances in urban power throughout pre-industrial Europe, China, and the Islamic world. It starts out to explore the ecological base of power in general, followed by an explication of the varying structures of stratification that are crucial to understanding the different potentials in resource mobilization for the urban communities.

## ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND RESOURCE EXTRACTION

Given the basic fact that urban development can only occur where and when a substantial agrarian surplus is durably generated, it follows that the dimensions of urbanization in pre-industrial societies varied greatly over time and space. As a general rule, one can observe that the earliest growth of cities occurred in regions where a moderately warm and humid climate was combined with abundant irrigation as well as easy transportation facilities on rivers or along coasts.

Mesopotamia, Egypt, Northern India, and China not only were the cradle of the first urban cultures, their natural environment also enabled these cities to rise to dimensions and densities which for centuries remained unthinkable elsewhere in the world (see above, [Chs. 2, 4–6](#)). The alluvial plains along the Indus and the Ganges with their tributaries constituted the backbone of an irrigation system

which increased the agricultural productivity in such a way that cities with a population estimated at tens of thousands could develop in the period from around 2500 to 1500 BCE. From the 10th to the 18th centuries CE, urbanization grew steadily, concentrated in 120 major centres, to an estimated overall 15 per cent of the total population. During Mughal rule (mid-16th to early 18th centuries), the largest capitals reached several hundred thousand inhabitants; Agra fluctuated between 500,000 and 660,000, depending on the presence of the court, Surat numbered around 200,000.<sup>3</sup> In 8th-century China, the Tang capital Chang'an had a population of 1 to 2 million. Cities of over 100,000 inhabitants may already have represented 6 to 7 per cent of the total population in 1100; the capital of the Northern Song Kaifeng might have reached 1 million inhabitants in the 12th century; Hangzhou, the capital of the southern Song dynasty, 600,000 to 700,000. The intensive rice production in irrigated fields and the extensive system of water transport favoured a high level of commercialization and thus resource extraction.<sup>4</sup>

Locations in the fertile irrigated plains along the great rivers similarly help explain the rise of the dozens of great cities in the Islamic Middle East (see above, [Ch. 14](#)). Damascus, Baghdad, Samara, Fustat/Cairo were initially central seats of the army and administration, but grew to the dazzling dimensions of over 100,000 inhabitants. Relocations of the seat of power just as rapidly led to the decline and the expansion of yet other places. The case of Fustat, the capital of the Abbasid province of Egypt, illustrates this point well. Beyond the palace and military camp areas, mercantile functions developed thanks to its location on the east bank of the Nile on the crossroads to the Red Sea. The Fatimid rulers that conquered Egypt in 969 had their palaces built some four kilometers northward, which became the core of rapidly expanding Cairo. From the 10th to the 12th centuries, all major cities in the West, reaching to Fez and Córdoba, and with the sole exception of Constantinople, the eastern capital of the late Roman empire, belonged to the Islamic sphere. They were all important centres of credit and finance, artisanal production, and markets for regional as well as long-distance trade. The Abbasid capital Baghdad may have counted 300,000 inhabitants in the 9th century; the population of the Fatimid capital Fustat/Cairo added up to some 250,000 in the 13th century. Granada reached a similar size in the 15th century.<sup>5</sup> In the 920s and 930s, however, Northern Iran and Baghdad suffered unusually cold winter temperatures, which turned into a continuous pattern accompanied by drought in the 11th century into the 1230s. The persistent cold winters were affected by the Siberian high wind system and severely damaged the cotton plantations as well as various other crops such as dates, figs, and citrus trees. As a consequence of these climatic fluctuations, Baghdad was depopulated well before the Mongols' conquest.<sup>6</sup>

However impressive the dimensions and activities of the Islamic cities really were, their development remained confined to the Mediterranean and subtropical climate zones. Their growth and prosperity rested on the combination of the choice of a political and religious centre, their favourable location on long-distance trade routes, intensive commercialized agriculture, and the attraction of highly skilled local crafts. In this respect, there are striking similarities with the cities in the urbanized areas of India and China; indeed, all pre-industrial cities concentrated economic, social, religious, and political powers. Yet the possibilities and capacities of massive resource extraction varied. The steady supply of huge quantities of rice and grain, and the possibilities of transporting and storing them created a formidable asset favouring the central state authorities in China. The sheer scale of such capacity provided the Chinese emperors with resources that clearly outran those of other contenders for power. Power systems elsewhere were more vulnerable; in India as a consequence of the highly variable climatic conditions; in the Islamic world because of the

volatility of nomadic rulers imposing various taxes; and in Europe as a result of its small margins of surplus in the agrarian economy.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, looking at Europe around the 10th and 11th centuries, we can single out Constantinople, Córdoba, and Granada as the only cases which were comparable in their size with the cities of the Middle East. Their importance was evidently derived from their status as capital cities located in exceptionally fertile regions and on strategic crossroads. In the cases of Andalusia, the cultural unity with the rest of the Arabic world facilitated overseas linkages. From the 11th century, however, northern and central Italy became unmistakably dominant, taking over from the earlier developed centres in the south such as Amalfi and Palermo. The demographic high point was reached about 1300, when Venice, Milan, and Florence counted at least 100,000 inhabitants each and both Genoa and Bologna had perhaps around 80,000. There were twenty other cities in their environs with more than 20,000 residents at this time. The second most densely urbanized area in Europe in this period was the southern Low Countries, in particular Flanders, where it can be assumed that around 1300 Ghent had more than 65,000 inhabitants, Bruges had probably close to 45,000 and in addition, nearby Arras, Saint-Omer, Lille, Douai, and Ypres numbered between 20,000 to 30,000. It was not until the 16th century that this concentration was surpassed by the cities of Brabant, especially by the growth of Antwerp, the first trading metropolis north of the Alps to pass the 100,000 threshold, and in the 17th century by Amsterdam.

None of the largest European cities emerged because they were a political capital, they all grew thanks to their exceptionally favourable location on the overland trading routes and their maritime connections which secured their access to resources. Some of these towns, though, expanded because of their political connections. In the cases of London and Paris, economic location advantages supported their extraordinary size, to which their political ascendancy in a larger kingdom was added. Absorbing population surpluses from a very wide area, they became much larger than all other cities in the realm.<sup>8</sup> In terms of power relations, the contrast thus needs to be highlighted between the basically feudal power structures concentrated in the capital city of the incipient dynastic states, and commercial metropolises that depended on their connections with the hinterland and long-distance trade networks, thus upon a different system of resource extraction.

## VARYING POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN CITIES AND TERRITORIAL STATES

The rise of a strong feudal power did not follow automatically from the available methods of resource extraction. For China, Victoria Tin-bor Hui showed how the Qin emerged victorious from the period of the 'Warring States' (475–221 BCE) thanks to new policies, the methods being partly copied from the 'best practices' of their competitors. Already in the 4th century BCE intensive farming was encouraged alongside multiple crops by large-scale irrigation projects and assistance with farm tools and technical advice. Population growth was stimulated by mandating marriage before the age of twenty and providing subsidies for families with more children. An improved system of household registration facilitated the levy of taxes. The administrative system, based upon meritocracy, was gradually extended into four layers which controlled production on the basis of annual reports, leading to rewards and sanctions. The Qin thus consolidated their conquests and expanded continually the degree of centralized resource extraction. Peasants were obliged to perform military service and public works as *corvées*. In the 1st century BCE, the Confucian philosophy laying a stress on service and loyalty to principle became the dominant imperial ideology; administrators regarded themselves

henceforth as protectors of the people. Imperial capitals were built by each new dynasty as reflections of the cosmological order: the drum tower stood invariably in the very centre to maintain civil order.<sup>9</sup>

It is remarkable that the period of the Warring States coincided with a rising commercialization that permitted Chinese merchants to amass substantial resources thanks to new trade opportunities, not unlike merchants in late medieval Europe. But the rise of the Qin state stifled the tendency towards urban autonomy; the Qin rulers efficiently suppressed the merchant class by introducing a merchant registry that imposed heavy duties and restricted its mobility. The Han dynasty (202 BCE–189 CE) was less repressive and allowed the accumulation of merchant wealth, but strictly forbade merchants to show off any status symbols such as expensive clothing, carrying weapons, or riding horses, and excluded them from the administrative offices. The way in which the Chinese empire was built—by massive physical violence to extract huge material and human resources for its military, symbolic, and administrative purposes—prevented the emergence of the kind of autonomy that Weber considered to be essential in the European development.<sup>10</sup> Yet even then the Chinese emperor's capacities to mobilize resources for power always depended upon a political and economic balance that could change because of weakening central rule or unexpected and sudden economic expansion. The Tang dynasty (618–907) favoured trading connections with the Turkish and Persian realms, permitting the settlements of Sogdian merchants in the northern capitals Chang'an and Luoyang; Sogdian temples emerged even near the market squares. They also established themselves in minor towns in the valley downstream of the Yellow River, where they could deal directly with the silk producers. Around 750, 55 per cent of state revenue consisted of duties on silk and hemp cloths, which demonstrates the connectedness between the empire and the Sogdian merchants. Also Arab and Persian merchants could establish themselves in the harbours of southern China.<sup>11</sup> Under the Song dynasty (960–1279), the largest Chinese cities enjoyed a considerable degree of commercial freedom, not unlike under the Ming empire in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In contrast to China, Europe's population grew and its trade networks expanded at a time when no strong dynastic states existed. Agricultural commercialization occurred while feudal lords ruled through patrimonialism, not through meritocracy such as in China. While Chinese emperors, like the sultans in the Islamic world, could impose commercial taxes at will, and imposed state monopolies on the production of iron and weapons, salt, liquor, and tea, European rulers were unable to establish a monopoly of violence and most were bound to customary law that, at least in principle, protected even communities of serfs against arbitrary exploitation. The European feudal structure was more of a reciprocal kind; *Magna Carta* (1215) is a clear demonstration of the vassals' power to resist transgressions by their feudal lord, even if he were the king. The feudal model was extended to a more general principle of public law, and also the city of London was explicitly included in the listed limitations to royal power. A much earlier case of the extension of the feudal right of resistance to protect citizens dates from 22 August 1128. Thierry, the newly inaugurated Count of Flanders, had the privileges granted to Saint-Omer confirmed by his most prominent barons who swore to assist the citizens in case of violation of their privileges and customary law by the count. In the late 13th century, the right of resistance became part and parcel of all privileges granted by the dukes of Brabant to the estates, including the citizens. As free men, they were obliged only to provide a clearly limited number of services to the prince, mostly related to the defence of the country.

While resource extraction for Chinese warfare rested mainly upon the principle of coercion, European wars depended much more on the willingness of financial elites to cooperate with

monarchs, thus on negotiation and bargaining.<sup>12</sup> In addition, wars tended to be much more expensive in Europe (because of the hiring of mercenaries) than in China (conscripts) which strengthened this dependent relationship. From the 11th century, Europe's rapidly growing towns protected their liberties against feudal assaults by the construction of defensive walls and by organizing militias. In the late 12th century, the Lombard cities united in a league whereby they effectively resisted the encroachments by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa through military means.

But the timing of commercialization, differences in state efficiency, feudal reciprocity, and more expensive European wars were not the only relevant factors. It is essential to take into account the secular structure of the Catholic Church, which enjoyed, in the tradition of the late Roman empire, the status of legal and fiscal immunity for its personnel and properties, and thus commanded yet another way of substantial resource extraction. For several centuries the Church was in fact the only sophisticated and stable power structure in Western Europe. Bishops effectively ruled most cities and their hinterland in Italy and in the empire. The Church expanded thanks to its reciprocal relationship with the holders of physical power, legitimizing their actions as holy wars spreading the true faith and sacral royal power, by which it could ideologically supersede its aristocratic contenders. By the end of the 10th century, the bishops protected peasants and burghers against feudal violence by promoting the notion of a general peace.

In Europe, relative overpopulation drove the clerical and the aristocratic owners of large estates to concede greater personal freedom to the peasants who started the clearance of new arable land. Similarly, they had to give up their seigniorial rights over those who fled their domains and settled in emerging urban centres. From the 10th century onwards, old towns and cities saw their population grow, and new conglomerates emerged on crossroads along navigable rivers. Both the communities in newly founded agricultural domains and those in growing urban centres built up their own way of life, based on particular privileges and liberties, away from the servile status which had been the rule since the 3rd century. Personal freedom of the citizens, a substantial degree of self-government, and a specific set of legal prescriptions protecting individual citizens as well as their property rights, were typically characteristic privileges that were granted to rural and urban communes as a kind of 'concession' by local lords. Cases of total autonomy and independence of the communes were rare however, since the landed aristocracy remained well established and was on its way to creating ever larger power structures through expansion, elimination of weaker contenders, and concentration into territorial principalities and even kingdoms.

External pressure and risks encouraged the earliest communes to create bonds of solidarity, formalized in sworn oaths, *coniurationes*. 'Horizontal' social relations, voluntarily agreed between people with comparable status, replaced the former model of 'vertical' dependency. Internal relations were ideally conceived as peaceful: visitors had to leave their weapons at the city gates, conflicts between citizens became regulated with restrictions on the use of physical violence. The 1114 urban privilege of Valenciennes was typically referred to as the 'peace of the city'. Wherever the burghers felt strong enough, they bought off the limitations to their freedom from their local lord, often a bishop or an abbot. Those craftsmen living in old urban centres in a servile status as servants of the aristocracy came into a position to buy their freedom, as did the commune as a whole. It generally meant personal freedom for the citizens, the right to protect the community, the citizens, and their property by legal as well as by military means, local law-making and proper jurisdiction. Guilds and neighbourhood organizations enhanced the associative political culture, which was boosted further by common festivities and rituals. In most developing cities, the lord's or the bishop's castle, or the

abbey which had ruled over the place for centuries, gradually became marginalized in relation to the expanding area occupied by the citizens, even if their iconic presence may have retained a symbolic value.

Thus, in Europe, alongside the nascent and centralizing territorial states, three different power structures emerged, each with its own logic, and each with independent capacities to extract resources and to control different means of power. The clergy mastered the means of persuasion and belief, the aristocracy derived its status from the exercise of physical violence, and the citizens controlled the markets. The clergy and the aristocracy extracted rents and duties from their domains, while the accumulated mobile capital enabled the citizens to contract massive loans at rather low rates of interest. This differentiated setting permitted the formation of shifting alliances and coalitions. Coalitions between aristocrats, feudal landholders, and clergy prevailed in most countries with low degrees of urbanization, such as in Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe, while urban interests were usually better represented in areas that were densely urbanized. Nevertheless, typical for Europe was that each contender for power could always reinforce its position by allying with one of the other parties, either from the feudal, ecclesiastical, or burgher ranks, which resulted in a continuous balancing act without any group enjoying a monopoly or prevailing in all three domains.

Such possible shifts in coalition were absent in most non-European countries, since religious power did not stand, as a rule, in opposition to the territorial power holders. China's various religious sects were superseded by the Confucian ideology that was firmly entrenched in the state apparatus; political opposition that was mingled with religious discontent always remained essentially local in character. In the areas in which Sunni Islam ruled, the local religious leaders (*ulama*) were dependent upon the state for their resources; state and religion constituted one inseparable whole, and no distinction existed between civil, feudal, and Islamic law.<sup>13</sup> In the Ottoman empire, urban officials were all appointed by the sultan. The *kadi*, administrator and judge, had authority over the plurality of courts, Sunni, Christian, and Jewish.<sup>14</sup> However, a different path was followed in Iran where the Safavids (1501–1722) introduced Shi'ite Islam. The clergy gained direct control over religious taxes that did not need to go through the hands of the government, which thus permitted the *ulama* to take independent and critical political positions. Through their own system of resource extraction Iran's clergy commanded a strong urban network, organizing education and welfare which furthered alliances with all sorts of urban groupings, not unlike in Europe. The division between church and state in Iran thus resulted in a balance of power that could also act in favour of typically town-based interests.<sup>15</sup>

## SECURING URBAN ECONOMIES

During the 10th to 13th centuries, European artisanal production and trade developed on a scale unseen in the earlier marketplaces. The urban way of life implied an indirect relation to agriculture, since most burghers were no longer producing their own food. Therefore, all cities and towns depended on the supply of food and raw materials from the countryside, which had to be paid for by artefacts of a higher quality than could normally be attained in the villages or domains. Only court cities, capitals, and bishop seats could rely on other, coercive-based streams of income, above all when they exercised direct political control over a larger area.

The urban market was thus a node of connections which required security along the trading routes. Potentially, this made urban economies vulnerable to interference from external powers. The larger



the city and the more sophisticated its production, the farther a city's hinterland had to extend. For example, from the early 12th century London controlled the traffic 65 km upstream and 61 km downstream along the Thames, and thus also the markets on the tributaries north and south of the river.<sup>16</sup> Merchants from Cologne effectively monopolized the traffic on the Rhine downstream to Dordrecht, especially for their most valuable staple product, wine.<sup>17</sup> Ghent traders similarly monopolized the traffic on the city's two rivers as far as the county's boundaries, on the Leie and in both directions of the Scheldt, especially in order to maintain its staple market for grain. Smaller towns were restricted in their development by the monopolistic tendencies of the better located ones, which, as a consequence, had more opportunities for further growth.

The most directly concerned were merchants dealing with long-distance trade, who often created forms of self-organization to protect each other on the basis of reciprocal solidarity, travelling in convoy, and negotiating with local authorities. Such merchants' guilds and *hanses* reduced risks, functioned on mutual trust, and thus lowered transaction costs.<sup>18</sup> Since the merchants were the most prominent members of the economic elite in the early urban centres, it will not come as a surprise that they effectively took over the government of the growing cities. There can be no doubt that they did so out of well-understood self-interest, resulting often in an outright abuse of their monopoly of entrepreneurial, commercial, political, and judiciary powers within the cities up to the 14th century.

The internal power relations in cities depended on their economic structure and population size. In the case of the largest industrial and commercial centres, revolts broke out from the 13th century onwards among the hundreds or, in some cases like Florence and Ghent, thousands of artisans working in the textile industry which was particularly sensitive to international disruptions. In a substantial number of towns these tensions led to a higher degree of political participation and self-organization of the crafts. The governments of the larger cities became thus less exclusively dominated by the old patrician clans and had to open their ranks to newcomers from the middle classes and even master craftsmen, which implied that a functional differentiation needed to be made between the public power and the merchants' guild.

The commune could still stand for the egalitarian rights of all citizens, but the elites of entrepreneurs and great merchants usually followed their own logic of capitalistic profit-maximizing. The immediate countryside could be subjected to market regulations, staple duties, guild monopolies, and capital investments with fiscal and judicial privileges for the urban owners who required deliverables in the form of products, rents, and tributes. In extreme cases, and in the absence of mighty sovereign rulers, as in central and northern Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries, this supremacy tended towards the formation of city-states dominated by the largest city in the region.<sup>19</sup> In this context, the dominant cities acted not fundamentally differently from feudal lords competing for the territorial control of resources, except that they showed greater respect for local privileges, economic interests, and self-governance.

Private initiative for self-organization remained the main option for the security en route. Maritime insurance was the hallmark of the Genoese traders, in combination with the spreading of risks over a number of partnerships. In Barcelona, Mallorca, and Valencia the *consulado del mar* was a specialized jurisdiction for maritime trade, established to ensure regular relations. Venice created a unique solution by the organization and protection of the commercial fleets by the state itself. Along the Atlantic, North Sea, and Baltic coasts, the protection of trade rested on a combination of free enterprise and reliance on the intervention of the communal or monarchical authorities in support of their citizens abroad. Negotiation, retaliation, boycott, and, if unavoidable, commercial war were the

typical instruments for solving conflicts between trading partners belonging to different realms and jurisdictions. The German Hanse is the most extended case (among many others) of this private–public combination, and its transition, in 1358, from an organization of merchants’ guilds to one of the commercial cities’ governments, also clearly marks the distinction we made earlier between merchants’ organizations and urban governments.<sup>20</sup>

A novelty for Europe was the establishment of companies for colonial trade, a most sophisticated combination of private organization and protection of commercial interests under the license of central authorities. The extraction of resources through this amalgam of urban capitalist and state coercive powers varied considerably in substance though. The Spanish and Portuguese companies yielded funds above all for the state, while only a limited number of merchants profited. Colonial companies of the Netherlands and Great Britain, in contrast, were essentially enterprises that were under the control of the merchants themselves. The institutions of the Dutch East India Company reflected the federated structure of the Republic with its extraordinarily high degree of urban autonomy. Six boards all located in different cities, fitted out the ships; shares were sold to a substantial number of investors; the earnings went to the separate, local merchant elites. The English East India Company was likewise run by merchants themselves; its shares were traded on the market and the profits were likewise destined for the participants, although the proceeds were regularly milked for loans to the government. The company was not bound by autonomous urban institutions like the Dutch, but constituted a much more national organization in which above all London-based merchants profited. The colonial companies continued on a global scale the functions merchant guilds had fulfilled in the Middle Ages.<sup>21</sup>

Outside Europe such powerful companies for long-distance trade did not emerge. Nevertheless, on a smaller scale, elsewhere too merchant associations and guilds protected and promoted the trade of their members, reduced transaction costs through the creation of trust, while solidarity was strengthened through common (religious) rituals and festivities. The Chinese common-trade and native-place organizations operated with a surprisingly high degree of self-governance. Mediation in merchant disputes constituted an important role of these guilds; some maintained private fire-fighting units or organized their own militia. But such organizations had to do without the charters that secured the independent and corporate structure of their European counterparts, implying the danger of sudden state interference. In 1219 the Chinese Southern Song dynasty issued the regulation prescribing that the cost of luxury imports should be paid in silk, brocades, and porcelain, in order to prevent the outflow of silver. Yet state policies did not only curb trade. In particular the lifting of maritime trade prohibitions in 1684 resulted in a rise of commercial activity in Qing China which stimulated the growth of new guilds and associations. Another period of unrestricted commercial competition was noticeable in the later 19th century, which even permitted the occasional emergence of a financial guild that assumed the basic function of a central bank, contributing to the stabilization of the local market and serving the needs of interregional and long-distance trade.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise in the Ottoman empire the guilds’ degree of self-governance varied. While most guilds had started out as voluntary associations, not only regulating trade and production but also providing mutual support in case of sickness and death, many came to serve as administrative links between the local government and the workshops, with guilds receiving instructions from the authorities. Control from above was greatest in Istanbul, but less in provincial towns like Damascus and Seres; likewise silk weavers had to deal with regular incursions from the local authorities, since silk occupied a central position in foreign trade, while guilds of shoemakers and tanners were usually left alone.<sup>23</sup>

Thus both in the Ottoman and Chinese empires merchants and artisans constituted comparable organizations for trade and production, but the range of their activities depended strongly upon the (temporary) room for manoeuvre granted by the contemporary central and local authorities, while European traders could rely upon traditions and constitutions that continued to serve as a base for power and negotiations.

### THE URBAN-BASED DEMAND FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Non-European merchants and guild members were thus by no means always powerless, yet they lacked the strong support that emanated from the legal position of the European urban organizations. European cities and even smaller towns were entitled to negotiate with all other public authorities and private associations, within as well as outside the boundaries of the realm to which they belonged, in order to protect their citizens by legal means, even beyond the walls. In 15th-century Flanders, Brabant, and Holland urban delegations negotiated on their own behalf with representatives of the German Hanse, and the kings of England and Castile. When their commercial interests conflicted with those of the monarch, the parties would negotiate to find a compromise, and the monarch mostly understood that their citizens' income was the basis for his tax revenues.<sup>24</sup> The legal personality of the European cities helped them to oppose arbitrary treatment by state rulers. They did so by referring to the privileges granted them on various occasions and by guaranteeing their citizens' security and property rights. This mattered especially with regard to commercial capital which represented an independent strategic asset in interstate relations.

At the basis of European urban power stood a distinct civil administration, with a separate budget and usually also with considerable fiscal autonomy, specific to a particular town. Outside Europe county administrations often overlapped with those of the towns; county borders could run right through the middle of a town. No local fiscal autonomy existed. Yet in the Chinese and Islamic realms informal forms of urban governance existed in which local notables advised and supported government officials. The relation between these 'notables' and the state was of a fluid character; when the state was strong the local notables operated as agents of the government, but in times of weakening government or crisis they acted with a substantial degree of autonomy. Geographical distance constituted another factor. In the Ottoman empire Istanbul was undoubtedly the most controlled town of all, but the central authorities had far less impact on distant provincial capitals like Algiers and Tunis; Tripoli's *shaykh* was even assisted by a regular assembly of city notables in the 18th century. Such local intermediaries usually looked after the interests of their communities and could ask for a lowering of taxation or other privileges.<sup>25</sup> In Japan, the merchant dominated town of Sakai (near Osaka) was even reported to govern itself as an independent unit in the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>26</sup>

Next to these informal urban administrations there were neighbourhood associations. Such organizations took up various tasks, such as combating crime and fires, disposal of garbage, mediation in conflicts, assisting in taxation, supporting local religious cults (in China and Japan in particular), mutual aid because of sickness and death, and defence in times of war. For such services, duties might be imposed. Again, these local associations were self-governing to a varying degree, usually depending upon the distance from the central power.<sup>27</sup> In Edo, for example, the shogun-government exerted a strict control through the appointment of the neighbourhood chiefs, thus reducing the independent nature of local government.

In fact, both the Islamic and the Chinese states left much of the actual urban administration to the non-state sector, which permitted local elites and their associations to govern the daily routine, to have social power and influence independent of the ruler, and to reinforce a separate urban identity and pride.<sup>28</sup> Yet no legal instruments existed to defend the citizens, and since the local notables cooperated closely with the regime through highly personalized networks, the development of an outspoken and independent middle class was hindered. Economic power was not so easily translated into political power as in Europe. The accumulation of capital resources in towns always stood under threat since the legal systems of the Islamic and Chinese worlds did not develop mechanisms to provide security against business risks or arbitrary taxation and confiscation. No powerful buffer existed that restricted ad hoc exactions and unexpected taxes and surcharges by the central government; no urban refuge was present to protect entrepreneurs and traders against the arbitrariness of over-ambitious princes.<sup>29</sup> In China salt merchants amassed considerable fortunes, yet they occupied some sort of intermediary position between state and the business community, not unlike the powerful tax farmers of the French ancien régime; they were even called ‘official merchants’. For most Chinese merchants, the best route to political power was to buy land and join the gentry, and then to have their sons educated in order to have them try to secure a post as an imperial official.<sup>30</sup> In the Islamic world the continuity of merchant-based wealth was further hindered because of inheritance patterns that tended to fragment the accumulated capital, while economic partnerships stood under regular threat of being dissolved after the withdrawal, incapacity, or death of a partner.<sup>31</sup>

Yet the fiscal autonomy of the European towns was gradually eroded, affecting the typical Weberian community too. The rise of unified dynastic states wore down the typical European urban autonomy, a direct result of the economies of scale that allowed territorial rulers the use of superior military techniques and an ever increasing number of troops. New generations of emperors and kings imposed greater fiscal pressures on urban communities; while former privileges continued, new regulations and new administrative networks broke more and more into the existing systems of self-government. The decline of urban autonomy varied though throughout Europe. Leading commercial cities typically maintained a fair level of autonomy, as long as the monarch profited from their services but did not exhaust them financially. It has been demonstrated that major autonomous cities ruled by a merchant elite had easier access to credit than territorial states. When these elites shifted toward a rent-seeking and economically less dynamic attitude, they paved the way for the dominance of the dynastic states.<sup>32</sup> While Dutch towns maintained their autonomous status right up to the end of the 18th century, in the Mediterranean region urban self-government virtually disappeared, with the notable exception of Venice. Numerous German, Flemish, and Brabant towns managed to preserve a self-governing status, yet they had to pay increasingly high prices in the form of taxation or loans for it. In any case, they lost the opportunity to defend the particular interests of their citizens beyond their own walls. Some compensation was found in the share of state taxation the local elites could keep for themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Despite this growing power of the state, even state-controlled towns contained areas that escaped direct intervention from above. All over the world marketplaces, public houses, coffeehouses, and teahouses constituted a ‘public sphere’ that permitted easy and rapid communication with the potential of formulating critical opinions regarding government policies. In the Islamic world the mosque acted as the main outdoor meeting place in the city. The *waqfs* (religious endowments held by charitable trusts) further extended the infrastructure of social interaction within towns, among other ways through the establishment of inns.<sup>34</sup> The fact that Islamic and Chinese state rulers adopted a kind of

laissez-faire policy toward local government and management permitted local notables and associations to discuss political issues. Indeed, the state simply did not have the capacity to control all and everything. The independent treasures of the rich Chinese merchant associations did not only serve philanthropic purposes; they also sponsored festivals and performances, and endowed teahouses and public gardens that became important social centres. The teahouses even acted as a kind of public court; Chinese often preferred the arbitration of the teahouse mediators to the justice of the local government.<sup>35</sup>

These social spaces permitted all kinds of debate, yet most disputes were restricted to local issues and managerial topics. According to Habermas, the ‘public sphere’ in early modern Western Europe constituted something new, with the emergence of a more open, also nationwide political debate, with the appearance of all kind of newspapers and immense numbers of pamphlets in the Dutch Republic, England, and France.<sup>36</sup> European public houses did differ from Chinese teahouses or social meeting places funded by Islamic *waqfs*. Chinese teahouses had to carry a public notice on the wall that warned the people not to talk about national affairs, and were often closed in times of crises. The organizations funded by *waqfs* had the disadvantage that the operating rules were fixed from the time of the endowments, and thus they could not adapt to new circumstances.<sup>37</sup>

The English and Dutch public spheres, moreover, contained a specific high political ingredient by tradition. Urban autonomy in England itself had always varied considerably from place to place, and the fiscal autonomy had always been much lower compared to the Continent, but in numerous municipal corporations the representatives were chosen through free elections. These elections became true community events in the 18th century; as such, they were unknown in continental Europe before the French Revolution. Even though the electorate was not always very large, and access to the English public sphere was not as open as is often assumed, the impact of this urban-based tradition regarding new notions of wider political participation cannot be doubted.<sup>38</sup>

Gradually, such ideals regarding citizen rights and parliamentary representation also spread to other parts of Europe and beyond. Mercedes Volait (below, [Ch. 32](#)) shows how the new 19th-century representative system of Islamic urban government was often based upon pre-existing informal forms of urban management. Within China the public sphere gained momentum after the establishment of chambers of commerce in the later 19th century. The members of these elite bodies were drawn from the former guilds and merchants’ associations, and were able to put considerable pressure upon the government and resisted arbitrary taxation. The chambers of commerce were seedbeds of a new kind of political consciousness, which was furthered even more by the appearance of the first major Chinese language newspaper in 1872.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Throughout Eurasia, the power base of cities depended upon a combination of factors, of which in particular the independent control over resource extraction and the balance of powers within the relevant political context stand out. Due to ecological factors European cities were, on a global scale, late to develop and relatively small. In the 10th to 13th centuries steady economic and demographic growth facilitated the expansion of ecclesiastical institutions in Europe, as well as that of seigniorial lordships and that of the most successful competitors among them, the territorial princes. It was in this triangular context of partly competing and partly complementary power structures of the Church, the aristocracy and the territorial princes, that towns emerged and grew into a new competitor for power,

based on a fundamentally different system of resource extraction. Thanks to the typical European balance of power these urban communes were recognized as legal and political entities which could be represented as a collective in confrontation with monarchical, ecclesiastical, aristocratic, and even external interests. Their voice needed to be taken into account given their control over substantial commercial capital.

At an earlier stage and more rapidly than in Europe, the balance of power in the Islamic and Chinese worlds had gravitated towards the central ruler, which precluded the development of autonomous urban communities. Yet everywhere townsmen associated and could profit from the temporary weakening of central rule, above all in the more peripheral areas of the realm. Since the actual local administration was a rather weakly defined field both in China and the Islamic states, local notables had the opportunity to fill this gap, and established urban councils, merchant associations, guilds, and neighbourhood organizations. Through such institutions urban notables furthered their interests and those of their community, although the degree of success was usually lower and less persistent than in Europe since strong legal protective instruments and property rights were lacking. Yet the strength of these European urban institutions could also result in exclusions; Jews and other non-Christians were only half-heartedly tolerated. In comparison, Chinese and Islamic cities were more tolerant and often included settlements of foreign merchants belonging to other religions, at least during the Middle Ages.

By and large, urban self-governance and the typical urban-based public sphere can be viewed as phenomena that appeared on a variable scale within Europe itself. Their role, and that of the urban component in them, depended on changing power bases. For the towns, these mainly involved their population size, their economic and financial prosperity, their communication facilities, their prerogatives in administrative, economic, fiscal, and judicial matters, and their military force. For thousands of small towns in thinly populated regions, the domination of Church, landlords, and princes prevailed until deep into the 19th century. Even in many regions in the more densely urbanized West, urban autonomy was worn down during the 17th and 18th centuries. Cities lost their capacity to rule beyond their walls, but their most enterprising citizens organized themselves in corporations and companies which reached out over the whole world. Yet old rights and constituencies proved strong, and strengthened the development of new, radical demands for political representation in the later 18th century. Such developments were not unknown outside Europe either, although the obstacles toward a wider participation of power were usually of a more obstinate kind. But both in the East and the West, these political demands emanated from a typical urban-based public sphere that had strong roots in the past.

## NOTES

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## CULTURE: REPRESENTATIONS

PETER BURKE

THE essential aim of this comparative chapter on representations or images is to identify the various ways in which cities were perceived (admired, loved, feared, or loathed) by different kinds of people (insiders and outsiders, rich and poor, male and female, and so on) in different parts of the globe. It is concerned both with the physical city (the city as artefact), and with the social city as an imagined community or cluster of communities. Large cities (that is, cities with a population of *c.* 100,000 or more) will be the main focus, in Europe, West and East Asia, including colonial cities, hybrids in which European and indigenous traditions met, clashed, and interpenetrated, making possible some 'connected' as well as some comparative history. For general surveys of these cities readers should consult in particular Chs 12–13, 16–19.

As is inevitable when comparisons are made, the dates to be chosen raise problems. In China, for example, the major breaks in historical continuity come with changes of dynasty, in 960, for instance (the end of the Tang and beginning of the Song), in 1368 (the beginning of the Ming), in 1644 (the beginning of the Qing), and in 1911, with the end of the empire, while in Japan, the major turning-points occurred in 1600, with the rise of the Tokugawa, and 1868, the date of the imperial 'restoration' and the beginnings of the policy of modernization. As an ecumenical compromise, what follows will consider the period 1000–1850, emphasizing the later centuries, when the sources become richer.

Like all sources, this material raises as well as solves problems, although it is rich and various: fictional as well as factual, pictorial as well as written. In the case of Europe, most of the cities to be discussed still exist, with much of their layout and in some cases many of their buildings preserved, the 'historic centres' of what have become much larger agglomerations. Formal descriptions of cities, or guides to them abound, together with shorter accounts in travel journals and prose fiction, as well as poems and plays (the 'city comedies' set in 17th-century London, for instance). The visual evidence includes maps, painted cityscapes, and woodcuts and engravings of urban life. In short, a student of the representations of the medieval or early modern European city, and to a lesser extent the colonial city of the Americas, North and South, is faced with an *embarras de richesses*.

In the case of Asia the sources are not so rich, while many are inaccessible to scholars unable to read Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Turkish, and other languages. In Japan, few physical traces of traditional cities remain, although, compensating for this loss, literary and pictorial sources are rich, especially from the 17th century onwards. For China, the sources are sparser. In the Islamic world, some historic centres have survived, but indigenous images of cities are rare.

Needless to say, the sources cannot be trusted completely and allowances have to be made both for prejudice and rhetoric. Representations are not simple reflections of social reality but pass through a double filter, through individual experience and through conventions of representation. For example, they are stylized according to the conventions of literary and pictorial genres. Eulogists and satirists alike select and manipulate the evidence. Travellers, especially foreign travellers, see only a small portion of the city and may misunderstand what they see. Literary and visual stereotypes abound,

especially but not exclusively in the case of the ‘underworld’ of beggars and thieves. These stereotypes should be recognized but not discarded, since they helped, like all representations, to shape past perceptions.

What follows is organized not by periods or by regions but by three major themes: the city as artefact, the ideal city, and the social city.

## THE CITY AS ARTEFACT

There is a sense in which the best representation of a given city was the city itself. Images of cities were embodied in their plans, in major buildings, and in urban spaces, as well as being enacted in urban rituals, both religious and secular.<sup>1</sup>

Baghdad, for example, which was rebuilt from 762 CE onwards, took the form of a circle, perhaps an image of the cosmos. Thirteenth-century Milan was described as circular, ‘symbolic of its perfection’. Discussions of the ideal city in Renaissance treatises on architecture emphasized the need for a regular plan, sometimes taking the form of a star.

Cities in widely separated parts of the world were built on a grid plan, perhaps to reduce traffic problems but possibly as a symbol of rational organization as well. The Tang capital of Chang-an took this form for instance, like the Song capital of Zhongdu and the Yuan capital of Dadu, the predecessors of Beijing. Chang-an was imitated by the builders of Nara and Kyoto in Japan and Kjonju in Korea. A few European cities were built on this plan, from Winchelsea in Sussex in the 13th century to the New Town in Edinburgh in the 18th. The Aztec city of Tenochtitlán (‘house of the gods’) was also built on a grid plan, and so were many colonial cities in the New World, among them Mexico City, Lima, Potosí, and Philadelphia.

In Europe, town halls were built from the late Middle Ages, not only for utilitarian reasons but also as symbols of civic pride and power.<sup>2</sup> They represented the ideal of self-government (which in practice usually meant oligarchy). The interior decorations of these halls often included exemplars of virtue, whether from the history of Rome (Mucius Scaevola putting his hand in the fire, for instance, represented Florence and Siena), or from the Old Testament (Moses and Solomon, in the case of Amsterdam).<sup>3</sup> The new town hall of Antwerp carried the inscription SPQA, Senatus Populusque Antwerpiensis (‘The Senate and the People of Antwerp’), making an implicit comparison with ancient Rome.<sup>4</sup> Once again, the competition between cities was expressed in representations, and even in little Enkhuizen, in the Dutch Republic, the town hall bore the proud letters SPQE. Churches and guildhalls were, among other things, so many expressions of civic pride and wealth, as theatres, concert halls, museums, libraries, and art galleries were in the 18th- and 19th-century city. So were hospitals such as the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan, an attraction for visitors to the city from the 15th century onwards.

A speech at the opening of the Bristol Exchange in 1743 made explicit a common motive for buildings of this kind: ‘public edifices have at all times been had in esteem and considered as manifestations of the wisdom and grandeur of a state.’ It should be added that these symbols of civic identity were also a form of competition: building grandly was a continuation of war by other means. Thus the Sieneese, for instance, made sure that the tower of their town hall, the Palazzo Pubblico, was higher than that of Florence, the Palazzo della Signoria.

In similar fashion in the Islamic world, mosques, minarets, bazaars, and public hospitals served

symbolic as well as utilitarian functions (for a European representation of Cairo's landscape see [Plate 24.1](#)). Travellers came to admire as well as to pray in the Great Mosque in Damascus, for instance, or the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. In South and East Asia, temples—whether they were Hindu, Buddhist, or Daoist—performed the symbolic functions of mosques and churches. Famous examples include the Five Pagoda Temple in Beijing and the Nanzenji, a Zen temple, in Kyoto.<sup>5</sup> In East and West alike elaborate gateways represented security as well as contributing to it. Some of these defences became famous: Beijing was known as 'Nine Gates' (a number that increased to thirteen after 1550).

Spaces, especially squares, had symbolic as well as practical uses. The square was already part of Italian life in the 14th and 15th centuries and in some famous cases still earlier (Piazza San Marco in Venice *c.*1200, and Piazza della Signoria in Florence *c.*1300). In the 16th century, the architect Jacopo Sansovino was commissioned by the doge to improve the appearance of Piazza San Marco, clearing away shops and stalls, building a library, and adding a *loggetta* to the base of the Campanile. Paris had only two squares in 1600, while the story of London squares effectively begins in the 17th century, with Covent Garden.

Some European squares were designed by famous architects, such as Bernini in the case of Piazza San Pietro in Rome or Mansart in those of Place des Victoires and Place Louis-le-Grand (now Place Vendôme) in Paris, constructed to impress the public with the power of the ruler. Trafalgar Square was both an emblem of victory (organized around Nelson, whose column was erected in 1843) and an emblem of empire. To make them more impressive, squares were often embellished with fountains, statues, and other 'furniture'. In Spanish America, the plaza was even more important than it was in Spain itself: the centre of the colonial city was often the Plaza de Armas, the site of both the cathedral and of local government, making it a symbol of Spanish rule in territories where the Spaniards formed a minority.



**PLATE 24.1** Birdseye View of Cairo 1549 by Matteo Pagano (from the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg (1st edn. Cologne, 1572)).

In other parts of the world, on the other hand, squares were less important, if they existed at all. After the Turks took Constantinople in 1453, they replaced some squares with covered bazaars. In the Islamic world more generally, religious gatherings took place in mosques, while secular gatherings happened outside the city, on an open space or *maidan*. The major exception to this rule comes from Safavid Persia. The Maidan-e-Shah ('Shah Square') in Isfahan, constructed for Shah Abbas in the early 17th century, was and is seven times the size of Piazza San Marco.

In Beijing, Tian-an-Men became a square in 1651, when a space was cleared outside the Gate of Heavenly Peace, but at that time it was only a quarter of its present size. In the cities of Tokugawa Japan, squares were generally lacking and large spaces tended to be used for passage rather than gathering. Places of execution were usually to be found on the edge of towns, in contrast to Europe, where execution was a public ritual deliberately performed in the centre of the city to be seen by masses of spectators.

European squares were the settings for many other rituals, which were among other things collective representations of the city, its social structure, and its history. The terms 'ritual city' or 'ceremonial city' have been used of Milan, Madrid, and Venice. For example, the theatrical appearance of Piazza San Marco and the adjoining Piazzetta has often been noted, especially as seen from the Doge's Palace, with the doge himself in his 'box' overlooking major events such as the Carnival.<sup>6</sup> However, the ritual city par excellence was Rome, given the frequency of ceremonies such as the Easter blessing, the canonization of saints, the circumambulation of the city by a new pope as a way of taking possession of it (the *possesso*) and the opening of the official holy years of 1450, 1500, 1550, 1600, and so on. The Catholic pilgrimage to Rome, like the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, may be interpreted as itself a kind of initiation ritual. Central to this ritual was the visit to seven major Roman churches. In the late 16th century, Pope Sixtus V ordered the construction of new roads to link these churches: town planning was placed in the service of ritual.<sup>7</sup>

In Catholic cities the patron saint played an important part in civic representations: St Mark in Venice, St Denis and St Genevieve in Paris, St Isidore in Madrid, and so on.<sup>8</sup> In Florence, the feast of the city's patron, St John the Baptist, was a major ritual occasion. One of the main festive events was a procession from the Duomo to the Ponte Vecchio and back via Piazza della Signoria, in which monks, friars, secular clergy, choirboys, and religious confraternities took part. They walked through streets that were richly decorated—cities usually wore their best clothes on such occasions—accompanied by music, carrying relics and followed by floats representing religious scenes such as the birth of St John and his baptism of Christ. A more unusual feature of the festival was the formal presentation of tribute to the saint by the cities under Florentine rule, such as Pisa and Arezzo. In other words, the saint was regarded as a personification of the city he protected, while the ritual was essentially a celebration of the dignity and power of Florence itself, a collective affirmation of its dominance over other cities.

In the Protestant world, the Reformation led to major changes in ritual. Patron saints and their festivals disappeared and other rituals took their place, among them the Lord Mayor's Show in London, a kind of secular English version of the papal *possesso*. Every year, on 29 October, the newly-chosen Lord Mayor of London made his way, usually by barge, from the Guildhall to the Palace of Westminster to take an oath. On returning to the 'City' (in other words, the commercial centre of London) the Mayor would land near St Paul's Cathedral, to be greeted by a 'pageant' in St Paul's churchyard. He would then ride in procession through the City, followed by the members of the major guilds or 'city companies', passing through triumphal arches and viewing more tableaux. A

procession turned the streets into a theatre and made visible the social structure of the city—‘It was a statement unfurled in the streets, through which the city represented itself to itself’—which is not to say that the city was unanimous. Indeed, the events were not infrequently disrupted by disputes over precedence by rival individuals or guilds.<sup>9</sup>

All over Europe, the centralization of power was marked by rituals such as royal entries into cities or the movements of rulers in their capital cities, from Madrid to Moscow.<sup>10</sup> In East Asia too urban rituals were important. Traditional Chinese cities often included a major avenue running from south to north along which processions would move. City gods in China played the role of patron saints in the Catholic world. Among the most detailed representations of Beijing in the early Qing period are paintings of a procession that took place for the sixtieth birthday of the Kangxi emperor in 1713. In Japan, religious festivals took place in the open, and three in particular were important, one in each major city; the Gion festival in Kyoto, the Temma festival at Ōsaka, and the Sanno festival at Edō. Many people came into town to see these festivals. The Gion festival at Kyoto goes back to about the year 1000 CE. Central to the proceedings were large, elaborate floats, sculptures on wheels pulled by teams of men. As in Europe, groups of townsmen from different wards of the city competed to make the best float.<sup>11</sup> The Sanno festival at Edō also involved the competitive construction of floats, and the procession was allowed to pass through the grounds of the castle, with the shogun looking down on the proceedings, like the doge in Venice. These annual events are illustrated in a number of surviving paintings on screens, dating from the late 16th to the mid-17th centuries.

### THE IDEAL CITY—AND ITS OPPOSITE

Cities were often idealized in this period. They formed settings for utopias such as Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1623) and Johannes Valentinus Andreae’s *Christianopolis* (1619). Some cities, notably Rome and Jerusalem, were regarded as the centre of the world (*caput mundi*), while later cities claimed to be New Romes or New Jerusalems. In the 11th-century chronicle of Rodolphus Glaber, for instance, Orléans was presented as a New Jerusalem, while in New Spain the city of Tula was imagined in the same way.<sup>12</sup> The rivalry between cities was thus extended into the domain of representations. Constantinople was already described as a New Rome in the 4th century. Thirteenth-century Padua was ‘virtually a second Rome’ (*quasi secunda Roma*). A similar claim would be made for Florence and Venice in the 15th century and for Seville in the 16th, while London, more unusually, was called a New Troy. Following the conquest of Constantinople by sultan Mehmed in 1453, it was claimed by some Russians that Moscow was the third Rome, ‘and a fourth there shall not be’.

Eulogies of cities, both spoken and written, go back to ancient Greece and Rome, and in India to the Puranic period (c.300–1200 CE), when they were known as *mdhdtmya*. The praises of the city (*fada’il*) are also frequent in Islamic literature, including the descriptions and histories of cities by al’Khatib al’Baghdadi (d. 1071), on Baghdad (emphasizing the vast numbers of mosques and bathhouses) or Taqi al-din al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) on Cairo. In the West, in similar fashion to al’Baghdadi, the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* of the 1140s emphasized the marvels of Rome, while *De magnalibus Mediolani*, of the 1280s, used the rhetoric of statistics to emphasize the size and wealth of the city, noting for example its 120 towers.<sup>13</sup>

During the Italian Renaissance eulogies of cities, following classical models, became increasingly

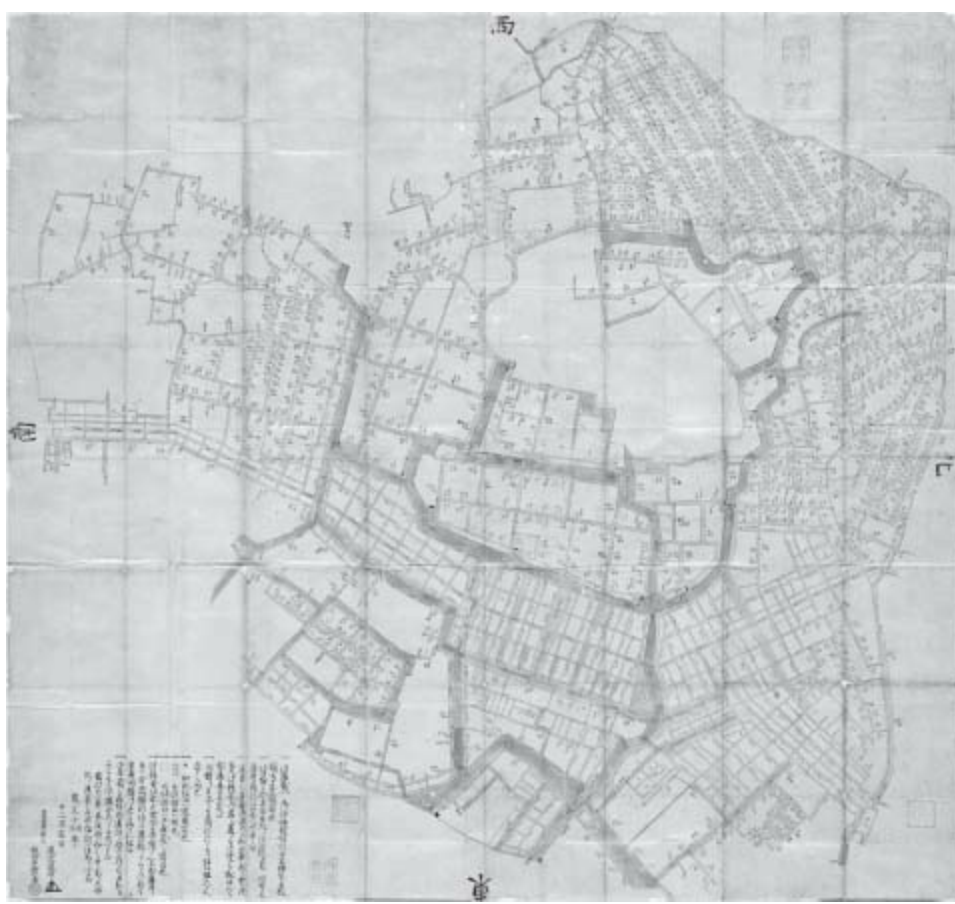
common: the most famous of them is the *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* ('Praise of the City of Florence', 1444) by the Tuscan humanist Leonardo Bruni, who claimed among other things that Florence was the cleanest city that had ever existed. Bruni's example, though not his claim about cleanliness, was followed in Milan, Brescia, and elsewhere, while the so-called 'myth of Venice', put into words by many different writers, emphasized the city's unique social harmony and good government. Among the most elaborate examples, in which the eulogy is combined with a guidebook, are Francesco Sansovino's *Venezia città nobilissima* (1581) and Giulio Cesare Capaccio's *Il forastiero* (1634), on Naples.

Writers in other countries joined in the competition. The 15th-century Scottish poet William Dunbar, for instance, famously called London 'the flower of cities all', while the humanist Alfonso de Proaza delivered and published an *Oration in Praise of Valencia* (1505). A visual equivalent of these orations was a mid-16th-century painting of the 'Seven Wonders of Bruges' (*Septem Admiraciones Civitatis Brugensis*) attributed to Pieter Claessens, a miniature version of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Defined in a narrow sense, the genre of city praises had gone into decline by the end of the 16th century (Dekker's pamphlet of 1604 in praise of London offers a late example). Defined in a wider sense, however, the genre continued to the end of the period—indeed, to this day—in the form of the guidebook. A pioneer guidebook was Francesco Sansovino's *Cose notabili de Venezia* (1558), followed at a distance by guides to Florence, Naples, Amsterdam, Paris, and London (where two rival guides were published in 1681). Guidebooks to cities were also published in Ming China and in Tokugawa Japan, among them guides to Kyoto (1658, 1665, 1678, 1685), Edo (1662, 1677), and Osaka (1675). The guides grew larger and larger and allowed the reader to navigate the city street by street, so that some of them might be better described as directories, the equivalent of books such as Nicolas De Blegny's *Livre commode des addresses de Paris* (1692) or the London trade directories of the 18 century.

The guides were often illustrated with maps, while maps of cities became an increasingly important printed genre in Europe, China, and Japan alike (see [Plate 24.2](#), map of a part of Edo). Jacopo de Barbari's map of Venice (1500) is a famous early example, followed by maps of Beijing (1560), London (1560), Naples (1566), and the collection known as the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* ('Cities of the World', 1572–1617), which is unusual for its global range. Like the guides, city maps showed more and more details of streets and even houses from the 17th century onwards: Alessandro Baratta's map of Naples (1629), for instance; the great map of Edo (1670–1673), in five sections (see [Plate 24.2](#)); John Ogilby and William Morgan's map of London (c.1676), and so on.

The townscape was a pictorial genre that emerged in the 16th century as a complementary opposite to the landscape and became particularly important in the Netherlands (Jan Vermeer's Delft, for instance, painted c.1660, or Gerrit Berckheyde's Haarlem, a series of paintings produced a little later). The 18th-century representations of Venice by Giovanni Antonio 'Canaletto' and Francesco Guardi, like those of London by Canaletto and Paul Sandby, are also memorable. The growing popularity of the genre is shown not only by the rise in the numbers of paintings but also by their reproduction as engravings, some of them at least aimed at a tourist market, so their multilingual titles suggest. The rising number of woodcuts of city streets by leading artists such as Hiroshige suggests that the Japanese public were developing similar tastes at more or less the same time as their equivalents in Europe.



**PLATE 24.2** Map of Edo: sheet 1, 1670. Based on actual measurement by Ometsuke Ujinaga Hojo, the Lord of Awa, published under the commission of Bakufu. The whole town of Edo is drawn in 5 sheets.

Despite their detail and the consequent ‘reality effect’, these representations are not always to be trusted. Jacopo de’ Barbari’s famous view of Venice has been described as an example of ‘moralized geography’, while the Jesuit map of Beijing of 1688 also regularized and idealized the city.<sup>14</sup> A similar point might be made about the townscape. Comparisons between drawings made on the spot and engravings of the same scenes made for publication sometimes reveal that squares become larger, streets wider, and public buildings taller, from the Spain of the Flemish artist Anton van Wyngaerde, who was sketching cities in the 1560s, to the *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna* (1660–) of the Swedish artist Erik Dahlbergh.<sup>15</sup>

Plagiarism or the recycling of images and texts was not uncommon: a notorious case is the so-called ‘Nuremberg Chronicle’ of 1493, where the same woodcut is used to represent four different cities: Damascus, Verona, Mantua, and Naples. Again, a traffic jam represented in a 17th-century engraving entitled *L’Embaras de Paris* was imitated by a number of rival artists. As for texts, the description of the theatre district of Edo by the Buddhist priest and writer Asai Ryōi, packed with vivid detail, actually plagiarizes an account of Kyoto by the physician-poet Nakagawa Kiun, and was plagiarized in its turn by the author of *Edo suzume* (‘The Edo Sparrow’).

The European city was often personified as a woman, as in the case of Magdeburg (‘Virgin City’), which was described as being ‘raped’ (in other words, sacked) in 1631, during the Thirty Years’ War. Venice appears as a majestic woman in the paintings of Tintoretto. For the 17th-century Venetian poet Giovanni Francesco Busenello, the city was ‘The queen of the sea, the goddess of the waves’, while for the English poet John Ford it was the ‘Queen of cities’.

Cities were often represented as the sites of ‘civilization’, ‘urbanity’, and in the 18th century, ‘politeness’, all terms derived from words for ‘city’ (*civitas*, *urbs*, *polis*). Another major theme in the



praise of cities was freedom, especially in what we now call the negative sense of freedom from control. Venice, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Paris, and London were all described as the home of freedom. The 16th-century Venetian patrician Marin Sanudo, for instance, wrote of ‘a free land never subjugated by anyone like all others’. Foreigners came to accept this Venetian view of themselves. As the French scholar Jean Bodin made one of his characters say in his ‘Seven-Day Dialogue’ (*Colloquium Heptaplomeres*), ‘one can live there in the greatest freedom’.

By the 1560s, however, as Venice became more tightly controlled by the Church, it was Antwerp that was praised for its ‘great liberty’ by a Venetian merchant, Giovanni Zonca. Zonca’s view is confirmed by the complaint of the commissioners of the Council of Flanders a decade earlier, about people flocking to Antwerp ‘in order to be able to live there each man according to his own heretical opinion’.

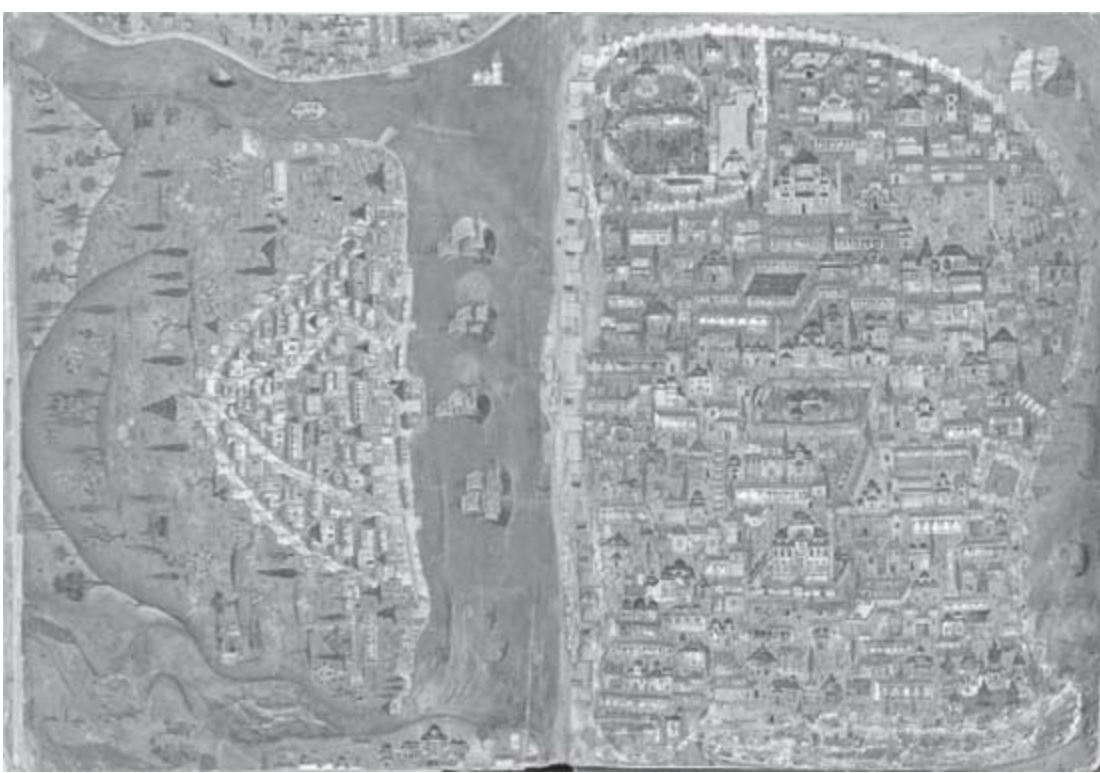
The liberty of the early modern metropolis was linked by some contemporaries to its anonymity, praised by some and condemned by others. In the course of his residence in London, James Boswell came to appreciate more and more what he called its ‘freedom from remark and petty censure’. A 17th-century Parisian wrote that ‘one becomes as anonymous (*inconnu et caché*) in moving from one quarter to another as by changing provinces’.<sup>16</sup>

The city, particularly the big city, was also represented as the promised land for immigrants, with opportunities for social mobility if not streets paved with gold. The story of Dick Whittington, the poor boy who became Lord Mayor of London, circulated widely in 17th-century England and ended, in its ballad version, with the quatrain: ‘And you poor country boys | Though born of low degree | See by God’s providence | What you in time may be.’

Traditional city chronicles were often an expression of civic pride and so was the new genre of urban history or urban antiquities to be found in Europe from the 15th century onwards. The genre was the creation of Italian humanists such as Flavio Biondo, whose *Roma Instaurata* (‘Rome Restored’, 1444) was soon followed by studies of Viterbo, Ravenna, Brescia, and elsewhere. Then came histories of Spanish cities such as Valencia and Toledo, French cities such as Paris, Nîmes, and Lyon, and, finally, English cities such as Exeter and London (the subject of John Stow’s *Survey*, 1598).<sup>17</sup> By the year 1600 more than thirty such histories were in print and there would be many more in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In the Islamic world too there was a tradition of urban histories, though they circulated only in manuscript. The works by al’Khatib al’Baghdadi on Baghdad and Taqi al-din al-Maqrizi on Cairo, mentioned above, joined description to history, like the work of Ibn Tulun (d. 1546) on Damascus.<sup>18</sup> Visual representations of the city were relatively rare, but a 16th-century miniature offers a vivid image of 16th-century Istanbul (Plate 24.3), while in the following century there was a fashion for conventionalized representation of cities such as Mecca and Medina on Iznik tiles.

Cities were not always viewed with favour. For some Europeans the city was not a new Jerusalem but a modern Babylon, a comparison that recurs from Petrarch on Avignon in the 14th century to Blake on London in the 19th. Where the eulogists of the city saw beauty, neatness, and cleanliness, other observers saw ugliness, disorder, and dirt (the notorious *boue de Paris*, for instance).<sup>19</sup> Even the size of the city, for its citizens a reason for pride, horrified some visitors. To a Scottish visitor to London in the 1680s, the city appeared to be ‘a great vast wilderness’. In similar fashion, in a novel by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), one of the characters describes Paris as ‘ce vaste désert’.



**PLATE 24.3** Sixteenth-century Ottoman miniature of Istanbul.

The anonymity of the big city did not appeal to everyone. Francis Bacon, for example, in his essay on friendship, quoted the Latin phrase ‘A great city is a great solitude’ (*Magna civitas, magna solitudo*) and commented that ‘In a great town, friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods’. In the middle of the 17th century, Pierre Petit described houses in Paris filled with different families who kept themselves to themselves like so many barbarian tribes (*qui ne se hantent non plus que les barbares*), ‘and did not even know one another’s names’. A hundred years later, another Parisian noted that ‘people who have lived a long time in the same house do not know one another’. In the late 18th century, the journalist Louis-Sébastien Mercier remarked that in Paris ‘One is a stranger to one’s neighbour’ (*on est étranger à son voisin*). The observation had clearly become a literary topos, and we should not take it too literally. On the other hand, we ought to take it seriously in the sense of recognizing the social roots of a new way of viewing the city.<sup>20</sup>

The soundscape and what we might call the smellscape of the city did not please everyone either. The noise of cities was frequently noted with disgust by residents and visitors alike: ‘rattling coaches’, dogs barking, hawkers shouting, artisans hammering, bells ringing. Seventeenth-century English travellers thought Paris stank compared to London, but even Londoners such as John Evelyn complained of the ‘sooty air’ of the metropolis. When Goethe visited Italy in 1786 he was shocked by the filth of Verona and Venice: ‘as I walked’, he wrote in his journal, ‘I found myself devising sanitary regulations.’ The problem was not one for Europeans alone. Beijing, for instance, was described as unhealthy and noisy by Xie Zhaozhe in his *Fivefold Miscellany* (1608): ‘Dwellings in the Capital press closely together without any space to spare. There is also a lot of excrement and muck in the markets. People from every region live in a rowdy hubbub.’

The pace of life in the city was already perceived by visitors as much more rapid than elsewhere: a character in Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* (1771) found that in London ‘all is tumult and hurry’. Boswell too remarked on the ‘hurry’. The rush extended to language: Mercier noticed that ‘the Parisian is distinguished by rapid speech’.

Dirt, stench, disorder, noise, and hurry were far from the only sins of the city. Venice was described as a new Sodom by a 15th-century Florentine poet, while in Thomas Otway's play *Venice Preserved* (1682), one character, Pierre, calls the city itself—sometimes viewed as a virgin—'The Adriatic whore'. Eighteenth-century London, a paradise for some, was viewed by others as a kind of urban hell.<sup>21</sup>

Satires on the city, often modelled on the poet Juvenal's famous satire on ancient Rome, were common. The Englishman Andrew Marvell wrote against Amsterdam; and the Italian poet Alessandro Tassoni against Valladolid and Madrid. There was a whole series of satires on Paris, by the poet Nicholas Boileau, for instance, or the *Tracas de Paris* (1666) written in 'burlesque verse' by François de Colletet. John Gay's *Trivia* (1716) 'or the Art of Walking the Streets of London' offered a vivid description of the perils awaiting the incautious pedestrian. Johnson, better known for his love of London, published a satire on the city in 1738 emphasizing its dirt and squalor.<sup>22</sup> Images too could be satirical, as in the case of the famous engravings of *Gin Lane* and the *Harlot's Progress* by William Hogarth (a Londoner himself) even if the artist's own attitude to the city is sometimes hard to determine, sliding backwards and forwards as it does between condemnation and amused detachment.

Other representations make their creator's point of view more clear. Nicholas Rétif de la Bretonne, for instance, was a country boy, from Burgundy, who migrated to Paris in the later 18th century and made a successful literary career. One of his successes was the novel *Le paysan perverti* ('The Peasant Perverted', 1775). Rétif believed that cities spread education and refined taste, but he considered that the price of this urban civilization was too high. According to him cities were full of hypocrites and tricksters who corrupt innocent peasants, encouraging them to abandon their traditional values. These tricksters will return in the following section.

## THE SOCIAL CITY

Representations of the social structure may be divided into official and unofficial. In China, for instance, society was officially divided into four groups in this order: officials, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. In Tokugawa Japan the system was similar: samurai, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants (the last two groups being described by one name, *chonin* or 'townspeople'). However, in both countries some merchants became rich, especially in the 18th century, and their consumption patterns were those of an elite. Lower down the scale, in the directories of Japanese cities, the detailed descriptions of particular occupations undermined general conceptions of status.<sup>23</sup>

In Europe, where the official system was that of the 'three estates' of clergy, nobility, and others, townspeople, thanks to their everyday experiences of different kinds of people, seem to have had a rather different image of the social structure, not unlike the 19th- and 20th-century view of society as divided into classes. Sometimes there were two classes (patricians and plebeians, or 'haves' and 'have-nots'), sometimes three, and sometimes more. In colonial cities, on the other hand, where Europeans, Asians, Africans, and native Americans often intermixed, the principal unofficial system was a 'pigmentocracy' with pale individuals at the top, dark ones at the bottom, and in the middle the *mestizos* and mulattos. However, this representation of society in terms of races was supplemented if not replaced in some cities by distinctions between such groups such as 'respectable people' (*gente decente*) and 'plebeians' (*plebe*).

In Italian cities, notably Florence, it was common to contrast two groups, the rich and the poor, or in the more vivid colloquial language of the time, the 'fat people' (*popolo grasso*) and the 'little

people' (*popolo minuto*). Some texts refer to a 'middle' group between the other two, known as the *mediocri* or the *uomini di mezzana qualità*. Others distinguished the *popolo* from the *fece della plebe* ('the excrement of the people'). Similar distinctions were made outside Italy as well. The French, for example, spoke like the Italians of the 'little people' (*menu peuple*), contrasting them with those who were well-off (*les riches, aisés, opulents*). Shortly before the Revolution, Mercier distinguished eight classes of Parisian: great nobles, lawyers, financiers, merchants, artisans, unskilled workers, servants, and the poor (*grands seigneurs, gens de robe, financiers, négociants, artisans, manoeuvriers, laquais, bas peuple*). Elsewhere he distinguished *petit peuple* or *petit-bourgeois* from *populace*. Schemes for urban taxation encouraged the use of this kind of model, which was made all the more plausible by the increasing anonymity of urban life and the consequent need to judge by appearances.

Some 18th-century descriptions of London emphasized the threat to hierarchy from the crowding and confusion of the city: 'Here a Sooty Chimney-Sweeper takes the Wall of a Grave Alderman, and a Broom-Man Justles the Parson of the Parish.'<sup>24</sup> In Tobias Smollett's novel *Humphry Clinker*, what impresses a Welsh squire about London is the lack of 'distinction and subordination. The different departments of life are jumbled together—The hod carrier, the low mechanic, the tapster, the publican, the shopkeeper, the pettifogger, the citizen and courtier.'<sup>25</sup>

Another threat to hierarchy came from the 'mob', in other words from urban crowds, represented in texts, images, and the minds of respectable people as a 'many-headed monster' that was prone to disorder, rioting, and mindless violence. Contemporary accounts of riots and revolts often treated the crowd as a force of nature, describing disturbances in terms of fevers, floods, storms, fires, and earthquakes.<sup>26</sup> Arab chroniclers like European ones distinguished the 'people' (*'amma*) from the 'mob' (*ghawgha*) or from gangs of vagabonds (*ayyarun*).<sup>27</sup> Needless to say, prejudices and stereotypes abound in all these accounts, which must not be read literally but remain valuable evidence for the attitudes of at least some contemporaries.

As in the case of the Japanese directories, the vivid detail of the descriptions of European occupations worked, like urban crowding, to undermine any simple hierarchy. A new genre of representation came into existence in the 16th century and proliferated in the 17th and above all in the 18th century: the 'Cries' of Rome, Paris, London, and elsewhere: woodcuts or engravings of a variety of occupations, especially those to be seen in the streets: sellers of water or vinegar, hats or clothes, ballads and faggots.<sup>28</sup> These representations offer precious evidence for women's work, ignored in many other sources. For example, the sixty etchings of 'The Itinerant Street Trades of the City of Venice', published by Gaetano Zompini (1753) show women telling fortunes, hiring out servants, and selling fried food, second-hand clothes, and seats for the theatre. Once again, though, one needs to be aware of idealization—the number of pretty girls represented in the *Cries* should act as a warning. These images were produced for a market of middle-class and upper-class collectors, suggesting that street trades were increasingly perceived as 'picturesque'.

Images of this kind were not confined to Europe. In Mughal India, illustrations in manuscripts sometimes represent work such as the construction of buildings (with women working as carriers on the site).<sup>29</sup> A series of late 18th-century images of street trades were produced by two Chinese artists in Canton (Guangzhou), probably for Europeans.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Hishikawa Moronobu's series of prints of Japanese occupations (1685) were produced for the local market.

There does not seem to have been a similar interest in legitimate urban occupations in the Islamic

world. On the other hand, Arab writers appear to have been the first to represent the urban underworld of beggars and thieves, the *Banu Sasan*. Texts from the 9th century CE already reveal an interest in fake ascetics, fake epileptics, fake cripples, and so on. The 10th-century poet Abu Dulaf produced a catalogue of beggars, Badi az-Zaman described the various species of thief, while in the 13th century Syrian writer Jaubari added many details.<sup>31</sup>

In the Ottoman empire, the anonymous 18th-century text *Risale-i Garibe* ('Treatise of Strange Things') described the tricks of beggars in similar fashion. Thanks to the close contacts between the Islamic and Christian Mediterranean worlds, the Arab texts, or at least the ideas that informed them, had reached Europe by the 15th century, when similar treatises began to circulate in Italy and Germany. By the 16th century the trickle had become a flood and had spread to Bohemia, Poland, France, England, and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Robert Greene's pamphlets on 'coney-catching', published in the 1590s, offer lively examples of the genre. The treatises also inspired 'picaresque' fiction in Spain, including Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599) and Cervantes' *Rinconete y Cortadillo* ('Little Corner and Little Knife', 1613).

The treatises are full of topoi, above all the topos of the world upside-down, presenting the underworld as an inversion of the normal social hierarchy, complete with its kings and its fraternities. In addition, some treatises steal passages from others. The texts both express and appeal to prejudice, offering readers voyeuristic pleasures. All the same, some of the tricks they describe are genuine ones, still practised to this day, while the division of labour between different kinds of beggar and thief is what might be expected in a large city.

The literature of roguery appears to be absent from East Asia, but in Japan at least a substitute flourished from the later 17th century onwards. In Tokugawa Japan, as in Europe, cheap and popular forms of literature developed. *Kana-zōshi*, a term that might be translated as 'chap-books', often described the so-called 'floating world' (*ukiyo*) of actors and courtesans and the pleasure quarters they inhabited in the three major cities: Shimabara in Kyoto, Shinmachi in Osaka, and Yoshiwara in Edo.<sup>33</sup> These were also among the principal subjects for the new genre of coloured woodcuts. Guides to the districts and their inhabitants were published, among them *Azuma monogatari* ('Tales of the East', 1642), *Yoshiwara hito tabare* (1680), a directory of courtesans, and *Shokoku irozato annai* ('Guide to the Quarters of the Land', 1688).<sup>34</sup>

The concept of *ukiyo* may not be irrelevant to Islamic cities such as Istanbul (where the 17th-century writer Evliye Çelebi described a zone of wine-houses and male prostitutes).<sup>35</sup> However, it fits cities such as Venice, Amsterdam, or London much better, even if their floating worlds were not organized in quite the same way. Guides to the courtesans of Venice appeared in 1535 and 1566 and to the prostitutes of Amsterdam in 1630 and 1681. In London, the centre of the floating world was Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (published annually between 1757 and 1795) offered its readers literary portraits and addresses.<sup>36</sup> It remains uncertain how far these lists functioned as pornography and how far as a guide—a kind of an 18th-century *Which?*

## CONCLUSION

The representations of cities in different parts of the pre-industrial world described above show some intriguing similarities as well as differences. The emphasis on city gates as symbols of security

can be found in China as well as in Europe. The ritual of the Roman *possesso* resembles traditional rites of circumambulation by rulers in East Asia, while the competition between groups of artisans to construct the best floats for a festival brings Florence and Kyoto together. The praises of cities form a literary genre in India and the Arab world as well as in Europe. Treatises and stories about beggars and thieves in the Islamic world and in Europe have many features in common. In important respects, such as the market for highly educated courtesans, the Japanese floating world resembles that of Venice. If the beggar literature furnishes an example of ‘connected history’, the similarities between floating worlds arose independently as cities remote from one another grew and diversified.

Again, the rise of city guides and maps, chap-books, and *kana-zoshi* runs parallel in Europe and in Japan from the 17th century onwards. In both regions this rise exemplifies the commercialization of representations, increasingly aimed at a public that had never seen the original city. Competition was associated with commercialization: it is surely no accident that rival guides to Kyoto appeared in 1658, rival guides to Amsterdam in 1663 and 1664, and rival guides to London in 1681. The majority of townscapes, paintings or prints, were produced in some of the places with the highest density of urban population: the island of Honshu in Japan, northern Italy, and the Netherlands.

On the other hand, the Islamic world differed from both Europe and East Asia in remaining a manuscript rather than a print culture, while the ban on public representations of human figures also affected representations of the city. Max Weber’s contrast between the city in Europe and in the rest of the world may have been drawn too strongly and has been criticized by specialists in the history of East Asia and the Islamic world. All the same, Weber offered a plausible explanation of important differences in representations, notably the importance in Europe of public spaces such as squares and of civic buildings, especially town halls, when he drew attention to the relative importance of self-government in the West.

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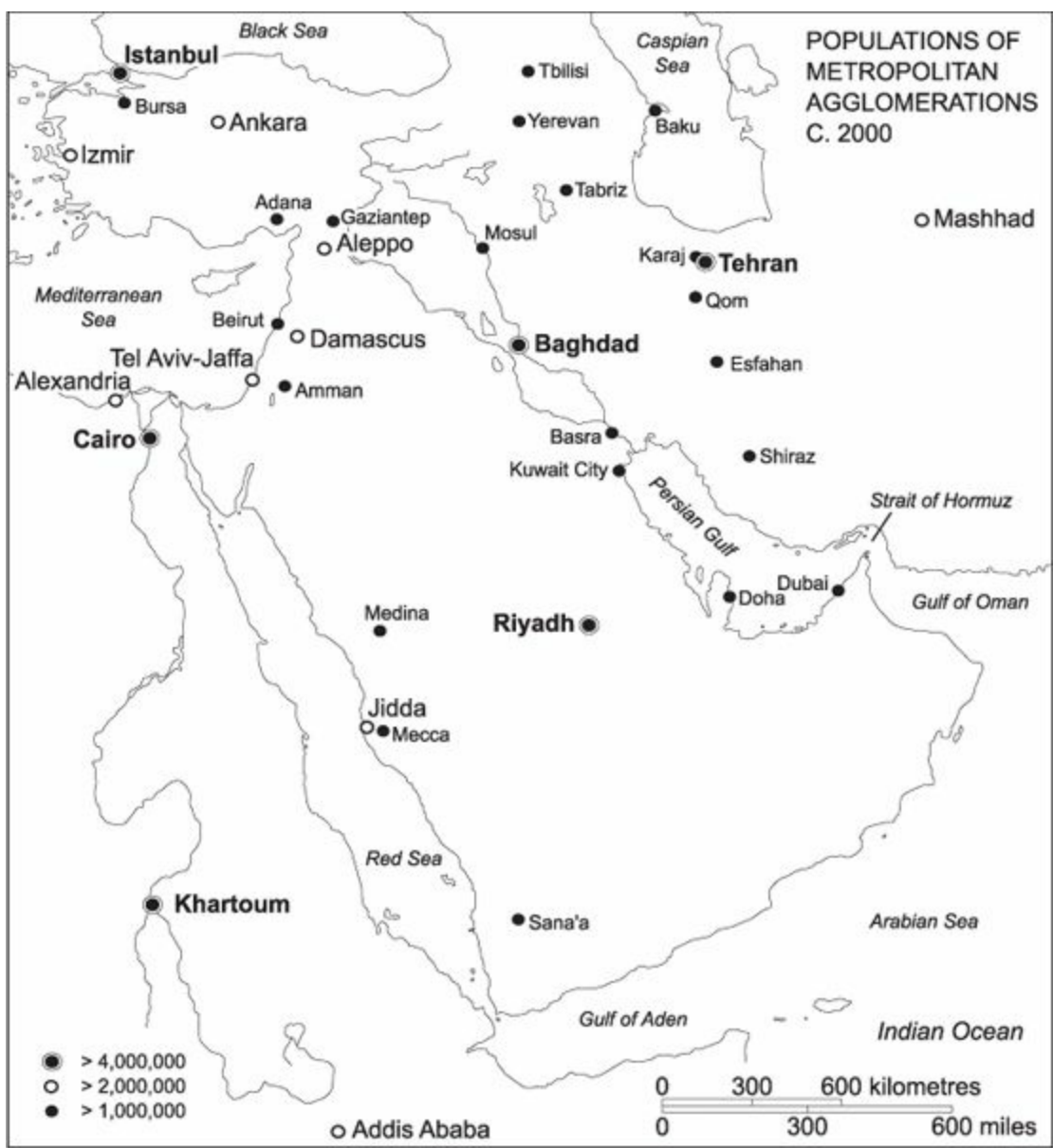
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**MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY CITIES**

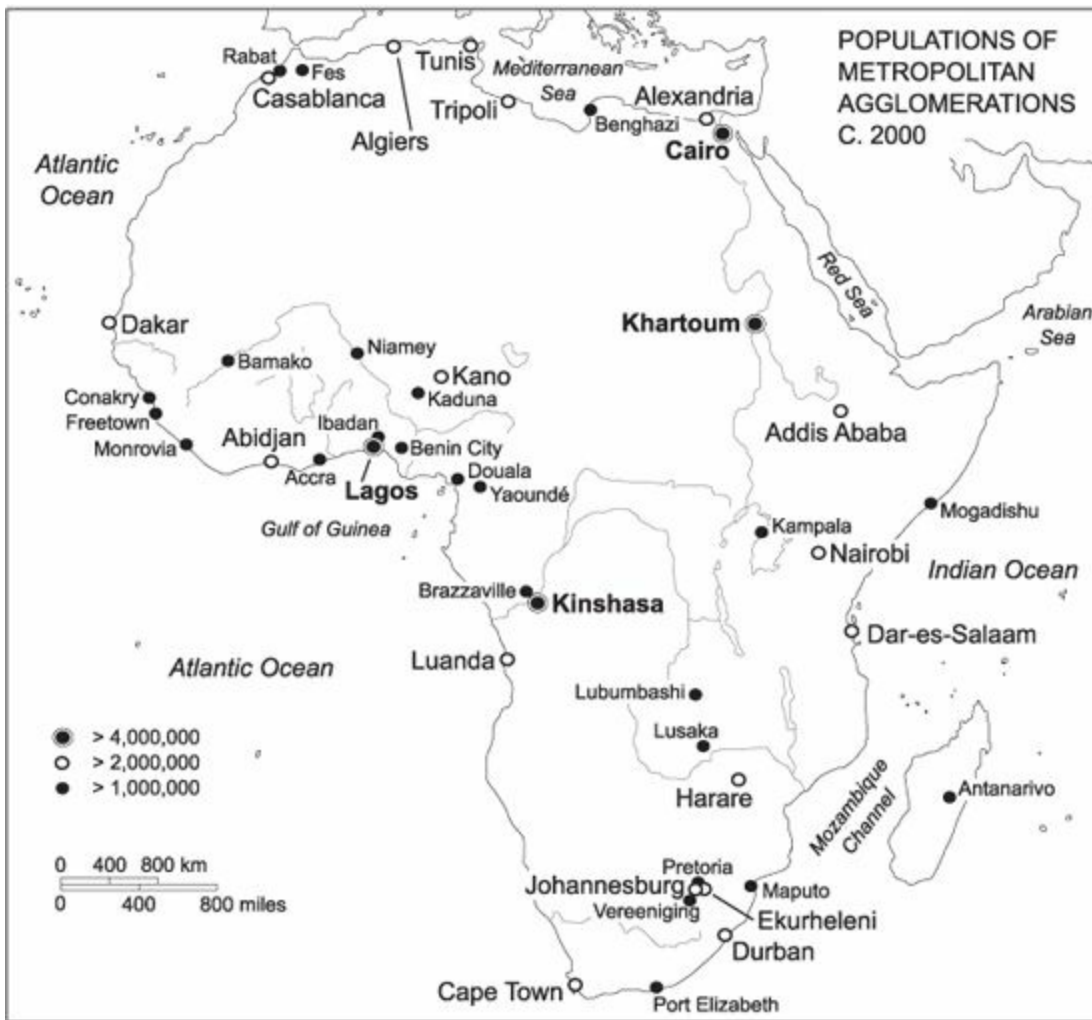
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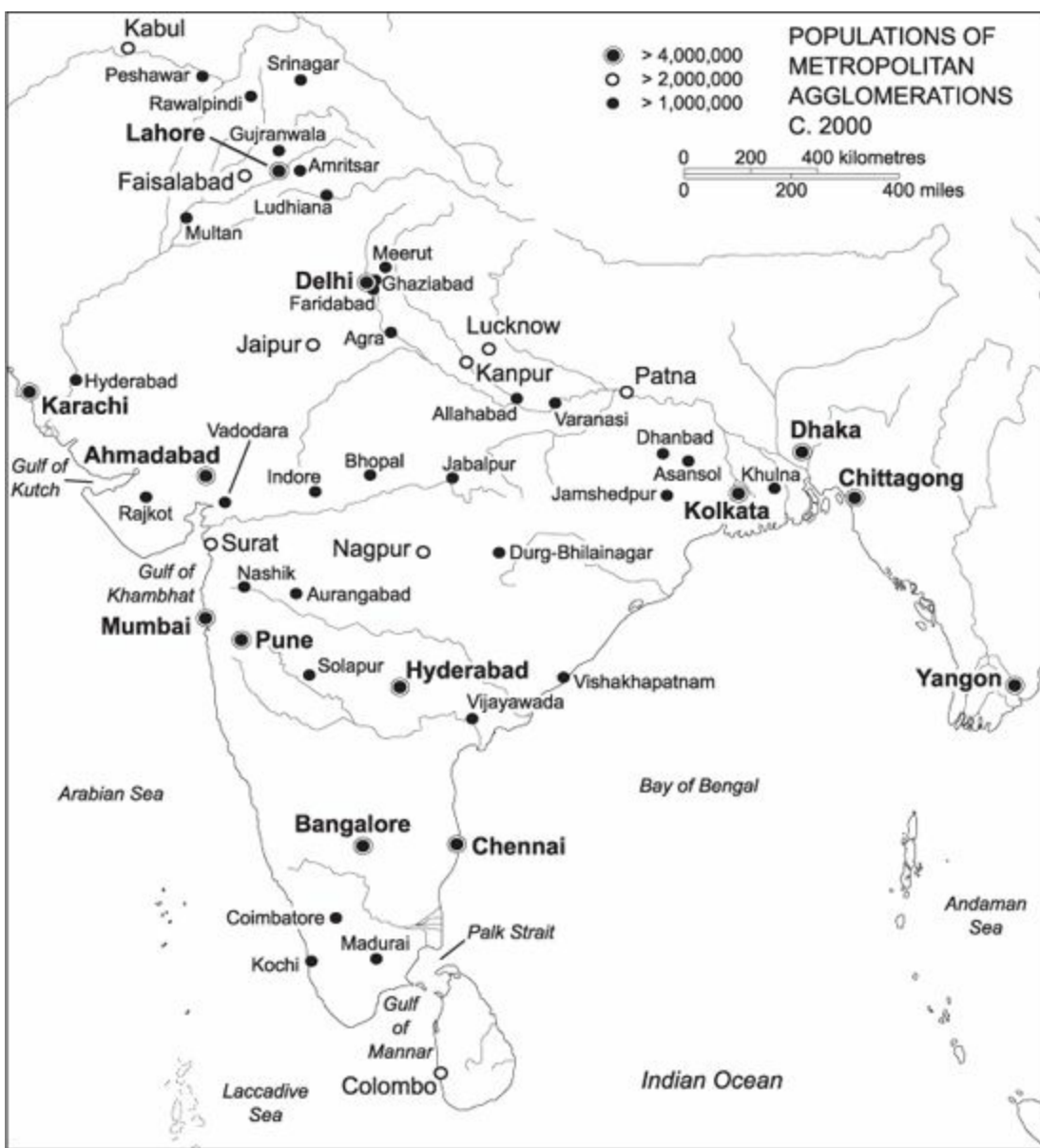
Regional Map III.1 Europe



Regional Map III.2 Middle East



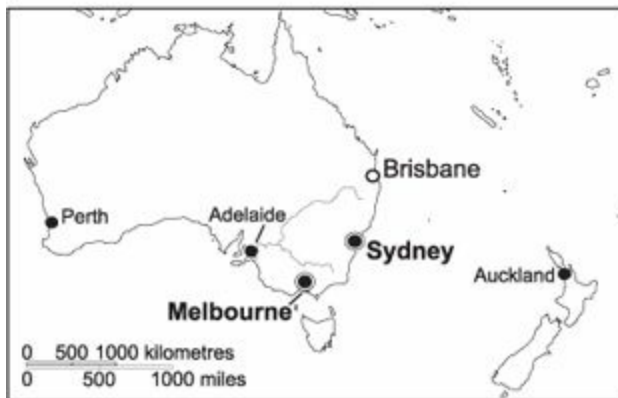
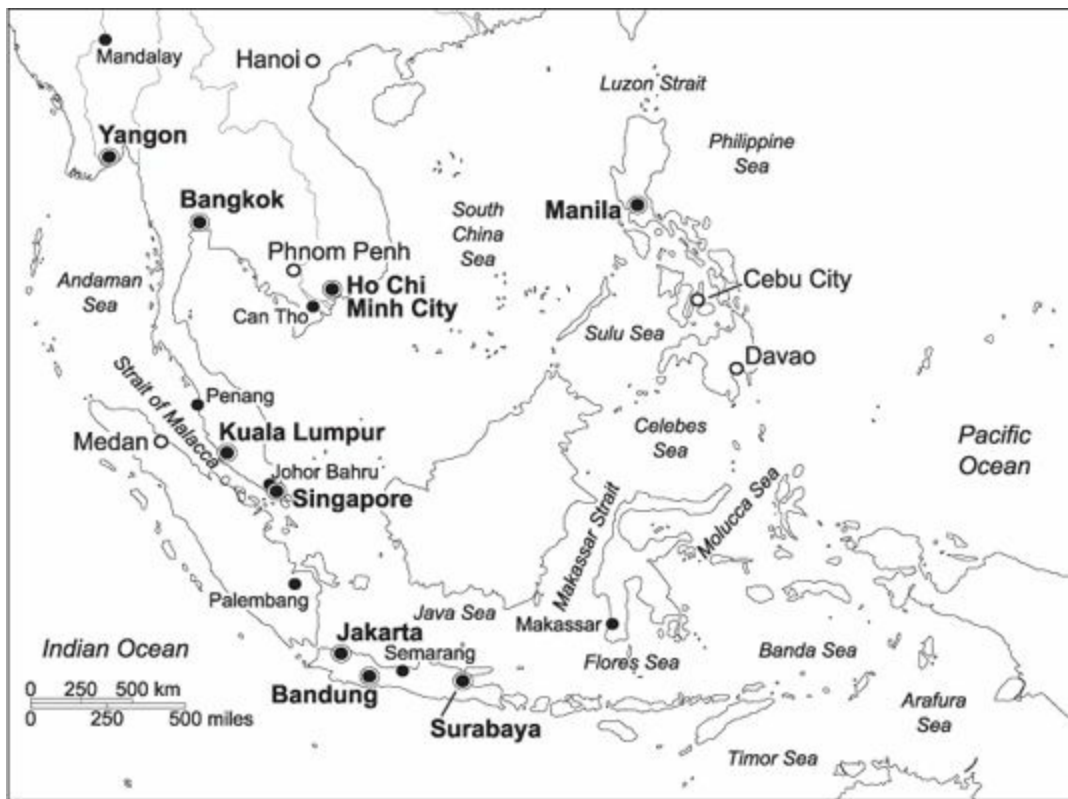
Regional Map III.3 Africa



Regional Map III.4 South Asia



Regional Map III.5 East Asia



**POPULATIONS OF METROPOLITAN AGGLOMERATIONS C. 2000**

- > 4,000,000
- > 2,000,000
- > 1,000,000

**Regional Map III.6** South East Asia and Australasia





**Regional Map III.7 Latin America**



Regional Map III.8 North America

**EUROPE: 1800–2000**

ANDREW LEES AND LYNN HOLLEN LEES

DURING the 19th and 20th centuries, the population of Europe's cities expanded explosively, as the dual pressures of industrialization and of state development encouraged migration from the countryside to towns and from smaller towns to larger ones. Urban growth in Europe occurred within the framework of a distinctive urban heritage: long-term continuity of sites and central plans, relatively stable urban hierarchies, traditions of effective local governance, and well developed civic identities (for pre-modern developments see above, [Chs. 12–13](#); for a map of the principal cities around 1800 see [Regional Map II.1](#)). Urbanization in Europe over the last 200 years has been marked both by innovation and by respect for tradition. Our chapter will follow its trajectory by focusing on the impact of technological change, the emergence of environmental and social problems, and both voluntary and governmental efforts to cope with them.

**URBAN GROWTH**

In the course of the long 19th century, the overall size of the urban sector in Europe underwent an extraordinary increase. Whereas, in 1800, only 14.5 per cent of the population of Europe outside the Russian empire lived in municipalities or other local administrative units with more than 5,000 inhabitants, by 1910 the percentage had risen to 43.8. The increase in the percentage of the population that lived in 'big' cities, numbering more than 100,000 inhabitants, was even more pronounced. Urban expansion first took off in Britain, and other countries then followed suit. Whereas London was its only big city in 1800, ten other places passed the 100,000 threshold during the next five decades. Industrial centres such as Manchester and Birmingham as well as port cities such as Liverpool and Glasgow more than tripled in size. As Belgium industrialized, its manufacturing towns and ports expanded rapidly too. The rush to the cities then spread to the north and east. The pace of urban expansion during the century's second half was particularly rapid in Central Europe. Between 1850 and 1910, in addition to Berlin, a dozen other cities at least quintupled in size, among them Breslau, Munich, and Stuttgart. In Scandinavia and in the Russian empire, the urban population approximately doubled. By the century's end, truly giant-sized cities could be found in several countries: Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, and St Petersburg had passed the million mark, and London was the world's largest city, with over 6.5 million inhabitants (see [Table 25.1](#)).

**Table 25.1 The Growth of Big Cities in Europe, 1800–1910**

Europe	Britain	France	Germany	Russian Empire
1800: 2.9 (21)	1801: 8.2 (1)	1801: 2.8 (3)	1816: 1.9 (2)	1800:—(2)
1850: 4.8 (43)	1851: 21.8 (11)	1851: 4.6 (5)	1849: 3.1 (4)	1850:—(2)
1900: 12.3 (143)	1911: 40.7 (39)	1911: 14.6 (15)	1910: 21.3 (48)	1910:—(20)

Sources: Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820–1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 4–5; B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe, 1750–1993* (London: Stockton Press, 1998), 72–74. In each box, the first number after the date indicates the percentage of total population accounted for by cities numbering 100,000 or more inhabitants. The second number indicates the numbers of such cities.

**Table 25.2 The Growth of Big Cities in Europe, 1950–1990**

	Western Europe	Northern Europe	Mediterranean Europe	Central + E. Europe	Russia (Europe + Asia)	Totals
1950	93	3	31	29	32	190
1990	111	4	57	44	74	290

Source: Jean-Luc Pinol, ed., *Histoire de l'Europe Urbaine*, II (Paris: Seuil, 1903), 572.

Urban growth continued throughout most of the 20th century as well, albeit unevenly and at a somewhat slower pace. The two World Wars and revolution in Russia destroyed towns and disrupted immigration; nevertheless, urban growth resumed with reconstruction. In Europe as a whole, cities that numbered 100,000 or more inhabitants increased between 1900 and 1950 from 163 to 190 and between 1950 and 1990 from 190 to 290. By mid-century, metropolitan areas of more than a million people dotted the landscape from Britain to the Soviet Union. Even Athens and Bucharest had crossed that threshold. Such places were urban regions, rather than clearly bounded and centrally administrated municipalities. In 1950, the Rhein–Ruhr complex of industrial cities, which included 6.9 million people, counted as the fourth largest metropolitan area in the world! (See below, [Ch. 41.](#))

The rush into Europe’s largest cities continued after World War II, during the decades of reconstruction and post-war economic boom (See [Table 25.2](#)). Jobs continued to move into the larger towns, drawing people off the land. More and more cities overran legal boundaries, producing a growing ring of suburbs around older urban cores. By 1970, over 50 per cent of the population of Sweden, Denmark, Greece, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR could be counted as urban, while the proportions in the most heavily urbanized parts of Western Europe—Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands—reached or exceeded 80 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

The pattern of urban growth began to change in the 1970s and 1980s. Two quite different dynamics affected urban populations. As automobiles and affluence permitted many people to look for better housing and more space, once prosperous older urban districts lost residents. At the same time, industrial decline discouraged migration into older manufacturing towns and port cities. Growing international competition hit many Atlantic and Baltic ports very hard. The virtual collapse of urban manufacturing pushed formerly thriving industrial towns such as Manchester, Liège, and Essen into a phase of decline. Growth continued in the USSR, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe until the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1990, but thereafter, many industrial towns and even major cities such as St Petersburg lost population. Still, by the end of the 20th century, Europe had become a predominantly urban continent, where the vast majority of citizens lived in cities and towns (see [Regional Map III.1](#)).

Rates of urban growth were shaped by differences in economic structures. Cities are embedded in

regional and international networks of production and exchange, which industrialization transformed during the 19th century. Once steam engines, spinning machines, and power looms permitted factory production of fabrics, textile production quickly became an urban occupation, fostering an array of rapidly growing industrial towns, initially in northern Britain but spreading quickly into Belgium, north-eastern France, and the Rhineland. The city that stood out earliest in this regard was Manchester. Sometimes referred to as Britain's 'cottonopolis', it rose to prominence between the 1820s and the 1840s. It soon served as the central place for the region's many smaller towns, offering marketing and financial services to firms supplying international markets.<sup>2</sup>

This early wave of industrial urbanization was fuelled by coal, the mining of which led to the growth of towns around pitheads in Yorkshire, South Wales, the Belgian Borinage, and the Ruhr valley. Cheap coal, along with new smelting techniques, revolutionized iron and, later, steel production, fuelling the growth of Sheffield, Liège, St Étienne, and Essen, among many other cities. As villages grew into towns, a spine of newly urbanizing regions could be traced from north-western Britain through Belgium, north-eastern France, and the Rhine–Ruhr area.

In the 19th century's second half, aggressive entrepreneurs introduced steam engines and new machinery into an array of older European towns in Central Europe, as well as to the south and east. Berlin, Milan, Barcelona, Warsaw, and Moscow emerged as major centres of industrial production, feeding the rapid growth of world trade. By the century's end, after the development of commercially available electricity broke the link between mine and factory, virtually any city in which workers and transportation for raw materials and finished goods were available could expand its manufacturing for export.

New means of transportation accelerated the mid-19th century take-off of industrial urbanization. Railways, which spread in England during the later 1820s,<sup>3</sup> expanded across the continent in later decades, built by British and French engineers and financed by British and French capital. By 1870, all the states of western and southern Europe had national railway networks, which became tightly interlinked by 1900. Steamship services, operating out of port cities such as Hamburg and Glasgow, were also growing rapidly. Both land-based and maritime transportation networks stimulated world trade, which led to more urban development. Travel became easier and cheaper. These new transportation networks centred on major cities—seaside ports and national capitals—stimulating the growth of places already favoured by long-distance trade, industry, and political power. Not only could goods move quickly from European producers to American or Asian markets, but young workers could leave their villages in past Prussia or southern Italy and make their way more easily to Essen or Milan. London had long lured immigrants from across Britain, but by the late 19th century it became the destination for thousands of newcomers from Russia and Eastern Europe, who travelled there by train and steamboat. After the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, British and Continental rail systems joined hands, truly unifying European land travel.

Although new modes of transportation initially centralized populations, they also fostered decentralization. Trolley services, as well as underground railways and regional rail systems, brought workers and shoppers into business districts from outlying areas and home again at night. By 1930, the Paris Métro reported 888 million passenger journeys per year! Cheap fares permitted commuting to jobs, and with urban growth the distances got longer and longer. The rise of the internal combustion engine was particularly significant. Already by the 1920s, commercial bus services throughout Britain allowed villagers to shop and play in the towns, thus encouraging greater suburbanization. In subsequent decades, rising numbers of private automobiles posed huge challenges, contributing not

only to commuting and out-migration but also to traffic congestion and air pollution. In London, which had around 100,000 licensed drivers by 1920, automobiles already reshaped the urban landscape before World War II. Elsewhere too, devising ways to permit rapid travel within and among cities in areas where there are more automobiles than urban parking spaces has been increasingly difficult.

Although urbanization is frequently and justifiably linked to industrialization, one needs to bear in mind that it was also closely intertwined with state formation and the rise in the size of European governments. The 19th century witnessed the establishment of several new nation states. Greece led the way. It was followed by Belgium, Romania, Italy, a semi-sovereign Hungary within the Habsburg empire, Germany, and Serbia. Each of these states had a capital city that grew dramatically as a result of becoming a new centre of governmental activity. Athens, Brussels, Bucharest, Rome, Budapest, Berlin, and Belgrade all owed much of their increased numbers of inhabitants to their new status as focal points for their nations' political life and for national administration. In the 20th century, new capitals continued to emerge. Prague (capital first of Czechoslovakia, then of the Czech Republic), Warsaw (Poland), Dublin (Ireland), Vilnius (Lithuania), Riga (Latvia), Zagreb (Croatia), and half a dozen other places gained capital-city status. Meanwhile, other cities that had already been capitals of sovereign states before the 19th century—e.g., London, Paris, Vienna, St Petersburg, Stockholm, Madrid, and Lisbon—also benefited demographically from a process in which more and more functions were being performed at the national level, in states that had long histories as well as in ones that had short histories. Expansion of the roles played by nation-states in meeting the needs of their citizens depended on increases in the numbers of bureaucrats and other state employees, many of whom resided in their nations' political centres or in other places in which national administration was carried out regionally.

Whether as workers in industrial enterprises, as employees in the public sector, or as providers of services for the urban population at large, city dwellers were highly likely to have migrated to their places of residence. On the European continent, most urban growth was not natural growth until late in the 19th century. In the large cities of France, Germany, Russia, Italy, Hungary, and Sweden, death rates normally exceeded birth rates. Infant mortality remained high in towns until after 1900. Growth thus resulted primarily from a massive movement away from the countryside and from small towns. As employment in agriculture declined and urban wages rose, more and more men and women sought new opportunities in cities—whether as industrial workers or in urban service jobs. Most were young, unmarried adults, who followed others in their families or villages along well-trodden paths. Tens of thousands of Irish took up residence in Liverpool and London,<sup>4</sup> and comparable numbers of Poles made the trek to Düsseldorf and other cities in the Ruhr Valley.<sup>5</sup> Much of this migration was temporary; young people moved frequently from place to place. Around 1850, about half of the residents of European cities had been born outside the places where they lived. The proportions of city dwellers who were immigrants declined somewhat in subsequent decades, but in 1890 they still amounted to 43.7 per cent in France and to 46.1 per cent in Prussia. While most of these urban immigrants came from nearby areas, 'world' cities such as London, Paris, and Berlin had received huge numbers of migrants not only from surrounding regions but also from other countries in Europe and from their empires. Tied by steamship routes and long-distance railways to far-flung places, they drew thousands of newcomers every year.

Migration into European cities has fluctuated over time. Wars, revolutions, and depressions have sometimes forced people to take to the roads, but at other times they have discouraged movement. Over time, national governments became increasingly interested in recruiting labour, but they also

sought to control their borders. Such pressures mounted in the 20th century as periods of conscription and labour control were succeeded by periods of demobilization, repatriation, and rebuilding. During the 1920s, when the United States government restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe, the French government worked to import foreign labour, particularly to rebuild towns and factories in the northern part of the country. In contrast, during the 1930s, Communists fled Spanish towns, and thousands of Jews left the cities of Germany, Poland, and Hungary, looking for safety farther to the west. Massive displacements of population continued during and after World War II, when forced labourers and prisoners returned home, and the Soviet government expelled ethnic Germans from eastern territories.

After 1945, as the European economy revived, massive shortages of labour in northwestern Europe created employment opportunities for workers to the south and east. Millions of people from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and northern Africa crowded into the industrial towns and capital cities of north-western Europe. During the 1970s, over 100,000 Turks arrived in Germany every year. It was generally expected that their stays would be temporary, but men imported their families, and female migrants married and decided to remain. ‘Guest workers’ were joined by thousands of refugees from colonial wars and post-colonial struggles for power. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians and Surinamese settled in the major cities of the Netherlands, while even greater numbers left Algeria and France’s sub-Saharan colonies to settle in French towns.<sup>6</sup> (See below, [Ch. 35](#).)

## HIERARCHIES AND NETWORKS

Cities have always existed within networks of cities.<sup>7</sup> Well before the wave of industrial urbanization, the European landscape was dotted from Ireland to the Urals by market towns and small settlements. In 1800, before the heyday of industrial urbanization, the mean distance between cities with 10,000 or more inhabitants in Britain, the Low Countries, and Italy was only 30 km and just slightly greater in Spain, France, and the German-speaking states. In those areas, an energetic walker or rider could travel from city to city in less than a day, and market centres were even closer to hand. Connected by roads and by rivers, a web of settlements overlay the plains and lowlands of the continent. Some were specialized centres—ports, resorts, or manufacturing or mining towns—places whose labour forces reflected the dominance of a few occupations. Others were simple market towns, where the rural population went to buy and sell. The larger and more diversified cities offered much wider arrays of goods and services to people who were prepared to travel in order to obtain them. Places that housed universities and cathedrals as well as ports attracted newcomers from an even wider region. These people needed housing and food, providing jobs for still more immigrants. As state administrations grew, funding law courts, jails, and government offices, so too did the cities where they were located.

Urbanizing regions developed hierarchies of central places. The largest ones were usually national capitals, which housed not only the most important political and religious institutions but also banks, foreign firms, and, often, factories. But states also had regional centres and county towns whose lower-level courts, offices, and secondary schools employed lawyers, clerks, and teachers. Even if smaller in size than the capital cities, their relative wealth and their diverse institutions attracted steady streams of young workers and people of middling status.

The shapes of urban hierarchies varied across Europe. Around 1850, the more centralized states—

France, Britain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, and the Hapsburg empire— had capital cities several times as large as the second largest cities in those territories. Athens and Bucharest joined this list in the later 20th century. Each one of these primate cities drew to itself a disproportionate share of national resources and population. In contrast, the high density of towns in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and northern Italy produced urban systems organized around many medium-sized cities, and this pattern has persisted. In the Netherlands, Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden, and Utrecht remain interdependent, complementary cities, sharing the political, economic, and cultural functions that London combined in England. A third pattern can be found in Spain and in Russia, in each of which two major cities (Barcelona and Madrid, St Petersburg and Moscow) have competed with one another for resources and power. National urban networks reflect each region's historical heritage, as well as the growth patterns of the industrial era. Scholars debate whether Europe today has one integrated set of cities that transcends national borders. Long interlinked road and rail networks give evidence for connections, but political divisions as well as poverty have inhibited movement. After the international conflicts of the 20th century split the continent into two warring teams, the Cold War not only divided Berlin but also restricted exchanges between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. The gradual extension of the European Union from its original six countries to its current twenty-seven, resulting in a vast area within which citizens have rights of free migration, has worked to diminish the importance of national borders, linking European countries and their cities together through the Brussels-based bureaucracy of the European Union and the Strasbourg-based European Parliament.

Major European cities were closely linked not only to one another but also to cities overseas. Urban networks went global centuries ago. Western coastal ports—Bordeaux, Liverpool, and Lisbon—were linked by sea to the Americas and to Africa. The Mediterranean permitted easy travel from Marseilles to Algiers and from Naples to Tripoli and Bengazi. Steamships took passengers and mail from London to Hong Kong or from Hamburg to Shanghai and back. A global exchange of people, goods, and cultures operated through cities and their transportation networks, which tied the European urban system to those of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

How do urban networks and levels of urban development look today against the backdrop of the far-reaching developments that have occurred during the past two centuries? The largest and most important cities in Europe as a whole have remained surprisingly constant since 1800. They are all multifunctional cities, most of which have been political capitals for centuries. London and Paris remain Europe's only 'world cities', wielding political, economic, and cultural influence at the global level. While economic growth and regional integration created new urban superstars during the 19th century, such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Essen, deindustrialization in the late 20th decreased their importance. Moscow, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt am Main, Milan, and Madrid still function as second-tier cities, albeit with international as well as regional functions. The dominance of north-western European cities has decreased in the later 20th century with the rapid growth of southern urban regions after 1950. Along the shores of the Mediterranean from Barcelona through southern France, to central and northern Italy, economic development has revitalized older towns and produced dynamic metropolitan areas which overspill administrative jurisdictions. Overall, in sharp contrast to the situation in 1800, when only a very small percentage of Europeans lived in cities of any size, nowadays only a few parts of the European continent—primarily the far north of Scandinavia and parts of the Balkans—can still be considered largely 'rural'.



Particularly during the first half of the 19th century, the rising size of urban populations caused huge problems, which for a long time local authorities seemed unable to master. These difficulties were physical, physiological, social, and political, and they elicited loud choruses of complaint about the quality of urban life. A classic expression of unease with regard to the industrial city appeared in the mid-1850s in Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, in which his treatment of 'Coketown' implicitly criticized what he regarded as the dreariness and selfish heartlessness of life in Manchester. Also in the mid-1850s, the German ethnographer Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl penned a more explicit denunciation of urban centres as such. When he wrote, 'Europe is becoming sick as a result of the monstrosity of its big cities', he had in mind a wide range of maladies. These afflicted not only Europeans' bodily health but also the social wellbeing of the communities in which they lived, which were in his view marked by a serious deficit of communal cohesion. Such sentiments, which had already found widespread expression before the 1850s, continued to be voiced by many writers long thereafter.<sup>8</sup>

A great deal of criticism of cities resulted from the wretched physical conditions under which a majority of city dwellers in big cities lived. Having grown so quickly, large towns became dangerously unsanitary. The lack of clean drinking water as a result of inadequate sewerage had especially severe consequences between the 1830s and the 1860s. During these years, repeated epidemics of cholera resulted in huge numbers of deaths. Spreading westward from Russia, cholera broke out in central and western Europe in 1832. From that year until the end of the century, it afflicted millions of Europeans, most of whom lived in impoverished parts of cities, and it killed at least one-third of those who contracted it. City dwellers suffered disproportionately from other forms of communicable disease as well, among them typhoid and tuberculosis, whose incidence can be related directly to poor sanitation.<sup>9</sup>

As concerns about the lack of clean water and as outbreaks of epidemics declined, more and more attention was focused on substandard housing. The connections between disease and overcrowded dwellings that lacked adequate numbers of privies had been widely noted by sanitary reformers in the 1840s. Later on, the ill effects of poor housing became a still more central feature of criticism of urban conditions, as the construction of new residences continued to lag far behind the growth of city populations. Accordingly, 'slums' seemed to spread rapidly in urban areas. East London became particularly notorious in this regard, but many other cities had similar problems. In Berlin, working-class families were packed like sardines into what were called 'rental barracks'. In 1911, in Budapest, one set of residences in a workers' area consisted of wooden shacks described by an observer as a line of 'cells in a prison'. In one building, ninety-seven people shared two privies. A typical apartment there consisted of one room and a windowless kitchen. Overcrowding diminished overall in the 20th century, but during the years between 1939 and 1945 a great deal of housing was destroyed as a result of aerial bombardment of cities.

Not only the poor but also the young were noticeably more at risk than other city dwellers as a result of both impure water and overcrowding. In towns in Lancashire and Cheshire in 1841, 198 infants of every 1,000 newborns died before their first birthday. At that time, infant death rates in all northern English cities exceeded rural ones by about 50 per cent. The incidence of death among children between the ages of one and five in France as a whole in 1886 was 30.3 per thousand, but in Paris it was 58.2. Death rates tended to be highest in workers' neighbourhoods and much lower in areas inhabited by middle- and upper-class populations.

Death rates varied throughout the century in proportion to city size, despite the fact that the

percentage of adolescents and young people was higher in urban areas than in rural ones. In Paris between 1886 and 1890, there were 23.69 deaths per thousand inhabitants, but in cities with under 5,000 inhabitants there were only 20.91. Overcrowding, which tended to be most severe in the largest cities, was particularly deadly. Given the additional fact that urban birth rates were much lower than rural ones, it is no wonder that many observers feared a situation in which, having exhausted the supplies of fresh recruits from the countryside, urban populations would eventually grow much older and then begin to die out. Others feared that the combination of low birth rates among natives of cities and high levels of long-distance migration would radically transform urban society in ways they found threatening.<sup>10</sup>

Threats to bodily health were seemingly accompanied by additional dangers, which urban elites thought menaced moral health. In the eyes of many contemporaries, cities were hotbeds of social pathology and other forms of deviant behaviour. Sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, suicide, and crime appeared to bear witness to the role that urbanization and city life played in changing behaviour for the worse. Contemporaries pointed frequently to the decline of religious observance in cities.<sup>11</sup> It is true that church attendance in Europe fell overall as cities grew and that it was lower in cities than elsewhere, but there were great variations among countries, Catholic observance generally having held up better than membership in Protestant churches. Matters are similarly complicated when one considers particular forms of deviant behaviour. In late 19th-century Germany, although crimes against property were more frequent in the cities (where there were more visible goods to steal) than in the countryside, violent crimes were less frequent. Nonetheless, perceptions and fears constituted a social reality in their own right, helping to give rise to the belief that urban problems had to be remedied. Similar fears arose in the 20th century with regard to urban areas inhabited by first- and second-generation migrants from abroad; for example, the suburbs of Paris where large numbers of migrants from northern Africa lived and the Kreuzberg section of Berlin, which was disproportionately inhabited by Turkish 'guest workers' and their children. Despite the national need for their labour power, these migrants were and are perceived as outsiders, a biological and cultural threat to the majority because of differences in skin colour, religion, and language. Although European cities have always housed populations divided by social class and often by religion and ethnicity, Europeans' awareness, and often resentment, of cultural diversity has grown, fuelling the rise of anti-immigrant parties.<sup>12</sup>

Big cities also served as the primary staging grounds for men and women who wished to change the political and the social status quo. Revolutions erupted in Paris and Brussels in 1830, not only in Paris but also in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and Milan in 1848, and in Paris yet again in 1871.<sup>13</sup> Revolution also occurred in St Petersburg in 1905. Meanwhile, in Western Europe, the forces of organized socialism, whose leaders preached revolution even though they did not actively pursue it, received much more electoral support in big cities than they did elsewhere. Take the case of Germany. In elections held in 1898, socialists won 60 per cent of the seats in Reichstag constituencies located in big cities, whereas in the rest of the nation socialists won only 5 per cent of the seats. In the 20th century, efforts to change countries' political regimes centred on Petrograd and Berlin during and at the end of World War I, on Paris again in 1968, and on Budapest, Leipzig, Berlin, Prague, and Vilnius in 1989 and 1990.

Facing these challenges, reformist groups drawn from the middle and upper classes worked for both hygienic and social improvement. The overall trend, particularly after the middle of the 19th century, led away from belief in the beneficence of purely market forces and in the direction of increased activism at both voluntary and governmental levels.

Attempts to alleviate urban distress through organized philanthropy were pervasive throughout the century. Voluntary associations raised money to assist the poor, while at the same time working to change their behaviour through educational efforts. A widespread religious revival that took place in part as a reaction against the French Revolution sometimes contributed to this approach, as did the gospel of laissez-faire. Philanthropists were particularly active in Britain. Starting in the 1820s, there was a proliferation of ‘visiting societies’ in London and in other urban areas. During the same years, groups of Catholic women in Bordeaux and Lyon as well as in Paris intensified their efforts to help both sick adults and orphaned children.<sup>14</sup> Later in the century, not only groups of socially oriented Protestants and Catholics but also a multitude of secular organizations sought to promote social philanthropy. Among them, there was the Charity Organisation Society, which originated in London, the Central Office of Philanthropic Works in France, and the German Association for Poor Relief and Charity. Not to be outdone, Russians also established numerous charitable societies.<sup>15</sup>

Secular reformers, among whom medical doctors stood out, brought strong pressure to bear on governments to clean up the physical environment. Agitation by these men in favour of improved sewerage, clean water, paved streets, and better ventilation began in France and Britain in the 1820s. It culminated in Britain in the passage in 1848 of a Public Health Act, which empowered local authorities to take on many new regulatory responsibilities. Creation of a new sewerage system as well as demolition of overcrowded housing and the construction of new thoroughfares was a central feature of a massive program of urban reconstruction that began in Paris during the 1850s, under the direction of the prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann.<sup>16</sup> Counterparts to the ‘Haussmannization’ of Paris could be seen not only in Lyon and Marseille but also in Barcelona and Vienna, all of which underwent extensive reconstruction during the third quarter of the century.<sup>17</sup> Such reconstructions required effective municipal governments, taxation capacity, and financial institutions, which developed earlier in Europe than elsewhere.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed dramatic increases in the power and the responsibilities of city governments, dwarfing whatever changes had occurred earlier. Under the leadership of energetic mayors and far-seeing city councils, they took on more and more functions with a view to improving the lives of the people they governed. As municipal authorities increasingly took control of water companies, engineers in their employ found ways to make cities much healthier by introducing technological innovations. City-owned water works were supplemented by city-owned (or at least city-regulated) gas works and electrical works. Seeming to be ‘natural monopolies’, such works ought, it was widely believed, to be run as ‘public utilities’. The provision of these utilities, together with other services (such as the maintenance of slaughterhouses and marketplaces), was frequently referred to as ‘municipal socialism’. Municipal services were, however, not provided on a purely benevolent basis. To be sure, clean water was a public good. But consumers were expected to pay for it as well as for gas and electricity, and profits from their sale helped pay for other services, which might not turn a profit on their own. Mass transit—first in the form of trams, which were powered by electricity starting in the 1880s, and then in the form of subways—spread throughout not only urban but also broader metropolitan areas, helping to bind them together.<sup>18</sup> City governments also worked to improve their human capital by building hospitals, schools, orphanages, and labour

exchanges, vastly expanding social services for the urban population.<sup>19</sup>

What about municipal activism's geography? Contemporaries from many countries expressed deep admiration for the accomplishments of German city governments.<sup>20</sup> (For Berlin as a model creative city see below, [Ch. 38](#)). By the eve of World War I, they were clearly in the lead with regard to municipal provision of water, gas, and electricity, and their social services were highly developed as well. This leadership was expensive. Between 1870 and 1913, German cities greatly increased the size of municipal budgets, which grew approximately eleven fold nationwide. There were also outstanding examples of city-sponsored advancement in Britain, where both Birmingham and Glasgow enjoyed well deserved reputations as centres of municipal activism (see [Plate 25.1](#)), and also in Scandinavia. In Mediterranean countries and to the east, the pace of municipal advance was much slower, but increasing levels of municipal activity were apparent almost everywhere.



**PLATE 25.1** Birmingham, c.1889: industrial sites shown in the background are overshadowed by civic buildings (art museum and the council house) that appear in the foreground and in the centre. The picture celebrates municipal mastery of challenges posed by industrial and urban expansion. (Source: *Edwin Hodder, Cities of the World, IV (c.1889), 41.*)

Between the two World Wars, local governments took on more and more responsibilities. Construction of public housing occurred on a much greater scale. In Britain, a Housing Act that was passed in 1919 resulted for the first time in substantial subsidies by the national government for 'council' housing. Authorities in Liverpool built 38,000 residences in the 1920s and the 1930s. Municipal authorities in Vienna and Stockholm also constructed massive amounts of new housing. Mass transit systems were expanded and integrated. In 1929, the Paris Métro reached suburban areas, and the Berlin city government pushed successfully for the coordination of trams and light rail services. The Great Depression led to increased pressure on city governments to provide poor relief and other social services. As a consequence of such developments, the numbers of municipal employees grew rapidly. The size of the city workforce in Helsinki, for example, rose by 50 per cent between 1931 and 1941.<sup>21</sup>

Standards for what counted as a 'good city' rose steadily, as architects imagined new urban forms

and planned to combat urban problems with the help of new technologies and science. Le Corbusier suggested introducing green space into central Paris by levelling much of the central area and moving its population into high-rise apartment towers. The International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), organized in 1928, spread support for modern styles of building and the segregation of urban activities into functional zones.<sup>22</sup> All over Europe, planners thought not only about technical modernization of old cities but also about redesigning traffic patterns, extending public transport, and building neighbourhoods around new parks and modernist, social housing. Ideas advocated in the 1920s and 1930s kept their appeal during the 1940s. Soon after the war began, European governments formed agencies that were charged with developing plans for urban rebuilding. In 1943, a British Ministry of Town and Country Planning was created with planning powers for the entire country, and in it Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Town Planning at the University of London, worked with a team of architects to develop a sophisticated strategy both for rebuilding London's destroyed areas and for redistributing its population through the establishment of new towns and outer settlements. Vichy France, Belgium, and Norway also had central planning ministries charged with developing specific designs for a post-war urban order.

The scale of the destruction of European cities between 1940 and 1945 is difficult to imagine now. Military strategists on both sides of the conflict thought that the path to victory lay through the disruption of civilian life. Not only factories, railways, and ports were targeted, but also city centres. German air attacks on London and Coventry made thousands of people homeless, and they turned not only residences but also churches, schools, and hospitals into blackened shells. On the Eastern Front, German planes levelled Stalingrad and Leningrad. As it retreated from the USSR and other areas in Eastern Europe, the German army systematically blew up Warsaw, as well as many Russian cities. In the raids carried out by the British and American air forces, about 50 per cent of the built-up areas in Germany's larger cities was destroyed, and between 400,000 and 600,000 residents died as a result. Mountains of rubble lined city streets; electricity and water supplies had to be re-established. It was hard to know where to begin given the immensity of local needs.<sup>23</sup>

Despite planners' hopes for radical renewal and modernization, constraints on time and resources meant that compromises had to be made. People needed new homes and places to work right away, and existing street and land ownership patterns proved very difficult to change. Moreover, popular nostalgia for a lost urban world dampened the political will to transform the urban order radically. In town after town, builders produced low-rise utilitarian buildings of little distinction, using existing street lines and plot dimensions. Stripped down versions of older, vernacular styles fostered the illusion of historical continuity. Nuremberg, Freiburg, and Münster rebuilt their most important monuments, but they followed a strategy of adaptive reconstruction for much of the rest, making use of materials, colours, and designs that resembled traditional styles. The restoration of Warsaw, which had lost 90 per cent of its buildings, went several steps farther in efforts to recapture the past. The post-war Polish government quickly legislated that all land within the city belonged to the municipality, giving planners great latitude. Although new thoroughfares eased traffic, the historic core of the town was largely reconstructed according to pre-war maps and drawings. The rebuilt Royal Castle became a Museum of National Culture. Not just individual buildings, but neighbourhoods and major streets with their complex ensembles of churches, palaces, and monuments were restored. Very few cities chose aggressively modernist forms for their reconstructions. The new cathedral in Coventry, Berlin's sleek apartment blocks in the Hansa Viertel, and Rotterdam's central shopping districts stand out as memorable examples of the introduction of contemporary design into

cityscapes.

By the 1960s, there was more and more emphasis on new construction, and what was being built was astonishing. Economic revival in the West, jump-started by the Marshall Plan and the establishment of the European Economic Community, financed not only rebuilding but also a great deal of expansion. Construction crews extended public transit systems and built ring roads to divert traffic from city centres. New towns, skilfully designed around green spaces and city services, helped to manage urban growth and urban decentralization in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France, Britain, and Ireland. State planning of cities was in the air all across Europe. The Communist regimes of Eastern Europe and Russia built over 1,000 new towns to support the rapid industrialization of their economies. With state ownership of land and government allocation of resources, authorities could site settlements where they wished and move workers there to staff new factories. Soviet planners sought to create socialist cities, which would embody their vision of an egalitarian, modern society. The state built and allocated space in apartment blocks in neighbourhood units, which offered both parkland and necessary services. Residents used public transport for the journey to work or to central areas, where public space was provided for political rallies and cultural activities. Severe housing shortages and limited amounts of consumer goods and services homogenized the living standards of the vast majority, with the result that segregation by social class largely disappeared. Central planning dictated urban forms, but it was not necessarily efficient or sufficiently imaginative to meet longer-run problems and deficiencies. These new towns lacked not only adequate services and transportation but also adequate housing. Facilities for mass recreation and cultural life were neglected in favour of more utilitarian needs. Still, in Eastern as well as Western Europe, constructive change was taking place.<sup>24</sup>

## CULTURE AND LEISURE

Cities have always provided more than just shelter and places in which to work. City dwellers have gathered to celebrate, learn, and have fun. Urban society has nourished a wide range of cultural opportunities, designed for all tastes. Cultural enrichment, in conjunction with economic opportunities and social services, has helped urban residents to feel both loyalty and affection toward the cities in which they live.<sup>25</sup>

Already during the 19th century, the larger cities emphasized their commitment to high culture and to conventional symbols of political power and prestige. During a walking tour of any major European city, a pedestrian would have passed dozens of impressive buildings, many newly built in historicist styles, others centuries old. Not only city halls, which were particularly important as symbols of civic identity, but also railroad stations, banks, opera houses, theatres, concert halls, and museums contributed to an aura of urban elegance.<sup>26</sup> These buildings provided the scaffolding for political and economic, as well as cultural life. Attendance at operatic, orchestral, and theatrical performances gave the rich opportunities to parade their wealth as well as their cultural choices. Art and ethnographic museums—the Louvre in Paris, the Prado in Madrid, and the collection of galleries on the ‘museum island’ in Berlin, together with hundreds of other museums that were constructed in European cities between the early 19th century and the 1930s—served as impressive repositories of traditional high culture. Increasingly, however, they welcomed not only middle- and upper-class men and women but also workers. Formerly disadvantaged by opening hours limited to weekdays and Saturdays, they benefited from the opening of museums’ doors on Sundays too. Museum directors in

Hamburg, around 1900, conducted a vigorous campaign to attract visitors by displaying not only traditional art but also local and applied art.<sup>27</sup> Starting in the 1850s in Britain, municipalities sought to promote popular ‘enlightenment’ in yet another way, by establishing public libraries, in which trained librarians could try to cultivate appreciation for good literature. The larger cities became sites of cultural innovation and cultural mixing, as both private philanthropists and local officials worked to expand the ‘public’ that was attracted to high-status leisure activities.

City governments also worked to improve the ‘character’ of city dwellers by promoting healthy recreation. Urban parks lured rich and poor into public open spaces. Victoria Park was established in east London in 1842 as a 190-acre green space surrounded by houses and factories. Many other cities followed suit, carving out public spaces in which city dwellers could not only admire the greenery but also play sports. People went to the Gerland stadium in Lyon or Gorky Park in Moscow to swim, to play football, or to watch matches. By 1939, a Sports Committee in Helsinki had opened eighty-six public sports grounds. For cities whose residential areas were becoming more segregated by social class, the building of new public spaces open to all was an important movement in the direction of a democratic public culture.

A great deal of urban culture took the form of mass market amusements, provided for those who could pay. The desire for entertainment, not cultivation, drew people into urban, commercial spaces. Eating, drinking,<sup>28</sup> and shopping were central to this culture. Neighbourhoods had their own pubs, clubs, and eateries, but central areas acquired them too. After the public restaurant was invented in Paris in the late 18th century, spots for elegant dining spread along newly constructed boulevards in central areas. Glass-covered galleries in Brussels and Milan lured customers with their window displays, cafés, and gas or electric lighting. Middle-class women benefited particularly from the invention of the department store, which gave them safe, respectable places to shop where they could also find lunch, clean toilets, and places to sit down. Whether at Bon Marché in Paris starting in the 1850s or at Selfridge’s in London or Wertheim’s in Berlin starting around 1900, city dwellers rushed into these exciting new temples of consumption, to see the latest designs and lavish displays of goods from around the world (see [Plate 25.2](#)).<sup>29</sup> Commercial theatres also attracted customers from a variety of social backgrounds. Urban stages offered everything from classic dramas to contemporary comedies and operetta, vaudeville, and melodramas. Cabarets such as the Motley Theatre in Berlin and the Chat Noir in Paris served up combinations of good wine and satiric songs and skits, to local citizens and to tourists.<sup>30</sup> A wider group of city dwellers preferred music halls, where food, drink, and rousing songs could be found at relatively low costs.

New forms of urban commercial entertainment greatly enriched urban popular culture. Shortly after the turn of the century, a recently established motion picture industry grew quite rapidly. In London by 1912, films could be seen regularly in nearly 600 places. In German cities, the number of cinemas grew five fold between 1910 and 1928. (See [Ch. 39](#).) The establishment of professional sports teams, which permitted inter-city competitions, also contributed to the liveliness of urban popular culture. In the 1880s, a Football League was established in Britain, and by 1911 almost all British cities with populations in excess of 100,000 had professional teams. Italian, Spanish, as well as German cities soon had their own teams, as the football craze spread around the continent, while in Nordic countries after 1945, ice hockey games attracted thousands of fans.



**PLATE 25.2** Potsdamer Platz. After the removal of the Berlin Wall in the early 1990s, the area became one of the world's biggest and most creative construction sites. Dozens of new buildings were erected in a part of the city that, for many years, had been a desolate no-man's-land. (Source: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.)

## CONCLUSION

The quality of life in European cities today varies greatly according to city dwellers' economic and social status and to the wealth of their societies. Deep pockets of urban poverty can still be found in many cities, particularly in areas that are inhabited by immigrants from countries outside Europe or in regions where economic growth has lagged. In contrast, however, to the United States, much less housing has become so run down that it has been abandoned. On the whole, city centres have retained their attractiveness as places in which well-to-do people want to live, movement to suburbs having been relatively restrained. In much of the region, effective governance and urban planning have checked the disintegrating effects of unregulated markets. What some historians refer to as 'the European city' continues to be characterized not only by density and relative compactness of settlement but also by high levels of city services, among which public transportation frequently stands out.<sup>31</sup> On many counts, the story of cities in Europe during the past two centuries has been and continues to be a story of notable successes in surmounting the problems posed by technological changes, exploding populations, and democratization. The heritage of past eras of urbanization has adapted well to the pressures of the globalized economy and the political changes of the 20th century.

## NOTES

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## LATIN AMERICA

ALAN GILBERT

As Ch. 20 has shown, Latin America has a long urban tradition.<sup>1</sup> The Aztec, Inca, and Maya civilizations built major cities, Cuzco, Chan Chan, Cholula, Teotihuacán and Tenochtitlán, as the focal points of their empires. The Spanish demolished these pre-Columbian symbols, constructing their own imperial shrines upon the ruins. When independence came to most of the region in the early 19th century, it actually made little difference to most people's lives.<sup>2</sup> The majority continued to live in the countryside and most of the region's cities went into temporary decline.<sup>3</sup> The real beginning of modern urbanization in Latin America came only after 1880 when several areas in the south of the region began to develop successful export regimes and began to industrialize.

This chapter looks first at urbanization trends up to 2010, second, at the changing shape of the urban system, third, at the quality of urban life, and concludes with a discussion of the urban impact of globalization.

## POST-INDEPENDENCE

From independence to World War I, the pace of economic growth in Latin America was largely dependent upon export production. Indeed, the desire to trade directly with Britain was one of the principal motives behind the independence struggle. However, throughout the 19th century most countries struggled to develop export markets.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Angostura bitters were once Venezuela's major source of foreign exchange illustrates how that country remained in a backwater until the 1920s. And, even when a profitable product was discovered, success could quickly turn to failure; perfectly illustrated by the history of the rubber boom in Brazil and the rise and fall of the indigo and guano industries of Colombia and Peru.

Without a successful export product, economic development was limited and the cities grew slowly. As a result: 'The typical Latin America city was small at the close of the colonial period and remained so toward the end of the 19th century. The median population of the 40 largest cities in 1880 was about 35,000, and only 8 cities in Latin America had a population in excess of 100,000.'<sup>5</sup> In Venezuela, Caracas hardly grew from the time of independence in 1810 to 1880.

Urban life in the great majority of towns and cities changed relatively little during the 19th century. Most were administrative, commercial, and religious centres bound integrally to their agricultural hinterlands. With agricultural practice stultified by unequal landholding systems and poor management, few cities could grow quickly. Physically, most cities also changed little, retaining their central square and grid-iron road layout. The elites lived near to the main square close to the nexus of government and ecclesiastical power. Less advantaged groups lived further out, with the poor mainly concentrated into over-crowded rental tenements. There were few shanty towns because without cheap transportation, labourers were forced to live close to their work. There was little manufacturing beyond artisan production. Most of the local elite lived on the income from their rural

estates, although some increasingly invested in property and commerce. Many, along with the Catholic Church, owned the rental property in which the vast majority of the population found shelter. Services were rudimentary and only improved when foreign companies began to introduce limited electricity, water, and transport systems. The first real changes in urban form came with the arrival of the electric tram around 1870 and even then it was only the elites who were able to move into the newly created suburbs.<sup>6</sup>

### URBANIZATION IN THE SOUTHERN CONE (1880–1914)

If export production increased slowly in most of the region, the situation in Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil was very different. In Argentina, export revenues quintupled between 1870 and 1900 with cereal production increasing from 5 to 50 per cent of the total and wool and meat exports making up most of the rest.<sup>7</sup> The agricultural area of the Pampas grew fifteen fold between 1872 and 1895 and the length of railway track increased from 460 to 10,000 miles over a similar period. In Brazil, coffee production exploded, with annual exports increasing from 100,000 tons in the 1850s to 840,000 tons in 1900.

During the late 1800s, exporters were greatly helped by the appearance of new kinds of technology. The steamship and the electric telegraph improved communications with Europe and the railway linked areas of production to the ports. With its exports of wool, meat, and cereals Argentina was the greatest beneficiary of the booming Atlantic trade and became the unofficial capital of Britain's informal empire. By 1914, Argentina's per capita income matched those of Germany and the Netherlands. Between 1895 and 1914 the population of Argentina doubled and at the outbreak of World War I three out of four Argentines were first- or second-generation immigrants. Immigrants also flooded into Uruguay, southern Brazil, and Chile, as the surnames of so many people in those countries still testify.

The major ports, transport centres, and mining towns of those areas expanded rapidly. In 1880, Buenos Aires was still a small colonial-style city. However, its population increased from 290,000 in 1880 to 1.2 million in 1905, fuelled mainly by immigrants from Italy and Spain, who made up half of the population in 1895.<sup>8</sup> With its growing prosperity Buenos Aires began to transform itself into the first European city in Latin America. Electricity and water systems were improved and major port works began. City beautification included the building of wide avenues, most notably the *Avenida de Mayo*, intended to rival the *Champs Elysées*. An electric tramway was opened in 1897 and, in 1913, the region's first underground railway—the *subte*. The city's elite aspired to turn Buenos Aires into one of the world's main cultural centres and after its opening in 1908 the Colón theatre became a regular stop for top opera singers.<sup>9</sup> 'This was a city that by 1910 even Parisians would claim was the Paris of South America... the beautiful and prosperous queen of the Rio de la Plata.'<sup>10</sup>

Further north, sudden spurts in exports also stimulated some spectacular examples of urban development. The rubber boom in Amazonia, 1879–1912, led to the rapid growth of Manaus, whose rubber barons competed vigorously to show off their wealth. They embellished the city and commissioned a 700-seat opera house which after many delays finally opened in 1896. Less extravagantly, the completion of a railway to Bolivia and the growing demand for nitrates from northern Chile led to Antofagasta quickly developing into Chile's fourth city.

The other source of urban growth was linked to the growing status of the region's national capitals;

between 1880 and 1905, the populations of Bogotá, Montevideo, Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro at least doubled or more. Growing national solidarity and increasing city revenues, originating mainly from taxes on foreign trade, encouraged this expansion.

Despite these examples of spectacular urban growth, most cities in Latin America were still very small. In 1905, only two cities (Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro) contained more than half a million inhabitants and four others more than 250,000 (Havana, Santiago, Montevideo, and São Paulo). And, even where rapid expansion occurred, the nature of urban life changed remarkably little. In the booming Pampas, for example, 'Rosario's rapid growth between 1880 and 1910 did not imply a dynamic and increasingly complex economy: the city simply consumed the rent, and exported the value, of its rich hinterland.'<sup>11</sup>

## GALLOPING URBANIZATION FROM THE 1930S

Latin America's cities changed profoundly after 1930. The sudden spurt in national rates of population growth contributed greatly to this change. When the major epidemic diseases began to be eliminated after 1930, average life expectancy increased from 34 years in 1930 to 65 by the early 1980s. However, birth rates generally remained high and as a result Latin America's population increased from 100 million in 1930 to 425 million in 1980. Most people continued to live in the countryside, an area which was often little changed from colonial times. As population numbers grew economic pressures increased on the already dismally poor.

Fortunately, despite the world depression, economic growth was beginning to accelerate. There were incipient signs of manufacturing growth in Buenos Aires, Medellín, Mexico City, Monterrey, and São Paulo. And, if the world recession caused major problems for Latin American exporters during the 1930s, it also presented an opportunity for local manufacturers to replace increasingly scarce imports.<sup>12</sup> Manufacturing and a slow but generally sustained process of economic growth created opportunities for rural people in the cities. More moved to the cities than the number of formal jobs could justify but most migrants did sufficiently well to encourage others to follow them. Urban conditions were difficult but offered most a genuine improvement compared with their lives in the countryside. Access to public services like education, electricity, and drinking water was problematic but infinitely easier than in the countryside. Despite the fears of the urban elites, urbanization was to prove a genuine success story. At the very least it offered an effective safety valve for the rural poor in highly unequal and unfair societies.

The impact of migration on Latin America was profound. In 1940, one-third of the population lived in cities, twenty years later one-half and, by 1980, two-thirds. Expressed in absolute numbers the figures are still more astounding. Between 1950 and 1990, the population of Latin America's towns and cities increased from around 69 million to 313 million. After 1940, most of the larger cities were growing rapidly, some doubling and even tripling their population in twenty years. During the 1940s, Cali (Colombia), Caracas (Venezuela), and São Paulo all grew annually at more than 7 per cent. [Table 26.1](#) shows how quickly most of Latin America urbanized after 1930 and how, by 1980, the region contained a large urban majority. Variations in the level of urbanization between countries can be explained broadly in terms of differences in the pace of their economic development. The most affluent countries were the most urbanized, the poorest contained the highest proportions of rural people.

The rapid pace of growth, combined with changing technology, transformed the nature and shape of

most cities profoundly. Taking advantage of improved forms of transport, notably the electric tram and the bus, elite groups began to move away from the city centre to new suburbs in the most environmentally desirable areas. They established elite neighbourhoods in beach areas like Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro and Miraflores in Lima, alongside the green hills in the north of Bogotá and Quito, and to the lower, more habitable, slopes of that most elevated of national capitals La Paz. The bus gradually transformed the nature of poor people's lives. Now that they could commute longer distances, increasing numbers moved out of the inner-city tenements into the new shanty towns. Between 1930 and 1980, self-help construction was the principal source of new homes and informal home-ownership gradually replaced rented rooms as the main form of accommodation.

**Table 26.1 Latin America: Urban Share of Population in Selected Countries 1930–2010**

Country	1930	1950	1970	1990	2010
Argentina	(38)	(52) 65	79	87	90
Bolivia	(14)	(20) 34	40	56	62
Brazil	(14)	(21) 36	56	75	87
Chile	(32)	(45) 58	75	83	89
Colombia	(10)	(22) 33	55	68	75
Ecuador	(14)	(18) 28	39	55	67
Guatemala	(11)	(13) 25	36	41	50
Mexico	(14)	(26) 43	59	71	78
Peru	(11)	(20) 41	57	69	72
Venezuela	(14)	(35) 47	72	84	94
Latin America*	(14)	(26) 41	57	71	79

Sources: UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (2007), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database*, <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp> for 1950 to 2010; bracketed figures for 1930 and 1950 from T. W. Merrick, *Population Pressures in Latin America*, *Population Bulletin*, 41: 3 (1986), 23 which uses a more conservative definition, urban people were those living in settlements with more than 20,000 inhabitants.

\*1950–2010 includes the English, French, and Dutch Caribbean and circum-Caribbean.

## SLOWING URBANIZATION AFTER 1980

Table 26.2 shows how the pace of urban growth gradually slowed after 1980, with falling fertility a critical element in that shift. In 1970, the average Nicaraguan woman during her lifetime gave birth to 7.2 children compared with 2.8 today. Declining fertility helped to slow annual population growth, from 2.8 per cent in the 1950s to around 1.2 per cent today. Slower national growth in turn reduced both migration to and natural increase in the cities. Today, most cities are growing much more slowly.

Emigration out of the region sometimes helped to slow urban growth. By 2000, the United States contained some 35.3 million Hispanic people and the impact on some Latin American countries was profound.<sup>13</sup> In 2000, approximately 19 per cent of all Mexicans, 16 per cent of all Salvadorans, and 11 per cent of all Cubans and Dominicans were living in the US. Had the migrants not moved abroad, many of the region's cities would have grown much more quickly.

The debt crisis of the 1980s also helped slow urban growth. As conditions in the urban areas deteriorated, prospective migrants were advised by their friends and relations in the city to stay where they were; at least food was generally available in the countryside. The impact on many urban people was severe. Unemployment rose as private companies went out of business and some

government jobs were cut. Austerity programmes demanded cuts in government budgets and subsidies on many items were reduced or even cut. Devaluation, another element in the adjustment programmes, put up the prices of imported goods. Everyone except those rich enough to have money salted away in overseas bank accounts suffered. The middle classes survived by using up their savings, the poor by putting more members of the family into work (see [Table 26.5](#)). The incidence of urban poverty shot up and the number of urban poor doubled (see [Table 26.7](#)).

**Table 26.2 Urban and Overall Population Growth Rates 1950 to 2010**

Year	Urban annual growth rate (%)	Total annual growth rate (%)
1950-1955	4.4	2.7
1960-1965	4.4	2.8
1970-1975	3.8	2.4
1980-1985	3.0	2.1
1990-1995	2.4	1.7
2000-2005	1.9	1.3
2005-2010	1.7	1.2

*Source: UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (2007), [World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database](http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp), <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp>*

## THE SHAPE OF THE URBAN SYSTEM

Until the 1930s, Latin America's economy was strongly oriented towards export markets. When foreign trade expanded, the principal ports and transport centres clearly grew. Some national capitals also benefited because they were major conduits for trade, for example, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Lima. But even when they were neither ports nor entrepôts for exports, the capital cities always benefited because national governments taxed foreign trade and spent a considerable share of the revenue in the capital. As a result, urban primacy tended to increase. There were exceptions such as Colombia and Brazil, where Medellín and São Paulo managed to develop substantial manufacturing sectors, but in most countries it was the capital cities that increasingly dominated their national economies.<sup>14</sup>

Latin America's external focus never entirely shifted but it was blurred after 1930 and blunted during the 1950s and 1960s, by a new strategy of development. Latin American countries would industrialize by partially protecting their markets from outside competition. Import-substituting industrialization (ISI) would transform the region by making it less dependent on the outside world. It was most successful in the larger countries but even there ISI failed to cure either unemployment or improve the balance of payments. However, it did encourage manufacturing companies to locate in the main cities, which further distorted the urban system.

The demise for ISI began with the world oil-price rises of 1973. Since most countries were dependent for oil on foreign suppliers, the quadrupling of prices caused major balance-of-payment problems throughout the region. The problems came to a head in August 1982 when the Mexican government admitted it had too few funds to service its debt. Behind Mexico, a long line of Latin American countries found themselves in a similar position. The combination of import substitution, government deficit financing, and subsidies could not be maintained. The lost decade had begun.

Structural adjustment required cuts in government budgets and in consumer demand, opening up the economy to external competition, and giving greater encouragement to exporters. However, the recipe

was rarely wholly successful and hit the bigger urban areas particularly hard. Many companies failed as governments devalued their currencies, removed protective barriers against imports, and cut subsidies. Between 1980 and 1988, Mexico City lost over 120,000 manufacturing jobs, a 14 per cent decline.

But if the new economic model cut employment in traditional manufacturing centres, it also created opportunities for cities that had previously been industrial backwaters. Nowhere was that better demonstrated than along the northern border of Mexico. With costs of production in Mexico falling owing to a spectacular decline in the value of the peso, North American and Japanese companies invested heavily in new *maquiladoras* (factories). Between 1980 and 2006 foreign investment poured into frontier cities such as Ciudad Juárez, Mexicali, and Tijuana and industrial employment in the border region increased from 117,000 to 905,000. Today, these plants, some located well beyond the frontier, employ well over a million people. The manufacturing structure of Mexico was transformed as the centre of economic gravity moved north.

### URBAN PRIMACY, MEGA-CITIES, AND ‘DISTORTED’ URBAN SYSTEMS

Latin America contains some of the largest cities in the world. Table 26.3 lists the major urban centres and shows how quickly those cities grew after 1950.<sup>15</sup> However, it is not their sheer size that most distinguishes Latin America’s cities from those in other continents but the structure of the region’s national urban systems. In numerous countries, the major city contains one-quarter or more of the total population (Table 26.4). Uruguay is outstanding in this respect in so far as almost half of the population lives in Montevideo but, given their much larger national populations, it is extraordinary that around one-third of all Argentines, Chileans, and Peruvians live in their respective capital cities.

**Table 26.3 Latin American Cities with More Than 4 million Inhabitants 2010 (thousands)**

City	1950	1980	2010
São Paulo	2,334	12,089	19,582
Mexico City	2,883	13,010	19,485
Buenos Aires	5,098	9,422	13,089
Rio de Janeiro	2,950	8,583	12,171
Lima	1,066	4,438	8,375
Bogotá	630	3,525	8,320
Belo Horizonte	412	2,441	5,941
Santiago	1,322	3,721	5,879
Guadalajara	403	2,269	4,408
Porto Alegre	488	2,133	4,096

Source: UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (2007), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database*, <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp>

**Table 26.4 Concentration of the National Population in Large Cities 1950, 1980, and 2010 (percentage)**



City	1950	1980	2010
Montevideo	54.1	49.9	44.6
Panama City	19.9	31.5	39.3
Santiago	21.7	33.3	34.3
Buenos Aires	29.7	33.5	32.1
Asunción	17.5	24.1	31.4
San José	15.3	22.4	29.5
Lima	14.0	25.6	29.0
Santiago Domingo	9.0	20.9	22.5

*Source: UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (2007), World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database, <http://esa.un.org/unup/index.asp>*

This high level of concentration often means that the national capital is much larger than the next largest city in the country. While ‘urban primacy’ is quite common in other continents, e.g. London, Paris, and Vienna in Europe, Latin America often exhibits very high primacy. For example, Lima has ten times as many people as Peru’s second city, Arequipa, and greater Buenos Aires nine times more than Córdoba. Of course, there are exceptions. Brazil has two giant cities, neither of which is the national capital, and Ecuador has two major cities, with the port of Guayaquil outranking the national capital Quito.<sup>16</sup>

Urban primacy and population size are not synonymous, even if critics often confuse the supposed problems arising from a ‘distorted’ urban distribution and those arising from ‘excessive’ city size. Super-primate Asunción, Montevideo, and Panama City all have fewer than 2 million inhabitants and, while some ‘primate’ cities like Mexico City are gigantic, so too is São Paulo, which is not primate!

Over the years, many governments in the region have worried about both the speed and the pattern of urban growth. For years, numerous governments devised plans to slow migration to the biggest cities and to encourage development in the poorer regions. River-basin and regional development programmes were initiated in many countries, particularly in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. Some governments even constructed new capital cities, for example, Brasília, Belmopán in Belize and, at least on paper, Viedma in Argentina. Few of these projects were very effective and, arguably, only the creation of Brasília and Ciudad Guayana and some of the river-basin projects in Mexico proved successful. Certainly very few of the programmes helped the poor, ostensibly one of their main aims.

What is perhaps ironic is that the pace of growth of the largest cities slowed just when most governments had lost interest in planning for territorial balance. During the ‘lost decade of the 1980s’ the populations of Mexico City, Santiago, and São Paulo hardly grew.

Since then, several other processes have helped slow the growth of the mega-cities. Air pollution, traffic congestion, expensive land prices, and high office costs have encouraged some companies either to relocate to smaller cities nearby or to set up subsidiary plants. Other companies have simply gone out of business because, without government protection, they could not compete with imported goods, particularly those from China.

Of course, there are major differences in the way that globalization and neo-liberal restructuring has affected urban growth. While many medium-sized cities in Mexico have done well, elsewhere

some of the largest cities have prospered. For example, Santiago, Bogotá, and Buenos Aires have all enhanced their national pre-eminence.

With the advantage of hindsight perhaps governments should not have worried so much about urban primacy. The pace of population growth has fallen dramatically in those cities and more effective government has removed some of the worst urban diseconomies. But perhaps the main argument against explicit decentralization strategies is that they were so often ineffective. When metropolitan growth slowed, the explanation had little to do with regional development policy.

### **THE QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE: MIGRATION**

Given the speed of urban growth after 1940, the migration process turned out to be surprisingly harmonious. People moved to the cities because urban conditions, for all of their horrors, were better than those in the rural areas. Those who moved felt that they had a decent chance of making their way in the city: those aged between 15 and 35 years; those who could read and write; and those with marketable skills like drivers and bricklayers. Young women were more likely to migrate than men because their hands were needed less in the fields and they stood a better chance of getting employment in the city, as maids, cleaners, shop assistants, or even as sex workers. The migrant flows produced cities dominated numerically by women; in 1951, for example, Bogotá had 100 women aged between 20 and 24 for every 77 men.

Moving to the city was a real challenge but one to which most poor Latin American newcomers responded very well. There was little sign of 'marginality', 'irrationality', 'despair', or of a 'culture of poverty'. Even those that came from very different kinds of society, were so anxious to adapt to their new lives in the city that they modified their lifestyles, their dress, and even their language. Most migrants in the region never returned home, an important difference from the experience in many parts of Africa.

Latin American cities were once cities of migrants and were sometimes even designated peasant cities.<sup>17</sup> But, gradually, the contribution of natural increase grew. As migrants were generally young, they produced children and reared them in the city. And, even though fertility rates fell more rapidly in urban areas than in the countryside, the share of the population born in the cities increased. By the 1980s, only one-third of the population growth of the cities of the most urbanized countries came from migration, although it remained much higher in the late starters: 64 per cent in Bolivia, 55 per cent in El Salvador, and 56 per cent in Paraguay.

### **THE INFORMAL SECTOR: HOME AND WORK**

A perpetual problem in most Latin American cities is the lack of sufficient well-paid and secure employment. The labour supply has increased dramatically, both because the number of young people looking for work has grown and because women have increasingly sought paid employment.<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, unemployment has not been the region's principal problem, although it has sometimes risen to very high levels at moments of economic crisis. Unemployment has generally remained low because people have found ways of generating income in the 'informal sector'. [Table 26.5](#) shows how between one-quarter and one-half of urban work is non-salaried and that, in places, the proportion of informal workers has risen over time.

The nature of informal sector work is highly diverse including activities like driving taxis,

domestic employment, cleaning shoes, street vending, prostitution, and crime. It employs both men and women, although the latter tend to dominate particularly in domestic service and shop work. While most workers earn little, some do well. But the more profitable activities require experience and contacts.<sup>19</sup> The size of the sector also ebbs and flows according to the state of the economy. During periods of rapid inflation or economic recession, formal sector workers often supplement their incomes through informal activity and the poorest families are forced to send older children out to work.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 26.5 'Formal' and 'Informal' Employment in Selected Latin American Urban Areas, 1990–2008**

Country	Year	Employers	Waged and salaried workers		Non salaried
			Public sector	Private sector professional and salaried	Domestic and own account workers
Bolivia	1989	2	18	30	49
	2007	7	12	37	44
Brazil	1993	4	14	45	36
	2008	5	13	49	31
Chile	1990	3	n.a.	n.a.	30
	2006	3	11	60	26
Colombia	1991	4	12	49	35
	2005	5	8	42	46
Mexico	1994	4	16	54	25
	2008	4	13	61	21
Peru	1997	6	13	38	44
	2008	6	12	38	44
Uruguay	1990	5	22	46	28
	2008	5	15	48	32
Venezuela	1990	8	21	42	28
	2005	4	18	39	40

Source: UNECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2010* (Santiago: UNECLAC, 2010).

The lack of decently paid employment creates many social problems to which the poor have responded innovatively and stoically. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the heroic efforts they have made to build their own homes. There is little homelessness in Latin American cities because of the poor's willingness to marshal their limited resources to buy the bricks and cement, the glass and the window frames needed to construct their homes. In most cities in the region, half or more of the housing stock has been built informally. People obtain land either through invasion or through the purchase of plots in clandestine subdivisions. The authorities generally tolerate this process, because they have no alternative policy through which to house the population.

Of course, self-help housing is widely denigrated by outside observers. 'As a group, the *favela* population is on the wrong side of every standard index of social disorganization, whether it be illiteracy, malnutrition, disease, job instability, irregular sexual unions, alcoholism, criminal violence, or almost any other on the familiar list.'<sup>21</sup> In reality, self-help housing has saved most Latin American cities from disaster. The collections of flimsy huts that sometimes appear overnight slowly develop into much more substantial neighbourhoods. Settlements more than ten years old will

generally contain many multi-storey, brick-built buildings. Gradually, the authorities provide the barrios with services and the settlers in once illegal settlements are increasingly granted title deeds. Erstwhile shanty towns become ordinary working-class suburbs.

Of course, the self-help process is highly flawed. Too often the land occupied is susceptible to floods or slippage. If electricity and water provision comes relatively quickly, sewerage, schools, and health facilities may take years to arrive. And, of course, the inhabitants have to spend a vast amount of effort designing and building their homes and are forced to live in unfinished premises for years. Self-help housing is an architecture that works but in a better world it would not be necessary.<sup>22</sup>

## PROVIDING SERVICES, TRANSPORT, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Table 26.6 Urban Homes with Electricity, Water, and Sewerage in Selected Latin American Countries, 1990–2006 (percentage)**

Country	Year	Piped water	Sewerage disposal	Electricity
Argentina	1990	97	58 (1995)	100
	2006	99	62	100
Bolivia	1990	90	52	97
	2006	93	56	100
Chile	1990	97	84	99
	2006	99	93	100
Colombia	1990	98	95	99
	2006	98	94	100
Guatemala	1990	87	70	87
	2006	94	66	96
Mexico	1990	94	79	99
	2006	97	90	100
Uruguay	1990	95	57	98
	2006	98	66	99

*Source: UNECLAC (Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago: UNECLAC, 2007), 71.*

Latin American governments have done a relatively good job in providing their urban populations with essential services.<sup>23</sup> Compared with the situation in most cities in Africa and the Indian subcontinent, a majority of city dwellers in Latin America has access to basic services and infrastructure. (See [Table 26.6](#).) Urban services were first provided in the late 19th century by private, usually foreign, companies. However, gradually the state took over the provision of electricity, water, and sanitation. Only recently has this tendency been reversed and private companies have been contracted to provide the services that inefficient public enterprises have failed to install. But privatization has been very uneven, slowed by some highly controversial privatizations of the water supply, and unpopular with most left-wing administrations.

The vast swathes of formal and informal suburbia could never have developed without an extensive transport system and, over the years, most of the region's larger cities have developed motorways, bus terminals, railway networks, and even underground railways. Unfortunately, most

have also reaped the downside of that modernity: traffic congestion, long journeys to work, road accidents, and air pollution. The main cause of those problems is, of course, the private car. Latin America now has some 60 million cars, most of which are concentrated in the cities. Everywhere that number is increasing; the stock of motor vehicles in Mexico City, for example, increased from 2.3 to 5.2 million between 1980 and 2006.

## THE URBANIZATION OF POVERTY

Over the last fifty years, poverty in the region has been transformed from a rural to a predominantly urban problem (see [Table 26.7](#)).

**Table 26.7 The Incidence of Poverty in Latin American Cities, 1970–2009**

Year	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Millions	%	Millions	%	Millions	%
1970	115	40	41	25	74	62
1980	149	41	71	30	78	60
1990	213	48	129	41	84	65
1994	222	46	138	39	84	65
1999	230	44	146	37	84	64
2005	209	40	147	34	62	59
2009	196	33	132	28	64	30

*Source: UNECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America 2010 (Santiago: UNECLAC, 2010).*

Several factors explain this change. First, because the incidence of poverty was, and continues to be, much higher in the countryside, many of the rural poor have moved to the cities. Second, the debt crisis of the 1980s hit the cities hard, increasing the proportion of the urban poor from 30 per cent in 1980 to 41 per cent in 1990. Third, although economic conditions generally improved after 1990 and reduced the incidence of urban poverty, because the urban population rose, the absolute number of poor people in the cities increased.

Despite the urbanization of poverty, most of the desperately poor still live in the countryside ([Table 26.8](#)). Figures from Colombia show that in the early 2000s, women in the national capital could expect to live twelve years longer than women of the Chocó, one of the country's poorest and most rural departments. The data in [Table 26.8](#) suggest that urbanization helps to reduce poverty. It also shows that living conditions are generally better in the metropolitan areas than in smaller cities.

**Table 26.8 Poverty in Selected Latin American Countries by area 2007–2009**

Population below the poverty line (%)

Country	Year	Total country	Metropolitan areas	Other urban areas	Rural areas
Bolivia	2007	54.0	40.6	44.9	75.8
Chile	2009	11.5	8.3	13.8	10.4
Colombia	2009	45.7	22.1	44.7	64.5
Costa Rica	2009	18.9	16.7	25.4	19.5
El Salvador	2009	47.9	32.6	49.5	57.6
Honduras	2007	68.9	47.8	64.0	78.8
Nicaragua	2005	61.9	48.7	58.1	71.5
Paraguay	2008	58.2	48.8	58.2	66.1
Uruguay	2009	10.4	12.8	9.1	5.9

N.B. Complete data are unavailable for Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.

Source: UNECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2010* (Santiago: UNECLAC, 2010).

## INEQUALITY AND URBAN SEGREGATION

If urban growth has helped many people in the region to escape poverty, the form that urban development has taken has done little to reduce income inequality. Latin America's cities reflect the sad reality that the distribution of income and wealth in the region is very uneven. Indeed, Goiânia, Fortaleza, Belo Horizonte, and Brasília in Brazil rank among the most unequal cities in the world, followed closely by Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Santiago, in Chile, Quito, and Mexico City.<sup>24</sup>

Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean is a heritage of colonialism and of the failure of most republican governments to seriously confront that problem. Traditional forms of land holding, ethnic discrimination, poor-quality education and health facilities and, until relatively recently, authoritarian and undemocratic political rule have all helped perpetuate inequality. It used to be thought that inequality would diminish as countries became richer (see Ch. 36), but in Latin America there is little sign of that actually happening.<sup>25</sup>

Income inequality always aggravates social and residential segregation. In Latin America the urban rich live in elegant homes in well-serviced neighbourhoods while the poor build their own, semi-serviced, communities. With their elegant restaurants, cinemas, and clubs, affluent neighbourhoods resemble their residential counterparts in Europe or the US. Latin America's poorest districts have few parallels in the cities of the developed world.

With inequality increasing in most parts of Latin America, many worry that social polarization is increasing. A particular fear is that a new form of residential segregation is spreading rapidly. The gated community is now common in most Latin American cities. The worry is that such neighbourhoods, with their wide range of offices, supermarkets, and recreational facilities are virtually autonomous. In Rio de Janeiro, a newly developed area of shopping malls and gated communities, Barra de Tijuca, has virtually no poor residents at all. Barra is an aberration; a very large, single-class neighbourhood in a poor city.

Despite the development of gated communities, the evidence suggests that residential segregation in Latin America is not increasing. 'Typically, in Latin American cities the elites represent just a third of

the population of high-income areas. Even at the block level, the isolation index of the elites in Santiago did not exceed 40 per cent in 2002. American suburbs, on the contrary, are more socially homogeneous both in racial and income composition, and this homogeneity is more stable through time' (see Ch. 27).<sup>26</sup>

In addition, while the housing of the rich and poor is often located at different ends of the city, this is not always the case. In cities with variegated topography the residential districts of different social classes are often juxtaposed. In Rio de Janeiro, many rich areas have seen *favelas* develop on hillsides next door. In Caracas, the exclusive Country Club also has its unwelcome neighbouring barrios.

## GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT

Over the years many outside economic, social, and cultural influences have changed Latin America. European conquest obviously transformed the region in terms of its population, culture, economy, and trade. The independence movement was also strongly influenced by experiences of France and the United States and subsequently Argentina and Uruguay lay at the centre of Britain's informal empire. Later, the US came to dominate much of Latin American economic and political life. In terms of architecture, waves of foreign influence have swept across the region: Portuguese and Spanish colonial design, European monumental architecture, English and then Californian residential fashions, Le Corbusier-style modernism and, most recently, post-modernism. And, since around 1970, Latin America has increasingly sought to participate fully in the globalizing world economy.

Urban elites have modernized the cities in order to improve their position in the world economic order. New international airports, the proliferation of skyscrapers, shopping malls, and modern hotels, and the opening of 'world trade centres' is testament to the effort being made, at least in the larger cities. Socially and culturally Latin America has embraced globalization. Foreign films and television programmes, cell phones, and video games have swept across the region. Regrettably, most cities contain McDonalds, Burger King, Denny's, and other international chains.

Fortunately, Latin American cities have also contributed greatly to global culture. In music, where would the world be without samba, salsa, and bossa nova and superstars like Sergio Mendes, Shakira, and the Buena Vista Social Club? Its writers include several winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature and the history of football would be much diminished without the names of Pelé, Maradona, Ronaldo, and Messi.

## THE 'COMPETITIVE' CITY

The impact of economic globalization on the region has been highly variable. Cities like Mexico City, São Paulo, Santiago, and Buenos Aires are important intermediaries in global trade and finance and increasingly their business districts and affluent suburbs reflect that role. Cities dependent on mining, copper, tin, gold, silver, and petroleum have also found their niche in the world economy, albeit in a much less ostentatious and affluent way. And international tourism has impacted profoundly, creating new globalized resorts like Cancún in Mexico and Varadero in Cuba and transforming, for better and worse, cultural jewels like Cuzco and Cartagena.

Most Latin American cities are trying to attract foreign investment and company headquarters to their cities. In the competition for world roles, they are beautifying their urban centres, erecting new

museums and cultural centres, and building hotel complexes. Competition to host international conferences and sporting events is intense. International league tables of city competitiveness now appear regularly. Over the last few years, Santiago, São Paulo, and Miami have taken turns in occupying first place.<sup>27</sup> Miami's presence in Latin America's list is a reflection of how 'globalized' the region has become.

The problem with international competition is that the number of winners is bound to be very limited compared to the number of cities entering the race. The prospects for most Latin American cities outside the top twenty are limited unless they embrace some particular speciality such as tourism or drugs. Globalization is unlikely to produce many winners among the smaller urban centres. They will remain administrative and commercial centres serving their surrounding rural economies. Few will ever manage to escape from the Latin American periphery.

### **URBAN GOVERNANCE, DECENTRALIZATION, AND MISGOVERNMENT**

Urban governance over the years has generally been weak and has failed to deal adequately with most of Latin America's problems. At the same time, many urban administrations have been more competent than most commentators would claim. The general improvement in the provision of services suggests that national and local authorities have not been uniformly awful. And, recently, a few city governments have clearly upped their game.

Most governments, both national and local, are now democratically elected, a marked contrast with the authoritarian 1970s. Elected local officials have often made a real difference: corruption has been reduced, tax yields have increased, public investment has grown, and the quality of public life has gradually improved. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Curitiba, Porto Alegre, and Bogotá—cities whose example is being copied by local administrations in many other countries.

Improving urban governance is easier in a national context of consistent economic growth and political stability. It is much easier to run a city effectively in Brazil or Chile than in Honduras or Bolivia. It also helps if mayors have adequate financial and political support from central government. Even though decentralization has swept fashionably across the region, it only helps when local administrations are competent and have sufficient resources to undertake the task of government.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, too many municipalities do not satisfy those minimum requirements. In Brazil, at most 500 of the country's 5,500 municipalities are competent and in Colombia, perhaps 100 out of 1,000. As a result, too many small cities are still run very badly and even corruptly.

Improving governance is clearly complicated in certain kinds of city. It has always been difficult to prevent social and environmental problems developing in boom towns. Sustainability, in any sense of the term, was clearly lacking in the development of the cities that exploded along the US–Mexico frontier during the 1950s and 1960s, in the growth of tourist resorts, like Acapulco, and in the petroleum centres of Venezuela. Currently, many frontier towns in the Amazon are experiencing similar kinds of problem.<sup>29</sup>

'Cities' on the fringe of much larger urban agglomerations also struggle to cope with rapid growth, for example, El Alto on the edge of La Paz and Soacha next door to Bogotá. Both are dominated by low-income, self-help settlements that were neither planned adequately nor competently managed. This kind of problem is likely to increase in the future as more and more cities expand beyond a single administrative area. Among the mega-cities of the region only Bogotá has a majority of its



population living in a single administrative area. In Mexico City, half of the population live in the Federal District and half in the State of Mexico. São Paulo is similar with its ‘relative absence of a true institutional framework of metropolitan governance’ (see Fig. 26.1).<sup>30</sup>



**FIGURE 26.1** São Paulo: Urban growth beyond the municipality.

## LATIN AMERICAN URBANIZATION: AN EVALUATION

Over the years, urbanization in Latin America has received a poor press but many of the negative views were simply ill-informed. Urban growth has been a huge challenge but has allowed a majority to transform their lives. It has shifted the locus of work from the fields to offices, shops, factories, and urban streets. It has changed housing from typically unserviced rural shacks to semi-serviced tenements and self-help housing. It has helped modify the way people think about religion and about their place in society. Politics has gradually been transformed from a matter dictated by rural landlords to one where urban people have the vote and occasionally influence major decisions. In this sense, urbanization has been arguably the most revolutionary change to have occurred in Latin American life during the 20th century.

In such an unequal and impoverished general environment, where the pace of economic growth has generally been disappointing and during a time when the population grew so quickly, it is amazing that urbanization did not turn out to be a real disaster. Of course, it would be foolish to deny that vast problems still face the region's cities. But, the facts suggest that urbanization has generally improved the quality of life. Most households now have access to basic services and in most of the larger cities people can expect to live for more than 75 years. A majority can afford consumer durables like television sets and mobile phones and most cities have more parks and leisure facilities than ever before.

At the same time, the region could and should have done much better! What has been disappointing about urbanization in the region is that poverty is still so rife. Worse still, the proportion of urban people living in poverty has marginally worsened over the last forty years and the number living in

poverty has increased dramatically—from 41 million in 1970 to 132 million in 2009.

Urbanization has brought benefits in terms of better employment opportunities, infrastructure provision, and improved opportunities for leisure but it has also brought a swathe of associated problems. Air and water pollution appears to be getting worse and urban sprawl is complicating travel patterns. The motor car is wreaking havoc in many cities in terms of rising accident rates and traffic congestion. Inequality has also increased in most cities in the region and there are growing signs of social and residential polarization. This may or may not have contributed to another social problem, increasing levels of crime.

The processes associated with urbanization in Latin America have often treated people badly, certainly unfairly, and sometimes viciously. But under the circumstances and in comparison with what has happened in much of Africa and Asia, urban growth should undoubtedly be viewed as a progressive force.

## NOTES

1. In this chapter, Latin America is defined to include those countries in the Americas where most of the population speaks Spanish and Portuguese. It therefore excludes the British, French, and Dutch colonies and effectively also excludes Puerto Rico, which since the 1950s has perhaps had as much in common with the United States as the rest of Latin America.
2. Indeed in terms of basics, little had changed for centuries. ‘In most of Latin America, for example, life expectancy at birth (20–35 years) and infant mortality rates (near 300 per 1,000 live births) stood at levels comparable to the Roman empire until 1900 or so; literacy rates in most countries had not yet reached 30 per cent of the adult population’, J. H. Coatsworth, ‘Structures, Endowments, and Institutions in the Economic History of Latin America’, *Latin American Research Review*, 40 (2005), 129.
3. R. Morse, ‘The Development of Urban Systems in the Americas in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 17 (1975), 7.
4. Under the control of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911), the Mexican economy was opened up to foreign investment, mining and manufacturing activity flourished, and the railway network increased from around 750 miles to 12,000 miles in 1900.
5. C. S. Sargent, ‘The Latin American City’, in B. W. Blouet and O. Blouet, eds., *Latin America and the Caribbean: A Systematic and Regional Survey* (2nd edn., London: Wiley, 1993), 172–216.
6. Amato (1970) describes how urban elites took advantage of the new means of transport to move to pleasant locations beyond the urban fringe.
7. J. R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 119.
8. G. Germani, ‘El proceso de urbanización en la Argentina’, *Revista Interamericana de las Ciencias Sociales*, Unión Panamericana, 3 (1963). Even as late as 1914, 49 per cent of the inhabitants had been born outside Argentina.
9. For a comprehensive history of the city’s development see J. R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb 1870–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).
10. Scobie, *Argentina*, 164.
11. M. Johns, ‘The Urbanisation of a Secondary City: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1870–1920’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 23(1991), 489–513.

12. In the 1930s, most Latin American countries lacked the foreign exchange needed to buy British, German, or US imports and after 1940 the factories of Europe and the US were too busy building arms to export a great deal.
13. J. R. Logan, 'The New *Latinos*: Who They Are, Where They Are', Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, New York University at Albany (2001), 1.
14. With the discovery of petroleum in Venezuela in the 1920s, it was Caracas that benefited most from the petroleum revenues even though production was located in the far west and the east of the country.
15. Mega-cities are variously defined as cities with more than 8 million, 10 million, or 12 million people.
16. Bolivia and Venezuela are no longer primate countries and Colombia, traditionally the country with the most balanced urban distribution, maintains that distinction, even if the growth of Bogotá has recently outpaced that of its main rival, Medellín.
17. For example, W. Mangin, ed., *Peasants in Cities: Readings in the Anthropology of Urbanization* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), and B. Roberts, *Cities of Peasants* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).
18. In 2010, approximately half of women over 15 were in paid employment in urban areas compared with around 80 per cent of men.
19. M. Hays-Mitchell, 'The Ties That Bind. Informal and Formal Sector Linkages in Street Vending: The Case of Peru's *Ambulantes*', *Environment and Planning A*, 25 (1993), 1089.
20. However as H. Hirata and J. Humphrey, 'Workers' Response to Job Loss: Female and Male Industrial Workers in Brazil', *World Development*, 19 (1991), 671–82 point out it is not always easy for industrial labourers or government employees to establish informal businesses.
21. F. Bonilla, 'Rio's Favelas: The Rural Slum within the City', repr. in Mangin, ed., *Peasants in Cities*, 74–5.
22. J. F. C. Turner, 'The Squatter Settlement: An Architecture That Works' *Architectural Design*, 38 (1968), 357–60.
23. In 2010, both Cuba and Venezuela suffered badly from electricity cuts which the governments blamed on a lack of rain while their opponents attributed it to a lack of investment.
24. Based on UN-HABITAT's survey of cities in 109 countries from all regions (*State of the World Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide*). All of the cities listed had Gini coefficients above 0.5 and the four Brazilian cities recorded figures above 0.6. Most of the other highly unequal cities were in Africa or South East Asia.  
<http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/SOWC10/R8.pdf>
25. See S. Kuznets, *Modern Economic Growth: Rate, Structure and Spread* (London: Yale University Press, 1968) and A. G. Gilbert, 'Inequality and Why It Matters', *Geography Compass*, 1 (3) (2007), 422–47.
26. B. R. Roberts and R. H. Wilson, eds., *Urban Segregation and Governance in the Americas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 133.
27. In *America Economía's* annual survey.  
<http://rankings.americaeconomia.com/2010/mejoresciudades/ranking.php>
28. Although many capital cities seem to be thriving despite having mayors from political parties

opposed to the national president, for example, in Mexico, Colombia, and Peru.

29. J. O. Browder and B. J. Godfrey, *Rainforest Cities: Urbanization, Development and Globalization of the Brazilian Amazon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
30. J. Klink, 'Recent Perspectives on Metropolitan Organization, Functions and Governance', in E. Rojas, J. R. Cuadrado-Roura, and J. M. Fernández Güell, eds., *Governing the Metropolis: Principles and Cases*. (Washington, D.C.: Interamerican Development Bank, 2008), 77–134.

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## NORTH AMERICA

CARL ABBOTT

THE urban system of Canada and the United States has developed in three overlapping but distinct stages that track broad patterns of urban development in the Atlantic-industrial world. First came European colonial outposts planted by France, England, Spain, and Russia from the late 1500s into the early 1800s (see Regional [Map II.7](#)). Second was a century-long phase of continental expansion that coincided with the industrial urbanization of Europe and brought substantial urbanization to the United States and Canada by 1900 ([Table 27.1](#)). Third has been the consolidation of national systems and their expanding engagement with the world economy over the last hundred years (see Regional [Map III.8](#)). Each phase is characterized by a dominant energy/transportation system: wind for sailing ships; coal for steamboats and railroads; petroleum for automobiles and aircraft. Because cities are both spatial systems in themselves and components of spatial networks, the capacity to move people, products, and information sets limits on land uses and locations. How far can workers live from their jobs? How widely can a megalopolis reach? Where and how can new cities grow when they are connected by horses, or steam locomotives, or 747s? The technologies of energy and transportation frame each answer.

North American cities were born modern, growing to maturity in the sunlight of liberal capitalism. Neither ancient institutions nor medieval walls reined in their exuberant expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries. Goethe noted the opportunity when he wrote: ‘America, you have it better than our old continent’, untroubled by useless memories and conflicts.<sup>1</sup> It was not that better results were guaranteed, but that there seemed fewer impediments to political progress.

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, port cities—and the commercial hinterlands that they integrated into the Atlantic economy—provided the impetus and support for the federal Constitution of 1789 and a national state that could support economic growth. A generation later, Alexis de Tocqueville in 1832 knew to take the pulse of New World society in burgeoning cities, travelling among New York and Montreal, Pittsburgh (‘the Birmingham of America’), and Cincinnati (where he found ‘the image of industry and labor obvious at every step’).<sup>2</sup> These new towns were the scenes both for economic growth and for the creative construction of voluntary organizations and associations that Tocqueville found such a fascinating contrast to France.

Where ‘the modern’ has been a set of liberal institutions, ‘modernity’ has been a style of life and culture. Modern institutions that enabled technological and economic innovation also quicken the pace in every aspect of life, from work to leisure to artistic conventions. Paris, Berlin, and London claimed to be the capital of modernity, but so did Chicago in the 1890s and New York in 1920s. These were cities where Europeans thought they encountered the edge of the new. Sometimes they were dismayed, as when Rudyard Kipling visited Chicago and ‘urgently desire[d] never to see it again’.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes they were blown away by urban dynamism, as when exiled Leon Trotsky arrived in the US in 1917: ‘Here I was in New York, city of prose and fantasy... more than any other city in the world, it is the fullest expression of our modern age.’<sup>4</sup>

If North American cities began modern, they also matured quickly. Geographers distinguish between urban systems in which a single primate city like Bangkok or Lima far outstrips its potential rivals and those in which a number of large cities interact as competitive peers. North America fits the second pattern, developing as a set of distinct regions where winning cities (e.g. Atlanta) only gradually separated themselves from secondary cities (e.g. Chattanooga, Charleston). As a result, North America looks somewhat like Germany, a nation consolidated from separate political units whose political and economic centres—Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, Leipzig—have balanced and sometimes outpaced *Hauptstadt* Berlin.

The first of the following sections briefly introduces North American cities of the pre-industrial era. Then follow sections discussing 19th-century economic expansion, the internal social dynamics of growing industrial and commercial centres, and changing growth patterns with the rise of the automobile. The last section examines the new urbanization dynamics that have led to the 21-st century metropolis.

## IMPERIAL OUTPOSTS

From the late 16th into the early 19th centuries, imperial Europe ringed the vast territory that would become the United States and Canada with outposts of empire—urban centres that anchored trade, settlement, and grandiose political claims. First was Spain at St Augustine (1565) and Santa Fe (1608), last was Russia at New Archangel (Sitka) in 1804. France claimed the entrances to two great river systems with Quebec (1608) and New Orleans (1718). The Dutch planted New Amsterdam in 1626. England strung trading cities along the eastern edge of the continent in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Not every tenuous fort or tiny colonial trading post can be counted as a town. Some, however, grew into permanent settlements where residents were able to own property and seek civil justice and where an increasingly diverse local economy involved something more than directly supporting missionaries or the military. Boston's emergence as the dominant centre in New England is an example. The catalyst was economic crisis in the 1640s, the second decade of Puritan colonization, when war between King and Parliament commanded the resources of English Puritans. When immigration and investment from England slowed, New Englanders had to find their own markets and trading partners, and Boston emerged as the convenient and necessary business centre and port. News came first to Boston, whose residents rubbed shoulders with ship owners, merchants, and seamen. Non-Puritans built houses and businesses, and the city's merchants accumulated wealth that widened the gap with the rest of the Puritan colony.

With populations ranging from 8,000 upwards to 40,000 in 1775, Charleston, Quebec (British after 1763), Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were comparable in size to the provincial centres of Britain.<sup>5</sup> They were comparable as well in the social ambitions of their merchants, who copied the manners of the metropolis. Life revolved around their waterfronts. Before the American Revolution, for example, New York's wharves and warehouses crowded the East River at the tip of Manhattan, interspersed with cheap taverns for sailors and dock workers. A couple of blocks back, warehouses mixed with more substantial homes and coffeehouses where merchants exchanged the latest news. Elegant townhouses, filled with imported furnishings and china, occupied the lower end of Broadway, close to the fort at the island's tip. Artisans and small shopkeepers lived a bit further from the centre, close to public markets and the chapels of dissenting Baptists and Methodists.

This maturing set of coastal cities overlapped with the expanding global economy. Growth and prosperity of the large seaports depended on networks of smaller cities and country towns that funnelled resource exports and distributed imported foods and manufactured goods. Village merchants in New England assembled local products for middlemen in Hartford, New Haven, or Portsmouth. Further north, the lucrative fur trade ran through Montreal and Quebec. To the south, New York dominated the commerce of the Hudson Valley and Philadelphia the fertile Delaware Valley. Coasting vessels brought goods to Charleston from Savannah and Wilmington, North Carolina. Cities and large towns accounted for no more than 5 per cent or so of the population of British America in 1775. Nevertheless, they were nerve centres and power centres—instigators of political revolution, then targets of British strategy, then seats of independent government. Dividing thirteen colonies from Canada, the American Revolution also set up a political tension between the natural St Lawrence River route into the interior via Canada and trans-Appalachian routes from more southerly cities.

### CORE AND CONTINENT

The shape of the North American urban system was framed in the years from 1815 to 1870 and filled in during the next half century. In play were two processes, both the results of the 19th-century transportation revolution and expansion of internal trade. The first process was the growth of manufacturing and financial power within a core region anchored by Baltimore at the south-east, Montreal at the north-east, Minneapolis at the north-west, and St Louis at the south-west. The second was the establishment in the American South and Canadian and American West of commercial cities that developed and organized resource hinterlands producing cotton, lumber, minerals, and foodstuffs.

Canals in the 1820s and 1830s and railroads thereafter made the core possible. Montreal, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia competed for connections to the growing cities of the Great Lakes and Ohio River valley. The dominant story was the rise of New York. The Erie Canal, which connected the Great Lakes to Hudson River shipping in 1825, was a New York City project. It simultaneously built up a string of canal-side cities (Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo) and expanded the commerce of New York. With a growing hinterland, the port attracted the first regularly scheduled transatlantic shipping service. The concentration of mercantile capital and expertise helped to make New York the emporium for trade in southern cotton, reinforcing its pivotal position in the Atlantic economy. By 1860, the population of New York and its sister city Brooklyn topped 1 million, twice the size of Philadelphia, Berlin, or Manchester.

The rise of Baltimore was just as impressive, from backwater on a side channel of Chesapeake Bay to the nation's second largest city in the 1830s and 1840s, driven by the rise of a wheat farming hinterland. Baltimore was a key objective for British invasion forces in the War of 1812, a centre for intellectual life, and subject to 'the envy and jealousy of all the great cities of the union' according to journalist Hezekiah Niles.<sup>6</sup> Its forward-looking residents broke ground for the first commercial railroad in North America in 1828, choosing a cutting-edge technology to compete with New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Richmond canals.

Across the Appalachian Mountains, the three largest cities were Cincinnati on the Ohio River, St Louis on the Mississippi River, and Chicago on Lake Michigan. They grew as 'spearheads of the frontier' in the telling phrase of historian Richard Wade, providing the supplies, services, and marketing capacity that made it possible for farmers to turn hardwood forests and prairies into wheat fields and hog farms. As farmers settled along the tributary rivers in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky in

the first decades of the 19th century, Cincinnati merchants made fortunes turning maize into whiskey, wheat into flour, and hogs into cured meat, leather, and soap and selling the manufactured products to southern plantations and eastern cities. With the westward spread of settlement into Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, St. Louis and Chicago passed Cincinnati after 1850.

Taken together, the Atlantic ports and the new Middle Western cities consolidated the North American heartland—a region that included nine of the ten largest cities in 1860 (New York-Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, St Louis, Chicago, Montreal, and Buffalo, with only New Orleans outside the core). New railroads that connected the Atlantic and trans-Appalachian cities had a decisive effect in the US Civil War (1861–1865), which might have taken a different turn if fought ten years earlier. Rails to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore gave the interior states an alternative to the older trading outlet down the Mississippi River through New Orleans, bound the Ohio Valley to the north-east, and knit the north into a powerful war-making nation-state. Only one of the twenty largest US cities in 1860 lay in the soon-to-be Confederacy and only nine of the hundred largest—a good indicator of comparative war-making capacity between North and South.

In the two generations that followed, the core concentrated North American manufacturing capacity. As in Europe, industrialization proceeded in phases. Textile production and the processing of agricultural products came first, then the growth of an iron and steel industry, and then the rise of electrical, chemical, and petrochemical industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Railroad delivery, fast postal service, telegraphs, and telephones from the 1880s allowed firms to serve regional and national markets for manufacturing and services. Industry flourished in the diversified economies of New York, Toronto, Philadelphia, St Louis, and Chicago, but also in mid-sized and smaller cities that specialized in particular products—steel in Pittsburgh, rubber in Akron, ceramics in Trenton, and eventually automobiles in Detroit. The city of ‘Zenith’, producer of condensed milk and pasteboard cartons and the home of real estate broker George F. Babbitt and 400,000 fellow citizens in Sinclair Lewis’ 1922 novel, epitomized these industrial cities with its new downtown skyscrapers, railside factories, and new suburban bungalow belt.

As late as 1950, the US portion of the core had only 7 per cent of the nation’s land area but 43 per cent of its population, 50 per cent of its income, and 70 per cent of its manufacturing employment. It was equally the centre of political and cultural influence, with a disproportionate share of patents, scientists, corporate headquarters, candidates for president, and listings in *Who’s Who*. The Canadian component, in a narrow strip along the Lake Erie–Lake Ontario–St Lawrence corridor was even more dominant.

Complementing and serving the continental core were the gateway cities of the South and West. Some were inland railroad centres like Winnipeg, Kansas City, Dallas, and Atlanta. Others were ocean port gateways like Galveston-Houston, San Francisco, and Vancouver (see below, [Ch. 43](#)). Only New Orleans and San Francisco had more than 10,000 residents in 1860, but gateway cities grew explosively over the next sixty years as they imported manufactured products for farmers, miners, and timber workers and processed raw materials into foodstuffs, metals, and wood products for national and international markets.

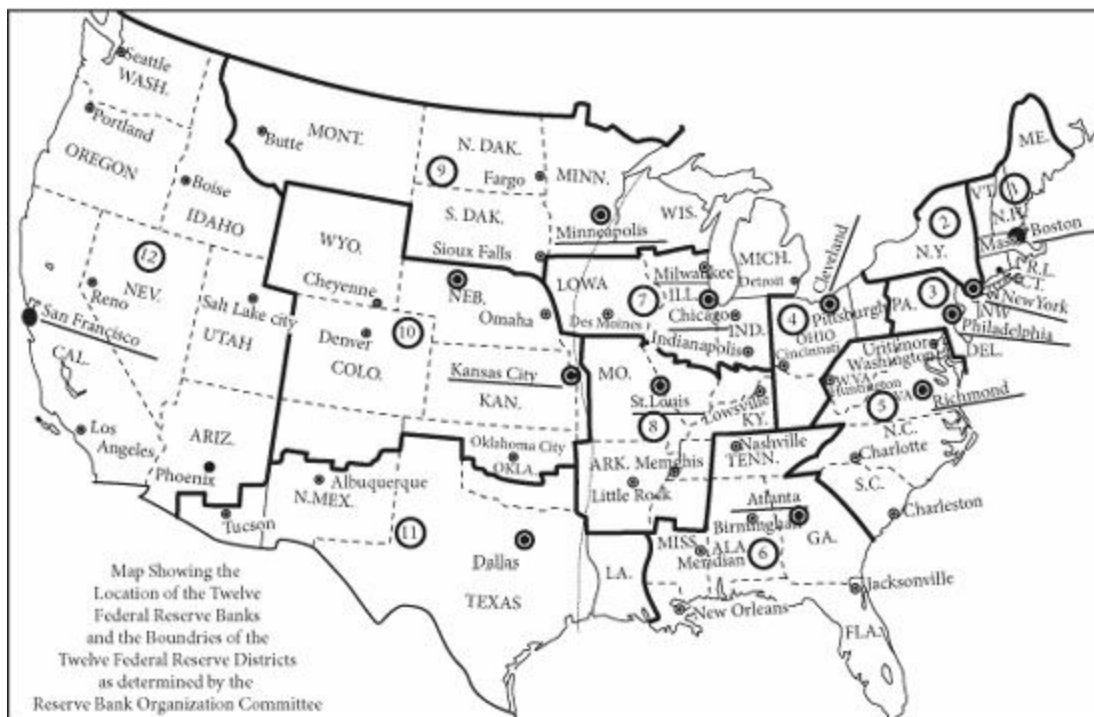
On the Pacific coast the first gateways were ports that offered access to networks of interior waterways. With the California Gold Rush, ocean-going ships called at San Francisco in the hundreds to offload onto small vessels that chugged up the Sacramento River to California’s Central Valley and the jump-off points for the mines. Eighty miles up the Columbia River, Portland’s shrewd



businessmen commanded the trade of the entire Columbia Basin—an area as vast as the drainage of the Danube. From Victoria, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, traders served the shores of Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia on both sides of the US–Canada border in a small-scale version of Singapore’s role in the maritime world of South East Asia. The completion of transcontinental railroads between 1869 and 1893 added railroad terminus cities to the competitive mix—Vancouver to surpass Victoria, Oakland to contend with San Francisco, and Los Angeles to challenge the entire coast.

Railroads also defined and created a set of interior gateways that roughly bisected the continent from Winnipeg at the north to Dallas and Fort Worth at the south. In between were busy, unglamorous Wichita, Kansas City, Omaha, and Minneapolis–St Paul. These were cities of warehouses and railyards, flour mills, stockyards, and packing plants. They dealt in ploughs and building products, hardware and household goods for prairie farmers and Great Plains ranchers, whose output they assembled, processed, and shipped onward to world markets (for comparison see the role of railroads in creating the new city of Nairobi: below, [Ch. 33](#)).

Behind continental urbanization lay not only the expansion of markets and industrial capitalism but also the hand of government. Antebellum canals were projects of individual US states and governmental entities in Canada. Turnpike and railroad companies expected and received subsidies from the cities that they served. After 1850, the US federal government passed out vast land grants to help build the Illinois Central, Union Pacific, Northern Pacific, and other key railroads that made places like Omaha and Tacoma important cities. The Canadian government similarly used cash and land grants to assure completion of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway to Vancouver as a condition of British Columbia’s integration into the Canadian Confederation of 1867.



**PLATE 27.1** Map showing the location of the twelve US Federal Reserve banks and the twelve Federal Reserve districts as determined by the Federal Reserve Organization Committee.

In the United States, the creation of the Federal Reserve Banking System in 1913 recognized the mature urban-regional geography. Wary of the power of a single national bank, Congress divided the nation into twelve banking districts centred on the most prominent commercial cities (see [Plate 27.1](#)).

Cities peppered the decision-making committee that made the designations with elaborate descriptions of their commercial stature, and the nation's thousands of local banks sent in choices for their regional centre. Many of the winners were obvious—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St Louis, Minneapolis, San Francisco (Los Angeles was challenging in population but not yet financial might). Other choices sorted out cities on the rise from those that had plateaued—thus Cleveland rather than Cincinnati, Kansas City rather than Omaha, Atlanta and Dallas but not New Orleans. In Canada, Montreal remained the leading banking centre until Toronto surged ahead in the 1930s.

## GREAT MIGRATIONS

Who peopled these cities? Who were the new urbanites who filled the streets and houses of fast-growing North American cities from Toronto to San Francisco? Where did they come from? What was the balance of internal and cross-border migrants?

Most conspicuous were newcomers who crossed oceans—Chinese workers in San Francisco, Germans in Milwaukee, Irish in Boston and Toronto, Italians in New York. The volume swelled from 1815 to 1914. Approximately 30 million Europeans entered the United States over that century, nearly half in the first two decades of the 20th century. Approximately 3 million immigrants entered Canada from 1850 to 1914. Not everyone stayed, of course, particularly as increasingly easy transatlantic travel allowed workers to return home after years or decades in North America. Most of those who made permanent moves chose cities rather than western frontier homesteads. In 1920, 75 per cent of foreign-born whites in the United States lived in cities, including 88 per cent of Russian immigrants and 84 per cent of Italians.

Migration to North America was part of larger transfers of population that reshuffled global demography (see [Ch. 35](#)). In very large numbers, Europeans also embarked to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil as well as North America. Chinese and Japanese workers voyaged to Mexico and South America as well as California. By the end of the 19th century, Buenos Aires and Chicago had much in common (see above, [Ch. 26](#)). Both were boom cities that grew in step with rich agricultural hinterlands and where immigrants and their children outnumbered so-called old stock residents by three to one. Argentina shifted from 25 per cent to 53 per cent urban from 1870 to 1914 just as the United States shifted from 26 per cent in 1870 to 51 per cent in 1920 and Canada from 20 per cent in 1871 to 50 per cent in 1921 (also see [Table 27.1](#)).

Overseas immigrants with their accents, ethnic churches, native language newspapers, food stores, and neighbourhoods were conspicuous newcomers in North American cities, but equally important in populating new cities were Americans and Canadians who streamed from farm to city as mechanization reduced the need for farm workers. Far more young people left family farms for bright city lights than for wide western spaces. Midwesterners moved to Chicago and dozens of smaller cities. French Canadians moved from rural Quebec to Montreal and to New England mill cities. African Americans moved to southern cities and then, starting in the 1910s, in large numbers to northern cities. Even as pioneers pushed the wheat frontier into the Great Plains, rural New England and the rural Midwest were losing population; three-fifths of all Illinois townships—local government subunits of roughly 36 square miles—lost population in the 1880s.

**Table 27.1 North American Urbanization 1850–2001**

	US		Canada	
	% urban	% metropolitan	% urban	% metropolitan
1850/1851	12		13	
1900/1901	40		37	
1950/1951	64	56	62	43
2000/2001	79	80	80	64

*Note:* Canada: Urban places of 1,000 +, Census Metropolitan Areas; United States: Urban places of 2,500 +, metropolitan areas under varying definitions.

The young man or woman who leaves the small town for the metropolis became a staple character for the era's novelists. The title character of William Dean Howells' *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) is a businessman who ambitiously relocates a successful enterprise from small town Maine to Boston. Carl Linstrum in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913) leaves rural Nebraska for Chicago to pursue a career as a commercial artist. He might unknowingly have shared a streetcar with Wisconsin teenager Caroline Meeber who also takes on the big city in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900).

While novelists pondered the social costs of rapid urbanization, civic leaders struggled to keep their cities functional. Many looked to Europe for guidance—to London for expertise in sewer construction, to Germany for experiments in city planning and models for public libraries and art museums (see above, [Ch. 25](#)). When national leaders decided it was time to upgrade the monumental core of Washington in 1903, they dispatched experts on a junket to the great capitals of Europe. Urban designers like Edward Bennett, who did plans for Ottawa, Detroit, and Portland, repeatedly referenced Europe. Portland, he said in 1911, should emulate Budapest when it planned its riverfront.

In the first half of the 19th century, cities were a jumble of business and residential districts with rich and poor often living in close proximity. Rail-based transportation (horse-drawn streetcars in the 1830s and 1840s, cable cars in the 1870s, and electric trolleys after 1889) allowed cities to spread over ten times as much territory as before. With elbow room, city centres sorted into industrial, retail, and office districts, the latter dependent on new technologies of communication.

Horizontally expanding cities had physical needs for water supply, waste disposal, transit, and open space that were solvable with enough commitment and capital, both of which North American cities had in abundance. They were also physical problems of the sorts that North Americans enjoyed solving, whether they were transcontinental railroad builders or municipal engineers. The harder challenge was to find common ground and common culture to overcome religious and ethnic rivalries and the individualism of the labour market.

One means was through the formal processes of politics. Contemporaries decried the corruption associated with machine politics, but partisan organizations played important roles in acculturating immigrant communities. The classic political machine was designed as a perpetual motion device. On one side a network of ward and precinct operatives looked after constituents (largely immigrants and their children), dispensed jobs and assistance, and made sure that everyone turned out to vote. On the other side of the equation, political leaders offered city contracts to legitimate businesses and protection to saloons, brothels, and gambling dens in return for financial contributions and pay-offs that lined the pockets of the leaders but also paid the army of political soldiers and funded the needs of the voters. Such political machines—which could be run by democrats in New York and Boston or republicans in Philadelphia and Portland—served real needs among immigrants and the poor. At the

same time, they were a costly and inefficient way to provide social services and they left important interests out of the loop—industrialists who did little business with local government and middle-class residents who paid taxes but got little in return. These were the voters who supported sporadically successful reform mayors in the 19th century and backed progressive structural changes in city government that gradually ended the party boss/political machine system—in some southern and western cities not until the 1940s.

Cultural and political differences played out in the gradual and grudging increase in the powers of municipal government. Local governmental entities (cities and single purpose service districts) have always been the creations of states and provinces, where authority ultimately resides. In the 19th century, for example, state legislatures periodically took control of city police forces when they were seen as corrupt or inimical to middle-class goals. In the 20th century, states increasingly granted cities a measure of autonomy with ‘home rule’ charters, but often continued to restrict their ability to raise revenue. Canadian provinces still hold and sometimes exercise the power to alter the structure of local governments, reflecting gaps between city and provincial parties and politics.

Middle-class dislike of corrupt politics contributed to a mounting sense of urban crisis. Economic depressions of the 1870s and 1890s, the rise of big business, and the shifting origins of immigrants from northern Europe to southern and eastern Europe fuelled fears that focused on the big cities. Critics pointed not only to neighbourhoods full of newcomers speaking odd languages, but also to outbreaks of disorder: New York City’s draft riots of 1863, a nationwide railroad strike in 1877, the explosion of an anarchist bomb at Haymarket Square in Chicago in 1886. With the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune in mind, Charles Loring Brace described a permanent underclass in *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872). In *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (1885), Josiah Strong claimed that ‘the dangerous elements of our civilization are each multiplied and concentrated in the city’ (he meant saloons, immigrants, socialists, and Roman Catholics).<sup>7</sup> Articles about cities as the deadliest menace to civilization filled popular magazines and a spate of utopian and dystopian novels responded to the crisis—particularly Edward Bellamy’s immensely popular *Looking Backward* (1888) that anticipated Boston of 2000 CE saved by democratic socialism.

There were, in fact, practical solutions that historians group together as Progressivism—a reforming set of mind that put Detroit and Cleveland on the same page with British cities such as Birmingham and Glasgow, where local governments intervened in the market to promote social justice and prosperity. Reformers tackled the physical slum with building codes and tenement housing regulation—a first step towards government intervention in the private housing market. Protestant clergy propounded engaged Christianity through the Social Gospel. The settlement-house movement, copied from Britain, brought college educated men and women to live in immigrant neighbourhoods to organize vocational training, playgrounds, and consumer cooperatives and to advocate for child labour laws and union organizing. Chicago’s Hull House, founded in 1889 by Jane Addams, is the best known; its residents conducted social surveys, building ties to the emerging practice of academic sociology at the University of Chicago.

Progressives targeted the structure of local government. Electing an honest mayor was a short-term solution. Without the backing of a political organization, reform candidates quickly faded like morning glories while political bosses bided their time. For more permanent change, reformers replaced ward elections to city councils with ‘at-large’ or community-wide voting, shifted from partisan to non-partisan ballots, replaced patronage appointments to city jobs with formal civil

service systems, and shifted municipal administration to professional managers. All such changes favoured the middle class over workers and the well-educated native-born over immigrants. The president of Dayton's National Cash Register Company summed up the progressive business approach when he compared a city to a business corporation whose stockholders were the people and argued that municipal affairs should be managed efficiently by skilled professionals. Before industrial Dayton adopted council-manager government and at-large elections, socialists won several council seats with 25 per cent of the vote; afterwards they got up to 44 per cent of votes and not a single seat. The success of middle-class progressivism is thus a partial answer to Werner Sombart's famous puzzlement about why there was no socialism in the United States.

In the more informal realms of daily life, historians have explored the ways in which city people competed for and parcelled out the public spaces of streets and parks. They have also argued that new institutions such as daily newspapers and professional sports provided common ground that gave immigrants and natives shared experiences. Historian Lizabeth Cohen has described Chicago's transition from ethnically divided workers in 1920 to a unified working class by the 1930s. Much of the change came from the erosion of ethnic grocery stores, banks, churches, and newspapers. Instead, Chicagoans increasingly shopped at chain stores, listened to the new national radio networks, and viewed Hollywood movies. Out of this engagement with mainstream culture came a white working class whose members retained their sense of ethnic identity but recognized common needs that would support a strong labour union movement during the Great Depression.

In the midst of political turmoil, economic growth, and the increasing spatial differentiation of large cities were new opportunities for women. A ballooning volume of business correspondence that required banks of filing cabinets stuffed with typed letters led to the feminization of office work. The trend began in Washington during the Civil War, when women filled the need for clerks as young men were drawn into the military. By the 1870s and 1880s, women increasingly found jobs as clerks, typists, telephone operators, and retail clerks. It helped that high school diplomas went disproportionately to women in the later 19th century, guaranteeing their competency in information processing jobs. In 1900 women comprised 76 per cent of the nation's stenographers and typists and 29 per cent of its cashiers, bookkeepers, and accountants. Fast-growing urban populations also opened opportunities for small businesswomen running restaurants, groceries, boarding houses, hotels, laundries, and sewing shops. In 1880 San Francisco, 1,500 women were business proprietors—about one tenth of all working women.

Women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were also an increasing public presence outside places of employment. The expansion of consumer districts and the rise of department stores created urban spaces that were physically and culturally safe for middle-class women. In Philadelphia they could shop at Strawbridges or Wanamakers, lunch at a respectable restaurant, and enjoy a concert at the Academy of Music on Broad Street. Their working-class sisters, living alone in hotels and boarding houses, could participate in cheaper but still respectable recreation. Meanwhile, middle-class women not only led settlement-house work but participated in growing numbers in aspects of municipal policy that went beyond the traditional topics of beautification and so-called civic housekeeping.

No small thanks to professional women as well as to all the other reformers of 1870–1920, North American cities by the end of what we can call the 'Continental Era' had solved many of their basic problems of governance and public services. Historian Jon Teaford calls this the unheralded triumph of municipal government. Residents had access to clean water, parks, new bridges, and streetcars that

allowed the middle class to escape the crowded core in favour of new neighbourhoods of single-family houses served by streetcar lines.

North American cities at the opening of the 20th century were economic machines first and last, but in between their newly wealthy business class found time to emulate the cultural institutions of Europe. City officials developed elaborate systems of parks and parkways under the guidance of a gifted group of landscape architects and designers. Civic leaders staged international expositions and world fairs. Private benefactors established libraries that evolved from private to public institutions. Tycoons endowed new universities and loaned or donated art collections that they had accumulated abroad to new museums. Chicago, for example, got the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the grand Art Institute building on Michigan Avenue, and the University of Chicago in the space of three years in the early 1890s.

By the later 19th century, civic leaders also recognized that many cities were outgrowing narrow physical boundaries. Some responded with massive municipal annexations. Chicago tripled from 60 to 185 square miles in 1889 and Los Angeles swelled from 28 to 260 square miles between 1900 and 1915 by holding out the carrot of a newly acquired water supply. In other US settings, city and county governments—historically separate local government entities with different functions—consolidated into single unified municipalities. Denver, Philadelphia, and St Louis were prominent examples, but eclipsed in 1898 by the great consolidation of the separate cities of New York and Brooklyn and three suburban counties into a single New York super-city.

The emerging culture of opportunity, progressive reform, and middle-class escape was greatly beneficial to many, but it was also a culture of whiteness. Suburban comfort was more available to old stock Americans than to newer immigrants, and more to Italians and Poles than to African Americans. A small but significant presence in northern US cities at the start of the 20th century, African Americans moved in mounting numbers from southern farms and cities to northern and western cities from the 1910s through the 1960s. Arriving in cities that were already full, meaning that work was already taken and housing occupied, they had to squeeze themselves into jobs and neighbourhoods in competition with recent European immigrants and the native-born working class.

The upside of African American urbanization was to concentrate a critical mass of clients for black businesses and institutions. Atlanta was thus a thriving centre for African American life, with a thriving business district along Auburn Avenue, and the colleges that would coalesce into Atlanta University. Washington was another centre for black life and culture, its middle class supported by federal government jobs and attracting ambitious African Americans to Howard University. New York's Harlem, which transitioned from a white to a black neighbourhood in the 1910s, epitomized the cultural possibilities when a critical mass of cultural producers and consumers concentrated in the same city and facilitated the Harlem Renaissance in African American literature and music during the 1920s (for more on New York as a creative city at this time see below, [Ch. 38](#)). In smaller cities such as Norfolk, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee, working-class blacks fought with some success for fair wages and decent neighbourhoods.

The downside of the urban migration was the creation of black ghettos. African American migration from the rural South to northern cities accelerated in the mid-1910s when World War I cut off the supply of European workers. White communities could accommodate and ignore African American populations that had totalled only a small fraction of the city, but, for example, Detroit's 120,000 black residents in 1930 were a different challenge than its 6,000 in 1910. Whites responded by drawing racial boundaries that designated some areas suitable for black residents and some not.

They enforced the boundaries with one-on-one violence and with race riots in east St Louis (1917), Washington (1919), Chicago (1919), and Tulsa (1921) and another wave of riots during World War II in Detroit, Mobile, and New York.

Whites defined ghettos by real-estate practice and local government action as well as violence. Police departments tolerated vice in black neighbourhoods as a way to protect Carl Abbott white neighbourhoods. City governments neglected basic services because blacks had little political clout. A dual housing market meanwhile restricted black buyers and renters to a limited set of neighbourhoods, where high demand on a fixed supply led to excessive rents, overcrowding, and landlord neglect. The basic process was similar in both larger and smaller cities. Denver's 7,000 African Americans faced the same discrimination as Detroit's 120,000. The progression turned ghettos, or districts set aside by community custom for African Americans, into slums.

The migration of 2 million African Americans out of the South between 1910 and 1940 created the first black ghettos. Another 3 million left the South in the 1940s and 1950s to fill what Arnold Hirsch termed second ghettos. Where first ghettos were largely the result of private action, second ghettos expanded with government assistance. Federally funded land clearance for downtown urban renewal and freeway construction displaced African Americans by the thousands in Miami and by the tens of thousands in Chicago. At the same time, replacement public housing re-concentrated the black population within old and new ghetto neighbourhoods like Hunters Point in San Francisco and South Central in Los Angeles.

### **AUTOMOBILES TAKE COMMAND**

The transportation story of the 19th century was the knitting together of a continental economy with more than 120,000 miles of railroads. The story in the 20th century was the opening out of compact and centralized cities into sprawling metropolitan regions. The facilitators were the mass produced automobile and road construction projects funded by gasoline taxes, including 47,000 miles of US Interstate Highways. The necessary preconditions were the cheap land of continental nations and affluence that allowed the construction of a vast new built environment. The result was to make metropolitan life the norm in both Canada and the United States ([Table 27.1](#)).

The stages in suburban development are clear. First came affluent 19th-century railroad suburbs like the towns of Chicago's North Shore or Philadelphia's Main Line (named for the western line of the Pennsylvania Railroad). Next came working-class and middle-class streetcar suburbs from 1890 to 1920, followed by the first auto-oriented suburbs in the 1920s (including George F. Babbitt's home in 'Floral Heights' with its modern tiled bathroom). Prosperity and automobile culture brought massive growth of residential suburbs after 1945, and the evolution of ranch-house and split-level suburbs into 'edge cities' in the last decade of the century. The United States entered the century of peak oil and global climate change as a majority suburban nation at 52 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

Scholarly and popular literature on automobile suburbs is vast and conflicted. The suburban option served households at every level of the economic hierarchy. For every Jay Gatsby, living in exurban comfort in F. Scott Fitzgerald's fictionalized version of Long Island, thousands of working-class families used streetcar lines and Model-Ts to escape inner-city tenements. Milwaukee's ethnic working class used investments in new housing to inch up the economic ladder. Many families on the fringes of Toronto and Los Angeles were self-builders who purchased a cheap lot and built houses room by room in the 1920s and 1930s. After World War II, with strong unions and government-

subsidized mortgages available in the United States, more of these families were able to buy their suburban toehold in the form of a 900-square-foot house in Levittown, New York, Lakewood, California, and other mass-produced subdivisions.

To turn from description to criticism, nobody agrees on a precise meaning for a term like suburban sprawl, let alone understands the pros and cons of different residential environments (see below, [Ch. 42](#)). Sprawl can mean low density development, non-contiguous development, or multi-centred development—characteristics that may or may not go together. Phoenix has developed at low-density around multiple centres, but its footprint remains compact. Los Angeles is multicentred but relatively dense, and sprawls less than Atlanta or Philadelphia. Canadian cities are generally more compact than US cities, but metropolitan Montreal and Toronto are denser than Vancouver and all three are denser than Ottawa and Calgary.

The horizontal spread of metropolitan regions challenged local governance. New York outgrew its great consolidation of 1898 by the 1920s and Los Angeles outgrew massive early 20th century annexations by the 1950s. Leaders of central cities like Chicago and St Louis found themselves hemmed in by rings of independent suburban municipalities that pursued their own education, land use, and taxation policies in isolation from core city problems. City–county consolidation in Indianapolis, Nashville, and Miami addressed the problem, but continued suburbanization made these metro governments only partial solutions. Even Toronto outgrew its heralded Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (1954–1998); half of the regional population is now in surrounding suburbs. Canada and the United States now count so-called suburbs with 200,000 or more residents—Arlington, Texas; Aurora, Colorado; Mississauga, Ontario; Laval, Quebec; and many more.

Although often criticized for isolating women, the suburban frontier actually challenged them to take on direct political roles. Post-war suburbs were frontiers that called for quick action to assure adequate schools and to mitigate the impacts of sprawl on the physical environment. Efforts to respond to these challenges gave women numerous chances to engage in civic work, to sharpen political skills, and run for local office. Women mayors were a rarity in the 1950s and 1960s but a commonplace by the 21st century, and suburban government has been an important avenue for women to build political careers (e.g. Sarah Palin, mayor of the Anchorage, Alaska suburb of Wassila).

Although the modern metroscape looks like the product of pure market forces, it has been incubated by public action. Federal programmes subsidized suburban highways and sewers and guaranteed suburban mortgages. In city centres, federal funds under-wrote 1950s and 1960s urban renewal projects and saved public transport. Local governments have continued the urban renewal mindset by subsidizing sports facilities, convention centers, and retail complexes—all economic development updates of 19th century railroad subsidies.

At the same time that redevelopment bulldozers were at full throttle, US policymakers ‘rediscovered’ the persistence of urban poverty, particularly among African Americans trapped in second ghettos. The ‘urban crisis’ of the 1960s brought radical organizing and outbreaks of violence in which blacks targeted representatives and symbols of white authority, as in the Watts district of Los Angeles in 1965 and in Newark and Detroit in 1967. It also brought substantial federal programmes such as the Office of Economic Opportunity and Model Cities to improve employment chances, housing, education, and public services. Identified with President Lyndon Johnson and his ‘War on Poverty’, these programmes were largely phased out in the 1970s in favour of bricks-and-mortar programmes.

Behind persistent poverty was the spatial economy of American cities. Industrial expansion in the



1940s and 1950s attracted African Americans to family-wage jobs in cities like Detroit, Los Angeles, and Oakland and seemed to build the basis for an expanding black middle class. Beginning in the 1960s, however, industrial jobs moved to suburbs where housing was still closed to African Americans; in the 1970s, many industrial jobs disappeared entirely. African American baby boomers thus found themselves marginalized as they were coming of age, resulting in persistently higher unemployment among black men than white men. The problem grew worst in concentrated poverty neighbourhoods. About 8 million Americans in 2000—black, white, and Hispanic—lived in concentrated poverty neighbourhoods where more than 40 per cent of their neighbours were poor. Isolation exacerbates poverty by making it difficult to build housing equity and find good schools, concentrating stereotypical ghetto culture, and limiting access to jobs and informal job-search networks.

Since the 1970s, three trends have interacted in the United States. Fair housing legislation and the gradual integration of the suburbs have reduced residential segregation by race, which by statistical measurements was lower in 2000 than any time since 1920. A large share of recent immigrants have also located in suburbs, increasing their ethnic variety in both the US and Canada. At the same time, segregation by income and educational level has increased, leading towards class-based rather than race-based social divisions. Connected to this trend has been the suburbanization of poverty as inner-city revitalization has pushed poor households into older, less desirable suburbs.

### **POST-INDUSTRIAL AND INTERNATIONAL CITIES**

When both General Motors and Chrysler Corporation entered bankruptcy in 2009, it was obvious that the North American economy had changed. World War II may have been a disaster in Europe and East Asia, but it was an immense urban stimulus in the United States and Canada, ushering in the ‘Great Prosperity’ of 1945–1974. After building industrial capacity since the early 19th century, however, the economy changed direction in the last quarter of the 20th century. As in Europe, heavy industry left old cities behind, often moving across national borders to Latin America or Asia. Instead, more workers held down jobs in the huge service sector and city officials looked to the electronics industry, software/multi-media, and medical services and biotechnology.

Countering the outmigration of industry was a surge of immigration. The abolition in 1965 of quotas that had favoured northern Europeans opened up the United States to large-scale migration from Latin America and Asia that pushed the percentage of US residents born in another country from 6 to 12 per cent between 1960 and 2000. Foreign-born Canadians were 18 per cent of the national total in 2001, the highest proportion since 1931. The newcomers have rearranged the neighbourhood mosaic in historic immigrant cities like New York and Toronto and transformed cities like Los Angeles and Vancouver into cosmopolitan communities. A streetcar ride along Toronto’s Dundas Street, a stroll through the crowded streets of Queens, or a drive through the suburbs of Los Angeles County all leave the impression of vibrant cosmopolitan cities.

Driven by immigration, the defence economy, and the leisure economy, southern and western cities have outpaced the cities of the old industrial core since the 1960s. These burgeoning Sunbelt cities have rebalanced the continental urban system. Los Angeles is a serious counterweight to New York. Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, and Vancouver have supplanted Providence, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Winnipeg as economic centres. Western cities were the originators and field-testers for the post-World War II culture of consumption. Western cities have become centres of popular entertainment

(Hollywood), multi-media innovation (San Francisco), and technical innovation (Silicon Valley). The American style of gated suburb has meanwhile become a model in newly wealthy nations like China and India.

While much metropolitan growth has been at the edge, laments for the demise of downtown in the face of suburban sprawl, shopping malls, and edge city office pods can be overstated. In fact, many cities have continued to develop looser but thriving metropolitan cores despite the rise of edge cities. Extending outward from the old node of banks, government offices, and convention facilities, these areas embrace condo clusters, historic districts, and sports venues. Stretching several miles and covering 3 to 5 per cent of developed land in the metropolitan area, such districts include most of the public facilities and institutions that serve the entire metropolitan area. They are not walkable, but they are certainly ‘railable’. Indeed, one of the best ways to identify the metropolitan core is to look at the routes of new rail transit lines—for example, the line soon to connect ‘South Downtown’ Seattle to the University of Washington.

Just as individual galaxies coalesce into clusters, individual metropolitan areas group into even larger structures. Geographer Jean Gottmann identified the Boston–Washington corridor as ‘Megalopolis’ in 1961, describing a region where individual cities retained their identities but also interacted as a larger region 400 miles in length. Fifty years later, urbanists have revisited Gottmann to define North American mega-regions. Each has a distinct historical identity and is organized around high volume transportation corridors. They include the Boston-to-Washington and Chicago-to-Toronto-to-Pittsburgh clusters that observers identified as early as the 1960s, with 50 million residents each. They also include Cascadia (Vancouver–Seattle–Portland), Los Angeles–San Diego, the Gulf Coast, and the South Atlantic Piedmont. These are North American versions of the Tokaido Corridor in Japan, the Pearl River Delta region in China, and Europe’s Milan-to-Manchester heartland (for a general analysis of contemporary metropolitan cities see below, [Ch. 41](#)).

## CONCLUSION

Cities have been the engines of North American growth. In the 19th century they were spearheads of the continental frontier, hubs of industrial capacity, arrival points for immigrants, and the vibrant social milieus where Canadian and American identities were fashioned in the give and take of urban life. They have also been the arenas in which affluence and automobility have supported the emergence and consolidation of a middle-class society with benefits (and costs) available to both men and women, and increasingly to racial and ethnic minorities.

Different as the cities themselves may be, the contemporary urban system has an important similarity to the colonial era. The early European outposts looked eastward for commercial connections and the whims of officials in London, Paris, and Madrid. Although transatlantic networks remained important in the 19th century, the overriding project for the US and Canada was to use city-to-city connections to articulate continental economies and nations. In the last half century, in contrast, North American cities have reinternationalized with Internet-age flows of ideas and trade and jet-age flows of people (fourteen US and three Canadian airports counted more than 3 million international passengers annually in 2007–2009). New York’s information and finance industries make it a global city along with London and Tokyo, with Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto close behind. Smaller North American cities also play direct international roles. Foreign investment in less likely cities such as Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Portland, Oregon balances Houston’s export of petroleum

industry expertise. Atlanta's international connections are comparable to Barcelona's and Denver's to those of Helsinki. North American cities, in sum, have come full circle over two centuries as components of international networks.

## Notes

1. Goethe wrote 'Den Vereinigten Staaten' in 1827 and published it in *Musen-Alamanach* issued by Amadeus Wendt in 1831.
2. George W. Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 543, 552.
3. Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea; Letters of Travel* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1913), Part II, 139.
4. Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1960), 270.
5. West from the Atlantic coast, the largest colonial cities in the later 1700s were New Orleans at 4,000–5,000 and San Antonio with 1,000–2,000.
6. *Niles Weekly Register*, 19 September 1812, quoted in Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 16.
7. Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1891), 177.
8. The US Census defines Metropolitan Statistical Areas as 'central cities' and surrounding counties with close economic linkages. Everyone in an MSA who is not within the central city is by definition 'suburban'. Different definitions used by Statistics Canada for Census Metropolitan Area make direct comparisons difficult.

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## CHINA: 1900 TO THE PRESENT

KRISTIN STAPLETON

CHANGE was afoot in China's cities in the years before 1900. The expanding number of 'treaty ports', discussed by William Rowe (above, [Ch. 17](#)) in this volume, and the growth of Hong Kong as a predominantly Chinese city under British control brought many Chinese into contact with new urban phenomena like newspapers, streetcars, electricity, and department stores, as well as foreign ideas about urban administration. Although material life in China's coastal cities had changed greatly by 1900, the Qing dynasty bureaucrats who ruled the country never articulated a new vision for the place of cities in the Chinese socio-political order. Despite the evolving economy and technologies, officialdom remained committed to a conception of the realm in which a central ruler posted outstanding civil servants to administrative centres in every region to 'care for the people', maintain order, and collect taxes. Even the reformer Kang Youwei, writing in exile after an 1898 palace coup, predicted China would avoid the social problems of industrial Western Europe by spreading economic development evenly across the country, minimizing distinctions between city and countryside.

As Rowe argues ([Ch. 17](#)), this vision of a bureaucratically managed, socially homogenous Chinese society, with little difference between rural and urban life, was always largely a myth. Nevertheless, as much as the history of Chinese cities since 1900 has been marked by ruptures—the collapse of the imperial order, rapid integration into the world economy and the crisis of the Great Depression, warfare on a staggering scale, Maoist revolution and Cultural Revolution, and the recent phenomenal industrial and commercial surge—there has been considerable continuity in thinking among political leaders and theorists about the role of cities. Depending on the era, cities and their residents were called on to 'strengthen the nation', 'serve the people', or 'create a harmonious society', but, except at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), they were to be firmly controlled by the central state. China's distinctive modern urban history reflects the tensions between the statist goals of its leaders, who sometimes welcomed foreign influences and sometimes shut them out, and the entrepreneurial and creative energies of its diverse people.

The following pages offer a chronological account of changes in Chinese urban life and in the political and economic environments that shaped the urban system in the 20th and early 21st centuries. The first section discusses urban administrative reforms and technological transformations set in motion in the Qing dynasty's final decade and urban developments in the chaotic years after the Qing collapse in 1911. The next section examines the new era of Soviet-influenced urbanism that began with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The final section surveys city life in the post-Mao period of 'reform and opening' since 1978. Changes in the Chinese urban system since 1978 are also examined in some depth by Hung and Zhan ([Ch. 34](#)). For the spatial pattern of cities around 2000 see Regional [Map iii.5](#).

Readers should bear in mind that the narrative of Chinese urban history since 1900 that follows has been constructed in the face of numerous methodological challenges. Compared to other world regions discussed in this volume, modern China has been characterized by a remarkably dense urban

system, with many hundreds of urban areas of various sizes, including small towns serving as market centres for agricultural communities, regional trading hubs and administrative centres, and huge industrial cities and ports, such as Shanghai and the Pearl River delta urban conglomeration with Guangzhou at its core. The various national governments that ruled China in this period have claimed a major role in shaping Chinese urbanism, instituting policies such as the mobility-restricting *hukou* (household registration) system discussed below. Statistics on city size and other aspects of urban life also reflect national politics. For the first half of the 20th century, when China lacked a stable national government and/or was engulfed in wars, urban populations and the networks connecting them fluctuated wildly. Although individual cities have been examined in some depth, scholars have yet to offer a careful, comprehensive overview of urban change in that period. For the post-1949 period, geographer Kam Wing Chan has analysed how official statistics over-report the urban population, due to the state's unusual definition of urban administrative areas, which include both high-density residential zones and large areas of primarily agricultural hinterland.<sup>1</sup> In recent decades, though, migrant workers have often been excluded from urban population statistics, leading to under-estimates of Chinese city size, particularly for industrialized coastal cities and provincial capitals, which attract millions of migrants. The modern history of Chinese urbanization, in short, is a complex, highly politicized topic that this chapter can only begin to outline.

### CHANGING URBAN POLITICS, NETWORKS, AND CITY LIFE, 1900–1948

In 1901, the Qing government launched a programme of 'New Policies' reforms that rapidly reshaped Chinese provincial capitals and other major cities. The reforms, forced on the dynasty by foreign powers occupying Beijing in the wake of the anti-foreign Boxer movement in 1900, were intended to increase the government's capacity to control society and so prevent further attacks on foreigners, but the scope of the New Policies quickly expanded to resemble Japan's Meiji-era reforms (see below, [Ch. 29](#)). Provincial governors created and experimented with new urban institutions: chambers of commerce, professional police forces, a hierarchy of government schools, and local assemblies.<sup>2</sup>

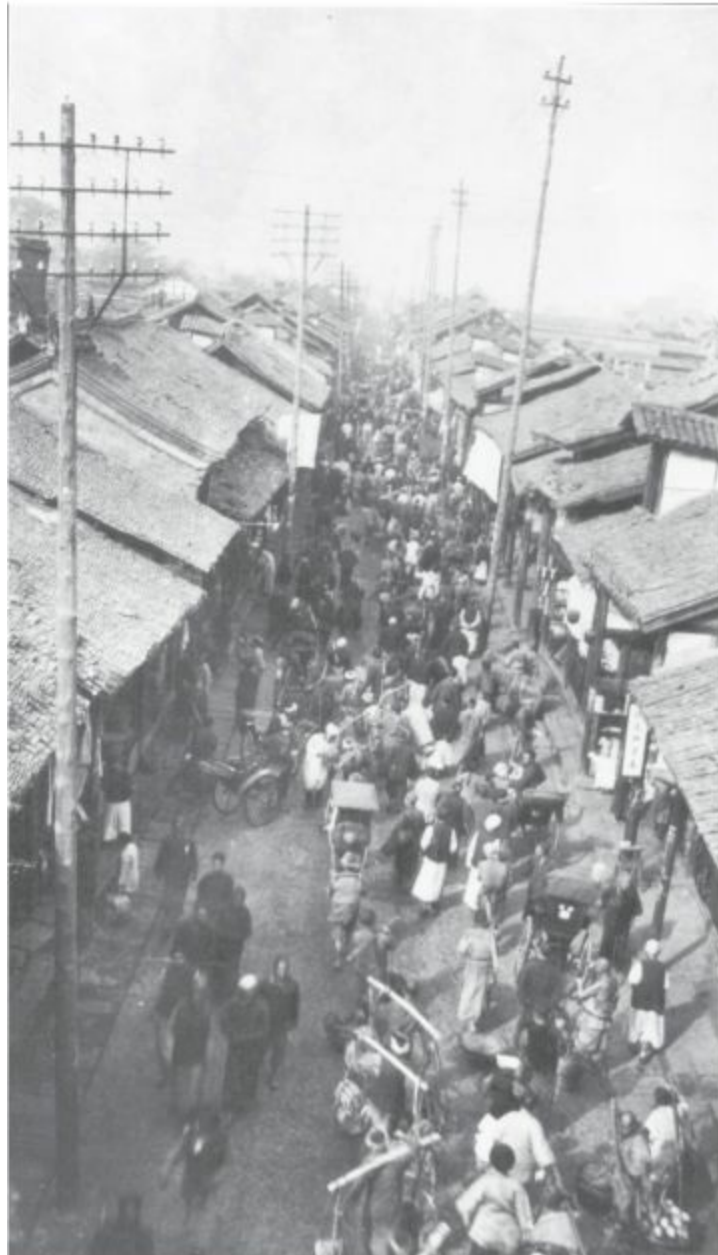
The collapse of the imperial system in 1911 resulted largely from changes in Chinese cities introduced via the New Policies. The creation of new urban institutions like chambers of commerce and provincial assemblies established new platforms for prominent local men to challenge central policies, such as foreign loan agreements. Politicized students and military officers, many trained in Japan, congregated in provincial capitals. New tax levies to support reforms added rural discontent to the mix. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has labelled the 1911 Revolution 'bourgeois', but anger at the dynasty crossed divisions of class and region. The Qing collapsed amid widespread uprisings.

The Republic of China established early in 1912 remained weak for many years. Regional militarists who paid only pro forma respect to the central government controlled most of the territory the Qing had ruled. In some ways, the weakness of the centre spurred development in provincial cities. Chronic warfare and banditry encouraged those who could to move to relative safety in the cities. Wishing to be seen as potential national leaders, many militarists encouraged economic growth in their urban bases and sponsored elaborate construction projects, such as new commercial streets and public parks. Plate 28.1 shows a street scene at Chengdu before such improvement.

This focus on urban development largely continued the agenda of the New Policies era. However, those connections were not stressed: under the Republic, newness was a value in itself. Beginning in

the late 1910s, some regional administrators embraced the burgeoning international planning movement. Students returning from study in Japan, Europe, and the US established university departments that taught urban administration and journals that propagated city planning principles, introducing, for example, the ‘garden city’ concept and standards for road and building construction used in European, Japanese, and American cities.

Despite regional militarists’ efforts to transform their cities into monuments to their rule, the provincial capitals, and even Beijing itself, were overshadowed between 1912 and 1949 by Shanghai. Shanghai’s ascent as China’s most important economic and cultural centre was rapid. By the early 1860s, the city comprised a Chinese section, an International Settlement dominated by the British, and the French Concession. Between 1910 and 1930, the total population of the three zones tripled to about 3 million. The vast majority were Chinese migrants from the city’s hinterlands, attracted by new employment opportunities in industry, transport, and other sectors, including sex work and domestic service. Demand for textiles and other products during World War I buoyed the city’s economy. Chinese and Japanese industrialists built factories in Shanghai. It became a centre of finance, trade, and shipping. Shanghai-based publishers and movie houses spread the city’s fashions and culture nationwide.<sup>3</sup>



**PLATE 28.1** Chengdu, c.1928. Typical scene of a major street not long before widening of roads began. Rickshaws and electrical poles are already in evidence among the sedan chairs and long-gowned pedestrians. (United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto: catalog no. UCCA, 98.083P/25N.)

Shanghai's fragmented political configuration, large population, and wealth attracted political activists and criminals, who moved between jurisdictions, playing authorities off one another.<sup>4</sup> Migrants to the city often joined native-place associations that eased their integration into urban life, organized commerce, and sometimes played a role in urban and national politics (see above, [Ch. 17](#); below, [Ch. 35](#)). The CCP was founded in the French Concession in 1921 and expanded after the May 30 incident of 1925, when International Settlement police killed demonstrators protesting the treatment of workers at a Japanese factory.

Urban anti-foreign sentiment fuelled the rise of both the CCP and the Nationalist Party (Guomindang or GMD), which entered into a partnership brokered by the Comintern in 1923. Comintern agents helped train the Nationalist army at its base in Guangzhou, near Hong Kong, from which it challenged the legitimacy of the Beijing-based regime. In 1926, Chiang Kai-shek led this army on a 'Northern Expedition' to bring the whole country under Nationalist control. His rapid victories in major Yangzi valley cities led to the capitulation of his rivals and the establishment of a new government in Nanjing, west of Shanghai along the Yangzi, in 1927.

Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime revived much of the agenda of the late-Qing New Policies, attempting to bring order to cities through new police, building regulations, street paving, and construction of schools, public parks, and jails.<sup>5</sup> As in the late Qing, although government initiatives were supposed to reach communities of all sizes nationwide, most money and effort was expended in the largest cities, including the new capital, which immediately attracted a wave of job-seekers and refugees from war-torn, bandit-ridden areas.

National statistics are very poor for this tumultuous period, but it is unlikely that urbanization increased substantially nationwide. Besides Nanjing, Shanghai and other treaty ports like Tianjin grew rapidly, as did British Hong Kong and Japanese-administered Manchurian cities, including Dalian and Harbin. Other cities grew slowly, if at all, but many acquired features of the 'modern city': electricity, cinemas, streetcars. A rail network connected the major cities of eastern China, reorienting the economy to focus more heavily on Shanghai, China's main gateway to the outside world.

Urban government under the Nationalists continued to be authoritarian. GMD ideology called for democratic rule, but only after a period of 'political tutelage' to prepare people to be good citizens. City regulations issued in the early 1930s thus gave only advisory roles to urban residents, whose views were to be shared with city leaders through organizations like the chambers of commerce and labour associations that were required to register with the government. City governments were headed by mayors appointed by provincial governors, who were themselves appointed by the Nationalist leadership from among the military commanders allied with Chiang Kai-shek.

As this top-down urban administrative structure was consolidated in the 1930s, however, social and cultural movements that had developed over previous decades continued to transform the urban experience in China. Already in the last years of the Qing, advocates of women's education and family reform had established girls' schools. By the 1930s, women supplied much of the factory labour in Shanghai, and well-off women adopted more public roles as professionals and housewifely consumers.<sup>6</sup> Middle-class housing in coastal cities began to be designed, like Shanghai's extensive



housing blocks, for nuclear families rather than the extended families that had been the cultural norm.<sup>7</sup>

Economic growth led to structural changes in many cities. The walls around Shanghai's old city were demolished in 1912 to make circulation easier. In the 1910s, industrialist Zhang Jian created a new model factory town next to his hometown Nantong, north of Shanghai, with a prominent clock tower, factory dormitories, schools, and museums. Lu Zuofu, founder of the Minsheng Shipping Company, did the same in Beipei, near Chongqing on the upper Yangzi. Both model towns received much publicity in planning journals and the popular press, welcomed thousands of visitors, and inspired the construction of clock towers, museums, and factory complexes in other cities.<sup>8</sup> Steamships and railroads made long-distance travel possible for increasing numbers of professionals and students. Tens of thousands of young people took steamers to Japan, the US, and Europe to study in the first half of the 20th century. Shanghai and Hong Kong were among the world's most active ports for passenger lines and freight shipping in the 1930s. Chinese entrepreneurs who made good in Hong Kong, South East Asia, and beyond invested in industry and commerce in Shanghai and their home provinces.

Culturally, cities experienced considerable turmoil. Aided by its movie producers and popular fiction writers, Shanghai became symbolic of jazz age insouciance and callousness, with famine refugees begging at the doors of fashionable nightclubs. But, as in Beijing and the provincial capitals, Shanghai's universities also fostered leftist groups, with earnest students teaching workers to read and to recognize social injustice. The Nationalist government in nearby Nanjing launched the neo-traditionalist New Life Movement in 1934 to combat what it condemned as Western-inspired decadence and to stave off radical political ideas propagated by the CCP, which it had driven underground and out of the cities in a bloody purge in 1927. The Nationalists' attempt to combine Confucian rhetoric with Fascist-inspired military discipline had little impact on urban life beyond periodic rallies where Party leaders lectured to assembled students and soldiers.

After only ten years in their new capital, the Nationalists abandoned Nanjing in 1937 in the face of an all-out Japanese invasion of China. All the cities of coastal and east China fell under Japanese control between 1937 and 1945, suffering much devastation. Millions of Chinese refugees spent the war years crowded into provincial cities of the west and south-west, which the Japanese were unable to conquer. Factories and schools were evacuated to the temporary Nationalist capital, Chongqing, and to Guilin, Kunming, and Chengdu.<sup>9</sup> After 1941, the Allies established air bases in these cities, ending the horrific Japanese aerial bombardments they had endured in 1939 and 1940. In many ways, the infusion of resources into western China during the war with Japan accelerated the economic and cultural transformation of China's interior cities, a process that continued, in different form, under the post-1949 Communist government.

Japanese defeat in 1945 brought the Nationalists back to eastern cities—including Taipei in Taiwan, ruled by Japan since 1895, and north-eastern cities that had been developed into industrial centres as part of Japanese-controlled Manchukuo since the early 1930s. Re-establishing stable administration in these urban areas proved an insurmountable challenge for the Nationalists, however. Infrastructure was in shambles. Treasuries were depleted. Returning refugees sought restoration of property and demanded punishment of 'collaborators' who had stayed behind. Inflation spread panic. The Nationalist government lost credibility in its core cities, even as its Communist rivals advanced across north China. After surrounding and fighting their way into the Nationalist-held Manchurian cities, in 1949 the Communists marched south and took the rest of Nationalist territory with surprising ease. War-weary residents of cities across China lined the streets to welcome incoming Communist

troops with a mixture of trepidation, curiosity, and hope. Two million Nationalist leaders, soldiers, and supporters left the mainland for Taiwan, establishing another temporary capital for the Republic of China in Taipei as the Communists declared Beijing the capital of the new People's Republic of China (PRC).

### CITIES IN THE MAOIST ERA, 1949–1978

China's Communist leaders had little experience administering large cities before 1949. Three decades of civil war, however, had sharpened their skills in organization, discipline, and propaganda and gained them an ally in the Soviet Union. The role of Soviet advisers in PRC urban history has not been adequately studied. Certainly the large central squares and monumental government buildings constructed in Beijing and provincial capitals in the 1950s owe much to Soviet models.<sup>10</sup> Many city walls were torn down and replaced with ring roads and, in Beijing, with a subway system. Following the Soviet model for economic growth, the CCP's first Five Year Plan emphasized centralized decision-making and heavy industry. The government quickly issued its own money and ended the hyperinflation that had panicked the cities. Nationalization of private enterprises quickly followed. The lively associational life that had characterized 19th-century Chinese cities (above, Ch. 17), and which the Nationalists had failed to fully control, was almost completely suppressed in the first years of Communist rule.

The new institutions that framed urban life in Mao's China were the work unit (*danwei*) and the neighbourhood committee (*juweihui*). Every factory, school, hospital, store, and government bureau organized its personnel into a work unit, with an associated CCP branch to provide leadership. The work unit provided access to housing, medical care, and ration coupons. Not all work units provided housing at a central site, but many did—huge, six-storey apartment blocks in walled compounds dominated many Chinese cities. In large work units, housing compounds contained shops, schools, and clinics, so residents had little need to go outside.<sup>11</sup> Shanghai, with its dense housing developments from the 1920s and 1930s, retained its stylistic distinction, but apartments built as single-family homes were divided among many families. Neighbourhood committees played a more important role in areas without large work units. Residents in such neighbourhoods met regularly to learn about and discuss government policies. Retired residents often served as officers for neighbourhood associations, watching for unusual events and reporting to the local public security office.

The urban cultural realm was dominated by the CCP, which quickly took control of schools, publishing, broadcasting, and film-making. Brothels, gambling houses, and opium dens were closed; sex workers and drug addicts were 're-educated' in 'reform camps' and prisons. Churches, temples, and mosques were disbanded or forced to submit to Party supervision. Foreigners, except for friends from the Socialist bloc, were mostly expelled. Maoist slogans appeared on banners throughout cities and towns and were painted on the gates of schools and work unit compounds. Workers' and soldiers' uniforms became a badge of revolutionary zeal, and by the 1960s had completely replaced the long scholarly gowns and tight-fitting dresses of the previous era. Work units kept dossiers on personnel that specified their 'class background'—whether they had come from a 'good' family of workers or a 'bad' family of capitalists or landlords. Class background and demerits for bad behaviour could stand in the way of a housing assignment or permission to marry, which were obtained from the work unit.<sup>12</sup>

In the first decade of Communist rule, the percentage of the Chinese population living in officially

designated urban areas almost doubled, reaching 19 per cent or 125 million people (see [Table 28.1](#)). Of these, however, many were engaged primarily in agriculture, since urban administrative areas usually included both an urban core and the surrounding countryside, much like the basic unit of territorial administration in Qing times, the ‘county’ (*xian*). Nevertheless, the number of industrial workers rose from 5.1 million in 1952 to 23.16 million in 1958. Many workers moved from the countryside to existing or new industrial areas in the north-east (Manchuria), coastal regions, and provincial capitals.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 28.1 Nonagricultural, Agricultural, and Total Population of China’s Cities and Towns (Expressed as Percentage of Total National Population) 1949 to 2010**

Year	National population (millions)	Nonagricultural population of cities & towns	Agricultural population of cities & towns	Total population in urban administrative territories	Total urban population based on refinement of urban zones
1949	541.67	—	—	10.6	—
1955	614.65	—	—	13.5	—
1961	658.59	16.1	3.2	19.3	—
1970	829.92	12.7	4.7	17.4	—
1975	924.20	12.6	4.8	17.3	—
1980	987.05	14.0	5.3	19.4	—
1982	1016.54	14.5	6.3	20.8	21.1
1985	1058.51	17.0	19.3	36.3	23.7
1990	1143.33	17.7	35.2	52.9	26.4
1995	1211.21	—	—	—	31.7
2000	1265.82	—	—	—	36.2
2005	1306.28	—	—	—	43.0
2010	1339.72	—	—	—	49.7

*Note:* In 1982 the PRC began to refine population figures for ‘urban’ administrative units to exclude more of the non-urban areas included within the administrative territories of cities and towns.

*Sources:* 1949–1990—Chan, *Cities with Invisible Walls*, 24–5; 1995–2005—Chan, ‘Fundamentals of China’s Urbanization and Policy’, *China Review*, 10: 79 (2010); 2010—‘Press Release on Major Figures of the 2010 National Population Census, 28 April 2011’, [www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents](http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents), 2011.

Like the late-Qing reformer Kang Youwei, Mao Zedong believed China could avoid the social problems associated with rapid urbanization that had accompanied industrialization in Western Europe and elsewhere; industrialization, he thought, could occur throughout China simultaneously. Growing tension with the Soviet Union in the late 1950s isolated China from world trade, pushing Mao to launch his own distinctive economic development programme, the Great Leap Forward, in 1958, and to shift strategic industries to interior cities, out of reach of a potential Soviet invasion. Although Shanghai remained the most productive manufacturing city through the 1970s, substantial investment in infrastructure turned languid towns in western China into industrial centres, as part of this ‘Third Front’ initiative beginning in 1964.<sup>14</sup> Mianyang, in western Sichuan, for example, became the headquarters of China’s nascent nuclear weapons industry. In the less sensitive industrial sectors, local and regional ‘self-sufficiency’ was emphasized, rather than national economic integration.

The Great Leap Forward was intended to unleash productivity in the countryside by creating large communes that would better manage resources to support more intensive agriculture as well as local industrialization. The horrendous failure of the Great Leap had profound effects on China's cities. Most importantly, the restrictive 'household registration' (*hukou*) system was written into law, institutionalizing the divide between rural and urban people. The *hukou* system was intended to prevent mobility, particularly rural migration into the cities. During the great famine of 1959 to 1961, the state continued to requisition grain from the starving countryside to distribute to urban *hukou* holders, who were issued ration coupons by their work units.<sup>15</sup> The imperative to maintain urban social stability contributed to the deaths from starvation of millions of rural Chinese and created a system of exclusively urban citizenship rights that continues to restrict mobility and access to resources in contemporary China.<sup>16</sup>

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966, convulsed Chinese cities, as Mao called on young people to rise up as 'Red Guards' to 'bombard the headquarters' and destroy all traces of 'feudal' and 'bourgeois' culture. Students and young workers organized Red Guard groups, seizing teachers and supervisors and accusing them of seeking to restore capitalism or other counter-revolutionary actions. Officials at all levels of government were purged. During the height of the Cultural Revolution, in 1967 and 1968, Red Guard patrols monitored public behaviour—city residents who wore colourful clothes or unusual hairstyles were subject to attack—and ransacked homes of suspected counter-revolutionaries. Temples and other symbols of the pre-revolutionary past were destroyed; universities shuttered. People greeted each other by exchanging Maoist slogans from the ubiquitous 'Little Red Book'. Crowds gathered at public rallies to denounce 'capitalist roaders'. In some cities, rival Red Guard factions fought each other with guns obtained from the military.

Beginning in 1968, Mao turned to the army to restore order in the cities and instructed Red Guards to leave for work on state farms and in villages in the poorest parts of the country. This rustication policy, which affected 17 million young people, was justified as a way to deepen revolutionary experience through manual labour and learning from the peasants. Recent analyses, however, many by former rusticated youth, suggest that, having used the Red Guards to topple his political rivals, Mao sent these volatile supporters into internal exile for practical reasons. After some economic disruption at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, industrial and agricultural output steadily increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but absorbing millions of politicized young people into urban employment would have been difficult. Mao's death in 1976 ended the Cultural Revolution. Gradually most of the rusticated youth returned to the cities.

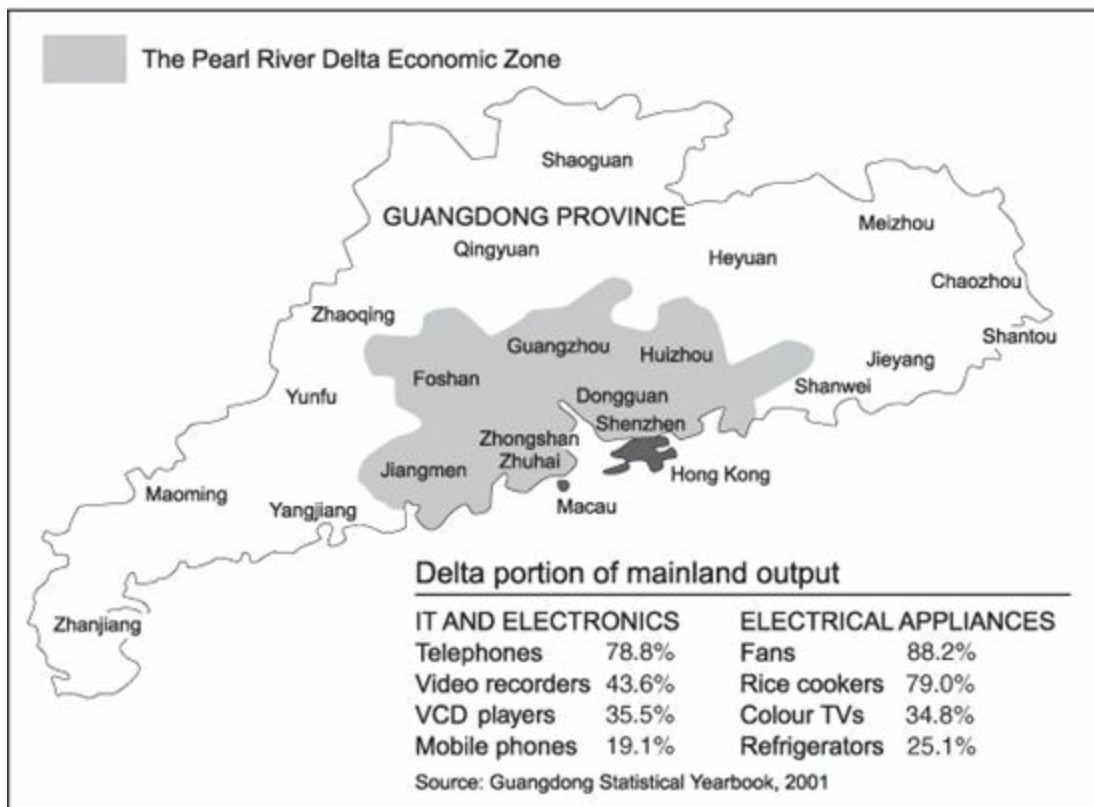
The Maoist stress on heavy industry, collective living, and publicly monitored homogeneity in revolutionary culture ensured that, physically, Chinese cities resembled those of other anti-consumerist socialist states. Dingy state-run shops and restaurants opened for limited hours, often with little to sell. Public buildings and apartments, constructed mostly of low-quality concrete, were often neglected, and buses tended to be overcrowded. Although the terror of the Cultural Revolution created social rifts, crowded urban conditions meant people lived in close contact with neighbours, often setting cots on sidewalks in summer to escape the heat indoors. Bicycles were the most prized possessions in the Maoist city. In the years after Mao's death, as his grand mausoleum rose on the south edge of Beijing's Tiananmen Square, more and more bicycles appeared on the wide streets around it. China's post-Mao economic boom began with a shift to light industry and consumer goods, as the bicycle-filled cities of the 1980s demonstrated.

Three decades of double-digit economic growth completely transformed China's cities beginning in the early 1980s. Growth was spurred by reforms that decentralized economic decision-making, legalized previously banned forms of private and semi-private enterprise, opened China to foreign investment and trade, and encouraged workers to move to coastal centres of industry. Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, presided over this 'reform and opening' policy until his death in 1997, and it has been maintained with modifications.

The post-Mao reforms dramatically increased the overall level of urbanization: China's State Statistical Bureau cites rates of 18 per cent for 1978 and 43 per cent for 2005; for 2010 the figure approaches 50 per cent.<sup>17</sup> As Hung and Zhan discuss in detail (below, [Ch. 34](#)), government policies favoured the growth and proliferation of smaller cities in the 1980s, but more recently have led to greater concentration of population in the largest cities. In the densely populated coastal provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangzhou, medium and small cities like Wenzhou and Yiwu (discussed below, in [Ch. 41](#)) have mushroomed as they have become specialized centres of commodity production.

The most spectacular urban experiments of the early 1980s were the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for export-oriented industrialization. The central government authorized special regulations and a favourable tax structure to encourage foreign investment in the SEZs, following the model of export-processing zones in Taiwan and other parts of Asia. But Chinese SEZs expanded beyond expectation to become giant factory towns in the Pearl River delta north of Hong Kong. The first and most impressive SEZ, Shenzhen, bordering Hong Kong in Guangdong Province (see [Fig. 28.1](#)), grew from a community of 30,000 in 1980 to a city of 9 million legal residents in 2010, when it had the fourth-largest GDP and the highest per capita GDP of all China's cities.<sup>18</sup>

Two major political events in the last thirty years raised doubts about Shenzhen's viability. First, in 1989 mass protest rallies in cities across China challenged the Communist leadership. After these were violently suppressed on orders from Deng Xiaoping, international exchange plummeted for a time. In 1992 Deng toured Shenzhen and reaffirmed the central government's support for SEZs, indicating that the model would be extended to other regions, including Pudong, adjacent to the port of Shanghai. The pace of development picked up. Second, in 1997, shortly after Deng's death, Hong Kong was incorporated into the PRC. Many predicted the collapse of Hong Kong's economy, with dire effects on Shenzhen. That did not occur. Despite the fact that Shenzhen built an international airport and huge container port a short distance from Hong Kong's, the two cities work together more than they are rivals.<sup>19</sup>



**FIGURE 28.1** The Pearl River Estuary (redrawn from a map by Xiangming Chen).

Hong Kong investors and agents are a major conduit for foreign business in Shenzhen and the entire booming Pearl River delta region. In 2004, provincial leaders in Guangdong, heartland of the Pearl River delta, together with their counterparts in Hong Kong, spearheaded the creation of a pan-Pearl River delta economic region spanning nine provinces and two Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and nearby Macau, a former Portuguese territory incorporated into the PRC in 1999) to coordinate infrastructure investments and compete more effectively for industry and tourist dollars with the rapidly developing Yangzi delta region centred on Shanghai (see below, [Ch. 41](#)).<sup>20</sup> Further north, a new international port at Tianjin (one of China's four centrally administered cities, equivalent administratively to a province, with a 2010 municipal population of 13 million) is connected to nearby Beijing by high-speed rail; together those two cities form the core of a north China planning unit, with links to Korea, Japan, and the Russian Far East.

This large-scale regional planning points to one of the distinctive features of China's reform-era urban boom. Even while encouraging entrepreneurship, leaders at central, provincial, and local levels retain an astounding power to shape development. The keys to that power are institutional, such as the *hukou* system and the land-use-right regime that allow the state to demolish unauthorized housing of migrant workers, for example, and clear city blocks to make way for subway stations, office towers, apartment buildings, and shopping malls. Pervasive public security forces ensure authorities can enforce their dictates.<sup>21</sup> But force has usually been unnecessary. The Communist leadership has successfully instilled confidence that it can promote economic development and it has learned to manage potential challenges by, for example, expanding Party membership to co-opt successful entrepreneurs.

The central government sees urbanization as part of the big picture of economic development. The CCP views itself as guardian of the Chinese people as a whole. As in the old imperial bureaucracy, regional officials look to superiors for assessment and promotion: loyalty to the centre is valued more than exceptional service to a particular locality, although effective local administration as defined by

the centre is usually a prerequisite for promotion. Administrative divisions are drawn not to encompass communities with common interests and levels of urbanization, but as much as possible to create standard units containing a mix of urban and rural conditions. In the Maoist era, the *hukou* system produced a sharp distinction between city and countryside, even while commune-based industrialization was promoted. Since the beginning of the reform period, the government has stressed 'integrated governing of urban and rural areas' (*chengxiang hezhi*).<sup>22</sup> Centrally administered and provincial-level cities in the PRC encompass territories with several types of subdivisions, including counties and urban districts. Geographically the largest, Chongqing was declared the fourth centrally administered municipality in 1997, in part so planners of the Three Gorges Dam, east of Chongqing on the Yangzi, could bypass the Sichuan provincial government.<sup>23</sup> In 2006, Chongqing was slightly smaller than Austria: 82,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its population of over 28 million, most of them farmers, exceeded that of Venezuela.<sup>24</sup>

The centre's ability to restructure provincial and local administration and incentivize it in support of economic development is clear. There were fewer than 100 provincial-level cities in the Maoist era. In the reform period, that number tripled, and hundreds of new county-level cities were created. Geographer You-Tien Hsing argues that in the 21st century urbanization has supplanted industrialization as the main marker of administrative success for regional officials, with important impacts on the nature of local government. Municipal governments throughout China garner the majority of their revenue by granting development rights to land, sometimes doubling the built-up area of a city within a decade, as in Guangzhou.<sup>25</sup> To attract investment, they publicize grandiose visions of new central business districts, hiring famous foreign architects to design signature skyscrapers and new streetscapes. To spur tourism in a post-revolutionary era of renewed cultural nationalism, famous historical districts and sites are refurbished or rebuilt from the ground up, including churches, synagogues, and Buddhist temples visited by busloads of overseas Chinese and other foreign visitors.

The New Urbanism that Hsing analyses has enriched city governments and developers and totally obliterated socialist cityscapes across China, as well as most of Shanghai's pre-1949 urban fabric. The rapid construction has tended to make cities more homogenous in appearance, although extensive older districts in such famous scenic cities as Suzhou, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou have been preserved with an eye to tourist dollars. Conflict over land confiscation has intensified, pressuring the government to clarify property rights and re-evaluate the *hukou* policy. Hsing has shown how land-related conflict differs in urban core, urban fringe, and rural fringe: at the core, demolition to make way for development leads to highly visible neighbourhood protests and lawsuits. In the urban fringes of the industrializing Pearl River delta cities, communities strike bargains with municipal governments that grant them rights to build their own collectively run rental housing in congested, high-rise 'urban villages' in exchange for forfeiting most of their land.<sup>26</sup> People living in rural fringes of municipalities tend to lose control over their land for construction of industrial development zones or new satellite cities with little or no compensation.

The *hukou* system, which had once sharply divided those with a state-financed safety net and those without, continued in the reform period, but transferring residency registration became somewhat easier. Municipalities began offering urban *hukou* to migrants who bought housing in new developments. Most of the tens of millions of migrant labourers working in urban industries in the early 21st century, however, maintained ties to their home villages, returning to celebrate the New Year and to marry. Their village *hukou* provided claims on collective property they would have lost if they registered where they worked. Political scientist Fei-Ling Wang notes that restrictions on

mobility under the *hukou* system are increasingly criticized as a violation of Chinese constitutional rights; however, he argues that powerful municipal governments find it a valuable tool for excluding unwanted populations. The central government's modest attempts to reform the system have not led to significant change (for further discussion of *hukou* by Leo Lucassen, see below, [Ch. 35](#)).<sup>27</sup>

In addition to conflict over land confiscation by local governments and the status of migrants, industrialization and the rapid growth of Chinese cities have created other tensions and challenges (see below, [Ch. 34](#), for more on this topic). In the early 1990s, income levels varied greatly between coastal and inland China,<sup>28</sup> stimulating a flood of migrants and building resentment in the interior. In 1999 the central government announced a major initiative to 'Develop the West', improving transportation infrastructure and encouraging foreign investment in interior cities. The construction of the Three Gorges Dam, which resulted in the relocation of several cities and over a million people, is part of that effort, and the dam's hydroelectricity is intended to power the region's further development. Likewise, the new railroad connecting Lhasa to points east opens cities and towns in the Tibetan Autonomous Region to development and greater integration into the Chinese economy. As a result of such government investment, the income gap between coastal and western China did not widen significantly around the turn of the 21st century, but that between rural areas and cities in the west did.<sup>29</sup>

Pollution and environmental degradation are serious problems in China. Poor air quality threatens the health of city residents. Industrialization has absorbed much of the water along the eastern course of the mighty Yellow River, in whose basin arose many of the ancient cities Steinhardt discusses (above, [Ch. 6](#)). The central government has launched an ambitious project to divert water from the Han River, a central China tributary of the Yangzi, to supply Beijing and other northern cities. As with the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, the long-term ecological consequences and impact on Yangzi-basin cities are sure to be complicated and quite possibly catastrophic. Environmental issues, while very much on the mind of Chinese leaders and people in general, have mostly taken a back seat to economic development. Many Chinese firms have entered the arena of 'green technologies', and municipal governments claim to promote their use, but measures of environmental quality show there is much room for improvement.

## DAILY LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE CITIES

In contrast to life in Maoist cities, contemporary Chinese urban life is characterized by considerable socio-economic and cultural diversity. Besides physical differences like skyscrapers and traffic jams, the most striking difference is the presence of migrants from rural areas, the so-called 'floating population' (*liudong renkou*). Migrants are accommodated in Chinese cities in several ways. In the early reform years, provincial and county governments organized teams of rural labourers whom municipal governments and agencies hired for construction and other projects in cities. These labourers often lived in temporary dormitories on construction sites (as most still do, see [Plate 28.2](#)). Government agencies also recruited and trained rural women to serve as nannies and housekeepers; they almost always lived in the apartments of their urban employers.<sup>30</sup> Over the past two decades, migrants have increasingly travelled to cities independently, although often with assistance from relatives and neighbours who preceded them.

Migrants to industrial zones near Guangzhou find cheap rental housing in 'urban villages' there. In other cities, migrants have rented and built housing without approval from urban authorities. The most



famous example is Beijing's Zhejiang village, a community of 90,000 migrants from Zhejiang province engaged in small-scale commerce and services such as tailoring. In 1995, Beijing authorities ordered the entire community to leave and demolished forty-eight large housing compounds that had been constructed without permits. Community schools for migrants' children, who are ineligible for public schooling, are regularly shut down. Anthropologist Li Zhang concludes that the complicated restrictions migrants face make them extremely vulnerable. Many long-term urban residents see them as a source of crime and social disorder.<sup>31</sup>

The substantial income gap within Chinese cities (see below, [Ch. 34](#)) affects infrastructure, housing, and social life in general. Estimates of the number of 'middle-class' urban Chinese in the early 21st century range up to 350 million, but are disputed—subsidies to urban residents are hard to measure, and many urban families have sources of substantial 'grey income' not included in official statistics. In 2001, the central government recognized the existence of urban poverty, particularly among workers laid off during the restructuring of state-owned enterprises, and instituted a welfare system that is supposed to provide a minimum income. In 2007, almost 23 million urban residents (migrants not included) were eligible for such payments. Geographer Fulong Wu and his colleagues analysed the distribution of poor households via welfare data and found poverty to be increasingly spatialized among districts within the same city.<sup>32</sup>

Members of the new middle class are most likely to live in very new, gated apartment complexes with amenities like parks, clubhouses, and supermarkets. The real estate development companies that create these complexes work closely with municipal governments, often sharing personnel and profits. Families buy completely unfinished spaces in a new building, and pay an estimated one-third of the purchase cost to install fittings, appliances, flooring, etc. In 2006 in the Yunnan capital Kunming, 2,000 firms specialized in finishing apartments, employing 50,000 migrant labourers.<sup>33</sup>

The geographic expansion and growing socio-economic segregation of Chinese cities has increased private automobile use. Bicycle use has steadily declined in major cities since the 1990s. Shanghai even banned bicycles in its downtown core. Subway systems were expanded in Beijing for the 2008 Olympics and in Shanghai for the 2010 World Expo. Most provincial capitals are building new subway lines and expanding old ones. Buses continue to be a popular, inexpensive option for urban residents, and on the outskirts of cities unlicensed taxis compete with and often outnumber licensed ones.

As the existence of unauthorized construction and unlicensed taxis suggests, Chinese cities are not as well regulated as their extensive official regulations would have them be. The dismantling of the old socialist system has produced serious concerns about corruption, exacerbated by the frenetic economic growth and dislocations of the 1980s and 1990s. The 1989 political movement that filled the central squares of Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities with angry protestors was animated by accusations of corruption against CCP bosses. After the harsh crackdown on that movement, few activists have openly challenged the Party, and the press is monitored very closely. Still, by working with sympathetic elements in the Party, some journalists have brought to light intra-Party conflicts and bad news that would have been suppressed in the Maoist period.<sup>34</sup>

In particular, high-profile incidents have exposed abuses perpetrated by 'city management' (*chengguan*) bureaus responsible for enforcing urban regulations regarding vendors and other aspects of street life. Increasingly sensitive to bad publicity and frightened of the potential destructive power of urban crowds, some municipal governments have launched initiatives to make these bureaus more acceptable to the public. The most striking innovation was the 2010 decision of a city district in



**PLATE 28.2** A construction site in Shanghai. The Shanghai World Expo 2010 billboard in front of a temporary worker's dormitory states that 'cities make life even more beautiful'.

The changing nature of Chinese families is reflected in city life. In 1979, new family planning regulations limited most couples to one child. This restriction has since been relaxed in rural areas. In the cities, though, one-child families have become the norm. As a consequence, family life often revolves around the child, simultaneously pampered by doting parents and grandparents and required to excel at school and at music lessons. Food quality is a flash point of Chinese political life, due to parents' fears that tainted food will harm their only child.<sup>36</sup> Parents often identify marriage partners for their grown children. In many cities, parents gather regularly to exchange information about marriage prospects.

The 'one-child policy' has led to fears that parents will lack support in old age. As in Japan, the aging population and the crumbling of assumptions that family members will care for the elderly have forced society and policymakers to contemplate new approaches to eldercare. In Chinese cities, district governments designate funds for community centres where older residents can meet and seek support.<sup>37</sup> Municipal governments have begun collecting fees from employers to provide pensions to retirees, but pension funds have sometimes been diverted to other uses.<sup>38</sup>

Urban cultural life has become much more diverse over the last thirty years. Karaoke clubs and Internet cafés are ubiquitous. Officially approved temples, churches, and mosques attract worshippers and tourists. Rapid expansion of higher education has created 'university cities' on the outskirts of large municipalities like Shanghai and Nanjing. While cultural diversity within cities has increased, to some extent regional distinctiveness in Chinese urban life has declined as all regions of China have been integrated into global markets.

Thirty years of ambitious planning and investment in infrastructure, along with a willingness to accept foreign influence, have put Chinese cities at the centre of contemporary urban studies. International businesses and foreign entrepreneurs have flocked to Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. A 2009 report by the international consulting firm McKinsey predicts 1 billion Chinese will live in cities by 2030 and advises businesses to prepare for the opportunities China's expanding cities will offer. This urban growth could happen in a number of ways, the report's authors note, but they recommend that the government encourage creation of several 'supercities' with populations of 50 million to use land efficiently and minimize energy costs for transport. They express confidence that government regulation and incentives can shape the urbanization process to this end.<sup>39</sup>

Other analysts, however, question the power of the Chinese government to achieve the dreams of urban planners. Fulong Wu argues that China's urban boom was enabled only by the historical condition in which an 'under-urbanized' post-socialist state employed the legacy of earlier social policies—most importantly the *hukou* division between rural and urban—as an advantage in the global economy.<sup>40</sup> The cheap labour of migrant workers denied urban benefits will not be available forever. Demographic change and rising worker expectations are forcing up wages in the Pearl River industrial region. Labour unrest is rising, as is anger over land requisition for urban development.

Will Chinese cities continue to astound the world? Will they continue to be managed by a combination of central government fiat and partnerships between municipal bureaucrats and local developers? Or will urban residents, including recent migrants, gain more control over their environment? Critics of contemporary Chinese urbanism emphasize that, although, as Xiangming Chen and Henry Fitts (below, [Ch. 41](#)) note, the top-down approach to municipal administration makes regional infrastructure planning easier, it may hinder the growth of the 'creative' urban space analysed by Marjatta Hietala and Peter Clark in [Ch. 38](#) below.

## Notes

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## JAPAN

PAUL WALEY

THE Meiji Restoration of 1868 presents itself as one of history's great turning points. Indeed, it would be hard to deny the extent of the rupture that occurred around this time. Members of the military class fled the principal cities; Edo (the city soon to become Tokyo) in particular lost almost a third of its population during the years of uncertainty of the 1860s. Among those who remained were artisans and traders and many poorer samurai who had lost their domain positions. Conditions had been hard for some decades; the unease was considerable; and incomes fell. In the cities, the distinction between military, temple and shrine, and commoner territories was abolished in the first years of Meiji rule. The feudal lords were 'bought out'; their inherited right to receive land tax in their provinces was translated into government bonds.<sup>1</sup> In the emperor's new capital, the compounds of the feudal lords lay empty.

Early modern Japan was already highly urbanized (see above, [Ch. 18](#); also [Regional Map II.5](#)). Cities had distinct functional roles—castle town, port, market town, although castle towns dominated. Under the conditions of rapid economic and social transformation that prevailed for much of the Meiji era (1868–1912), cities gained new or modified functions. Many castle towns became administrative centres. To take but one example, Kanazawa, centre of the powerful Kaga lords, became capital of Ishikawa Prefecture in 1872, with the abolition of feudal domains and after a brief process of administrative consolidation. The changed circumstances accelerated the growth of two newish settlements, Yokohama and Kobe, which serviced the needs of foreign traders and became centres of cultural as well as commercial ties between Japan and the world beyond. But perhaps the overwhelming trend of the Meiji era lay in an intensification of growth around the country's 'three great cities', Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo, and especially the latter two.

The country's first railway line, completed in 1872, connected Yokohama with nearby Tokyo. By 1887, Tokyo was connected with Osaka, and by 1907, lines were completed from Aomori in the north to Kumamoto in Kyushu in the south-west of the country. The railways were a part of a more generalized move from water to land. Within cities in particular, Osaka and Tokyo foremost among them, goods had been moved around predominantly by boat; Tokyo (and Edo before it) in particular was linked to the broad Kanto plain, through a network of waterways. And while the shipment of industrial goods meant that coastal port cities grew in importance, within cities people and goods were increasingly conveyed over the improved surfaces of city streets with their growing number of bridges. Later, in the course of the 20th century, the transport infrastructure of rail and road accelerated the growth of an urban strip stretching along the country's Pacific coast, punctuated by swelling conurbations around Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto. Industrial production has throughout the modern period been overwhelmingly concentrated along the Pacific coast, and in particular in these three metropolitan areas ([Table 29.1](#)).

**Table 29.1 Proportion of the Japanese Population Living in Cities and Densely Inhabited Districts 1903–2000<sup>a</sup>**

	Total population	All cities (shi) (%)	DID population (%)
1903	48,542,736	6,809,976 (14.0)	—
1908	51,741,853	8,299,744 (16.0)	—
1913	55,131,270	8,999,264 (16.3)	—
1903	48,542,736	6,809,976 (14.0)	—
1920 <sup>b</sup>	55,963,053	10,096,758 (18.0)	—
1930	64,450,005	15,444,300 (23.9)	—
1940	73,114,308	27,577,539 (37.7)	—
1950	84,114,574	31,365,523 (65.2) <sup>c</sup>	—
1960	94,301,623	59,677,885 (72.1)	38,648,657 (43.7)
1970	104,665,171	75,428,660 (76.2)	52,704,136 (53.3)
1980	117,060,396	89,187,409 (76.2)	66,358,923 (59.7)
1990	123,611,167	95,643,521 (77.4)	73,839,118 (63.2)
2000	126,925,843	99,865,289 (78.0)	78,510,281 (64.7)

<sup>a</sup> Densely Inhabited Districts are contiguous square kilometres with a population density of over 4,000 inhabitants and a total resident population of over 5,000. Because administrative boundaries in Japan tend to be either over-drawn (including large areas of rural and mountain land) or under-drawn (with contiguous cities part of the same conurbation), the DIDs tend to be a more consistent measure of the extent of urbanization.

<sup>b</sup> Figures before this date are derived from the household register. From 1920 on, figures are derived from the National Census.

<sup>c</sup> The proportion of the population living in urban areas increased dramatically in the 1950s as a result of the first post-war amalgamation of administrative units and the consequent increase in the number of cities.

Source: Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan*, 172, and *Historical Statistics of Japan* (<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/chouki/index.htm>).

**Table 29.2 Population Growth in Japanese Cities with a Population of over 1 Million in 2000**

	Sapporo	Sendai	Tokyo	Kawasaki	Yokohama	Nagoya	Kyoto	Osaka	Kobe	Hiroshima	Kita Kyushu <sup>a</sup>	Fukuoka
1920	102,580	118,984	3,699,428	21,391	422,938	429,997	591,323	1,252,983	608,644	160,510	—	95,381
1930	168,576	190,180	5,408,678	104,351	620,306	907,404	765,142	2,453,573	787,616	270,417	—	228,289
1940	206,103	223,630	7,354,971	300,777	968,091	1,328,084	1,089,726	3,252,340	967,234	343,968	—	306,763
1950	313,850	341,685	6,277,500	319,226	951,189	1,030,635	1,101,854	1,956,136	765,435	285,712	—	392,649
1960	523,839	425,272	9,683,802	632,975	1,375,710	1,591,935	1,284,818	3,011,563	1,113,977	431,336	—	647,122
1970	1,010,123	545,065	11,408,071	973,486	2,238,264	2,036,053	1,419,165	2,980,487	1,288,937	541,998	1,042,321	853,270
1980	1,401,757	664,868	11,618,281	1,040,802	2,773,674	2,087,902	1,473,065	2,648,180	1,367,390	899,399	1,065,078	1,088,588
1990	1,671,742	918,398	11,855,563	1,173,603	3,220,331	2,154,793	1,461,103	2,623,801	1,477,410	1,085,705	1,026,455	1,237,062
2000	1,822,368	1,008,130	12,064,101	1,249,905	3,426,651	2,171,557	1,467,785	2,598,774	1,493,398	1,126,239	1,011,471	1,341,470

<sup>a</sup> The city of Kita Kyushu was formed in 1963 out of the amalgamation of five municipalities.

Source: *Historical Statistics of Japan* (<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/chouki/index.htm>).

**Table 29.3 Value of Manufacturing Output as a Proportion of the Total by Geographic Area**



	Area (% of Japan)	1909	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Tokyo MA	4	18	20	21	29	22	28	30	27
Nagoya MA	6	11	10	11	10	11	12	13	13
Osaka MA	5	35	33	31	25	23	23	20	17
Three MAs	14	64	62	62	63	56	64	63	56
Pacific Belt	23	73	74	74	78	72	78	76	71

Tokyo Metropolitan Area (MA): Tokyo Metropolis, plus Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa prefectures.

Nagoya MA: Aichi, Gifu, and Mie prefectures.

Osaka MA: Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, and Hyogo prefectures.

Pacific Belt: The three metropolitan areas, Shizuoka, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Fukuoka prefectures.

Source: Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan*, 170; *Historical Statistics of Japan*, 2: 414–418.

This process of concentration of population and productive capacity has accentuated and culminated in recent decades in what has been called ‘unipolarization’ in Tokyo, with Japan’s capital city dominating the urban hierarchy to such an extent as to weaken the economies and social structures of other urban areas, including even the Osaka conurbation. Tokyo and its surrounding conurbation now has a population in excess of 35 million (over twice the size of the Osaka–Kyoto–Kobe conurbation), almost 30 per cent of the entire national population, while well over 60 per cent of Japan’s population inhabit the narrow coastal strip that runs from Tokyo to Fukuoka in the south-western island of Kyushu. The hierarchical pre-eminence of Tokyo has reinforced a longstanding attenuation of regional distinctiveness in what one might call a Tokyo-ization of the urban landscape. It is this process of gradual and then much quicker urban growth along the country’s Pacific belt and its more recent shift towards concentration in the centre that presents itself as a recurrent theme in this chapter. These processes of rapid but geographically skewed urbanization are readily apparent in [Tables 29.2](#) and [29.3](#); see also [Regional Map II.5](#).

### 1880S AND 1890S—LOOKING BOTH WAYS

In the 1880s and 1890s, the mid-Meiji years, Japan’s largest cities were being remodelled to reflect the new institutional setting and the new infrastructure of a modernizing and westernizing urban condition. These are decades in which are rooted the triple departures of Japan, modernization, industrialization, and westernization—modernization of the infrastructure and westernization of the prevailing institutional ideology according to which social change was orchestrated. The import of Western ideas, institutions, and technology always involved a process of translation and adaptation, and this can be seen clearly in the setting of Japan’s cities. The creation of a modern urbanizing society involved massive changes in urban infrastructure. A new sense of urban order had to be created. Space was needed in city centres for the institutions of government, finance, and the military. New government and business centres were required.

The pre-Meiji structures of Japanese cities, and Tokyo in particular, lent themselves well to this transformation, as the compounds of leading samurai families were centrally placed, conveniently sized and immediately available. Edo, a city of walls and gates, had been built around a girdle of moats and forbidding revetments, within which the shogun lived with his close retinue and his

officers of state worked. In the years immediately before and after the Meiji Restoration (1868), more and more of the castle was destroyed by fire. But despite, or more probably because of, the connotations of this space with the aura of power, the Meiji emperor eventually moved back in, although his quarters were in a palace newly built in an Occidentalized style. The ample compounds around the castle, in which the more powerful members of the feudal elite had lived, were transferred to the army and to ministries of the new government. This new spatial configuration was reflected, as had been the old one, in many of the former castle towns around the country. While the scale differed, there too the compounds of leading retainers, which had ringed most of the larger provincial castles, were transferred to government hands and became the site of prefectural offices.

Under the Tokugawa shogunate, the urban economy had been sophisticated and diverse, with powerful merchants bound together in trade associations. With the change of political and landholding regimes, a number of merchants imposed themselves both on the political scene and on the geographical territory of the new imperial capital. Interests associated with the Mitsui family established themselves through land acquisitions in the part of Tokyo that now houses the Stock Exchange, while the family later to become known as Mitsubishi took control of a large swath of land that today houses the headquarters of many of the nation's leading businesses. Embryonic modern Japanese capitalism had stamped its authority on the soil of Tokyo; corporate land ownership has remained a prominent feature of the city centre.<sup>2</sup>

Urban improvement meant an early attempt to remove the more egregious backstreet slums that existed as hangovers from the previous period. A process of removing poverty and 'unclean' occupations from the public gaze to locations on the urban periphery was replicated in Osaka.<sup>3</sup> The new urban order involved a need for transport and movement. Physical and human impediments were removed from roads. Traffic, and in particular wheeled transport including rickshaws, required improved road surfaces and a clear passage.<sup>4</sup> The number of bridges needed over even modest waterways increased. Both in Tokyo and Osaka the provision of a modern and Western infrastructure (neatly elided) became the main features of urban policy.<sup>5</sup> Consideration for the wellbeing of urban dwellers had to wait.

Gas lighting was introduced to illuminate a few major roads in the early 1870s, while the first essays in street electricity occurred a little over a decade later.<sup>6</sup> Space was found for a wide range of modern urban institutions, including universities, hospitals, and schools. Western styles of consumption and recreation—or, sometimes, Western adaptations of traditional approaches—began to figure. In a previously neglected corner of central Tokyo, an unparalleled experiment in urbanism occurred. The district of Ginza had been burnt down in a fire in 1872; its buildings became the first to be rebuilt in brick, its pavements the first to be paved. Indeed the district, which was adjacent to the recently completed railway station at the head of the country's first line linking Tokyo to Yokohama, was planned to be a sort of showcase of Western urbanism with its shop windows, roadside trees, and gas lights. After some significant early problems, Ginza became the *locus classicus* of modern urbanism not only for Tokyo but for the whole country, a paradigmatic example of the benefits that modern commerce, technology, and consumption practices could confer.

At about the same time that the new Ginza was being planned, Japan's first public parks were designated. Five in number, they all occupied sites in Tokyo that had been popular recreation spots in Tokugawa times. It was not until 1903 that the country's first 'Western-style' public park was opened, at Hibiya in central Tokyo on the site of an army parade ground.<sup>7</sup> But the difficulties that planners and

politicians faced in conceptualizing and laying out this parcel of land reveal the task of translation that was faced in importing Western urban spaces into Japanese cities. Only a few years after its completion, in 1905, Hibiya Park became the site of political rallies, some of which spilled over into surrounding streets in violent protests against the treaty that ended the war with Russia.

Surprisingly perhaps, of all Japan's cities the one that underwent the greatest changes at this time was Kyoto. In an attempt to reinvent a city that suffered a long period of decline and helped by a donation from the Imperial Household, large Western-style avenues were built; street lighting was provided; and a tram system was planned. A commemorative shrine was built, the Heian Shrine, and land was cleared around it for various government offices.<sup>8</sup> In this way, many of the appurtenances of Western urbanism were introduced into Japan. It was a piecemeal process, and it was one that availed itself of existing urban land use.

After some hesitation involving Kyoto and Osaka, Tokyo was chosen as national—and imperial—capital. While Osaka retained its commercial pre-eminence, all aspects of national life were centred on Tokyo. But what sort of capital should Tokyo be? The mid-Meiji years were characterized by an intense debate over the direction in which Tokyo should develop: should it become a grand 'baroque' capital in the style of Paris or Berlin or should the government concentrate on expanding the port and making the capital a great centre of trade and commerce like London? The argument was never really resolved, but financial constraints led inevitably to a scaling down of the grand baroque plans that had been drafted by eminent German engineers who had been invited over by the Japanese government.<sup>9</sup> The debate culminated in the first attempt to regulate in a concerted fashion the shape of Japan's cities. The Urban Improvement Ordinance of 1888 was chiefly concerned with roads, bridges, and the urban infrastructure. It was applied in Tokyo over a period of years with decreasing effectiveness as the stock of funds available dwindled, and with little impact beyond the capital.

The Meiji government, comprised as it was of former samurai mainly hailing from peripheral provinces, was reluctant to create conditions for the formation of competing power structures in the country's largest cities. While other cities were granted mayors and municipalities in 1878, that privilege was withheld from Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, until, in 1898, the government capitulated in the face of widespread discontent.

Life in Tokyo and Osaka and the other largest cities was, as it were, like existing in a world that looked both ways. The experience of urban life is well illustrated in topographical accounts of writers who cast their accounts in retrospective idioms and often express wonder at the changing physical and human landscape of the city. Hirade Kōjirō is one such figure. His account of Tokyo manners and customs, published from 1898, draws an enticing picture of a city in which traditional pastimes that celebrate the changing seasons exist alongside, and even share space with, new recreational pursuits such as cycling and angling.<sup>10</sup> His and other accounts are valuable documents that contribute to a more complete picture of life in Japan's cities at the dawn of the industrial era.

Most of Japan's cities of the Meiji era inherited a twin condition from the Tokugawa regime. Since the military class of samurai had been compelled to leave their land and base themselves around the castles of their lords—as their lords themselves had had to spend fixed periods of time in the shogun's capital—castle towns throughout Japan were both centres of consumption and of artisanal production. Consumption grew again quickly as the political situation stabilized and urban populations started growing rapidly by the 1880s. But arguably, one of the crucial elements in the transformation and growth of Japanese cities was the strength of artisanal manufacture. Members of

the artisanal class were joined by former samurai, many of them poorly off, to form an urban stratum of producers making all sorts of products for the urban market, largely managed and controlled by wholesaler-contractors (*ton'ya*). Out of this production system, full-fledged urban industrial capitalism grew, with a number of small-scale manufacturers successfully innovating and transforming themselves into industrial capitalists.

Despite the great political and social changes that revolutionized urban (and rural) life in Japan, the geography of Japanese cities retained many of their Tokugawa-period features. Patterns on the ground evolved slowly during these decades, but the pace of change would pick up, driven above all by incipient urban industrialization, centred on Osaka and to a lesser extent Tokyo. By 1886, Osaka already had over 5,000 factories (1,000 more than Tokyo) employing over 200,000 workers.<sup>11</sup> Urban growth trends were not, however, uniform across the country. While the population of the 'three great cities' of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto grew vigorously throughout this period, as did that of thriving port cities such as Nagasaki and Hakodate as well as Yokohama and Kobe, more than doubling between 1878 and 1898, some former castle towns like Toyama and even Kanazawa now found themselves peripheral to the main thrust of economic activity and failed to register population growth.<sup>12</sup>

### 1920s—METROPOLITAN EXPANSION

By the 1920s, the hesitations of the mid-Meiji period had disappeared, and Japan's urban infrastructure was rapidly modernizing. Japanese cities were swiftly spreading outwards. The number of rickshaws was declining fast, their place taken by trams and then buses.<sup>13</sup> By the mid-1920s, the largest cities such as Tokyo and Osaka had extensive tram networks. These linked into an expanding network of suburban railway lines. Beginning in Osaka in the 1910s, privately run suburban railway lines soon became—and have remained—a pivotal feature of Japanese cities. They were owned and operated by business tycoons who both developed real estate along the line and built opulent department stores adjacent to their terminus stations.<sup>14</sup> *Primus inter pares* amongst these shapers of Japanese urbanism, was Kobayashi Ichizō, owner of the Hankyū company, which operated a rail line out of Osaka. As Jordan Sand recounts in his history of *House and Home in Modern Japan*, Kobayashi created various and varied tourist attractions at the two outbound ends of his line. A few years later in Tokyo, a railway company owned by one of the country's foremost industrialists, Shibusawa Eiichi, built a garden suburb at the end of its line just outside Tokyo. Den'en Chōfu is said to have been inspired by, if not modelled on, Ebenezer Howard's first garden city at Letchworth.

At the same time as the new private railway lines were enticing people to live in suburban areas, the older districts of Japan's largest cities (as well as a number of smaller ones) were fast becoming important centres of manufacturing, characterized by numerous small establishments among which were interspersed much larger factories. Osaka, whose leaders were very conscious and proud of references to their city as Japan's Manchester, remained the centre of industrial activity, a role it inherited from the Tokugawa centuries, although it would soon lose its position to Tokyo.<sup>15</sup> Industrial production swung to the political centre in the years leading up to total war on the continent, when the dredging and improvement of Tokyo port led to the development of the Keihin industrial zone along the coast.<sup>16</sup>

The growth in modern industry, nearly all of it located in Japan's cramped and increasingly urbanized alluvial flood plains, was spurred by World War I, when colonial markets were suddenly

opened up for Japanese goods. That growth was facilitated by the electrification of manufacturing plants that had previously been powered by steam. And it was around this time that gas and electricity were being brought to an increasing number of homes, as was piped water—but not the sewerage system (Table 29.4a-b).

The catastrophic event of the decade was the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923, which destroyed nearly all of central and eastern Tokyo, as well as Kawasaki and Yokohama.

**Table 29.4a Households Served by Gas Supply in Selected Tokyo Wards**

Wards	1885	1890	1911	1926
Nihonbashi	127	394	14,722	12,909
Azabu	—	23	6,545	11,385
Asakusa	15	71	16,949	16,396
Honjo	—	—	16,571	12,660

*Source: Compiled from Tokyo Statistical Yearbook.*

**Table 29.4b Households Connected to Electricity Supply in Selected Tokyo Wards**

Wards	1911	1926
Nihonbashi	16,178	17,789
Azabu	9,463	17,957
Asakusa	26,320	51,867
Honjo	19,223	47,752

*Source: Compiled from Tokyo Statistical Yearbook.*

While the disaster caused some 100,000 casualties and some terrible localized disasters, its impact was not such as to cause a rewriting of Japanese urbanism. The city that grew out of the ruins was not so different from that which had stood before. The earthquake did allow for a partial standardization of plots and widening of main thoroughfares, but some of this had already been planned before the earthquake struck. Many of the houses that were rebuilt were, however, given exemptions from fire regulations (highly ironic in the circumstances), exemptions that were later extended indefinitely, leading directly to their destruction in the wartime air raids.<sup>17</sup> The principal effect of the earthquake was to displace thousands of Tokyo's inhabitants, compelling them to move further out, in many cases to hastily built and poorly planned districts just beyond the city boundaries.

This outward expansion of the urban population was formally recognized in 1932, when the city's borders were moved outwards and twenty new wards were carved out of the surrounding lands to be added to the existing fifteen. This occurred seven years after Osaka had undergone a similar process of administrative expansion. Population growth in urban areas and the accompanying expansion of cities was a pattern that replicated itself throughout the country. Results from the first national census, in 1920, and the census conducted in 1930 show steep population increases in the largest cities, and larger than anywhere else in Tokyo prefecture, despite the devastating earthquake and consequent haemorrhage of residents from the city centre and inner city (Table 29.2). At the same time, the population of all administrative areas having a population of over 30,000 rose by 12 per cent within this decade.

If the Great Kanto earthquake was an event that might have led to a new beginning for Japanese cities, so too might have been the passage in 1919 of the country's first Urban Planning Law, which was implemented on a city-by-city basis in the 1920s and 1930s. This was accompanied by a number of other measures, including the city-by-city introduction of zoning plans. The effectiveness of the Urban Planning Law in Tokyo was considerably curtailed by the earthquake, after which a further ad hoc law was passed. The zoning plan was descriptive rather than prescriptive, recognizing existing land use patterns rather than attempting to ascribe new ones.<sup>18</sup>

More important to the shaping of Japanese urbanism were the positions taken and plans adopted by Seki Hajime, mayor of Osaka from 1923 to 1935.<sup>19</sup> He is the pre-eminent example of a generation of politicians and bureaucrats who worked to alleviate overcrowding in urban areas, garden cities being among his favoured remedies. Many of the urban and social reforms of this period were introduced at a municipal rather than a national level. Social welfare legislation is a case in point, with the district commissioner (*hōmen iin*) system introduced first in Osaka and Okayama in 1917, but full legislation was not enacted until 1929.<sup>20</sup> The system relied very much on the voluntary efforts of members of the new managerial and professional classes.<sup>21</sup> In Tokyo, the city government had set up in 1919 a Social Welfare Bureau, which played an important role in pinpointing and tackling poverty. Meanwhile, throughout Japan's cities, sanitation committees (*eisei kumiai*) had been set up, generally on the initiative of local citizens, and these were now being brought within the compass of local administrations. In the decades that followed, and especially in the 1920s, neighbourhood associations were set up in urban areas throughout the country, many of them modelled on the sanitation committees, helping establish a strong role for civil society in the fostering of socially cohesive neighbourhoods.

The 1920s are often depicted as a sort of golden age during which a distinctive mass urban culture developed, with a growing middle class of salaried employees with spare time to enjoy and income to spend. Certain specific districts in Tokyo, Osaka, and other large cities came to be associated with consumption practices, leisure pursuits, and crowds of shoppers, many of them young women. The archetype of such districts is Ginza, which in the 1920s and 1930s was unquestionably the most modish part of town. Its cafés, shops, and milk bars exhibited an exquisite blend of Western products and Japanese sensibilities. It was the city catwalk for the new middle classes. This was a time when the number of office workers in Tokyo was growing, but a sense of what a modern middle-class urban lifestyle might be had to be invented, while industrialists like the railway and property magnate Tsutsumi Yasujirō invested in model urban villages that he hoped would attract members of the city's professional and managerial classes.<sup>22</sup> Many of the window shoppers in the Ginza, however, were in town for the day or were clerks and other lowly paid employees for whom one of these hybrid Western homes would have been way beyond their means.

The Japanese state played little part in the provision of housing, which remained a private prerogative. Experiments in social housing were limited; Dōjunkai, the state's first essay in public housing, was inaugurated in Tokyo after the Great Kanto earthquake, but it only ever completed 7,000 dwellings. Most of the middle classes, whether they inhabited Tokyo or other cities, lived modestly in small two-storey wooden terraced or row housing, with little to differentiate their dwellings from those of factory employees and their families. Japan's rapid industrialization was sucking into the cities large numbers of working men and women, with and without families, many of whom lived

lives tightly constrained by factory discipline, long hours, and low pay. While the 1923 earthquake had cleared Tokyo of many of its concentrations of bad housing, it had not eliminated poverty. By the end of the 1920s, Tokyo, like Osaka and most other Japanese cities, was characterized by an unusual combination of poor quality housing, built of wood, for the majority of urban dwellers alongside a lack of significant slum districts.

As with the European colonial powers, the capture and recasting of major cities and the construction of new ones were central to Japan's imperial policy in Korea, Taiwan, and China (for a fuller discussion of Chinese cities during the decades of Japanese imperial aggression, see [Ch. 28](#) on Chinese cities by Kristin Stapleton). Imperial authority was translated into grandiose buildings for governor-generals in Seoul and Taipei. Koreans and Taiwanese were shunted around to make room for new residential districts for Japanese colonialists and business people and their families. The officials who planned Japan's advance through Asia were able to call on the services of architects and planners who jumped at the chance of being able to plan without regulatory encumbrance, often from a *tabula rasa*, in a way that they would never have been able to experience back home. The Japanese made Shenyang the capital for their puppet state of Manchuria. Here they planned a new city, adjacent to the existing settlement, of vast size and ambition. Its main government buildings were linked by broad avenues laid out in radials and grids with a liberal provision of green space.<sup>23</sup>

Land readjustment, which involves the rationalization of adjacent land plots and provision of infrastructure in return for small contributions of land from landowners, was trialled on a large scale by the Japanese in their colonies. In later years, especially after the war, it was increasingly used as a tool for the redevelopment of both urban and rural areas—city centres and in particular land at the urban fringe.

## THE DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF JAPAN'S CITIES

Disaster and destruction are a leitmotif of Japanese urban history, and arguably something of an imaginal obsession. In terms of the sheer scale of damage inflicted there is nothing to compare with the destruction wrought by the blanket fire-bombing of Japanese cities in the last few years of World War II. Tokyo and Yokohama had only recently been rebuilt, having both been destroyed in the cataclysmic earthquake of 1923. Later much of Kobe too was destroyed by an earthquake in 1995, although the casualty rate was much lower, at about 6,000. But there were many other disasters that caused countless deaths in the history of modern Japanese urban life. Among them, one might single out the great floods of 1910 that hit Tokyo and surrounding cities, the floods that paralysed much of Kobe and Osaka in 1938 (616 fatalities), the Ise Wan typhoon which killed some 5,000 people in Nagoya in 1959, the Niigata earthquake of 1964 (26 victims), the Nagasaki flash floods of 1982, which killed 299 people, and on 11 March 2011 the earthquake and tsunami that devastated parts of northeast Japan and caused up to 20,000 fatalities. There have been many others, but this list conveys something of the regularity and geographical spread of these disasters. The immediate post-war period was one of particularly regular devastation, with over 1,000 people killed almost each year from 1945 to 1960. But this was as nothing compared with the devastation of the bombing during World War II, from which only Kyoto and Kanazawa were spared, and the destruction by atom bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the last few days of the war.

In the immediate post-war months, a series of ambitious plans were set out for Japan's destroyed cities, the most ambitious of all being for Tokyo, the work of visionary planner Ishikawa Hideaki.

However, at a time of extreme national stringency, very little funding was available to bring these plans to fruition, and indeed proportionately Tokyo enjoyed even less funding than did other cities. Most activity involved not orderly reconstruction and the provision of park land as envisaged in these plans but the rapid provision of housing, with ‘the majority of rebuilding schemes... consistent with prewar planning culture, concepts and techniques’.<sup>24</sup> Land readjustment was to have been the tool for this rewriting of Japan’s cities along orthogonal lines. However, conditions were not favourable, and Nagoya was one of the few cities in which land readjustment was effectively used. The technique had been deployed from well before the war in agricultural areas around the city, but was used in the aftermath of war destruction to bring about broad new avenues in the centre of Nagoya and throughout the urban area. The city as a result lost that impromptu and unplanned appearance that is for many the hallmark of Japanese urbanism.

It was in the countryside that the greatest changes occurred in the six years that Japan was under the control of the Occupation forces, but the impact of these changes was felt acutely in urbanizing areas. The programme of land reform instigated by the Allies and implemented in 1947 led to the creation of an irredeemably fragmented pattern of growth at the urban fringes. At the same time, as Sorensen argues, strong property rights were reinforced as a result of Japanese representations during the process of writing the new post-war constitution.<sup>25</sup> It is certainly the case that the basic patterns of mid-and late 20th-century urban expansion in Japan have been deeply etched by the small size of landholdings and the deep-rooted proprietorial instincts of landowners.

### 1960s AND 1970s: MEGALOPOLIS—JAPANESE CITIES IN THE HIGH-GROWTH ERA

In the post-war decades, Japanese landscapes were transformed through extensive urbanization and industrialization of much of the country’s alluvial flood plains. As the flood plains filled up with concrete, land was extended into the sea through an acceleration of reclamation work. The population along the Pacific coastal corridor grew exponentially in the high-growth years of 1955 to 1970, but growth was rapid in cities large and small throughout the archipelago, even allowing for successive rounds of administrative mergers. Much of Japan’s coastline was carpeted in concrete, while special zones were created for heavy industry through the construction of so-called *kombinaato*, giant industrial complexes named after Soviet counterparts and based around the petrochemical and oil refining industries. Virtually the whole of Japan’s narrow Pacific coastal strip, which runs with only small interruptions from Fukuoka to Tokyo, had been converted into the base for the production of the consumer goods that penetrated and eventually saturated world markets. And linking it all together was the Shinkansen, the bullet train line, whose first section, along the ‘Tōkaidō megalopolis’ from Tokyo to Osaka, had been completed in time for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. The Olympics themselves had provided a catalyst for various urban ‘modernization’ projects, notably the construction of overhead expressways in Tokyo (followed by other major cities).

Rapid economic growth whetted the appetites of architect and developers. Hyperbolic plans were drafted by leading architects such as Tange Kenzō for a new city to colonize Tokyo Bay, and although these came to nothing, they helped lay the ground for the various mega urban projects that were to be built along the bay in the 1980s. One of the high water marks of this grandiose development-led approach to planning was prime minister Tanaka Kakuei’s *Rebuilding Japan: Plan for the Remodelling of the Japanese Archipelago* (1973), which stoked a frenzy of land speculation around



the country leading to the withdrawal of many of the plans outlined.<sup>26</sup> Economic growth was so rapid that even the economic targets of the government's 1960 income doubling plan were soon exceeded.

Most of the growth was concentrated in the Tōkaidō corridor along the Pacific Coast. This concentration elicited a certain amount of political opposition. The central government's regional and land development plans during this period vacillated between accommodating these voices and those of the centralizers. In the end, the impact of the various plans was probably neutral; and in any case, growth for most of the 1950s and 1960s was so fast as to make planning almost meaningless.

The single-minded pursuit of a form of economic growth based on the export of industrial goods and mass development of the landscape in concrete was unsustainable. By the late 1960s, a number of deadly pollution cases had broken out, alongside many smaller ones—the courts eventually ruling in favour of the plaintiffs. Citizens agitated up and down the country, and voted in reformist mayors and governments to run Japan's largest cities. Japan's local government system had been thoroughly revised and rewritten, largely in the years after the Pacific War. Local autonomy was, however, generally considered to be rather limited. Central government exercised a large measure of control, through funding mechanisms, secondments and legal structures, although there was a considerable degree of overall agreement about directions at a time of rapid development.

Faced with a picture of untrammelled sprawl, the Japanese government undertook a major revision of the City Planning Act in 1968. The primary intent behind the legislation was to give shape to urban growth by channelling it in desired directions. Urban control and promotion areas were created, but as Hebbert and Nakai showed convincingly, the upshot was perverse in that exemptions led to construction in urban control areas, while strategic land retention by farmers contributed to a disorderly conversion of urban promotion areas.<sup>27</sup> In addition, an 'escape clause' for plots of under a tenth of a hectare led to a proliferation of tiny match-box developments deprived of proper infrastructure.

Despite the scale of wartime destruction, the construction of housing was left largely in private hands. State provision of housing remained limited throughout the post-war years, the state seeing housing as primarily a household responsibility. The size of the average dwelling remained small, and life in the major cities was generally rather frugal. State intervention in housing, however, was not entirely absent. Starting in the 1960s, new towns were built by the Japan Housing Corporation on the edges of large cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. Later new towns were developed by private railway companies and contained principally detached houses. But throughout Japanese urban areas in the 1950s and 1960s, four-floor apartment blocks were built to the same pattern. Known as *danchi*, they were intended to mitigate urban sprawl while providing dwellings for rapidly growing urban populations. The baby-boom generation is known, appropriately enough, as the *danchi* generation. But the housing that they occupied has aged along with its inhabitants, and the whole issue of what to do with decaying housing estates came to the fore in the 1990s.

Many of the accoutrements of a comfortable life were missing, as long commutes on crowded trains became the standard pattern of life for young female staff and the ubiquitous male salaried employees (*sarariman*). Commuting distances continued to grow well into the 1980s, as rising prices for residential property pushed homeowners further and further out (a trend accelerated by the continued policy of promoting home ownership and by the normal practice of companies paying their employees' transport bills).

The cliché of Japanese urban life was captured in the picture of station staff cramming commuters

onto crowded trains or the traffic police standing in the middle of busy road junctions wearing face masks. Poor quality of air and a lack of green space contributed to the common picture of urban life at this time. The defining moment came in a leaked 1979 document in which an official of the European Community described the Japanese as ‘workaholics living in rabbit hutches’. The reaction in Japan was one of both indignation and agreement. There was much talk of Japan in terms of rich country, poor people, in a reference to GNP as opposed to quality of life.

## JAPANESE CITIES IN THE POST-BUBBLE DECADES

The Japanese economy adapted better than most others to the era of high energy prices in the 1970s. Japan’s had become the second largest economy in the world, and by the early 1980s it was seen as a paragon of economic management. At the same time, Japan was running massive trade surpluses with the US and other countries at a level considered unsustainable. A combination of repatriated profits in search of a safe berth and American pressure to boost domestic demand in Japan led to rampant speculation on land values in Japan’s major cities, especially Tokyo. A frenzy of speculation led to an absurd state of affairs where the Imperial Palace in Tokyo was said to be worth as much as the whole of the state of California.

The economic bubble burst in 1991 when the first in a series of political scandals broke out. By the mid-1990s land prices had plummeted to the levels at which they had been in the early and mid-1980s. But the juggernaut of urban projects rolled on. The time lags that are an inevitable part of large urban projects meant that many developments planned in the 1980s actually came to fruition in the early 2000s, by which time the Japanese government was once again promoting greater exploitation of urban space, and once again largely in the name of international competitiveness.

Recent decades in Japanese cities have been characterized by successive (indeed, excessive) waves of urban development capital driving Japan’s largest cities out of horizontality and into dizzying verticality and by a concentration of functions, funds, and people in the Tokyo conurbation (for more on this see below, [Ch. 38](#)). And while higher order service industries have moved to Tokyo, provincial cities have suffered further through the proliferation of out-of-town shopping centres and American-style strip developments. The deep malaise that appears to have afflicted Japanese society at least since the collapse of the economic bubble in the early 1990s has manifested itself in the triumph in mayoral elections of unorthodox and maverick politicians, including comedians and, in Tokyo’s case, the ultra-nationalist figure of Ishihara Shintarō.

A host of measures have been developed from 1980 onwards to introduce a more orderly note into urban landscapes and give residents more influence (most notably the District Plan system implemented in 1980), but these have tended to be recast as deregulation measures, taking their place alongside a host of other measures introduced in the 1990s and 2000s whose cumulative impact has been to allow much higher floor area ratios, exploiting vast new amounts of vertical air space and greatly accelerating the number of high-rise buildings in Japanese cities.<sup>28</sup>

Sharp rises, and more recently falls, in property prices have had a destabilizing effect on life in Japanese cities, even if in many respects life has become more comfortable ([Table 29.5](#)). With lower prices for land and for property, there has been a return to city centre living in Tokyo as well as Osaka and one or two other large cities. The population of city centre wards, which had been falling dramatically in the 1980s and into the 1990s, started rising again, as it had not done for many

decades. The picture in provincial cities could not however have been more different. While the population in prefectural capitals with under 1 million residents grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s and into the 1980s and even the 1990s in many cases, it then flattened and started to fall in a number of cities, a process that is inevitably spreading and deepening. In many provincial cities, a shrinking population as well as deregulation and other measures favouring the construction of out-of-town shopping and eating establishments has led to a deep-rooted decline. Meanwhile, as retail outlets move out of smaller urban areas, in the big cities consumption comes to play an ever greater role, and proliferating subcultures feed urban diversity.

It would, however, be a mistake to see the urban life-spaces of Japan as being detached from those in nearby countries. Various commonalities exist between the way life has been lived in recent decades in Japan and in South Korea, Taiwan, and China. This is not surprising. It would be strange indeed if the Japanese approach to economic development had been such an influence without some sort of related impact on urban areas and urban life. Thus in each of these countries the last few decades have seen the materialization of a very plastic urban environment. This is an environment that has been constantly changing under the pressure of corporate investment in urban land and property as business interests take advantage of the shift from a production-based urban landscape to one that derives its dynamism from the activities of finance and related industries, and of consumer and culture capital. Over the last few decades too, many of the products of Japanese culture and its proliferating subcultures have infiltrated neighbouring countries in a flow which, although not one-way, is predominantly outward from Japan.

**Table 29.5 Index of Average Prices of Urban Land, 1980–2010**

	All urban land	6 major cities
1980	70.7	67.8
1990	133.9	276.8
2000	100.0	100.0
2010	58.5	70.9

The six major cities: the 23 ward area of Tokyo (roughly equivalent to the 33 London boroughs), Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe.

2000 is the base year (31 March).

Source: Japan Real Estate Institute (<http://www.reinet.or.jp/>).

## CONCLUSION: PLANS, CAPITAL AND PERPETUAL CHANGE

The great challenge that now faces municipal government leaders in Japan (a challenge that will soon be replicated in large Chinese cities), as well as ordinary residents of urban areas, is that of a declining population and ‘shrinking cities’. If properly managed, this could provide an opportunity. If left unmanaged, the result could be calamitous. But these are issues beyond the scope of this chapter.

Running through this chapter, reflecting the three thematic threads of urban landscape, governance, and life-spaces has been a sense of the pace of change in modern Japanese cities, fuelled (especially in recent decades) by a dynamic of outward sprawl at the edges and upward growth in and around the centre. Japan’s largest cities extended into surrounding farmland and merged with nearby towns and cities; they did this through incremental growth as farmland was converted into urban plots. As this

process began to run its course, they pushed upwards, exploiting the vertical space made available through the relaxation of building regulations. Given the lack of visual evidence that remains, it is sometimes hard to imagine an earlier time, earlier in the modern period, when urban areas in Japan were predominantly two storey and built of wood, and rickshaws were the main form of conveyance. While Japan's cities have frequently suffered from calamitous fires and floods, it is not the grand acts of politicians and planners that stand out as formulators of the urban terrain but rather a piecemeal but constant process of demolition and reconstruction that provides the underlying impulse. Those who live in Japanese cities have had to respond and adapt to the ever-shifting spaces within which everyday life is conducted.

## Notes

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**SOUTH ASIA**

PRASHANT KIDAMBI

UNTIL recently, the perception that the defining feature of Indian society was its predominantly agrarian character had tended to obscure the significance of its cities. Yet the subcontinent has a long and complex history of urbanization and cities have played a crucial role in its economy, society, and politics over the course of the last two hundred years. This chapter offers an overview of the key developments in the history of the city in modern South Asia from the mid-19th century, when India passed under the direct rule of the British Crown, to the early 21st century, when it began to emerge as a significant player within the global economy.

The first part examines the ways in which British colonial rule transformed urban India and addresses three themes. First, it charts the trends in urbanization as well as its changing pattern over time. Second, it considers the nature of urban governance under the Raj. Third, it shows how cities also became the principal site for the creation of a new intermediary domain between state and society—the public sphere—which became critical to the rise of new forms of collective imaginings among Indians of diverse strata.

The second part shifts the focus to the post-colonial period and identifies continuities and shifts in the patterns of urban development. Here, it highlights the key trends in the patterns and structure of urbanization, assesses urban governance, and reflects on the changing public culture of South Asian cities.

**URBAN SOUTH ASIA UNDER THE RAJ: TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION**

A striking feature of the pace of urbanization in colonial South Asia is that it appears to have been fairly static during the ‘long nineteenth century’. Indeed, the available evidence—both quantitative and qualitative—suggests that even though the urban population almost doubled in absolute terms, the subcontinent experienced a form of ‘de-urbanization’ for the better part of this period. In 1800, an estimated 17.6 million people lived in urban centres; this constituted about 11 per cent of the total population of the subcontinent (see Regional [Map II.4](#)). But by 1872, the total urban population was down to 8.7 per cent and it was not until 1911 that it once again returned to the level that it had attained at the beginning of the 19th century.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘de-urbanization’ that characterized many parts of India in the first half of the 19th century stands in marked contrast to the picture of urban growth that we now have for the 18th century. An influential body of scholarship has shown how the decline of the Mughal empire was accompanied by a growing decentralization of power and the attendant rise of regional successor states that depended on an increasingly close nexus of commerce, finance, and politics.<sup>2</sup> Saliently, the rise of these kingdoms spurred the expansion of urban centres, both large and small, and thereby offset the decline of the larger Mughal cities like Delhi and Agra. In the former category were cities like Hyderabad and Lucknow, capitals of the newly independent satrapies carved out by the successors to the

Mughals. The latter category comprised a variety of smaller cities, market towns, and administrative centres that rapidly grew as a result of the interplay between merchants, markets, and the state.

As these regional successor states succumbed to British power towards the end of the 18th century, the cities and towns that had flourished under their rule felt the consequences. Most notably, the royal courts that had sustained the economies of these urban centres diminished in size and significance. Importantly, they no longer generated the same level of demand for goods and services, which had once had such a buoyant effect on their hinterlands. Equally, the disbanding of the large armies and military establishments maintained by the successor states further contributed to the decline of these cities. And as their economic prosperity waned, there was a progressive impoverishment of the artisanal and scribal communities that resided within them.<sup>3</sup>

The decline of the pre-colonial urban structure was also accentuated by the policies of the new regime. As colonial rule became more deeply entrenched, it increasingly circumscribed the power of the indigenous mercantile elites whose activities had contributed to the urban dynamism of the 18th century. Crucially, the colonial state attempted to claw back the administrative powers that had devolved to revenue farmers and tightened its grip over the most lucrative areas of commerce.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, colonial authorities also sought to intervene more directly to curb the involvement of mercantile capital in the commercial dealings of religious institutions and corporations. In turn, these developments resulted in the atrophy of the small- and medium-sized market towns and administrative centres that had dominated the urban landscape in the 18th century.

The sluggish pace of urbanization during the early colonial period was, however, punctuated by bursts of growth in some parts of the subcontinent. Here, the most notable development was the rise of the new colonial port cities on India's eastern and western seaboard. By 1850 Calcutta and Bombay, with populations estimated to be in excess of 400,000 and 500,000 respectively, were the largest and fastest growing cities in the subcontinent. The concentration of administrative, commercial, and educational institutions in these cities attracted a large migrant population.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the consolidation of the English East India Company's rule also contributed to the emergence of new provincial capitals and district towns.

In the two decades after the Great Uprising of 1857, a variety of factors stimulated the pace of urbanization in different areas of the subcontinent. Undoubtedly, the most important of these was the development of a modern transportation system. In particular, the railway network grew rapidly in the second half of the 19th century, integrating India more closely with the world economy while simultaneously deepening the link between the town and the countryside. For instance, the towns that grew fastest in eastern India during the 1870s and 1880s 'were generally located along the newly constructed railway lines in the agricultural belt of the Ganges plains'. In the following two decades, however, it was the towns in the southern areas of the Central Provinces and Berar, with their links to the seaports of eastern and western India, which experienced the fastest growth.<sup>6</sup> Even though the railways undoubtedly destroyed some pre-colonial market towns by taking trade away from them, they also 'invigorated smaller, older settlements, which came to play important roles as servicing and switching spots, such as Waltair (Vishakapatnam), Bareilly, Meerut, and Nagpur'.<sup>7</sup>

Still it was the colonial ports—Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Colombo, and Karachi—that continued to grow most quickly because of their location and role as terminals for the railways and steamships. Bombay's development was particularly spectacular as a result of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which dramatically cut the travelling time to Europe.<sup>8</sup> Even more impressive was the growth of



Colombo, which developed quickly as a result of the burgeoning export trade in coffee, tea, coconuts, and rubber, and became the largest port in South Asia.<sup>9</sup> Karachi was another port whose rapid rise was linked to the onset of colonial rule. During the American Civil War, Sind emerged as an important centre for cotton cultivation and Karachi became a magnet for a wide range of commercial interests. Moreover, after the Suez Canal opened, it was the first port of call for ships arriving from Europe, thereby boosting its status as a key transit centre in the export trade.<sup>10</sup>

A more favourable economic climate from the mid-19th century onwards also stimulated the pace of urbanization in the subcontinent. There was a boom in the export trade for agricultural produce and rising prices for cash crops revived a number of urban centres. Equally important in this context was the onset of modern industrialization in the port cities of Bombay (cotton-textiles) and Calcutta (jute), which became 'hyper-primate' cities, dominating their regional hinterlands and constraining the growth of the intermediate cities within them. As a consequence, by the end of the century both cities attracted large numbers of rural migrants who were tempted by the prospects of work and wages that they offered. Yet these migrants also continued to retain their rural connections, and moved back and forth between the city and the countryside in a seasonal pattern.<sup>11</sup>

Across the subcontinent as a whole, however, the pace of urbanization remained relatively sluggish in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. One major cause for this was the plague epidemic that engulfed many parts of the subcontinent during the late 1890s. The impact of the disease, which killed more than a million Indians by World War I, was most severe in the urban areas.

It was not until the 1930s that the rate of urbanization in India began to speed up. The depression in that decade produced a severe crisis in the countryside as a result of falling agricultural prices, a growing scarcity of credit on account of the withdrawal of capital by British managing agencies and the 'deflationary policies' pursued by the colonial state.<sup>12</sup> As capital began to flow towards the towns, labour followed suit, pursuing prospects of wage employment in the increasingly diversified economies of the larger towns and cities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while the total population of British India grew by 15 per cent in the 1930s, its urban population grew at more than twice that rate. Significantly, 'the population of towns of over 100,000 increased by almost three-quarters while the total urban population increased by less than a third'.<sup>14</sup>

The last decade of colonial rule intensified the rate of urbanization as waves of migrants flooded into cities, either on account of the straitened living conditions in the countryside or as refugees fleeing the horrors of Partition. There was a net increase in the urban population of 18.3 million between 1941 and 1951, a figure that equalled the entire net increase over the four decades spanning 1901–1941.

While the *rate* of urbanization was relatively slow and uneven for the better part of colonial rule, there was nonetheless a growing diversification throughout this period in the *types* of urban settlement. Of course, some urban centres exhibited continuity with pre-colonial forms. This was the case with many of the administrative cities and towns that developed at both the provincial and the district levels in the decades after 1857.

But other cities began to exhibit features that were to be found elsewhere in the industrial capitalist world as a result of the rapid expansion of international trade in the late 19th century. Such was the case with Bombay and Calcutta, the leading Indian manufacturing and shipment centres, which became similar in their gateway function, social structure, and built form to other great port cities around the globe from New York to Liverpool (see [Ch. 43](#)).

Yet other urban forms that emerged over the course of the 19th century were, however, distinctively *colonial* (for more on colonial cities in general see below, [Ch. 40](#)). Thus from the late 18th century onwards the British developed ‘cantonment’ towns that testified to the growing militarization of the English East India Company. The cantonment originated as a military encampment that was located in areas of strategic value, often in proximity to existing urban centres but nonetheless set apart from them. But it became a more formalized type of permanent settlement in the decades after 1857, as the needs of military security became a paramount consideration for the Raj. By the 1860s, there were 114 military cantonments in South Asia, which were self-contained urban centres in their own right. In some cases—for instance, Kanpur and Bangalore—the cantonment towns outgrew their military origins and became major commercial and industrial centres.<sup>15</sup>

The need to preserve their health in the intense tropical climate and a growing perception that the upland regions of India were more salubrious also led to the development of ‘hill stations’. In the 19th century, the British established more than eighty of these settlements. In the summer months, it was common for the entire colonial bureaucratic establishment to move to hill stations like Simla, Ootacamund (Udagamandalam), Darjeeling, Mahabaleshwar, and Nainital. By the end of the 19th century, they had become bustling towns where the British community in India gathered frequently to work, socialize, and recreate ‘home’.<sup>16</sup>

## URBAN GOVERNANCE UNDER THE RAJ

The governance of South Asian urban centres became an increasingly key priority for the colonial state from the mid-19th century onwards. Colonial authorities no longer regarded cities and towns simply as ‘headquarters for revenue establishments or staging points in the export of agricultural produce’.<sup>17</sup> A variety of factors lay behind the growing significance accorded by colonial authorities to issues of urban management. For one, the colonial state faced new financial pressures after the suppression of the 1857 Uprising—inflation, the changing exchange rate, and increasing military expenditure—which placed a strain on the imperial budget. Fearing that any further increases in the taxes paid by the peasantry would trigger rural unrest, colonial authorities began to explore ways of enhancing the economic and financial potential of urban centres. Moreover, the presence of large military contingents in the towns and cities of the Raj also called for investments in improving urban infrastructure, especially sanitation, to safeguard the health of the army.<sup>18</sup>

In order to develop towns and cities the colonial state needed to embark upon a programme of urban investment and reconstruction. But in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising, the financial difficulties of the Raj meant that it was unable and unwilling to contemplate such a task. The colonial state’s response to this conundrum was to shift the responsibility for urban governance on to civic bodies that would raise taxes locally for their requirements. Thus, across colonial India municipalities mushroomed to collect taxes from town dwellers and provide essential civic amenities.

Of course, civic bodies had existed in colonial India even prior to the 19th century. In particular, the presidency capitals of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras had distinctive traditions of local self-government—based on British models—which dated back to the 18th century. But civic administration in these cities was a highly circumscribed affair, rarely catering to the needs of the large number of poorer Indians who resided in them. The situation was even worse in the smaller urban centres, which lacked the most rudimentary civic amenities.

From the 1860s, municipalities came to play an important role in the running of towns and cities. They raised local taxes, identified and validated property rights, drew up laws governing the use of 'public space', and regulated all kinds of urban activities. They also had to provide a range of civic services: policing, sanitation, lighting, road maintenance, and the licensing and supervision of markets. As a consequence, they intervened in the everyday lives of urban dwellers to an extent that was quite unprecedented in the subcontinent's history.

In practice, of course, the municipal bodies tended to be selective in their civic zeal, favouring the residential areas of the colonial elite (see [Plate 30.1](#)). The outcome was a glaring neglect of the poorer quarters within towns and cities, whose festering living conditions and glaring absence of basic civic amenities made them a breeding ground for a variety of epidemics. For their part, a vast majority of Indian urban dwellers responded to the municipality's activities with a mixture of indifference, incomprehension, and hostility. The poor, in particular, who were frequently at the receiving end of policies that targeted them, viewed the municipality as a threat to their precarious livelihoods rather than as a provider of services.<sup>19</sup>



**PLATE 30.1** European quarter, Calcutta, 1922.

At another level, the devolution of powers and responsibilities to local bodies allowed the colonial state to pursue another key objective of its statecraft in the post-1857 period. This was to enlist Indians 'to work for imperial ends' by widening the circles of collaboration. Though some changes were initiated earlier, the famous Ripon Resolution of May 1882 was undoubtedly crucial. It paved the way for the formation of local boards, comprising both elected members and government officials, which exercised control over territorial constituencies. At first, the right to vote or sit on municipal bodies was determined by highly restrictive property and educational qualifications. The municipalities were also under-funded and constantly strapped for cash. Furthermore, despite the grandiose pronouncements that accompanied the Ripon reforms, the civilian Raj retained a tight grip

over the local boards. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the late 19th century few Indians outside a tiny circle of propertied and professional elites took an interest in municipal affairs. Yet for all their limitations, it was in the domain of municipal politics that Indian educated elites first began to contest the iniquities and exclusions of colonial rule.

The outbreak of World War I put paid to Indian demands for further reforms in the sphere of local self-government. It was not until 1918, following the Montague–Chelmsford report on constitutional reform, that the issue was addressed again. The Montford scheme introduced the principle of ‘dyarchy’, whereby political responsibilities were divided between the central and provincial governments. Within this scheme, local self-government became a ‘transferred’ subject and came under the control of provincial legislatures. It also put in place new ‘Scheduled Tax Rules’ that gave local authorities sole control over a number of revenue headings. This, in conjunction with the revived economic conditions of the mid-1920s, enabled urban bodies to embark on a number of public works.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the extension of the franchise after the end of World War I widened middle-class participation in municipal politics. Indeed, in the 1920s nationalist politicians increasingly took charge of the municipalities in British India. Many Congress stalwarts learnt the art of government in this sphere of politics: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Ahmedabad, Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad, and Subhas Chandra Bose in Calcutta being the most notable examples.

However, the 1930s saw a reversal of many of the trends in municipal governance and politics that had marked the previous decade. Notably, the Government of India Act of 1935, which devolved more fiscal powers to provincial legislatures and repealed the special taxation rules that had provided local bodies with an assured stream of revenue, dimmed the lustre of municipal government.<sup>21</sup> Municipalities thus became less attractive to ambitious politicians who now moved to the greener pastures of provincial politics.

## URBAN PUBLIC CULTURE UNDER THE RAJ

South Asian urban centres under the Raj also became key sites for the emergence and consolidation of new forms of urban public culture. It was in cities that Indians encountered and came to terms with new ideas of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ and it was here too that they began to recognize the potential of novel modes of association and sociability. This was reflected in the rapid proliferation of a variety of associational ventures such as caste and religious societies, commercial associations, nationalist organizations, charitable trusts, trade unions, and sporting clubs. Simultaneously, there also arose a vibrant and dynamic print industry that churned out a growing volume of books, newspapers, journals, tracts, and pamphlets both in English and in regional Indian languages.

The contours of the ‘civil society’ that emerged in 19th-century India may have been defined by colonial power and inspired by contemporary British models, but its substantive character was determined by indigenous initiatives. Notably, an ever-increasing number of Indian town dwellers took to forming associations in the pursuit of their mutual ends.

The causal link between urbanization and modernization and the expanding universe of associational activity was by no means straightforward. A variety of contingent factors—the growth of networks that operated on a regional or national level, as well as specific events, individuals, and movements—played a crucial role in mediating between underlying structural forces and specific associational ventures.

Two countervailing trends can be discerned in the spectacular expansion of associational life in

towns and cities across colonial India. On the one hand, a number of the clubs, societies, and trusts established by Indians in these years were organizational ‘hybrids’ that combined voluntary and ascriptive membership criteria. On the other hand, there also developed more paradigmatic forms of voluntary association that adhered to the principle of open access based on secular membership criteria.

The associational activities that characterized the urban public arena in colonial India had ambiguous and contradictory effects. The large number of clubs and societies that were formed in this period undoubtedly generated in their members a capacity for mutual sociability and solidarity as well as a concern about the ‘common good’. Equally, they performed an ‘integrative’ function within urban society at a time of rapid and far-reaching social change. Yet these voluntary associations did not always adhere to the values of autonomy, equality, and deliberative decision-making. Nor were they free of tensions and conflicts. At times, internal rivalries ripped apart associations as their members competed against each other for power and prestige. In other instances, associational activities produced deep fissures within urban society that even resulted in riots. Furthermore, ‘modern’ forms of collective sociability served to refashion a variety of putatively primordial attachments and ‘traditional’ identities.

The rich diversity of associational activity within urban civil society thus ensured that the public sphere in colonial India was not a ‘homogenous, consensual, unitary space’. On the contrary, the public sphere was a ‘segmented’ domain, in which the fashioning of the ‘autonomous, reason-bearing individual’ was off set by a contrary logic through which ‘community identities were reworked and reaffirmed’. Urban public culture was thus simultaneously shaped by processes of mutual dialogue and the ever-present threat of its violent breakdown.<sup>22</sup>

Another noteworthy feature of the urban public sphere was its role in forging the collective identity of the Indian middle class. Through their activities within the public sphere ‘educated, respectable, but hardly the richest, most powerful or influential of men in colonial India’ defined themselves as the ‘middle class’ and thereby became the new ‘arbiters of native social conduct and aspirants to direct political power under British rule’.<sup>23</sup> Notably, by the early 20th century the middle classes participated in various forms of civic activism that sought to strengthen bonds of community and nation. They established and ran schools, universities, libraries, hospices, co-operative credit societies, and conducted relief work during calamities such as floods and famines. Furthermore, they drew upon both Western ideas of service and associational philanthropy as well as longstanding Indian traditions of *seva* (service) and *dana* (charity) in propagating ideals and practices of active citizenship, patriotic endeavour, and ‘constructive nationalism’.<sup>24</sup>

It should not be assumed, however, that urban public culture was solely dominated by the middle classes. From the late 19th century, the urban working classes too began to organize themselves in various ways, ranging from educational ventures to self-help societies. In the inter-war period their political aspirations began to take on a more militant form. These years saw a profusion of trade unions, charitable societies, reformist associations, and volunteer corps among the urban poor. Equally, there was a proliferation of *akharas* (wrestling clubs), whose activities ranged from cultivating the physical prowess of their working-class adherents to providing the necessary muscle power for rival parties during the periodic episodes of violence that swept over towns and cities across colonial India.<sup>25</sup>

## TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH ASIA

The most significant aspect of South Asian urbanization in the postcolonial era has been the massive increase in the size and significance of the population living in towns and cities (see [Tables 30.1 – 2](#) and [Regional Map iii.4](#)). In 1950, the urban population of South Asia was about 71 million, out of a total population of about 454 million. By 2007, the urban population stood at 477 million and accounted for a third of the entire population in the subcontinent. Over the same period, the increase in the total number of urban centres with a population of at least 100,000 persons was equally astonishing: from 91 in 1950 it shot up to 550. Of these, 435 were in India, 65 in Pakistan, 9 in Nepal, and 6 in Sri Lanka. An estimated 308 million people lived in them, comprising 65 per cent of the urban population and 21.8 per cent of the total population of the region as a whole. Furthermore, in 2007 there were 56 South Asia cities that had a population of more than a million inhabitants, making up 40 per cent of the total urban population. Of these, ten were ‘mega-cities’, each with a population of more than 5 million. Collectively, these ‘mega-cities’ had a population of 107 million, which was 22.5 per cent of the urban population and 7.6 per cent of the subcontinent’s total population.<sup>26</sup> For contemporary Chennai (Madras) see [Plate 30.2](#).

However, these statistics obscure significant variations in the level of urbanization within the different South Asian countries. Thus, on the one hand, Pakistan has experienced a relatively high degree of urbanization since the 1980s, and its principal cities are massive urban agglomerations comprising urban, suburban, and peri-urban settlements. Sri Lanka and Nepal, on the other hand, are notable for their comparatively low levels of urbanization.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 30.1 South Asian Urban Population, 1950–2007**

	1950			1975			2007		
	Total population (thousands)	Urban population (thousands)	Percentage urban	Total population (thousands)	Urban population (thousands)	Percentage urban	Total population (thousands)	Urban population (thousands)	Percentage urban
India	357,561	60,936	17.0	620,701	132,406	21.3	1,049,874	350,658	33.4
Pakistan	36,944	6,473	17.5	68,294	17,985	26.3	164,541	68,186	41.4
Bangladesh	41,783	1,774	4.2	73,178	7,214	9.8	146,887	47,063	32.0
Nepal	8,643	231	2.7	13,548	654	4.8	28,196	7,184	25.5
Sri Lanka	7,782	1,193	15.3	14,042	2,736	19.5	21,064	3,501	16.6
Bhutan	734	15	2.1	1,161	53	4.6	2,259	479	21.2
Maldives	82	9	10.6	137	24	17.3	345	130	37.6
Totals	453,529	70,631	15.6	791,061	161,072	20.4	1,413,167	477,200	33.8

Source: Heitzman, *City*, 176.

**Table 30.2 Mega-Cities in South Asia, 1950–2007**

	Population 1950 (thousands)	Average annual growth rate 1950–55	Average annual population growth (thousands)	Population 1975 (thousands)	Average annual growth rate 1975–80	Average annual population growth (thousands)	Population 2007 (thousands)	Average annual growth rate 2005–10	Average annual population growth (thousands)
	Calcutta	4,513	2.27	108,40	7,888	2.71	228,40	14,769	1.71
Mumbai	2,857	3.7	115,00	7,082	4.02	315,20	18,905	1.93	368,00
Chennai	1,491	2.68	42,80	3,609	3.05	118,80	7,159	1.74	125,80
Delhi	1,369	5.26	82,60	4,426	4.56	226,40	15,785	2.42	387,00
Hyderabad	1,096	1.45	16,60	2,086	3.52	80,20	6,358	1.97	126,80
Karachi	1,047	6.09	74,40	3,989	4.71	211,80	12,231	2.65	328,80
Ahmedabad	855	3.27	30,40	2,050	3.74	86,80	5,348	2.20	119,20
Lahore	836	4.02	37,20	2,399	3.67	96,60	6,634	2.71	182,40
Bangalore	746	4.61	38,60	2,111	5.74	140,20	6,751	2.21	150,80
Dhaka	417	5.13	24,40	2,173	8.10	216,80	13,251	3.25	439,00

Source: Heitzman, *City*, 180.



**PLATE 30.2** Skyline of present-day Chennai, India.

Furthermore, contrary to the impression conveyed by the sheer numbers, urbanization in South Asia has not followed a trajectory of rapid, unilinear, and uninterrupted growth since the 1950s. Indeed, the *rate of urban growth* has been marked by discontinuities and periodic reversals. The Indian case is especially instructive in this regard. In the decade preceding the census of 1951, the country's urban population had grown at an annual compound rate of 3.47 per cent. But the annual rate of urban growth dropped to 2.34 per cent in the 1961 census. The 1960s saw the rate of urban growth increase again to 3.21 per cent, largely because of an increase in the size of the existing urban centres rather than the creation of new ones. In the following decade, the annual growth rate of the urban population increased yet again to 3.83 per cent. Much of this increase was a result of the rise of new towns, of which over a thousand were included in the census for the first time. The startling increase in the rate of urban growth in the 1970s triggered frenzied speculation about 'hyper-urbanization'. But unexpectedly, the 1991 census 'recorded a significant decline in urban growth'. The 3.1 per cent increase in the urban growth rate during the 1980s was 'much below all official projections'. A similar pattern repeated itself in the following decade when, contrary to the projections of various government agencies that the urban population would grow by 4.1 per cent as a result of economic liberalization, the census figures recorded an annual growth rate of 2.73 per cent.<sup>28</sup> However, the provisional results for the 2011 Indian census suggest that the deceleration of the preceding two decades is being reversed, with the rate of urbanization appearing to pick up once again.

At one level, some changes in India's urban growth rate can be attributed to 'definitional anomalies'. For instance, the 1961 census called into question the rather loose definition of urban centres in 1951 and declassified as many as 803 towns with a combined population of 4.4 million. But the decline in the growth rate of the urban population during the 1980s and 1990s was not simply an outcome of 'definitional' factors. Instead, it reflected macro-economic changes that had taken place in these two decades. Saliently, the process of industrial growth during the 1990s was 'capital intensive' in the private sector and sluggish in the public sector; this lowered the demand for labour in urban areas, and reduced the rural-urban flows of migration. The increasing tendency to locate big manufacturing units in rural areas or the peripheries of large cities, in order to circumvent the land and environmental restrictions within their municipal limits, also played a part in reducing urban employment in the organized sector. Simultaneously, the capacity of the unorganized sector to absorb migrants also diminished significantly in the 1990s. Consequently, contrary to the feverish projections of policy-makers, urban industrial growth did not significantly increase migration to the cities and towns from the countryside.<sup>29</sup>

Recent studies of Indian urbanization, based on data generated by the decennial censuses, have also challenged the widely entrenched perception that it has been largely driven by 'migration induced by

rural distress'. On the contrary, it has been argued, 'natural increase accounts for the principal share of urban growth of about 60 per cent', whereas net rural–urban migration contributes 'only about 21 per cent' to urban growth.<sup>30</sup>

The *urban structure* in South Asia continues to reflect the enduring legacy of the colonial past. Most notably, the great cities of British India have continued to dominate the urban landscape of the subcontinent in the post-independence period. According to the 2011 Indian census, the three largest urban agglomerations are Mumbai (Bombay) (18.4 million); Delhi (16.3 million); and Calcutta (14.1 million). Significantly, the rate of population growth in all three cities appears to have slowed down over the last decade. Nonetheless, reckoned in terms of sheer numbers, the increase in their population over the past six decades has been quite staggering: in 1950, Mumbai's population was about 2.8 million, Delhi's 1.3 million, and Calcutta's 4.5 million. Karachi in Pakistan and Dhaka in Bangladesh grew equally spectacularly over the same period. The population of Karachi went from a little over a million in 1950 to more than 12 million in 2007. The case of Dhaka was even more astonishing: its population rose from around 400,000 persons in 1950 to more than 13 million in 2007, 'a 3,177 per cent increase'.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, in many of these 'mega-cities' it was the periphery rather than the old core that grew fastest in the late 20th century. A variety of factors was responsible for this. For one, dense urban agglomerations of industrial clusters and corridors developed along the peripheries of mega-cities. Equally, the rapid growth of these peripheral areas was also a result of the growing scarcity of available resources and the high cost of living within the core areas of these cities.

Next to the 'mega-cities' in order of importance are the 'million-plus' cities, each with a population of between 1 and 5 million. In 2007, there were 46 of these in South Asia, with a total population of 84 million. This constituted 17.5 per cent of the region's urban population and 5.9 per cent of its total population.<sup>32</sup> These 'million-plus' cities have tended to grow fastest among all categories of urban settlements. According to the provisional findings of the 2011 Indian census, their number has increased from 35 to 53 in the past decade.

But the rise of 'mega-cities' and 'million-plus' cities is not the only noteworthy feature of urbanization in South Asia in the post-colonial period. An equally prominent development has been the rapid growth of 'middling' cities, each with a population of over 100,000, but less than a million. In 2007, there were 494 cities in this category, with a combined population of approximately 118 million persons and accounting for 25 per cent of the urban population. These middling cities are of different kinds. Some combine roles as important marketing and administrative centres that stand 'atop hierarchies of lower-level central places'. Others grew as a result of a 'grassroots capitalism that contributed to agglomeration or clustering of related industries and associated services'. Yet others have 'grown from the galaxy of former towns and sub-district capitals lying 20 to 40 kilometers away from a larger city'.<sup>33</sup>

Below these 'middling cities' are a large number of cities with less than 100,000 residents. Many of these cities have mushroomed 'in the immediate vicinity of million cities or mega-cities, evolving from villages or towns lying adjacent to zones of metropolitan urban expansion'.<sup>34</sup> In India, even though the population of these small cities has grown in absolute terms, the rate of increase has until recently been slower than that of the so-called 'Class I' cities with a population of over 100,000 persons.

Significantly, in recent decades the patterns of urbanization in some regions of South Asia have



begun to exhibit a significant reversal in the relationship between the level of urbanization and the rate of urban growth. In India, for instance, the developed states—Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka—had high levels of urbanization and medium to low rates of urban growth in the four decades between 1951 and 1991. By contrast, over the same period, the under-developed states—Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh—had low levels of urbanization but registered high rates of urban growth. Between 1991 and 2001, however, many of the developed states experienced rates of urban growth above the national average, while the ‘backward’ states saw their rates fall below it. There was thus a pronounced ‘dualism’ between the process of urbanization in India’s most developed and under-developed states.<sup>35</sup>

## THE STATE AND THE CITY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

The policies and actions of post-colonial states have crucially shaped processes of urban development in South Asia. They have done so in three ways. First, in the immediate aftermath of independence, the new governments of South Asia set about constructing new national or provincial capital cities as well as industrial townships. Second, state economic policies and investment have been critical in spurring the process of capital accumulation within the larger metropolitan cities. Third, state policies have also had a major impact on the nature of urban governance in the subcontinent.

In the second half of the 20th century, the national governments of South Asia periodically undertook the construction of new capital cities. In Pakistan, one major consequence of General Muhammad Ayub Khan’s coup in October 1958 was the abandonment of Karachi as the national capital. The military administration embarked on an ambitious project to develop a new capital in the vicinity of Rawalpindi and chose a Greek architect, Konstantinos Doxiades, for the task. Doxiades conceived Islamabad as a ‘dynapolis’ in which there would be an integral link between ‘humanity, society, buildings, networks, and nature’. By 2007, the new capital had a population of over 800,000 persons, a majority of whom were employed in the city’s administrative and military establishments. Dhaka, on the other side of the subcontinent, also saw the construction of a national capital enclave in the 1960s.<sup>36</sup>

In India, the first decade after Independence saw the formation of a number of new regional states that required capital cities. The most notable among these were Bhubaneswar in Orissa, Chandigarh in Punjab, and Gandhinagar in Gujarat.<sup>37</sup> Alongside the construction of new capitals, governments in the subcontinent also developed new industrial townships, often with foreign collaboration. For instance, in 1961 the Government of India commissioned a major steel plant at Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh, which was built with Soviet assistance. Two more steel plants were commissioned the following year, the first at Rourkela in Orissa (with German collaboration), and the second at Durgapur in West Bengal (with British collaboration). A decade later, the Government of India signed an agreement with the Soviet Union to build the Bokaro Steel City in Bihar. From the outset, the state dominated life in these ‘model towns’, providing living quarters and civic amenities for its employees, as well as setting the framework within which their educational, social, and cultural life took shape. But as the process of urbanization gathered pace, the townships attracted vast numbers of migrants. As a result, they ‘took on the characteristics of the other large cities in South Asia’.<sup>38</sup>

State investment was also responsible for the growth of many longstanding urban centres. The most notable example of this phenomenon was Bangalore, which was home to a number of significant

industries in the decades after Indian independence. Here were clustered together large-scale enterprises such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), a major defence supplier; the Indian Telephone Industries (ITI), which produced phone equipment; and Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), a watch-manufacturing company. Alongside these factories, there developed a range of secondary industries to service their needs. A number of other government institutions dedicated to science and technology—most notably, the National Aeronautics Laboratory (NAL) and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)—further buttressed Bangalore’s status as a premier industrial city. It was this environment that laid the foundations for the city’s subsequent emergence from the late 1990s as the principal hub of the information technology revolution in India<sup>39</sup> (for more on Bangalore see below, [Ch. 38](#)).

Since the early 1990s, a number of state governments in India have also tried to remake their cities in keeping with the requirements of globalization and economic liberalization. For instance, the government of Maharashtra has striven to transform Mumbai into a ‘global city’ along the lines of Hong Kong and Shanghai. To this end, it appointed a ‘Task Force’ in 2004 to transform the city into ‘one of Asia’s leading service hubs’ with an emphasis on a mixture of high-end financial services, information technology, retail, recreation, construction, and consumption.<sup>40</sup>

But like its colonial predecessor, the post-colonial state has struggled to impose its authority over the city. Indeed, urban planning and development in Mumbai quickly became mired in controversies over the allocation and utilization of resources for public projects. Key urban policies were the contingent outcome of political competition and conflict between different class interests within a democratic set-up.

The policies of post-colonial states are also a key explanatory variable in understanding the nature of civic governance in urban South Asia. A noteworthy feature here is the parallels between colonial and post-colonial urban management. As in the colonial period, the political and fiscal autonomy of local self-governing bodies in urban areas was severely circumscribed by the policies of central and provincial governments in the newly independent nation-states of the region.<sup>41</sup>

For instance, municipalities in post-1947 India continued to remain under the jurisdiction of state governments, which had the right to curtail the powers of elected civic bodies. Furthermore, as in the colonial period, state governments in India often created ‘parastatal’ agencies that were ‘responsible to the state for the implementation and administration of water supply and sewerage, housing, or urban planning’.<sup>42</sup> These bureaucratic agencies bypassed the elected municipalities and thereby hampered the growth of a genuinely participative democracy within the civic arena.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, just as the financial crunch that it faced in the late 19th century prompted the colonial state to embrace urban self-government, the fiscal troubles of the Indian state in the late 20th century forced it ‘to give greater powers to urban local bodies and to encourage their self-financing endeavours’. From the mid-1980s, market-oriented strategies were initiated in order to generate a ‘surplus’ from urban centres with an attendant devolution of powers to urban local authorities. One major component of this reorientation in state policy was the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992, which gave local bodies increased powers ‘to manage and control the urban’ environment.<sup>44</sup>

Critics of the ‘neo-liberal’ paradigm of governance have highlighted how it has skewed patterns of urban development in contemporary India. For one, the policies stemming from this paradigm have sought to enhance the urban infrastructure of ‘metro-cities’ in the more developed regions of the

country, with a view to facilitating processes of capital accumulation within them. As a result, small and medium cities, especially those in the ‘backward’ states, have tended to languish, with high levels of urban poverty and little by way of basic civic amenities. Simultaneously, the ‘decentralization’ of urban governance has spurred the ‘privatization of land and civic services’ within the larger Indian cities, thereby accentuating existing disparities and segmenting them ‘into rich and poor colonies’.<sup>45</sup>

## URBAN PUBLIC CULTURE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

When we turn to the public arenas of South Asian cities, it is the shifts rather than the continuities that are most striking in recent years. The period from the late 1980s, in particular, has witnessed a dramatic transformation in urban public culture across the subcontinent. Two novel developments are visible in South Asian cities in this period. First, significant sections of the urban middle classes have been profoundly transformed by new modes of consumption that have accompanied processes of globalization and economic liberalization. Second, the urban public arena has become quite central to the fashioning of new political imaginings among plebeian groups that aspire to a modernity from which they have been excluded.

It is in contemporary India that these developments have most visibly manifested themselves. The public culture of the Indian middle classes had for long been influenced by Gandhian ideals of spartan living and Nehruvian state ideologies of development, both of which discouraged extravagance in consumption. Such frugality and restraint was seen as a political imperative in a society in which the vast majority of the population lived below the poverty line. Moreover, the middle classes were also constrained by their relatively modest economic circumstances. Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a startling shift in the cultural orientation of the Indian middle classes.<sup>46</sup> In particular, the increased spending power of the ‘new middle classes’ has spawned a brash consumer culture, a development amply reflected in the ever-proliferating shopping malls, with their glittering array of commodified goods and images, which now dominate the landscape of many Indian cities. These sites and forms of consumption have become integral to the public enactment of ‘middle classness’, as can be seen in the so-called ‘Bollywood’ films of recent years (see also below, [Ch. 39](#)).<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the ‘intensified circulation of images of global cities’ through the mass media has had important consequences for the ways in which the Indian middle classes now perceive and engage with the urban poor.<sup>48</sup>

Simultaneously, in the age of the ‘democratic revolution’ the plebeian classes have also begun to advance their own claims on the spaces of the city. Indeed, in recent years the ‘subaltern’ has become an increasingly visible and voluble presence on the streets of South Asian cities. In some instances—most notably, in the ‘nativist’ movement spearheaded by the Shiv Sena in Mumbai—this has taken the form of ‘unruly and unpredictable’ forms of collective violence in public spaces, directed at times against the agencies of the state and at times ‘against political opponents or other communities’. But the Sena is by no means unique in this regard; the mobilization of ‘young, mobile and plebeian men as activists and audience’ is now a ubiquitous feature of urban politics across the subcontinent. As a result, the culture of ‘paternalism’ that once permeated the relationship between the elites and the plebeian classes in South Asian cities has been severely eroded.<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the dawn of the 21st century, South Asia is at the epicentre of a new global 'urban revolution'. It is estimated that by the middle of the current decade the region will account for five of the world's dozen largest urban agglomerations. Furthermore, according to a United Nations report, there may well be over 800 million South Asians living in towns and cities by 2030.

This chapter has tried to indicate the historical processes that have played a part in this extraordinary transformation. It has also argued that these were neither ineluctable nor unilinear. For much of the 19th century, South Asia experienced slow and uneven rates of urbanization. Even in recent decades, when the absolute numbers of urban dwellers have acquired mind-boggling proportions, phases of growth have alternated with phases in which the rate of urbanization has declined.

The foregoing account has also highlighted how colonial power moulded the structure, governance, and public culture of South Asian cities in historically unprecedented ways. Furthermore, it has suggested that the colonial legacy has continued to weigh heavily on these cities even in the post-colonial era. Yet in recent years contemporary South Asian cities have embarked on trajectories of growth that were scarcely conceivable even a few decades ago. Indeed, propelled by the forces unleashed by globalization and economic liberalization, these cities have come to symbolize both the possibilities and perils of South Asia's experience of urban modernity. For some, they are dynamic sites of creative innovation and enterprise. Others have conjured up dystopian visions of a 'planet of slums' marked by structural urban poverty, overcrowded shanty towns, disorderly politics, and violence. But underlying both these perspectives, there lurks the anxious recognition that South Asia's cities perhaps represent 'the future of urban civilization on the planet'.<sup>50</sup>

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## SOUTH EAST ASIA AND AUSTRALIA

HOWARD DICK AND PETER J. RIMMER

SOUTH East Asia does not impinge upon the rest of the world like China, Japan, or India (see above, [Chs. 28 – 30](#)) but in 2012 no survey of world cities can ignore this region. Singapore is unambiguously a world city and Kuala Lumpur is pressing for such status; Jakarta and Manila are mega-cities of around 20 million people, equivalent to the population of the entire continent of Australia; Bangkok is a mega-city of almost 10 million; Rangoon (Yangon), Surabaya, and Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) have populations of around 5 million with another twelve cities of more than a million ([Table 31.1](#)). One million population may now be taken as the threshold at which a large town becomes a city. Overall, more than half the region's 600 million people live in cities, about the same as the average across the whole of Asia (see [Regional Map III.6](#)). This is all an enormous change from the situation in the 1930s, towards the end of the colonial era, when the largest city was no more than half a million people and the level of urbanization across the region was barely 10 per cent.

From a comparative perspective, are South East Asian cities distinctive, as some literature would suggest, and is there a South East Asian 'type' of city or a shared urban experience? This chapter will first review the historical trajectories of South East Asian cities, second discuss urban governance and the state, third identify the present urban hierarchy, and fourth explore urban dynamics by linking regional identity to the international connections as revealed by airline networks. South East Asian urbanism is thereby seen to have distinctive features that have arisen from the exigencies of a tropical monsoon climate, as also from associated cultural patterns; at the same time, modern technologies, introduced first through colonization and more recently through globalization and industrialization, are easing the constraints of climate and leading to more conformity with Western urban norms. Variation across South East Asian cities also precludes simple generalization.

**Table 31.1 Populations of Main Cities in South East Asia and Australia, 1850–2010 (millions)**



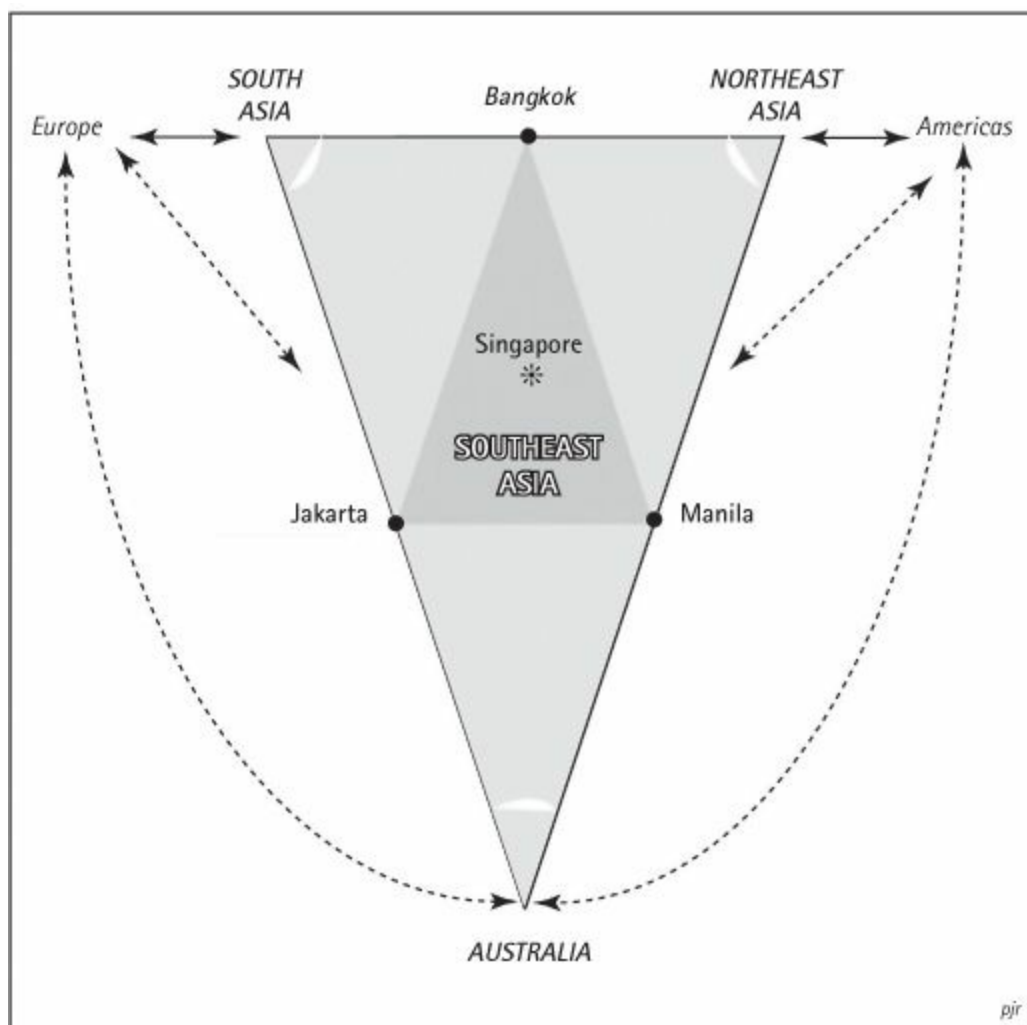
	c.1850	1930	1980	2010
Manila	0.2	0.3	6.9	19.6
Batavia/Jakarta	0.1	0.4	6.0	15.4
Bangkok	0.1	0.5	4.7	8.9
Saigon/HCMC	n.a.	0.3	2.9	6.1
Singapore	0.1	0.6	2.4	4.9
Kuala Lumpur	—	0.1	0.9	4.9
Rangoon/Yangon	0.1	0.4	2.4	4.7
Bandung	n.a.	0.2	1.5	3.3
Surabaya	n.a.	0.4	2.0	3.0
Medan	n.a.	0.1	1.3	2.7
Hanoi	n.a.	0.1	0.9	2.7
Cebu	n.a.	n.a.	0.5	2.5
Palembang	n.a.	0.1	0.8	1.8
Semarang	n.a.	0.2	1.0	1.7
Phnom Penh	n.a.	0.1	0.2	1.5
Davao	n.a.	n.a.	0.6	1.4
Makassar	n.a.	0.1	0.6	1.4
Johor Bahru	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	1.1
Mandalay	n.a.	0.1	0.5	1.0
George Town/Penang	n.a.	0.1	0.3	1.0
<b>Australia</b>				
Sydney	0.04	1.2	3.2	4.5
Melbourne	0.03	0.9	2.8	4.0
Brisbane	0.008	0.3	1.1	2.0
Perth	0.006	0.2	0.9	1.6
Adelaide	0.03	0.3	0.9	1.2

Note: 1850 figures are from various sources; 1930 figures are drawn from B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia and Oceania, 1750–2005*, 5th edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); the 1980 figures from Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/>; and the 2010 figures for cities over 1 million are from Thomas Brinkhoff, *The Principal Agglomerations of the World*, <http://www.citypopulation.de/world/Agglomerations.html>

Before World War II, South East Asia was seldom recognized as a region, being simply an agglomeration of colonies of Britain (Burma, Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and North Borneo), the Netherlands (Dutch East Indies/Indonesia), France (Indo-China), and the United States (Philippines) with only Thailand retaining its autonomy.<sup>1</sup> If anything the region was negatively defined, that is to the west not India, to the north not China, and to the south not Australia. Since 1967, however, South East Asia has defined itself as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the five founding countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Thailand increasing to ten through the admission of Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam. Yet by no means is South East Asia self-contained: it is best viewed as an open region nested within the adjacent spheres of India, China, and Australia (Fig. 31.1).

As a region South East Asia equates to Europe in terms of population but culturally it is much more diverse. There has never been a period of imperial unity. Religion divides: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Nevertheless, as Anthony Reid has shown, there is a sub-stratum of common cultural norms.<sup>2</sup> Today, in the main cities there may also be observed a convergence towards an international middle-class lifestyle. Nevertheless, over the decades since independence the predominant trend has been towards uniting the disparate peoples who once coexisted within arbitrary colonial boundaries into a shared national identity. As in Europe, public education systems

have imposed national languages, now reinforced by national television networks. On the periphery of Muslim Thailand and the Philippines, however, the ‘imagined (national) community’ is still contested in favour of an amorphous Islamic World (below, [Ch. 32](#)).<sup>3</sup>



**FIGURE 31.1** South East Asia: an open system with connections to South Asia, North East Asia, and Australia.

Notwithstanding its proximity to South East Asia, Australia remains a separate continental region, excluded by mutual consent from ASEAN, trading heavily with north-east Asia, but oriented by sentiment, culture, and security ties towards the United States and Europe. As a region of recent settlement, its urban history and structure are also quite different. Culturally, Australia used to be strongly Anglo-Celtic in character, though underpinned by a White Australia Policy. Since 1945, however, immigration has shifted first to Europe and more recently towards Asia, resulting in a more vibrant multicultural society.

### URBAN TRAJECTORIES

Perceptions of the Asian city have been badly distorted by the evolution of the urban studies literature with its origins in the late colonial period. Especially influential was the work of Max Weber (1864–1920) and Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), who set up as an ideal type the model of the autonomous free trading city of Italy or the Hanse.<sup>4</sup> Pre-colonial Asian cities were disparaged as inferior because they were beholden to the ruler and lacked political autonomy. Karl Marx’s ‘Asiatic mode of production’ was also a baleful influence. From Istanbul and Cairo to Peking and Tokyo, the great cities of Asia

were portrayed not as thriving metropolises but as the bloated, indulgent, and inward-looking capitals of degenerate empires and Asiatic despots. South East Asian cities like Hanoi, Ayuthia/Bangkok, Mandalay, and the twins of Surakarta and Yogyakarta came to be depicted as palace towns, quaint remnants of a bygone age without a modern impulse. More recent scholarship, however, has identified pre-colonial port cities as busy commercial entrepôts and emporia that were stifled by colonial intrusion (above, [Ch. 19](#)).

By the 19th century, urban dynamism resided in the colonial capitals and port cities of Singapore and Penang, Batavia (Jakarta), Rangoon, Saigon, and Manila, all relatively new cities and built at least in part to a European template (below, [Ch. 40](#)). None of these colonial cities was especially large, even as late as 1930 being not much over half a million people, while the overall level of urbanization was not much over 10 per cent.

After independence, as rural–urban migration led to an explosion in the size of the region’s capital cities, they were again negatively categorized as ‘Third World Cities’. To Western eyes, (South East) Asian cities were still not proper cities. Yet in 2012 the main cities of South East Asia rank on a world scale and, for all their problems of crowding and poverty, congestion and pollution, are the most dynamic places in each country.

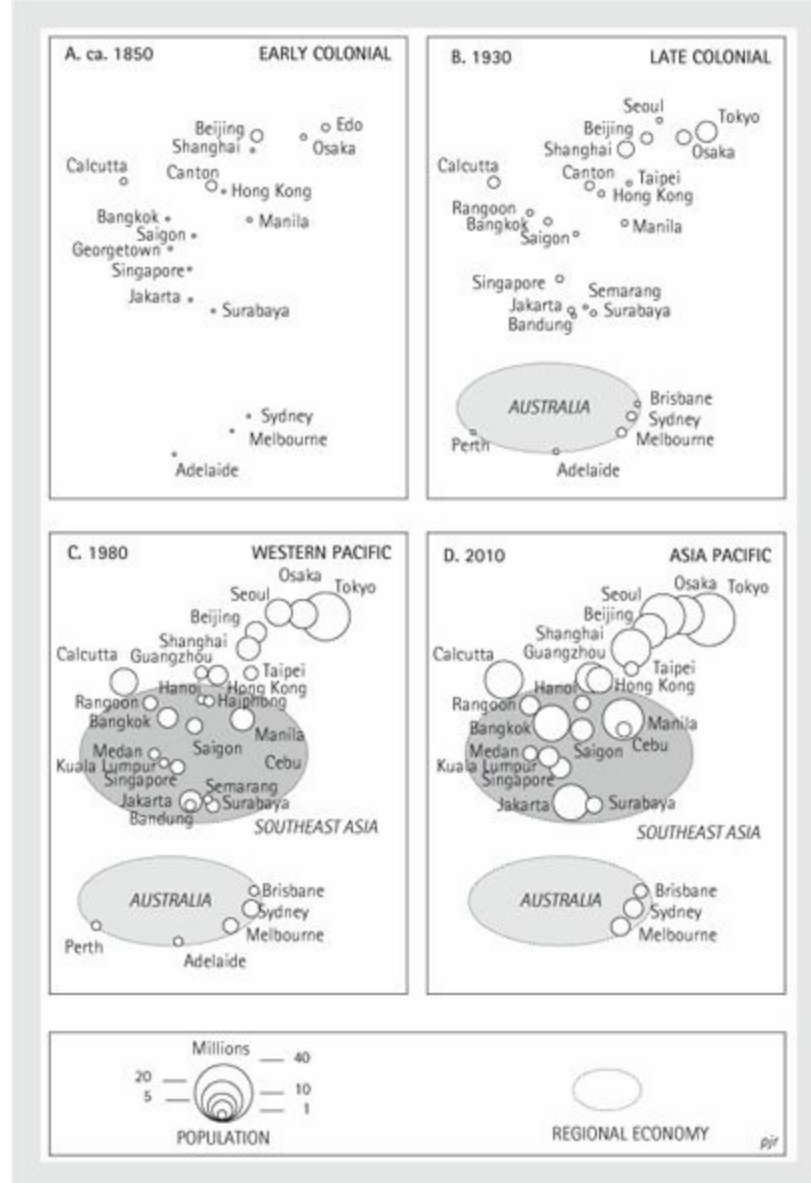
South East Asia’s contemporary urban dynamism resonates with what is known of pre-colonial history. Reid has gone back to early European accounts and some Chinese sources to argue that in the 16th and 17th centuries many of the kingdoms of South East Asia were quite highly urbanized and the leading cities such as Malacca, Ayuthia, and Thang-long (Hanoi) were of at least 100,000 people, a size comparable with most leading cities of Europe.<sup>5</sup> Recent research on Angkor Wat (Cambodia) suggests that in its heyday in the late 1300s this ‘hydraulic city’ may have had a population as large as a million people.<sup>6</sup> The capital of the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit may also have been of this order. It depends very much where the boundary is drawn (above, [Ch. 19](#)).

Until the beginning of the colonial era, South East Asian cities were unwalled, a core of palaces and temples being surrounded by an agglomeration of compounds and hamlets under a canopy of green, most of the trees being fruit-bearing and, along with vegetable gardens, chickens, and livestock, part of the city’s subsistence. To the early Europeans and Chinese, they hardly resembled cities at all but we can now recognize them as proto-suburban. In wet-rice areas like Angkor and East or Central Java, irrigation supported high-density peri-urban settlement, which also provided a labour force for manufacturing, public works, the military, and household service. Quarters were set aside for foreign traders in their own communities and were responsible in the first instance to their own leaders.

The early colonial port cities absorbed many elements of cosmopolitan South East Asia, but also set in train a new urban dynamic. Spanish Manila and Dutch Batavia were laid out in the late 16th and early 17th centuries as model European port cities with a citadel, walls, and canals for the movement of goods and people as well as to provide water and sanitation.<sup>7</sup> Because of the risk of attack, other trading posts were also fortified on a smaller scale. Outside the citadel and walls were the quarters of the foreign trading communities, the artisans and the kampongs or villages of the less loyal ‘native’ population who grew food and supplied the labour force to supplement the household slaves. Yet appearances were to some extent deceptive. While the city inside the walls was recognizably European, the Chinese community generated much of the commercial vitality and artisanship. Nowhere was this to be seen more clearly than in Singapore, founded by Thomas Raffles on a little island in 1819. Though having the small citadel of Fort Canning, it was never a walled city and the

tiny European population provided little more than basic state functions, the main population being Chinese, Malay, and Indian. Singapore was *in* South East Asia but from the outset it has always been a cosmopolitan amalgam of European, Chinese, Indian, and Malay influences, with the Chinese role the predominant one.<sup>8</sup>

As late as the mid-19th century, most of South East Asia had yet to enter the colonial and modern era. Fig. 31.2a suggests how different it all was. In North East Asia, Japan and Korea were still isolated from world commerce while China's treaty ports and the new British colony of Hong Kong had yet to surpass the emporium of Canton (Guangzhou) as the gateway to China. The Spanish had in Manila an offshore base for the China trade but held no sway over the southern part of the sphere loosely claimed as the Philippines. The French had yet to come onto the scene: Vietnam was three separate independent kingdoms of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin. The British had seized Lower Burma but further east the Union Jack flew only over the small settlements of Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and, of course, Hong Kong. Only Java was a territorial colony, the result of a hard-won Dutch victory in the Java War (1825–1830), but the Dutch presence throughout the rest of the Malay Archipelago was little more than a string of small trading posts. In short, there was an uneasy balance of power. There were no longer great and powerful kingdoms that could defeat the Western powers, but neither was there yet the impetus for Western imperial expansion. Within South East Asia, the leading cities were probably smaller than they once had been, nothing to rival Guangzhou or Calcutta, let alone Beijing or Tokyo (Edo).



**FIGURE 31.2** South East Asia: an emerging urban region: (a) 1850 (cities with over 25,000 population); (b) 1930 (cities with over 200,000 population); (c) 1980 (agglomerations over *c.* 1 million); and (d) 2010 (agglomerations over 2 million population).

This urban pattern might have long persisted had it not been for the technological revolution that after the mid-19th century spread from Europe and America to South East Asia. Two decisive events both occurred in 1870, the opening of the Suez Canal to commercial steamship traffic and the extension of the telegraph from Madras to Singapore, extended in 1871 through to Hong Kong, China, and Japan and by 1872 through Java to Australia.<sup>9</sup> Steamships, railways, and telegraphs made it possible for colonial powers to administer and exploit much wider regions. Along with electricity and advances in medicine, they also helped to make it safe and comfortable for Europeans to live in the tropics. Slavery was abolished. Whereas in the 18th century Batavia and Manila had been Eurasian societies administered by a skeleton staff of short-lived white males, by the late 19th century they were becoming prosperous enclaves of white, middle-class European families. As exemplified in late 19th-century Singapore, they were reliant on hackney carriages and man-powered rickshaws imported from Japan.<sup>10</sup> Early in the 20th century these modes were progressively superseded by tramways and motorcars, which accelerated the drift of the white population away from the unsanitary walled town to spacious garden suburbs. Most Chinese continued to live in their shop-houses in the old Chinese quarter, while the indigenous population with scarcely any rights either crowded into increasingly slum-like kampongs (*barrios*) or enjoyed a partial subsistence on the urban fringe. For

them it was a luxury to own a bicycle, which became more affordable in the 1930s with cheap imports from Japan.

Yet all this modernization did not bring much expansion in the size of cities. Between 1850 and 1930 the largest cities in South East Asia increased from around 100,000 to 500,000 but with no apparent increase in the overall level of urbanization (Fig. 31.2b). Over the same period, the population of Tokyo soared to 5 million, Shanghai to 3 million, and Calcutta to 1.5 million. The explanation for the apparent urban backwardness of South East Asia is partly political, partly economic. The Western powers sought to exploit the export potential of the land and resources of their colonies, which required the labour force to be dispersed for agriculture and extractive industries.<sup>11</sup> Manufacturing accounted for only around 10 per cent of GDP, just enough to service the transport infrastructure and meet the processing needs of the export industries, along with supplying the home comforts and perishables to the small, colonial middle class. Migration from the villages was discouraged except to provide household servants, a standing workforce and the seasonal needs for dock labour.

This colonial order broke down in the 1940s with the Japanese occupation and the intensifying struggle for independence from colonial rule. The Dutch never regained control of Indonesia, nor the French of Vietnam. The United States granted independence to the Philippines in 1946, and Britain to Malaya in 1957. The last country to become fully independent was Brunei in 1984. Political independence also broke down the colonial urban order, which had reserved the best land for Europeans and maintained fairly strict controls over migration to the cities.

Uncontrolled migration began during the Japanese occupation as a means of escape from famine and corvée labour demands and accelerated with disorder in the countryside and the lure of work and informal-sector opportunities in the capital cities. In 1930 Jakarta was a city of 530,000 people; by mid-1948 it had doubled to over a million and by 1961 it was 3 million.<sup>12</sup> The flood of migrants from rural villages created a new urban dynamic. Some migrants settled in existing low-income slums like Jakarta's Kebun Kacang and Manila's Tondo District; others squatted along river and canal banks, railway lines and back lanes; yet others took up formerly rural land on the urban periphery.<sup>13</sup> But migration was not the only driving force behind rapid urbanization: there was also the absorption of formerly rural villages into the urban fabric.

Although only Manila suffered heavy wartime damage, all the infrastructure networks of the colonial era were soon overwhelmed.<sup>14</sup> Public transport devolved from electric trams and buses to an informal system of jitneys/jeepneys and pedicabs (*becak*). Electricity blackouts became a daily occurrence; telephones ceased to work; human sewage mixed with urban waste in rivers, canals, and groundwater; even reticulated water supplies became contaminated. Within two or three decades, the model colonial cities of Jakarta, Manila, Rangoon, and Saigon had become almost dysfunctional.

Ordinary people were not necessarily worse off and were indeed attracted by the better opportunities to be found in these capital cities. First, the weakening of the formal-sector economy because of tightening restrictions on foreign investment gave rise to new income-earning possibilities. Second, public sector spending and bureaucracy was concentrated in these capital cities. Third, population growth created its own demand for services and the consequent proliferation of informal-sector opportunities rewarded enterprising migrants. It was the middle class on fixed incomes that suffered, not least state bureaucrats, including teachers and health workers, who had to find alternative ways to supplement their livelihood. Such was the Third World condition, much commented upon at the time and well captured by Terry McGee in his classic work, *The City in*

*South East Asia* with its depiction of ‘pseudo-urbanization’.<sup>15</sup> Only in Singapore did the urban order not break down. There the system of land-use planning, public transport, and welfare housing was carried on after 1959 and elaborated by the socialist People’s Action Party (PAP) government of Lee Kuan-Yew.<sup>16</sup>

The Third World dynamic began to change in the 1980s with the emergence of newly industrializing economies. After independence, South East Asian nations had sought to industrialize by means of high tariffs and quota restrictions to stimulate import substitution. The dismal outcome, however, was uncompetitive, high-cost manufacturing and economic stagnation. The success of Japan, followed by Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, led South East Asian countries to switch to a new mode of export-led industrialization that took advantage of cheap labour.<sup>17</sup> While Singapore embarked first upon this new mode of industrialization followed by Malaysia, the incipient industrialization of the hinterlands of Bangkok, Jakarta, and Manila attracted further migration to the urban fringe, exacerbating the infrastructure deficit. The spread of these urban areas into the adjacent rice plains led Terry McGee to propose his *desa-kota* (village-town) model to account for such porous extended metropolitan regions.<sup>18</sup> From an economic perspective, these multi-nodal and somewhat diffuse regions are reminiscent of the edge cities popularized by Joel Garreau in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

Signs of a new mode of urbanization became apparent in Singapore in the 1970s and in other main South East Asian cities in the 1980s (Fig. 31.2). The outward manifestation was the high-rise office tower, hotel and apartment block. Hitherto South East Asian cities had been low-rise cities, with the notable exception of Manila’s new, American-inspired CBD of Makati. The immediate reason was the tropical monsoon climate, which demanded shade, high ceilings, and airflow, helped by electric ceiling fans. Buildings therefore tended to be spacious, with tiled floors, verandahs, and shuttered windows that could be closed to the heat or rain but open to any breeze.

Air-conditioning was the technological breakthrough that made high-rise buildings feasible in the tropics. Indeed, ceilings had to be lowered to reduce the mass of hot air, thereby lessening the unit cost per square metre of floor space. But first the business climate had to improve enough to attract the investment in immovable buildings. Thus high-rise appeared first in Singapore, which in the early 1970s was achieving success with industrialization, while in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia it was delayed until the 1980s. Malaysia staked its claim in spectacular fashion in 1996 by the opening in Kuala Lumpur of the 456-metre-high Petronas twin towers, then the two highest buildings in the world.

A rapidly changing skyline was just the most visible sign of rapid transformation in the land-use pattern of South East Asia’s leading cities. Office towers were accompanied by high-rise apartments and hotels, spacious multi-storey shopping malls with multiplex cinemas, gated suburban housing estates for the burgeoning middle class and even entire new towns with adjacent industrial estates. All this meant the displacement, voluntarily or otherwise, of millions of people from crowded downtown and fringe kampongs and villages, spreading the urban footprint even further afield.

By the mid-1990s, the building boom had turned into a speculative frenzy, fuelled by artificially low exchange rates and cheap foreign capital. A run on the financial system of Thailand in mid-1997 triggered financial collapse and rapid contagion across South East Asia and as far away as Hong Kong and Korea. This became known as the Asian Crisis. For some years afterwards the skeletons of uncompleted buildings and bare swathes of ground attested to its savagery.

Falteringly and unevenly, South East Asia did recover from the Crisis with its financial systems

strengthened. As far as the manufacturing sector was concerned, the growth prospects of South East Asia were modified by the rise of China as a lower-cost location for foreign investment. Singapore with its concentration upon financial, logistics, and business services has been the only South East Asian country to match China's double-digit growth. Elsewhere growth post-Crisis has been subdued, not more than about 6 per cent. Nevertheless, Indonesia has graduated to becoming a G20 nation, though Thailand's once-impressive progress has been held back by political turmoil.

From the vantage point of 2012 the Asian Crisis can be seen to have slowed, but not changed the emerging built environment of South East Asian cities. Two technologies in particular, the motor vehicle and air-conditioning, along with pre-stressed concrete, have been the carriers for a wave of what may loosely be called First World elements.<sup>20</sup> The traveller who stays within the air-conditioned environment from airport to hotel to office and mall, like the resort tourist, observes South East Asia from the comfort zone as exotic colour. Beyond the comfort zone is another city, hot, crowded, and sweaty, where millions struggle on the margin of poverty. As in Singapore and Hong Kong, this other and often invisible city of slums and cheap labour may in time, with rising real incomes and public intervention, be rehoused in estates of high-rise apartment towers and enjoy some modest prosperity. This is a trajectory and outcome not unlike that in Spain, Portugal, Greece, China, or Brazil. In the meantime, the mega-cities of South East Asia will remain dual cities, as indeed were London, Paris, and New York until the era of post-war prosperity. If there is any striking physical difference, it is that in South East Asia they are hot rather than cold cities, hot all year round. Consequently there are differences of lifestyle, as of politics and culture. The fact that cities may outwardly more closely resemble each other, not least in their high-rise ugliness, does not, of course, mean that they are like each other, or that people are suddenly speaking or behaving in the same way. It is just that the world is becoming smaller.

*Australia* has experienced no such fluctuations in urbanization. For quite some time after the first white settlement at Sydney in 1788, the new colonies were not much more than urban enclaves, 'limpet ports' around the coastline of a hostile continent.<sup>21</sup> The gradual opening up of the interior to the land-extensive pastoral industry did not lead to the rise of any substantial inland towns. Instead the construction of railways from the 1850s onwards channelled exports back to the main coastal cities. In 1850 the level of urbanization was around 40 per cent and by 1900, after the gold rushes, it was around 50 per cent, a level not achieved in South East Asia for another century.<sup>22</sup> By the time of Federation in 1901 Melbourne was a prosperous city of some 500,000 people, Sydney not much smaller; by 1930 both cities had reached the 1 million mark (below, Ch. 40).<sup>23</sup> For all their remoteness from Britain, Australian cities were culturally well attuned to it. This began to change after 1945 when rapid migration from Europe gave rise to a recognizably multicultural society, which in recent years has taken on a more Asian aspect. As of 2006, 9.3 per cent of the Australian population was of Asian ancestry, the corresponding figures being 16 per cent for Melbourne and 17 per cent for Sydney.<sup>24</sup>

## URBAN GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE

Before the colonial era, the main cities of Asia were either royal capitals or city-states in their own right. Rulers mostly held absolute power but the tasks of government were delegated to officials, sometimes foreigners who enjoyed royal favour. So long as they did not create disturbance, communities of foreign merchants were usually allowed a good measure of autonomy.<sup>25</sup>



When the European powers established trading posts and colonies in South East Asia they tended to establish modes of urban governance consistent with those in the mother countries. The Dutch East India Company in 1620 set up in Batavia (Jakarta) the region's first urban council (Gemeente), whose grand Town Hall (Stadhuis) of 1710 can still be seen.<sup>26</sup> Beneath the shadow of the Company, the urban council exercised authority over the small European and Eurasian citizenry. The Chinese community continued to be governed by their own appointed officers according to prior custom.

Representative forms of urban government followed upon growth of the European population after the opening of the Suez Canal had made South East Asian cities more accessible and better layout and sanitation had made them more salubrious. In 1901 the Americans introduced an elected municipal council to Manila. Then in 1904 the Dutch Government passed the Decentralization Act to allow the formation of elected municipal councils in the leading cities of the then Netherlands Indies. These new municipalities took on powers over planning, infrastructure, and services for the European population but governed the 'native' *kampongs* only by default, and with concern mainly upon matters of sanitation that impinged on the European population.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile the British introduced municipal councils to Singapore, Penang, and Rangoon and the French to Hanoi, Haiphong, Saigon, and neighbouring Cholon, Tourane (Da Nang), and Phnom Penh.

Thus by the inter-war years there was across most of South East Asia, except for Thailand, a system of urban governance that involved local responsibility for planning and urban infrastructure with prime concern for the comfort and welfare of the largely middle-class European population.<sup>28</sup> On public health grounds there was some intervention in inner-city 'native' and Chinese areas but little else was done to improve poor living conditions. Behind the well-ordered façade, Singapore's tenements were a disgrace, from which the hard-working rickshaw pullers and female prostitutes suffered most of all.<sup>29</sup>

This colonial mode of urban government quickly broke down after Independence. New national governments sought to centralize rather than delegate power and municipal government was allowed to atrophy. Councils and urban instrumentalities such as transport, power, and water utilities were under-funded and heavily constrained in their ability to set taxes and charges in line with the needs of a growing population and to compensate for inflation. Electric tramway systems were closed down, power supplies failed, and water became undrinkable. At the same time, land-use control became ineffective in the face of widespread squatting and unauthorized land transfers.<sup>30</sup>

Yet notwithstanding these economic and social problems, South East Asia's capitals were still seen as the embodiment of new nations and their aspirations. The city-state of Singapore is itself the nation, whereas Kuala Lumpur was never meant to be a capital. Before the independence of Malaya in 1957, Kuala Lumpur was a modest town of just 316,000: it is now a sprawling, bustling metropolis of almost 5 million. Vietnam is atypical in that Saigon, which from 1954 until 1976 was briefly the capital of the Republic of (South) Vietnam is still much larger than the national capital Hanoi. These capital city metropolises are not only the seats of national government but also the sites where governments are overthrown either by military coups or, like Paris in 1789, by popular uprising. Recent examples of the latter have been Manila in 1986, Bangkok in 1973, 1992, and 2006, and Jakarta in 1998. Fear of popular uprising in Rangoon led the military junta in Myanmar to build a new inland capital at Naypyidaw (meaning, ironically, 'Seat of the King').<sup>31</sup> The Malaysian Government has also built a new capital, Putrajaya, but moved it no further than across the boundary of Kuala Lumpur as a new node along with the Cyberjaya in a 'multimedia urban corridor' modelled on

National aspirations have not always translated into good urban government. Well before the Asian Crisis, there had emerged a sharp distinction between those South East Asian capitals which Rimmer and Dick have described as ‘planned cities’ and ‘self-organizing cities’.<sup>33</sup> The planned cities are those where the national government has taken over control of urban councils and planning processes while ensuring the necessary funding for investment in modern infrastructure. The two notable cases are Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. By contrast, in Indonesia (Jakarta), the Philippines (Manila), and Thailand (Bangkok), modest planning efforts have not been backed by funding or effective agencies to carry out the necessary tasks.

A good example of the difference is the organization of urban transport. Meeting the internal transport needs of large multi-nodal cities is an enormous challenge. The motor vehicle with its flexibility for personalized door-to-door trips is the ideal form of transport, except that in large numbers it gives rise to congestion. Some South East Asian cities have addressed this challenge by careful planning. Singapore is the outstanding example, having imposed heavy taxes on motor vehicles along with congestion pricing for downtown districts, and used the funds to build a sophisticated mass rapid transit system.<sup>34</sup> Kuala Lumpur is also a planned city but has relied much more on private motor vehicles. In other South East Asia capitals there is planning but not much to show for it. Jakarta, Manila, and Bangkok are the ‘self-organizing cities’ in which congestion drives the search for accessibility. Assisted by Japanese planners and funding, Manila and Bangkok are having some success with retrofitting above-ground light rail public transport systems but Jakarta has yet to progress beyond dedicated busways.<sup>35</sup>

*Australian* cities inherited from Britain a tradition of elected urban government. Since Federation in 1901 municipal councils have been the third and lowest tier of government. As state capitals have grown in size and complexity, local government has not kept pace in either powers or funding. Canberra and Brisbane are the only capital cities with a single local government authority. All others are highly fragmented. This has given rise to a political vacuum in which no level of government accepts responsibility for the proper planning and funding of urban infrastructure. Ironically, the leading Australian cities, Sydney and Melbourne, now face a similar infrastructure deficit to that of many South East Asian cities, albeit less severe.

Australia’s urban transport issues are more tractable, not least because income per capita is much higher than anywhere in South East Asia except for Singapore. Nevertheless, fixed route public transport is still laid out on a late 19th-century pattern for simple radial cities, so that emerging multi-nodal urban rings perforce rely heavily upon road-based transport and rapid population growth has led to worsening congestion. While the technologies exist for more energy-efficient orbital public transport, as also for much faster inter-city rail connections, state and federal governments have so far been unable to emulate much less well-endowed North East Asian governments in mobilizing funds to build such infrastructure.

## URBAN HIERARCHY

In 2010 the United Nations Population Division recorded twenty-three urban agglomerations in South East Asia with populations over 1 million.<sup>36</sup> Their number includes the mega-cities of Jakarta, Manila, and Bangkok with populations over 10 million, followed by Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore,

Kuala Lumpur, and Rangoon with populations of around 5 million (Fig. 31.2d). All exceed Australia's largest cities of Sydney and Melbourne in population but also fall well short of the largest Chinese cities and also Tokyo and Seoul. Nevertheless, even such authoritative compilations as the United Nations are bedevilled by the well-known pitfalls of measuring urban populations.<sup>37</sup> Administrative boundaries typically understate functional urban populations. Thomas Brinkhoff refers to functional agglomerations 'that include a central city and neighbouring communities linked to it, for example, by continuous built-up areas or commuters' but these criteria are also elastic.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the capital city province of Jakarta had a census population in 2010 of 9.6 million; Brinkhoff allows 15.4 million; our own estimate of the urban region would be more than 20 million, equivalent to Manila.<sup>39</sup> Likewise the East Javanese city of Surabaya has a municipal census population of 2.8 million; Brinkhoff gives 3 million but our estimate of Greater Surabaya would be 5 million.<sup>40</sup> Singapore's official population of 4.9 million is also understated by functional overspill into the adjacent countries of Malaysia (Johor Bahru) and Indonesia (Riau Islands) for container ports (Tanjung Pelepas) and bulk handling, manufacturing, dockyards, tourist resorts and golf courses. Given the nature of ribbon development, commuting zones and peri-urban activities, there can of course be no precise definition of extended metropolitan regions. Any estimates of the functional size of mega-cities should be regarded as no more proximate than six decimal points (Table 31.1).

Australia's urban hierarchy could hardly be more different. While Sydney had by 2010 grown to a metropolis of 4.5 million, Melbourne 4.0, Brisbane 2.0, Perth 1.7, and Adelaide 1.2 million, the inland national capital of Canberra, established in 1913, still has only around 370,000 people.<sup>41</sup> When the federal parliament is not sitting, the politicians and their staff return home and it becomes once again a country town. In all other respects, including commerce, the state capitals are the multiple centres of national life. Although sharing a common national culture and linked air travel and modern telecommunications, these state capitals are still at a distance from each other and retain a distinct identity. Between Perth in the southwest and Brisbane in the middle of the eastern coast lie some 4,000 km of coastline with aircraft the only fast mode of transport from one to another. This continental pattern is more akin to North America than anywhere in Asia. Australian cities also resemble North American ones in their tendency to sprawl over vast urban regions, but they lack the poor inner-city enclaves found in much of the United States (above, Ch. 27).

Population alone may be a poor guide to how cities rank on a world scale. One ranking of 123 cities by the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Group at Loughborough University based on 'advanced producer services' (accountancy, advertising, banking/finance, law, and management consultancy) shows that, in contrast to Europe and North-east Asia, the mega-cities of South East Asia do not rank among the world's 'command and control centres'.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, the city-state of Singapore is listed with Hong Kong in the top ten city *alpha* group along with London, Tokyo, and New York. Sydney, the highest ranked Australian city, falls in the second *beta* group but there is no other city from South East Asia. Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta are ranked with Kuala Lumpur in the third group as minor or *gamma* world cities together with Melbourne in Australia. Among the residual group of cities in South East Asia, only Ho Chi Minh City is seen as having some features of a world city.

Nevertheless, such rankings are at best indicative and very sensitive to the criteria applied. The GaWC findings suggest a bias towards Europe and North America and a lack of a detailed knowledge of cities in Australia and South East Asia. For example, while singling out Adelaide in Australia, the study omits the more vibrant state capitals of Brisbane and Perth. It also makes no reference to the

national capitals of Cambodia (Phnom Penh) or Myanmar (Naypyidaw), or the second cities of Indonesia (Surabaya), Malaysia (Penang), the Philippines (Cebu) and Thailand (Chiang Mai). A subsequent revision of the ranking has made some amends by elevating Kuala Lumpur to the position of a ‘global city’ aspirant because it has much in common with Singapore and Hong Kong through the strength of its international stock market.<sup>43</sup> In particular, the GaWC emphasis upon financial and professional services diverts attention from the production bases that are the very essence of the new international division of labour and a huge influence upon urban morphology. Whereas white-collar services are concentrated in high-rise CBD locations, the industrial estates that underpin the new economy are dispersed to the periphery, often beyond official urban boundaries. These industrial estates, oriented towards export markets, in turn attract a labour force and associated services in ribbon and clusters along seaboards and main highways. In between the CBD and the urban fringe are suburban nodes whose core is the shopping mall, an enclosed private space that incorporates most of the commercial and social elements that used to be provided in clusters along public streets.

## URBAN DYNAMICS

Asia’s booming real economy is better revealed by the flows of goods, people, and information. Herein lies a paradox between the dematerialization of trade flow networks through informationalization and virtualization—what Manuel Castells refers to as the ‘space of flows’—and the increased importance of material flow structures, that is through urban gateways and along inter-city corridors, in his ‘space of places’.<sup>44</sup>

South East Asia’s leading urban gateways can be identified from their standing among the world’s top-25 hubs in container shipping, air cargo, air passengers, and the Internet. Such a ranking by flows highlights Singapore’s position as the pivotal regional gateway in South East Asia, being strongly represented in container shipping, air cargo, and air passengers, though falling outside the top 25 in terms of Internet usage (Table 31.2). Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok also rank in these same three categories. Such strength in international logistics underpins their attraction as production sites and helps to generate economies of agglomeration within their local urban regions. Despite Indonesia’s new status as a G20 nation, Jakarta lags well behind in overall logistics, though its port of Tanjung Priok ranks in terms of container shipping.

No Australian city qualifies among the top-25 hubs by any of the four transport and telecommunications criteria, reflecting the country’s position as a southern *cul-de-sac* in relation to the Asian-Pacific gateways along the main trunk routes to North America and Europe. What links Australia and South East Asia are the container shipping, air cargo, air passenger, and telecommunications connections with Singapore, which functions as an offshore gateway to Europe.

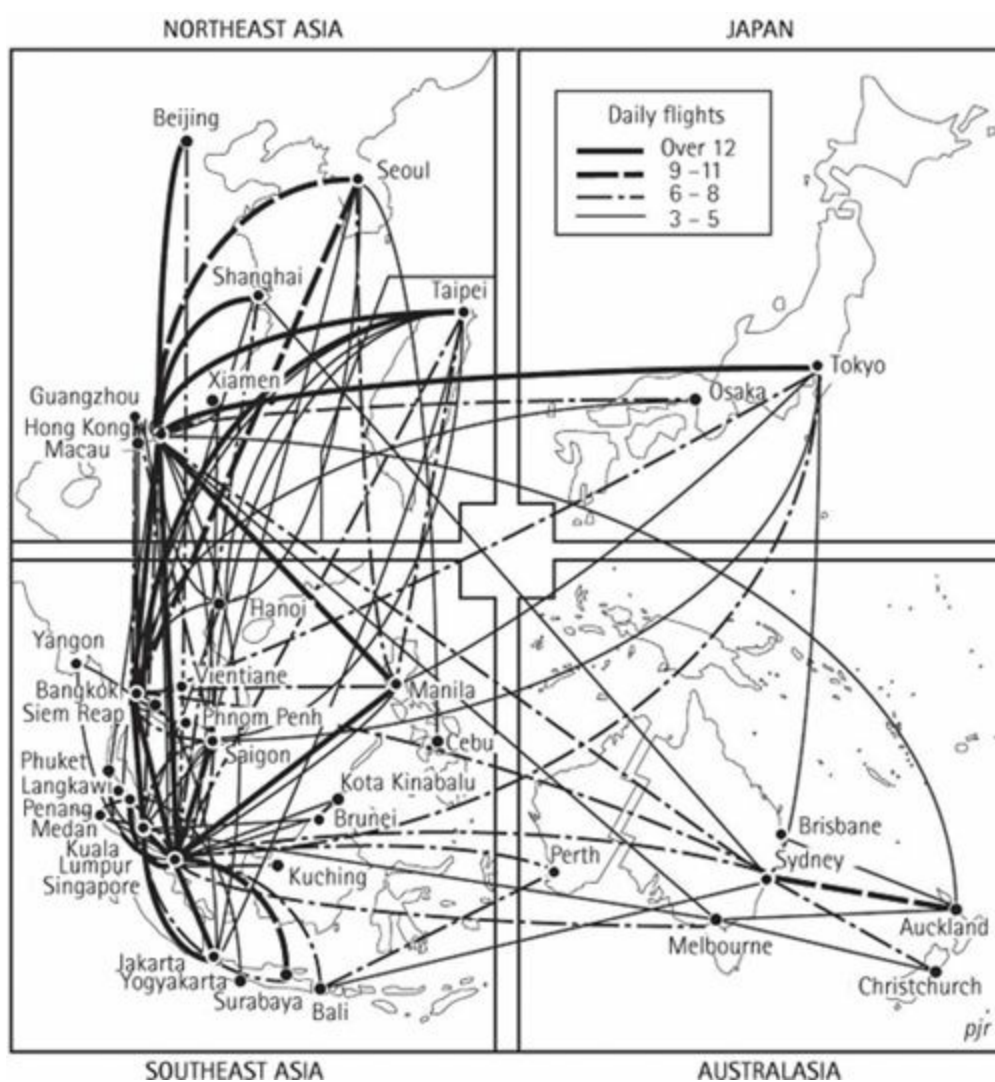
**Table 31.2 Representation among World Top-25 Ranking of Container Shipping, Air Passenger, Air Cargo, and Internet Hubs, 2008**

Gateway	Modes							
	Container shipping		Air cargo		Air passenger		Internet	
	rank	mill.	rank	mill.	rank	mill.	rank	gbps
	TEU		kg		pass.			
Singapore	1	29.9	7	1.9	7	36.3	–	–
Tanjung Pelepas	18	5.6	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sub-total	–	35.5						
Hong Kong	3	24.5	2	3.7	4	47.1	19	380
Shenzhen	4	21.4	–	–	–	–	–	–
Guangzhou	8	11.0	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sub-total	–	127.9						
Kuala Lumpur/Port Klang	15	8.0	22	0.6	25	17.8	–	–
Bangkok/Laem Chabang	21	5.1	14	1.1	10	30.2	–	–
Jakarta/Tanjung Priok	25	4.0	–	–	–	–	–	–

*Note:* TEU twenty-foot equivalent unit; kg kilogram; pass. passengers; Gbps Gigabits per second of Internet bandwidth connected across international borders to metropolitan areas. Container ports, air cargo, and air passenger hubs within 100 km radius are grouped together (e.g. Bangkok/Laem Chabang, and Kuala Lumpur/Port Klang) and multiple international container ports within a similar radius are dealt with in the same way, without regard to administrative boundaries (e.g. Singapore/Tanjung Pelepas).

*Source:* *Containerisation International Yearbook, 2010* (London: Informa Ltd, 2010); ACI, 2010. Annual Traffic Data, 2008. Airport Council International [http://www.aci-na.org/stats/stats\\_traffic](http://www.aci-na.org/stats/stats_traffic) (accessed 7 June 2010); Telecommunications Geography International, *Telecommunications Geography* (Washington, D.C.: TeleGeography Inc., 2010).

The transport corridors linking the gateway cities of South East Asia and Australia are revealed by the intensity of international air traffic (Fig. 31.3). A criterion of more than twelve flights per day shows a double arc, one of direct flights between the super hubs of Singapore and Hong Kong, the other linking them along an extended corridor from Jakarta through Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Manila sits out on its own with links to both Singapore and Hong Kong. North of Hong Kong the corridor fans out to Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, and Shanghai.



**FIGURE 31.3** Direct daily international airline flights involving South East Asia (including Hong Kong) and Australian airports. Based on *OAG Flight Guide; The Complete Guide to Air Travel in Alphabetical from/to Sequence*, vol. 11: 8 (February, 2010).

Lower frequencies of between three and eleven flights per day bring into the network the South East Asian capitals of Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Rangoon, and Vientiane together with the second cities of Cebu, Saigon, and Surabaya and the tourist centres of Bali, Langkawi, Phuket, and Siem Reap.

Both patterns suggest how modest is the passenger traffic from Australia. Only the lower level of frequency registers the Australian state capitals of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth with Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Hong Kong acting as transit points for passengers travelling to and from Europe. This result is no anomaly. Even though Australia ranks as a prosperous G20 nation, its population of 23 million is now smaller than that of Malaysia and with no dominant national hub.

Australia's relations with South East Asia have always been tenuous, as reflected in its absence from ASEAN. World War II and the growing America connection, also the post-1958 trade boom with Japan and later Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, were slow to erode Australia's colonial orientation to Britain, while post-war migration enhanced cultural ties with Europe. Although north-east Asia has long been the main market for Australia's exports, only since the 1980s has migration from Asia become more prominent, mainly from China and South Asia. Apart from those of Chinese extraction or Vietnam, the South East Asian component is much less than would be predicted by proximity. There is no equivalent of Mexican immigration to the United States and no free circulation of people as within the European Union.

## CONCLUSION

Arguably, before 1800 income per capita across South East Asia was equivalent to that in Europe. Colonialism and its associated mode of commodity production brought a steady increase in population and output but little improvement in living standards. From the mid-20th century, decolonization and economic nationalism gave rise to several decades of political instability and economic stagnation. Since 1965, however, the New International Division of Labour has brought South East Asia back into the mainstream of the world economy with unprecedented economic growth. Singapore is now one of the richest countries in the world in per capita terms while Indonesia is included among the G20 nations. As in China and India, the one certainty about the future in South East Asia is that income per capita will continue to rise and each year lift millions more people out of poverty and into a more urbanized and middle-class lifestyle.

It is reasonable to expect that South East Asia's urban regions will continue to expand as well as increase in density. One set of projections is that by 2050 Manila will have a population of around 43 million, Jakarta 38 million, Bangkok 35 million, and Saigon 20 million.<sup>45</sup>

In Australia, urban expansion is likely to be driven by a continuing high rate of immigration. Official estimates are that by 2056 Melbourne will have 7.5 million, Sydney 6.6 million, and Brisbane 4.5 million.<sup>46</sup> These are still not mega-cities but incomes and living standards will likely remain higher than across most of South East Asia apart from Singapore.

What may confound such long-term projections is sustainability. In Australia the great concern is the lack of fresh water and the contraction of the agricultural frontier. The big cities draw water away from the hinterland and are also highly inefficient in their use of energy, with heavy reliance upon fossil fuels. These problems can be overcome but only by massive investment, for which presently there is no political will. Popular pressure is therefore to reduce immigration and population growth.

In most South East Asian cities, the great vulnerability is climate change and rising sea levels. With the exception of the inland river cities of Hanoi and Kuala Lumpur, the big cities are all located in the tidal zone and are therefore highly vulnerable to rising sea levels as predicted by climate scientists. This vulnerability has been exacerbated in recent years by subsidence brought about by the extraction of groundwater plus the pressure of high-rise buildings. With canals and earth turned into vast expanses of hard surfaces and less retention of rainfall in deforested hinterlands, these cities are also prone to frequent serious flooding which, combined with peak tides and rising sea levels, will make them not only more dysfunctional but perhaps eventually also too hazardous for dense habitation. Two-thirds of Jakarta is already regarded as flood prone; Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila are all seen as being particularly vulnerable to extensive inundation by 2050 with the cost of damage ranging from 2 to 6 per cent of GDP.<sup>47</sup>

Herein lies more than one historical irony. Much of South East Asia's population, especially in the Malay Archipelago, used to live on or just above the water. Dutch occupation of Jakarta (Batavia) led to urban environmental catastrophe when deforestation of the hinterland for sugar cultivation caused the canals to silt up and become a breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes, as did surrounding fishponds.<sup>48</sup> By the late 18th century, gracious Batavia had become a notorious death trap, as bad as the slave fortresses of West Africa.

Although it is conceivable that technology and adaptation may allow these South East Asian cities to restore some harmony with their watery environment, it is more likely that the sheer density of

population will, like old Batavia, make them too unsanitary and force most of the city to retreat into the hinterland. In fact it is only over recent centuries that these cities have achieved seemingly permanent sites. In the pre-colonial era royal capitals were relocated quite often, sometimes because of conquest, sometimes for environmental reasons such as volcanic eruptions or exhaustion of resources, sometimes because it was thought auspicious to do so. Their wooden structures could be pulled apart and reassembled, something not possible with reinforced concrete. Myanmar's capital has already been rebuilt in the interior, albeit for political and strategic reasons.

South East Asia may therefore be one of the first parts of the world where the limits are reached to the environmentally harsh technologies of concrete, air-conditioning, and automobiles. A new mode of urbanism may need to rediscover lost knowledge of how to live in harmony with water and earth, sun and breeze. If so, they will also be happier places where those who cannot enjoy the privileges of an energy-intensive lifestyle are no longer forced to endure the worst aspects of an urban environment just to survive.

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## MIDDLE EAST

MERCEDES VOLAIT (PART I) AND MOHAMMAD AL-ASAD (PART II)

Middle Eastern cities... are simply cities in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

MIDDLE Eastern cities entered the 19th century with specific roles, social organizations, and in some instances substantial physical structures (Istanbul was the fourth largest city in the world in 1800, with a built-up area of 1,700 hectares), inherited both from the early modern period and the era of Ottoman rule (see Regional [Map II.2](#)). Contrary to what has been long assumed, the Ottoman period was characterized by significant rates of urbanization in the Arab provinces of the empire, a strong interdependence between the urban and rural worlds, and active trade routes across the empire, and beyond, to Iran and India.<sup>2</sup> This urban system was to experience radical change following exposure to direct and indirect European economic, political, and cultural hegemony in the region, starting with the brief French occupation of Egypt (1798–1801). The reassertion of central government control over the rural areas, improvements in health conditions, and the multiplication of commercial links which were to bind the Middle East to the expanding industrial economies of Western Europe all impacted the economic balance of power firmly in favour of wealthy city dwellers, while gradually dis-empowering rural producers.<sup>3</sup> Port cities and quasi ‘city-states’ experienced tremendous growth throughout the long 19th century, at the expense of previous regional centres. With the consolidation of nation-building in the post-colonial period, the urban hierarchy changed again; some capital cities experienced a spectacular hypertrophy while others developed almost from scratch. Urbanization accelerated. Less than 10 per cent of the region’s population lived in cities in 1800; the figure reached 27 per cent by 1950 (25 million), close to the world average, and 58 per cent in 1990 (138 million) (see Regional [Map III.2](#)).<sup>4</sup>

This chapter charts the shifts that took place at political and economic levels, looks at demographic dynamics, and highlights the social and spatial transformations that ensued. Following recent literature, it posits that in contrast with the situation prevailing in colonial Africa or India, Middle Eastern cities transformed socially, culturally, and physically following a specific pattern that combined external forces and internal agency. Consequently, the local engagement with Western-style modernity in pre-colonial, semi-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times and its changing expressions over time (e.g. Ottoman Europeanism, post-war Americanism, or post-colonial Sovietism) constitutes a recurring theme of the chapter. The text is divided into two parts. The Ottoman Land Law of 1858 instituting private ownership at one end, and the independences of the 1950s at the other, delimit a first coherent period for the early urban transformations that affected the region, while the era opened by decolonization forms a second coherent period, marked by the growth of statism and a subsequent shift to economic liberalism illustrated by the growing number of large-scale/urban real-estate development projects fuelled by oil money.

## I. FROM THE 1850S TO THE 1950S

## The Age of Ottoman Reforms

Until World War I, large parts of the Middle East, from Egypt to Armenia, remained in the Ottoman realm. The great revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries—the French and the Industrial—had a profound effect on the empire. The first encouraged internal reforms, known as the *Tanzimat* (literally ‘reorganizations’), in order to keep pace with modern technology and progress in Europe, while the second produced a huge increase in trade which began the complete transformation of the region’s economy. The integration of the Middle East into the world economic system has been described as a three-stage process, first commercial, then financial and commercial, and finally, political, financial, and commercial. External loans in ever-larger amounts were taken by Ottoman rulers to supplement internal revenues obtained through (inefficient) taxation, ending in bankruptcy and the deepening of the economic penetration of Britain and France, and later Germany, in the region. The value of foreign trade is said to have been multiplied by ten during the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> The Mandates and Protectorates that emerged from the dismantling of the Ottoman empire after World War I reinforced the process.

The top-down change imposed by the *Tanzimat* (1839–1876) on legal and administrative matters was variedly naturalized across the empire and its outreach was diverse, according to local context and distance to the main entry points of modernity (capitals, port cities, new towns, administrative centres). Moreover, westernization, modernization, and urbanization are phenomena that possess their own temporalities, endurance, and inertia. Yet common patterns are discernable in terms of demography, migration, governance, economic growth, urban expansion, and renewal. Changes in the management of land, a major economic resource of the region, had repercussion at all levels of society, in cities as well as in the countryside. The institution of private ownership in 1858 and the right granted to foreigners in 1867 to own real property reinforced social groups (e.g. non-Muslim minorities) at the expense of others (e.g. the peasantry). Another social byproduct of the *Tanzimat* was the rise of a new professional urban middle class known as the *effendiya* (from *effendi*, a Turkish title used to address literate young men). Differing from the traditional learned men, the *ulemas*, by their Western-style education and familiarity with the English, French or Italian languages, and from the guilds and merchants, because of their engagement in civil service, the *effendiya* was instrumental in disseminating the new order, and in return benefited from it.<sup>6</sup> Cosmopolitanism was another social feature of the period. Greek, Jewish, and Persian merchants figured prominently in Istanbul’s trade system in the late Ottoman empire. Urban Egypt was home, in the 19th century, to sizeable Maghrebi and Persian groups, besides large communities of Turco-Circassian, Armenian, Greek, and Syro-Lebanese origin, not to mention a significant presence of Western and Eastern Europeans. Non-Muslims made up two-thirds of Izmir’s population in 1900. With hundreds of thousands of people mainly in big towns, Italian immigrants formed the largest European group in the region. In 1893, one-third of Baghdadis were Jews having fled repression in neighbouring Syria, Kurdistan, or Iran. Qajar Iran (1796–1925) witnessed, with a time lag of several decades, a similar Westernization process, and the related development of a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. With the progress of steam navigation after the 1830s, the introduction of railway two decades later, and sharp drops in transport costs, capital and labour flowed across frontiers in unprecedented quantities and Middle Eastern cities became increasingly interrelated through trade, mobility, and migration.

## Urban Demography and Hierarchy

From 1798 to 1945, the urban population of the Middle East, from Morocco to Afghanistan, increased almost ten times, from 2.8 million to 26 million.<sup>7</sup> Part of the growth resulted from natural increase. Pandemics continued to take lives throughout the 19th century: in Cairo alone, 30,000 died from cholera in 1831 and 75,000 from plague in 1835; Baghdad lost 5 per cent of its population in the cholera epidemic of 1889, and Tehran 10 per cent of its dwellers in that of 1903–1904. Yet high fertility increasingly outpaced mortality, as sanitary conditions improved due to continued efforts from rising central governments to promote public health—including vaccination programmes and quarantines. At the same time, high demands for labour (in nascent industry as well as in trade in raw material and European goods) set in motion continuous flows from the countryside to primary and secondary urban centres. In Cairo, from the 1850s on, residents' exemption from conscription served as another attraction drawing peasants to the city. The burgeoning economies of the eastern Mediterranean attracted European workers and contractors. Warfare (e.g. the Crimean conflict of 1856, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, the Armenian massacres of 1894–1895 and genocide of 1915) was responsible for the transfer of vast numbers of people from one region to another. A prime recipient of these migratory movements was the network of port cities that had emerged in the 18th century to service trans-Mediterranean trade, and continued to flourish throughout the following century. With the opening in 1869 of the Suez Canal, new routes for trade emerged, and with them new cosmopolitan centres, such as Basra, a quasi 'city-state' on the Persian Gulf, that the steamship had made equidistant to Baghdad and Bombay, and that was to develop a separatist project in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

Major ancient capitals continued to grow (see [Table 32.1](#)). Istanbul reached about 1 million in 1896, as did Cairo three decades later, the former as a pole of global trade, the latter as the seat of a hyper-centralized government. Other capitals suffered from the displacement of economic life to coastal cities. Beirut grew at the expense of Damascus, an old centre of textile industry and regional trade hit hard by the influx of European apparel and the development of maritime commerce, that led to social strife and the sectarian war of 1860, where thousands of Damascene Christians died and about 7,000 fled the city. Large-scale migration from the Balkans, Crete, and the Caucasus at the end of the 19th century helped the Syrian capital regain population and dynamism.

Entirely new large-scale urban developments appeared in conjunction with mega infrastructures, as in the case of the three cities created along the Suez Canal by a private company of international status starting in 1859. Eventually, nation-building produced, from the 1930s onward, the emergence of other new urban entities, such as capital cities (Riyadh, Ankara, Amman), designed on modern functional lines almost from scratch.

**Table 32.1 Demographic Growth of Key Middle Eastern Cities (1800–1950)**

	1800	1880–1900	1950
Istanbul	360,000	950,000	1,035,000
Cairo	270,000	570,000	2,420,000
Izmir	150,000	180,000	480,000
Aleppo	120,000	127,000	400,000
Damascus	90,000	154,000	563,000
Ankara	50,000	74,000	290,000
Baghdad	c. 30,000	145,000	580,000
Teheran	20,000	200,000	1,300,000
Jerusalem	8,750	55,000	123,000
Alexandria	8,000	232,000	700,000
Beirut	6,000	140,000	350,000
Tel Aviv	—	30,000	567,000

*Source:* B. Hourcade, 'The Demography of Cities and the Expansion of the Urban Space', in Peter Sluglett, ed., *The Urban Social History of the Middle East, 1750–1950* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 164–81.

## Old and New Governance

Middle Eastern cities differed enormously between themselves in type and size during the period under consideration. There is little point in comparison between long-established cities such as Cairo, Fez, or Istanbul, and quasi-colonial or colonial creations such as Casablanca or Port Saïd, with small or no historical cores. The reassertion of central authority, however, constituted a common framework. New forms of governance were brought by the *Tanzimat* process to cities under Ottoman suzerainty. Municipal bodies combining state officials, European representatives, and local notables multiplied after the creation for the cosmopolitan district of Istanbul (Pera/Galata) of such an assembly in 1855. Municipal commissions were established in Beirut in 1863, in Aleppo in 1868, in 1870 in Barbary Tripoli, in Jerusalem in the early 1860s. North African cities experienced in pre-colonial times similar mixed commissions (after 1858 in Tunis), that continued to function under later French or Italian rule. In some instances, these bodies developed out of previous collegial forms of decision-making at city level, and continued enacting classical ways of mediating power in the city, as was the case in Barbary Tripoli and Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Some municipal structures achieved a good measure of autonomy from central power, albeit colonial, as was the case in Alexandria under British rule (1882–1922). A community of local and foreign notables composed what was Egypt's first municipality, in the proper sense of the term: a locally elected, legally responsible, and fiscally autonomous urban government that was created in 1890.<sup>10</sup> There were indeed exceptions: Damascus' council was exclusively Ottoman, and Cairo remained centrally governed until 1949.

Changes in property tenure and ownership were also decisive. The gradual secularization and centralization of *waqf* endowments (a distinctive Islamic institution that had enabled essential services to be provided in Middle Eastern cities such as water distribution or poverty relief) on one side, and the consolidation of individual property following the land law of 1858 on another, transformed urban societies and landscapes. In Cairo, the process included for a couple of years during the 1860s and 1870s free distribution of state-controlled (*miri*) land by the central authority in order to stimulate building construction. This allotment system disappeared with the Franco-British



control imposed on Egyptian finances in 1879, and was substituted by speculative developments led by wealthy local landowners and European financiers. The granting of concessions to European companies gradually took over the previous organic provision of urban services through the *waqf* system and the guilds (abolished in 1890 in Egypt), with the exception of solid waste disposal that remains—to this day in Cairo—managed by a specialized corporation (*zabbalin*). Water supply through pipes was conceded to a French entrepreneur in Cairo in 1868; lighting by gas, and later by electricity, was provided by the French firm of Lebon from 1865. Similar concessions developed in Beirut, Damascus, Istanbul, and Tehran. Politics of benevolence evolved: while assistance to the poor is an obligation within Islam, existing pious foundations, even well-funded ones such as imperial soup kitchens (*imaret*) or *sufi* lodges (*tekke*) in Istanbul, became increasingly incapable of providing sufficient safety nets to the sick and needy. New state-sponsored institutions (poor houses, orphanages, hospitals) took over, as well as charities, such as the Islamic Benevolent Society in Cairo. Attempts at policing the poor and the marginal were carried out by the ruling authorities. Concerted efforts were made to clear the streets of Cairo of the itinerant poor from the 1830s. Beggars were sent back to their villages, mosques were turned into poor shelters for the indigent; a decree was passed in May 1834 banning prostitutes and public dancers from Cairo and banishing them to Upper Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, precarious housing, sheltering the excluded, multiplied in the fringes of most major cities, raising municipal concern. Slum clearance was contemplated by the municipality of Alexandria as early as 1896.<sup>12</sup>

## Urban Expansion and Renewal along Global Models

Starting in the 1870s, suburbs burgeoned around urban centres, on adjacent agricultural land as well as further afield following the rapid development of infrastructure (roads and bridges) and of motorized transport. Privately operated tramways, in many instances run by Belgian companies, appeared in 1870 in Istanbul, 1894 in Cairo, 1897 in Alexandria, 1907 in Damascus, 1911 in Tehran. Cars began circulating in 1903 in Cairo and 1912 in Tehran. Between 1868 and 1906, Cairo almost doubled its size, through allotment of previously reclaimed land on ancient Nile marches adjoining the historic city. Large peripheral estates were similarly urbanized at the end of the 19th century in Istanbul, starting with the military parade grounds at Taksim, and following in some instances previous dynamics, as in the case of residential expansion on waterfront land along the Bosphorus. By the 1910s, garden suburbs or ‘nouvelles villes’ of varied sizes, from modest *faubourgs* (the quartier de l’Étoile in Beirut, or the neighbourhood of Garden-City in Cairo) to new satellite cities targeting 30,000 inhabitants (e.g. Heliopolis in Cairo, started in 1905), were flourishing in the peripheries of the most significant agglomerations and channelled the urban sprawl. New space was also gained through redevelopment, a case in point being Istanbul, where whole neighbourhoods were regularly lost to fires (300 were registered between 1853 and 1922) and thereafter completely rebuilt.

European planning models, and in particular Haussmann’s Paris, are known to have impacted on the formation of these new urban landscapes throughout the 19th century. Nasreddin Shah, the Persian ruler, is said to have begun to tear down the old Safavid city walls of Tehran in 1870–1871, to allow for building expansion, after a visit to Europe. Egypt’s Khedive supposedly developed his idea for a new Cairo after visiting Paris in 1867. Izmir became known as the ‘Petit Paris du Levant’.<sup>13</sup> Most new streets cut into the existing urban fabric of Middle Eastern cities were invariably known as ‘Rue

de Rivoli', even if they shared little with their acknowledged model. A measure of 'Haussmannism' was certainly introduced in most towns of the region, through the cutting of new streets in the old fabric to make arcaded thoroughfares, the implementation of building alignments to rectify existing narrow and irregular streets, or the creation of public squares and gardens. Egypt represents an early instance, where the transformation pattern was not restricted to major towns (Cairo and Alexandria), but was systematically extended to provincial districts through state intervention: from Alexandria to Aswan, most administrative centres experienced urban embellishments and remodelling linked to the arrival of the railway: from the station located at the outskirts of the city, a new street was cut to the historic core in its immediate surroundings, new quarters were built up on a grid, and waterfronts were set up along the Nile.<sup>14</sup> The Ottoman administration started opening new wide and straight streets in Damascus in 1908<sup>15</sup> and in Baghdad in 1914. In most situations however, these interventions were kept to a minimal scale and interfered only marginally with the existing built-up fabric.

In contrast to Haussmann's Paris, most existing cities in the Middle East managed to retain—almost to this day—the sizeable historic cores they had inherited from their multilayered past and from the *waqf* system of alienating and perpetuating built-up property for the benefit of pious foundations (representing up to 75 per cent of the historic fabric in some instances). These vast repositories of historic structures (280 hectares in the case of Fez, for instance) in turn determined the shape and future of the cities to which they belonged, well into the 20th century. Ruling authorities, whether colonial or otherwise, reacted in changing ways to historic nuclei. Early significant demolitions (in Algiers for instance in the 1830s and 1840s, in Cairo in the 1870s) gave way to a concern for the value of historic monuments and areas, at a time when European antiquarians were engaged in the defence of 'Vieux Paris' or 'Vieux St Petersburg'. By 1883, concerned European amateurs had assembled for Cairo a list of 800 monuments to be monitored, and a Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe had been created in 1881 to control restoration work. Fez, and the network of imperial Moroccan cities, experienced in the early 20th century policies meant to preserve their picturesque character through strict zoning specifications and what has been termed as 'urban apartheid'—a strict segregation between quarters reserved for natives and quarters designed for foreign settlers.<sup>16</sup> The conservation movement left its mark on new structures as well, through the explosion of neo-Islamic architecture across the region after 1900.

The Haussmannization of Paris, while referred to as a model, had thus little equivalent in the Middle East. Inaugurated before colonial rule, the improvement of Cairo accelerated after British occupation (1882) and continued well after independence (1922), suggesting furthermore a disconnection of urbanistic activity from political chronology. Tehran began to be thoroughly redesigned much later on: the first wide avenues were implemented between 1933 and 1940. By then, the Parisian model had lost much of its lure and British and American planning models were gaining momentum. The new towns produced by the oil industry in Iran in the 1920s–1950s, were designed by British architect and planner James Mollison Wilson along lines primarily inspired by Luyten's application of Garden City and City Beautiful ideals at New Delhi. Tel Aviv was designed in 1925 by another British advocate of the Garden City provided with Indian experience, Patrick Geddes. Cairo's first masterplan was prepared in 1929, with the aim of applying 'the true principles of town planning and of the garden city movement' to its future expansion. An early achievement was the whole new neighbourhood of *Madinat al-Awqaf* (now Muhandisin), implemented on agricultural land on the left bank of the Nile from 1948 with low-density housing clustering around communal gardens,

a network of wide avenues, and ample provision of public space.

## **The New Urban Culture of Modernity**

Urban development brought into cities new building typologies. New boulevards were lined with bank offices and department stores that were branches of famous European firms, i.e. the French Le Bon Marché or the Viennese Stein in Cairo. Residential architecture fostered new forms of individual or collective dwelling, reflecting social change in family life and structure. Early town houses, bungalows, and hybrid types such as the model of the 'apartment villa' (a superposition of flats, with separate accesses, in a single building) were replaced by post-Haussmannian apartment buildings, with domed angular rotundas (at the turn of the 20th century), and later on by apartment blocks on a North American scale (as from the 1930s). Although generally associated with Nasserism, experiments with workers' housing and subsidized housing (back-to-back row housing, followed by four-storey blocks of flats) can be traced back to the 1910s in Egyptian cities, and materialized over the following decades in a series of schemes for low-income families.

The new amenities brought in by the *Tanzimat*, and later on by the *Nahda* (Renaissance), were not restricted to transportation, public lighting, water distribution, and sewerage (introduced by the British in Cairo in 1907), or to new consumer venues. Public leisure redefined space and society in the modern Middle Eastern city as well: theatres, operas, horse tracks, parks and promenades, thermal facilities, etc. made their appearance from the 1860s, either as state-funded enterprises (in Cairo) or commercial ventures (in Istanbul). Cairo's opera house was inaugurated in 1869; Izmir had four theatres in 1883, Istanbul a whole quarter (Pera) devoted to them by 1900. Movie theatres followed shortly after the invention of cinematography in 1895. Films were shown in Cairo as early as 1897. In 1916, the Ottoman government subsidized the building of the first theatre in Damascus devoted primarily to cinema. By 1922, Beirut and Aleppo had three or four cinemas each. Women accessed such facilities on separate schedules or in separate sections. Open-air cinemas were built widely in the 1930s and 1940s.

In contrast to colonial cities, such locales, in the Eastern Mediterranean, catered not primarily to the needs of limited groups of European settlers and expatriates, but to those of the *effendiya* and of the merchant and landowning classes, Muslim and minorities alike. Museums, Masonic lodges, men clubs, learned societies, political cafés, represented locations of gendered modernity that could be found in big and middle-sized cities in the first decades of the 20th century. Cairo's Museum of Antiquities was founded in 1869 and installed in a building erected for it in 1902; the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, first located in an ancient kiosk, was built in 1891 at the initiative of an Ottoman official of international stature, the painter and archaeologist Osman Hamdi; a similar institution opened in Baghdad in 1925 and in Tehran in 1939. Before being banned by Atatürk in 1935, Freemasonry had flourished in Istanbul, as in most other capitals of the region. Female literary salons provided both genders with an opportunity to mingle. The salon of Palestinian poetess May Ziade in Cairo (from 1913 to 1933) was of particular repute; similar circles existed in Jerusalem, Aleppo, and Damascus and brought together writers, local journalists, officials, officers, politicians, and European diplomats.

The modern aspirations of the young secular elite were regularly expressed in the streets, e.g. by the Young Turks in 1908 in what was to become Turkey after the disintegration of the Ottoman empire in 1923, or by successive generations of Egyptian *effendis* starting with the major upheaval of 1919

against the British. In many instances, the demonstrators generally achieved what politicians did not obtain, and their recurrent revolts paved the way to the independences of the 1950s. It was Cairo's Great Fire ignited by rioters on 26 January 1952 that brought to an end the parliamentary monarchy ruling Egypt since 1922; in the event, hundreds of buildings—bars, cinemas, restaurants, hotels, and department stores, the very signs of an exclusive modernity unaffordable to the majority of Cairenes—burned, opening a new chapter in the history of the capital, and indeed of the whole region.

## II. THE 1950S TO THE PRESENT

### **Economic and Political Background**

The mid-20th century brought a series of political, economic, and social changes that significantly transformed the development of cities in the Middle East. Before discussing these changes, a number of general issues and trends need to be pointed out. Politically, the region has come to include over fifteen countries, which appeared after the end of the colonial period, all vying to function as nation states.<sup>17</sup> Although unified by Islam (both its Sunni and Shi'i branches), one also may subcategorize the region according to linguistically defined national identities: thus Iran, Turkey, and the Arab countries.<sup>18</sup>

The countries of the region have all been greatly affected, and even formed, by their interaction with the West during the period under consideration, beginning with the post-colonial era. The powers that exerted political influence over the region during the colonial period were Britain and France. Subsequently, their influence very quickly gave way to that of the United States, with the Soviet Union, along with the countries of the Eastern Bloc, also vying for influence until the fall of the Soviet system in 1989.

One characteristic that connects the region's countries on the political level throughout this period is that they have been governed by what may be described as centralized authoritarian regimes. Among other things, this is clearly apparent in their municipal structures. Turkey is emerging as an exception since it has been undergoing a clear process of democratization over the past decade. Before that, however, it had gone through its share of military coups and martial rule. Lebanon is another exception. However, it has suffered from other political problems relating to a weak central government, sectarianism, a civil war that extended from 1975 to 1990, and recurring internal conflicts. One should add that this authoritarianism has been severely challenged since 2011 as a result of the popular uprisings taking place in various parts of the Arab world, but it remains too early to assess their consequences.

Economically, the region's countries are marked by extremes. This is evident when considering both gross national products and per capita incomes. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are among the world's largest twenty-five economies. Turkey, which has the region's largest economy, is becoming an increasingly industrialized nation that currently has one of the world's highest rates of economic growth. The oil-rich emirates of the Gulf region, primarily the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait, boast some of the world's highest per capita incomes. At the other extreme, countries such as Yemen, Sudan, and Egypt suffer from very low per capita incomes. Inbetween are countries such as Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, which are considered middle-income countries, but with small economies. Most of these countries (Turkey being a notable exception) depend heavily on oil and gas

production as a source of income. This not only applies to rich countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the countries of the Gulf, but also to poorer ones such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Sudan.

## **Urban Growth and Population Movement**

A major physical development that began to take place at a rapid pace from the 1950s, especially apparent by the 1970s, was increased levels of urban sprawl, often sacrificing agricultural land surrounding cities to building activity. This has usually been connected to the inefficiency of existing public transportation systems and the domination of the private automobile as a primary method of urban transportation. At the same time, no clear strategies for developing urban management and planning systems that address issues such as land-use patterns or environmental protection have been put in place. Even when such strategies are devised, the financial and human resources as well as institutional structures available usually do not have sufficient capacity to implement them. This is evident even in the affluent cities of the Gulf. Here, though the necessary financial resources are available, comprehensive visions for urban management and a critical mass of local expertise have been absent. This has permitted sprawl and the domination of the private automobile to take hold.

The region has been affected by a great deal of population movement, most of which has been channelled into its cities. A good part of this influx has resulted from political upheavals. The most dramatic of these was the displacement of Palestinians as a result of the Arab–Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. These conflicts forced large numbers of people to move outside Palestine, ending up as refugees in countries throughout the region. The Palestinian Diaspora has had a very strong presence in the collective psyche of the region and its urban development. Thus, the growth and character of cities in the region such as Amman have to a large extent been connected to the movement of Palestinian refugees.

Civil strife and restlessness have affected other parts of the region. This has been most clearly evident in the case of Iraq and Lebanon, where significant populations have had to relocate within the country or to emigrate outside it. For example, the expansive informal settlements that have evolved south of Beirut are primarily inhabited by Shi'ite populations from the south of Lebanon. In addition, millions of Iraqis have been uprooted as a result of the instability into which the country has descended since the 1990–1991 Gulf War. They have moved within Iraq as well as outside it, very often to cities in Jordan, Syria, and Iran.

Not all of this movement has been the outcome of displacements resulting from conflict. Economic factors have been influential with populations from the poorer countries of the region searching for better economic opportunities in its more affluent ones. Egypt has been a primary exporter of labour, primarily of unskilled or semi-skilled young males working in the agriculture, construction, and the service sectors. This search for a better life has led them to cities in various parts of the region, primarily the Gulf, but also in middle-income countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. Expatriates ranging from labourers to highly-skilled professionals, and coming from both inside and outside the region make up the majority of populations in numerous cities of the Gulf.

Indeed, a defining feature of a number of the cities in the region for decades has been the presence of large expatriate populations. Although this has been a long-term trend, and many of these expatriates have ended up living there for long periods of time, if not indefinitely, they still are perceived as temporary residents—with this being particularly evident in the cities of the Gulf. The vast majority of them are not granted citizenship, thus creating complex conditions relating to issues

of identity and belonging.

As in other parts of the developing world, a considerable internal movement from rural areas and from smaller cities and towns to larger cities has taken place in the region. One important source of population increase is the region's birth rates, which are higher than the world average.<sup>19</sup> As a result of these various factors, some of the region's cities have grown into massive urban conglomerates. According to conservative estimates, present-day Cairo and Istanbul have populations of over 10 million people, and Tehran a population of over 8 million. High uncontrolled levels of urban growth have been a consistent factor in shaping the cities of the region during the late 20th century. By the 1970s and 1980s, such growth had often overwhelmed the ability of existing institutions in charge of urban management, whether municipal, regional, or national, to address them. Such conditions are common in the developing world, where urban 'decline' has become associated with excessive population growth, and the overcrowded informal settlements that accompany it, rather than population decrease.

Strikingly, some of the major contemporary cities of the region were no more than small towns, or even villages, during the 1950s. This is especially true of the cities of the Gulf, all of which have since emerged as sizeable urban centres. Dubai is a most remarkable example of this phenomenon. It has grown from a small trading outpost, with about 20,000 people in the mid-20th century, to become the region's primary cosmopolitan and global business centre, with a population reaching almost 3 million people (2010).

In the late 20th century, the region has increasingly expressed a powerful duality between its 'historic' cities and its 'modern' ones. Cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Isfahan, Sana'a, and many others have very deep historic roots, while those of the Gulf, for example, have much shorter histories. Dealing with the historic buildings and districts of the region's historic cities remains an issue that presents considerable opportunities and challenges in relation to their urban management.

## **Urban Governance and Urban Elites under the Nation State**

During this period, the region has been defined by the almost complete domination of capital cities over national life at the political, economic, and cultural level. Even great historic urban centres have been marginalized to some degree or other by these national capitals. Examples include Alexandria in relation to Cairo, Basra and Mosul in relation to Baghdad, Isfahan and Tabriz in relation to Tehran, Tripoli in relation to Beirut, and Aleppo in relation to Damascus.

An exception to this is Turkey, where the largest city, Istanbul, ceased to function as the political capital when the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923. Economic power continued to be centred in Istanbul, although the country's centre of government is in Ankara. Saudi Arabia also provides a partial exception to this phenomenon. It is true that the capital city of Riyadh has grown to become the country's largest urban centre, clearly overtaking Jeddah, which historically had been the Arabian Peninsula's primary metropolis. At the same time, Jeddah and other Saudi urban centres such as Mecca and Medina in the west, and Dammam and Dhahran in the east, remain important and economically active cities. To a great extent this is due to the country's sizable financial resources, which allow it to support development in those cities to a level that is not possible in the other countries of the region.

This domination of the region's national capitals is a manifestation of the overwhelming power of the state and is connected to the authoritarian nature of its regimes. Municipal authorities remain fully subjugated to national forces of political power, and the concept of municipal autonomy remains weak. However, municipal elections are becoming more widespread, particularly over the past decade. Qatar held its first municipal elections in 1999; Bahrain in 2002; and Saudi Arabia in 2005. The full election of mayors and city councillors, however, is not the norm in most countries of the region, and the authority that these officials have is usually controlled by centralized government bodies.

Many of the region's cities have undergone significant ruptures in the identity of their urban elites during the course of the past six decades. In some cases, this is the result of political crisis, as has been the case in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, where regime changes took place through coups or violent upheavals. As established political elites were forcefully dislodged, new ones, usually with strong rural roots or connections, have taken over. Such ruptures are very significant. The new ruling classes have brought with them markedly different social and cultural norms that have displaced predominant and often deep-rooted urban values. Also important is the significant migration of rural populations into cities. The large numbers of migrants have often eventually been able to translate their presence into social, cultural, economic, and political power, even if the old political elite has not been overthrown by force. All in all, the replacement—or at least a clear weakening—of traditional urban elites, and the rise of a new influential class with rural roots has taken place throughout the region's established urban centres.

## **Shaping New Environments**

A number of urban projects that have taken place since the 1950s illustrate and articulate the various factors and changes mentioned above. The 1950s and 1960s were very much decades of hope and optimism in the region. Colonialism was coming to an end, and a new era of national independence was at hand. There was also a strong belief in the transformative power of technology, primarily through industrialization, to bring about economic development and affluence. Architectural and urban modernism constituted an integral part of that overall vision. This included a rejection of—or at least a lack of interest in—the architectural and urban past, a belief in modernization, and a march towards a future where the developing world would be economically and politically on a par with the world's developed industrial nations.

A primary urban example of this new era is Nasr (Victory) City, conceived during the 1960s. It is an expansive urban development in the desert east of Cairo. Nasr City, whose buildings were constructed along the lines of socialist public housing complexes, occupied about 250 square kilometres, and remains Cairo's largest district. In contrast to the more informal street layout prevalent in much of older Cairo, Nasr City was organized according to a clear orthogonal grid system. It presented a departure from and rejection of the past, one associated with foreign subjugation and/or under-development.<sup>20</sup> During this period, Egyptian architects and planners became very active in the Arab countries of the region. Among the most prolific of them was Sayyid Kuraym. His many projects outside Egypt included the new district of governmental buildings constructed in Riyadh during the 1950s.<sup>21</sup>

Also, during the 1950s and 1960s, a number of ambitious urban masterplans were designed for

cities in the region, though not necessarily implemented. They were mainly carried out by European and American planners, and were aimed at modernizing the city, often at the expense of pre-modern urban fabrics. Among the more active of these planners was the internationally known Constantinos Doxiadis from Greece, who carried out masterplanning work in Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1955, Doxiadis produced a masterplan for Baghdad and a number of other Iraqi cities. During the 1960s, the Doxiadis plan was replaced by one developed by Polservice, a Polish planning firm, marking the growing presence of the countries of the Communist Bloc in the region.<sup>22</sup>

Another modernist planner active in the region was Michel Ecochard from France. He had already worked in Damascus and Beirut during the colonial period. Following independence, during the 1950s and 1960s, he was commissioned to develop master plans for Beirut and other Lebanese cities, for Damascus, and for Tabriz. He continued to carry out masterplanning work in Iran during the 1970s, for Meshed and Tehran.<sup>23</sup> Also active in Iran was Victor Gruen, the Austrian–American architect who drew up a masterplan for Tehran.<sup>24</sup>

The 1970s, although marked by considerable political upheaval in the region, also brought tremendous building activity, paid for by the drastic rise in oil prices after the 1973 oil embargo. This generated unimagined windfall profits to oil-exporting countries, such as Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf States, and part of that new wealth also trickled down to affect the region's oil-poor countries. Projects of immense scale were constructed primarily in the oil-rich countries. These included airports, university campuses, and public buildings such as mosques. Some were among the largest in the world. The 1970s, are remembered more for their hyper building activity rather than for urban planning initiatives. The transformation of the cities of the region during that period nonetheless was overwhelming. Population growth reached explosive levels. Managing that growth became an increasingly difficult undertaking.

The 1980s provided a continuation of many developments that took place during the 1970s. Violent conflict continued to affect countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. Oil prices, however, had eased off by the end of the decade, and with that the hectic construction activity that had taken place since the mid-1970s. Urban population increases, however, continued unabated, and that created tremendous pressure on cities. One area of urban management that received considerable attention during the 1970s and 1980s was urban transportation. As cities expanded drastically and as car ownership levels soared, congestion problems reached overwhelming levels. Much of the attention given to urban transportation, however, concentrated on facilitating the movement of the automobile, through widening existing roads or laying out new ones. This exacerbated the problem rather than solving it. In contrast, investment in public transportation lagged behind. One example of this policy was the construction of two massive bridges crossing the Bosphorus in Istanbul, the first completed in 1973, and the second in 1988. These bridges served to facilitate automobile movement across the city, between its European and Asian sides, so compromising the local autonomy of the city's neighbourhoods and further increasing traffic congestion in Istanbul. Traffic congestion became endemic throughout cities in the region, greatly undermining the quality of urban life. In Tehran, for example, traffic congestion (along with other factors such as the presence of high mountain ranges surrounding the city) has led to extremely high pollution levels. On certain days, pollution levels are so high that much of the city is shut down.<sup>25</sup>

Some attempts at addressing the challenges of urban transportation through improved public transportation did appear during the late 1980s. An early example was the Cairo metro, which opened



in 1987, when the first stage of a 43 km line was completed. Likewise, Istanbul completed its first light rail line in 1989.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, with the 1990s, a series of new large-scale urban initiatives began to take place. This was partly the result of a realization that addressing the challenges facing the cities of the region required comprehensive urban interventions rather than piecemeal ones. But there was also an economic context. The 1990s witnessed the initiation of numerous policies aimed at economic liberalization, with governments in the region allowing the private sector to play a much larger role in national economies. This paved the way for urban developments involving private investment, ones that promised tremendous financial rewards for developers. They became particularly ubiquitous following the spectacular rise of oil prices that took place around 2003. One project that served as a model was the development of central Beirut by Solidere, the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District. Solidere is a public shareholding company founded in 1994 by former Lebanese prime minister Rafik al-Hariri. It concentrated on revitalizing the central area of Beirut, which was devastated during the Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990.<sup>27</sup>

Since then, large-scale urban real-estate development projects have proliferated following a variety of financial and ownership models that include some sort of partnership, or at least coordination, between public- and private-sector entities. In many of them, the government provides the land, and private investors provide the capital. Examples include the ongoing Abdali real-estate development project, which covers a government-owned site of about 36 hectares in a centrally located part of Amman. In Istanbul, a large urban-scale development has been designed for both the Asian and European sides of the city.<sup>28</sup> Such projects usually involve the participation of internationally celebrated architects and planners, emphasizing their connection to a global system of real-estate development.

Developments of this type have proliferated in the oil-rich Gulf region. Dubai in many ways pioneered them, and a number of its real-estate development companies, such as Emaar, have become among the largest in the world.<sup>29</sup> Dubai is particularly known for its outlandish projects, of which the series of man-made islands in the shape of palm trees and a map of the world are the best known. Complete new districts are being conceived in a number of Gulf cities, as with the 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> King Abdullah financial district in Riyadh, which will house financial institutions and companies, as well as a convention centre, hotels, and also residential and recreational areas.<sup>30</sup>

If successful, some of the large-scale development projects currently being planned or implemented may help dilute the domination of national capitals over their respective countries. A number of the projects aim at promoting economic activity in provincial cities or at creating new cities from scratch. In the Gulf region, for example, a series of new cities is being constructed or planned. The King Abdullah Economic City and the Jazan Economic City along the Red Sea coast in Saudi Arabia; the zero-carbon-emission city of Masdar in the emirate of Abu Dhabi; and in Kuwait the City of Silk, planned as a centre of international commerce.<sup>31</sup>

Other developments also are underway, including the extensive rethinking of existing urban centres. Thus the Istanbul Metropolitan Planning and Urban Design Centre, affiliated to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, was established in 2005 to develop integrated planning strategies for Istanbul.<sup>32</sup> Work on developing an ambitious masterplan for Amman was initiated in 2006. This has addressed issues including revising land-use regulations, controlling the chaotic spread of high-rise buildings, and expanding public transportation networks in the city.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the concept of

heritage conservation on the urban, rather than the individual building level is beginning to take hold. Comprehensive conservation plans have been implemented for the historic districts of cities as diverse as Cairo, Aleppo, and Shibam in Yemen.<sup>34</sup>

Also of importance are new efforts aimed at the environmental protection of green spaces in and around cities. One example is the ongoing reforestation project implemented by the Middle East Technical University on the outskirts of Ankara, which has created the largest man-made forest ecosystem in the world. It has contributed to improving the climate of the city, provided recreational areas for residents, and helped control urban sprawl. Another is the Wadi Hanifa reclamation project in Riyadh. The reclamation project initiated in the 1990s has rehabilitated the valley bordering the city and restored it as an agricultural area, as well as providing a green breathing space for the residents of Riyadh.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, considerable attention is being paid to public transportation, which is among the most serious challenges facing cities in the region. Accordingly, Cairo's metro system is undergoing a continuous process of expansion. Metro systems have also been inaugurated over the past decade in Tehran, Istanbul, and Dubai. Other metro systems and light rail projects are being designed or implemented in other cities in the region. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, where buses occupy dedicated lanes, have come into existence during the new millennium in cities including Istanbul and Tehran, and a BRT system is under construction in Amman.

## Cycles of Globalization

Since the early 19th century, the cities of the region have undergone a complete cycle. A number of them emerged as part of a global mercantile system during the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, only to retreat into more restrictive national borders with the emergence of the nation-state during the post-colonial era. Beginning in the 1990s, the region's cities entered a new wave of globalization connected to developments in information technologies as well as the liberalization of investment activity. With the global financial crisis of 2008, this second era of globalization is coming under stress with uncertain consequences for the cities of the Middle East.

## Notes

1. Peter Sluglett, ed., *The Urban Social History of the Middle East, 1750–1950* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 3.
2. André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985), 54–66. See also above, [Ch. 15](#).
3. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 56; Sluglett, *Urban Social History*, 28.
4. Bernard Hourcade, 'The Demography of Cities and the Expansion of the Urban Space', in Sluglett, *Urban Social History*, 164–81.
5. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 287.
6. Jens Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut, The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

7. Hourcade, 'The Demography of Cities'.
8. Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State: Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq*, (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2005).
9. Nora Lafi, *Une ville du Maghreb entre Ancien Régime et réformes ottomanes, Genèse des institutions municipales à Tripoli de Barbarie 1795–1911* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); Vincent Lemire, *La soif de Jérusalem* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010).
10. Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830–1930, histoire d'une communauté citadine* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1996).
11. Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2003.
12. Ilbert, *Alexandrie*, 388–90.
13. Hervé Georgelin, *La fin de Smyrne, Du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 2005).
14. Mercedes Volait, *Architectes et architectures de l'Égypte moderne (1830–1950), genèse et essor d'une expertise technique locale* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005).
15. Stefan Weber, *Damascus, Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918)*, (Proceedings of the Danish Institute in Damascus, v, 2009).
16. Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
17. The region consists of Iran, Turkey, and the Arab countries. These Arab countries include those of the Nile Valley in Africa, i.e. Egypt and Sudan, and the Arab countries of Asia. The latter consist of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. The countries of the Arabian Peninsula are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. These usually are referred to as the 'Gulf' countries, and are marked by their considerable oil wealth. The remaining country of the Arab Peninsula is the much poorer Yemen. The Fertile Crescent consists of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. In addition, there are the Palestinian Territories, consisting of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These have yet to attain political independence as a Palestinian state, and remain under Israeli domination.
18. Another nationality that the region includes is the Kurds. Significant Kurdish populations exist in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Unlike the Arabs, Turks, and Iranians, the Kurds do not have their own country, but they have attained a status of autonomy in Iraq since the early 1990s. Israel, although geographically part of the region, is not included in this overview since its political, economic, cultural, and social compositions qualify it more as a Western country rather than one to be studied within the context of this region.
19. Regarding population growth rates in the Middle East, see Ragui Assaad and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, *Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: Demographic Opportunity or Challenge?* (Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 2007). The report is available online at <http://www.prb.org/pdf07/youthinMENA.pdf>.
20. Regarding the evolution of Cairo during the 1950s and 1960s, see Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo*. For an overview of the urban evolution of Cairo since the 1950s, see Ghislaine Alleaume and Mercedes Volait, 'The Modern Metropolis', in André Raymond, ed., *The Glory of Cairo* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2002), 439–64.

21. Regarding Sayyid Kuraym and his work, see Mercedes Volait, *L'architecture moderne en Égypte et la revue al-'imâra (1939–1959)* (Cairo: CEDEJ, 1988).
22. For more detailed information on Doxiadis, see the website of the Doxiadis Foundation at <http://www.doxiadis.org>.
23. Regarding Michel Ecochard, see Nathalie de Mazieres, 'Homage', in *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1 (1985), 22–5. The article is available online at [http://archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.jsp?document\\_id=4841](http://archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.jsp?document_id=4841).
24. Regarding Gruen, see M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
25. For a foreign correspondent's view of traffic in Tehran, see Ian Williams, 'Tehran's Roads—A Chance to Dismiss Authority', 2007. The article is published online on the MSNBC web site at [http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/\\_news/2007/03/20/4376325-tehrans-roads-a-chance-to-dismiss-authority](http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2007/03/20/4376325-tehrans-roads-a-chance-to-dismiss-authority).
26. For an overview of urban rail systems in different cities, see the Urbanrail website at [www.urbanrail.net](http://www.urbanrail.net).
27. For more detailed information on Solidere, see their website at [www.solidere.com](http://www.solidere.com).
28. Regarding the Abdali project in Amman, see its website at [www.abdali.jo](http://www.abdali.jo). Regarding the large-scale urban development projects planned for Istanbul, see Suha Ozkan, 'Transformation of Workplaces in Istanbul: Some Macro Urban Form Suggestions', Mohammad al-Asad, ed., *Workplaces: The Transformation of Places of Production: Industrialization and the Built Environment in the Islamic World* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2010), 199–208.
29. For more information on Emaar and its projects, see its website at [www.emaar.com](http://www.emaar.com).
30. Regarding the King Abdullah Financial District, see its website at [www.kingabdullahfinancialdistrict.com](http://www.kingabdullahfinancialdistrict.com).
31. Regarding the King Abdullah Economic City, Jazan Economic City, Masdar City, and City of Silk, see their websites at [www.kingabdullahcity.com/en/Home/index.html](http://www.kingabdullahcity.com/en/Home/index.html), [www.jazanecity.com](http://www.jazanecity.com), [www.masdar.ae/en/home/index.aspx](http://www.masdar.ae/en/home/index.aspx), and [www.madinat-al-hareer.com](http://www.madinat-al-hareer.com).
32. Regarding planning strategies being developed for Istanbul, see Ozkan, 'Transformation of Workplaces in Istanbul'.
33. More detailed information on the Amman masterplan is available on the website of the Amman Institute at [www.ammaninstitute.com/project/amman-plan-0](http://www.ammaninstitute.com/project/amman-plan-0).
34. Regarding the conservation of Old Sana'a and the rehabilitation of Shibam, see the website of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture at [www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=1380](http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=1380) and <http://78.136.16.169/pages/p02942.html>. Regarding the Historic Cairo conservation project, see *Historic Cairo* (Cairo: The Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2002).
35. Regarding the Middle East Technical University reforestation program and the Wadi Hanifa Wetlands project, see the website of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture at [www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=1364](http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=1364) and [www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=2258](http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=2258).

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## AFRICA: 1000–2010

BILL FREUND

OF all the continents, Africa is probably the one least associated with cities and it is the least urbanized today. On the maps of early modern Europe reflecting this bias, indeed, there were elephants and other beasts featured in place of towns to fill in unknown spaces. In fact ignorance always had something to do with this Eurocentric configuration; towns have a long history in parts of Africa as [Ch. 4](#) by Mattingly and MacDonald indicates. The first pages of this chapter are intended to indicate the early and diverse history of this process.

As Africa became more significantly linked to international commercial networks in the early modern centuries, urbanization intensified and economic causation became more universal (see [Regional Map II.3](#)). As this chapter shifts to the colonial era, it suggests that the layered nature of urbanization over time sees decline in some urban networks but a rapid growth in cities along the lines of new economic forces, reflecting the power of both capitalist-inclined and racist ideas. In the challenges they began to raise to the forms put into play, the African masses began the process of urban reconstruction.

The final sections of this chapter consider the last half century, more or less, since the end of colonialism. The urbanization of Africa is a process that has lagged far behind Europe or North America and somewhat behind the Middle East and Latin America but it has come into full swing. Today the population of Africa is shifting rapidly in the direction of urban residence, it contains numerous cities with 1 million plus populations (see [Table 33.1](#) and [Regional Map III.3](#)), and it is foreseeable that the majority of Africans will be living in urban space within the lifetime of young adults today. Many, although not all countries, are characterized by the dominance of primate cities, ten times and more larger than the next biggest, revealing the attraction of the state and the activities associated with it and its capacity to display and expend wealth. These cities operate above all at a national level where they play a key role in nation formation. However, at a regional level they are sometimes competitive with one another in attracting investment and the presence of supranational organizations with their flow of resources. Explosive growth with only very limited industrial activity has, however, created dramatic metropolitan dys-functionalities that present acute problems for governors and urban dwellers but has also produced increasing cultural and social initiatives, a combination labelled ‘post-colonial’ by some. At the same time, migration and contemporary forms of communication mean the links to urban society throughout the world are unprecedentedly quick and intense. Out of the response to these developments have perhaps come the foundations of, in Abdulmalik Simone’s words, ‘the city yet to come’.

**Table 33.1 The Largest African Cities at the End of the 20th century**

City	Population in millions	Date of estimate or count
Cairo, Egypt	12	1994
Lagos, Nigeria	10.5	2002
Kinshasa, D. R. Congo	5-7	2002
Casablanca, Morocco	3.535	2000
Kano, Nigeria	3.329	2003
Alexandria, Egypt	3.328	1996
Johannesburg, S. Africa	3.226	2001
Ibadan, Nigeria	3.140	2003
Ethekwini(Durban), S. Africa	3.090	2004
Luanda, Angola	3	2003
Cape Town, S. Africa	2.893	2001
Abidjan, Ivory Coast	2.878	1997
Khartoum, Sudan	2.7 [4.8 m. Greater Khartoum]	
Algiers, Algeria	2.562	1998
Ekurhuleni (East Rand), S. Africa	2.480	2001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	2.3	1994
Pretoria (Tshwane), S. Africa	1.986	2001
Accra, Ghana [Greater]	1.781	1990
Conakry, Guinea	1.767	2003
Dakar, Senegal	1.659	1996
Kaduna, Nigeria	1.510	2003
Nairobi, Kenya	1.5	1994
Douala, Cameroon	1.448	1999
Harare, Zimbabwe	1.42	1992
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	1.4	1996
Rabat, Morocco	1.386	1994
Tananarive, Madagascar	1.359	2001
Lusaka, Zambia	1.327	1995
Tunis, Tunisia	1.2	
Port Harcourt, Nigeria	1.093	2003
Tripoli, Libya	1.083	
Benin, Nigeria	1.082	2003
Port Elizabeth, S. Africa	1.006	2004
Mogadishu, Somalia	1	2000

Note: Table 33.1 is taken from Bill Freund, *The African City: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145 with thanks to Cambridge University Press. Sources are listed there.

## EARLY CITIES IN AFRICA

The beginnings of urban impetus in Africa came about slowly and gradually for a variety of reasons. Commerce was one of these but environmental, political, and sacral factors were also typical of how Africans conceptualized larger centres of population and how they actually came to develop. Sub-Saharan Africa has long had regular links with other regions and continents, especially across the Sahara and through the monsoon winds over the Indian Ocean, although its dependence on borrowings from invaders and settlers can be exaggerated to the exclusion of internal factors. (For more discussion of early African cities see [Ch. 4](#)). This meant however that models of urban society, Punic, Graeco-Roman, and especially Islamic, were brought to the African continent and adapted to African usage. This volume considers the Islamic model and its transformations elsewhere (see above, [Ch. 14](#)), but it is important to note that it penetrated far beyond the range of the spoken Arabic language in sub-Saharan parts of the continent. Muslim traders, likely building on earlier models, are attested for through archaeological evidence on the coast of East Africa by the 9th century and geographical writing reports on towns visited by them south of the Sahara in connection with the Saharan trade not long afterwards. Before the first European arrived in Kilwa, in present-day Tanzania, the 14th-century city was the site of a grand mosque that encapsulated local styles that had developed over time on the coast. The rulers, who controlled the gold trade with what is today Zimbabwe, spoke a form of the

Swahili language, minted coins, and presided over a varied economy including the weaving of cotton cloth for the market. The beginnings of Muslim influence in towns in West Africa probably began with 'ports' near the desert such as Timbuktu and Gao on the middle Niger but became important in structuring, for instance, the walled towns of northern Nigeria in later periods. Recent discoveries of hoarded documents confirm the importance of Timbuktu as a centre of scholarship for many centuries. Along the Nile, there never was a Saharan barrier in any case; urban life undoubtedly represented a continuum from the Nubian and Meroitic on through Christian and into Islamic times along the middle stretches of the river where the two branches meet.

There is no question, however, that from the 15th or 16th centuries, the pace of urban life quickened in Africa. No doubt trade had always tended to bring people together spatially but now it was the mother of numerous new population agglomerations while transforming older ones in meaning. Europeans think of these times as an age where Muslim civilization lost dynamism and gradually became subordinated and weakened, but in fact the march of Muslim traders and preachers into Africa, and the Islamization of Africa, as well as the Africanization of Islam, advanced far more rapidly than before. Interestingly we can see these processes in the case of Muhammad Ali's early 19th-century expanded Egyptian state that formed the basis of the modern Sudan focussed on Khartoum or the slightly later far-flung extension of caravans under the flag of the sultan of Zanzibar reaching to the Great Lakes of East Africa and beyond (with the emergence of new commercial centres such as Tabora, Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika, and Bagamoyo on the Indian Ocean shore, all in modern Tanzania), as occurring under the economic aegis of European imperialism and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, powered by the impact of cheap cotton goods and reliable guns. At the same time, the West African *jihads* or holy wars, starting in the early 18th century, that were meant to create Islamic commonwealths free of the impurities of African belief and the corruption of kings also set the stage for commercial expansion as well. Mid-19th-century Kano, in the heart of northern Nigeria, was a city with many tens of thousands of inhabitants that attracted seasonal business from all over the northern savanna belt of Africa from ocean to ocean as well as hundreds of merchants from northern Africa, especially Egypt (for an early 20th-century picture of the city see [Plate 33.1](#)). Textiles and leather trades joined the sale of slaves and ivory and all that went into long-distance caravan requirements under the protection of the emir. Just over the Nile from Khartoum, a *jihad* state succeeded for a time from 1885 in ridding Sudan of Egyptian rule and created a new capital and economic centre at Omdurman.





**PLATE 33.1** Aerial view of the old city of Kano, Nigeria, in the central savanna of West Africa (from *Tschadseeflug* by Walter Mittelholzer (1894–1937), published in 1932).

This kind of contradiction which saw both the emergence of new dynamic and violent internal or non-European actors and the imperial factor as the shadow of Europe itself loomed larger, can also be seen in the emergence of Addis Ababa as the capital of what would be Africa’s only remaining unconquered state in the early 20th century. At first, Addis emerged as the capital of a newly conquered southern region under the rule of Minilik, the Ethiopian emperor who defeated the Italians decisively in 1895 at the battle of Adwa through his mastery of guns acquired by expanded trade in ivory, slaves, and other commodities. The new centre had the hallmarks of a typical transient royal town, more like an encampment, of the Ethiopian monarchy. However, after Adwa, Addis became a permanent capital of a new sort, a genuine city as noblemen and church officials marked out properties for their use. The Ethiopian historian Bahru Zewde ascribes this first of all to the growing cultural influence of the European embassies who laid down stakes in the new centre, and secondly to the planting of eucalyptus trees which allowed for an easy permanent supply of firewood. It was the arrival of the railway to the coast early in the new century, however, that, he argues, ‘put the seal’ on the city’s future.

The reference here to antecedents is not intended to take away from the formative importance of the colonial era in African urban and economic development more generally. However, the weight of pre-colonial forms was often of considerable importance in colonial urban development.

### **COLONIAL CITIES 1880–1960**

Nonetheless, it is probably important first to stress some obvious common features of colonial towns in Africa (for colonial cities in general see below, [Ch. 40](#)). The largest towns were the seat of administrations in the context of authoritarian systems where executive power ruled. Imposing structures intended to impress the population with the power of the state dominated a landscape of avenues and open spaces. The placement of a military and police establishment was equally

important. Many colonial towns were virtually new. In Africa's most populous single territory, Nigeria, the old slaving port city of Lagos remained the territorial capital but new regional capitals were created at Enugu for the east (also near important coal deposits) and Kaduna for the north. The French created Brazzaville as the capital of French Equatorial Africa on the Congo River and Dakar on the coast of Senegal as capital of French West Africa. Abidjan, the capital of the territory of the Ivory Coast within French West Africa, which would start to rival Dakar in economic importance in the 1950s, and Léopoldville, capital of the Belgian Congo which was to become the biggest sub-Saharan African city after Lagos, were only really established as urban centres after World War I. Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, was midway between the coast and Lake Victoria; its foundation in 1899 was linked to the arrival of the railway as was that of Livingstone, the first capital of Northern Rhodesia (later replaced by Lusaka in 1935). Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia and Windhoek in German South West Africa were well placed to capture economic activity and control territory administratively; again the arrival of the railway was critical to their efflorescence as Metcalf points out elsewhere (see [Ch. 40](#)). If possible, the colonial towns tried to impose themselves also with structures that emphasized 'best practice' and defined modernity in early 20th-century Europe—a vision of progress over disease and barbarism that inspired their rulers: broad streets easy to patrol, planning ordinances that emphasized official control, desirability of open spaces.

Colonial towns moreover tended to be linked into a hierarchy of urban nodes that reflected not just administrative power but the new economic processes that served the kind of development, based on the evacuation of natural resources, mineral and agricultural, which was typical of the place and time and linked up with roads and railways that facilitated the route to the port. There were also mining towns such as Jos on the main plateau region of northern Nigeria where tin mining was lucrative under corporate auspices in the interwar years or towns that were business centres for settler farming communities such as Arusha in northern Tanganyika or Eldoret in Kenya. By no means did all towns thrive: for example in Tanganyika under the Germans, the caravan towns, Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika and Bagamoyo on the coast, were off the site of the new rail line and went into decline. So did the centuries-old insular emporium of the Mozambique port town off the Indian Ocean shore.

However, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the functionality of colonial urbanization or to deprive the towns of their character by assuming too much commonality in their structure. If one can differentiate amongst the new range of cities, probably two kinds of differences need to be stressed. On the one hand, as already suggested earlier, many African cities did have important elements of continuity from pre-colonial times and were not blank slates on which colonial officials could write as they liked. The most typical way with which this problem was dealt was strangulation: the creation of a new colonial city around and about the older settlement which turned it into a more or less colourful enclave. Examples of this were the Three Cities complex in Sudan (Khartoum–Khartoum North–Omdurman) where the two Niles met. Omdurman was reduced to a neglected and relatively sleepy section within a burgeoning urban centre. In Accra, the three towns that had over time spread themselves around the respectively Dutch, Danish, and British forts, became dominated by an extended British-generated city that served as capital of the Gold Coast.

A variant on this theme lay in the Nigerian system which differentiated for purposes of governance sections of cities suitable for the 'natives', for whom some kind of indirect rule via their own chiefs and customs was usually offered; sections intended for 'foreign natives' attracted by commercial growth but whom the colonialists did not want emirs and *obas* to govern; sections where business could take place and independent foreigners could live; and official neighbourhoods—Government

Residential Areas—for government people, with wide swathes of green space for recreational and decorative purposes. Historians have shown how important scares concerning health in the tropics as well as physical safety were responsible for the planning emphasis on the last category.

It would be an error to think that this apparently logical system solved all problems. Ibadan emerged in the 19th century in the midst of the so-called Yoruba civil wars as a centre of refuge and of power in what became south-western Nigeria. It was ruled by an alliance of powerful figures without a monarch. Attempts by the British to create an *Olubadan* (lord of Ibadan) were to be very fraught as were the endless quarrels over the remaining powers of the ruler of Lagos which was annexed as a colony as early as 1861. In the 1920s, the *Eleko* (traditional ruler) refused to assist the administration in convincing voters to support a water rate which was seen as essential to improving sanitation in Lagos. The ‘father of Nigerian nationalism’, Herbert Macaulay, made his career fighting this water rate which he denounced as ‘designed to benefit Europeans at the expense of the Lagosians’ purse.’<sup>1</sup>

In general, this kind of conflict was very common and took a variety of forms. The rights of the Lebou in Dakar or the Duala in Duala, the great port town serving first German and then French Cameroon, proved a headache for the modernist planning vision of colonialism which worsened when reforms allowed some municipal capacity to pass into elected African hands. In cities such as Lomé, the capital of Togo, Dakar, or Lagos, recognition of often convoluted local property rights regimes, absolutely critical to the wealth of elites, were impossible to sweep aside. In Accra, capital of the Gold Coast, *asafo* (warrior) companies once essential to how the Ga people organized defence, became the basis of political opposition to the colonial government that blocked municipal reforms not seen as essential by Africans and for which they were expected to pay.

Not that planning new cities was always smooth sailing. Here very often the distinctive feature lay in the extensive size of the quarters and amenities laid out for Europeans. Nairobi or Salisbury (present-day Harare) were both largely planned, beyond the defence and administrative imperatives plus the needs of business, for very extensive plots appealing alike to property speculators and whites searching for attractive family suburban living. Nairobi had an apparent British model of governance but representation was racial and privileged whites and, to a lesser extent, Indians. Few cities could beat those in Southern Rhodesia for street width or those in Kenya for the beauty of flowering trees lining avenues. Green belts marked by sporting facilities and beautiful parks were introduced. The miserable shacks where African workers, essential to the economic life of these towns, resided were for a long time simply expendable, available for demolition as the cities expanded. According to Penvenne, ‘African workers felt humiliated and cheated’ in the urban setting of the capital, Lourenço Marques.<sup>2</sup>

To an important extent, there was a model here in South Africa. Here not only was there a very large, long-established population of essentially European descent plus many immigrant Indians and an important population of mixed race but the extraordinary richness of the mineral deposits found, above all gold, made possible a far wealthier and more economically complex society. However, from 1910, South Africa was an independent country with a government determined to create white society as a bounded, dominant, hegemonic core. The cities reflected this pattern. Whites were by no means all wealthy or powerful but political developments created economic and social policies that led to most residential space consisting of suburbanized developments exclusively intended for their use. Dependent at first on rail links and tramways, this shifted with time to an American style automobile-based suburban sprawl. Private properties occupied most residential space while

protectionist policies and the needs of the underground mines allowed for wide-ranging industrial development that had a large impact on urban growth and employment. The capital, Pretoria, became an important site for state-generated or encouraged industry but revealed a relatively planned character. Only an hour's distance by rail, Johannesburg, where gold was discovered in 1886, was the capital of nowhere but was a far larger and more dynamic city that grew extremely quickly as the core of a string of mining towns built on the gold-bearing reef, the Witwatersrand. Here was a boom town which acquired an American style business centre but relatively few green spaces or public amenities and without arteries that connected neighbourhoods easily. The old colonial port of Cape Town became less significant as a port than Durban on the Indian Ocean, far nearer to Johannesburg and Pretoria, while acquiring more of a regional identity over time. By 1921, the Witwatersrand line of towns held a population counted as 537,707, Cape Town's population was 220,562, Durban was at 168,743, and Pretoria 74,347. Thirty years later the respective figures were Witwatersrand including Johannesburg 1,670,242; Cape Town 547,648, Durban 479,974, and Pretoria 285,379, while the new industrial complex of Vereeniging/Vanderbijlpark and the car assembly city of Port Elizabeth also exceeded 100,000.

It was not only in South Africa, however, that thriving urban commerce attracted traders with distant origins. As Metcalf points out in his chapter (40), this was a characteristic of colonial towns. East African cities also contained important and internally variegated communities of Indian origin, more numerous generally than the whites and with older roots in this part of the continent. In West Africa, sections of the commercial economy became dominated by the Lebanese, both Muslim and Christian, who played a key role in urban life. Amongst Europeans, Greeks and Portuguese too formed adventurous trading diasporas that brought consumer goods to African populations even in remote towns in territories such as the Belgian Congo and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

### COLONIAL STRUCTURE, AFRICAN VOICE

With the Depression of 1929, the demand for African minerals and tropical crops diminished dramatically and quickly. However in, for instance, the copper-mining centre of Elisabethville (today Lubumbashi) in the Belgian Congo, the African population did not fall in numbers accordingly. The Belgians allowed Africans to construct residences along marked-out lots that had been prepared because this fitted their sense of what economic stability and growth required; they had not anticipated the emergence of an urban community prepared to remain in town even if jobs were no longer available. Still, this remained a phenomenon affecting only tens of thousands of Africans in the early 1930s.

It was in the middle years of that decade that colonial production began to come into demand again initiating the generation of good prices and often boom conditions in many corners of Africa. This improvement, taking most of Africa into independence or the brink of independence by its end, was the one where the limited networks of colonial towns turned into cities (see [Table 33.2](#)).

**Table 33.2 Populations of the Largest Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Late Colonial Period**

City	Year of census/estimate	
Ibadan, Nigeria	1953	459,000
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	1951	409,815
Léopoldville, Belgian Congo	1953	283,859
Lagos, Nigeria	1953	272,000
Khartoum-Khartoum North-Omdurman, Sudan	1953	241,000
Dakar, French West Africa	1951	229,400
Tananarive, Madagascar	1951	182,982
Luanda	1953	168,500
Ogbomoshos, Nigeria	1953	140,000
Accra, Gold Coast	1948	135,925
Kano, Nigeria	1953	130,000
Oshogbo, Nigeria	1953	123,000
Nairobi, Kenya	1948	118,976
Ife, Nigeria	1953	111,000
Iwo, Nigeria	1953	100,000
Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika	1952	99,140

*Note:* Table 33.2 is comprehensive for cities of 100,000+ at the time outside of South Africa, for which see text. Compare with Table 33.1. It is striking that, with the exceptional case of Nigeria, the big cities are primate cities and also capital cities for respective administrative units, a trend that was already well in place. Figures are taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica World Atlas, 1956* edn., ed. G. D. Hudson.

Rapid and dramatic urbanization was almost universal and affected South Africa, also experiencing unprecedented industrialization and infrastructural expansion as well. From 32,000 inhabitants when demographic recovery from the Depression began, the population of Léopoldville reached 283,000 in the colonial census of 1953 and was estimated at 400,000 by the time of independence in 1960. Nairobi's population in 1936 was estimated at 36,000 while the 1948 census reported this to have increased to 118,000 and, on the eve of independence in 1964, estimates reached 350,000. Certainly this allowed for the expansion of planned public and commercial construction and typically the population of white settlers increased very rapidly. However, this is the period where Africans from the countryside came to settle in the city in earnest. Much of this did reflect the growing possibilities of employment for commercial and even industrial firms as well as to serve the increasingly complex needs of the state. However, there was now in addition a population that fended for itself without any logic to its residence that served the authorities. Early colonial towns were often populated, so far as Africans were concerned, by single men defined as migrants while the few women, often important in creating a fragile stability, were labelled as prostitutes. During and after World War II, the ratios of men to women in towns began to fall and family life began to develop in this context. Migrant men acquired town wives if they proposed to lengthen their time of residence in places like the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, where an industrially critical metal was mined.

Up through the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, to leave the farm for the city was to risk one's life in a less healthy environment where health indicators show lower child survival rates and higher death rates in particular. One can find something like this in Johannesburg in the 1920s also but

by the 1940s the reverse was probably beginning to be true. The cities generally offered better educational and health services than anywhere else. Moreover, they exposed Africans to professional sports, cinema, and a myriad of consumer items. For those who were discontented or alienated by village life one way or another, notably women, the towns offered ways of restructuring identity as well as new occupations. As Thomas Hodgkin wrote, citing a Congolese account, 'In Brazzaville, you sleep well; you eat well. When you are together with someone else's wife, there is no trouble with the commandant because in Brazzaville nobody sticks their nose into business that does not concern him.'<sup>3</sup>

Hodgkin was a rare early English observer stimulated by the growing appeal of the towns by contrast to the anthropologists wedded to tribal analysis and structural kinship-based assessments of African society; the French, whom he read, were often more open to these new tendencies. The Frenchman Claude Meillassoux, writing about the future Malian capital of Mali, described the significance of the spread of a lingua franca, Banaba or Bambara. This was typical of many cities that attracted cosmopolitan populations—Nyanja in Lusaka, Lingala in Léopoldville, Hausa in Kaduna, and Swahili all over East Africa and into the eastern and southern Belgian Congo. Meillassoux also commented extensively on the importance of dance. Music, dance, and ceremony transmuted themselves in the burgeoning cities even if they were adaptations of rural cultural expression. Religious practices tied to the ancestors and the land did not make much sense in cosmopolitan communities nor did witchcraft beliefs that were intended to enforce ancestral kinship structures.

Bamako is recognized as a centre that attracted talented African photographers and would give birth to captivating popular music. Gang cultures absorbed young men in impoverished but dynamic new neighbourhoods in many African cities that did not fit European modernist ideals, where they had no official political or cultural role to play. *Billisme*, the cult of gangs looking towards American cowboy films for fighting heroes who could replace more traditional icons of masculine behaviour, swept the streets of Léopoldville. Zoot suits and American clothing were the hallmarks of equivalent smart-dressing youths in Johannesburg, a dramatic contrast with the blanketed (and armed) Sotho-speaking miners who were desperate to defend their turf and gain what they could from the crumbs of the urban economy while retaining their identity as they saw it. Gary Kynoch considers these Marashea (Russians) a 'criminally inclined migrant society' struggling to survive the onset of apartheid.<sup>4</sup>

Ethnicity had a new salience and this was often the case despite or because of the cosmopolitan character of the new cities. It is not only the case that small remnant ethnic groups such as the Duala in Duala, the Lebou in Dakar, or the Ebrié in Abidjan clung to their rights as city 'aboriginals'; others defended their corner in terms of economic niches such as the Hausa in Ibadan, Nigeria<sup>5</sup> or the Indian working class in Durban, South Africa, as I have described elsewhere. These identity definitions were often agglomerative and rather different from what they might mean to a linguist or an anthropologist concerned with origins. Homeboy associations allowed newcomers to make their first move into town and start the foundations of a new life. In other cases, religious identity, Muslim or Christian took precedence. In Kenya, the 1950s were marked by violent rural conflict between the British government and the so-called Mau Mau movement. Identifying Mau Mau as essentially having an appeal limited to Kikuyu speakers in central Kenya, Operation Anvil was used to expel tens of thousands of Kikuyu from Nairobi in 1954. As workers they were replaced by Luo from eastern Kenya and others. This is one of the key sources of the conflicted ethnic politics of modern Kenya and modern Nairobi.

The result was a massive challenge to colonial authority and the planning regimen established earlier, even though planning itself became continually more extensive and elaborate. The distinctive feature of the previous era was a negative one: the city had never been intended primarily for the use of its African population whether as workers, as residents, or as consumers. The Africans in cities such as Nairobi or Lourenço Marques really had been marginal to the intentions of the state. In the 1950s if not the 1940s Africans became the large majority of city residents and what can be considered in Fred Cooper's terms a 'struggle for the city' ensued. This took the form of what he calls 'restrictions on residence', labour struggles and manifestations of national solidarity which arguably was born in the city. In Cooper's words: 'After the war, British and French officials imagined a different sort of city, segregated more by class than by race and above all expressing their desire to concretize and symbolize the incorporation of Africans into a "modern" urban space, organized in accordance with the best ideas of sanitation and urban planning.'<sup>6</sup>

Certainly that was increasingly legitimated as an African elite wanted access to the luxuries they associated with colonial officials and settler populations. Against this went not just the racialized thinking that imbued the colonial project but the sheer volume of in-migration, the poverty of new urban dwellers, their unfamiliarity with many of the requirements of urban living. For many it was the impulse of petty accumulation independent of the formal colonial economy that beckoned landlords, market traders, and later taxi entrepreneurs. Housing meant for workers (but never enough) became the property of the petty bourgeoisie who were better able to afford amenities such as electricity and the goods its availability made possible. Authorities could never keep pace with informal housing constructed through private arrangements on the edge of African cities.

### SINCE INDEPENDENCE

With the coming of independence, one can try to bring together a very large range of specific developments by considering three historically distinctive phases. The first pertains especially to capital cities and it is linked to the importance of the spatial location of the state as part of the nationalist project. If Africa 'works' through the diffusion of multiple patrimonial networks that stretch deep into the countryside, possibly but by no means exclusively defined in ethnic terms, the seat of these networks lies in the big city where economic activity is focused first and foremost on consumption whether one looks at the huge, more or less formalized markets or the manifest possibilities of display and performance. The city became the site of prestigious new government structures, luxury hotels where the elite met important foreign contacts, and stadia where popular sports events and affirmations of political support took place. In general, where colonialism had sometimes allowed some municipal government representation, governance in the big towns was taken over directly by the central state. This was in order both to provide sources of income and to exert control over potentially insurgent popular forces. Much of the agitation associated with the rise of nationalism had taken place in the cities, in poor neighbourhoods, in universities and schools, and in workplaces. Establishing a state-led order in these institutions and associating the striving for a better life with fitting into that order was crucial.

In some cases entirely new cities were created, notably the Malawian capital of Lilongwe (1975) and the Nigerian capital city of Abuja (1991). The Ivory Coast moved the capital to the long-time president Houphouët-Boigny's home village of Yamoussoukro (1983) while Tanzania very, very gradually established a new centre in the geographic core of the country at Dodoma (since 1973).

Virtually new capitals had to be created where certain kinds of administrative changes took place: Kigali in Rwanda following the break-up of Ruanda-Urundi, Gaborone in Botswana where the Bechuanaland Protectorate had been administered from within South Africa.

In some cases, the continued success of export-led growth allowed this kind of order to flourish for a period of time. In Zambia, for example, good copper prices allowed for the rapid spread of educational and health systems through the country as well as improved transport. The state nationalized the copper mines and used its resources to build a range of industrial operations in this landlocked, lightly peopled country. Nairobi was the focus for rapid development of an African middle class built on the prosperity of coffee and tea cultivation by African farmers in Kenya. In the Ivory Coast, a diverse range of primary agricultural exports, notably cocoa and coffee, brought new sources of money to the country and the government. Abidjan became the 'pearl of the lagoons' attracting a large cosmopolitan population with numerous high-rise buildings on the plateau. The former French residential suburb of Cocody housed not only an Ivorian university and the presidential palace but the palatial Hotel Ivoire with its iconic ice-skating rink. Abidjan in the 1970s was surpassing Dakar, the old federal capital, as the richest and largest Francophone city in West Africa. Typically the limited public housing available existed largely for middle level government employees. Inevitably working people built their own shelters. Such was the determination to have a hygienic and secure urban order that these squatter areas were constantly under threat of demolition even though their inhabitants were essential working components of the Ivorian boom. South Africa became notorious for such forced urban displacements, carried out in the apartheid era where marginalization or second-class status was legally tied to race in an effort to keep the city white despite the reality that whites no longer formed the majority in agglomerations of any size. Elsewhere however, not only in Abidjan, but notoriously in Dar es Salaam and Maputo (the former Lourenço Marques), removals occurred under left-wing governments for whom uncontrolled squatter housing got in the way of development planning and ideas about the clean and orderly city.

### **CRISIS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF RECONSTITUTION**

A second stage became very apparent almost everywhere by 1980. The decline in foreign aid on easy terms marking the lessening salience of the Cold War went together with a systematic decline in the value of the primary products Africa produced. Even in South Africa, the most industrialized African country by far, most secondary industry was sustained by a protectionist regime and government funding aimed at security while exporting very little. Here too, with the end of an ephemeral gold boom immediately after 1980, the economy ran into growing difficulties after decades of systematic growth, feeding into (largely urban and labour-based black) rebellion and squeezing the government where the shoe pinched. This certainly exposed the growing problems facing African cities which had experienced only very limited industrial development as an economic base. Yet even where migration to cities tailed off somewhat and sex ratios began to normalize, the natural population growth in cities, with better living conditions than elsewhere, was rapid.

Stagnant budgets meant withdrawing money from the educational and health systems that legitimated political systems; public housing was no longer constructed anywhere. Urban infrastructure frayed, decayed, and fell into ruin. Political crises led to episodes of violence in certain cities where unrepaired damage remained evident, while other cities became relative places of safety accumulating refugees fleeing from the threat of violence. In central Africa, for instance,



Léopoldville, now Kinshasa, grew enormously on the basis of uncontrolled settlements of impoverished urban newcomers stretching further and further south from the urban core up into surrounding hillsides where little or no urban infrastructure (sewerage, electricity, water supply, etc.) existed. It was a foolishly mismanaged nationalization of European property together with the collapse of copper prices that exposed these problems as virtually beyond fixing. Across the Congo, Brazzaville eventually became the site of a destructive civil war that severely damaged the city centre. Years of violent confrontation in Angola brought a huge refugee population, hundreds of thousands of people, to a third central African city, Luanda, where they were largely living in squalid *musseques* (shanty towns).

In most African cities, moreover, there was very little capacity to think through the problems of the city in new ways. Irrelevant planning statutes and by-laws remained unchanged from colonial times and were even sometimes operationalized, if usually in the breach, when possible. Maputo, despite the apparently revolutionary nature of the FRELIMO regime, was typical in that the old business district and residential areas designed for the Portuguese, the ‘cement city’, fell into decay while the informal city of unplanned shacks, already quite large by the time the Portuguese left in 1975, expanded enormously, in part due to the perils of life in the countryside in wartime. Equipment for cleaning the city fell into decay and became insufficient. The continent of Africa was joining what Mike Davis, in his influential polemic, called a ‘planet of slums’ (see [Plate 33.2](#) for the extensive Kibera slum outside Nairobi, Kenya).<sup>7</sup> For culture-centred observers, if Africa was no longer the rural continent, the cities were being overgrown by the culture, adapted in interesting but often brutal ways, of an older society once rooted in the countryside.



**PLATE 33.2** Kibera slum, outside Nairobi, Kenya.

The harsh structural adjustment regime of the 1980s was to some extent modified over time with the encouragement of so-called poverty alleviation measures that did not interfere with the international dictates demanding an open economy through which Africa earned its way through

exports. At first, expanding international governance institutions (and would-be international governance institutions setting the tone for policy enactment) pushed the idea of 'urban bias'. Reformed governance meant that industrious rural dwellers now earning 'farmgate' prices fairly would become more important economically; and cities themselves, especially the bloated African capital cities, would perhaps shrink in size or at least runaway growth would be curtailed, just as inflated paper money loses value. Such dreams have tended to give way to accepting the inevitable urbanizing nature of contemporary African society, and directing development efforts in the form of interventions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the city streets while trying to rescue urban local government, usually in a condition of rigor mortis. This can involve assisting street children, promoting urban agriculture (sometimes in zones where colonial planning favoured parklands and clipped verges), combating violence against women and attempting to find inexpensive and easily applicable localized solutions to problems of hygiene and nourishment. Makeshift and localized solutions, of course, cannot solve systemic problems based on the weakness of the economy and the ineptness or greed of local authorities. As cities get bigger and bigger, environmental problems also start to loom. How to expand the water supply? How to feed the city and with what consequences socially for entire populous regions? What about firewood or the growing proliferation of plastic waste?

Here one might flag up the absence of models of good local government in urban Africa. Representative government, where it did exist in colonial times, excluded the mass of the population. Post-colonial administration has often been eager to milk and/ or clamp down on cities rather than invite genuine urban civic representation. When such representation has existed formally, it often lacks expertise and resources and cannot address key problems, let alone formulate an urban vision. The most positive accounts today emphasize the growing presence of informal actors coming in many different forms.

Enterprising Africans do find means of coping with the lack of an effective local government through networks that may involve ethnic associations, which were often so important in the early stages of urban growth, but more likely through religious or other kinds of ties. New kinds of fundamentalist Islam (Islamism) catch on in northern Nigerian cities such as Bauchi or Kano while Pentecostal sects that follow American media-savvy preaching campaigns try to promote a new morality that will underwrite the dream of prosperity in Lagos or Kinshasa. These networks are also assisted by the growing mobility of Africans. In any one city, aided by electronic technology and cellular phones, Africans link up to many others, smaller and larger and to connections outside their own country and indeed outside Africa where there are resources. Cultural ideals circulate through the increasing spread of television and videos far beyond what the film world of a generation ago could do. Lagos has become a centre for a very low capital cost video film industry; Kinshasa once was the centre of a large Congolese music business. The business end there has largely moved on to Europe but the diffusion continues. Most African countries have their local variety of hip-hop and are quick to pick up on forms that resonate with emotions on the African street. Do or die loyalty to the local football team begins to give way to identification with the multiple success of African star footballers who earn fortunes playing in front of European supporters.

The situation has changed again in what we shall term a third phase, although not without extensive continuities, in recent years. African commodities, primarily mineral commodities in which the state plays a rentier role, bring increasing sums in to African governments that have an impact on African cities. Extreme aid dependence has given way, in some countries at least, to more capacity to take the

initiative.

What is increasingly noticeable, and rarely discussed by those focussing on ‘poverty alleviation’ is that a gradually maturing middle class with a small number of wealthy people at its core, is beginning to find some capacity to rework the city, to decolonize it and to focus on its own desiderata. This is most notable of course in relatively peaceful centres such as Dakar or Dar es Salaam, and in such cities as Accra where many successful émigré Ghanaians build substantial houses. Such cities profit sometimes at the expense of others experiencing greater turbulence and instability on a regional scale. The nationalist era was linked in the great majority of cases, despite the denigration that Western sources pour on it for its corrupt and arbitrary regimes, by a genuine populism, a genuine desire to reconstruct society through largesse from the one-party state and improving welfare conditions. Today the most successful African governments, either bloated through oil wealth or legitimating themselves through the ‘good governance’ dictates of the international financial institutions—two terms only for the head of state, women in apparently powerful bureaucratic and elective jobs, contested elections, free press, etc.—rather than being able to deliver anything in particular, are not very interested in what they offer the population. Rather those who benefit from the regime and the possibilities of ‘globalization’ concentrate on the establishment of decent fee-paying private schools and clinics, on the construction and expansion of roads, airports and discreet suburbs where families can live behind high walls or perhaps in ‘gated communities’. One might call this an African vision of modernization. This process was well under way in Abidjan under rather difficult economic conditions as the Houphouët-Boigny patronage system fell apart and the Ivory Coast fell into intensified conflict and, eventually, civil war. Here notable features were the diminishing importance of the Plateau in favour of more distant suburbia and the weakening of markets replaced by shopping centres, usually Lebanese owned, sometimes following suspicious fires. In Nigeria the new capital of Abuja is open to bourgeois restructuring beyond the possibility of any older city and it runs infinitely better from the perspective of the middle-class consumer or commuter.

In cities which are very problematic places to live, numerous authors have shown that energetic groups of Africans, generally from the elite and often giving women a chance to exert leadership and satisfy basic needs, have been able to make a difference in particular situations. New forms of associations, usually focused on this class, are active in weaving together practical solutions to their problems in dealing with roads and bridges, schools and health care, and even hygiene problems. A Lagos study has added to this list issues such as dealing with the aftermath of natural and industrial catastrophes and fighting crime.

However one does not have to be an Afro-pessimist to affirm that this very noticeable trend is far from universal. There remain a few cities, for instance, devastated by conflict: in Mogadishu in Somalia no real central state exists at all, and in Freetown in Sierra Leone and Monrovia in Liberia electricity still remains a luxury. Even in Abidjan, the progress of reconstruction after 2001 became almost impossible. Kinshasa remains overwhelmed by the lack of minimal urban services and the sheer poverty of the majority of its 6–8 million people. Finding solutions occurs at a much more modest ‘survivalist’ level there.

A feature of post-colonial urban history that also requires noting is the emergence, typically in the course of political crisis or economic pressure, of what South Africans like to call ‘xenophobia’. Despite the end of colonialism, minorities associated with the period of colonial rule continue to have a significant presence in many countries. The ruined and still empty houses and shops visible in Ugandan towns such as Jinja—site of the strategic Owens Falls hydroelectric project on the Nile and

once the centre of industry and sugar processing—which formerly belonged to Indian families thrown out by Idi Amin almost forty years ago, are melancholy testimony to the damage this kind of crude nationalist triumphalism brought on. However, many cities experience tension between ethnic groups from within their borders also, particularly where such tension is politically generated and salient. Moreover, commercial diasporas and refugee groups move easily across African borders and are attracted by favourable trading conditions. When these conditions are reversed, such groups are singled out as foreign and experience violence and expulsion. This has disfigured the cities of the Ivory Coast since 2001 but it has been a recurrent factor in almost every West African country including Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana. Xenophobic attacks on foreigners, sometimes Somali shopkeepers, sometimes Zimbabwean workers, that killed several dozen people, forced many thousands into camps, and threatened (and they continue subtly to threaten) the future of the numerous professional-class migrants from elsewhere in Africa, were a feature of South Africa in 2008. Overwhelmingly this is an urban problem. Despite the economic benefits which attracting a diffuse foreign community brings, opinion polls reveal in fact an intense resentment of foreigners by most urban residents.

One of the major problems facing the reconstruction of African cities is land and its disposition. In many cases, African resistance to the fully-fledged privatization of land on the basis of a universal system that is acceptable to all is still very strong. Even in South Africa, for the African majority, buying and selling homes is a new historical experience and the real-estate business constantly struggles to create and expand a genuine market for housing in all-African neighbourhoods. In Lusaka, research has documented long-term resident families over almost half a century in what was originally informal settlement housing quite near the centre of town where there seems to be little mobility in the context of the long-term economic decline of Zambia, only recently reversed.

Property rights in land are often contested and confused in African cities. Those with ‘traditional’ land rights make forceful demands in Accra, Lagos, or Abidjan. In Kinshasa property is often designated by signs that indicate that it is not for sale; property rights are often the source of intense contestation between potential different heirs and those with influence. Difficulties over establishing systematic and predictable property regimes are rather typical in central African countries. The recent electoral violence in Nairobi has had the effect of beginning to create ethnic neighbourhoods where affiliation to the right ethnic group-cum-party or party faction has increased as a source of entitlement. Yet in cities such as Nairobi, Kinshasa, and Dar es Salaam, landlordism and tenancy are becoming increasingly prevalent. In Nairobi, black investors are organizing the construction of purpose-built concrete tenement buildings of up to six stories, a stage which has not been reached virtually anywhere else.

It is also important to note that these patterns are showing more and more variability and individuality with time as particular countries and perhaps even regions diverge in their social and economic prospects and the baggage they carry with them through what is now often two generations of post-colonial development. It is going to be ever less possible in our new century to talk about ‘the African city’.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while Kinshasa has become ever more emphatically the central urban place of the country as a whole, other centres have either seen their growth limited or even fallen into ruin. The Belgian-created network of cities based on administrative and extractive logic has collapsed. The decline and decay of what was once the third biggest city, Kisangani (once Stanleyville) on the middle reaches of the Congo where the transport routes linked the east and east-

centre of this immense territory with the river flowing north and west, has been pictured dramatically by more than one author. By contrast, the diamond town of Mbuji Mayi (1984 population estimate 486,000) which attracted Luba refugees fleeing from violence elsewhere back to Kasai, is probably now the second biggest city in the country. Tshikapa (1984 population estimate 116,000) is another diamond boom town turned into a small city while Butembo, perhaps the seventh largest urban agglomeration in the country (1984 population estimate 101,000), associated with Nande traders who profit from the violence in the eastern part of the country, has also grown and developed new urban infrastructure organized by local residents. Gombe, on the Rwandan border, profits from the uncontrolled international market.

South Africa knows little of the agonies of the Congo but it also shows divergent urban trajectories. The capital Pretoria and the nearby business centre of Johannesburg have grown rapidly since the end of apartheid despite the lack of available cheap housing which would make urbanization so much easier. This growth is more restrained in the port city of Durban which services the largest part of South Africa's container trade. Cape Town, the other large city, has become something of a white redoubt with the city and province controlled by a minority party which attracts on current estimate no more than 3 per cent of the black African vote nationally. It has boomed through the attraction of an internationally competitive tourist industry, services, and agro-business perhaps in part for that reason. However, its wealth attracts not just rich Europeans looking for a winter alternative to the Riviera but many poor black migrants who largely live far from the historic centre and the slopes of Table Mountain. By contrast, the smaller cities of South Africa—Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London—are growing little if at all. South Africa has some smaller towns, especially nearer to Cape Town, that are thriving based on tourism or services or newer mining extraction but it has many, for instance old mining and railway towns, that are falling into very poor shape and in certain cases losing absolute population.

In the Senegalese city of Touba, merchants loyal to the Muridiyya, a particular Senegalese-born Muslim brotherhood, which prefers to have its adepts base a domicile there, have their headquarters. Here is a city (population estimated at 500,000) grown out of very little due to the way African merchants have seized opportunities in the age of globalization. Globalization does not perform the way those theorists imagine who think that all over the world there is an exciting race for urban units to become so-called world cities. Obviously African cities are not 'competitive' with London or New York, not in our era for sure: nor is this a tragedy. However globalization or perhaps better put, globalization-powered regionalization does have its impacts. Cape Town does compete successfully for substantial European property investment and consumer spending with other big city tourist destinations such as Sydney, Australia. Nairobi profits from a huge United Nations presence and, at a survivalist level, so does Kinshasa from MONUC, the UN military force. The troubles of Abidjan have been of substantial benefit to Dakar in terms of bringing commercial and services activity seeking a West African and French-speaking headquarters to the older city.

This chapter started by reiterating the often made point: Africa is urbanizing rapidly with the presence of many large cities even though it remains the least urbanized continent. Culturally these cities are the site for the fusion of recharged African traditions and dreams of consumerist modernity derived from elsewhere, although often reinterpreted. It would be a mistake to think that they lack character and style. The challenge will be to make those cities less inequitable and more serviceable for their populations and to build up economies that can balance consumption and the myriad commercial activities that have to feed so many mouths with productive activities, not just, but clearly

including, a process of industrialization. Moreover, the cities also have the challenge of stimulating if not creating what they still really lack, urban citizens with a sense of identity rooted in the urban community as a whole.

## Notes

1. Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973, 3rd edn.), 254.
2. Jeanne Penvenne, *African Strategies and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques 1877–1962* (Oxford and Portsmouth, N. H.: James Currey and Heinemann, 1995), 90, 142.
3. Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 70, my translation.
4. Gary Kynoch, *We are Fighting the World; A History of the Marashea Gangs of South Africa 1947–1999* (Pietermaritzburg and Athens, Oh.: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press and Ohio University Press, 2005), 152.
5. Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa; A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). He called this ‘political ethnicity’.
6. Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 121.
7. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: New Left Books, rev. edn., 2006).

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# MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY CITIES

## *Themes*



## INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE CITY: EAST AND WEST

HO-FUNG HUNG AND SHAOHUA ZHAN

THE early 19th-century rise of industrial capitalism, which defined modernity in the last two centuries and its late 20th-century transformation, have left us with puzzles and debates.<sup>1</sup> The genesis of industrial capitalism in Europe, England in particular, has led generations of scholars to ask why this profound socio-economic revolution happened there but not in other equally advanced pre-industrial economies such as China. Likewise, the late 20th-century rise of East Asia and China as an industrial powerhouse, concomitant with the protracted economic crisis and manufacturing decline in Europe and North America, compels us to debate about the foundations of China's industrial competitiveness.

In this chapter, we discuss how the origins of the two Great Divergences—the early modern divergence when Europe embarked on industrialization while China did not, and the contemporary divergence created by China's economic dynamism and the relative decline of the West, as illustrated in Table 34.1, can be explained in terms of the role of cities in economic development.

## THE DEBATE ON THE EARLY MODERN GREAT DIVERGENCE

Since the 1970s, many theories that explain the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe have focused on the countryside. They have tried to identify the special conditions underlying the great leap forward in agricultural productivity and the subsequent generation of an ample agrarian surplus that fuelled the spontaneous capitalist-industrial take-off in 18th-century England.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 34.1 Great Divergences in GDP Share, Population Share, and Ratio of GDP per capita to World Average, East and West**

	1500			1820			1940			2008		
	GDP	pop	GDPpc	GDP	pop	GDPpc	GDP	pop	GDPpc	GDP	pop	GDPpc
China	24.9	23.5	1.1	33.0	36.6	0.9	6.4	22.6	0.3	17.5	19.8	0.9
Japan	3.1	3.5	0.9	3.0	3.0	1	4.7	3.2	1.5	5.7	1.9	3
UK	1.1	0.9	1.2	5.2	2.0	2.6	7.3	2.1	3.5	2.8	0.9	3.1
W. Europe	15.5	11.0	1.4	20.4	11.0	1.9	27.5	10.8	2.5	14.5	5.0	2.9
USA			1.8	1.8	1.0	1.8	20.6	5.8	3.6	18.6	4.5	4.1
World	100	100	1	100	100	1	100	100	1	100	100	1

Source: Angus Maddison, 'Historical Statistics of the World Economy, 1-2008AD', [http://www.ggdc.net/MADDISON/Historical\\_Statistics/vertical-file\\_02-2010.xls](http://www.ggdc.net/MADDISON/Historical_Statistics/vertical-file_02-2010.xls)

This rural-centric explanation of industrial revolution, however, has been challenged by new discoveries about China's high agricultural productivity that compared favourably with England in the early modern period from *c.* 1600 to 1800. These findings entail a new conundrum: if China's agricultural productivity on the eve of the 19th century was as high as England's, then why did the substantial agrarian surplus there not fuel any industrial transition, as was the case in England?

An array of explanations have emerged to explain the puzzle. One explanation that has attracted the most attention is Kenneth Pomeranz's ecological argument.<sup>3</sup> He asserts that the divergence of the developmental pattern between England and China did not occur until the turn of the 18th century.

Before that, both economies were experiencing parallel growth in commerce, population, and agricultural productivity. Towards the end of the 18th century, development in both regions reached the limit that the available and diminishing ecological resources, such as timber and cultivable land, would allow. Whence Chinese development was trapped, but England successfully circumvented the ecological constraint and leapt forward to industrial revolution. The single most important endowment that allowed England to overcome this constraint was its access to vast American resources such as raw cotton and sugar through its colonial control of North America.

This explanation is neat, but it is problematic in several ways. First, it cannot explain why England did not capitalize earlier on its easy access to American resources to foster capitalist-industrial development. Second, the availability of American resources to England and their unavailability to China is an exaggeration. American resources in 18th-century England were far from inexpensive. Many of these resources were in fact sold to England at higher than average world-market prices.<sup>4</sup> Provided with a huge silver reserve from several centuries of trade surplus, it was not difficult for China to purchase New World resources from the world market if needs arose.<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, Japan also had no access to American resources, but it industrialized successfully in the 19th century through purchasing most of its essential raw materials from the world market.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of industrial capitalism, which occurred in a unique place in a unique time in world history, must be the result of a contingent concatenation of multiple factors.<sup>7</sup> Though one cannot deny the contribution of each of the above factors to the rise of industrial capitalism, these factors, taken either individually or collectively, do not adequately explain the industrial transition in 18th-century England, as well as China's non-transition throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. There must be a crucial factor missing. To explain sufficiently the variation in the developmental pattern of England and China, this factor must be present in 18th-century England, but absent in 18th- and 19th-century China. The key role of the city is increasingly regarded as vital in helping to explain the Great Divergence of this period. Recent research has presented evidence for the significantly higher urban living standards in the cities of England and the Netherlands in the early 18th century, reflecting and stimulating labour market integration, rising output and consumption of manufactured goods and services, as well as economic innovation.<sup>8</sup> But another urban factor also deserves attention: the role of urban entrepreneurs. In the following, we will see the prominence of entrepreneurial elites in urban centres capable of channelling the rural surplus into their hands and putting it to productive, innovative use.

### **BRINGING THE CITY BACK IN**

Recently, Jack A. Goldstone developed an 'engineering culture' theory to explain the China–England divergence. It stipulates that the key to England's capitalist-industrial take-off at the turn of the 19th century was the popularization of a unique Newtonian worldview and engineering culture, which enabled entrepreneurs to turn preexisting scientific knowledge into the practical improvement of commercial ventures.<sup>9</sup> Goldstone argues that the rise of this culture in 17th-century English academies and schools resulted from a series of historical accidents.<sup>10</sup> The question that follows is how this engineering culture could diffuse outside the scientist community and become entrenched in the world of industrial production, and who were the actors responsible for such diffusion.

Part of the answer may be found in Robert Allen's theory of 'collective invention'.<sup>11</sup> According to

this theory, application of abstract scientific knowledge to innovative practical use during the Industrial Revolution required recurrent and costly experimentation by capital-intensive firms and mutual diffusion of the subsequent knowledge among those firms. Likewise, Reeder and Rodger note that English industrialization was enabled by the rise of 19th-century ‘information superhighways’ through which dense networks of entrepreneurs, equipped with the necessary know-how and financial resources for industries, developed in big cities where entrepreneurial human and material capital reinforced one another.<sup>12</sup>

The significance of urban centres in fostering industrialization is also noted, though only in passing, by Lachmann, who finds that England’s agricultural revolution and the subsequent increase in the incomes of landowners and tenant farmers did not automatically trigger industrialization. An intermediate step of a ‘forced draught’, that concentrated high rural incomes in the hands of urban entrepreneurs, was necessary to turn the gains of the agricultural revolution into the fuel of industrial investment and innovations that finally triggered the Industrial Revolution as a ‘spontaneous combustion’. This transfer of income from the rural to urban sector may be channelled via various routes, such as the landed gentry’s investment in urban companies, their residence in cities, or commercial exchange between urban entrepreneurs and rural landowners or tenants, with the terms of trade in the former’s favour.<sup>13</sup> In other words, collective invention, or the diffusion of an engineering culture into the production process, was impossible without a critical mass of vibrant entrepreneurs (a mixture of merchants, professional men, manufacturers, and landowners), who were capable of exploiting and appropriating the high income of the rural elite and using this concentrated surplus to execute the costly trial-and-error development of productive technology.

The rise of such an entrepreneurial business elite in England was related to the role of the state. In [Ch. 21](#) above, Bas van Bavel and his colleagues set out a general model of how states and political institutions impacted on the pre-modern urban economy and highlight the different trajectories of urban growth in Europe. In England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 the government had a reduced capacity and ambition to intervene in society, though trade tariffs were revised to meet the needs of producers and there was military action abroad to protect and promote British commercial interests. But Parliament (increasingly active and influenced by business lobbyists) was active in adjusting the poor laws and legislating against trade unions to meet entrepreneurial demands.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, *both* abundant agrarian surplus in the form of high landed incomes *and* a strong urban entrepreneurial elite capable of funnelling this income into their hands are necessary for a capitalist-industrial take-off. It explains why during industrialization in 19th-century England and later elsewhere in Europe, the rise of large industrial cities never displaced the development of rural towns, which remained bustling centres of smaller scale manufacturing and services and served as intermediaries in the urban system, helping to channel agrarian profits and basic industrial products to larger centres.<sup>15</sup>

Accepting the presence of a strong urban entrepreneurial elite as a crucial sufficient factor in fostering industrialization in 18th- and 19th-century England leads us to another question: why did this kind of entrepreneurial elite not attain a leading position in 18th- and 19th-century China? True, Qing China did see the emergence of an urban-based entrepreneurial class, in concert with the rapid commercialization of the economy (see above, [Ch. 17](#)). But this elite mostly pursued a very different strategy that prevented them from becoming wealth accumulators in the way their English counterparts did.

Chinese elites normally operated in merchant groups bounded by native-place identities and shared

dialects. In contrast to the traditional orthodoxy that the Qing government was always hostile to mercantile activities and eager to curb commercial growth because of a Confucianist loathing of commerce, recent studies agree on the view that ‘the Qing seems perhaps the most pro-commercial regime in imperial Chinese history’.<sup>16</sup> Many officials and rural gentry families saw commerce as an opportunity to diversify their sources of income. Throughout Qing times, a number of well-known merchant groups monopolized the most profitable business sectors. The most outstanding case was the Anhui merchant group, which originated in Anhui province and thrived on the production of and trade in salt, textiles, tea, and other items in the economically advanced metropolises along the Yangzi River such as Yangzhou, Suzhou, and Hankou. They always operated their business with the blessing of state officials, who welcomed their regular supply of consumer goods, their tax contributions as well as their bribes. Despite the prominence of these merchant groups at large, they were mostly no more than decentralized networks constituted by individual merchant families that rose and fell successively. These families rarely thrived over several generations. The common pattern was that a certain successful entrepreneurial family, after accumulating an initial fortune, pulled out from commerce and transformed themselves into members of the gentry or state elite class through investing their wealth in preparing their offspring for the imperial examinations.<sup>17</sup> With the recurrent departure of the most successful members from commerce, capital accumulation and further expansion of these merchant networks were limited, though the maintenance of the network at large was guaranteed by the continuous entry of new members from modest backgrounds. In contrast, in England established entrepreneurial families supplied many of the first industrialists during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>18</sup>

The high propensity of successful entrepreneurial families to transform themselves into gentry and state elite limited the growth of the entrepreneurial class’ size and power in China. As a result, the Qing commercial economy was marked by ‘weak firms in strong networks’, as compared with the ‘firm-based economy’ grounded on enterprises operated by business dynasties in 18th-century England, and also 19th-century Japan.<sup>19</sup> With the lack of a strong entrepreneurial elite China was short of an agent that was competent in centralizing the abundant agrarian surplus and diverting this surplus to costly and risky productive investment and innovation.

This tendency for urban entrepreneurial families to leave business was attributable in part to the Qing state’s paternalistic policies that prioritized popular living standards over mercantile profits at times of subsistence crisis. The imperial state supported the urban entrepreneurial elite in normal times, but at times of subsistence crisis or class conflict, such as those between workshop owners and workers, the paternalist state would often give priority to the livelihoods of the lower classes and pressure urban entrepreneurs to offer concessions—either by raising workers’ wages or selling their grain stocks at below market prices. Thus class politics created a milieu of insecurity affecting urban entrepreneurs that shaped their choice of strategy of social reproduction. It helps us make sense of this elite group’s preference for preparing their offspring for gentry and bureaucratic rather than mercantile careers, and so the relative weakness of the urban entrepreneurial elite in 18th-century China.

### **A TALE OF TWO URBAN-INDUSTRIAL CATCH-UPS**

The insecurity of urban entrepreneurs faced by popular strife and the lack of state protection against it only worsened in 19th-century China, as the Qing empire witnessed deepening socio-economic and

fiscal crises, which were aggravated by China's successive wars with the Western imperial powers from the 1840s.<sup>20</sup> Besides intermittent urban riots, the 19th century witnessed a tide of more protracted and violent heterodox religious uprisings from the White Lotus Rebellion of 1796–1805 to the Taiping Rebellion of 1851–1864.<sup>21</sup> These rebellions further constrained the growth and continuity of the entrepreneurial elite, both directly and indirectly. The sectarian rebels, with strong egalitarian impulses, confiscated accumulated wealth and executed the rich along the way.

The indirect impact of these rebellions on mercantile activities was equally devastating. Finding the large, corrupt, and immobile imperial army not reliable in the eradication of heterodox rebels during the White Lotus Rebellion, the Qing state opened the Pandora's box of local militarization, encouraging the gentry class to collaborate with bureaucrats to organize local militias. Amid growing social disorder, these militias proliferated in all corners of the empire during the 19th century. During the Taiping Rebellion, many of them even merged to become larger and more formal military structures, leading to the rise of provincial armies autonomous from the imperial centre.

Short on financial support from the central government, these military organizations financed themselves by levying heavy special taxes on local towns and commercial centres and on agricultural producers.<sup>22</sup> The landed elite, the main agents of local militarization, reaped handsome profits from the process, as they usually appropriated 20–30 per cent of all funds raised for military purposes for their own ends.<sup>23</sup> This led to the rise of a military-predatory class. The protection they offered did not match the extraordinary tax burden that they imposed on the entrepreneurial elite, who were already suffering from financial losses caused by the upheavals.

In the 1860s, the Qing state initiated a top-down industrialization programme to nurture an array of state-sponsored industrial enterprises, in the wake of the humiliating defeats by Western industrial powers. But this industrialization effort was hampered by the ever-expanding nexus of the military-predatory elite, who consumed a large portion of the economic surplus that otherwise might have been mobilized by the central government to finance the growth of new industrial firms. It is not surprising that this industrialization programme ended in spectacular failure. At most, it achieved nothing more than the creation of a few isolated 'pockets of growth' scattered across the empire.<sup>24</sup> Only in the Treaty Port areas dominated by the Western powers and Western investment was there any significant modern-style industrial expansion (see above, [Ch. 17](#)).

Comparing the successful capitalist-industrial catch-up in late 19th-century Japan and China's retrogression to an agrarian-coercive order is striking. In the early 19th century, the advantages and limitations of Japan's economy were similar to China. Following the agricultural revolution in the Tokugawa period, the Japanese economy had an agrarian surplus decentralized among peasant cultivators.<sup>25</sup> Japan was not short of resourceful merchants, but they were far from securely dominant. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, however, the energetic reformers successfully built a highly centralized state that effectively and brutally repressed all kinds of popular contention, clearing the path for the entrepreneurial elite.<sup>26</sup> This managed to concentrate vast economic resources in its hands through heavy agricultural taxes. It employed these resources to construct urban-industrial infrastructure, ranging from railroads to telegraph systems, necessary for industrial growth. It also channelled a substantial portion of its revenue to finance the development of large, vertically integrated, private corporate conglomerates known as *zaibatsu*, with Mitsubishi and Mitsui as well-known examples.<sup>27</sup>

This pro-capitalist, centralized political structure, which was effective in concentrating and using

the substantial agrarian surplus to jump-start a capitalist-industrial take-off in big cities, was simply non-existent in 19th-century China. Whereas the expanding military-predatory networks in China eroded the state's financial capacity and thwarted its effort to cultivate a vital and self-expanding urban entrepreneurial elite from above, a formidable, state-sponsored corporate elite took shape in Meiji Japan, laying the groundwork for Japan's industrial expansion in the century to come.

## URBAN–RURAL DIALECTICS IN THE LATE 20TH-CENTURY RISE OF CHINA

Industrialization in Western Europe and North America in the 19th century was based on a concentration of large industries that had advanced capital and technology levels in big cities, alongside workshop-type industries, with lower capital and technology levels, in both big centres and smaller towns in the countryside that employed their cost advantage to take care of the labour-intensive component of industrial production. But by the mid-20th century, thanks to the growth of technology and capital intensive production, manufacturing in most developed countries had become concentrated in major industrial cities, while the decline of rural–urban migration eclipsed low-cost workshop manufacturing.<sup>28</sup>

Increasing labour inflexibility and rising wage costs in the highly concentrated and urban-centred manufacturing system in the developed world were important factors in the long-term crisis in industrial profitability there in the 1970s and after.<sup>29</sup> The continuing industrial strength of Germany, which retained the tradition of *Mittelstand* medium-scale and smaller industries scattered across the country, including smaller towns, as well as the revival of decentralized and flexible manufacturing in other European economies are exceptions that prove the rule.<sup>30</sup> The crisis of most other urban-industrial economies in the global North created an opening for a group of Asian countries, above all China, to enter the world stage and become new industrial powerhouses grounded on their low manufacturing labour costs, due to the abundance of untapped rural labour. The next sections trace this process in contemporary China.

## MAO'S URBAN-CENTRIC HEAVY INDUSTRIALIZATION

The Communist (CCP) government that came to power in China in 1949 sought to free the country from Western imperial domination through the rapid development of a national industrial system. Facing a countryside devastated by war, lack of investment, and colonialist exploitation for more than a century, the CCP's task was to channel the small agrarian surplus to promote industrialization. The challenge was much starker than that facing urban-industrial entrepreneurs in early 19th-century England and state-sponsored urban-industrial corporations in late 19th-century Japan, who had a much greater rural surplus to channel and exploit.

While succeeding in mobilizing peasants to win the revolution, the CCP shifted its focus to urban industry after taking power in 1949. The priority was to develop capital-intensive heavy industries in an attempt to 'catch up' with industrialized countries. Party elites reached consensus in the early 1950s on mobilizing the rural surplus to fund urban heavy industry through the state's monopoly of purchase and sale of grains, cotton, and other agricultural goods.<sup>31</sup> The concentration of resources for heavy industry gave rise to large urban-industrial centres.

Under the influence of the Soviet Union and its development model, China in the 1950s attached

strategic importance to heavy industry and mobilized human and material resources through central planning to expand its industrial base (see above, Ch. 28). Two types of city became particularly important in this industrial schema and thus received more resources than others: one included the cities that already had well-developed industrial sectors before 1949, including port cities such as Shanghai, Wuxi, Tianjin, and Qingdao, and urban-industrial centres in the north-east where the Japanese had built a strong industrial infrastructure; and the second were new industrial cities that were built close to the sources of raw materials such as coal, oil, and minerals for heavy industry. Concerned about the possibility of war near the coast, the Communist state deliberately built most of these new cities in hinterland regions. Between 1949 and 1957, the number of officially designated cities increased by one-third, or forty-four, of which twenty-three were located in central provinces, and seventeen in western provinces, while only four were in coastal provinces.<sup>32</sup> During the same period, the urban population increased by 72.6 per cent to nearly 100 million.<sup>33</sup>

However, urban expansion soon ran its course due to the limits of heavy industry-oriented industrialization. Heavy industry, then regarded as the core of modern industry, required high capital inputs. As noted earlier, the Chinese state sought to finance urban industry by monopolizing the purchase and sale of grains and other agricultural goods. This practice was initiated in 1953 and was accompanied by the establishment of the well-known *hukou* system (the system of household registration) in 1958, which strictly controlled population movements between rural and urban areas.<sup>34</sup> The rural surplus was transferred to the urban economy through state-controlled exchanges between agricultural and industrial products with the terms of trade heavily in the latter's favour. It was estimated that the state took 600–800 billion yuan from the countryside before 1978 to fund its industrial investments.<sup>35</sup>

Capital-intensive heavy industry was also limited in its labour absorption. According to Communist ideology, the Chinese state implemented a policy of full employment in the city. However, most of the resources were allocated for labour-saving heavy industry. As a result, the expansion of industrial jobs could not keep pace with the natural growth of the urban population, even less absorb some of the rural population. After the initial two years of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and 1967, the Chinese state started to send urban youths to the countryside. This political campaign, known as 'up to the mountain and down to the countryside', continued until the end of the Mao period, during which about 16 million young people from cities were sent to rural areas.

Rural industrialization had started here and there in the Mao period, particularly in the 1970s, but the priority of allocating resources to urban-industrial centres to develop heavy industry, the defence industry in particular, remained unchanged throughout the period.<sup>36</sup> Due to this persistent resource-allocation bias, the late Mao period saw the dominance of large industrial-urban centres and the decline of small cities. Between 1957 and 1978, the number of large cities increased from twenty-four to forty, and medium-sized cities from thirty-seven to sixty, whereas the figure for small cities shrank from 115 to ninety-three.<sup>37</sup> Mao's urban-centric heavy industrialization was thus distinguished from the industrializing experiences in 19th-century England and other western European countries where smaller towns coexisted with large industrial cities and played a crucial role in channelling resources from the countryside to industrial cities. It was also different from post-war experiences in other East Asian economies such as Japan and Taiwan, which pursued industrialization without constraining rural industrial activities or the expansion of rural towns.

## DENG'S RURAL-ORIENTED MARKET SOCIALISM

The market-oriented reforms initiated in 1978 shifted the political focus from urban-industrial centres to the countryside. With remarkable successes in agriculture and rural industry, the early reform period, that is, the 1980s, marked a clear break from both the Mao period and the previous Republican period. With the state's constriction of large capital-intensive urban enterprises and its support for small rural producers, together with Maoist legacies of social reforms in rural areas that created a literate and healthy rural workforce, this period saw the emergence and thriving of rural-based and decentralized industrialization that could be labelled 'market socialism'.

Contrary to the Mao period when party elites embraced the strategy of prioritizing urban-based heavy industry, the early reform period saw the emergence of high-profile party elites who supported rural reforms and emphasized rural and smaller town interests. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, a group of party elites at both central and provincial levels including Zhao Ziyang and Wan Li pushed forward the rural reform programme.<sup>38</sup> From 1982 to 1986, the central government used the important annual No.1 Document—the first policy directive issued at the beginning of each year setting out the highest government priorities—to cover rural issues, signifying the prominent place of rural development on the state's agenda. However, such reforms could not succeed without the support of local elites, most importantly, local cadres. The fiscal reforms in the early 1980s granted local governments the right to a share in state revenue and thus greatly motivated local cadres to develop the rural economy, small town industry in particular.<sup>39</sup> Last but not least, local entrepreneurs, with the reinstatement of the market and financial support from the state, also played an important role in expanding rural and small town industry.<sup>40</sup>

The reforms first started with increasing the purchasing prices of agricultural goods and followed with the institutional change that replaced the earlier People's Communes with the Household Responsibility System. With more resources and more freedom of production and exchange, millions of rural households, albeit all on a small scale, exhibited surprising capacity and flexibility in transforming the rural economy. Within five years from 1978 through 1984, grain output increased by one-third from 300 to 407 million tons, which made China a net grain exporter in 1985 for the first time since the Great Leap Forward in 1958.<sup>41</sup> A more dramatic change was the explosive growth of rural and small town industry, known as Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs): in 1978, there were 1.5 million industrial enterprises, employing 28 million rural labourers; in 1991, 19.1 million enterprises, employing 98 million. By 1991, rural industry accounted for as much as 43 per cent of rural output.

Associated with the rapid rural economic growth was the efflorescence of market towns, which functioned as centres of rural market activities and residential settlement. Between 1981 and 1989, the population in small towns increased 2.9 times from about 60 million to 170 million, while in the meantime the total population in towns and cities increased 1.7 times, suggesting that population growth in small towns was much faster than urban population growth in general.<sup>42</sup> The rapid expansion of small town populations was certainly derived from rural industry's capacity to absorb labour. In contrast to the labour-saving industrial enterprises of the Mao period, TVEs were mostly labour intensive, employing up to 100 million rural labourers by the end of the 1980s. In addition, the increase in grain output provided the necessary food resources for urban expansion.

The development of towns and small cities was also in line with official policy in the 1980s. Fei Xiaotong, a renowned sociologist with political influence, called on the authorities to give priority to



small towns and small cities because they could boost the rural economy as well as create millions of jobs for surplus rural labourers.<sup>43</sup> Fei's opinion was widely shared among policy-makers in the 1980s. A political decision was thus made to develop actively small urban centres while strictly controlling the expansion of large cities. As a result of this policy, the number of officially designated towns soared from 3,430 in 1983 to 11,100 in 1989.<sup>44</sup>

With the improvement in international relations, China sought to use foreign capital, particularly capital from overseas Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South East Asia, to stimulate the economy. The most important policy decision was made by Deng Xiaoping in 1980 to establish special economic zones in coastal regions, where overseas investors were offered favourable policies (see above, [Ch. 28](#)). These measures led to the expansion of coastal cities and paved the way for China's integration into the global capitalist economy in the 1990s. However, foreign capital played a relatively small role in the 1980s economic growth and the expansion of coastal cities also fell behind that of market towns.

The urban population grew rapidly in rural towns and small cities. The proportion of urban population reached 26.2 per cent in 1990, but some scholars estimate that the actual rate of urbanization may have attained 30 per cent, given that a growing number of peasants had already become non-agricultural workers in urban areas even though they were regarded as rural residents in the statistics.<sup>45</sup> This rural-driven urbanization was different from the previous phase of urbanization based on the growth of urban-industrial capital concentrated in large cities. The new rural-driven expansion led to the stabilizing and even narrowing of the rural–urban income gap, in contrast to the urbanization of the 1990s, which as we shall see resulted in an ever widening rural–urban income gap as well as polarization within the city.

## **DYNAMISM AND LIMITS OF CHINESE URBAN CAPITALISM SINCE THE 1990S**

The 1990s and onward saw the rise of Western-style urban capitalism in China. This round of urban expansion, partly built upon the industrial base of the Mao period and the material foundations of the 1980s growth, revolved at an ever faster speed and greatly changed the Chinese economy and urban landscape (see above, [Ch. 28](#)). Driven by export-oriented manufacturing and fixed asset investment in coastal cities, the robust urban-industrial growth paralleled and even surpassed what occurred in the early industrialized countries and other East Asian countries. However, it also included many downsides, such as widening income inequality, regional disparity, capital over-accumulation and environmental degradation.

Inflation-triggered urban unrest in the late 1980s helped force the Chinese state to shift its political focus from rural to urban areas. Concerned about the participation of town dwellers in the unrest, the state moved to placate urban interest groups by controlling the growth of rural industrial enterprises and providing financial support and more subsidies to state-owned enterprises in cities.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, with the removal of Zhao Ziyang and the elevation to power of Shanghai-based politicians such as Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, urban interest groups replaced rural ones as the dominant political force in the central government.<sup>47</sup>

After Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour in 1992, investors from surrounding nations and regions such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, followed by Western investors, flocked to take advantage of the low wage costs, developed infrastructure, and favourable policies in Chinese

coastal regions. China became the largest FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) receiver among developing countries after 1993, and replaced the United States in 2003 as the largest FDI receiver in the world. A high proportion of FDI participated in export-oriented manufacturing, turning coastal China into the world's factory. The share of exports in GDP grew rapidly from 17.6 per cent in 1992 to 23.1 per cent in 2000, and further to 33.4 per cent in 2008.<sup>48</sup>

The urban bias of official policy and the shift to an export-oriented economy ushered in a period of rapid urbanization. The rate of urbanization increased from 26.9 per cent in 1991 to 45.7 per cent in 2008, more than 1 per cent growth per year.<sup>49</sup> Taking account of the more than 100 million rural migrant workers living in cities, the urban proportion of China exceeded 55 per cent. In contrast to the 1980s when most of the newly-added urban population tended to live in small urban centres, this period saw the concentration of population in large cities.

The reorientation of urban-industrial growth towards large cities and coastal regions has often been seen as a natural process repeating what occurred in developed countries. However, close scrutiny shows that it was actually the consequence of deliberate policies and class interests.<sup>50</sup> On the one hand, practices and institutions that facilitated rural and small town growth in the 1980s—such as easy bank credit for TVEs, pro-peasant grain purchase and rural infrastructure investment—were reduced, stopped, or abolished. On the other hand, local governments and banks diverted most of their resources to support urban enterprises or invest in urban fixed assets to court domestic or foreign buyers in pursuit of higher returns in the short term; this was coupled with the central government's bias in resource allocation and policy support towards large cities and coastal regions. This urban bias has generated large-scale rural-to-urban, labour-to-capital flows through the banking system; the factory system, the fiscal regime, and the forced land expropriation all directly feeding the dynamic urban-industrial growth.<sup>51</sup>

The changing relationship of state, city, and entrepreneurs has had complex effects on industrialization. Today, the rural-centred TVEs no longer constitute a significant engine of growth. Instead, China's development has been dominated by export-oriented industries mostly run by domestic or foreign private entrepreneurs concentrated in coastal urban regions, as well as equally urban-centred state-owned corporations. It has led to the rise of a new strata of wealthy urban entrepreneurs (with 271 dollar billionaires in 2010 according to one estimate), alongside senior management in state-owned corporations and foreign invested companies. The privatization and reform of state-owned enterprises through management buy-outs has accelerated the expansion and consolidation of the new urban entrepreneurial class. Since 2001, the Communist Party has started recruiting private entrepreneurs and managers into the Party, formally instituting an alliance between the new urban capitalist class and the authoritarian state. Large industries in key sectors have also seen the rise of industrial associations engaged in lobbying the different levels of government for favourable policies.<sup>52</sup>

Western-style growth has brought Chinese cities serious socio-economic problems, threatening their social stability and weakening the potential for economic development in the long run. The first and foremost problem is the worsening income inequality in Chinese society. Due to the surplus flow from the rural to urban sector, the rural–urban income differential has been widening rapidly since the 1990s. The ratio of urban per capita income to rural had risen from 2.40 in 1991 to 3.31 in 2008.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, inequality within the city was also increasing, in a large part caused by the differential returns to labour and capital. The urban Gini coefficient increased from 0.2473 in 1992 to 0.3263 in

2004.<sup>54</sup> If millions of rural migrant workers were included in the urban population (see above), the figure would be even higher. The concentration of FDI and resources in coastal regions has also led to a growing regional disparity. In 1991, per capita GDP in coastal regions was 1.76 times that in inland regions, and it rose to 2.68 times in 2008.<sup>55</sup>

Besides income inequality there was capital over-accumulation and under-consumption. The problem emerged as early as the late 1990s and has been haunting the Chinese economy ever since. The low capacity of domestic consumption, which was a consequence of polarized income distribution, led enterprises in China to target mainly overseas markets. Overseas earnings will further turn into domestic capital, generating a self-reinforcing vicious circle of over-accumulation and export dependency. Without profitable outlets of investment and encouraged by local governments and the banking system, surplus capital in China moved out of industry and commerce and speculated on the urban estate market after 1998, pushing up urban housing prices and creating asset bubbles in large cities.<sup>56</sup>

Environmental degradation is another serious problem that urban capitalism has generated in China. The scale of this problem far exceeds that in other industrialized countries due to China's ecological vulnerability and huge population. With now more than 700 million people living in Chinese cities, plus industrial production for domestic and foreign markets, the amount of energy consumption such as coal, oil, and electricity has grown rapidly. Statistics show that total energy consumption increased 175 per cent between 1991 and 2008.<sup>57</sup> In addition, more than two-thirds of Chinese cities are facing chronic problems of water shortage, prompting the Chinese authorities to build dams, redirect rivers or over-extract underground water, which may lead to serious ecological crises in the future.<sup>58</sup> With the rapid expansion of the automobile industry in the last decade, millions of cars have crowded the streets of every city in China, burning millions of tons of petroleum and giving off an unprecedented amount of exhaust emissions. Moreover, the environmental costs of urban industry in coastal regions are now being shifted to the countryside and inland regions, with polluting factories being relocated from the former to the latter.

## **RURAL FOUNDATIONS OF URBAN INDUSTRIALISM**

In this chapter, we saw how England's industrialization at the turn of the 18th century hinged (at least in part) on the prominence of an urban entrepreneurial elite who benefited from the transfer of a growing rural surplus from the advanced agrarian economy. This rural-urban flow of resources not only contributed to the rise of large industrial cities, but was facilitated by the continuous vibrancy of market towns and smaller cities, which also served as small-scale manufacturing centres and as a market for the new industrial production. In contrast, the paternalistic policies of Qing China restricted the rise of a dynamic urban entrepreneurial elite, depriving China of a key agent capable of concentrating the vast agrarian surplus decentralized in the countryside.

By the late 20th century, the countryside of most advanced industrial economies had been depopulated, and their agrarian sectors often depended on heavy state subsidies to survive. The exhaustion of the rural migrant supply of manufacturing labour heightened the cost and inflexibility of the old industrial sectors in many Western countries, contributing to its declining profitability and international competitiveness since the 1970s. In contrast, in China heavy industrialization under Mao and the rural-oriented market reforms and agricultural productivity surge under Deng, followed by export-oriented and industrialization in the 1990s, enabled the rise of a coastal urban manufacturing

establishment that relied on vast flows of social and human capital from the countryside via the immigration of low-cost labour.

In sum, the Industrial Revolution in early 19th-century England and export-oriented industrialization in late 20th-century China point towards the rural dimensions of urban-industrial success. But such success also sows the seed of its own downfall, as urban-industrial growth often erodes its own rural bases. After more than a decade of rapid industrial expansion that has drained investment and manpower from the countryside, it is arguable that China may encounter the same problems of exhausting the rural sources of industrial dynamism. Anticipating this problem, the Chinese government has for the last five years attempted to rejuvenate the countryside as a preemptive cure of the problem. The outcome of such attempts is the key to whether China will repeat the crisis of Western industrial capitalism or manage to foster an alternative, more sustainable, model of urban industrial growth.

## Notes

1. The editor kindly helped revise our text.
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## POPULATION AND MIGRATION

LEO LUCASSEN

## INTRODUCTION AND MODELS

Under what conditions did people in the past two centuries settle in cities and how do we explain the huge differences between various parts of the world? And what about the differences in settlement patterns of immigrants, ranging from staying permanently in the city to highly volatile and circular moves that create a rural–urban continuum? These are the key questions of this chapter. The basic argument is that to understand both the differences in the level and the nature of urbanization throughout the world we have to look at what cities have to offer to their (new) inhabitants in terms of rights and services. The better and more encompassing the offer is, the more people will settle permanently in urban centres and the less they will depend on ethnic or kin networks, and vice versa. In this model ethnicity, whether it is portrayed as tribal or reliance on strong ties, is primarily seen as a function of the institutional completeness of cities. The more services cities provide, the less need there is to rely on kin and co-ethnics, and to spread risks between the city and the countryside. From this perspective therefore ethnicity or tribalism is something that needs to be explained. These considerations lead to the following typology (see [Fig. 35.1](#)) which encapsulates the bulk of the rural–urban migration configurations in the world over the last two centuries.

This typology should not be used in a rigid way. Instead it stipulates that when over time conditions change, regions, states, or cities may move through the typology. Furthermore, as we have seen geographical units should not be treated as homogeneous units. Present-day American cities only partly fulfil the criteria of the ‘full citizenship model’ and contain all kinds of pockets that resemble more the realities of the ‘empty citizenship’ model. On the other hand, cities in India or Africa that combine aspects of empty citizenship with a highly segregated civil society, also developed a limited shared public sphere. Such a layered and open typology therefore rejects binary assumptions and implications which privilege the (Western) European city as the master pattern waiting to be followed by the rest of the world.

Type	Access to urban services	Salience of ethnic ties	Strength of rural-urban links
1: <i>The full citizen model</i>	High (both internal and foreign)	Low, especially in the long run	Weak
2: <i>The ethno-national model</i>	Institutionally segregated along ethnic and religious lines	High, also in the long run	Weak
3: <i>The external differential citizenship model</i>	Exclusion of foreign (low-skilled) migrants	High, especially among foreign migrants	Strong
4: <i>The internal differential citizenship model</i>	Exclusion of internal (rural) migrants	High, especially among internal migrants	Strong
5: <i>The 'empty citizenship' model</i>	Non applicable	High	Varies: depends on access/rights to resources in the countryside

**FIGURE 35.1** A global-historical typology of rural–urban migration settlement patterns.

*The full citizenship model.* This model developed in medieval southern European cities and then gradually spread in the direction of north-western Europe. These cities were relatively autonomous and offered their citizens forms of citizenship that freed them of feudal obligations and which transcended kin or ethnic ties. Inhabitants of the city shared a *communitas* that provided institutional support from poor relief to the regulation of the labour market and a shared public sphere.<sup>1</sup> From the 19th century onwards this inclusive model was transferred to the national (and more recently to the supranational) level, with full-scale welfare states and liberal democracies as the zenith of inclusiveness, especially in Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Oceania.

Especially in Western Europe, the Americas, white settler colonies, and Japan, most migrants to cities, both internal and external, can be classified as ‘citizens on arrival’, which means that legal migrants are treated as citizens and in the long run expected to integrate in their host societies. Racial prejudice played an important role, as in the New World this homogenization was stimulated by discourses about whiteness and deliberate policies to change the racial balance of the country. Well known examples are the American Quota acts from 1917 onwards which favoured north-west Europeans and similar policies in (former) British dominions like Canada and Australia. But Latin American countries were also heavily influenced by racial worldviews. In the latter part of the 19th century Brazil stimulated the immigration of Europeans to counterbalance the former black slave population. Another darker side of the full citizen model is that minorities who were already present (either as ‘native peoples’ or the Roma in Europe) were partly excluded from citizenship. From the 1960s in most democratic states the stress on ethnicity and race gradually shifted to human capital as the main criterion to allow people from other states in as permanent citizens.<sup>2</sup>

*The ethno-national model.* In the Russian, Habsburg, and Ottoman empires (with the exception of Istanbul) urbanization levels were much lower than in the rest of Europe and the settlement process, as also in the successor states, was shaped by ethno/religious criteria. Although a shared urban citizenship-cum-public sphere developed to some extent, it was segmented as it interfered with nationalist and religious group thinking, which caused forms of segregation within cities and fostered ethnic and religious ties.<sup>3</sup> During and after World War I these multiethnic empires finally dissolved and gave way to the nation-state model. The relative tolerance towards differences suddenly changed into a stress on ethnic homogeneity. In extreme cases this led to genocide (Armenians in Turkey), large-scale population exchanges (Turkey–Greece 1922), ethnic cleansings (Yugoslavian civil war of the 1990s), and virulent forms of discrimination against Jews and Roma, but also national minorities. This ethno-nationalist opportunity structure had lasting consequences for the settlement process of migrants to cities like Moscow, Budapest, and Istanbul, and created important barriers for assimilation and full citizenship. The position of Kurds in Turkish cities or Chechens in Russian towns (or more in general the Russian internal passport system) can be seen as the result of this extreme socio-political transformation.

*The external differential citizenship model.* In contrast to liberal democratic states, where citizenship rights are in principle meant for all inhabitants, many autocratic, dictatorial, or partially democratic states draw the principal line between insiders and outsiders, with nationality as a key criterion. Natives are treated as full citizens and provided with all kind of rights and (urban) benefits (except political rights), which are denied to aliens. The result is a permanent condition of circularity and temporariness of labour migrants. A good example is the Gulf states, which have been recruiting Asian migrants in large numbers to their expanding cities since the 1970s, but treat them as non-citizens and bar them from citizenship.<sup>4</sup> This makes settlement virtually impossible, and they are often expelled when the economy goes down. Similar mechanisms operate in states that developed into democracies but where citizenship is defined in ethnic or religious terms, like Malaysia.<sup>5</sup>

*The internal differential citizenship model.* This model refers to states that differentiate citizenship rights among citizens according to their residence, with the aim to restrict and control internal migration from the countryside to the city. As a consequence, rural migrants who settle in cities become either illegal or they are not automatically entitled to civic rights, and equal access to urban services (welfare, education, etc.). This model was widely spread in early modern Europe, but after 1800 remained in force in Russia. Its most extreme version is the Chinese *hukou* system that was installed by the Communist regime in the 1950s and successfully slowed down rural to urban migrations until the late 1970s.<sup>6</sup> But also when the reins were slackened from 1978 onwards rural migrants remained excluded from urban citizenship, creating two classes of city dwellers: those with urban citizenship and access to all kinds of services, and the migrants who were only allowed to work, but whose citizenship was limited to the countryside. Because of the lack of social provisions in the city this model contains strong incentives to return (at least temporarily) to the home region.

Another variant is the segregation of the Palestinians in Israel and the creation of artificial ‘homelands’ in South Africa under Apartheid, which was institutionalized in 1948. The latter enabled black Africans to migrate to South African and Namibian mining towns, but these (male) migrants found themselves isolated in compounds. Permanent settlement was forbidden and their citizenship rights were restricted to their ‘homelands’ or *Bantustans*. Ironically, elements of the Apartheid system have remained in force under the new ANC regime, but now aimed at African migrants from neighbouring states, leading to violent clashes with the native population.

*The 'empty citizenship' model.* Finally there are cities that have very little to offer to newcomers. These can be found in (sub-Saharan) Africa, parts of Asia (like India) and in different degrees in South America. States and cities in these parts of the world are either too weak or too poor, or for other reasons provide neither a common safety net nor a sense of urban citizenship for (mostly internal) migrants who move to cities. Since Independence people are free to move to cities, but are largely left to themselves in highly segregated slums, isolated from the wealthy and gated parts of the city. To some extent, a 'lighter' version can be found in the United States (and to a lesser degree France and Italy) where 'hyperghettos' have developed around cities, populated by racial minorities and poor immigrants, which bear a resemblance to the slums and favelas of Calcutta, Lagos, and Rio de Janeiro.<sup>7</sup>

In order to prevent marginalization many migrants nurture ties with their place of origin and set up various kinds of hometown associations. Such a rural–urban continuum should not only be interpreted as an insurance against social risks, but may also have emotional and spiritual meanings for the migrants and their kin. The preference in China and parts of sub-Saharan Africa to be buried in the home village, as well as ongoing remittances, testify to that. The lack of common civil urban institutions explain the heightened salience of ethnic and kin networks that channel and regulate migration between countryside and towns. Parallel to hometown associations there was room for the creation of ties and allegiances, through work, religion, and leisure, which created at least a partial shared urban culture. How this balance between 'ethnic' and 'civil', or the 'subject' and the 'citizen' works out depends on the concrete local and historical context. Finally the strength of the rural–urban links highly depends on the access or right to resources (like land, real estate, or jobs) in the countryside.

In this chapter I will focus primarily on those parts of the world that so far have been left out of discussions about urbanization, ethnicity, and migration, such as China, India, and sub-Saharan Africa. Before doing so, however, I present a brief summary of the major trends in urbanization and migration, starting with the Atlantic world.

## **MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION LEVELS IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD AND BEYOND**

At the end of the 18th century Europe was not the most urbanized part of the world. If we take 10,000 inhabitants as the urban threshold, its urbanization level was lower than in Japan and the Middle East and not dramatically higher than South America and India. Only China, North America, and Africa lagged behind. Only at the end of the 19th century did Western Europe and the United States surpass the rest of the world ([Table 35.1](#)).

**Table 35.1 Urbanization Levels in Japan, the Middle East, Europe, and China 1800–1890 (cities > 10,000)**

	1800	1890
Japan	15	20
Middle East	12	15
Western Europe	10	30
Europe	9	15
Latin America	7	10
India	6	9
United States	3	32
China	3	5
Africa	2	4
World	6	13

Source: Paolo Malanima, *Pre-modern European Economy (10th–19th Centuries)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 242; id., 'Urbanization', in Stephen Broadberry and Kevin O'Rourke, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe*, vol. 1: 1700–1870 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 235–63; Bjoern Olav Utvik, 'The Modernizing Force of Islam', in John L. Esposito and Francois Burgat, *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 43–68; Anthony Gerard Champion and Graeme Hugo, eds., *New Forms of Urbanization: Beyond the Urban–Rural Dichotomy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 44.

These very broad trends, however, hide important differences within Europe (as well as other regions), with respect to economic growth, urbanization, and proletarianization. From the 16th century onwards north-western Europe, for example, developed into a highly urbanized and commercialized region, very different from most other parts of Europe. This 'little divergence' has its roots in the late Middle Ages and it explains the rise of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century and that of England in the 18th as world powers. As in other continents, in most parts of Europe, especially the north and the east, the bulk of the population lived in villages and had little urban experience (see [Table 35.2](#)).

**Table 35.2 Urbanization Levels in Europe 1700–1870 in Percentages (cities >5,000)**

	1700	1750	1800	1870
The Netherlands	45	39	24 (37)	32
Belgium	29	26	24 (20)	32
England	15	22	30 (23)	50
Italy	15	16	18 (18)	20
Spain	14	14	19 (18)	25
Europe	11	12	12 (12)	20

Source: P. Malanima, 'Urbanization', in S. Broadberry and K. O'Rourke, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe*, vol. 1: 1700–1870 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 235–63.

In the 19th century the combined industrial and agrarian revolutions caused an unprecedented growth of the population and pushed urbanization levels up, first in the Atlantic world (Europe and North America), followed by Southern America and Japan. This spectacular rise in urbanization levels, however, should not primarily be interpreted as the consequence of increased mobility. Migration to cities grew, but overall migration levels were already quite high, both in Europe and in

other parts of the world long before the Industrial Revolution began.

As in earlier periods (see above, [Ch. 22](#)), most migrants in cities were highly mobile and moved between towns, but also between cities and the countryside. Employment perspectives in the city, for example in the building sector, were still too uncertain and unstable, and for many young migrants work in the city was part of their rural–urban life-cycle. Only when the urban labour market started to offer year round jobs and agriculture underwent further mechanization, did the links with the countryside weaken.<sup>8</sup>

This temporary character of the migration to cities also characterized much of the transatlantic migrations. In particular, male labour migrants from southern Europe behaved as ‘birds of passage’. With the transport revolution (steam trains and ships), the costs and duration of transatlantic passages decreased considerably after 1860, and millions of workers navigated the new Atlantic space on a temporary basis: either as seasonal migrants on the Argentinean Pampas, or as temporary workers in the mines and factories of urban North America. Before World War I, the share of return migrations among Italians, Spaniards, but also workers from South-Eastern Europe, was very high. For many of them these temporary long-distance migrations fitted well in their household strategies, which were based on income pooling through temporary migrations that had a long tradition. The only difference after 1860 was the scale of their migration field.

In the 20th century new forms of temporary migration developed. First in the inter-war period, with France, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands as major poles of attraction; second, during ‘Les trentes glorieuses’ (1945–1975) with the guest worker programmes in Western Europe; and finally during the first decade of the 21st century a highly volatile labour migration system developed with workers from Eastern Europe (especially Poland and Roumania) moving to the west and the south. In time many guest workers settled for good, and the overwhelming part of them in cities. There they were joined by both newcomers from the colonies (in the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Portugal) and by asylum seekers, refugees, and high-skilled migrants from all over the world. Immigration to the United States decreased dramatically during and after World War I and only resumed in the 1970s, now predominantly from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In the meantime the Great Migration of African Americans to northern US cities and temporary workers from Mexico (through the ‘Bracero’ program, 1942–1967) had a dramatic impact on the ethnic composition of American cities. The result of the various migrations in the 20th century in the Atlantic world was that the share of foreign-born jumped to some 10 per cent of the population in most countries, but in cities this could easily reach 30 per cent or more.

The phenomenon of chain migration, with migrants embedded in their own ethnic networks and developing an infrastructure of ethnic associations, is well known both in the early modern and modern period and can be witnessed in all parts of the world. The extensiveness and duration, however, vary widely and depend on both the intentions and preferences of the migrants themselves and on the urban (and national) opportunity structures. Especially the nature of urban institutions and their inclusiveness towards migrants is crucial to explain different patterns within Europe and in a global perspective.

Starting with internal migrants in 19th-century Western Europe, we can ascertain that ethnicity did matter and that many of them were considered not only as country bumpkins, but also culturally as aliens. This pertained especially to those whose dialects or religion differed from the national standard, like the Bretons and Auvergnats in Paris, or the Irish in British and the Poles in German cities. All were officially citizens, but were perceived and treated as fundamentally different. Many

of the Irish and the Poles also stressed their national cohesiveness and established a dense network of ethnic institutions. In the long run (mostly after the second generation) the ascribed and self-chosen ethnic identity faded and the descendants of these migrants blended into the urban environment. This was largely true even for one of the most despised minorities in Europe, the Jews, many of whom during the 19th century also moved to cities as internal migrants and gradually assimilated, although in the private sphere many held on to a 'light' version of Jewish identity.<sup>9</sup>

The example of the Jews immediately reminds us of important differences between Western and Eastern Europe when it comes to the salience of religion and ethnicity. Whereas in the west citizenship was largely inclusive and did not pose huge barriers to formerly discriminated groups, ethnic categorizations proved more resilient as one moved east. During the 19th century especially the three large multiethnic empires (Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian) adopted a virulent nationalism that defined ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities as fundamentally different, even if they shared the same nationality. As a result members of such minority groups who settled in cities remained visible, even over the long term, and therefore fall into our second model (the ethno-national model). Thus, even within Europe a shared public sphere and forms of civil society clearly had limits.

Apart from France, where immigration was promoted for demographic reasons from the 1920s onwards, most post-war Western European countries were opposed to permanent immigration, but because of the economic boom period between the end of the 1940s and the middle of the 1970s temporary foreign labour was deemed unavoidable. In the United Kingdom labour scarcity was solved by migrants from the colonies, but on the Continent by the recruitment of male guest workers from southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia) and soon also Turkey and north Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria). When the oil crisis hit Europe in the 1970s, something unexpected happened. While unemployment levels went up steeply, Turks and Moroccans decided to stay and call for their families to join them. This led to a mass immigration to Western European cities at the beginning of a long period of economic recession in the late 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this badly timed mass immigration was two fold: first of all since the 1960s these migrants had built up social and legal rights through their contributions to the welfare state, and secondly—and this distinguishes them from most southern European guest workers—the decision to close the borders in the mid-1970s for labour migrants had the opposite effect. It was only then that non-European guest workers realized that by leaving they would give up all their rights and would never be admitted back in, while the alternative in their countries of origin was unemployment without social benefits.<sup>10</sup>

That their settlement process would lead to social problems, such as high unemployment, youth criminality, under-performing at school, and segregation in derelict neighbourhoods, need not come as a surprise. The bad timing of the immigration combined with low human capital was bound to create integration problems, which were further highlighted by the growing stigmatization of Islam. Given this background it is remarkable that so many children of these migrants are doing rather well at school and in the labour market. At the same time the long-term perspective of a considerable number of them is gloomy, as they are locked in inner city and *banlieu* kind of ghettos, where crime and oppositional cultures are rampant.<sup>11</sup>

The socio-economic and cultural problems that resulted from the immigration have given way to a widespread pessimism about the possibilities of integration, a fear that orthodox Muslims will create a 'Eurabia'. Structural similarities with the difficult and lengthy integration process of Catholic Irish and Russian Jews in England and the United States a century earlier are often denied, if considered at

all. In-depth analyses of migrants then and now, however, show that such comparisons are highly relevant. Although it is clear that different family systems, cultural practices, and religious values lead to partial ethnic group formation in European cities, especially among migrants with a Muslim and Hindu background, there are ample indications that their children *are* integrating, both structurally (in the domains of work, education, and housing) and—albeit more slowly—in terms of identification (marriages, friends, associations). Transnational ties and practices are still nourished, but over time lose significance and intensity. As in the United States the mainstream in European cities is gradually changing and becoming more inclusive to the children of migrants who enrich and partly change the mainstream with their own qualities.<sup>12</sup>

Given the unfavourable circumstances (bad timing of the immigration and the problematization of immigration), this mutual integration process is remarkable and shows the strength of the inclusive and egalitarian West European citizenship model, that treats legal migrants and their descendants in principle as equals and offers them a range of urban (and national) institutions, including welfare benefits, political rights, education, the possibility of mingling in the public sphere, and ample opportunities to add their own institutions to an already vibrant civil society. That this also results in conflicts and discriminatory practices towards these newcomers does not prevent the ongoing integration process. The relative openness and inclusiveness of West European states and cities was furthermore helped by the use of deliberate inclusive definitions of (post) colonial migrants, that extends also to the German *Aussiedler* (descendants of erstwhile German colonists in Eastern Europe). French, British, German, Portuguese, and Dutch governments from the late 1940s onwards chose to define them as part of the national body or as citizens of the common empire, thus stressing their right to settle in the ‘mother country’ and being treated as equals. Ethnicity was to some extent recognized but largely downplayed in favour of a common national identity.

On the other side of the Atlantic, developments in the United States bear important similarities, but also highlight crucial differences. Notwithstanding pessimism about the long-term integration of new immigrants, empirical research shows ongoing converging trends. Children of current Asian and Hispanic immigrants still prefer English as the standard language and share core values of patriotism, capitalism, and individualism, notwithstanding the pull of ethnic networks.<sup>13</sup> However, in the United States formal and informal urban ethnic institutions play a bigger role in migrants’ lives—mainly because the welfare state is much less developed and social and economic equality are not seen as per se desirable. The most obvious difference with Europe is the obsession with race, especially blackness, rather than religion. The social and cultural distance between ‘white’ and ‘black’ Americans is still considerable, which explains the hugely disadvantaged position of a large part of the African American population. This is most visible in the many vast urban black ghettos, from which the state has largely withdrawn and in which poverty, unemployment, broken families, and criminality are rampant.

Having nuanced and qualified the ‘full citizenship’ and the ‘ethno-national’ models, it is now time to look more closely at parts of the world that apparently seem to follow quite distinct roads and where the migration to cities seems to be structured along other lines.

## URBAN CITIZENSHIP IN CHINA<sup>14</sup>

In stark contrast to their Japanese neighbours, in the 19th and 20th centuries the Chinese displayed a reluctance to settle in cities and the urbanization level therefore remained rather low, with the



exception of regions like the lower Yangtze.<sup>15</sup> Around 1800 the difference with Europe was still small, but there were already important differences. Where in Western Europe most urbanites inhabited a large number of relatively small cities which integrated the surrounding countryside in the market economy, in China large cities (over 100,000), along with widespread manufacturing in the countryside,<sup>16</sup> predominated. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries China remained heavily rural and only from the end of the 1970s did urbanization levels go up steeply, rising from 17 per cent in 1978 to 45 per cent in 2008.

This Chinese pattern was strongly shaped by both state policies and also cultural preferences that valued enduring contacts with one's place of origin. The most dominant theme in discussions about Chinese cities which has major repercussions for the way we interpret migration and settlement processes, is Weber's claim that Chinese cities did not constitute a real urban community, because the tradition of lineages and the ancestral cult ('the magic closure of clans') prevented the emergence of an urban civic confederation. According to this view, forms of civil society and public sphere barely developed. This would explain why most migrants remained locked in their own ethnic (hometown) associations known as *huiguan*, and developed a strong 'sojourner' mentality that kept the bonds with the home village or region as well as their own language alive. This was deemed crucial because of the pivotal role of the ancestral cult which among other things prescribed that one had to be buried 'at home' and thus continue the spiritual link with one's ancestors. Apart from burials, migrants and their descendants also sent back remittances and returned for visits during festivals like Chinese New Year.

The Chinese reality, however, was much more diverse and highly dependent on the specific historical context. As we saw from Chs. 17 and 28, there were many Chinas and differences between cities and various parts of China were considerable. A good example is Yangzhou in the north-east, close to Nanking (Nanjing).<sup>17</sup> In this bustling commercial and immigrant town, dominated by merchants from Huizhou, migrants with many different linguistic backgrounds soon developed a common identity and a common urban language, while at the same time certain merchant groups displayed a strong ethnic cohesiveness and sojourner mentality.

In other towns the impact of native-place associations was much more prominent and illustrates the centrality of the attachment to 'home'.<sup>18</sup> However, such a focus easily leads to essentialist, static, and simplistic accounts of the settlement process of rural migrants. Whether native-place associations were created, depended on wealth, and rich merchant groups in particular built temples for their local gods and burial sites that functioned as a substitute for the home region.

In Shanghai the proliferation of *huiguans* stood in the way of a common urban identity and language, but it did not entirely prevent shared urban experiences and class identities. Native-place associations proved very flexible and able to adapt to waves of modernization. In the latter part of the 19th century they became more democratic and less ethnic. When the state imploded at the beginning of the 20th century, it was these commercial urban institutions that took over and expanded their activities in public services, policing, and poor relief.

With the Communist takeover in 1949, China initially adopted the Soviet model of development that stressed urbanization and industrialization. This set off a huge migration stream to Chinese cities. As this threatened the privileged welfare provisions of urban citizens, the state soon took measures, including deportation, to discourage people from leaving the countryside. The cornerstone of these measures was the so-called *hukou* household registration legislation in 1958, that made it very difficult and often impossible for rural folk to settle in cities. Apart from safeguarding the

differentiated welfare regime, the state could thus control internal migration, slow down urban growth and thus prevent the uncontrolled creation of slums.<sup>19</sup> In China the choice to produce industrial goods in the countryside appeared a gigantic failure that cost some 45 million Chinese their lives and only in the course of the 1970s did the regime embark upon a ‘coastal development strategy’, starting with special economic zones in 1979 and complete freedom of movement in 1994. As a result, temporary migration to cities, predominantly in the east and the south-east, increased exponentially: from 6.6 million in 1982 to around 200 million in 2010.

Although the liberalization since 1978 has pushed up urbanization levels dramatically, the discriminatory effects of the *hukou* legislation are still felt. Many migrants do not have entrance to urban institutions, like housing, jobs, education, and poor relief, unless they can afford to buy urban citizenship. Some cities like Shanghai have started to experiment with granting welfare benefits to skilled migrants, but many other towns are afraid that relaxation of the rules will be too costly for the local taxpayers. Most migrants seem to accept the situation, which can be explained by their own cultural preferences to foster ties with their home village and return there on a regular basis. Apart from considerations concerning ancestors and lineage, this transient behaviour can also be seen as insurance against their insecure existence in the city.<sup>20</sup>

The exclusion of rural migrants from urban provisions does not apply to those who are persuaded by the state to settle in regions—including cities—that are considered in need of Sinicization by ‘Han’ Chinese. Well-known destinations are the provinces of Yunnan in the south and Tibet and Xinjiang in the west. Here migrants behave more as colonizers and are granted rights upon arrival. Also in this configuration, ethnic identities (Han versus other minorities) are stressed and remain important nodes of orientation in the new urban environment.<sup>21</sup>

## INDIA AND THE PULL OF THE VILLAGE

In 2007 two of the ten largest cities in the world were situated in India: Bombay (Mumbai) with some 19 million inhabitants ranked number four, behind Mexico City, New York, and Tokyo, whereas Calcutta occupied the eighth position with 15 million residents. Yet India as a whole is not a highly urbanized country, as we can see in [Table 35.3](#) (see also above, [Ch. 30](#)). Compared with other parts of the world, South Asia, which largely overlaps with India, has the lowest urbanization levels and since the 1960s has been overtaken by Africa.

**Table 35.3 Levels of World Urbanization (20,000>), by Region and Year: 1920–2000**

	1920	1940	1960	1980	2000
Africa	5	7	13	27	37
South Asia	6	8	14	24*	30*
India			18	23	28
East Asia***	7	12	19	27	42
China			16	20	36
Japan			63	76	79
Latin America	14	20	33	65	75
Soviet Union	10	24	36	64	73**
Europe (ex USSR)	35	40	44	69	74
Oceania	37	41	53	72	74
North America	41	46	58	74	77

Source: 1920–1960: United Nations, *Growth of the World's Urban and Rural Population, 1920–2000* (New York: United Nations, 1969), 31; 1980–2000, plus the figures for China, Japan, and India 1960–2000: *World Urbanization Prospects. The 2001 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2002), 26–37 (table A2).

\* South-central Asia;

\*\* Russian Federation

\*\*\* including Japan, China, and Korea.

The relatively low Indian urbanization levels, however, do not mean that Indians are immobile. On the contrary, intra-state mobility in particular has been quite high from the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>22</sup> Many migrants, however, did not settle for good in cities: instead, a pattern of large-scale circular and seasonal migration developed. Migrants flocked to cities, but most of them stayed only temporarily and remained attached to the villages of birth.

In Calcutta many migrants were drawn to the jute mills and until the 1960s most of them, predominantly male, did this on a temporary basis. Urban industries did not provide year-round employment, except for a small number of workers, and the business cycle was characterized by unpredictable ups and downs. Moreover, housing in Indian cities was relatively expensive and there were barely any urban institutions which offered shelter from risks such as unemployment, sickness, or death. As in China, many migrants therefore kept their ties with the village of origin, which also prevented full-scale proletarianization. Large numbers settled in the slums, but returned to their villages on a regular basis, especially single men whose families remained in the countryside. Even workers with stable and year-round positions preferred to spread social risks and did not give up their rural ties. The developments within Indian society in the course of the 20th century counter-intuitively facilitated temporary migrations through the spread of cheap and fast transport (buses and trains). In a way one could even speak of seasonal migration from the cities to the rural regions, as many male migrants spent most of their time in the city. This pattern was stimulated by mill owners in Calcutta who until the second part of the 20th century preferred a flexible workforce and did not follow the European industrial pattern of creating a stable workforce.<sup>23</sup>

Although the reluctance to settle permanently is largely explained by the nature of urban institutions and labour markets, culturally specific characteristics also played a role. First of all, we have to realize that India is a pluralistic state in terms of languages and religions, where most people live in linguistically more or less homogeneous states. And although, unlike China, India is a democracy with freedom of migration, people from other states, and sometimes even from other parts of the same

state, are often perceived as aliens. The temporariness of rural to urban migration may also have promoted the recruitment of workers on an ethnic basis. Many temporary migrants in cities, both in industry and in the building trade are organized in teams led by a paymaster with a preference for co-ethnic workers; a system that was also common in early modern and 19th-century Western Europe. Moreover, many migrants organize in village clubs or ‘hometown associations’ with mutual insurance schemes that protect members against the risks of unemployment, sickness, and death and also offer credit facilities.<sup>24</sup>

We should take care, however, not to juxtapose this stress on pluralism and ethnic ties in India (and Africa) against a flourishing civil society and public sphere in which rural migrants are processed to become urbanites. Although there are fundamental differences between various parts of the world when it comes to the content of urban citizenship, such an overly simplistic interpretation neglects various kinds of overarching forms of citizenship that developed in India (and elsewhere) from the 19th century onwards. New pan-religious identities forged ties between various sorts of migrants and urbanites with a similar religious background. Moreover, from the end of the 19th century onwards the public sphere was broadened by the creation of public parks, libraries, cinemas, radio broadcasting, and fairs, as well as by all kind of urban associations.<sup>25</sup>

### AFRICA: TRIBALISM AND MODERNITY

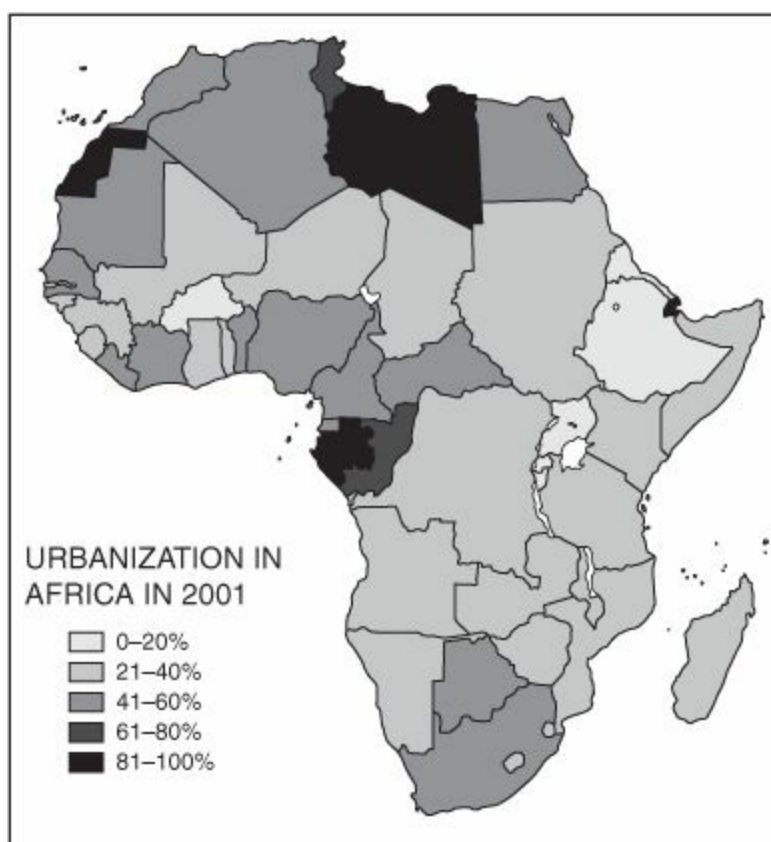
The level of urbanization in Africa resembles that of Asia. In both cases the share of the population which lived in cities at the beginning of the 20th century was very low compared to Europe and North America (5–6 per cent), whereas a century later both continents have arrived at a level of around 38 per cent. There are, however, important differences within the two continents with high levels in the south and the north and much lower levels in the east and the middle (Table 35.4 and Fig. 35.2). Regional trajectories are discussed by Bill Freund in Ch. 33.

Although Africa has large cities, like Lagos and Cairo (each with some 10 million inhabitants), they do not figure in the world’s top ten largest cities. Most African cities are ‘primate cities’. This means that within the boundaries of the state there are no other cities with a comparable size nearby and that most rural migrants move to the capital. This pattern is usually explained by the dominant role of the central government in most African states, who spend the bulk of their money on education, health care, and bureaucracy in the capital and as a result are often by far the most important employer.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 35.4 Urbanization Levels (%) in Africa in 1975 and 2001**

	1975	2001
Eastern Africa	12.3	25.1
Middle Africa	24.6	36.0
Western Africa	18.5	40.0
North Africa	39.5	49.3
Southern Africa	46.2	54.7
Africa as a whole	24.4	37.7

Source: K. C. Zacharia and Julien Condé, *Migration in West Africa Demographic Aspects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press and World Bank, 1981).



**FIGURE 35.2** Urbanization in Africa in 2001.

The development of urbanization in various parts of Africa was heavily influenced by colonialism and colonial policies. Allowing large-scale migration to cities was thought likely to destabilize African societies and lead to chaos and disruption. Africans living in cities should be segregated, either by creating ‘villes nouvelles’ for Europeans or by separate neighbourhoods. Belgian colonial rule also created strict rules on who was allowed to settle in cities, though the British colonizers in West Africa put up no barriers.

In the post-World War II period, Britain and France pursued the modernization paradigm that put high value on urbanization and a stable workforce. This vision of the ideal society was only partly shared by Africans, whose preferences in terms of family life, associations, and the ongoing bonds between the countryside and the city led to a rather different outcome. As in India, most migrants did not break off their contacts with their home villages and thus maintained a resilient rural–urban continuum. To understand this pattern I will focus on the following four factors: (1) cultural preferences; (2) the urban economic structure; (3) the partial nature of the urban citizenship and more specifically the lack of an urban welfare structure; and (4) the social and political construction of identity through notions of ‘autochthony’.

After World War II migration to cities was still largely a male affair, but migrants started to stay on longer. Moreover, women and children who used to remain behind in the countryside and tend the farm, increasingly joined the cityward migration. Changing patterns of land tenure, the introduction of cash crops, and individual landownership stimulated the migration of whole families, so that the over-representation of males decreased. From the 1970s urbanization gathered speed and increasing numbers of people became urbanites.

This development, however, did not automatically weaken the strong attachment of the migrants with their villages of origin.<sup>27</sup> As in China and India hometown associations are numerous and remittances are more the rule than the exception. One of the reasons to foster ties with the village of origin is the value people attach to landowner-ship and to being buried in their home village. Thus

towns and villages remain 'interrelated social fields'. To what extent people are able to hold on to land and navigate the rural–urban continuum varies greatly within Africa and is subject to change over time. The link with the countryside should therefore not be considered as an essentialist feature of Africans, as it is highly dependent on economic, social, and political developments.

In Africa we can distinguish at least two types of cities that draw migrants. On the one hand there are the primate cities, mostly capitals of post-colonial nation-states, and on the other hand mining towns like those in the Zambian (previously North Rhodesian) copper belt and in South Africa. In the primate cities it is not so much industry that pulls migrants, but the bureaucracy of the national government, Western NGOs, hotels, and educational and medical institutions linked to the state. These institutions create an additional flexible demand for all kind of services and other commercial activities, but at the same time their absorption capacity is limited. Many jobs, especially in the informal sector are subject to fluctuations in the economy. Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s, union activity notwithstanding, wages were so low that additional sources of income were necessary and permanent settlement in the city of the whole family impossible. In the colonial period the problem of the 'bachelor wage' was most widespread in East Africa, but also in Sierra Leone and Nigeria wages were too low to support the migration of an entire family.<sup>28</sup>

Compared to European welfare states, urban authorities in African cities had (and still have) little to offer to their inhabitants, whether natives or migrants, in terms of welfare benefits. Although some mining companies experimented with welfare benefits and pensions, these initiatives remained very limited. Social policies that cover these costs are virtually absent, but also other services, like education and health, are often only accessible to those who have money to pay for them.

It should therefore not come as a surprise that migrants from the countryside have relied heavily on personal networks of kin and co-ethnics which can offer support in the new environment. Ties with the village or region of origin give access to much-needed resources such as food and seasonal work. It is therefore expected that migrants with a foothold in the city guide and support kin from their home area. The result has been the emergence of ethnic enclaves in cities that not only support and cushion migrants, but also are the nodal point in the networks that channel people to and from the city.<sup>29</sup> Bonds with the countryside are further maintained by remittances in the form of both cash and commodities, which can be seen as a kind of insurance premium safeguarding among other things rights to land.

In the absence of general and widely accessible urban institutions, ethnicity, for natives as well as newcomers, has structured urban life and given rise to all kinds of welfare societies, voluntary organizations, and hometown associations, like the Luo in Kampala. Many studies of African cities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, stress the transformative nature of cities, notwithstanding the central role of ethnicity. Not only are hometown associations involved in 'resocializing the country bumpkins', but the city confronts migrants also with other forms of identification, like nationalism, religion, and class consciousness. Urban associations cross-cut ethnicity and as they focused on urban neighbourhoods created a new form of social glue.

In the absence of vibrant and strong social and political alternatives ethnicity nevertheless remained a powerful way of defining identities and forging social categories.<sup>30</sup> As such, it can obstruct the creation of stable democratic institutions. In the struggle over access to urban and rural resources—and also citizenship—politicians have started to emphasize the salience of (rural) origin. Notions of 'autochthony' and belonging have led to an obsession with roots and origins in many African countries (like Cameroon) and make collective conceptions of village and region a powerful base for politics. Elite associations in cities that play the ethnic card increasingly crowd out political

parties which are more reliant on notions of civil society and the public sphere.

This tendency is not restricted to Africa, but can be seen in other continents as well, including Europe and the Americas. The recent populist backlash against migrants, especially Muslims, has proved very successful in countries like France, the Netherlands, Germany, and most Eastern European states, such as Russia. The difference, however, is that in Europe this communitarian and nativist reflex has not led to the exclusion of migrants and their descendants from urban or national institutions and welfare schemes on ethnic, religious, or racial grounds.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter shows that the institutional structure of cities largely determines the mode of rural–urban migration. The forms of migration and settlement depend to a large extent on institutional arrangements in various parts of the world. Key questions are: what do cities have to offer to immigrants and how is urban membership defined? This urban profile interacts with rural institutions varying from family systems, legal arrangements, and the level of commercialization to cultural and spiritual practices. In other words, I hope to have shown that in order to understand changes over time this institutional and materialist approach has a greater explanatory power than religious and cultural factors that stress allegiances with village and family. To make sense of the bewildering variations throughout the world and within continents, regions, and even countries, the typology proposed here may prove a useful analytical tool.

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**POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND SOCIAL SEGREGATION**

ALAN GILBERT

THIS chapter considers the quality of life and social relations in urban areas across the globe. Given its ambitious remit, discussion is limited to five themes that I regard to be highly significant: poverty, inequality, segregation, crime and violence, and urban governance.

I will start with a generalization: the quality of most people's lives over the last couple of centuries has generally improved and progress has been integrally linked to urbanization. Of course, urban growth has always created problems and some would argue that the quality of life for most people in the cities of sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent today is as bad as that in British cities of the past. As Davis puts it: 'There is nothing in the catalogue of Victorian misery, as narrated by Dickens, Zola or Gorky, that doesn't exist somewhere in a Third World city today.'<sup>1</sup>

While accepting that there are far too many horror stories to be told in the contemporary city, it is now generally recognized that urbanization has contributed to both economic and social progress. Cities have helped increase economic productivity, change social attitudes, and force governments to invest in public infrastructure. Since 1950, life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates have improved in virtually every city of the world.

This chapter will make many general statements about urbanization across time and space but recognizes that towns and cities vary greatly across the world. It is difficult to make sensible comparisons about life in Stockholm and Kinshasa when they are so different in terms of income, infrastructure, housing, and family structure. And, even though they have similar levels of income and wealth, Japanese cities differ significantly from those in the United States.

**QUALITY OF LIFE AND POVERTY: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CITIES AND REGIONS**

In the past, life in most cities across the world was fairly similar. Most people worked as artisans, servants, or trades people until the Industrial Revolution changed daily routines for many. Cities were densely populated because defensive considerations meant that most people lived within the city walls. And even when defence became less of a concern the lack of urban transport meant that most people had little choice but to live within walking distance of their work. It was not until the 1880s in London, and much later elsewhere, that cheap urban transport became available. Most cities were dirty and disease-ridden and lacked most essential public services. Of course, cities differed from one another in many respects. The Middle-Eastern city with its medina was very different from the layout of the Spanish colonial city with its grid-iron road plans and formal design. But everywhere, while the urban rich and powerful lived well, most of the poor lived in deplorable conditions. 'Life expectancies in the urban centres of north-west Europe appears to have been mostly below the low 20s before the 19th century.... When life expectancy was reliably calculated at 36.5 for London in 1841 it was probably among the healthiest cities of the world.... For Paris an estimate of 23.5 has been made for the end of the 18th century.'<sup>2</sup>

The Industrial Revolution may well have made life even worse for the urban majority, at least for a while (see above, [Ch. 25](#)). Life expectancy in 1841 was only 28 years in Liverpool and 27 in Manchester, lower than the national average of 40.<sup>3</sup> Attempts at cutting disease and pestilence sometimes contributed to a worsening of living conditions. New public works and destruction of the notorious ‘rookeries’ or slums of inner London, for example, only increased housing densities for the very poor. Britain might have led the world in the 1850s but that did not bring many benefits for the urban majority.

Today, however, there is a clear correlation between levels of economic development and the quality of urban life. Mercer Consulting’s survey of cities across the world shows that in 2010, every one of their seventy most liveable cities was located in rich countries.<sup>4</sup> The best cities of Africa, Asia (outside Japan and Singapore), or Latin America only achieved a ranking in the eighth decile: Hong Kong, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Kuala Lumpur, Dubai, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo. All of the ‘worst’ cities were located in poor countries and the bottom ten cities in the list of 221 included Brazzaville, Port au Prince, Khartoum, N’Djamena (Chad), and Bangui (Central African Republic). Urban poverty and poor living conditions are a symptom of low levels of development.

In comparison to the past it is difficult to argue that the prevalence of poverty has increased in the contemporary era. In 19th-century cities, the majority lived in what today we would regard as poverty. Large numbers lacked an adequate diet, disease was rampant, there was often no source of fresh water, and housing was often overcrowded. If urban poverty was not worse it was because most poor people continued to live in the countryside. Technology has brought many advances. The railway reduced the danger of famine in the Indian subcontinent, the last global pandemic, Spanish flu, was in 1918, today there is better access to drinking water and most of the poor can look at television and talk into a mobile phone. Virtually everyone lives a longer life.

Nevertheless, in 2005 some 1.4 billion people subsisted on less than US\$1.25 a day, the vast majority of whom were living in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific. As a result, ‘over three-quarters of a billion people... are malnourished’.<sup>5</sup> And, even if the incidence of poverty worldwide is in decline, urban poverty is increasing. This is a direct consequence of urban growth. Between 1800 and 2010, the world’s population increased from around 1 billion to almost 7 billion and, in the process, half of its inhabitants became city dwellers. As a result, even if a smaller proportion today lives in poverty and the severity of that poverty has diminished, contemporary cities contain far more poor people than ever before. In Latin America, for example, the number of poor people living in urban areas rose from 41 million in 1970 to 127 million in 2007 (see above, [Ch. 26](#)).

However, blame for the increase in urban poverty should not be attributed to the process of urbanization, for it is clear that poverty is far more pervasive in the countryside ([Table 36.1](#)). If anything migration has helped to reduce poverty in rural areas.

The difference between urban and rural living standards is why so many people over the years have moved from the countryside to the cities (see above, [Ch. 35](#)). While at times that movement has been accelerated by war or civil violence, economics is the prime motivation behind migration. More work is available in the cities and most of it is better paid. That does not mean that everyone is better off in the city and in some countries a significant, and sometimes growing, urban minority is living in acute poverty.

**Table 36.1 Percentages of Population Living in Poverty by Urban and Rural Area: Selected Countries 2005–2007**

Country	Urban	Rural
Bolivia, 2007**	23.7	63.9
China, 2005*	1.7	26.1
Colombia, 2006**	39.1	62.1
Ecuador, 2006**	24.9	61.5
Ghana, 2006**	10.8	39.2
India, 2005*	36.2	43.8
Indonesia, 2005*	18.7	24.0
Kenya, 2006**	34.4	49.7

\* Population living on less than US\$1.25 each day in 2005.

\*\* Population living in poverty according to national poverty lines.

Sources: UNDESA (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs) *Rethinking Poverty: Report on the World Social Situation 2010* (New York: UNDESA, 2009). <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2009/18-Poverty-and-inequality.pdf>; World Bank (2010) World Development Indicators, 2010. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.RUHC> and <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.URHC>

Many poor people live in difficult conditions. Most self-help settlements in urban Africa and South Asia lack supplies of potable water and few have access to any kind of sanitation. Decent shelter is scarce and overcrowding is a chronic problem. As one horrified journalist reported: ‘In a squeezed square mile on the south-western outskirts of Nairobi, Kibera is home to nearly one million people—a third of the city’s population. Most of them live in one-room mud or wattle huts or in wooden or basic stone houses, often windowless... The Kenyan state provides the huge, illegal sprawl with nothing—no sanitation, no roads, no hospitals. It is a massive ditch of mud and filth, with a brown dribble of a stream running through it’ (see [Plate 33.2](#), p. 635).<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, the urban majority rarely live in such awful conditions. Urban poverty in most poor cities is not as ubiquitous as the media suggest. Few poor people die on the streets although many suffer from inadequate diets, insecure incomes, and the perpetual threat of ill health. However, some of these problems are no longer confined to cities in poor countries. Urban poverty is present today in countries with relatively high GDP incomes. The disappearance of the state support system in Russia in the 1990s led to widespread distress, and the plight of so many after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005 confirmed that poverty is thriving in US cities. The combination of structural economic change, immigration, and globalization is creating poverty in the most unexpected places.

## INEQUALITY

Most pre-modern cities consisted of a rich elite and a vast impoverished working population. Modernization gradually changed that picture by creating a substantial middle class and, in many developed countries, state intervention and the introduction of modern technology in the 20th century helped to improve living conditions for the poor. Progressive taxation, wider access to education, the gradual introduction of public services and, in places, the emergence of a welfare state all contributed to the transformation.

If many societies became more equal during the 20th century, the gap between countries and therefore cities in those countries grew. According to the World Bank, ‘while the world got richer, income inequality—relative and absolute, international and global—increased tremendously over a

long period of time (1820–1992).<sup>7</sup> Since World War II, the gap between the richest and poorest countries in the world has widened enormously. ‘Measured as the ratio of average incomes in the industrialised and developing countries, they have risen from roughly 30:1 at the end of World War II, to 60:1 in the 1970s, to over 90:1 now.’<sup>8</sup>

Yet over the last half-century many once poor countries have gained ground on the North and some, such as Singapore, have even joined the ranks of the rich. Thus, while the gap between say Europe and Africa has widened, the emergence of an intermediate group of middle-income countries has made the old North–South gap much less meaningful. In the process, many fortunes have been made by entrepreneurs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Of the 85,400 ‘ultra-rich’ people in the world in 2005, who collectively owned 24 per cent of the world’s wealth, 15,400 were based in Asia/Pacific, 7,700 in Latin America, 3,400 in the Middle East, and 1,700 in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

While this spreading of wealth has reduced international and global disparities, it has helped raise inequality within countries.<sup>10</sup> While most developed countries became more equal between 1914 and 1980, the pattern was then reversed. In developing countries, of course, any movement in the direction of greater equality was rare.

In poor countries inequality is manifest by the gap between living standards in urban and rural areas (see [Table 36.1](#)). Increasingly, however, the greatest disparities in wealth are found within cities. Inequality is becoming particularly marked in fast growing cities of the South.<sup>11</sup> But it is clear that inequality is growing almost everywhere. In Mumbai, London or São Paulo, the very rich live, at least figuratively, side by side with the poor. In Britain, Dorling claims that: ‘over the course of the last 30 years... growing financial inequality resulted in large and growing numbers being excluded from the norms of society, and created an expanding and increasingly differentiated social class suffering a new kind of poverty: the new poor, the excluded, the indebted.’<sup>12</sup>

## EXPLANATIONS OF CHANGING PATTERNS OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Many believe that the process of globalization has driven most forms of economic and social change over the last thirty or so years. ‘Globalization, simply put, denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world’s regions and continents.’<sup>13</sup> Technological change in computing, transport and communications, and the development of the silicon chip are at the centre of that process.

*The new geography of production.* Globalization has brought investment to areas that had previously been starved of capital. Manufacturing production has boomed in China and South East Asia and along the US–Mexico border. Call-centres have grown in some parts of India. The world geography of agriculture has changed; Vietnam is now the world’s second largest exporter of coffee and Colombia the second exporter of cut flowers. In many places, particularly in Asia, globalization has created new jobs and urban poverty has declined. At the same time, this process has often created unemployment elsewhere, for instance in the cities of Western Europe. Of course, many cities have been unaffected by the shifts in production because they have never been greatly involved in the world economy.

*Financial capital flows.* Globalization has led to much larger flows of capital moving across the

world. The mechanization of stock markets, the creation of electronic markets, and the ability to transfer huge sums of money at the click of a mouse have facilitated capital flows and arguably increased economic instability. Property booms and busts, exaggerated commodity trade cycles, and currency speculation have created huge profits for a few in London and Wall Street and an uncertain future for the majority.

*Technological change* has transformed the nature of work. Fewer hands are needed to produce food or cars, mine coal, or to fill out invoices. However, more are needed to programme the computers, design new products, and advertise the vast flow of new services and manufactured goods becoming available. Fewer jobs are available for the old 'blue-collar' class of manufacturing worker and public sector employee. Those with lower education levels and skills are reduced to finding poorly paid work in the booming urban service sector. The earnings gap between the skilled and the unskilled is widening. These tendencies are most marked in so-called 'global cities' like London and New York but they are also apparent in places like Bangalore (see below, [Ch. 38](#)) or Silicon Valley in California.

*The movement of people.* Globalization has allowed people to move in increasing numbers from poorer to more affluent countries (see [Ch. 35](#)). Vast numbers of Latin Americans have moved to North American cities, Africans, South Asians, and Turks to Western European cities, Indians and Pakistanis to the booming centres of the Middle East, and so on. In 2005, an estimated 191 million people were living in a country other than the one in which they were born, some 3 per cent of the world's population.<sup>14</sup> Almost one in ten people living in developed countries is now a migrant; in Switzerland one in six. The majority are condemned to low-paid work. Most of the office cleaners, bus drivers, and supermarket workers in central London are immigrants.

The international movement of people has deprived many poor countries of desperately needed skills, for example, in health care. On the other hand, those countries have benefited from the remittances of those working abroad. More than one-quarter of the GDP of Jordan, Lesotho, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Tonga is made up of remittances and many households in Havana survive on the basis of the dollars they receive from kin living in the United States. Remittances reduce inequalities between countries but increase them internally.

*Neoliberalism.* Since the late 1970s, Keynesianism has given way to neoliberalism. In North America and to a growing extent in Europe, controls over multinational capital were loosened, tax rates on corporations and the wealthy lowered, and the social rights of the poor reduced. After 1980, multinational corporations prospered and their share of world production and trade grew enormously. Equity was no longer a principal goal of public policy. The post-war welfare state, based on progressive taxation and a belief that governments should protect and nurture everyone in society, was no longer accepted wisdom. After 1980, most governments interpreted their primary role as one of helping to accelerate economic growth. These shifts in attitude were bound to increase inequality. In the United States 'the share of aggregate income going to the highest-earning 1 per cent of Americans doubled from 8 per cent in 1980 to over 16 per cent in 2004. That going to the top tenth of 1 per cent tripled from 2 per cent in 1980 to 7 per cent today'.<sup>15</sup> Today, few accept the view of Hirschman and Kuznets that there is a positive correlation between per capita income and equality.<sup>16</sup> Neoliberal globalization changed the old template.

*Population growth.* Had sub-Saharan Africa's population not expanded from 243 million in 1965 to 865 million in 2010, that region would probably have been less poor. If too much emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s was put on population growth as a cause of poverty, it is still an important factor.

After all, ‘high population growth leads to deeper poverty, and deeper poverty contributes to high fertility rates.’<sup>17</sup>

In short, many different processes have contributed to a change in the way that the world economy operates. If that change has brought benefits to some once-poor countries, it has also led to the growth of inequality within countries and in virtually every city across the globe. And since well over 3 billion people live in urban areas the consequences of that inequality affect half of the world’s population.

### SOCIAL SEGREGATION: TRENDS AND PROCESSES

European colonization created divided cities. Delhi, for example, was ‘built for two different worlds, the “European” and the “native”; for the ruler and for the ones that were ruled’.<sup>18</sup> Most British, French, and Dutch colonial cities were similar (see [Plate 30.1, p. 566](#)). The European quarters demonstrated how the colonizers thought proper cities should be designed; the colonized lived in ‘unplanned’ areas and were generally left to their own devices. In North Africa the colonial authorities built new residential areas for the Europeans while Arab communities remained in the medina.<sup>19</sup> Where the city was home to more than one set of ‘inferior’ people, elaborate rules were sometimes devised to keep the groups apart. In British Singapore, separate quarters were demarcated for Europeans, Chinese, Indians, Malays, and Buginese; in Dutch Batavia at least fifteen distinct tribal districts were established. For more on colonial cities see below, [Ch. 40](#).

One aim of urban planning was to keep the colonizers safe from tropical diseases—the so-called ‘sanitation syndrome’. But there were less laudable aims. In Africa, the ‘colonial authorities saw each opportunity to influence spatial form and function as an occasion not only to solidify their grip and control over the colonized but also an opportunity to reaffirm preconceived notions of European supremacy and power.’<sup>20</sup>

But colonialism was not the only explanation for modern urban segregation. In some Islamic cities, different ethnic groups had gathered over the years: ‘the immigration of homogenous migrant groups (military units, members of the ruling class, transferred populations, refugees), mass regrouping within cities (e.g. the Jewish *mellahs*) and population movements on an individual basis, where clustering may be related to immigration patterns, family establishment patterns, differences in customs or mutual distrust, the presence of holy sites, or socio-economic status.’<sup>21</sup>

When independence finally came to Africa and Asia, the only real change to the housing pattern was that some of the new rulers moved into the older European quarters. Most ethnic groups continued to live separately.

Ethnic and racial segregation is common in many contemporary cities around the globe although it is more marked in the United States and South Africa than elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> African Americans constitute most of the population in the poorest areas of US cities because most white people choose to live elsewhere. And, in South Africa, even though apartheid has been condemned to legal history, its cities are still highly segregated along racial lines. Elsewhere segregation has sometimes been in decline. In Britain, for example, it is claimed that ‘Ghettos on the American model do not exist and, despite an unfavourable economic position and substantial evidence of continuing discrimination, the segregation trend amongst the Black Caribbean population in London is downwards.’<sup>23</sup>

Racial segregation owes at least as much to differences in income by race as it does to outright

discrimination. In Brazil, the *favelas* have long been racially mixed whereas its affluent areas have never been anything but white.<sup>24</sup> In southern Africa most black people are poor, most white people are not.

The clear correlation between residential segregation and income is troubling given that income disparities are generally increasing. In the United States: ‘after 1973, labour unions withered, the middle class bifurcated, income inequality grew and poverty deepened. This new stratification in the socio-economic sphere was accompanied by a growing spatial separation between classes in the spatial sphere. As income inequality rose so did the degree of class segregation, as affluent and poor families increasingly came to inhabit different social spaces.’<sup>25</sup> Saskia Sassen has claimed that inequality and segregation are especially marked in ‘global’ cities like New York, Tokyo, and London because of their reliance on financial and business services rather than manufacturing; the latter generating a more equal distribution of income than the new service sector.<sup>26</sup> Fortunately, relatively few of the world’s urban population live in such global cities.

Across the world, however, widening differences in purchasing power increasingly affect where people live. The rich live in leafy suburbs or elite central neighbourhoods, the poor live wherever they can, often in the suburban shanty towns that dominate so many poor cities in the world today (see below, Ch. 42). True, some cities are less segregated than others. In Japan, ethnic discrimination is less apparent largely because there are rather few immigrants. But there are also fewer class divides than elsewhere. In Japan a household’s social standing is based more on the man’s job and on the family’s social reputation than on the quality of their residence or the urban neighbourhood where they live.<sup>27</sup>

In some cities, the state or municipality has sought to reduce urban segregation and shelter problems by building social housing. For many years Communist cities lacked the economic divisions found in capitalist societies and vast areas of apartment blocks were built to offer everyone a decent home.<sup>28</sup> In most advanced capitalist societies, efforts to improve the living conditions for the poor through social housing projects were much less successful and seldom led to real integration. Indeed, the social problems facing many French cities today stem from the separation of Arab immigrant families into public housing estates, spatially divorced from their more prosperous, usually white, French ‘neighbours’. Similarly, Cape Town is scarred by the legacy that apartheid left in the form of racially distinct public housing areas. The new neoliberal approach to helping the poor, through providing capital subsidies for home ownership, has replicated this pattern of social division. In Chile, effective targeting has grouped very poor households into the same, specially constructed, neighbourhoods. These areas are usually located in the least desirable areas of the city, which means it is extremely difficult to sell homes there and few families will ever manage to leave. In South Africa too, new subsidized housing has generally been located on cheap land miles away from the city centre.<sup>29</sup>

Elsewhere, suburbanization and urban sprawl have accentuated residential segregation. Improvements in public transport and the growth in car ownership have allowed cities to spread, and different classes now often live a long way apart (see below, Ch. 42). So-called gated communities, with their ‘walled condominiums, apartment buildings guarded by security towers, private policing, “armed response”, and so on’ represent an extreme version of this segregation.<sup>30</sup> The appeal of these estates is that their inhabitants feel safe from crime and from the more unsavoury aspects of urban life. The walls and gates that surround the communities ‘prevent people from seeing, meeting and hearing



each other; at the extremes, they insulate and they exclude'.<sup>31</sup>

Gated communities are certainly not a desirable development but have they changed cities very much? Rich children have always attended separate schools and when they have been ill, they have always gone to private clinics. While some gated communities provide their inhabitants with virtually everything they need, most rich families still leave their refuges at some time in the day.

And, of course, it is not only the rich who want to cut themselves off. People of every social class seem to be 'walling and gating'. 'Today one finds public housing projects in the United States, middle class suburbs, upper-middle class enclaves, retirement communities, with walls of various sorts around them, or with the equivalent measures designed to provide physical protection against social dangers.'<sup>32</sup> Poor communities in Bogotá and Santiago sometimes build walls or erect fences around their settlements in an attempt to keep crime and violence at bay. Similarly, with or without walls, ethnic and religious groups have long sought ways to live together. The desire to live close to synagogues or mosques has encouraged some Jewish and Muslim people to congregate in particular areas. Other cultural factors have also encouraged communities to live apart. In Britain, while employment and housing processes have forced the Pakistani community to concentrate: 'The Muslim religion, language, *halal* dietary requirements, cousin marriages and Punjabi or Kashmiri village orientations, favour strong network contacts which are preserved by geographical proximity.'<sup>33</sup>

The extent of outright discrimination on the basis of skin colour or religion has probably fallen over time in most cities, particularly over the last half-century but segregation according to income has become more important than ever. With rising inequality and increasing size, the urban rich and poor may well interact socially less than before. At the same time, it is doubtful whether in developed countries there is a growing group of urban outcasts marginalized by society.<sup>34</sup> Cities have long been divided by religion, ethnicity, language, income, and social class and will continue to be so.

### CRIME, FEAR, AND VIOLENCE

Crime is often associated with urban life. In *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens provides a compelling picture of a violent and crime-ridden London. And yet murder rates in England in the 1860s were similar to those of today.<sup>35</sup> Of course, some urban areas, for example, New York's Five Ways and London's East End were much more dangerous than others, and the image of criminality in such pockets strongly influences most people's worries about crime. However, serious crime has usually been more limited than the media portray and, of course, historically few Islamic or Chinese cities have been troubled by much homicide or even robbery.

Statistically crime rates are not closely correlated with urbanization rates. Highly urbanized Europe is reasonably free of crime but less urbanized Latin America and South Africa are not. In any case, much crime is committed in rural areas and often the worst examples of pillage and genocide are carried out in the countryside, for example, in Colombia and Darfur. If the degree of urbanization is a poor guide to criminality, so is the size of city. While Los Angeles, New York, and Rio de Janeiro have high crime rates, other giant cities, like Tokyo and Cairo, do not. Nor is crime in the United States linked to city size; the most dangerous cities are those located in the south and those which have large African American populations.<sup>36</sup>

Homicide rates, the most reliable measure of crime, vary greatly between cities. In 2010, most of urban Europe, the Middle East, and much of Asia experienced less than two murders per 100,000

inhabitants, whereas Ciudad Juárez in Mexico suffered from 229. Violence is clearly concentrated spatially, with all but three of the twenty-five most violent cities in the world being found in Latin America—the exceptions being Kandahar (Afghanistan), Kingston (Jamaica), and New Orleans (USA).<sup>37</sup> Differences in culture and religious affiliation sometimes help explain variations in patterns of crime, for example, the low incidence of crime in the Muslim and Hindu worlds. However, it does not explain why crime is so high in the Americas when so many people are highly religious. Higher rates of gun ownership and alcohol and drug use are clearly factors there, as well as in South Africa.

Poverty is often blamed for increasing crime rates but there appears to be little or no correlation between murder rates and urban poverty. Few murders are committed in the poverty stricken cities of poor South Asia or in the affluent cities of Scandinavia. Some authorities see differences in wealth explaining variations in crime and the fact that most of Latin America and South Africa are high in the league tables of both inequality and violence offers some support for that argument.<sup>38</sup> However, some extremely unequal cities, like Buenos Aires and Santiago, are not dangerous places. The experience of Bogotá also casts doubt on the link between crime and inequality; there the homicide rate fell consistently from 59 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1995 to 18 in 2007, a period during which inequality first rose and then declined.

What does seem to be critical in explaining urban violence is the trade in drugs. In Medellín, Colombia, the rate of violent death rose to 381 homicides per 100,000 people in 1991, the worst year in Pablo Escobar's war against the Colombian state. Similarly, the recent outbreak of killings in Ciudad Juárez is clearly linked to the turf wars between drug gangs and the efforts of the Mexican state to control them.

Crime and violence is also closely associated with age and gender. Most burglary, crime, and violence is committed by and against young men; in Bogotá, for example, a 20–29-year-old man is 15 times more likely to be murdered than a woman of the same age.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately, men seem to become less criminal as they age and the declining proportion of young men may explain why the number of robberies in London has fallen in recent years.

In discussing urban violence, however, we should not only think about robbery and murder. In practice, more people are killed on urban roads than by all the murderers, criminals, and terrorists in the world put together. Six hundred and twenty million or so private cars, together with all the buses, vans, and trucks, kill around 1.2 million people every year and maim millions more. Road deaths are actually the single most important cause of death for people aged between 15 and 29.<sup>40</sup>

## URBAN STRIFE

In the pre-modern world, urban populations were under regular threat of sacking and pillage. While most colonial cities in Africa, Asia, and the Americas felt safe from outside attack, the occupying powers were ever vigilant against local uprisings. 'The British raj regarded urban India and its inhabitants as unpleasant problems... cities and towns became seedbeds of religious reform movements and political consciousness.'<sup>41</sup> In many parts of Europe, the fear of social and urban revolution was stimulated by stories of the storming of the Bastille. In 1885 one observer in London declared that: 'I am deeply convinced that the time is approaching when this seething mass of human misery will shake the social fabric.'<sup>42</sup> Marx and Engels of course shared that opinion even though they viewed that eventuality more with hope than fear.

Excluding the cases when cities have been affected by war (e.g. in Iraq and Lebanon) or by terrorism (e.g. Belfast, Kano, New York, and Mumbai), politically inspired urban violence has been relatively rare since 1945. Admittedly, incidents like the recent protests in Bangkok and in various cities in Nigeria, north-west China, South Africa, south Kyrgyzstan and the Middle East have hit the international headlines, and as such remain indelibly impressed on people's minds. People still talk about the race riots of Watts, the Sharpeville massacre, Muslim protests in several French cities and the protests in Brixton and Toxteth in Britain.

Communal violence is sometimes associated with the arrival of outsiders. The outbreak of violence in Johannesburg in 2008, for example, was motivated by local resentment against massive immigration to a city already lacking sufficient jobs and housing. But violence may also break out between established groups in the city, religion being a not infrequent cause, or at least 'justification', of conflict. The long struggle between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; between Muslims and Hindus in Indian cities; differences between Shias and Sunnis in Iraq; the genocide of Muslim populations in towns of the former Yugoslavia; and the killing of Christians by Muslims in northern Nigeria all indicate how religion often sparks violence. But communal violence can arise under wholly different circumstances. Urban riots were a frequent tactic in the struggles for independence, for example, in Algeria, and they continue to be mobilized by political rivalry, particularly at election times. Sometimes, albeit less frequently, mass protests break out in an attempt to remove unpopular governments, as in the Arab Spring of 2011.

However, very few examples of communal violence have been caused by issues arising directly from urban life. Most protests have been riots in cities, rather than riots of cities. This is not what Castells once predicted. He believed that as cities grew in size, sustaining urban society would become more complicated. To resolve the problems of health, shelter, servicing, and employment, the state would be forced to provide, or at least, facilitate the 'collective means of production'. This would be difficult given their limited budgets, rising public expectations, and widespread poverty. Conflicting demands from different groups in society would raise political pressure and lead to situations when the state would lose control. Urban protest would result, which, if appropriately harnessed, would lead to demands for the radical restructuring of society.<sup>43</sup>

Others pointed out that though Castells was mainly concerned with the prospect of urban violence in cities like London, Paris, and Madrid, his predictions were much more likely in the sprawling slums of Third World cities. There was a good deal of public interest in the 1970s and 1980s with the appearance of social movements 'made up of young people, women, residential associations, church-sponsored "grass-roots" communities, and similar groups'.<sup>44</sup> The community-based protests supported by the Church in Brazil, the collectives established in Chilean *campamentos*, and in the urban coalitions being built across Mexican cities showed that the poor were prepared to throw off their shackles. The 'austerity' or 'IMF' riots that broke out during the 1980s as a result of the debt crisis were seemingly another sign of a more turbulent future.<sup>45</sup> Outraged about the quality of public services, the rising price of bread or bus fares or about the introduction of wage freezes, crowds protested in the streets of Algiers, Cairo, Caracas, Lima, and Rio de Janeiro.

Given these forecasts of communal protest, what is most striking about the urban transformation that has taken place across most of the world since 1900, and in much of Africa, China, and India since 1980, is how few urban revolutions there have been. Given the disparities in income, the numbers of poor people, the way that people of different nationalities, religions, and ethnicities have been thrown together, and the failure of so many governments to perform adequately in providing

infrastructure and services, it is surprising that there has not been a great deal more conflict.

The explanation, I believe, is simple. Most urban newcomers, whether they come from a neighbouring area or from far away, are seeking a better life. They are concerned with improving the lives of their own family. They are so busy looking for work, labouring for long hours, constructing their own shelter, and generally surviving in the city, that they have little time or energy for collective action. Class awareness has also been slow to develop. Unions have been thin on the ground, and because most people work in the 'informal sector' they 'are caught between being petty capitalist employers as well as suppliers of their own or family labor'.<sup>46</sup> Fear too plays a part. With so many governments, especially in countries with authoritarian regimes, prepared to use extreme violence against protesters, it is risky to gather in the street.<sup>47</sup>

## URBAN GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS

Throughout history few cities have been governed well. Most have lacked public services and adequate housing, and the authorities have ignored the needs of the mass of the people. As cities grew in size during the 19th century some governments began to pay more attention to urban issues, for example, Baron Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris and Joseph Bazalgette's installation of sewers in London. Sometimes of course, new public works complicated or even worsened old problems, as in the over-crowding that resulted from demolishing the slums of central London in the 19th century. However during the 20th century urban life in the majority of cities in the developed world improved as a result of more professional and competent municipal governance (see above, [Chs. 25](#) and [27](#)).

By contrast, in too many poor countries, effective urban government has long been notable for its absence. 'The end of colonial rule [often] meant the end of effective government. Particularly in Africa, colonialism frequently gave way to corrupt government or no government at all. Nothing so ensures hardship, poverty and suffering as the absence of a responsible, effective, honest polity.'<sup>48</sup> Fortunately, however, the quality of urban government has recently improved and in a few places, like Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore, it has transformed living conditions. Similarly, in Latin America, local authorities in Bogotá, Medellín, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Montevideo, Querétaro, and Santiago, can all claim credit for having improved urban conditions over the last twenty years.

Even where governments have been less effective in improving the quality of life, most have proved very adept at maintaining social peace. They have managed to co-opt political opposition and provide enough palliatives to urban problems to forestall violence. Most Latin American governments have tackled the housing crisis covertly by turning a blind eye to land invasions or even by encouraging them. The authorities have provided services for communities that have behaved and ignored those who have protested or failed to turn up in sufficient numbers at political rallies. When placatory action has failed the authorities have fallen back on repression. The brutal military governments in Argentina and Chile, the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Mugabe's thugs in Zimbabwe have all demonstrated how state aggression can be very effective at discouraging popular protest. In short, for both positive and negative reasons, the urban transition has not been as conflictive as many anticipated.

## CONCLUSION

Most urban dwellers throughout history lived in poverty. They lived short and often brutal lives. It was only from the middle of the 19th century that some governments, mainly in Europe and North America, sought to improve life for the urban majority. Modern technology helped reduce the danger from epidemics and provided the means to assure the urban infrastructure and services that have transformed most people's lives. For a time, it seemed that continued progress would produce a decent life for everyone. In practice, rapid population growth, corruption, and inappropriate government policies have combined to fail the majority and far too many people in urban Africa, Asia, and Latin America continue to live in poverty. And if the incidence of poverty has recently fallen in most countries, in most of the world the number of urban poor has been rising. Rapid city-ward migration has guaranteed the urbanization of poverty.

It is also clear that urban inequality has been increasing. A shift in the geography of manufacturing, greater capital flows, and the economic miracles of the Far East may have reduced global inequality but have accentuated local income differences. Urbanization has played a critical role in creating both poverty and inequality. It has encouraged greater productivity, which has generated the resources with which to reduce poverty, but in most cities uncontrolled market processes have directed too much of the new wealth into the hands of the few. The speculative property market has created millionaires when those resources could have financed services and shelter for the majority.

At the same time it is clear that without towns and cities, the world could not have supported over 7 billion people, let alone to have improved the quality of most people's lives. Better urban living conditions are an important explanation why there has been relatively little communal violence. It is also a compliment to the perseverance of the masses of poor people who have been prepared to put up with such difficult social and economic conditions, eking out a living in the informal sector, building their own homes and too often suffering from a mixture of neglect and violence from the authorities. In arguing that urban life is characterized more by social harmony than social conflict, therefore, I am in no sense suggesting that the quality of life for most people is acceptable. Given our global wealth, our technological ability and our long experience of urban life, we should have done much better.

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## THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

MARTIN V. MELOSI

THE importance of urbanization to environmental conditions builds upon the historic role of cities in reshaping many civilizations. Appreciating nature, in addition, emerged from its contrast with the built environment. Yet cities are connected to the natural world, sharing boundaries with it, and are thus interactive with nature and the countryside. Cities are a form of human cultivation like corn fields, and important examples of human priorities in ordering requisite life support services, such as shelter, food, water, heat, light, and waste disposal. As a consequence of being resource-intensive, cities are subject to many forms of pollution.<sup>1</sup> This chapter connects urban growth to a variety of topics relevant to environmental themes: health and sanitation; solid waste; city building and urban technology; urban ecology and growth; hinterland; pollution; nature in the city; and social justice. According to one expert, ‘Cities are the place where most of the human population now resides and where most of the resource consumption and waste production take place.’ In 1800 only 3 per cent of the world’s population lived in cities; by 2008 more than 50 per cent. Urban areas are growing three times faster than rural areas, with the lion’s share in developing countries.<sup>2</sup>

### HEALTH AND SANITATION

One of the most daunting tasks for cities was affording a healthful environment. Beginning in the mid-19th century, cities in Europe and North America especially began building sanitation infrastructures to prevent epidemics. Efforts at sanitation could be found in some of the largest cities throughout the world, but systematic, city-wide programmes developed initially in the West. Change came slowly, but once the causes of disease were well understood, the systems achieved several victories. Sanitary services provide water for domestic and commercial uses, sewers to eliminate liquid wastes, and collection and disposal of refuse to remove unwanted materials. Collectively they functioned under the rubric of ‘environmental sanitation’. Prevailing the public health and environmental theories informed decisions to choose among available technologies. Beginning in the late 19th century, when the initial technologies of sanitation were implemented in Western countries, a non-contagionist theory of disease influenced choice. The bacteriological theory prevailed in the early 20th century. Sometime after World War II, ecological views broadened the perspective of sanitary services.

With the Industrial Revolution, urban sanitation took a turn for the worse in England and then on the European continent due to overcrowding and myriad health issues. English cities were the first to establish services in response to these problems. While it is easy to exaggerate the range and quality of services provided, the largest industrial cities in England and elsewhere in Europe—and some colonial possessions—soon had rudimentary public works and public health agencies. The rise of public health science was crucial. Cholera ravaged England in the early 19th century, and in the late 1820s many people accepted as normal chronic dysentery and other endemic diseases. The 1842 Poor Law Commission’s *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* concluded that communicable disease was related to unhygienic environmental conditions. The filth

—or miasmatic—theory identified decaying matter and smells as primary causes of poor health, and was the most significant breakthrough for promoting environmental sanitation. By the turn of the century, the germ theory correctly identified bacteria as the culprit in spreading communicable diseases, and revolutionized health practices.

The worldwide influence of the English ‘sanitary idea’ spread the demand for systematic public health planning. English theories buttressed new water and wastewater systems in Europe, North America, and colonies in Asia and Africa. Some cities like Istanbul had elaborate water systems before the English sanitary revolution, but this was not typical globally. Worldwide, these systems were developed and managed by the cities themselves or, in some cases, by private companies. While Europe was in the throes of its Industrial Revolution, the United States just emerged as a nation. Many of the Old World lessons about sanitation were not applied immediately. Early North America was highly decentralized, and the smaller towns and cities did not face the enormous waste problems of London or Paris. Habits of neglect, however, affected these communities. Casting rubbish and garbage into the streets was done casually and regularly. Despite that, crude sanitary regulations were common by the late 17th century in major communities like Boston.

The earliest technologies of sanitation spread to several American cities (and elsewhere) by 1830 in an era of rapid urban growth. Cities gave primary attention to water supply and later, sewerage. The US pioneered modern water supply systems with the Fairmount Waterworks in Philadelphia in 1801. Contemporary sanitary services were designed to provide water for potable uses and for fighting fires, and to keep wastes from accumulating in central cities. In and of themselves, they did not prevent disease, but did play a role in curbing it. Early water supply and wastewater systems soon benefited from the addition of filtration and treatment apparatus that took into account health threats recognized through the germ theory. New health views gave urban leaders innovative tools for combating epidemic disease, including the bacteriological laboratory, inoculation, and immunization. The desire to find solutions to health problems ultimately placed more faith in programmes of individual health (and private medicine) than sanitation measures.

A major challenge for municipal officials, engineers, planners, and sanitarians in 20th-century industrialized countries was to adapt sanitary services to urban growth increasingly characterized by metropolitanization and suburbanization, and growing demand for services in small towns and rural communities. In developing countries, the objective was to provide at least rudimentary programmes in environmental sanitation—though this was not always possible. In the 1940s there continued to be preoccupation with biological pollution at the expense of a better understanding of chemical wastes, especially industrial pollutants, smog, and non-point (run-off) pollution. Especially in North America and Europe, concern over a decaying infrastructure raised important questions about the permanence of water supply systems, sewerage, and wastewater treatment facilities implemented earlier. Competition for priority status amidst other urban problems made sufficient funding for environmental services problematic.<sup>3</sup>

Globally, water supply problems became more serious in recent times. Over the past 100 years the world population tripled while water withdrawals increased six fold. Some observers raised the spectre of a ‘fresh-water crisis’ in much the same way as an ‘energy crisis’ in the 1970s. Population upsurge explains a great deal about fresh-water demand, but is not the whole story. In 1700, about 90 per cent of withdrawals went for irrigation, mostly in Asia. By 1990, fresh-water use was as much as forty times greater, with urban and industrial uses accounting for 32 per cent. Asia remained the biggest consumer in the late 20th century with withdrawals exceeding all other continents combined.

While stabilization of fresh-water use in wealthier parts of the world occurred in recent years, expanding demand elsewhere translated into problems of uneven distribution. By 2004, thirty-one countries—mostly in Africa and the Near East—confronted water stress or scarcities. Seventeen additional countries (2.1 billion people) were water poor. In the Middle East, nine of fourteen countries experienced shortages. Most striking is that for approximately 1 billion people there is inadequate and uneven access to clean water. In places like Cairo, the water supply has been plentiful since it was drawn from the Nile, but the water mains themselves are old and in need of repair, resulting in numerous breaks and outages. In Calcutta, which is subject to dry and wet months, water availability and quality varies greatly. In dry months when the water is particularly polluted, cholera outbreaks increase sharply. Caracas, on the other hand, faces the multiple problems of water shortages compounded by heavy discharge of sewage into the local river, plus industrial air pollution and poor garbage service.<sup>4</sup>

Who controls access, how it is used, and the quality of the available supply determine water scarcities. Adequate sanitation directly relates to the quality of available water and protection of obtainable sources. By World Health Organization standards, sanitation facilities that ‘break the fecal-oral transmission route’ are regarded as adequate systems. For cities, connection to public sewers or household pit privies, flush latrines, and septic tanks often determine adequate sanitation. While in rural areas these methods may be viewed as sufficient, in cities they are not. As shortages of fresh water became more common, concern also turned to unsustainable practices that deplete water supplies faster than they are replenished. What is often missing in satisfying the billions of people who need access to safe drinking water and sanitation is the political will to do so.<sup>5</sup>

## **THE SOLID WASTE PROBLEM**

Solid waste became a serious public issue in the late 19th century as crowded cities produced mounds of garbage. Coal mines left hills of slag. Pigs or turkeys roamed the streets and alleys looking for scraps; horses dumped tons of manure into thoroughfares; and rivers, lakes, and oceans became sinks for tons of discards. The United States is a leader in many categories associated with municipal solid waste generation, but the problem itself is global. Affluence is a strong dictator of urban waste volume and variety. In higher-income economies in the cities of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates abandoned cars, furniture, and packaging are openly discarded. In Asia, paper and plastic waste are generally greatest in Tokyo and Singapore, while very low in Beijing and Shanghai (due partly to recovery and recycling). On the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and in Latin America organic and inert matter dominate waste disposal.

While the discards of 19th-century North America were largely food wastes, wood and coal ash, rubbish, and horse manure, the current waste stream includes a complex mix of hard-to-replace as well as recyclable materials, and a variety of toxic substances to a much greater extent than anywhere else in the world. In cities with thousands of low-income people like Mexico City, collecting, sorting, and reselling products found in waste dumps is a major source of income. Western Europe currently leads the world in an ‘integrated solid waste management systems’, that is, using several disposal options with cooperation between public and private parties. Governments in all Western European countries are required to design systems around integrated models with waste prevention at the core. In many countries, legislation to improve solid waste management is insufficient, and private-sector initiatives increasingly compete with governments at various levels to carry out waste services.

Collection of waste is an imposing task. In some cities, such as Kathmandu, there is no formal waste collection service. In Mexico City, the national government controls collection and disposal arrangements, and does not allow private contractors to operate. Throughout Latin America collection coverage is reasonably good in the large cities such as Buenos Aires, Saõ Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, Caracas, Santiago, and Havana, although squatter settlements rarely receive adequate collection services. Privatizing collection operations, which became popular in the United States in the 1960s, also has caught on in several large cities in Latin America.

In West European and Scandinavian cities collection is frequent and highly mechanized; in Eastern Europe, where much housing is multi-family apartments, quality of service is uneven. Like Europe, cities in industrialized Asia—Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore—have mechanized waste collection that is capital-intensive. In developing countries most collection outside of some large cities is done by manual labour. In the poorest parts of the world, collection rates may not exceed 50 per cent and may not extend to the under-privileged. In East Asia and the Pacific, women often manage garbage in the household, pay for collection service, separate recyclables, and sell items to private waste collectors. In South and West Asia, labour unrest and civil disturbances affect municipal service periodically. In much of Africa a combination of human and animal power and motorized vehicles carries out collection.

Modern sanitary landfills originated in Britain in the 1920s and in the US in the 1930s. There is a clear split between northern and southern/eastern European cities in the use of landfills. In northern Europe landfill practices parallel the US with approximately half of the waste finding its way there. In Greek, Spanish, Hungarian, and Polish cities, virtually all collected waste goes into the ground. Landfilling has been among the cheapest and most typical form of disposal in East Asia and the Pacific. In developing countries open dumping rather than sanitary landfills dominate disposal practices. Waste pickers—sometimes under municipal authority—work the open dumps to find materials to utilize or sell. Ocean dumping is still common in some areas, although the practice is banned or restricted in general. The use of landfills or controlled dumping is on the rise in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in large cities. In Mexico, there are nearly 100 controlled disposal sites, but only about 10 per cent can be considered sanitary landfills. Waste pickers also are common in Latin America, and while attempts have been made to prevent them from entering the dumps, such efforts normally fail.

Of the available alternatives to sanitary landfills, incineration has had the strongest following. Although it drastically reduces the volume of waste, the cost and continual problems with air pollution made it a weak competitor. In Africa and Latin America burning and waste-to-energy are too costly. In Asia, only cities in the most industrialized countries use modern incinerator technology. Japan leads the way, with Tokyo having thirteen incinerators. In developing countries, problems have arisen with inadequate imported incinerators. Europe's commitment to incineration since the early successes in England has been mixed. Emissions of acid gases, heavy metals, dioxin, and mercury caused serious concern, and led the European Union to enforce stringent emissions standards.

Only in the last several years has recycling emerged as an alternative disposal strategy to landfilling and incineration. Once regarded as a grassroots method of source reduction and a protest against over-consumption, recycling emerged in the US in the 1980s as a disposal method in its own right. In 1988 about 1,000 US communities had curbside collection; in 2000 the number exceeded 7,000. The province of Ontario initiated its first curbside plan in 1983, and by 1987 at least forty-one communities in Canada had such programmes. Germany and Denmark have aggressive recycling

policies. Denmark recycles about 65 per cent of its waste. Recycling and recovery in other parts of the world is more uneven. Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean materials recovery is extensive with recycling programmes in all large cities and most moderate-sized communities. East Asian cities and those in the Pacific practise formal and informal source separation. The highest degree of waste reduction takes place in the thriving urban areas of Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong. There also are waste recovery programmes and recycling efforts sponsored by cities and national ministries in China and Vietnam. In South and West Asia and Africa, there are informal networks of pickers, buyers, traders, and recyclers. Materials recovery takes on a different form in much of the developing world—often a necessity in areas of poorly paid or unemployed people and in areas where resources are scarce. In industrialized areas, materials recovery is an attempt to lessen the wastefulness of growing economies and to reduce environmental costs.<sup>6</sup>

## CITY BUILDING AND URBAN TECHNOLOGY

Modern cities are networked cities. The best roadmap for understanding their physical evolution is taking into account urban technology revealed through networked systems and infrastructure—roads, drains and sewerage, power lines, telegraphs and telephones—complemented by city services such as water supply, mass transit, and heat and light. Not until the mid to late 19th century did modern networked cities emerge worldwide, and even then erratically. European and North American cities underwent a period of dynamic system building in the late 19th century—none probably as dramatic as Paris. Between 1852 and 1869, the French constructed 71 miles of new roads, over 400 miles of pavement, and 260 miles of sewers in the city.<sup>7</sup> Many technical innovations of the period—the streetcar, the automobile, electrical power, and the telephone—were instrumental in transforming core cities into metropolises. In the case of every technical system, essential components were not only material, but administrative entities such as utilities, traction companies, and municipal governments; technical expertise and financial institutions; and consumers who utilize the services.

The implementation of urban technologies was not automatic, coincidental, or inadvertent, but stemmed from intentional efforts to confront existing problems faced by cities as they grew. Beginning in the major industrial cities, the decision to utilize new technologies grew out of ‘struggles to surmount the limitations and failings of older urban arrangements that became apparent as a consequence of big-city growth’.<sup>8</sup> Policymakers acted on technical choices to alter the function of cities, such as the diversion of sewage from homes and businesses through a city-wide waste carriage system rather than by individual privy vaults and cesspools. Infrastructure, various technical systems, and sanitary services represented *public goods* requiring municipal—and then regional and national—commitments to increased public spending. Traditions varied from place to place. In France, two companies dominated water service in Paris: Générale des Eaux, established in 1852, and Lyonnaise des Eaux, founded in 1880. Both launched the tradition of private water delivery in France, benefiting from years of government protectionism. In some cases, the provision of urban services ‘switched back and forth between the public and private sectors as technology and markets changed’.<sup>9</sup>

Urban decision-making was complex. Political power was more diffuse than we think, and no one group—city officials, planners, or engineers—operated in a vacuum. Civil engineers were key conduits through which technical and scientific expertise flowed to city hall. While they denied it, engineers often determined the choice of infrastructure to be built. Engineers were receptors and disseminators of the prevailing environmental views of the day that helped shape the systems, and

also were susceptible to the promotion of then-popular technologies or readily available solutions. In the short run, implementation of technologies often met the expectations of city leaders to improve their municipality's reputation, especially the desire for good economic health for the business community. In the long run, emphasis on project design rather than careful planning focused attention on immediate goals rather than on the resilience of systems or their capacity to adapt to growth. Commitment to permanence locked in specific technologies. Problems could arise if systems were too well built or too poorly constructed. In the former case, an existing system could prove resistant to change; in the latter, it might be in need of early replacement or repair. Consequently, decisions made about many technical systems in the 19th century had a profound impact on cities more than 100 years later.

Another key question was service coverage. Until the late 19th century in Europe infrastructure systems were built in limited areas of cities. After 1880 or so, they might be adapted to entire urban areas. The new urban structures and spaces 'were treated as if the social, economic, and technological conditions to which they corresponded were permanent and so could be fixed into permanent form'.<sup>10</sup> Failure to build any infrastructure at all in some areas disproportionately hurt the lower classes or those outside the business centres.

The modern networked cities often came to be identified with major changes in their economic role. The industrial city—Pittsburgh or Cleveland—was the physical expression of America's 19th-century economic revolution. Arguably Manchester, England, was the first true industrial city—emerging in the late 18th century as a textile centre, but its influence did not coincide with changes in new technical networks like water systems and electrical power until deeper in the 19th century. In the US, industrial cities developed later than Manchester, and were magnets for factories and havens for migrants from the countryside, as well as for immigrants from abroad. Distribution centres for a wide variety of goods and hungry consumers of raw materials, they were 'big, sprawling, crowded with newcomers, full of opportunity, and full of risk'.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike early Manchester, other new industrial cities often were not only the tangible expression of the economic revolution, but also the spatial manifestation of a complementary technological revolution transforming physical space. Outside of Europe and North America, the coincidence of economic transformation and networked technologies usually came later, but with similar results. In China the shift from rural to urban-based industrialization did not occur until the Maoist revolution in the 1950s. Industrial urbanization in Japan was largely an early 20th-century phenomenon in cities like Tokyo. During that same period Russia (and then the USSR) gave all the appearances of a developing country, not nearly as urbanized as Japan, and lagging behind developed countries in scale of urbanization and industrialization. In the Third World—including Africa and Latin America—'over-urbanization' was possible in some places, that is, rapid growth of cities in size, but lagging in jobs and housing, and in modern technical networks.<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, while industrialization remained local or regional for many years, new technological innovations were quickly diffused. This suggests that while cities did not uniformly benefit from the direct economic impact of industrialism, they were physically modernized as a result of new technologies generated in the era. Building technology and related infrastructural development underwent extraordinary changes as skyscrapers dotted the skyline and newly paved streets radiated outwards from central business districts in large cities. Investment in and implementation of electrical power led to major changes in transportation, communications, and heating and lighting. Electric streetcars replaced horses; telegraph and telephone lines crisscrossed the skyline; arc lights and

incandescent bulbs challenged gas lighting; central stations undercut home and industrial uses of wood and coal. The demand for more and better housing resulted in altering existing buildings or changing current land uses. Laying water mains or extending sewer lines improved neighbourhood health or created new neighbourhoods. In the US model, the compact ‘walking city’ of the pre-industrial age was replaced by an upward rising, mechanized core city with expanding suburbs. However, industrial cities were paradoxes of progress—their role ‘as places to work seemed incompatible with their role as places to live’. This proved particularly true as pollution problems intensified.<sup>13</sup>

## URBAN ECOLOGY, GROWTH, AND THE HINTERLAND

Spatial transformation means vibrancy or deterioration, manifest in many forms including metropolitization and outward growth. The dynamics of growth help define cities. The interaction of cities with their rural counterparts, hinterlands, and other cities are essential in understanding the urban environment in the broadest sense. In recent years, researchers have sought to determine the ‘ecological footprint’ of cities, and to estimate the ‘load’ imposed on them by the human population. This leads to determining the ‘carrying capacity’ of a particular ecosystem, or the maximum population that a habitat can support without harming its productivity. This is a cornerstone of sustainable development.<sup>14</sup>

While the notion of the city as a human body is not a persuasive analogy, scholars have utilized the idea of the ‘city as animate’ as a tool for understanding urban growth and for framing urban ecology. Cities are not static backdrops for human action, nor are they organic metaphors, but ever-mutating systems. Cities also are major modifiers of the physical environment. Urbanization removes much of the filtering capacity of soil and rapidly channels precipitation into watercourses, producing run-off and flooding. City building through widespread non-permeable surfaces affects the atmosphere by increasing airborne pollutants and by creating ‘heat islands’ where temperatures are greater than in the surrounding area. Various urban activities produce huge volumes of waste that require complex disposal mechanisms. On the other hand, cities have the capacity to use resources more efficiently than highly decentralized populations. Concentration can be an advantage in providing services, offering social and cultural opportunities, and producing and distributing goods. But historically population concentration has often meant severe overcrowding, at least in lower-income sections of cities. Hong Kong is an extreme case with high population density and intense industrialization. The port, once called the ‘fragrant harbour’, is a kind of slum, housing hundreds of thousands of the city’s poor on junks and rife with pollution. Hong Kong did not build a sewerage treatment facility until the late 1990s. Even Mexico City has not succumbed to sprawl like many mega-cities. Its population density is high, land devoted to green spaces very low, and its water supply substantially tainted. Making matters worse, approximately 45 per cent of Mexico’s vehicles (71 per cent automobiles) are registered in Mexico City itself.<sup>15</sup>

In many ways, cities are relatively easy targets for what have been referred to as ‘natural disasters’—sudden and unexpected weather or geophysical events. Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, wildfires, and drought are stimulated by natural forces, but often rendered more serious because of the ‘unnatural’ acts of placing cities in harm’s way. Some thus prefer the term ‘environmental disasters’. Ted Steinberg observed that in blaming ‘acts of God’ for a variety of disasters or calamities, we tend to shrug off responsibility for them and underplay the human forces—

including the type and location of our city building—that exacerbate vulnerability.<sup>16</sup> Building Mexico City on a lake, New Orleans on a delta, Venice on the sea, or Miami on an exposed peninsula intensified risk. Tokyo is particularly well known in this way because of severe problems it faces associated with earthquakes. Tokyo has worked to overcome an array of environmental problems ranging from access to fresh water to choking air pollution. Most recently it has proved vulnerable to energy shortages. A good example occurred when the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant in northern Japan was overwhelmed by an earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, severely cutting Tokyo’s supply of electricity. Earthquakes also have been the most consistent ‘natural’ problem in urban areas like Osaka, Japan’s third largest city. In 2005, purportedly 430 environmental disasters killed approximately 90,000 people—the majority in low-income countries. In many cases, disasters impact the poorest urbanites in the cities of the developing world, and play a significant role in sustaining poverty and diminishing equal access to services and jobs.<sup>17</sup>

The dynamic of growth itself is the underpinning of fundamental changes in the urban environment. John McNeill noted that ‘Twentieth-century urbanization affected almost everything in human affairs and constituted a vast break with past centuries. Nowhere had humankind altered the environment more than in cities, but their impact reached far beyond their boundaries.’<sup>18</sup> There is no simple way to determine the moment when the modern metropolis began to typify urbanization on a global scale. However, what is most striking about modern urban growth is its regionalization. The extreme case is the mega-city merging into the mega-region.<sup>19</sup>

As we see below, in [Chs. 41](#) and [42](#), metropolitan growth and suburbanization are forms of urban development that grew out of or alongside commercial and industrial cities in many parts of the world. While the modern metropolises with their expansive territories and multiple centres may not resemble the industrial cities of the late 19th century, they are strongly dependent on the momentum for change brought on by several key technical systems including the automobile, and also annexation, urban imperialism, and sprawl. Suburbanization was not simply an American phenomenon. Tokyo, Seoul, Moscow, Sydney, and elsewhere experienced outward expansion, albeit in slightly different ways from their US counterparts with consequent environmental impacts. San José, Costa Rica, for example, contains the most important industries, businesses, and residential properties in the country, which includes fourteen *cantones* (‘counties’), functioning as bedroom communities but at a distance from workplaces, shopping, medical care, and education facilities.<sup>20</sup>

To the same extent that water and wastewater systems, streetcars, central station power, and the telephone/telegraph contributed to urban cohesion and urban growth, new or modified technical systems—especially the extension of water/wastewater systems and other environmental services, the automobile and the airplane, long-distance power distribution, and modern telecommunications—encouraged the de-concentration and territorial expansiveness of urban regions. Sprawl not only characterized outward urban thrust in the western US, but elsewhere in the world. As Seoul prepared to host the 1988 Olympics, urban redevelopment, new town construction, and expressway and subway building moved along at a rapid pace. The population grew to 11 million, automobile ownership was on the rise (more than 1 million vehicles on the road by 1990), and sprawl became literally uncontrollable beyond designated greenbelt areas and new satellite cities. As one observer noted, ‘[T]his giant capital city shows all the symptoms of urban ills; overcrowding, traffic jams, air pollution, urban decay, and environmental degradation.’<sup>21</sup> Outward growth often has been accompanied by inner-city deterioration, as in the case of the US. Yet in many other parts of the world, inner-cities remained vital, while urban fringes experienced decay and deterioration. Mexico



City is a good example of the latter, although its air pollution problem in particular—where smog limits are exceeded regularly—engulfs its core, and where subsidence has seriously influenced flooding.<sup>22</sup>

Few technologies have had as profound an impact on urban growth and change as the automobile. Almost like a plough breaking the plains, the automobile transformed cities. ‘The car has reshaped the nation’s landscape, making it virtually unrecognizable from the unpaved version of the previous century.’<sup>23</sup> The transformation of cities by motorized vehicles is a 20th-century phenomenon, building upon the impact of transportation technology before it, and leaving its own unique physical imprint. Some regard this phenomenon as positive: the emergence of a private mass-transit technology, permitting settlement over a wide area, and offering the flexibility to ‘work, shop, and enjoy recreation’ almost anywhere and at any time. To others, the swathe cut through cities by the automobile undermined urban physical integrity, generated unending sprawl, and sabotaged the sense of community by emphasizing personal choice at the expense of the many.<sup>24</sup> Car-dependence has become a real issue throughout the world. Even in Australian cities like Melbourne and Sydney, where manufacturing began to decline in the 1970s and suburban growth slowed, automobiles continued to rule the road. In Beijing, where leaded gasoline is being phased out and where traffic is horrendous, air pollution is greater than for Los Angeles and Tokyo combined (see also below, [Ch. 41](#)). Despite the fact that bicycles remain the leading mode of transportation and efforts made to improve public transit, cars are pervasive. In Buenos Aires buses, trolleys, railway, and subways had been primary forms of urban transit, but the use of private cars soared by the late 1990s with support from government policies. In Caracas the oil boom stimulated significant investment in highways and in the auto industry, which in turn prompted the use of automobiles. In Johannesburg the distinction in car ownership is clearly divided along racial lines. The United States and Western Europe, nevertheless, led the way with the production and use of automobiles, to be followed by East Asia. A 2008 study projected that there would be 1 billion cars on the road by 2010. There were a mere 777 million in 1995.<sup>25</sup>

Optimists and pessimists agree that the automobile is hardly a neutral force in urban physical development. Congestion in central cities predates the automobile, but does not negate its unique and profound impact in making or remaking cities. Cities like Seoul have developed classic congestion conditions—as automobile ownership skyrockets, travel time increases accordingly. Some cities, such as Bogotá, have committed to public transit in a major way—90 per cent of residents use it—but this does not necessarily relieve congestion. The same is true in Taipei despite the development of an integrated public transit system. In Lagos, the issue of congestion is complicated by the rise and fall in the oil boom—in good times gasoline prices decline, in lean times road construction ceases. Congestion and consequent air pollution are just part of the way of life from Cairo to Lima.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to visualize many large cities worldwide devoid of the car, which played a central role in the location of residence and work, and helped turn the landscape into real estate. Vacant land connected by streets and roads and accessible by automobile often gained value and was commodified, benefiting the state, landlords, bankers, realtors, contractors, and an array of consumers.<sup>27</sup>

## POLLUTION

Industrialization, peopling cities, building economies, concentrating structures, and utilizing resources not only resulted in urban growth but also in greater water, air, land, and noise pollution.

Modifications in the infrastructure and related services while most often intentional, produced results that were usually unintentional—in some cases causing or exacerbating pollution and health threats. For example, while city-wide sewer systems alleviated many sanitation problems in the inner city, they often redirected waste to nearby rivers, lakes, and bays. Cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Hamburg, Posen, Stockholm, St Petersburg, and Montreal all suffered from waterborne diseases in the 19th century, and only removed them from their city centres rather than eradicating them. Rivers and streams became the first sewers. Such problems persisted deep into the 20th century in cities like Tianjin, Jakarta, Calcutta, and Bombay.<sup>28</sup> Joachim Radkau persuasively argued that in densely populated old cities, sanitation ‘can only be described as a permanent crisis, since there was no clean solution to the disposal of sewage’ and that water pollution, especially for early modern and industrial cities, seemed to always ‘head the list’ of environmental problems. One exception was Cairo which after 1923 operated sewerage fields outside the city, although it was difficult to keep up with water and wastewater issues over the long term.<sup>29</sup>

Environmental pollution in cities was not simply a problem of the past. Steady population growth, intense industrial activity, and unwise land-use practices contribute to degraded city environments. In the Pearl River delta, one of the fastest growing regions in China since the late 1970s, environmental degradation comes from large and small cities, including the downstream city of Guangzhou. Air and water quality problems remain severe in Bangkok because of its many factories and congested streets filled with cars. Jakarta faces many of the same problems due to industrialization. Although Jakarta gets sufficient rainfall, wells are polluted because of a lack of wastewater treatment. A better planned Singapore, however, seems to have beaten the odds in maintaining a sound physical environment, to some degree because of its small and manageable size. However, limited catchment areas make obtaining an adequate water supply a continual challenge.<sup>30</sup>

Industrialization intensified the impact of energy use on the environment. Electrical power reduced the individual’s dependence on wood and coal, but increased the use of polluting fuels at centralized power plants. The transition from a wood-based economy to one dependent on fossil fuels resulted in severe air, water, and land pollution through the extraction and burning of coal and petroleum. The newly emerging economic order also led to the concentration of factories and workers in urban areas, which exacerbated problems caused by fossil fuels. While most environmental risks were local in origin and impact in these early years, they became unremitting in every sector touched directly or indirectly by industrialization. Threats from acid rain, global warming, and hazardous and toxic materials originated in this period. At the same time, the first major efforts to find remedies for industrially induced pollutants can be traced to the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>31</sup> Electrical lines above ground and in street rails posed a danger to humans and animals. Frank Uekoetter stated, ‘Smoke was the most severe air pollution problem of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.’<sup>32</sup> Air pollution, however, has a long history in the development of cities—generated first by forest fires and volcanoes in ancient times and then by fossil fuels and toxic materials more recently. For example, serious consequences occurred as a result of sulfide gas releases in Poza Rica, Mexico in 1950; methyl-isocyanate in Bhopal, India in 1984; and radioactive gases at Chernobyl in Ukraine in 1986. Some cities suffered from ‘natural disadvantages’ with respect to air pollution, such as Los Angeles, Mexico City, and Santiago because of large populations, heavy combustion of fossil fuels, temperature inversions, and air trapped in nearby mountains.<sup>33</sup> Mega-cities seem to get primary attention for severe pollution problems, but the problem is more ubiquitous: among the most polluted places are smaller cities such as Haina, Dominican Republic; La Oroya, Peru; Ranipet, India; Linfen,

China; and Kabwe, Zambia. Russia leads the way with three in the top ten: Norlisk, Chernobyl, and Dzerzinsk.<sup>34</sup>

The environmental impact of an automobile-centred transport system is a curse for almost every city in the world. From the manufacturing process to the junkyard, all motorized vehicles consume resources; pollute the air, land, and water; and transform space. A relatively new source of air contamination—automobile emissions—posed different problems than manufacturing discharges. The addition of many thousands of cars on the road especially after World War II accelerated the spread of air pollution, added more and newer sources of pollutants, and threatened many major cities. Abundant sunshine in cities like Los Angeles, Houston, and Cairo are key factors in producing photochemical smog, and the extensive use of carbon-based fuels intensified ozone production. In London, humid air embedded pollution in fog. In several parts of the world, countless older cars have inadequate pollution-control devices, burn tainted or leaded gasoline, and receive little servicing.<sup>35</sup>

The use of technologies to remedy urban problems was immersed in profound contradictions. On the one hand, the electric streetcar or the telegraph encouraged building density and concentration of population and economic activity at the urban core. On the other, these same technologies fostered outward residential and commercial growth into the suburbs. These technologies, therefore, were forces of cohesion *and* diffusion, which could make problems of overcrowding worse or create sprawl that degraded land use. Changes in technology also challenged the ability of urbanites to confront new sources of pollution. Trading in horses for automobiles reduced manure, urine, and animal carcasses in the streets, but put smog and ozone into the air. The noise of mechanical engines, wooden wheels, and sirens was replaced by whirring electrical motors, new sirens, and boom boxes. Joel Tarr is persuasive in noting that as we create new technologies we are forced to search for new sinks to handle our waste products, creating newer problems.<sup>36</sup>

## NATURE IN THE CITY

The contrast between the built environment and the natural world is not as stark as it may appear. Urban metabolism suggests a vital and active city environment rather than something unchanged. Nature persists in cities, sometimes coexisting and other times competing. The complexity of flora and fauna residing in cities is astounding. Also significant has been the effort to ‘bring nature to the city’ by constructing parks, green-belts, and park-like cemeteries. In its original form, urban ecology spoke directly to the idea of non-human nature in the city or to the interaction among plants, animals, and humans in urban surroundings. In this context, planning professor William Rees stated that the city was ‘a somewhat unnatural habitat for nonhuman organisms’. ‘To many ecologists,’ he added, ‘the “urban ecosystem” consists of the assemblage of nonhuman species *in the city*, and the purpose of inquiry is to determine how these species have adapted to the structural and chemical vagaries characteristic of the “built environment”.’<sup>37</sup> This is a limited view of urban ecology, but it introduces the idea that people share city space with other living things.

Cities are biotic communities. Geographers Lisa Benton-Short and John Rennie Short argue, ‘We can begin to think of urban ecosystems as a distinctive ecological category rather than merely as disturbance sites to be unfavourably compared to pristine sites.’<sup>38</sup> While urban development initially promoted local extinction rates and the loss of native species, an abundance of non-native species replaced native ones. Overall, because most cities encompass a variety of habitats, the range of flora and fauna is great. Some species, like foxes in European cities and coyotes in the United States, have

been remarkably adaptable. Rats and cockroaches seem to be successful everywhere. In some cases exotic/ invasive species were intentionally introduced or entered cities inadvertently. Pigeons, house sparrows, and starlings brought from Europe established feral populations that proved remarkably successful in thriving cities elsewhere. Urban flora can be spontaneous, cultivated, or invasive, and alter the urban environment. Urban vegetation can be of a grand scale as in the case of urban green space—parks, lawns, vacant lots—or exist as forested areas within cities. In heavily forested areas, tree canopies may cover more than 30 per cent of a city, but substantially less in other areas. Unfortunately, the process of urban deforestation in some parts of the world contributes to global warming.<sup>39</sup>

Biologists, landscape architects, and urban planners have played roles in preserving—and even manipulating—urban fauna and flora toward a variety of ends. In Harbin, China, a study compared the varying capacity of twenty-eight species of trees to control dust production. Researchers used the results to determine which trees should be planted in the city to deal with the problem.<sup>40</sup> Landscape architecture as a distinct discipline in the western world began in Europe, and before it became a more specialized profession incorporated horticulturalists, surveyors, gardeners, and engineers. The title of ‘landscape architect’ was bestowed upon Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted after they were commissioned to build Central Park in New York in the 1850s. Central Park itself was important in giving momentum to the park movement in the United States in the mid-19th century. Urban parks go back at least to ancient Rome, to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and to numerous locations throughout the world. The varied forms of green space—as urban parks, cemeteries, arboretums, botanical gardens, private gardens, golf courses, playgrounds, and lawns—are all necessary features that link nature with cities.<sup>41</sup>

In recent years, advocates of ‘green urbanism’ have made the claim that cities can be ‘environmentally beneficial and restorative’. They encourage city building ‘in harmony with nature’, to be accomplished by adding green and ecological features as central design elements into city building. Green urbanism goes under several names—ecological cities, green cities, sustainable cities, sustainable communities—but they all share a goal of re-examining the place and function of cities in the world.<sup>42</sup> The aspirations of the movement have yet to be matched by widespread results, but the conversation continues. On another level, cities promote ‘greenness’ and sustainability as a way to market themselves.

## **THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CONTEXT**

One way to understand the urban environment is to take account of the struggle for social justice that grew hand-in-hand with urban development. Early efforts at environmental reform (smoke abatement, waste reform) evolved into calls for ‘environmental justice’ to assure that no one group on the basis of race, class, or gender suffers disproportionate risk from pollution and other environmental threats. This story is a necessary corollary to the physical changes taking place in cities during the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>43</sup> Good examples can be found in US history. Unlike their counterparts in the American conservation movement, urban environmental reformers did not share a suspicion of urban life, believing instead that cities were worth preserving. Two rather distinctive, but not totally independent, groups promoted urban environmentalism in these early years—one composed of technical and health professionals often working within the municipal bureaucracy, and a second group constituting citizens who focused popular attention on the urban environment through organized

protests, petitions, and public education programmes. Women played a central leadership role in this latter group.

Looking primarily at the earlier conservation movement, many observers assumed that environmentalism before and immediately after World War II demonstrated little interest in cities. A deeper examination reveals more diversity than popular perceptions allow. For the urban environmentalists, problems of epidemic disease, lead poisoning, malnutrition, and air, water, and noise pollution were the most immediate and severe issues that required attention. National battles fought over environmental issues from the 1960s through the early 1980s tended to highlight saving nature and also ending pollution. Questions of personal health and wellbeing—problems where inequities were great—remained local and were necessarily redirected towards problem-solvers like social workers and public health officials.<sup>44</sup>

By the 1980s, environmentalism took a different turn that strongly emphasized missing elements in the existing environmental movement. Those missing elements were primarily race and class. Environmental racism became the central issue of environmental justice activists. Some in the movement connected class and race, but many others viewed racism as the prime culprit. Although the early leadership came from civil rights activism and academia, the movement found strength at the grass-roots, especially among low-income people of colour who faced serious environmental threats from toxics and hazardous wastes.<sup>45</sup> Environmental justice leaders concede that the reaction of local groups to toxics (lead poisoning or exposure to pesticides) and to hazardous wastes may have begun as NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard), but evolved into problems of disproportionate risks for people of colour.

Environmental justice advocates characterized mainstream environmentalism as having limited interest in concerns of minorities, many of whom lived in cities and were confronted with immediate health risks like lead poisoning and other pollutants and pathogens. Outside of cities, pesticides threatened farmworkers, and Native Americans faced a variety of risks from the dumping of nuclear and other hazardous wastes on their lands. The language of environmental justice sought to distinguish between older notions of ‘equity’ and ‘environmental racism’ and newer aspirations for ‘social justice’. Thus environmental justice emphasizes the *right* to a safe and healthy environment for all people, and defines ‘environment’ to include ecological, physical, social, political, and economic environments. The movement has a strong political agenda, and initially a very American cast. The fundamental issues of environmental rights for all races and classes of people ultimately resonated beyond the US, and the issue of social justice—including an environmental dimension—is clearly part of a new international dialogue.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study of the urban environment is not a counterpoint to studies of the natural environment, since the dichotomy between the built and the natural environment is somewhat artificial. Cities as built environments are shaped by climate, geology, and topography, which make nature’s own rhythms important to cities. But cities are human creations as well. Human action—including the building of cities—has certainly modified the physical world, has often been a destructive force on many levels, and frequently squanders the very resources humans hold as valuable and useful. But setting humans in a separate category from the rest of living things, and from the physical world they inhabit, clearly limits the role they have played in building cities as places of safety, production, and endless

possibilities.

The urban environment is a complex place, raising issues of health and disease, production of waste, city building, urban growth, the nature in cities, and social justice. Too often, however, emphasis on population growth, political change, economic development, and social institutions fails to factor in the environmental elements that provide the deepest history of cities, define their character, and influence the widest variety of change. An understanding of the intimate connection of cities to hinterland depends on a base understanding of the environmental interconnectedness of the two. Comparing urbanization on a global scale also depends on knowledge of the common and disparate environmental features and history of cities. Urban environmental history is a crucial ‘angle of attack’ for gaining perspective on the fundamental forces that shape city growth and development, and complements other ways to study and understand urbanization.

At the same time, the study of the urban environment intersects with other ways of viewing the city. The tension between public and private means of providing services speaks to inherent political issues central to urban governance. ‘Greenness’ campaigns highlight competition among cities for attracting business and sought-after citizens with skills to advance further development of urban areas as centres of innovation. The question of responsibility for controlling and even mitigating pollution brings to the stage various levels of government, the responsibility of the private sector, and the role of the private citizen. Urban environmental issues, therefore, provide insight into broad ecological questions, but also relate to the basic operation and function of cities in the political, economic, and social spheres.

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## CREATIVE CITIES

MARJATTA HIETALA AND PETER CLARK<sup>1</sup>

CREATIVE cities have been the focus of much theorizing, promotion, and urban policy-making in recent times. Since the 1980s the concept has been advanced by influential writers like Charles Landry, Richard Florida, and Allen Scott, and creative city strategies have been adopted by large numbers of major and medium sized cities, especially in Europe and North America, but also to some extent in developing countries.<sup>2</sup> Creative city commissions have been established; creative city networks have been founded by UNESCO and sponsored by other organizations like the European Union and British Council. Commercial consultancies provide advice to cities and publish rankings of creative cities. Interest has been orchestrated by think-tanks, videos on You Tube, conferences, roadshows, and inter-city consortia.<sup>3</sup>

If the original stimulus to the creative city movement derived from the economic problems of Western cities, in particular from the decline of traditional manufacturing after the 1970s (see [Chs. 25, 27, 34](#)), and the imperative to devise innovative policies to redress this, by expanding the service and new technology sectors, more recent influences have included concerns to regenerate decayed inner cities, to create stable, sustainable communities, and to promote city competitiveness against rivals in a globalizing world economy. Exemplars of successful contemporary innovative cities that are frequently cited include New York, Barcelona, London, Silicon Valley (the southern part of the San Francisco Bay area in northern California), Bangalore, and the Tokyo–Kanagawa area in Japan.

While creativity is a fashionable contemporary trope, it is clear from earlier chapters in this volume that dynamic, innovative cities are a historic phenomenon. Since at least the Middle Ages cities, elites, and states have sought to develop new urban economic sectors (often to compensate for declining ones), and we can see that a number of cities have been particularly successful at creating the right opportunities for innovation and creativity to flower. Significantly, several of the successful cities of the contemporary era also flourished in earlier generations as dynamic, innovative centres.

In this chapter we will look first at the recent conceptualization and definition of creative cities and their conditions for success, then deploy this template to examine earlier phases and examples of dynamic cities, identifying shared features and local variables, and lastly use this historical perspective to shed light on the contemporary analysis of creative cities.

## CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The creative city was a concept developed by the European Charles Landry in the 1980s, who argued that ‘creativity was the life blood of cities’ and that a new method of strategic urban planning was needed to create milieus from which innovations would emerge. Landry stressed the need to encourage open-mindedness and imagination, the underlying assumption being that ordinary people could also make the extraordinary happen if given a chance. A city’s innovativeness was connected to the mentality of its inhabitants, but to no less degree to prominent institutions, public buildings, and

support services such as transport and telecommunications. As well as arguing the case for civic activism and public support for creative initiatives, from cultural quarters to living laboratories, Landry has stressed the importance of the diversity and openness of populations, through immigration; the clustering of creative industries, such as media and entertainment, arts, and cultural heritage and creative business services; and (writing from a European perspective) the relative compactness of a city, allowing networking and accessibility.<sup>4</sup>

In 2002 the American Richard Florida brought a new dimension to the discussion by emphasizing the role of a new creative class of scientists, engineers, designers, and artists giving impetus to the rise of a creative economy. For Florida the urban place was crucial for success: ‘places that are open and tolerant have an edge in attracting different kinds of people and generating new ideas’. Technology was important for creative growth, but so too was talent and education.<sup>5</sup> Another important contributor to the discussion has been Allen Scott who has argued that the mainsprings of the creative economy in major innovative sites are clustered networks of small specialist firms, fluid labour markets, and the de-standardization of outputs. In such a new economic world there are high levels of risk and instability, but this in turn leads to experimentation and innovation. As well as enjoying recognition and support from policy-makers, there is international recognition too. Many of the most dynamic firms in successful creative cities are involved in the construction of global networks.<sup>6</sup>

The last few years have seen an explosion of literature and theorizing in this area. The main thrust has been to widen the definition of city creativity to most aspects of urban life.<sup>7</sup> Cities, it is argued, require continual social and political creativity to face the challenges of growth and decline: all the main sectors of the city community from housing and transport to waste disposal need to be mobilized in this battle. Cultural activities have been downgraded in significance. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish the special character of urban creativity from the general political and social capacity (or otherwise) of communities to cope with the structural pressures and strains of urbanization. Generally, the creative city debate has seen a blurring of theory, advocacy, campaigning, and policy formulation, and in a number of key areas there has been an overlap with older, long-standing municipal strategies of urban marketing, promotion of the tertiary sector, education and infrastructure investment, dating back to the 19th century if not earlier. In terms of outcomes, it has also been suggested that contemporary creative city strategies may not be very effective—a point to be returned to later.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, from the work of the leading theorists like Landry, Florida, and Scott one can construct a broad template of potential key conditions for promoting urban creativity in the contemporary period. These include networks of small specialist firms and flexible if volatile labour markets; linked to this, diversity and mobility of population; educational resources; the interaction of technology and cultural innovation; the size of city (large but not too large); internationality (networking, investment and recognition); and public support.

How far is this kind of a template of variables meaningful and valid when we examine dynamic innovative cities in the past? And what in turn does such historical analysis tell us about contemporary developments?

In his pioneering *Cities in Civilization: Culture, Innovation and Urban Order* (1998) Peter Hall argued for a progression of innovative, dynamic cities from medieval Florence to late 20th-century Tokyo. In his analysis he categorizes these cities in terms of cultural or artistic creativity; technological and economic innovation; technology and art combined; and infrastructure innovation (London, Berlin, and Paris appear in more than one category).<sup>9</sup> In this chapter the approach is different, suggesting that leading creative cities often combined many types of innovation, and that such cities in the past often experienced quite distinct phases of development. Here we look at a sample of what are widely regarded as the most dynamic and creative cities over time.

Arguably, medieval and early modern cities such as 14th- and early 15th-century Florence or late 15th-century and early 16th-century Antwerp can be categorized as belonging to an *archaic period of creativity*. Culturally both were highly innovative (fine quality textiles, the revival of neoclassical architecture, art, and sculpture in Florence; luxury crafts such as tapestries and diamond-cutting, art, book publishing, fortified architecture in Antwerp). Both experienced innovation in other related fields, especially high finance and banking. In terms of industrial structure, their economies were small and workshop-centred and were sustained in part by a mobile workforce (migration to both cities was important). Though Florence had a university (intermittently) from 1364, early modern Antwerp did not, but both centres had relatively high literacy rates.<sup>10</sup> During their golden eras Florence and Antwerp enjoyed an international reputation and status within Europe, but much investment in new sectors was locally based, with the patronage of the Medici family important in Florence and that of merchants in Antwerp. In terms of size, neither city counted among the largest European cities, nor achieved a significant breakthrough in new technology. Perhaps most strikingly, the periods of intense creativity were one-offs. Though Antwerp saw a mild revival in the 17th century, the city's career as a leading creative centre largely ended after the Spanish siege of 1585; in the case of Florence the tide of cultural innovativeness ebbed away steadily in the late 15th century and never returned.

By contrast the *proto-modern creative cities* that emerged in the 18th century were longer stayers and marked a turning point in the evolution of urban innovation. Previously innovation (novelty) was widely regarded as dangerous and disruptive: from this time it was praised as progressive and innovative cities had a major role in that transformation. London, Paris, and arguably Tokyo (Edo) are candidates for inclusion here. All were very large cities—Edo in the early 18th century was probably the largest city in the world with around a million inhabitants; London at that time had about 700,000 people rising to a million by the century's close, and Paris had around half a million. All were important innovative cultural centres—Edo's significance is discussed by James McClain in Chs. 18; Paris became a leading city for high fashion, music, and the Enlightenment; London pioneered the spread of magazines and novels, the free press, new forms of leisure entertainment, public science, clubs and societies, and other forms of civil society.<sup>11</sup> London was Britain's leading manufacturing town with a great deal of workshop-based innovation (clock and instrument making) and the spread of new technology (steam-engine powered breweries by the 1780s). It also attracted extensive European investment in mercantile activity, particularly great merchant companies like the East India Company. Paris like London was a leading European banking city and both cities enjoyed a growing international cultural reputation which extended beyond Europe to the Middle East, Asia and the Americas. Edo—secluded but never wholly isolated from international influences by the strict controls on foreign trade from the 1630s—had a much more limited global status, but all three cities benefited from extensive public and private infrastructure investment during the 18th century. Paris

and London openly competed to be the most fashionable, most improved cities in Europe with heavy expenditure on paved streets, drainage, and street lighting (see above, [Ch. 13](#)). Strikingly, all three cities enjoyed a renewal of urban creativity in later periods: Paris in the late 19th century as a centre of art, music, architecture, and high finance; London in the same period for international finance, public health, and town planning; and Tokyo in the late 20th century for finance, new technology, and new media.

## MODERN CREATIVE CITIES

In the 19th century we see the return or reinvention of earlier creative cities like London and Paris but also the arrival of new centres. Of these, the most remarkable were Berlin and New York.

*Berlin.* With 800,000 inhabitants Berlin emerged as the capital of the German empire in 1871, and rapidly became the metropolis, the predominant political, industrial, and financial centre, of a rapidly urbanizing country (see above, [Ch. 25](#)). Since the 18th century Prussian rulers had given official support for the toleration of foreigners. Population growth was boosted by heavy immigration, mainly from the German empire but also including substantial numbers of Jews, Poles, and Russians. By 1920 the population of Berlin had reached 3.8 million.

Before World War I Berlin was, in Peter Hall's words, a 'Pioneer Technopolis'. It was a forerunner in building infrastructural services and implementing municipalization policies. International competition was crucial as a driver of change. As in many other fields, Berlin competed with Paris as the electrical capital of the world, the 'City of Lights', replacing gas lamps with electric lighting. The city's first electrically lit advertisement appeared in 1910. Berlin was a pioneer in urban public transport, having a steam railway as early as the 1870s; the world's first electric tram was introduced in 1881, and by 1900 most of the electric trolley lines had been installed. Berlin's public utilities under municipal control became a model for other European cities, and were visited and admired by delegations from many countries. After the 1870s, the University of Berlin became a key player in making Germany a world leader in technology, the natural sciences, and medicine. Like its faculty of medicine, the University's physics department was a hothouse of pioneering research and a veritable factory of Nobel Prizes.<sup>12</sup> Associated with many of these developments was the growth of Berlin as a major centre for industrial innovation with the extensive Siemens and AEG factories but also important workshop-based industries.

Berlin was also culturally innovative. By World War I, Berlin had three opera houses and fifty theatres, plus many music halls. The year 1889 marked a revolution in German theatre and the birth of the Free Stage movement, which achieved international recognition. The formation of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in the 1880s with first Hans von Bülow, as conductor and later Arthur Nikisch helped turn Berlin into one of the world's leading musical capitals: Hans Richter, Felix von Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms, and Edvard Grieg all conducted the orchestra over the next few years. Berlin's reputation as a metropolis in the forefront of modernity inspired a growing sociological literature, most notably the writings of Georg Simmel.

During this era Berlin not only attracted high levels of imperial and municipal investment but also private funding. Berlin had close links with German, European, and North American cities before World War I and after the great trade fair of 1896 was widely regarded as the model creative city. Moreover, what is striking is that, despite the political and economic upheavals that followed Germany's military defeat, Berlin reinvented itself as a creative city in the 1920s, becoming

internationally known as a leading innovative centre in architecture and design (Bauhaus moved there in 1932), art (Grosz), literature (Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, 1929), film (German Expressionism), popular theatre (Brecht and Weill, *The Three Penny Opera*), and cultural institutions. With all its size, amazing vibrancy, and confusing sordid complexity, the metropolis became a central theme in much of the cultural discourse of these years. Networking was crucial. Berlin hosted one of the leading clusters of artists and art galleries (over eighty) in Europe, while 20 per cent of all German writers lived in the city during the 1920s. Berlin University consolidated its position as a leading scientific player on the global stage. Thus Albert Einstein acted as Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physics in Berlin, from 1914 to 1933. Berlin's international attraction and diversity dazzled: Viennese intellectuals including many Jews moved there after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire; English writers like Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood came and wrote about the city. Weimar Berlin promoted the infrastructure of creativity through advances in metropolitan government and transportation. As a result of the inauguration of Greater Berlin in 1920, the city's administrative area more than doubled, encouraging a vigorous municipal government. Berlin consolidated its mass transit lines in a single Berlin Transportation Company, and with the construction of a civilian airport at Tempelhof, Berlin became a crossroads for air travel.

All this ended brutally with the rise of Nazism and the partition of the city after World War II. Since the reunification of Germany in 1990, Berlin (with 3.3 million inhabitants at present) has sought to regain its status as an international cultural capital. Attempts have been made to rebuild it as a new, commercially driven world city with iconic buildings (for instance Potsdamer Platz; see [Plate 25.2, p. 479](#)). In addition, the city's many abandoned buildings, former factories, warehouses, and the like are being transformed into clubs, restaurants, art galleries, or designer shops. The municipal government and the business sector are now promoting Berlin as a city of design and fashion, of popular music, theatre, and art.<sup>13</sup>

*New York.* If the most important internationally known creative cities into the 19th century were largely European, from the 1870s there was significant shift in creative geography with the arrival of North American contenders, led by New York. Between 1870 and 1900 the population of New York grew at a rate faster than in any other city in the world. Modern office blocks and skyscrapers were constructed (the term skyline was coined in 1897 to describe the profusion of Manhattan high-rise buildings) and concentrated in central business areas. Infrastructure innovations of the 1870s and 1880s, such as telephones, trolley cars, and electric elevators facilitated accessibility and communication. During the years 1900 to 1940, the city population more than doubled from 3.4 to 7.45 million, partly due to increasing immigration with earlier inflows of Irish, Italians, and European Jews joined by growing numbers of southern blacks.<sup>14</sup> Global networking was consolidated not just by migration but by commerce. The port of New York was the busiest port in the world by the turn of the 20th century. New York also had the largest concentration of professional and financial services, the largest percentage of bankers and stock brokers, and largest professional populations of architects and lawyers, consulting engineers, and designers in the whole nation. It was the North American centre of advertising and marketing with firms establishing branches across the world. A survey in 1892 showed that 30 per cent of all American millionaires lived in New York. Their extraordinary wealth helped generate a major cultural centre with museums, the Carnegie Hall, and the Metropolitan Opera. But public investment was also crucial. New York became the 'capital of capitalism' with huge building projects. Between 1890 and 1940 more than 90 per cent of the river crossings, the entire subway system, and more than half of the residential housing in Manhattan,

Brooklyn, and the Bronx were constructed. By 1890, New York had the most comprehensive transit system in the world. From the 1920s and 1930s new expressways were created, while inhabitants tried to adapt the city to the automobile.<sup>15</sup> An important stimulus for innovation was competition, in the case of New York not just with European capitals like Berlin, London, and Paris, but also with other leading and successful American cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and after 1900 Los Angeles.

As Thomas Bender has argued, New York's distinctiveness was rooted in intellectual traditions that encouraged both the critical mode and the practicality of its thought. It was this which helped provide the context for Thomas Edison's work in the city from the 1870s, inventions which largely defined the popular culture of his time—electric lighting, recorded sound and cinema. But Edison also benefited from the small workshop-type industries in the city (average size thirteen workers in 1900) and the highly skilled and diverse workforce; the proximity of other innovators (between 1866 and 1886 80 per cent of all US inventors with five or more patents lived in or within commuting distance of Manhattan); the extensive advertising industry; and the large department stores which ensured access to large affluent markets.<sup>16</sup>

Like Berlin, New York at the start of the 20th century was also an exciting city, physically, visually, and culturally for artists. In the 1920s many African American artists and performers migrated to New York to take part in Harlem's dynamic jazz and blues music scene. They included Fletcher Henderson, who led the most successful African American jazz band, 'Duke' Ellington, 'Jelly Roll' Morton, Louis Armstrong, and Bessie Smith. Jazz became a powerful expression of New York's cultural life and was exported to the rest of the world through recordings, radio broadcasts, and live performances abroad. Immigrants like Irving Berlin were also involved in the development of other forms of popular music. Berlin's song 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' (1911) created ragtime as an international dance craze. George Gershwin was another hugely successful musician in the interwar period, writing and composing more than a dozen Broadway shows which went on tour across the world. New York's Tin Pan Alley dominated music publishing in the United States with important international influence. If Europeans—migrants, refugees, and promoters—brought Modernism to North America, New York with its cutting edge technology, its steel and electricity, its vitality and openness bordering on chaos, transformed it into a distinctive creative environment, which spawned new forms of painting, architecture, music, dance, and design, though it was in the postwar era that New York's Abstract Expressionists, choreographers, and other intellectual and cultural warriors took the international arena by storm.<sup>17</sup> Late 20th-century New York experienced economic reverses but, as we will see below, it remains one of the world's leading innovative centres.

*Tokyo and its region.* Outside Europe and North America Tokyo has long been recognized as one of the leading centres of innovation and creativity. Already, as we have noted, in the 18th century the city was a hive of new cultural activity. By the 1880s and 1890s Tokyo had regained its demographic and economic momentum and it soon began to expand in all directions: by 1920 Tokyo and its western suburbs had about 3.7 million inhabitants.

Tokyo remained the leading cultural centre in Japan and in the 20th century was the focus for a growing range of new media activity including cinema, radio, popular music, and publishing. Major film studios were (and still are) based in south Tokyo. Thus Toho Company, the biggest film company in Japan, was founded in the 1930s and has its headquarters in the city. Likewise, Studio Ghibli, the production company of Hayao Miyazaki's animation films, is based there. Tokyo has a huge entertainment industry, including video console games, computer games, manga comics, and similar

output.

After the mid-20th century Tokyo overtook Osaka as the main centre of Japanese industrial production. However, from the 1980s both the national and metropolitan government sought to transform Tokyo into a global city. Throughout the second half of the century, central government played a leading role in directing industrial growth, increasingly promoting the development of new high-technology and knowledge-based industries. This crystallized in the first decade of the 21st century in central and metropolitan government policy focused on a number of initiatives designed to support the capital's high-technology and cultural industries. For example, the CREATIVE TOKYO initiative was promoted by the government in cooperation with The Cool Japan Promotion Strategy Program with the aim of gaining 8 to 11 trillion Japanese Yen in the worldwide cultural markets by 2020. This scheme places great importance on the development of foreign retail channels for small and medium-sized businesses working in the Japanese content industry, fashion, food, local products, and traditional culture. Tokyo's success depends not just on state support but on heavy private investment in the metropolitan economy (the city hosts forty-seven of the *Fortune Global 500* companies, the highest number of any city<sup>18</sup>), an educated workforce, and affluent demand. Tokyo is the hub of the world's most populous metropolitan area with upwards of 35 million people and the world's largest metropolitan economy with a GDP estimated ahead of New York City, which ranks second on the list.<sup>19</sup> Competition is also crucial, not just with leading creative centres in the West and increasingly East Asia (Seoul, Hong Kong) but within Japan. Thus competing with Tokyo is a highly creative network evolving in the Kansai region and consisting of the six prefectures of Osaka, Hyogo, Kyoto, Nara, Wakayama, and Shiga. By contrast, factors identified in other major creative centres may be less important: for example, the diversity and openness of the workforce, and the importance of smaller scale, workshop businesses.

*Helsinki*. Not all the recognized creative centres of the late 20th century were mega-cities. A number were either major regional centres (like Barcelona or Manchester) or smaller national capitals such as Helsinki. In 2012 Helsinki celebrated the title of World Design Capital but the city's development as a dynamic innovative centre dates from considerably earlier. The city's population grew rapidly in the decades before World War I to reach 133,000 in 1910. This was also a creative period when Art Nouveau architecture and the visual arts flourished. Artists who had studied in Paris and Düsseldorf and architects who had participated in international exhibitions found inspiration in Finnish folklore and mythology.<sup>20</sup> Both the national government and the city administration of Helsinki had an important role in introducing the latest foreign innovations, in financing study tours and later in the municipalization of the most important infrastructural services, such as electricity and tramlines. Already in the first part of the 20th century Helsinki raised internationally famous architects like Eliel and Eero Saarinen and Alvar Aalto, and after World War II it became a prominent design centre.

However, it was from the 1980s that the innovative economy accelerated, boosted by five trends: technological development, especially digitalization; deregulation, which opened up competition; free trade in the European Union (Finland joined in 1995); technology policy; and education. During the 1990s, Helsinki was regarded as a key international node of technological innovation and it was best known for Nokia. Nokia was one of the first giants of IT technology that provided infrastructure for connectivity. Since the 1980s, the city had made major gains in wireless technology, an increased research and development workforce, and investment, emphasizing policies in support of open competition and strong protection of intellectual property. The National Technology Agency systematically raised financing for research and development at all levels, both for universities and



enterprises—not only large companies like Nokia but many smaller, workshop-based graphic design, media, IT consultancy, and other firms. Education policy too has been crucial in creating a highly trained workforce. Since the 1960s, the central objective of Finnish education policy has been to provide all citizens with equal opportunities (the nine-year comprehensive school) for high quality education. Finnish secondary school students rank third globally in the 2009 OECD PISA rankings (the only Western country in the top five). Inhabitants of Helsinki have, on average, a better standard of education than the Finnish population in general. In 2010, 37 per cent of the local population aged over 15 had a university degree.

As in many other major creative centres, technological advance has marched hand-in-hand with the development of cultural industries. Helsinki is proud of the Sibelius Academy which is the third largest university of classical music in Europe and its alumni figure prominently among leading international conductors and singers. In the 1980s and 1990s Helsinki City began to invest systematically in creative milieus in the heart of the city by converting former school buildings and industrial plants into cultural centres. Helsinki's two large live music venues, Kaapelitehdas (the Cable Factory) and Nosturi (Crane) are important sites for cultural experimentation. At present, around 100 artists and seventy bands work and rehearse at the Cable Factory, which also provides facilities for dancers and various institutions, schools, and clubs. Nosturi is mainly used as a concert hall, but also provides rehearsal space for bands. The decade after 2000 marked a significant growth of the music industry in the city.<sup>21</sup> Overall, we see how a combination of public and private investment, the linkage between technology and culture, international networking, urban agglomeration (metropolitan Helsinki had 1.2 million inhabitants in 2011), and educated labour force are crucial conditions for urban creativity. By comparison population diversity and openness seem less important in the city—despite a recent increase of immigration.

## CREATIVE CITIES AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Our case study examples have shown that many of the key attributes in the conceptualization of contemporary creative cities are also often applicable to leading innovative and dynamic cities in the past. At the same time, it is clear that not all these variables can be identified in the same place. Population aggregation is important but cities varied in their compactness. Diversified open workforces are found in New York, Berlin, but not necessarily in Tokyo or Helsinki. Small workshops form only part of the picture. Public investment may take the form of government support (Tokyo) or municipal intervention (Helsinki, New York). No less striking has been the fact that many of our leading centres in the past enjoyed a heritage of creativity that enabled them to reinvent themselves as creative centres at different times and in different directions.

Examining creative cities and creative industries in the contemporary world poses many problems, not least because of the plurality of candidates (many self-promoted), issues of definition (creative industries are not a well-defined area, sector, or occupation in a statistical sense, leading to problems of categorization), and the difficulty of evaluating outcomes. Certainly in many countries creative industries, largely headquartered in cities, have been one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy with computer games and electronic publishing among the most successful areas. In the OECD countries, creative industries account for 5–6 per cent of GDP, while in the USA more than 11 per cent of GDP comes from creative industries.<sup>22</sup> The digital environment and the internet have been central to the expanding trade system of cultural products. Information and communications

technologies have allowed the emergence of new tools of creativity, new means of distribution and new formats, such as e-books and downloadable music. The dynamics and creativity of these industries is heavily dependent on a high concentration of small companies. Small firms and freelancers perform an important role in the complex social production system of the creative industries. Large multinational corporations, however, play a decisive part in coordinating local production networks and in ensuring that their products reach wider markets. Companies such as Apple, BBC, PPR Group, Louis Vuitton, Alessi, Universal Studios, Time Warner, and Capital Records are good examples of successful players in creative industries. Public authorities around the world have developed strategies for attracting and supporting creative industries in their cities. In 2003 Taiwan launched a strategy to strengthen its cultural output from indigenous cultural expression to games.<sup>23</sup> In Hong Kong the effort was to maintain a highly regarded film and television industry. (See below, [Ch. 39](#) by Hannu Salmi.)

In recent years, the European Commission has paid special attention to creative industries and factors for promoting innovations. In 2009, European firms in the creative and cultural industries employed a total 6.4 million persons in thirty European countries. Large urban areas and capital city regions have dominated the creative and cultural industries with some regions more successful than others. The super-clusters of London and Paris stand out, followed by Milan, Madrid, Barcelona, and Rome.<sup>24</sup> Other global data confirm that there is striking national employment concentration in creative industries in major centres like New York and London, often clustered in central business or city-fringe areas in proximity to major institutions. Even so, total employment in these sectors is not large and is vulnerable to contraction in times of economic downturn.<sup>25</sup>

The substantial growth of cultural and creative industries coincides with expanding international trade in cultural goods and services. The UNESCO Report on Selected Cultural Goods and Services, 1994–2003 analysed cross-border trade data from approximately 120 countries on selected products, such as books, CDs, video games, and sculptures. Three countries, the United Kingdom, United States, and China, produced 40 per cent of the world's cultural trade products in 2002, while Latin America and Africa together accounted for less than 4 per cent.<sup>26</sup> Admittedly, export statistics do not accurately reflect the value of cultural products sold in foreign markets, especially core products that are endlessly available and reproducible at insignificant cost.

According to the *Creative Economy Report* of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), some parts of the developing world, notably in Asia, are enjoying strong growth in their creative sectors. There are several problems in the developing countries: the lack of a clear framework for understanding and analysing the creative economy; lack of data on the performance of the creative economy on which sound development strategies could be built; and the lack of institutional capacity to support the development of creative industries especially in the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. Here strong public policies are needed to nurture a solid, self-sustainable creative economy able to compete at the multilateral level.<sup>27</sup>

When we try to identify and categorize the different urban centres and sites in this new creative universe, we can distinguish four or five main categories: global creative cities in the historic mode, mainly large capital cities or major regional centres; niche cultural centres of varying sizes; specialist technology cities; and bandwagon cities, often medium or smaller-size centres.

Among the *global creative cities* ranked high on various listings we might include London, Paris, New York, Barcelona, Chicago, and Helsinki. Take New York. Building on its earlier innovative

resources, at the start of the 21st century the city was internationally famous for high finance and banking (not without risk), for art (with more than 1,000 art galleries and thousands of art dealers, New York City is arguably the art capital of the world), and for the media. The city is the largest media market in North America. Three of the leading record companies are also based in the city, as well as in Los Angeles, and one-third of all American independent films are produced in New York. The four major American television networks all have their headquarters in the city, while many cable channels are based there as well. New York has thousands of businesses and nonprofit organizations in the creative core. These are active in such areas as publishing, film and video, music production, broadcasting, architecture, applied design, advertising, the performing arts, and the visual arts. In addition, there are many independent artists, writers, and performers. The secret to the success of New York's creative sectors can be attributed to talent, proximity to audiences and suppliers, a receptive public and a unique environment in which both for-profit and non-profit creative organizations support each other. New York's creative industries are sustained by an excellent infrastructure. This includes internationally known educational institutions from The Juilliard School of the Arts to the Pratt Institute and the School of American Ballet, as well as a large community of arts-friendly philanthropic foundations of patrons, and prominent trade organizations. There are more than fifteen unions and fifty local bodies that support creative workers. The success of the cultural sector is also dependent on the city government. In recent years the city has demonstrated an increasing recognition of the creative sectors' importance and has improved the supply of services to creative firms through agencies such as its Department of Cultural Affairs. International competition is fierce from rivals like London and Toronto that are ahead of the Big Apple in developing public- and private-sector strategies to maintain and grow their creative industries. For example, rivalry in the advertising sector is intense. During the 1980s, New York was the location for half of all large advertising agency headquarters in the world, but in the early 2000s for less than one-third.<sup>28</sup>

*Niche cultural cities.* The popular music industry has become an important global industry and it has always been associated with certain cities: traditional jazz with New Orleans, urban blues with Chicago, country music with Nashville, the Motown sound with Detroit, and tango with Buenos Aires. In most cases, music is a highly localized cultural product that draws on a local creative milieu and has a tendency to agglomerate in urban areas. Production, circulation, and distribution rely on material factors, such as recording studios, concert halls, distribution retailing, record shops, music scenes, bars, and financial sources. The production, sales, and consumption of music, however, are globally dominated by an increasingly concentrated system of manufacturing and distribution. Stockholm in Sweden and Kingston in Jamaica are the centres of highly centralized music-production systems. After the US and the UK, Sweden is the world's largest net exporter of popular music products. Kingston's products have a far higher global commercial value than those from Stockholm, but Stockholm's local production system and urban economy makes bigger profits in real terms.

Kingston is a medium-size city (approximately 700,000 inhabitants in 2010) but a highly creative one, because its dense network of musicians, agents, songwriters, and recording studios has generated both intense competition and productively cooperative interactions. The tight clustering of a large number of studios around Orange Street promoted a fine division of labour and effective matches between musicians and producers. Most important, the clustering allowed musical innovations to spread rapidly among performers and the recording studios. The innovations that gave rise to reggae generated a global market for Jamaican music.<sup>29</sup>

The most important factor for the success of popular music production in Sweden is the crucial role of intellectual property rights and professional musicians. In Sweden, musical products are defended, while in Kingston the situation is different. In Jamaica, the absence of an institutional structure to protect copyright and collect royalties means that musical products are not protected. This is the main reason why many Jamaican artists record and produce most of their work in North America and Europe. To facilitate the development of the music industry, the government of Jamaica has extended incentives to investors, including duty-free importation of musical instruments and equipment, tax-free profits from overseas film and video releases for nine years, and duty-free and tax free concessions on equipment, machinery, and materials for building film studios and support facilities.<sup>30</sup>

In Sweden, export and domestic market success have led to significant benefits for the national music industry and for Stockholm (population 810,000 in 2009). Swedes are ranked as the sixth-highest per capita consumers of recorded music. At the beginning of the 2000s, there were approximately 3,000 professional musicians, composers, and producers, mainly operating as freelancers, in Sweden. There were around 200 record companies and approximately seventy music publishing companies, many based in Stockholm. There are headquarters of the global recorded music industry in Stockholm (Metronome, Elekta, Sonet, Polar) and Sweden's largest record companies are owned by foreign companies.<sup>31</sup>

*Specialist Technology Centres.* Specialist industrial cities have a long track record in Europe and North America, closely linked to the rise of urban industrialization from the late 18th century, and places like Birmingham or the Ruhr towns in Europe and the New England textile towns have some claim to be creative cities of this type. However, the Second Great Divergence and the rise of manufacturing in the East has created a new generation of specialist technology centres often in Asia. The success of Bangalore (4.3 million inhabitants in 2001) in southern India is a good example of the power of education—identified earlier in our template of creative attributes. Indian government has played a key role in fostering scientific education. Bangalore's success and its current abundance of engineers have their roots in decisions made long ago by its leaders, the maharajas of Mysore and their ministers. Mysore had a long tradition of embracing new technologies. The Indian Institute of Science was founded in 1909 with support from the British colonial government and the Mysore government. An act passed in 1961 by the Indian central government permitted the establishment of information technology enterprises. In the 1970s Bangalore launched a programme of investment in infrastructure such as improved roads, electricity, and other utilities that would attract international firms. In 1985 Texas Instruments became the first multinational corporation to set up base in Bangalore. Smart firms and smart workers flocked to Bangalore to be close to each other. The Indian company Infosys was founded in 1981 and it moved to Bangalore in 1983. In 2008, the company had close to 100,000 employees. Infosys has expanded its activities from software to banking services and consulting.

Bangalore has been called the 'Silicon Valley of India' because of the large number of information technology companies based in the city which contributed a third of India's IT exports in 2006–2007. Bangalore's IT industry is divided into three main clusters—Software Technology Parks of India; International Tech Park, Bangalore; and Electronics City. UB City, the headquarters of the United Breweries Group, is a high-end commercial zone. Not only are some of the largest Indian software companies headquartered in Bangalore, but so are many of the global *SEI-CMM Level 5 Companies*. In addition, the city is a hub for biotechnology-related industry in India: in 2005 nearly half of the 265

biotechnology companies in the country were located here, including Biocon, India's largest biotechnology company.<sup>32</sup>

Although expanding rapidly, Bangalore's economy is heavily geared to advanced technology complemented by more traditional heavy industry. There is little evidence of a major growth of new cultural industries or other forms of urban creativity. Crucial in its success has been a dense agglomeration, state investment, especially in infrastructure, an educated labour force, and significant levels of international investment. Other potential variables such as a multi-cultural or diversified workforce or small firm structures seem less evident. In fact small enterprises are increasingly crowded out by the high land prices fuelled by large companies.

*Bandwagon cities.* These are mostly medium-sized and smaller towns which have never had a major reputation or significance for urban creativity in the past. Examples include Hull, Huddersfield, Gateshead, and Oldham in northern England, cities such as Newcastle and Fremantle in Australia or Worcester, Massachusetts. Confronted by economic problems since the 1980s, especially the decline of manufacturing and employment, they have sought to generate jobs and business activity by employing consultants, and adopting basic elements of the creative city toolkit, establishing new theatres or museums, naming historic areas of a town's cultural quarters. The heritage/culture-based visitor economy is the most widespread because the investment costs and skill requirements are low. However, frequently the urban environment lacks many of the key conditions for creative success, as outlined above. As a consequence, success rates are often low, with new activity limited to low-level services, such as food and drink trades and tourism. Too often cultural quarters are kept alive only by public subsidy. Prospects for long-term creative development appear limited.<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have argued that current leading theories about the nature of urban creativity are in considerable measure validated by the analysis of leading examples of creative cities in the past—certainly from the 18th century. Here we have seen the important role of agglomeration, small-scale firms, labour mobility and diversity, education, the overlap of technology and cultural industries, internationality, and public support—though it is clear that not all leading cities share all these attributes. We have also identified two further conditions of significance for leading cities: the role of inter-city competition in stimulating and shaping creative developments; and the capacity of leading creative cities to carry over from past success a reservoir of creative resources (such as reputation, labour force, infrastructure) to fuel a new generation of creative activity.

For the contemporary period urban creativity increasingly has many meanings and many outcomes. As well as the continuing importance of high-level creative cities, which serve as a model for the urban creativity debate, there is also a multiplication of more specialist cities with distinct types of creative activity (specialist technology centres or niche cultural towns), although it is not sure that these will develop into fully fledged creative cities. In addition, there are many other urban centres which would like to become creative cities but which lack many of the key conditions for success. Urbanization is always a difficult steeple-chase with many riders and a short list of winners.

## Notes

1. We wish to thank Lynn Lees, Andy Lees, Paul Waley, Jim McClain, Prashant Kidambi, and Carl

Abbott for commenting on an earlier draft.

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# CINEMA AND THE CITY

HANNU SALMI

DURING the 19th and 20th centuries, cities, urban landscapes, their outward appearances, and their lifestyles have been conspicuously interpreted and reinterpreted in both literary and audiovisual culture. It seems that the circulation of urban imagery has increased together with the gradual acceleration of urbanization. Cultural representations of the city have not only been reflections of social change but have also been expressions of cultural dialogue that has transformed urban imagination and become an essential part of urban experience.

The aim of this chapter is to consider the role of cinema in imagining the city, but at the same time to track down those different ways cinema contributed and participated in the formation of urban lifestyles, city space, and future visions. The chapter keeps in mind those regional differences and temporal discrepancies that can be found both in the process of urbanization and the spread of cinematic technology. The chapter focuses on cinema, but it aims at covering a broader set of representations and genres by contextualizing the cinematic examples with other forms of art and entertainment.

It is essential to point out the Western origins of film technology. At the end of the 19th century, there were numerous engineers in North America and Europe who worked to develop cinematographic equipment, drawing on the rich audiovisual culture of the century. The idea to project optically preserved, moving images in a darkened exhibition room proved to be a success: as early as the mid-1890s cinema became known in every continent, and soon film technology was effectively used to describe urban life and to highlight urban ways of living. Despite its ‘Westernness’, cinema became a global mode of representation right from the start. Already at the end of the 19th century, moving images from Paris and St Petersburg, from Tehran and Shanghai were shown by the travelling companies.

## FROM COKETOWN TO HELSINKI

The rise of the industrial city in the late 18th and early 19th centuries happened in parallel with the rise of the novel. In the English literature of the time, numerous descriptions of the cities can be found. The best known fictional industrial centre is perhaps Charles Dickens’ Coketown in the novel *Hard Times* (1854), the city with endless rows of houses, cobble-stone streets, and canals.<sup>1</sup> The image of the industrial city lived through the 19th century, and has continued in the Dickensian film tradition. The first cinematic adaptation of Coketown was released in 1915.

The breakthrough of cinematic technology happened together with the second wave of modernization at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. From the 1890s onwards, the emerging cinema culture became the central site of urban experience and imagination. Many linkages between cinema and the city can be found: the first movie theatres were born in the cities; programmes emphasized urban settings; and the film trade soon made it possible to view modern city life in

different corners of the world.

By the end of the 19th century, there were many independent innovators working in the industry, but the French Lumière brothers established the first successful motion picture enterprise and brought the miracle of moving images to different parts of Europe and even other continents. On these travels, the cameramen employed by the brothers filmed new movies, further adding to the appeal of cinematic journeys around the world. In Helsinki, the first films were seen in June 1896, only half a year after the first performances in Paris. On the eve of the Finnish premiere, the newspaper *Uusi Suometar* wrote:

The presenter of the Cinématographe Lumière had invited journalists to the hall of the Seurahuone yesterday evening to see the miraculous machine. It is not without reason that he calls this apparatus a nineteenth-century miracle in his announcement; it is, indeed, amazing. It conjures onto a tautly stretched white canvas living photographs that move and act quite naturally. The first picture we saw last night showed the arrival of a railway train to the station of a large city. Why, the life and bustle in it! From afar, the arrival of the train could be perceived and it approached so naturally that we almost feared being run over.... There were also street scenes of several large cities, in which people, horses, omnibuses, carriages, bicycles, dogs and urchins swarmed *en masse*.<sup>2</sup>

The journalist for the *Uusi Suometar* refers to the film *The Train Arrives at the Station*, saying that the members of the press ‘almost feared being run over’. A similar story is in fact told of the brothers’ premiere in Paris. It was claimed that the audience climbed onto their chairs, fearing the train that seemed to be puffing from the screen into the stands. The story has been repeated in connection with experiences of other early films also, but no assurance of its truthfulness is available. Even Robert W. Paul refers to the assumed event in his film *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901), in which a simple rural man is unable to distinguish between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’.<sup>3</sup> The myth of fear seems to have arisen simply to portray the innocence of cinema audiences, especially non-urban spectators, at the end of the 19th century.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the representation of this innocence was soon employed as an argument for establishing film censorship.

The report by the Finnish journalist is interesting in many other respects as well. The author has clearly given a great deal of attention to the ‘street scenes of several large cities’ which were portrayed so vividly by the moving pictures. In 1896 Finland was still a rural country. Most of the population lived in the countryside and the number of city dwellers remained small until the 1950s. In Central Europe the situation was different: urbanization proceeded rapidly during the last decades of the century. If moving pictures offered the Central European public the opportunity of seeing ‘snow-covered lands and their sporting events’, as Georges Méliès wrote in 1907,<sup>5</sup> in a country such as Finland film seemed to be a product of the new and modern urban culture. It brought the possibility of experiencing the bustle of the metropolis that was not available in the urban centres of the more distant regions. In front of the silver screen, even Finnish viewers could become urban *flâneurs* letting their gaze wander amid the bustle of arcades and markets.

## CINEMA AND VERNACULAR MODERNISM

In Europe, the success of moving images was obviously connected with modernity. The trembling images of the screen represented not necessarily something that had been realized in the prevailing culture but something that was expected to come sooner or later. For the Finnish audience, the Lumière reels offered a gaze into an urbanized way of life, into a world that was mostly non-existent in the rural country. Furthermore, images of the city were obviously feasible raw material for early

films because all cinematographers wanted to demonstrate the technological abilities of the ‘wonder of the nineteenth century’ to capture and show movement. Thus, lively urban images were much more suitable for film-making than natural settings that had less movement. This ‘urbanism’ is illustrated by, for example, the first Iranian films that also portrayed city scenes, images from Tehran. On the other hand, film technology was born in parallel with the nation-states, and soon films were used to imagine nationhood and to construct national landscapes. Still, many films before World War I were set in urban surroundings, even in countries like Finland where most of the audience lived outside urban centres.

In the 1920s and 1930s, film-makers often depicted the modern life of the cities. Although such films as Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt* (Berlin: Symphony of a Great City, 1927: see [Plate 39.1](#)) and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) have become epitomes of the era, in the 1930s urban imagination became strongly addressed by film studios all over the world, in Hollywood and Helsinki, in Cairo and Shanghai. International audiences could follow American skyscraper-builders at work and the passers-by in shopping malls in New York, but simultaneously they experienced urban lifestyle in their own cultural setting. Urban imagery was circulated perhaps more than ever before. At the same time, particular cities like Berlin and Paris became almost mythologized by the silver screen. René Clair’s *Sous les toits de Paris* (Under the Roofs of Paris, 1930) reveals the way studio productions constructed city space: the result is a combination of outdoor footage and indoor takes with, often highly poetical, studio sets. In fact, the imaginary cinematic city of Paris was more a studio fantasy than something that would have existed in the tangible world outside studios and movie houses.



**PLATE 39.1** Still from Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt* (1927) portrays city life, especially traffic, cars and trains. (Image: Deutsche Vereins-Film.)

In contrast to the strongly idealistic image of the city in *Sous les toits de Paris*, there were also critical contemporary representations of urban life. There are plenty of such examples in the Chinese cinema of the 1930s, although the film industry in Shanghai was to a large extent constructed on the basis of Hollywood influence. One of the most lugubrious portrayals of the city can be found in Sun Yu’s early leftist feature *Tianming* (Daybreak, 1932). It portrays a girl Lingling (Li Lili) who moves from a rural village to Shanghai, loaded with fantasies of a better life. The reality proves to be harder than the representation. Lingling finds a job in a factory, but she is soon raped by the son of her

employer. Lingling ends up as a prostitute but, on the other hand, she succeeds in getting into the higher circles of society and starts to help her worker friends.<sup>6</sup> Many Chinese films of the era depicted clashes between the countryside and the city, as well as tensions between traditional and modern lifestyles.<sup>7</sup> Miriam Bratu Hansen has pointed out that the worldwide hegemony of American cinema in the 1920s and 1930s was due less to the quality of films than the fact that they provided a horizon of expectations of modernization and modernity for audiences around the globe.<sup>8</sup> This ‘vernacular modernism’ had an impact on Chinese cinema too, but this did not happen as a one-way cultural influence. Thus, cinema offered a platform for imagining domestic or regional problems through images offered by this ‘vernacular modernism’. Often films set women at the heart of their stories and discussed the problem of gender in rapidly changing social life. Here, Zheng Zhengqiu’s *Zi mei hua* (Twin Sisters, 1934) is of particular interest: twin sisters are separated at birth, and while one has been raised in poverty, the other has lived in luxury.

Interestingly, there were also direct connections between Shanghai and Hollywood. Sun Yu, for example, had studied film writing, directing, and cinematography in New York in the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese production of the time included also American remakes, or at least films that clearly had got an impetus from Hollywood. Yuan Muzhi’s *Malu tianshi* (Street Angel, 1937) showed young people who try to escape the corruption of one of the most miserable districts in Shanghai and was probably inspired by Frank Borzage’s silent films *Seventh Heaven* (1927) and *Street Angel* (1928). It has however been pointed out that Muzhi’s interpretation melds Hollywood influences together with Soviet techniques of film-making.<sup>10</sup>

The echoes of ‘vernacular modernism’ are discernible elsewhere at the same time and, obviously, the coming of sound in the late 1920s and early 1930s strengthened regional centres of film production. During the 1930s, Egypt emerged as the leading producer of Arabic-language cinema. In 1936, the Cairo-based Studio Misr organized its production according to the Hollywood model and had a central role in Egyptian cinema throughout the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Niazi Mustafa, trained in Munich and at the UFA studios in Berlin, became one of the leading directors of Studio Misr with his first feature film *Salama fi khair* (Everything Is Fine, 1937). Featuring Naguib al-Rihani, the top comedian of the day, *Salama fi khair* poked fun at the urban elite.

## CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD AND THE CITY

Already during the silent era, Hollywood had become one of the leading film factories in the world. Hollywood was a proponent of a modern lifestyle, but there were also other features that should be discussed. In the early 1930s, the American mob films started to portray the violent nature of urban centres. Warner Bros. in particular became famous as a producer of hard-boiled gangster movies, such as *Little Caesar* (1931), *Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932), depicting organized crime in big industrial cities. Soon, the Motion Picture Production Code, known as the Hays Code, was set up to censor Hollywood cinema, and the overtly violent images of the city were tamed. Although film censorship in Hollywood was exercised by the film industry and distributors, not by state officials as became the case in many other countries, it was a limiting and defining force in the way film-makers were allowed to describe the vices—and the violence—of the city.

New York City captured a particular place in the Hollywood cinema of the studio era (see also [Ch. 38](#)). It offered a scene for both crime and romance, for adventure films and musicals. The Empire

State Building, completed in 1931, became a distinctive element in the skyline and almost a symbol of New York City, and was used as a cinematic setting right from the start. *King Kong* (1933) clashes the exotic and strange against the modern technology of the city. When Kong tries to escape, he is shot down from the top of the skyscraper by airplane pilots. New York was also a showcase for dance: Busby Berkeley designed one of his most memorable choreographies for Lloyd Bacon's film *42nd Street* (1933).<sup>12</sup> The big city is here presented as a place of opportunity where a chorus girl can become a star. If gangster movies of the early 1930s explored inverted and distorted images of the American Dream, the musicals often pictured the opposite and offered positive images of self-making which were well received by the public during the years of the Great Depression.<sup>13</sup>

Besides big cities, small towns have always had a central position in Hollywood cinema. In the 1920s and 1930s, such towns were portrayed as symbols of 'home', with often nostalgic feelings for the past.<sup>14</sup> The Italian immigrant Frank Capra highlighted small-town life in his populist comedies. *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) foregrounds a small-town country boy Longfellow Deeds (Gary Cooper) who suddenly gets a huge inheritance. A lawyer's office invites him to the city and, finally, Mr Deeds ends up in the jungle of egoistic self-seekers. The journalist Babe Bennett (Jean Arthur) hooks up with the country boy and publishes a series of exaggerated newspaper articles on the undertakings of Mr Deeds. The film reaches its climax in the courtroom where Deeds has to defend himself against professional lawyers. The final scene becomes a celebration of common sense as Deeds overrides all accusations. Clearly, Frank Capra is an heir of Horatio Alger, but to him the American Dream is not economic welfare, something that would lift the protagonist 'from rags to riches', but a conscious aim at re-establishing those values that modernization, especially modern city life, had pushed into the background.

In Capra's case, the juxtaposition of the small town and the city refers also to political undertones in the sense that local government was often depicted as self-interested and indifferent to the common good. This becomes clear in *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (1939; see [Plate 39.2](#)). Mr Smith, played by James Stewart, becomes a senator and confronts the cynical world of politics which is ruled by selfish aims, embodied in the figure of Jim Taylor (Edward Arnold). In Capra's vision, it is impossible in the end to manipulate the people, and although Washington is near to becoming a symbol of corruption, it will finally be valued as the site of Lincoln's heritage.

If the tension between small towns and large cities seems to characterize Hollywood cinema in the 1930s and 1940s, suburbanization comes strongly to the fore after World War II, and suburbs would often be associated with the fulfilment of the American Dream. The paradise is however not without its shadows. Already in the wartime cinema, an idea of threat was connected with small-town mentality. Small communities were often treated as metaphors of nationhood and, eventually, unexpected external threats appear to shake their customary way of life. In the 1940s, this threat was Nazism, in the 1950s Communism.<sup>15</sup> The paranoid fears of American small towns provided raw material for science fiction films in particular. In Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) the fictional town of Santa Mira, California, is conquered from within by the Pod People who turn ordinary people into emotionless non-humans.



**PLATE 39.2** Mr Smith (James Stewart) refers to American values in Frank Capra's *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (1939). (Image: *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* © 1939, renewed 1967 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.)

### SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN CITY SPACE

Europe was the central stage of World War II. After the turmoil of the war and the years of destruction, many historical cities lay in ruins, especially in Germany. After the war, Berlin was frequently used as a location for film-making. The city itself had experienced tremendous physical changes. The first East German fiction film, Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (Murderers among Us, 1945), captures the physical and mental desolation of the city. The ruins of Berlin are not only referring to the lost war and the dramatic material loss but become a symptom of the fragmented German psyche.

Ruins have always tempted artists, and it is unsurprising that there were soon film groups from different countries using Berlin as a setting of destruction. Roberto Rossellini made his *Germania anno zero* (Germany, Year Zero) in 1948. The same year, Billy Wilder came from Hollywood to Berlin to realize his *A Foreign Affair*, with Marlene Dietrich, Jean Arthur, and John Lund, and Jacques Tourneur his *Berlin Express*, with Robert Ryan and Merle Oberon.<sup>16</sup> Occupation zones and (often) invisible borderlines served as a backdrop for several film-makers during the late 1940s and 1950s. Carol Reed, for example, used Berlin as a scene in *The Man Between* (1953). Film-makers, it can be argued, contributed essentially to establishing Berlin as the symbol of the Cold War.

After World War II, city space was characterized through social problems. Italian neorealism focused on urban surroundings, commenting first on wartime struggles, as did Roberto Rossellini in his *Roma, città aperta* (Rome, Open City, 1945), later describing the social problems of Italian suburbs. Vittorio de Sica's *Miracolo à Milano* (Miracle in Milan, 1951) tells the story of Totò (Francesco Golisano) who has spent his childhood in an orphanage and starts his adult life in a shanty

town outside Milan. Big business intervenes, however, to demand the land of the have-nots for itself and, in the final fantasy scene, the poor man does not have any other choice but to escape to heaven. During the 1950s and 1960s, areas surrounding big Italian cities were often shown on screen, and it seems that the rising blocks of flats especially created a mental background for many Italian films of the era. Michaelangelo Antonioni used this setting for his stories about alienation, especially in films like *Il grido* (The Outcry, 1953), *La notte* (The Night, 1961) and *Il deserto rosso* (Red Desert, 1964). The new housing policy was a sign of modernization. This was not only the case in Italian cinema. A similar emphasis can be found, for example, in Georgian cinema. Otar Ioseliani's first feature film *Aprili* (April, 1961) shows a young couple who move into a modern block of flats. The film is almost a silent drama, starting from the cohesion of the old town community, which is soon replaced by a modern way of life where everybody is isolated in his own apartment.

Accelerating urbanization is often connected with generational problems. When there were more and more people in the city, loneliness turned into a problem. Yasujiro Ozu's *Tôkyô monogatari* (Tokyo Story, 1953) is a touching story about parents who lose the connection to their children. Mother and father travel to Tokyo to see their children, only to notice that there is no place for older people in the new social order and the new urban way of life.

Moral anxieties were often reflected on the silver screen after the war. In Finnish films of the late 1940s, there were fears of moral degeneration and the spread of venereal disease. Teuvo Tulio became famous for his melodramas that depicted alcoholism, prostitution, and other moral problems. This period of distress was short, and is probably understandable in a society that was trying to find its way in a time of peace. Soon, in the 1950s, new moral concerns were raised by the youth problem. In the United States, the baby boom had already started during the war, but in Europe it came a little later. Laslo Benedek was a pioneer in discussing these concerns in his *Port of New York* (1949) which also deals with drug abuse. The depiction of alienated young people, especially men, was recurrent and continued through the decades. Karel Reisz's film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) can be interpreted in the light of this tradition: based on Alan Sillitoe's novel, it portrays an angry young man Arthur (Albert Finney) who is reluctant to identify himself with anything. He works as a machinist at a Nottingham factory, but refuses to take part in any social activities and is almost like a would-be-anarchist, willing to blow everything away.

The image of the city was often characterized by dark overtones. In the film noir tradition of late 1940s and 1950s Hollywood, it was usual to show the city at night, as a scene of crime and passion. Jules Dassin described organized crime in his *The Naked City* (1948), which also tried to capture the breathing rhythm of a big city that never sleeps. Shot in the post-war semi-documentary style Dassin's film is one of the most remembered depictions of New York City.

There are films about criminal cities in every continent. In India, Guru Dutt produced a highly successful series of movies, set in Bombay, in the 1950s. *C.I.D.* (1956), directed by Raj Khosla, is an interesting hybrid of film noir and Hindi cinema. It is a murder mystery following Inspector Shekhar (Dev Anand) who traces the killer of a newspaper man, Sher Singh (Mehmood). It seems that the gloomy atmosphere of *C.I.D.* is not a direct reflection of Hollywood but an imaginative amalgamation of styles that had been developed in popular Hindi cinema after World War II. There is an element of vernacular modernism in this film too: it shows Bombay as a modern city with only a few references to traditional Indian culture. The nocturnal, mysterious scenes of the city are however interrupted by bright musical numbers, composed by O. P. Nayyar.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, the depiction of the city in the cinema of the 1950s and 1960s did not develop in

isolation. At the same time, there was a wave of other entertainments. Television broadcasting had already started in the United States and Europe in the 1930s, but the real spread of television technology happened in the 1950s and 1960s. Television companies and their main studios were based in major cities like New York, London, and Sydney. In TV shows, popular film genres got an afterlife. Film-noir-inspired crime series were produced throughout the '60s, but also the image of small town and frontier America blossomed in the form of cowboy Westerns. Soap operas like the British 'Coronation Street' or the Australian 'Neighbours' often described a semi-sanitized version of the social problems of urban and suburban life. The expanding television networks were seen as something that unavoidably changed the way of life, creating connections that questioned the division into urban centres and rural peripheries. The Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan formulated his famous idea of the global village in 1962. According to McLuhan, the world was becoming a village where people knew other men's business and where information crossed traditional borders. Clearly, television has had a global impact. Television technology has exercised a distinctive influence on major cities, like London and New York, in their internal networking. Simultaneously the growing global media networks have interlinked big cities with each other.

Not only information crosses borders but also people. Cities were places to hide in. In his *Paris nous appartient* (Paris Belongs to Us, 1961) Jacques Rivette shows the capital of France as a gathering place for refugees. The principal character of the film Anne Goupil (Betty Schneider) meets a German theatre director and an American expatriate who has escaped McCarthyism, but Paris seems to be a refuge for Spanish political activists too. The French New Wave often described Parisian life, situating its stories in boulevards and cafés.

The next decades saw the rise of films that particularly concentrated on the city, and made individual cities almost like characters in their own right. Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975) is a vivid description of the music business in Nashville, Tennessee, but at the same time a caricature of the American way of life. Many of the city films of the 1970s and 1980s portrayed urban centres not only as living in present time but also as *lieux de mémoire*, or theatres of memory, that embraced remembrances of the past. These films include, for example, Federico Fellini's *Roma* (1972), Youssef Chahine's *Iskanderija... lih?* (Alexandria... Why?, 1979), Vladimir Menshov's *Moskva slezam ne verity* (Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears, 1980) and Wim Wenders' *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire, 1987).





**PLATE 39.3** New York City in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. The city is a lonely place, an asphalt jungle. (*Taxi Driver* © 1976, renewed 2004, Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.)

The multi-ethnic city became more and more distinctive in cinema decade by decade. It seems that urban social problems received greater attention during the 1970s, in such films as *Taxi Driver* (1976: see [Plate 39.3](#)). One of the most controversial films of the late 20th century was Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) which described ethnic riots three years before the outburst of violent conflicts in Los Angeles. The film foregrounds Mookie (Spike Lee), a young man who lives in the black and Puerto Rican area in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. The film shows also an Italian-American Salvatore 'Sal' Frangione (Danny Aiello) who holds racial contempt for the blacks. The film ends in a riot, incited by Mookie who throws a garbage can through the window of Sal's pizzeria. Spike Lee was criticized for his engagement with the history of urban racial violence, not only in *Do the Right Thing* but again in *Malcolm X* (1992), but he also got praise for his attempt to rewrite black urban identity and to understand the life of a ghetto.<sup>18</sup>

### CITIES PAST AND FUTURE

The representation of the city in cinema, and in other forms of art and entertainment too, is so overwhelming that it is difficult to characterize it in brief. This is especially so in the case of post-war European and North American cinema, where the city has been seen as the focal point of social problems and urban surroundings are employed as a setting in almost every film. During recent decades it seems evident that this 'cinematic urbanization' has also occurred more and more strongly in African, Latin American, and Asian film production. It would however be misleading to interpret the representation of the city only in terms of contemporary anxieties, or to claim that films can be seen merely as continuous processes of negotiation of present-day concerns. It is obvious that fiction in general is a cultural practice through which communities imagine their past and their future. Thus, it is important to remember how films represent the history and the future of urban life. Cinematic narration has been used to recreate ancient Rome, medieval London, and 18th-century Paris. When

Anthony Mann directed his *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) with its spectacular triumph scene, the huge set, depicting the surroundings of Forum Romanum, was painstakingly erected on the highlands of Spain. This effort was grounded in the conviction that the pleasure of historical experience stems out of the spectator's ability to navigate a bygone world. The long shot allowed the camera to move through Forum Romanum, thus giving the audience the sense of moving around in ancient Rome. After the introduction of digital technology in film-making in the 1990s there have been new kinds of ways of creating an illusion of the lost city.

Sometimes these lost cities are not in the remote past but in the memory of the people, and the cinematic apparatus is employed to resurrect the past. In 1948, Max Ophüls adapted Stefan Zweig's short story into a melodrama *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) which is situated in *fin de siècle* Austria, and the whole film is almost like a flashback from old Vienna. Ophüls had the resources of a Hollywood studio at his disposal, and the scenes from the Prater and other memorable places have been carefully recreated for the film. These images remind the spectator of Ophüls' earlier film *Liebelei* (1933) that was situated in Vienna although most of the film was shot in Berlin. In fact *Letter from an Unknown Woman* does not refer to any 'real' Vienna but to those images that had represented Vienna for decades.

An interesting example of urban memory is Wu Yigong's *Chengnan jiushi* (My Memories of Old Beijing, 1983). The film was based on Lin Haiyin's novel of the same name that, in fact, literally refers to 'stories of the southern part of the city'. Beijing had for ages been divided into three parts, the north-western part where aristocrats and members of the imperial family lived, the north-eastern part, inhabited by merchants and landlords, and the southern part where the middle class and the lower class used to reside. The novel and the film try to capture reminiscences of the southern part in the 1920s from the perspective of a young girl Yingzi who had moved from Taiwan to Beijing with her parents.<sup>19</sup> Although the film describes the pre-Communist era, it expresses melancholic feelings towards the lost city that has remained only in memory. In its fragile, nostalgic atmosphere *Chengnan jiushi* is almost like a reverse image of Tsui Hark's *Shanghai zhi yen* (Shanghai Blues, 1984), premiered a year later in Hong Kong. In this hilarious historical fantasy the old Shanghai is a place of romance and adventure. There is perhaps a portion of nostalgia, too, but no melancholy.

If cinematic interpretations of the city have articulated thoughts and emotions about the past, they have also profoundly participated in imagining the future, in creating utopian and dystopian visions of the city. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) the future is dominated by skyscrapers. The elite lives under the blue sky, while lower classes have to satisfy themselves with street canyons, eclipsed by tall buildings. *Metropolis* has undoubtedly been the most influential single film from the perspective of urban imagination. At the time of its premiere, the set designer Otto Hunte argued that he wanted to create something that differed from the architecture of his day. It is known, however, that Fritz Lang visited the United States in 1924 together with the architect Erich Mendelsohn and obviously got ideas from the skylines of the New World.<sup>20</sup> Still, *Metropolis* crystallized a vision of the future city, in a way that had not been done before. Its images have since been circulated by numerous science fiction films, including *Blade Runner*. If *Metropolis* has been powerful in its impact, the same goes for *Blade Runner*, which mixed memories of gangster movies and film noir in its vision of the year 2019.<sup>21</sup> There are also references to graphic novels, for example, the French comic magazine *Métal Hurlant* and especially the artist Moebius (Jean Giraud). The new millennium has provided more and more digital representations of the city (*King Kong*, 2005), and also interesting adaptations of comic books, like *Spider Man* (2002), *Sky Captain* (2004),

and *Sin City* (2005).

## BOLLYWOOD, NOLLYWOOD, AND THE URBAN CONSUMPTION OF CINEMA

During over a hundred years of film-making, cinema itself has been an urban product. The industry has always had towns of its own, Hollywood in Los Angeles, Joinville near Paris, Babelsberg outside Berlin, Cinecittà in Rome, and particularly rich film flows have originated from Bombay/Mumbai, Cairo, Shanghai, Lahore, and Lagos.

With accelerating urbanization (see above, [Ch. 30](#)), India has become the leading manufacturer of films in the world, producing close to a thousand films annually. The industry has been dominated by Tollywood, the Telugu-language studios in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and Bollywood which is the centre of Hindi-language production in Mumbai. Urban consumers have been central to Indian film-making too: there are more cinema admissions in India than anywhere else in the world. Since the turn of the millennium, an emerging urban middle class, widespread access to cable television, and the more frequent dubbing of foreign movies into Hindi have created new expectations.<sup>22</sup> During recent years, Hollywood influences have become increasingly visible in the urban imagery of Bollywood productions, and young audiences in particular are in favour of Hollywood production values rather than old Bollywood formulas. At the beginning of the millenium, Bollywood seemed to be in trouble, in part because of mafia connections, but blockbusters like *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* (2008) have revitalized the industry.

On a global scale, the upswing of African audiovisual production has been a striking feature, thanks to the rise of Nigerian cinema in the 1990s and 2000s. In contrast to Hollywood and Bollywood production ideals, Nigerian cinema has emerged from a completely different background since it relies almost exclusively on video technology, originally on Betacam, today on digital video. In 2009, UNESCO estimated the so-called Nollywood to be the second largest film industry in the world in terms of number of films produced per year. It was ahead of the United States but behind the Indian film industries.

The history of Nollywood goes back to the 1980s when the low-budget Ghanaian film *Zinabu* became a success in Nigeria in 1987. With video technology to hand, Kenneth Nnebue started the production of Yoruba-language popular films in the early 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Together with Chika Onukwufor, Nnebue also made an English-spoken morality tale—or sexploitation film—*Glamour Girls* which crossed language barriers. Because of the many languages of Nigeria, there has always been strong English-language production which has enabled Nollywood to extend its markets all over Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Nigeria has the highest population of all African countries, and its largest conurbation is Lagos, the second most populous city in the continent (see above, [Ch. 33](#)). Lagos is also the centre of the film industry, and rising urbanization has become apparent in its output since the 1990s. Instead of studios, Nollywood films are usually shot on location all over Nigeria in hotels, homes, and offices, mostly in the cities of Lagos, Enugu, and Abuja. Instead of film reels, the products are distributed in video CD format. Because films are shot outside studios and consumed in the densely populated cities, they portray a particularly interesting picture of urban life in Africa. Furthermore, Nigerian videos are extremely popular: they are watched by millions of people and include different genres from witchcraft melodramas to Christian morality tales, from horror films to urban action packages.<sup>25</sup> Thus, these films have probably had a greater impact on the imagination of rural and urban

communities than any other cultural product in contemporary Africa.

## CONCLUSION

Since the end of the 19th century, cinema has had a powerful influence on the representation of the city. It is however important not only to see film culture as something that has spun webs of significance around the city—which it definitely has done in ways that are almost immeasurable. Cinema has in itself been an urban activity, a major attraction in cities like London, Paris, New York, and Berlin at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Film production was among the first industries to become worldwide in its distribution networks, and it has obviously contributed to the emerging process of globalization which again has intensified the spread of urban imagery. This global network has always been biased in the sense that although distribution has reached almost all corners of the world since the first days of cinema, the flow of commodities has varied regionally: some films have got a worldwide circulation while the impact of others has been limited to the local hinterland. In small countries, movies have often been consciously made for domestic markets. The introduction of sound film in the late 1920s and early 1930s influenced the structure of film commerce when the role of spoken language became crucial. Cinematic production has developed its own dedicated centres or ‘film towns’, from Joinville to Cinecittà, from Shanghai to Mumbai, which have served as models for creative cities, eager to employ new talents.

In the 1920s and 1930s, cinema was a proponent of urban mass culture especially in the West. It was closely linked with the rising consumer culture, and films were exploited as vehicles for advertising. At the same time, films expressed hegemonic views of city life and even perhaps sharpened the dichotomy between urban and rural life.

Since World War II the role of cinema has also been significant outside Europe and North America, and its impact has gradually merged into a wider range of media, first television and video, then digital media and the Internet. Cinema has been a constructor of urban experience but at the same time it has created a rich cultural heritage in its own right, and served as a platform for discussing social problems and imagining future directions of city development.

## Notes

1. Hannu Salmi, *Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 21.
2. *Uusi Suometar*, 28 June 1896.
3. See e.g. Erkki Huhtamo, ‘From Kaleidoscomaniac to Cybernerd: Notes toward an Archaeology of the Media’, *Leonardo*, 30: 3 (1997), 224.
4. See also Tom Gunning, ‘An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator’, in P. Simpson, A. Utterson, and K. J. Shepherdson, eds., *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2004), 79.
5. Georges Méliès, ‘Cinematographic Views’ (1907), in Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 36–7.
6. Yingjin Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao, eds., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998), 139.

7. Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism', *Film Quarterly*, 54: 1 (Autumn 2000), 15. See also Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).
8. Hansen, 'Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism', 10.
9. Zhang and Xiao, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Cinema*, 325.
10. Ibid. 321–2.
11. Farid El-Mazzaoui, 'Film in Egypt', *Hollywood Quarterly*, 4: 3 (Spring 1950), 246.
12. Joseph Dorinson and George Lankevich, 'New York City', in P. C. Rollins, ed., *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film: How the Movies Have Portrayed the American Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 439.
13. Hannu Salmi, 'Success and the Self-Made Man', in Rollins, ed., *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film*, 598.
14. John C. Tibbets, 'The Small Town', in Rollins, *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film*, 457–8.
15. Kimmo Ahonen, 'Treason in the Family: Leo MacCarey's Film *My Son John* (1952) as an Anticommunist Melodrama', in H. Jensen, ed., *Rebellion and Resistance* (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2009), 121–36.
16. On *Berlin Express*, see Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 64–9.
17. On *C.I.D.*, see Jyotika Virdi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 100–3.
18. Philip Hanson, 'The Politics of Inner City Identity in "Do the Right Thing"', *South Central Review*, 20: 2/4 (Summer–Winter, 2003), 47–66.
19. Zhang and Xiao, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Cinema*, 246.
20. Silja Laine, 'Pilvenpiirtäjäkysymys'. *Urbaani mielikuvitus ja 1920-luvun Helsingin ääriviivat* (Turku: K&H, 2011), 221–2.
21. See e.g. Norman K. Klein, 'Building Blade Runner', *Social Text*, 28 (1991), 147–52.
22. Iain Ball, 'The Fall of Bollywood', *Movie Maker*, 23 March 2003. Cf. Timothy J. Scrase, 'Television, the Middle Classes and the Transformation of Cultural Identities in West Bengal, India', *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 64: 4 (2002), 323–4.
23. John C. McCall, 'Nollywood Confidential: The Unlikely Rise of Nigerian Video Film', *Transition*, 95 (2004), 99.
24. Pierre Barrot, ed., *Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 9.
25. McCall, 'Nollywood Confidential', 100–1.

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## COLONIAL CITIES

THOMAS R. METCALF

THE colonial city was the outcome of a process of conquest and settlement in which a state implanted its authority in an overseas territory outside its national borders. Such cities, for the modern era, were a product of European imperialism and of the spread of international capitalism. The earliest such cities date from the 16th-century conquests of the Spanish and Portuguese in America and Asia. Subsequently, with the rise of Dutch, French, and English, and later Japanese and American imperialism, colonial cities spread around the entire globe. In areas of temperate climate such cities housed mainly white settlers; in the tropics they usually involved the rule of European elites over indigenous peoples. With the ending of colonialism, these cities, for the most part, became urban centres for the newly free nations in which they were located. In recent decades many have burgeoned into densely populated metropolitan complexes.

The colonial city, as an object of study by scholars, has generated a substantial historiography over the last half century. Pre-eminent is the work of Anthony King, whose *Colonial Urban Development* (1976) first laid out the parameters of the field. Subsequently, post-colonial theorists have read urban forms as ‘texts’ for the study of empire. The outcome was a widespread understanding of the colonial city as being fundamentally different both from European metropolitan, what one may call ‘imperial’, cities, and those that came into existence naturally over time to accommodate the requirements of local peoples for central nodal places. This chapter will assess the growth and distinctive character of colonial cities as they developed over time. After sections on the early modern period and the great age of empire in the 19th century, we focus on design and planning, governance, the distinctive settler cities, and the impact of decolonization. Throughout we will argue that colonial urbanism was intimately connected to—and helped sustain—the growth of the emerging capitalist world order. Yet, at the same time, the process of colonial urbanism was affected not only by the varied policies pursued by the different European powers, but, as well, by the activities of local peoples as they endeavoured to come to terms with, and helped shape, the new urban world in which they found themselves.

### EARLY MODERN CITIES

The cities founded by the Spanish and the Portuguese, from Havana and Veracruz in America to Goa and Malacca in the East Indies, announced the beginning of colonial rule and the integration of the regions they dominated into the world capitalist economy (see above, [Chs. 19 – 20](#)). Above all, these cities provided harbours that could shelter the fleets that secured colonial authority against buccaneers and rival European powers; they normally possessed at their centre a fort to protect the city’s residents; and they generated cosmopolitan populations of merchants, traders, and others who flocked to these cities to take advantage of the opportunity and security they afforded. A paradigmatic instance is that of Spanish Manila, founded in 1571. The city flourished as the site where Mexican silver, sent across the Pacific from Acapulco, was exchanged for Chinese silks, porcelain, and other

luxury goods. Fort Santiago, where the Pasig River empties into Manila Bay, stood guard over the walled Intramuros, which housed the city's Spanish governors and friars; its extensive Chinese trading community resided just outside the walls. Like other Hispanic colonial cities, Manila was shaped by enduring elements of urban design first established with the conquest of Mexico, above all rectangular plotting and central plazas, and by looming baroque churches that announced the Christian enthusiasms of their rulers.<sup>1</sup>

As international rivalries intensified from the 17th century, with the entry of expansive British and Dutch trading companies, and lesser Danish and French enterprises, colonial port cities grew in number and in size. Among these cities the most prominent were Dutch Batavia on Java (1619), and the three pre-eminent Indian presidency capitals of Madras (1639), Bombay (1661), and Calcutta (1690). Though smaller, Pondicherry (1674), on the south-eastern coast of India, served much the same function for the French, as did the tiny Danish settlement of Tranquebar. The pace and shape of urban growth was determined by the requirements of the export trade to Europe. Initially, this consisted mostly of luxury goods, including sugar, tobacco, and spices, but above all hand-loomed Indian textiles. The South Asian colonial cities were centred upon 'factories', where agents [factors] of the European companies purchased and stored textiles and other goods awaiting shipment to Europe. As Europeans rarely went into the interior, successful trade was wholly dependent upon Indian middlemen known as 'dubashes' (lit. two languages); these men procured goods for the European companies, and, like Ananda Ranga Pillai in Pondicherry, were often among the wealthiest residents of these fledgling colonial towns.<sup>2</sup>

Though they prospered, these early colonial cities stood helpless against the scourge of new and unfamiliar diseases. Europeans venturing into the tropics always were at risk of an early death, not least because these low-lying port cities, surrounded by marshes, were breeding grounds for mosquitoes. In 18th-century Calcutta it was said that 'two monsoons [i.e. years] are the life of a man'; and the looming obelisks of the Park Street cemetery bear witness to the proximity of death. In Batavia the Dutch brought death upon themselves by endeavouring to reproduce the canals of Holland; as the waters stagnated, mosquitoes flourished. By 1850 much of the old city had been demolished and the canals filled in. Malarial West Africa was of course always notorious as the 'white man's grave'. European soldiers sent out to prosecute sieges of their rivals' cities were at extreme risk. In 1742 the English lost some 20,000 men to disease alone in an unsuccessful attempt to take Spanish Cartagena on the Colombian coast; twenty years later, in 1763, the British seized Havana, but yellow fever so decimated the troops that the British soon abandoned the campaign and returned the city to the Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

## THE SPREAD OF EMPIRE

As time went on, the composition and scale of trade changed. By the early 19th century the Industrial Revolution made hand-loomed Indian textiles no longer competitive on world markets, while the expansion into the interior of British power in India and the Dutch in Indonesia, opened up new opportunities for colonial states to generate wealth, from taxation as well as trade. Once the British had taken Delhi, Calcutta's location on the Ganges estuary enabled that city to funnel to itself all the trade of a vast hinterland extending 1,000 miles into the interior. Increasingly, this export trade involved raw materials not manufactures, together with commodities to fulfil a growing European consumer demand. Through the port of Calcutta came the blue dye indigo, opium destined for China,



jute from eastern Bengal, and, after the 1850s, tea from Assam. Throughout the 19th century Calcutta was the capital of India, and the country's premier commercial centre. The subsidiary presidency capitals of Madras and Bombay, as the British Indian army extended colonial authority through the southern and western reaches of the country, prospered as well. Throughout Asia urban growth was further stimulated by the winding up, after 1800, of the old commercial monopolies that had restricted European commerce and entrepreneurship.

Not all port cities possessed extensive hinterlands. A number were established solely to secure control over strategic coastal sites or for refuelling and refreshment for those on extended sea voyages. Despite the city's location in the richly endowed Philippines, the Spanish made no attempt to develop the hinterland of Manila other than to feed the city. In Cape Town (founded in 1654) the Dutch Company brought settlers from the Netherlands and Germany to grow vegetables and supply meat for sailors; but took little interest in the interior. In similar fashion, Cartagena, and with it Havana, despite some nearby sugar plantations, served primarily as Caribbean bases for the Spanish treasure fleets until the 1820s. Singapore, founded by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, a booming free trade emporium at the strategic tip of the Malay Peninsula, gathered to itself the goods of the whole of South East Asia for sale and transshipment; interior Malaya came under British control only fifty years later. Aden (founded in 1839), at the entrance to the Indian Ocean, cemented British control over the routes to the East; while Honolulu, with its famed Pearl Harbour, annexed by the United States in 1898, secured American predominance across the Pacific. For the French, Dakar (1857) on the barren far western coast of Africa, in like fashion, was developed as an Atlantic naval station with few connections to the interior before the 20th century. Even more prosperous French colonial cities such as Saigon and Hanoi, though located along major rivers, did not develop extensive hinterlands. The rich paddy fields of the nearby Mekong delta secured Saigon a lucrative export trade in rice, but the city's location well upstream disabled it from competing effectively with dynamic Singapore and Batavia.

As new cities prospered, older colonial towns declined, or were sidelined. Some of this occurred as the ever more powerful British elbowed their rivals aside, while shifting currents of trade reduced other towns to irrelevance. With the establishment of Penang (1786) and then of Singapore, Malacca dwindled into a backwater. British control of Hong Kong (1842) and then the bustling treaty port of Shanghai likewise left Portuguese Macau stranded. Pondicherry and Goa, though they survived as foreign enclaves, were pushed into the shade by Madras and Bombay. Even Madras itself, the most prosperous British centre in mid-18th-century India, lacking the extensive hinterland of Calcutta, stagnated throughout the 19th century. In North America French Quebec, though continuing as provincial capital, was superseded by the bustling English-dominated commercial city of Montreal and later by lakeside Toronto in newly settled Ontario. In like fashion, New York, with its Erie Canal and then rail connections to the bustling Middle West, pushed aside the premier cities of the colonial era, Boston and Philadelphia (see [Ch. 27](#)). In West Africa the abolition of the slave trade (1807) precipitated the downfall of the old slaving ports, such as St Louis in Senegal; subsequent decades saw the growth of a new palm oil trade centred on Lagos, from 1861 a British colony and later capital of Nigeria. In East Africa the Omani sultanate on the island of Zanzibar, whose prosperity was based on sales of slaves, cloves, and ivory, stagnated from the 1890s with its incorporation into the British empire. The Indian entrepreneurs and artisans who sustained the city's economy, and built the distinctive Stone Town, moved to British Mombasa, flourishing as the terminus of the Uganda Railway. Zanzibar remained a sleepy backwater throughout the 20th century.<sup>4</sup>

The coming of railways, by vastly expanding trade networks, spurred the growth of nearly all late-Victorian colonial cities. In India the so-called Grand Trunk line from Calcutta to the Punjab, while creating new industrial centres such as Cawnpore (Kanpur), undercut the old Ganges river towns. Between them railways and the Suez Canal (1869), by shortening travel times to Europe, redirected much of India's export trade from Calcutta to Bombay, the self-proclaimed 'Urbs prima in Indis' (see above, [Ch. 30](#)). Bombay's massively ornate Victoria Terminus remains the city's most iconic structure. In French Indo-China by contrast the rail system served little purpose other than to unite the colony politically. The major rail line ran for a thousand miles along the coast of the South China Sea, paralleling existing water routes, and so generated little trade or income. By 1900, with imperial control at its height and a prospering Europe, the volume of global trade had reached levels not to be seen again for a century. Colonial cities made this prosperity possible.

In Africa the development of colonial cities usually accompanied extended conquest and settlement (see above, [Ch. 33](#)). The famous partition of the continent during the last two decades of the 19th century left the major European powers in control of vast, often lightly populated territories. Effective control required interior lines of communication and administrative centres. Most striking perhaps of the new cities was Nairobi, Kenya's capital, which came into existence as a railway camp as construction of the line proceeded into the interior. The Germans in like manner set Windhoek, the colonial capital, in the heart of south-west Africa so as to ensure administrative control over this restive region. Two colonial capital cities—Leopoldville for the Belgian Congo, and Brazzaville for French Equatorial Africa—straddled the Congo where the navigable river gave way to rapids and cataracts downstream; each city thus commanded vast tracts in the interior, and prospered as jungle gave way to rubber plantations. Some few cities, most notably Nairobi and Salisbury, capital of Southern Rhodesia, grew to accommodate the needs not only of administrators but of incoming white settlers who took up farming in the surrounding region.

Specialized kinds of colonial cities also grew up in the later 19th century, most notably mining settlements and resorts known as 'hill stations'. Gold and silver discoveries invariably led to rapid if often unsustainable urban growth. Following the gold rush of California, the Australian 'digger' cities of Ballarat and Bendigo, South Africa's diamond city of Kimberley and nearby Johannesburg, which burgeoned to a city of 100,000 residents within a decade of the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold deposits, all testify to the power of precious metals. Elisabethville in the Belgian Congo and Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia in similar fashion came into existence as centres for mining, in their case above all of copper.

The 'hill stations' were a product of the later 19th century as colonial settlers and administrators sought relief from tropical heat and disease in towns established at elevations of 5–7,000 feet above sea level. Such towns were most numerous in India where Simla housed the imperial government throughout the summer months (see above, [Ch. 30](#)).<sup>5</sup> Modelled in part on their Indian predecessors, hill settlements flourished as well throughout the South East Asian colonies, from Malaya's Cameron Highlands and Dalat in French Vietnam to the American-built Baguio in the Philippines, designed by the eminent American architect Daniel H. Burnham. As one traveller wrote of Dalat, itself modelled on Baguio, 'It is impossible to find a more pleasant temperature than on this plateau; the air is very dry and a gentle breeze blows day and night.'<sup>6</sup> Unlike mining towns, whose residents were overwhelmingly young and male, hill station populations consisted disproportionately of women and children, the latter attending numerous hill schools, together with high officials and convalescing military personnel.

## COLONIAL URBAN DESIGN

As colonial cities were established throughout Asia and Africa, the colonial authorities endeavoured to separate urban residents into distinct racially and ethnically demarcated neighbourhoods. These took several forms. In Singapore, where Stamford Raffles laid out the entire city, his original plan was created side by side along the waterfront areas for Europeans, for Malays, and for Chinese. Subsequently, an Indian district emerged. From a very early date Madras was divided into a 'white town' and a 'black town'. The European districts, in India usually known as 'Civil Lines', often with a military cantonment nearby, stood in sharp contrast to the adjacent indigenous cities. Indeed, by the later 19th century, after the 1857 uprising, railway lines, as in the case of Allahabad, were frequently situated to provide a visible barrier between the two sections of the urban area; and railway stations, as in Lahore, were sometimes constructed as nearly impregnable fortresses for refuge in the event of an uprising.<sup>7</sup> In Algiers too the French initially established their civic area in the Marine Quarter separated from the old casbah by large squares and broad boulevards. As the Marine Quarter developed into a working-class European district, later urban planning moved European residential settlement south, beyond the native area.<sup>8</sup>

The segregation imposed by these urban designs was justified in large part by the supposed need to remove European bodies from contagious diseases. Throughout the colonial world, with little epidemiological understanding, Europeans saw native peoples as vectors of disease, with unhygienic practices and unsanitary habits, above all in such matters as defecation, from which Europeans were determined to keep themselves aloof. Separation, however, was always more apparent than real. Europeans employed fleets of native servants; businessmen and officials went back and forth daily; while the heat and insects of the tropics inevitably permeated the entire city. As time went on, colonial regimes, most notably the public health authorities of Malaya and the American Philippines, set out to reform hygienic practices among the colonized themselves, by strict enforcement of a new sanitary science centred around the household and the individual body.<sup>9</sup> Expenditures, however, never kept pace with professed intentions. In the early 1900s only 2 per cent of Hanoi's budget was spent on sanitation, compared with substantially larger sums on public buildings and official salaries.

European abhorrence of native residential practices was further reinforced by the seeming impenetrability of these old cities. With houses crammed together, along narrow twisting lanes that often ended abruptly in cul-de-sacs, Europeans felt ill at ease and vulnerable. Sometimes, especially among the French, there existed also a sense of the mysterious and hidden. The casbah of Algiers, most notably, evoked the magic of the Orient; setting off colonialist assertions of their own masculinity, the casbah was seen as a sensuous seductress, the 'vamp of North Africa'. A sketch drawing of Algiers by the famed French architect Le Corbusier shows the casbah as a veiled head set in the midst of a workaday urban world of office buildings and docks.

The design of colonial cities was never wholly imposed from above by colonial rulers. Indeed, as one recent writer has argued, the making of the colonial city was often a 'joint enterprise' of rulers and local elites. In Bombay, Parsi (Zoroastrian) entrepreneurs and philanthropists collaborated with the British in the shaping of the city. They hired local architects, took the lead in constructing a number of major civic structures, including docks, hospitals, and educational institutions, and made European Gothic architectural forms their own.<sup>10</sup> India's princely rulers too, among them the Nizams of Hyderabad and the female Begums of Bhopal, embellished their capital cities with modern civic structures and planned neighbourhoods; Shah Jahan Begum created a wholly new urban centre,

dubbed Shahjahanabad, centred about an immense mosque. In Cairo the initial development and beautification of the city in a 'European style' was the work not of the colonial British but of the Khedive Ismail in the years before the conquest of 1882. During the subsequent colonial era the city's further expansion resulted from the initiative of local land development companies, often using European capital, but without direct control from the authorities.<sup>11</sup>

As Europeans endeavoured to accommodate themselves to urban living in the tropics, they developed housing styles markedly different from not only those of the local people but of their compatriots in Europe. In Calcutta, known as a 'city of palaces' from the late 18th century, local Bengali mercantile elites erected residences with European ornamentation and even furnishings, but focused inwards around the traditional courtyard with its separate male and female quarters. Such hybrid styles were disparaged by Europeans, but the neoclassical façades of the spacious town houses spread across Calcutta's fashionable Chowringhee district were no less misleading. These houses possessed large central halls, opening out in all directions into surrounding rooms, each of which had its own entrance from an outside veranda. This open arrangement encouraged unobstructed flows of air throughout the house, together with easy access to all rooms. With doors open and servants gliding everywhere, the colonial residence provided none of the privacy or sense of an enclosed interior of the European town house or country estate.<sup>12</sup>

In smaller towns and cities the standard colonial residence was the bungalow. Though modest, it preserved many of the features of larger urban residences. No more than the Calcutta 'palace' could a bungalow be mistaken for a residence in Europe. One-storied, whitewashed, with open access and widespread verandas, it was usually set in the centre of a large plot, with gates and guards at the entrance. The bungalow announced the determination of the colonial ruler to be separate from, and superior to, the colonized. Nor was this residential form confined to India. It took root throughout Africa and even in the white settler communities of tropical northern Australia, where the Indian plaster finish was replaced by wrought iron decoration.<sup>13</sup>

The urban bungalow was the stage on which the colonial Europeans enacted their notions of proper gender relations. In the 18th century, when white women were few in number, European male residents of such cities as Calcutta and Batavia regularly developed liaisons with local women. Such women, known as bibis or companions, were usually kept discreetly out of sight, and the children of such unions were only occasionally acknowledged by their fathers. The result was the growth in both India and in Indonesia of distinctive mixed-race communities. Clustered in major cities these Eurasians were disdained by both Europeans and natives. As empires were consolidated, and more efficient transport became available, European women flocked to the colonial cities for marriage. Ensnared in bungalows, these women were expected to maintain racial boundaries and uphold the values of Victorian morality. Threats to the 'purity' of white women, more often imagined than real, were met with vicious reprisals, most notably in the aftermath of the Indian uprising of 1857.

French colonial urban design shared many features, most notably residential segregation, with that of the British. French planners were, however, torn by a constant tension between the universalist principles of the *mission civilisatrice* and preservationist enthusiasms.<sup>14</sup> In the earlier decades of French rule in Indo-China, from the 1860s, what is often called an 'assimilationist' strategy predominated. The French sought by displays of magnificence, especially in civic building and the creation of broad boulevards, to recreate in the Orient a vision of Haussmann's Paris. Much of this mimicry responded to the desires of a settled colonial population, of plantation owners and businessmen, for a semblance of the familiar. Saigon is perhaps exemplary. Clustered together in the

city's core are the ornate art deco post office, a lavish opera house, the soaring cathedral, its building materials imported piece by piece from Marseille, together with cafés along the adjacent rue Catinet and an opulent baroque hotel de ville modelled on that of Paris itself. The contrast with the British in India is striking. Whereas the colonial British withdrew into their clubs, the colonial French sought places where they might mingle and socialize among themselves. Noteworthy too in this urban ensemble is the prominent position awarded the post office. With its massive Victoria Terminus and an arched landing place known as the Gateway of India, Bombay looked simultaneously outwards toward Europe and to the subcontinent that lay behind it. Saigon's residents, as they posted their letters, looked only towards Europe.

By the early 20th century sceptics had begun to call into question this architecture of 'pretentious caricature'. As a result assimilation slowly gave way to what the French called 'association'. Urban planning was taken from military engineers and entrusted to *beaux-arts* trained architects, who insisted that the cultural forms of the colonized peoples deserved respect. In Vietnam Ernest Hebrard, and in Morocco Henri Prost, set out to remake the colonial city. For Hebrard association meant above all incorporation of indigenous elements into civic buildings. This practice of mixing design features drawn from various regions and ages followed similar British practice in India, where so-called Indo-Saracenic architecture, common from the 1860s, involved using Mughal and other historic forms to make ordinary colonial post offices and railway stations appear to be 'Indian'.

More far-reaching was the work of Prost in Morocco, under the guiding direction of Hubert Lyautey as governor-general (see [Plate 40.1](#)). Together Prost and Lyautey redefined the enduring opposition of 'old' and 'new' in the colonial city. Unlike the grouping of bungalows in an Indian Civil Lines, Lyautey constructed entire new cities—*nouvelle ville*—adjacent to the old medinas of such cities as Rabat and Casablanca; the older areas were then preserved untouched. Morocco, one critic wrote in 1930, 'is a laboratory of Western life and a conservatory of oriental life'.<sup>15</sup> The new cities, with broad straight boulevards, tight architectural controls and buildings that incorporated Islamic arches into the stark simplicities of modernist massing, exemplified an idealized 'modern' city; indeed they were even conceived of by men such as Lyautey as models for urban design in France itself.

The existing medinas, in an act of highly paternalist authoritarianism, were decreed to remain forever unchanged. Taking no account of potential population growth or local interests, this stultifying preservationist ideology, though offering up 'exotic' vistas for tourists, produced over time severe crowding inside the medinas, and spurred the growth of shanty towns, or bidonvilles, on all nearby vacant land. The British, by contrast, though committed to the upkeep of ancient monuments and historic sites, never made any effort to preserve pre-existing cities intact. In late 19th-century Delhi, for instance, railways were driven through the city and large areas cleared for military use; effectively one-third of the urban landscape was rendered uninhabitable. In addition, over time the city's neighbourhoods were transformed. As the old Mughal elite became ever more impoverished, Delhi's once splendid mansions were subdivided, sold, and taken over by squatters, artisans, and petty shopkeepers; many even became centres of small-scale manufacturing. In the face of a ballooning population, the British in the 1930s, with the founding of the Delhi Improvement Trust, tried vainly to regulate the city's growth and relieve congestion; inside the Mughal wall there nevertheless remained only, as is the case up to the present, slums and squalor.<sup>16</sup>



**PLATE 40.1** Central Post Office, Casablanca, by Adrien Laforgue, 1920. (From Henri Descamps, *L'Architecture moderne au Maroc*, 1930. Reproduced in Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in Colonial Urbanism* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1991), 109.)

While the French occasionally changed colonial capital cities for administrative convenience—shifting Indo-China’s capital from Saigon to the cooler northern Hanoi, and Morocco’s from inland Fez to coastal Rabat—the British built an entirely new city to be the capital of India. Driven by a desire to escape the political activity of a turbulent Calcutta, and as well to be closer to the frontier, the princes, and the summer capital of Simla, they set their new ‘Imperial Delhi’, constructed between 1913 and 1931, adjacent to the old Mughal Delhi. To design the new capital the Indian government hired two eminent British architects—Edwin Lutyens, to design the layout of the city and the viceroy’s residence; and Herbert Baker, who had worked for twenty years in South Africa, to design the secretariat and related structures.

Both Lutyens and Baker agreed that beaux-arts classical forms most powerfully expressed the worldwide empire the British had created. Nevertheless they sought to incorporate elements of indigenous design. The innovative and imaginative Lutyens created a strikingly original viceregal residence, with a dome resembling a Buddhist stupa; the more conventional Baker simply added screens, turrets, and cornices of Indic origin to classical façades. In its layout the new city (see [Plate 40.2](#)) took the shape of a hexagon, focused on the viceregal palace and a central processional way. Shaped by the ideals of the garden city movement, the city possessed grand vistas and wide tree-lined boulevards. The various sectors of the city were meticulously allocated to different groups. High-level officials, along with the Indian princes, secured extensive plots and spacious bungalows near the centre, while others were banished to distant suburbs and tiny residences.<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, the low population densities in the new city stood in sharp contrast with those of its overcrowded neighbour.



**PLATE 40.2** Layout of Delhi.

## URBAN GOVERNANCE

Almost inevitably, colonial cities generated cosmopolitan populations (see [Ch. 35](#)). Slaves, and subsequently black and mixed-race populations dominated such cities as Kingston, Jamaica, whose white population declined dramatically after 1800. Cape Town drew settlers from lands as far removed as Holland and Britain on the one side, and Madagascar and Indonesia on the other. Until 1833 many were slaves employed as skilled artisans and craftsmen; over time they mingled with the indigenous Khoi to create the distinctive Cape Coloured community. Throughout South East Asia, from Singapore and Saigon to Manila and Rangoon, the Chinese dominated trade and commerce alike as middlemen, retailers, and financiers. Saigon possessed in Cholon an entire self-contained Chinese urban centre across the river from the colonial city, while in Singapore, a vast majority of whose residents were always Chinese, rival clans fought for control of the trade in opium and other commodities. The latter city also housed a sizeable Indian community, itself divided by caste and region. West Africa possessed large urban populations of Lebanese traders, while in East Africa Indian merchants, originally settled in Zanzibar where they financed the sultan's government and the slave trade, in the later 19th century migrated first up the coast to Mombasa, and then into towns far into the interior, most notably in Uganda. Occasionally, outsiders even pushed local elites aside, as

was the case in mid-19th-century Calcutta, where immigrant Marwaris from the north, with the British, successfully forced the Bengal bhadralok (respectable castes) out of commerce and onto the land. Only rarely did local people anywhere retain a footing in large-scale trade or finance. One notable exception was Bombay, where the long-settled Parsi community prospered first in shipbuilding, then in the export trade to China, and ultimately in manufacturing, as the founders of India's cotton textile industry.

In all colonial cities, labourers streamed in from the countryside, seeking employment as workers on the docks, as hawkers on the streets, or as servants to the wealthy. As a result urban populations often exploded. Between 1860 and 1923 Saigon's population rose from 6,000 to 100,000; by the mid-20th century it had reached 1,700,000. Even Dakar, initially no more than a naval station, had 25,000 people by 1905, and continued to grow rapidly, reaching 100,000 by 1938 as the administrative capital of French West Africa. By 1950, with a final spurt of colonial investment during and after the war, Dakar had become an urban centre of nearly half a million.

To keep order in these bustling colonial cities, rulers devised a number of strategies. One was the employment of police, soldiers, and even low-ranking officials from outside the colony. The French deployed Senegalese soldiers throughout their empire, while the British employed Sikhs, tall and turbaned, from India across South East Asia. In Shanghai, for instance, in 1908 the municipality employed 500 Sikhs in its police force, while Singapore at the turn of the century had some 300 Sikhs in a Straits force of 2,000. Such men, set apart by race and appearance, could easily be used to intimidate local populations. Educated South Asians also took service overseas. Ceylon Tamils, some 8,500 in number, held all the skilled jobs, from clerk to stationmaster, on the Malayan railways; Goan and other Indian migrants similarly monopolized the mid-level positions on the Uganda railway.<sup>18</sup>

Much policing was delegated to community leaders, men such as those designated 'Kapitans' of the Chinese, Malay, and other communities in Penang, Singapore, and the small towns of interior Malaya where the British had almost no presence. In the early 19th century these men held courts to resolve petty disputes; subsequently they were often awarded powers as justices of the peace, and were incorporated by appointment into colonial municipal boards.<sup>19</sup> In Karachi by the 1870s some seventeen 'native communities' were represented on the municipal commission. The existence of a magnificent hotel de ville did not mean that Saigon's residents had a great deal of say in the city's governance. Initially placed under a military governor, Saigon from 1877 possessed a municipal council of fourteen members; only two were Vietnamese. Change to elected councils came very slowly. In India Calcutta alone in the late 19th century possessed a vibrant municipal corporation elected by a wide franchise and controlled by the educated Indian community. More common was the situation in Surat, in western India, where the council contained elected members only after Lord Ripon's local government reforms of 1883. Even then the elected members, chosen by a restricted propertied electorate, comprised only fifteen of the council's thirty members.<sup>20</sup>

Such pliant representatives, under the supervision of a European mayor or district magistrate, invariably asserted their commitment to reforms initiated by the colonial rulers, and they usually collaborated amicably with the authorities. Even though they often had to listen to patronizing sermons by officials on the lines of 'You have to prove that you can, like men of the West, lay down a thoughtful policy and follow it with resolution', still visible association with the colonial government enhanced the status of these notables as influential and civic-minded leaders, and often placed substantial patronage in their hands. Rarely, however, did these notables have substantial authority over the direction of policy, which was usually set by colonial officials; and disagreements frequently



erupted over matters of taxation and the differential allocation of resources among communities.

Ill-conceived reforms together with petty administrative regulations further antagonized local peoples. In Singapore a major dispute involved the covered walkways meant to provide a shaded pathway for pedestrians along the roads in the front of shops. Municipal ordinances from the 1850s asserted the right of municipal commissioners to pull down any obstructions that hampered movement. Shopkeepers, however, often sorted or stored merchandise on these verandas and itinerant hawkers set up shop in their shade. An endeavour in 1888 to forcibly clear the verandas triggered riots; subsequently the colonial government turned to usually ineffectual fines and prosecutions to assert its claims to these public spaces.<sup>21</sup> In Calcutta, so intense was the antagonism between the government and the elected corporation that an exasperated Viceroy Lord Curzon in 1899 forced through a reduction in the number of elected members; twenty-eight of the Indian members promptly resigned in protest.

The existence of cosmopolitan populations in colonial cities did not deter the growth of a shared civic culture, what one may call a bourgeois public sphere, among urban mercantile and professional elites. Over time, as indigenous educated communities grew up, comprising above all teachers and lawyers, voluntary associations, publications, schools, and even cricket teams proliferated in newly burgeoning metropolises as their residents endeavoured to come to terms with urban life and new Western ideas. These reform organizations, most notable among them the Brahma Samaj in Calcutta, called into question many of the customs and conventions, and even religious beliefs, which had defined pre-colonial societies. The location of free-trade Singapore in the centre of South East Asia, at the heart of the pilgrim routes to Mecca, encouraged lively discussion there not only of liberal but of Islamic reform. Among overseas Chinese, clan organizations united migrants with the same language, clan, or home region, while secret societies devoted to self-defence vied for the support of uprooted young men. Almost uniquely, masonic lodges welcomed indigenous and European members alike, and on nearly equal terms.

The position of women in the colonial city was often ambiguous. Male members of the indigenous elite often had occupations where they spoke French or English, wore European clothes, and worked under the supervision of Europeans. But the home was meant to be an ‘uncolonised’ space, in which their female partners, in cities like Calcutta, were to be educated but not Anglicized, companions for their husbands but modest and secluded, hence upholding the virtues of a culture otherwise disparaged under colonialism. Though it was ultimately pushed aside by a resurgent Indonesian identity, Batavia, by contrast, with other Indies cities, hosted a vibrant and distinctive urban ‘Indische’ culture, the product of a long-settled and prospering mixed-race community that incorporated both Dutch and Indonesian elements. By the 1920s, in cosmopolitan cities such as Shanghai there had emerged the concept of the ‘modern girl’ who sought to free herself from the hold of tradition by adopting Western dress and make-up.

## SETTLER CITIES

Towns inhabited largely by communities of white settlers—initially in colonial America, and subsequently across the globe—have often been excluded from the conceptual category of the ‘colonial city’. In an influential volume of essays on *Victorian Cities* (1963), Asa Briggs included Melbourne, which he called ‘a Victorian community overseas’, along with accounts of half a dozen English cities. More recently, in their *Empire and Globalization* (2010), Gary Magee and Andrew

Thompson have sought to identify a transnational 'British World'. In this world overseas settlers participated with their British cousins in a shared commerce and culture, based on the dissemination of British books, pianos, capital, clothing, and much else besides.

Yet these were colonial cities too. To be sure, their ordering structure was of a different character, and they ranged across a wide spectrum among themselves. At one end were cities where white settlers lived as a privileged minority among large native populations. Such cities were most common in the temperate regions of Africa, from Algiers through Nairobi and Salisbury to South Africa's bustling urban centres. At the other end were settlements founded in areas where the native population was thin and easily dispersed, as was the case most visibly in Australia. Though settler communities everywhere celebrated their diverse origins, as in the proliferation of the Orange order and Hibernian lodges among the Irish, residential patterns in these cities were shaped primarily by differences of wealth and status rather than race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, in cities like Sydney and Melbourne, the colonial government still proclaimed its power and its presence by the appointment of officials from Britain and the erection of palatial residences for the colonial governor. Melbourne's Government House, built in the 1870s in an elaborate Italianate style with a massive tower, dominated the town, as it still does, from its hilltop site.

Colonial cities of European settlement were also, like their counterparts in Asia and Africa, established as ports, with their primary function that of funnelling raw materials from the interior onto ships bound for Europe (see below, [Ch. 43](#)). These cities, like Calcutta but unlike Britain's Manchester, were centres of finance, wholesaling, and warehousing, not manufacturing industry. The first signs of colonial manufacturing appeared only in the later 19th century, and then first in India, with the foundation of the Bombay textile industry. In settler colonies consumer goods manufacturing emerged only with the growth of protected local markets. By 1881 about 25 per cent of Melbourne's male workforce was engaged in manufacturing, but such activity never dominated the city, nor was it at all significant in rival Sydney, which continued to be sustained by the export of wool.

Settler towns were customarily laid out on a rectangular grid of streets subdivided into building plots. Adelaide (South Australia) was laid out by Col. William Light in the 1830s on a grand set of interlocking squares before anyone was allowed to take up residence. In a manner similar to that of American cities, these colonial towns sprawled outwards into suburbs, possessed low population densities, and were fuelled by periods of boom and bust land speculation. The most spectacular instance of this kind of growth was surely that of Melbourne.<sup>22</sup> Spurred by the discovery of gold in the 1850s, the city, known as 'Marvellous Melbourne', had by the 1880s generated a population of nearly half a million, and a far-reaching network of rail and tram lines linking the city to new suburbs. During that decade over half of all private capital investment in the city was devoted to residential development. The climax was the great Centennial Exhibition of 1888. Within three years, a spate of insolvencies, bank fraud, panics, and the withdrawal of English capital led to a decade-long era of deep depression, and ultimately to the growth of a distinctively Australian form of nationalism that celebrated the bush and the 'digger' instead of British culture.

## DECOLONIZATION

Over time the colonial city helped spawn colonial nationalist movements. The first three meetings of the Indian National Congress took place in the three presidency capitals of Bombay (1885), Calcutta (1886), and Madras (1887). Only with the coming of Gandhi after 1920 did the Congress direct the

bulk of its activities toward the countryside. Likewise the streets of colonial cities provided ideal battlegrounds for encounters between nationalist protestors and the colonial police and military. The Amritsar massacre of 1919, which pitted unarmed demonstrators against a Gurkha military contingent, propelled Gandhi to the leadership of the Congress. By far the most brutal of these encounters, and the subject of a compelling film, was the so-called ‘Battle of Algiers’ (1954–1956) in which the tortuous lanes and alleyways of the casbah nourished an anticolonial guerrilla resistance movement that caught up even the veiled women of the city in a ferocious struggle against the French. Although the French ultimately put down the uprising, the event anticipated the end of colonial rule in 1962.

With the coming of independence the erstwhile colonial cities were incorporated into the fabric of national life. To celebrate the transformation, the names of some cities were changed to reflect nationalist sentiments, as Salisbury became Harare; and in most cities statues were toppled and street names of kings and viceroys gave way to the commemoration of national heroes. In Algiers the Place du Gouvernement became the Place des Martyres; Place Bugeaud, named in honour of a French governor-general, became Place Abdulkadir, celebrating the leader of the resistance in the 1830s. Sometimes this could lead to awkward results. A massive statue of King George V sheltered under a cupola anchored the far end of the processional way in New Delhi. When the statue was taken down, there remained the problem of what to put in its place. A statue of Gandhi, the obvious contender, seemed inappropriate in such an imperial setting. So the cupola, at the heart of a bustling traffic circle, remains empty to the present day.<sup>23</sup>

Often, colonial structures were allowed simply to fall into ruin, or razed to make room for new construction, as most notably in Singapore and Hong Kong. Hundreds of colonial bungalows and clubs met this fate. Not uncommonly, as in New Delhi, the new government, seeking accommodation, simply moved into the existing buildings. Life in Baker’s secretariats continued as before. Refusing the grandeur of Lutyens’ palace, Nehru took over the commander-in-chief’s residence; later the building became a museum and library. In Hanoi, by contrast, Ho Chi Minh ruled Vietnam from an austere wooden house erected in the former governor-general’s garden.

As time went on, many new states came to realize that their cities’ colonial past was part of their built heritage, and deserved a degree of preservation, to encourage tourism if for no other reason. Singapore most notably since the 1990s has conscientiously sought to preserve and rehabilitate its colonial structures. The Vietnamese colonial hill city of Dalat, which survived as a capital for the French and the Bao Dai emperor until the very end of the colonial era, has now taken on a new life as a romantic, if kitschy, honeymoon destination. Private enterprise too has refurbished many of the grand old colonial hotels, from the Imperial in Delhi to the Raffles in Singapore and on to the Majestic in Saigon. In the former British and American colonies, and in French West Africa, the language of the former colonial master is still heard on the street. But of the former Dutch presence in Batavia, and of the French in Indo-China, little remains outside the history books.

Everywhere, colonial cities have become metropolitan centres in their own right with populations soaring into many millions (see [Chs. 30 – 33](#)). Everywhere, new steel and glass towers have sprung up to celebrate the coming of free market neoliberalism. The colonial heritage is now only a small part of the visible present. But it remains a reminder of a time that, after centuries of Western supremacy, came to an end not so long ago, and helped shape the fabric of cities across the globe.

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## CONTEMPORARY METROPOLITAN CITIES

XIANGMING CHEN AND HENRY FITTS

WE begin this chapter with a pair of fundamental questions facing the study of cities. First, how did the early city become the contemporary metropolitan city and its variations that herald the primary urban form of the 21st century? Second, what are the most salient and consequential dimensions of the contemporary metropolitan city that shape its present and reshape its future? The first question calls for a long temporal perspective that has been provided in several chapters of [Parts I](#) and [II](#) of this book. We mainly address this question by focusing on the contemporary metropolitanization of the city to shed light on what drives the recent phasing and permutations of this process. While the second question invites a taxonomic look at the different aspects of the evolving metropolitan city, we focus on four major facets that capture its essence and complexity. By organizing our essay around this dual focus and through a broad comparative lens, we intend to offer both an essentialist and a relatively extensive treatment of the contemporary metropolitan city.

While cities have existed for over 6,000 years, the contemporary metropolitan city is young in its developmental stage, morphology, and function. Though data are sparse for earlier periods, it is likely that there were only a handful of cities that might be construed as metropolitan cities before 1800: thus Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Chang'an in ancient times; Baghdad, Hangchow (Hangzhou today), and perhaps Paris in the 11th–13th centuries; and Edo in Japan, Beijing, and London in the 18th century. While cities like Istanbul, Cairo, and Paris exercised some metropolitan functions for some earlier times, they were smaller.

As the renowned economic historian Paul Bairoch noted, ‘the emergence of a great number of very large cities... (with over half a million inhabitants) was in fact fundamentally related to the phase of development following the Industrial Revolution’.<sup>1</sup> By World War I Europe alone (excluding Russia) had twenty-nine cities with populations of over 500,000: it also had five centres with over 2 million (Berlin, St Petersburg, London, Paris, and Vienna), against three elsewhere in the world (New York, Chicago and Tokyo). Taking 1 million as the basic threshold and significant marker for metropolitan cities during the long course of the 18th century through the earlier 21st century, we can see both the rapid increase in the number of big centres, but also the changing spatial distribution of them (see [Table 41.1](#)). As the share of the world’s million-plus cities in Europe and North America declines over time, both the number and proportion of such cities located in the developing world, most notably in Asia (especially in China and India) grow significantly. By 2020, the number of million-plus cities in Asia is projected to have risen ten times from 1950 and to have accounted for more than half of all these cities. This long retrospective and prospective view provides a clear picture of how far and fast worldwide urbanization has become defined by the surge of large cities.

The uneven distribution of mega-cities (above 10 million) is also remarkable: already by 2000 there were nine in Asia, four in Latin America, but only one in the Middle East, one in Europe, and two in North America. Looking through a contemporary lens, we see a dramatic process of scaling up and growth outward of the city into varied urban forms and shapes that defy the traditional definition and conception of what is a city.

**Table 41.1 Metropolitan Cities (above 1 Million) 1800–2020**

Year	1800	1850	1900		1950		1980		2000		2010		2020	
Region			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Africa					0		14	6.0	33	8.4	52	11.1	62	11.4
Asia	1	1	3	21.4	30	35.7	90	38.8	174	44.2	248	52.9	306	56.0
Europe		2	7	50.0	31	36.9	57	24.6	63	16.0	53	11.3	52	9.5
Latin America					7	8.3	25	10.8	49	12.4	62	13.2	67	12.3
North America			4	28.6	13	15.5	32	13.8	41	10.4	48	10.2	53	9.7
Middle East					3	3.6	14	6.0	28	7.1	—	—	—	—
Oceania									6	1.5	6	1.3	6	1.1
Total	1	3	14		84		232		394		469		546	

Sources: Data derived from Paul Bairoch, *Cities and Economic Development: From the Dawn of History to the Present* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991); 'Globalisation: Countries, Cities and Multinationals', Jena Economic Research Paper, 42 (2009): 1–44; United Nations HABITAT, *Planning Sustainable Cities, Global Report on Human Settlements 2009* (Sterling, Va.: Earthscan, 2009).

Note: Data for 2010 and 2020 are projected by the United Nations and include the Middle East with Africa.

Relative to London being the first modern city to have 2 million people in the 19th century, it would be a conceptual leap of faith to imagine that the Nagoya–Osaka–Kobe mega-region will be home to about 60 million people by 2015. Despite the one and a half centuries separating these points in time, this huge difference in scale forces us to think broadly and deeply about the complex dimensions and consequences of cities becoming so large that they change fundamentally in nature. While metropolis was the next logical term to describe the enlarged city, it has become increasingly insufficient and inaccurate for capturing the demographic and spatial spread of linked metropolitan areas. To describe the varied and ever growing scales of this phenomenon, scholars have coined a host of terms, often hyphenated, including mega-city, meta-city, hyper-city, super-city, networked-city, clustered-city, city-region, regional city, urban corridor, mega-region, mega-city region, and new city-states. While we will not deal with these terms in any great detail, we begin with an overview of both the fixed and moving features of the contemporary metropolitan city.

### THE CITY IN METROPOLITAN FORM AND MOTION

Given the contemporary focus of our essay, we will refer to a metropolis as a spatial unit larger than the single central city. Arguably, there is an inherent metropolitan impulse in cities. In one sense, this means that all cities grow in size over time, even though some may shrink at a certain point in their development as indicated by the recent experience of some older industrialized cities in the United States like Detroit and Western Europe. In a different sense, the metropolitan seed inside the city refers to the varied form that a growing city may take. As cities have become larger over time, especially during the 20th and into the 21st century, they have unleashed that internal metropolitan impulse into the more visible metropolitan scale and structure. This process is characterized by the gradual, and sometimes accelerated, expansion of the spatial, economic, and political dimensions of the city. By no means linear and uniform, the metropolitanization of the city involves varied trajectories, contentious processes, disparities and lags, and simultaneous divergence and convergence across national contexts.

The United States is where the city has become most typically metropolitan in form and function, and serves as the reference case for discussing other national, regional, and local variations of the metropolitan city. In turning metropolitan, many American central cities not only grew larger, but also expanded out in a fashion characterized by the establishment of more separate settlements adjacent to and farther away from the central city. Over time, as some of these independent places gained more population, new ones appeared at even farther metropolitan edges. Generally known as suburbanization, this continued metropolitan expansion defines the American city as an endlessly shifting and fragmented agglomeration. This dynamic process has moved the American metropolis further beyond a size-based place to a network-based system that contains multiple interconnected nuclei or centres with both regional hinterlands and global ties.<sup>2</sup>

## BEYOND THE METROPOLITAN CITY

The metropolis in constant motion has morphed into some sort of post-metropolitan phase of development in the United States and some other countries. Jean Gottman captured the most visible initial stage of this development in his classic book *Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States*, published in 1961. Derived from the same Greek origin as metropolis, the term megalopolis means ‘extremely large city.’ Besides its reference to a larger city than metropolis, megalopolis, as used by Gottman, refers to a much larger region stretching 500 miles from Boston in the north to Washington, D.C., in the south, which became known as BosWash (for Boston and Washington). More than just one metropolitan area with more than one secondary centre, the megalopolitan region of BosWash encompassed multiple major functional centres separated by rural or under-built areas.

Gottman foresaw the shape of the metropolis to come as the Los Angeles region subsequently rose to represent the extreme of the sprawling American metropolis of the last several decades. In *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, published forty years after *Megalopolis*, Edward Soja portrayed this post-metropolitan complex in six themes that collectively reveal a fragmented, polarized, and globalized landscape dotted by edge or outer cities, gated communities, new ethnic suburbs, and other distinctive and contentious spaces. As the metropolitan motion in a post-industrialized context continues to churn, the settlement patterns in parts of industrializing Asia from the 1960s exhibit an extended metropolitan appearance of mixed urban and rural characteristics and processes.<sup>3</sup> The comparative evidence points to further extensions and variations that we need to account for.

As the metropolitan force, in its centrifugal fashion, reshapes the metropolitan city to different and yet similar paths of evolution, it ironically pushes us back to re-examine the scaling effect and the scaled outcome of metropolitanization. Having grown further out and even into one another, filling out the empty spaces in the process, dominant and secondary metropolitan cities, adjacent to one another, have scaled up the more connected metropolitan region. This has triggered the use of a set of new descriptive terms such as mega-city, meta-city, super-city, city-clusters, city-region, regional urbanization, mega-region, and global city-region. By a broad international recognition including the United Nations, mega-city refers to cities with 10 million or more people. With less agreement and precision, meta-city or sometimes super-city, has recently been used for cities with over 20 million people by both the United Nations and major media outlets.<sup>4</sup> According to Florida, Gulden, and Mellander, there are forty mega-regions that account for about 66 per cent of the world’s economic



output and 85 per cent of global innovation.<sup>5</sup> While a few of these mega-regions are located in industrialized countries and some even cross national boundaries in Europe, others are emerging in and across Asia and China such as the Yangtze River delta region that contains 60–80 million people, in its very outstretched boundaries, and have become global economic drivers.

In the rest of this chapter, we examine four salient thematic dimensions of the contemporary metropolitan city from a comparative and global perspective: wealth and poverty, globalization, governance, and infrastructure.

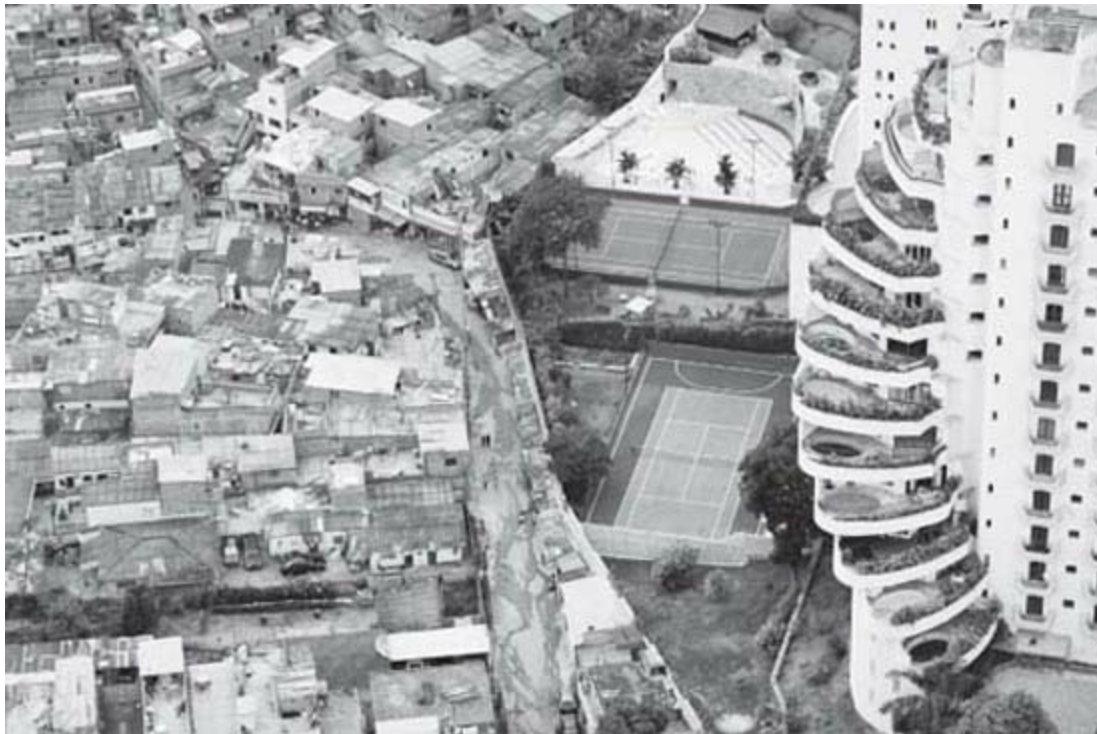
## WEALTH AND POVERTY ACROSS THE METROPOLITAN CITY

The spatial distribution of wealth and poverty within and across the metropolitan city is one of its key features. The metropolitanization of the city reflects the constant spatial shift of the coexistence of wealth and poverty in the urban core versus its periphery or hinterland. In differentiation from Gilbert's chapter on 36 on poverty inequality and social segregation, this section will focus more precisely on the social and spatial aspects of inequality at the metropolitan scale. While we will discuss the more familiar economic consequences of industrialization and deindustrialization in the American and European contexts, we will scrutinize the less known process by which accelerated urbanization and industrialization have produced a simultaneous sharp division and blurring of wealth and poverty in the populous metropolitan cities in developing countries. This comparative focus allows us to gauge a greater range of redistributed economic consequences as a result of metropolitan change.

The metropolitan city is inherently unequal because the original city, which became metropolitan, was an unequal place to begin with. Without tracing this early inequality in detail, we see a spatial redistribution of metropolitan wealth and poverty that evolves from territorial expansion and change in and of the urban core. For much of the long history of the city, wealth was concentrated in the spatial centre as the owners and creators of wealth—entrepreneurs and capitalists—worked and lived there. Even after they moved to the outlying areas that became known as suburbs and brought personal wealth with them, the productive assets—banks and factories—remained in the centre of the industrial city. There the concentration of wealth was striking against the geographic proximity of poverty, a massive industrial workforce earning a meagre wage and living in poor tenements. With the departure of manufacturing from the central city of American and West European metropolitan regions, the balance of wealth and poverty tilted to the suburbs as new centres of wealth, while the concentration of poverty in the urban core grew. Large numbers of poor residents were often unemployed and primarily ethnic minorities and new immigrants.

The shift of wealth from the centre to the periphery of the metropolitan region is not as clear and complete due to both countervailing and complicating forces. While much manufacturing has left the central city, the high-end service sector consisting of finance, insurance, and producer services has remained and even become more concentrated there, thereby keeping the centre relatively wealthy. This is mostly true of global cities like New York and London, which also finds a sort of parallel in a number of rising financial centres in the developing world like Shanghai and Mumbai. As the growth of finance, real-estate, and entertainment has brought renewal and new wealth and vitality to the centres of some metropolitan cities, it exasperates the old divides of wealth and poverty by making them more striking. As [Plate 41.1](#) shows, a wealthy gated (or walled) community rubs shoulders with a *favela* in San Paulo, Brazil. Beyond the central cities, suburban rings have also become more

stratified and segregated in wealth and poverty. The metropolitan structure of wealth and poverty has evolved much beyond a simple dichotomy of rich centre and poor periphery, reversing itself in more developed cities.



**PLATE 41.1** The Paraisópolis *favela* (Paradise City shanty town) borders the affluent district of Morumbi in São Paulo, Brazil.

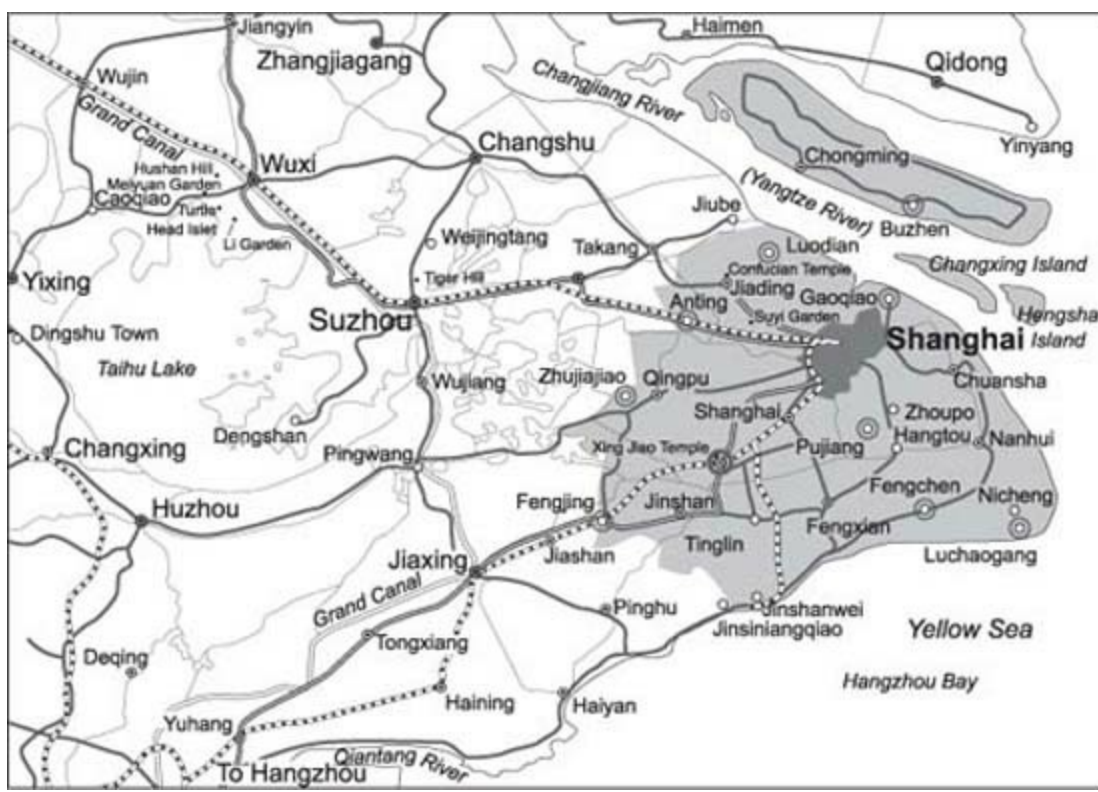
*Newer and larger-scale inequalities.* As the mature metropolitan city in developed countries evolves into more spatially linked regions, the less developed metropolitan city in developing countries has been undergoing a faster growth and a wider spatial expansion. Both processes have not only reinforced some existing socio-spatial inequalities but also produced new ones. For the developed metropolitan city, post-crisis Detroit is an extreme example. By the time the crisis hit in 2008 and worsened in 2009, Detroit fell \$300 million short of the funds needed to provide the basic municipal services and registered an unemployment rate of 28.9 per cent, the highest of any major city in the US. Today Detroit is the poorest major city in America, with a poverty rate of 34 per cent, nearly tripling the national average. To address this severe concentration of poverty will require Detroit to place its most dysfunctional agencies in receivership and to cooperate with its neighbouring suburban municipalities on issues that cross political boundaries. It also calls for the federal government to support the physical regeneration of Detroit through a new city plan for retrofitting economic and social activities to a much smaller demographic base, a city of more dense neighbourhoods, urban gardens, arts facilities, and entertainment parks built on old factory sites.<sup>6</sup>

In the European context, we see polycentric and decentralized urban systems anchored to supra-regional, corridor-shaped transport infrastructure that links the four metropolitan agglomerations (Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, and Munich). Within this regionalized urban system, there has been clearly differentiated regional growth versus decline over the last two decades since reunification. The old, heavy industrial city-region around Leipzig–Halle–Bitterfeld of the former East Germany experienced a population decline of 8.1 per cent during 1995–2004 due to out-migration, job loss, and suburbanization. On the other hand, the major metropolitan centres within and along the corridor stretching from Stuttgart to the Ruhr Basin in the south and south-west managed to keep a more or less stable population during the same time period. As the enlarged EU deals with the challenge of

rebalancing the disparities between the older city-regions of Western Europe, it faces the challenging task of addressing new local–regional inequalities brought by the incorporated member states from East and Central Europe and their immigrant populations.

For a state-driven model of metropolitanization, we turn to Shanghai. Bounded broadly, Shanghai municipality administers eighteen urban and suburban districts, some of which were agricultural counties, plus one county, as second-level administrative units. In the Shanghai Master Plan (1999–2020), the municipal government aimed to reduce the population of 9.15 million in the central city in 2000 to about 8 million by 2020 by relocating 1.15 million people to the suburbs. The central piece of this plan was to build nine new towns and one new city around Shanghai or ‘One City-Nine Towns’ (see Fig. 41.1) in order to accelerate metropolitan development and to reduce the density of the central city. As part of this plan, a total of 140 small towns in the suburban area of Shanghai were proposed by their district governments to become part of the new towns. The competition to become a new town was actually a contest among townships for mega-projects such as university districts and foreign manufacturing plants. The new towns were designed to follow certain places in Western European countries including the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Australia, and the Netherlands. The physical building type and landscape would imitate the living conditions and lifestyles of these developed countries. The connection of the new towns to globalization thereby was established not only as economic production sites, but also as social and cultural domains where local governments and residents would embrace global symbols and identities.<sup>7</sup>

Although this planned suburban development has drawn some people out of the dense central city, those who have bought the expensive housing in the new towns are wealthy Shanghai residents, Western expatriates, and speculative overseas investors. The Bauhaus-style apartments in the German Town in Anting average at least \$1,000 per square metre, or more than \$100,000 for a small two-bedroom unit, while a single-family house in Thames Town in Songjiang costs approximately 1 million US dollars. They have become rich enclaves in the middle of largely agricultural land. The lack of commercial facilities and social services, coupled with the speculative purchase and weekend use of these properties, has kept the new towns largely empty of regular residents and gives them a ghost-town feel. The Shanghai metropolitan case illustrates a sort of unintended consequence of spatially redistributed wealth that stems from a purposeful state policy for rebalancing a metropolitan population.



**FIGURE 41.1** The Shanghai metropolitan region including several new towns, satellite cities, and transportation infrastructure. (From Chen, Wang, and Kundu, 'Localizing the Production'.)

## GLOBALIZATION AND CONTEMPORARY METROPOLITAN CITIES

While international influences were already important during the early period of metropolitan development, globalization has exerted a much more direct and intense impact on the recent metropolitan city through a configuration of transnational economic interdependence at the regional and local scales and advanced cross-border transportation and communications technologies. Accelerated globalization through increasing interactions between economies and cultures over the past three decades or so has greatly influenced various aspects of the city, or in some cases completely reshaped them.

One of the pioneers of global perspectives on the metropolitan city is Peter Hall who first published *The World Cities* in 1966.<sup>8</sup> In the mid-1980s, the geographer John Friedmann argued that world cities are a small number of massive urban regions at the apex of the global urban hierarchy that exercise worldwide control over production and market expansion. World cities would also be major sites for the concentration and accumulation of international capital. Sociologist Saskia Sassen, with the publication of the book *The Global City: New York, London, and Tokyo* in 1991, brought a definitive touch to the study of the global city through a sharp conceptualization and a systematic comparison of three such cities.<sup>9</sup> According to Sassen, global cities function as (1) highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy; (2) key locations for finance and specialized services, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading industries; (3) innovative sites of production in these leading industries; and (4) markets for the products and innovations of these industries.

While the impact of globalization on and in New York and London is obvious, this influence is so pervasive and profound that it has invaded many cities and metropolitan regions including some where globalization has made a huge difference to local growth.<sup>10</sup> On the outskirts of Calcutta, India,

Rajarhat New Town has emerged as a new kind of local place with strong global connections. Planned as an integrated township with an expected population of 1 million, Rajarhat was conceived in the early 1990s as a self-contained growth centre that would help reduce the density of the core city of Calcutta. Spread over 7,598 acres (3,075 hectares) of land, the New Town is being developed as a major hub for business, trade, industries, IT, educational institutions, and cultural centres within its central business district. Thus, real-estate ventures and IT industry dominate the design, layout, and planning of township projects in Calcutta. Like the new towns near Shanghai, the high-income professionals in Rajarhat are expected to live in the luxury apartments behind gates and away from the local poor (see [Plate 41.2](#)).

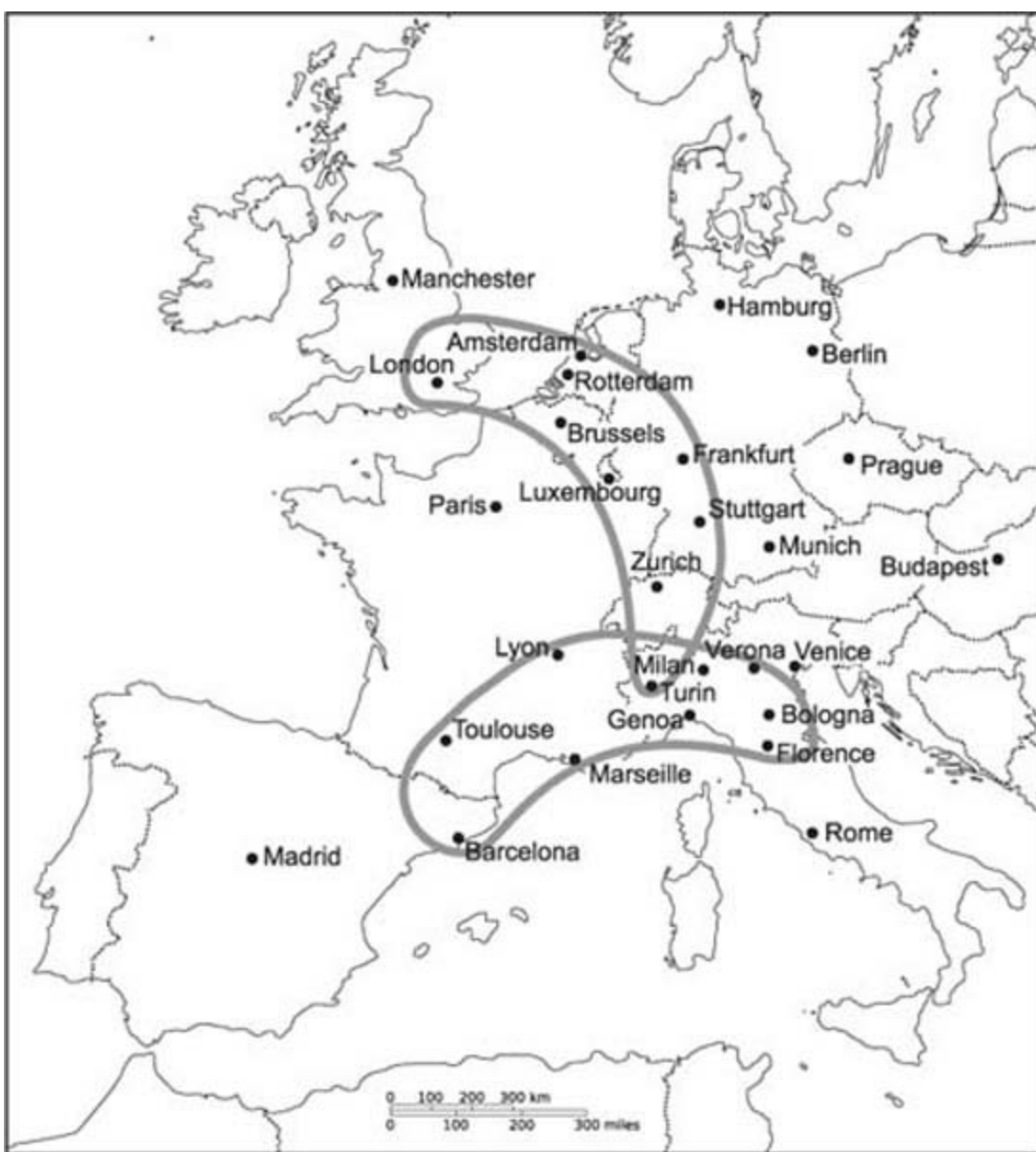
As the city has gained a greater metropolitan scale, the local and inter-local influence of global forces begins to scale up regionally. In the traditionally more globalized Europe, two spatially expansive and cross-border European regions have taken shape (see [Fig. 41.2](#)). Known as the ‘Blue Banana’ or vertical banana, one sprawling region originates from London in south-eastern England through northern France, the Benelux countries, Milan in northern Italy, and ends with the Rhine Valley in Switzerland. It features deeply regionalized historical, commercial, and cultural ties between neighbours as borders lost their barrier effects through the European Union integration. The other ‘horizontal’ banana or ‘Green Banana’ forms an arc from the Veneto in Italy, west through Lombardy and the Piedmont into the Rhône-Alps, across France’s Mediterranean coast and the hinterland, and into Catalonia.<sup>11</sup>

In Africa, the kind of positive global–regional–local effect on cities in China and Europe is largely absent. Even taking into account the paucity and little spatial clustering of export-oriented manufacturing, the flow of trade between origin and destination cities across neighbouring countries is severely restricted by different kinds of barriers. In the West African region of Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Togo, trucks carrying exports and originating from Mali’s capital city of Bamako have to face 4.8 checkpoints, pay \$25, and waste 38 minutes for every 100 km on their way to Ghana’s port city of Tema on the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean near its capital Accra.<sup>12</sup> The high costs are added to by police bribes, regulatory rents, and large profits extracted by transport service providers along the transport corridor. Disadvantaged by their weak manufacturing capacities, these West African cities are further hampered by the lack of regional economic, spatial, and transport linkages that otherwise would and should bring about development benefits from geographic proximity.



**PLATE 41.2** Gated luxury apartments, Rajarhat New Town, near Calcutta, India.

As the above cases indicate, globalization has either strengthened or stalled certain metropolitan and regional dynamics around the city to the point that the metropolitan city and the world economy are mutually constitutive of, and shaping each other. There is rising tension between the constraints of the global, regional, and national urban systems and the flexibility or autonomy of individual metropolitan cities to grow in response to these constraints. This tension can lead to some cities doing better economically than others by overcoming these constraints or turning them into opportunities. It may even allow a few cities, especially those from low and marginal starting points, to move up in the system and achieve more functional influence than expected of their scales.



**FIGURE 41.2** Two European ‘bananas’ which denote two cross-national urban regions. (After Newhouse, ‘Europe’s Rising Regionalism’, redrawn by Nick Bacon.)

## GOVERNING THE METROPOLITAN CITY

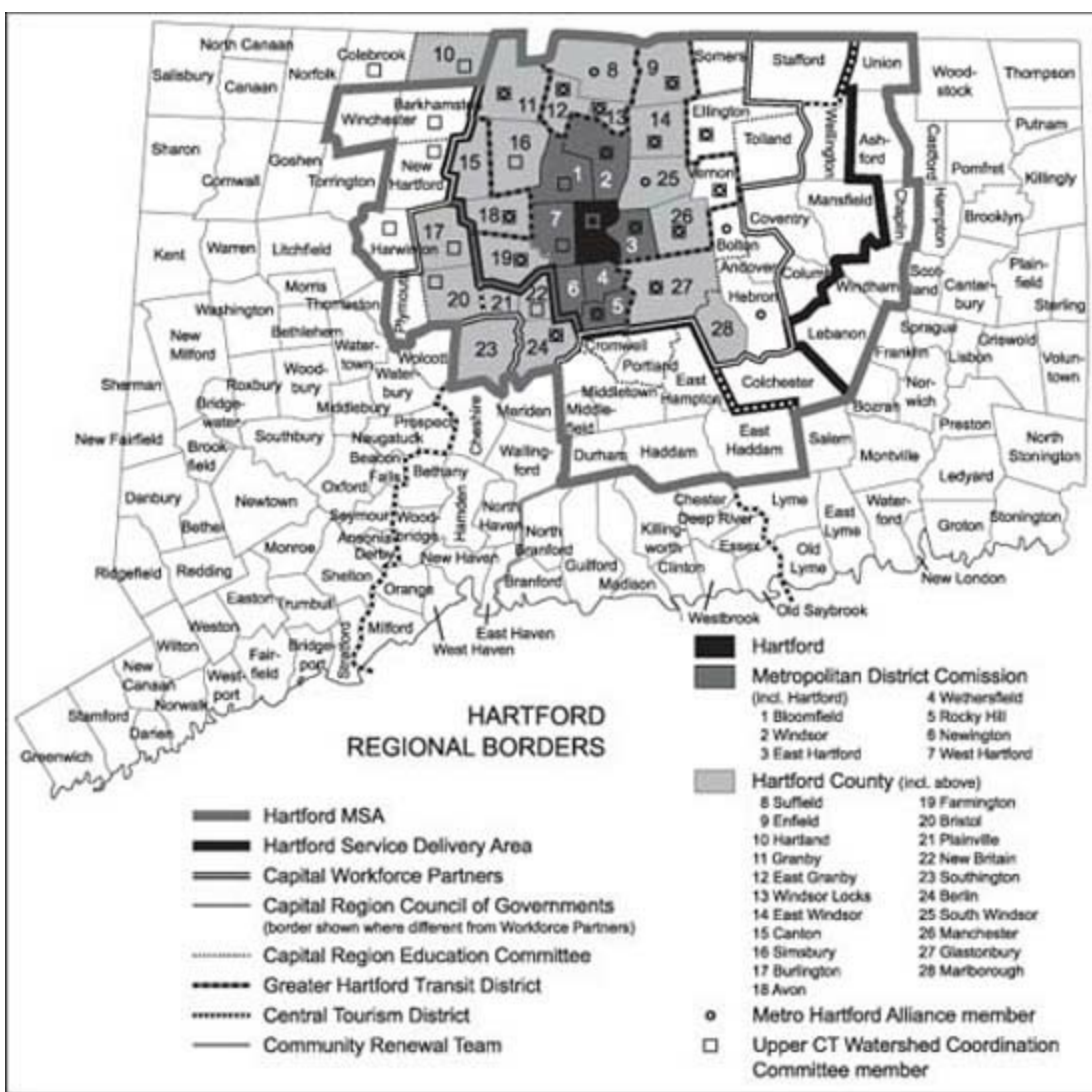
As globalization exerts greater influence on metropolitan cities, governing them is becoming increasingly difficult. Cities are essential to social, political, and economic reproduction but exist within the larger contexts of surrounding regions, national administration, and global competition. With more than half of the world’s 7 billion people now living in urban areas, some cities are facing challenges to governance associated with accelerated growth, and the emergence of massive concentrations of low-income populations. At the same time, others are witnessing growth just outside their borders and conflict in the metropolitan region. It has never been clearer that the economic and social welfare of the city and its surrounding metropolitan region are intimately tied together. To be successful, cities must reassess traditional governmental roles in an era of rapid change. This section evaluates the complex role that different levels of government play in governing the metropolitan city, financing the services it provides, and planning for its growth and redevelopment.

*Levels and borders of government.* A municipal government directly governs a central portion of the metropolitan city. This area is often much smaller than the metro region which encompasses

elements like suburbs and satellite cities, and is bounded by specific borders that are often difficult to expand. City governments provide services to residents and businesses within these borders. These services may include policing, snow removal, garbage disposal, and other necessities of urban life. City Hall also administers planning and policy to help organize the city and develop areas within its borders. As the urban agglomeration spills over official city borders, so too does some influence of City Hall. Downtowns and central business districts (CBDs) often remain a focal point of the metropolitan city despite decentralization and growing suburban influence due to their central location in the region, and function as a hub in transportation networks.

Above the local municipal government is commonly a county as in the US or small regional government in other places. This government has the potential more closely to fit the needs of the metropolitan city as its larger physical size can encompass an overgrown metropolitan region. The role of this level of government can take on many different forms. In New York State for example, there is a 'strong county' system where counties like Monroe act as redistributors of tax revenue from towns and cities within their borders, providing services and investing in areas of strategic interest. Rochester, the seat of Monroe County and primary metropolitan region, receives much of this investment. Other areas of the United States like New England have 'strong town' systems where the majority of taxes and political power remain within municipal borders. The uncooperative political nature of this type of metropolitan region has the potential to perpetuate spatial inequality. For example, the governing body of Hartford County of Connecticut was formally eliminated in 1960 during a period of substantial economic prosperity. New regional governance and service provision zones have since been created with overlapping or 'messy' boundaries, as seen in [Fig. 41.3](#). The outlying towns around the City of Hartford remain among the richest in the nation, while Hartford itself has become one of the poorest US cities. Given the huge disparities between a large metro region with 1.2 million people and Hartford's small municipal area of only 46.6 km<sup>2</sup> and 120,000 residents, the massive regional wealth is even more lopsided relative to Hartford's local poverty. Towns like those surrounding Hartford continue to resist contemporary attempts at regionalization, for fear of losing control of their tax base and role in local affairs and service provision.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, state governments have the power to override town interests that challenge a regional approach to governance and redistribution, but few have intervened.<sup>14</sup> National governments oversee all lower levels of governance and provide some, albeit decreasing, funding and support directly to local governments. During the economic hardship of the late 2000s, the US federal government stepped in to rescue bankrupt local governments like Camden, New Jersey when the crime-riddled city had run out of funds to operate its police force.<sup>15</sup>





**FIGURE 41.3** The Hartford region, US showcasing multiple borders of service delivery and ‘messy governance’. (Drawn by Nick Bacon.)

In contrast to the highly localized mode of governance in the United States, other countries have used forms of combined city-regional governance. For example, Chongqing became China’s youngest ‘direct controlled municipality’ in 1997 and now administers the entire municipal region of 82,000 km<sup>2</sup> and about 32 million people. With the ambitious goal of doubling the current population of 10 million in the urban core by 2020, the over-bounded Chongqing metropolitan region is experimenting with an orchestrated rural–urban conversion scheme that is historically unprecedented. Cases like Chongqing tend to be strategically important economic areas that receive special funding and planning efforts.

As is evidenced by these examples, the borders of governance often do not match the needs of a changing metropolitan city. This is especially true of the American context where cities face resistance and economic competition from towns and villages that border them. Decentralization has created the ‘exopolis’, metropolitan regions like Hartford with many residents and much of the wealth located outside the city limits.<sup>16</sup> Developing cities, especially those in a more top-down government environment like China have an easier time expanding their borders. Failure to expand urban borders has contributed to the malaise of cities like Detroit and Hartford (see earlier), which struggle with evaporating tax bases and severe social issues like urban violence and failing school systems. Cities with the ability and flexibility to extend their borders with the expanding metropolitan region have been the most successful in adapting to the current urban form.<sup>17</sup>

With decentralization and globalization, the trend of urban governance over the last twenty years or so has been towards neoliberal policy and development. Generally speaking, neoliberal policies push the city to be a fiscally responsible and market-conscious economic entity.<sup>18</sup> They stand in opposition to and move away from Keynesian redistributive policies, and advocate increased privatization and ‘entrepreneurialization’ of government. During the second author’s summer work in the City of Rochester’s Department of Neighbourhood and Business Development, the neoliberal policy and market-oriented approach was evident in both the projects the city supported and their emphasis on revenue creation. The director of the department emphasized the need to balance projects focused on building tax bases and more socially conscious neighbourhood development initiatives. In the end, earmarks on county and state development funding determined where much of the money was spent.

Today, businesses across the world are increasingly informed and mobile due to advances in information and transportation technology. They take into account numerous elements including taxes, services, amenities, infrastructure, and cost of living in choosing where to locate. This leads to intense competition between cities within and across national borders. Local governments increasingly act as business entities, evaluating their costs, revenue, and the quality of the services they provide. While investing in large-scale development and infrastructure projects can make a city more attractive to potential businesses, it requires large-scale funding and planning that is increasingly difficult to obtain from any source at the local level.

## **INFRASTRUCTURES OF THE METROPOLITAN CITY**

Cities are a testament to human knowledge, evolution, and ingenuity. They are the height of our ‘built environment’, complex places that rely on advanced infrastructure systems that humans have developed. This section looks at two categories of the physical infrastructure to clarify the important role that each plays in the activities and reproduction of the metropolitan city. Utilities infrastructure facilitates daily urban life through waste management and the delivery of essential utilities like electricity and water. Transportation infrastructure helps make the metropolitan city viable through the efficient movement of people and goods, and by connecting it to other metropolitan regions. (Information infrastructure is also becoming increasingly important in and for cities, but due to its primarily private ownership, we leave it out of this discussion.) In order to manage their high population densities and compete economically on a global scale, cities must constantly maintain and update their infrastructure systems. Growth of cities and metropolitan regions can overburden older systems, and challenges local government to develop infrastructure to accommodate population growth. Economic and social resources, however, often determine the location and quality of infrastructure development, contributing to inequality in the metropolitan city. A look at the source of planning and funding for infrastructure in the metropolitan city sheds light on its characteristic forms as well as economic and social implications.

Public utility infrastructure encompasses the provision of running water, energy, and waste management. For the purposes of this discussion we only deal with utilities infrastructure with large-scale physical elements as opposed to service-based infrastructure like garbage collection. Large infrastructure elements like water mains are commonly buried underground in cities for the sake of saving space, and safety concerns. This however makes maintenance, development, and redevelopment of public utilities costly and cumbersome in these locations. In large developing cities, public utilities infrastructures are often located above ground and visibly exposed. This can

contribute to safety and physical wellbeing as critical elements of the urban experience and quality of life in these cities. In these ways, the extent and quality of utilities infrastructure is intimately associated with the size and health of the metropolitan city.

Lags in the growth of municipal infrastructure when compared to population growth can have adverse effects including pollution of the environment and threats to public health (see above, [Ch. 37](#)). This can be seen in many developing cities, especially in Asia and Africa, where populations are growing at staggering rates due to rural-to-urban migration. Migrants often form slum communities that lack planned infrastructure. These communities have limited or no access to clean water, sewers, or waste removal and are often overlooked or intentionally excluded from development projects. The massive Dharavi slum in Mumbai is a classic example of infrastructure inequality, featuring open sewers, limited access to electricity, and inflated prices for clean drinking water. These elements contribute to the impoverished conditions and health concerns that slum dwellers all over the world live with on a daily basis. While many slums like Dharavi seem to persist and are tolerated by government, investment in municipal infrastructure has been shown to directly contribute to reduction in poverty in slum communities in Nigeria and South America.<sup>19</sup> In this way investment in infrastructure can reduce income inequalities and transform slums and incorporate some of their vibrant informal and underground economies into the larger synergies of metropolitan cities in the long run.<sup>20</sup>

Lags in infrastructure can also hinder real-estate development and growth of planned residential areas. ‘New Town’ development exhibits a prime example of this phenomenon. Urban planners in many countries have pushed these artificially developed satellite cities as a solution to overpopulation in dense urban areas, directing populations away from overpopulated central cities. Infrastructure has been slow to catch up with real estate for some of these projects causing major delays or completed buildings to remain vacant for long periods of time.<sup>21</sup> Perception and reality about the lack of infrastructure in these formerly rural areas have combined to dissuade some businesses and residents from moving to new towns (see Shanghai earlier).

While utility infrastructure plays an integral part in the health and welfare of the residents of the metropolitan city, transportation technologies are essential to commerce and travel within and between metropolitan regions. Within their downtown areas, many cities have public transportation systems such as trolleys or subway systems. Extending into the metropolitan region, public transport can take the form of light rail, bus lines, or other transport infrastructure. Private transportation also plays a major role in the metropolitan city and region, in terms of cars using more and more of urban roads and freeways. Expressways and turnpikes snake across the United States connecting a vast network of metropolitan economies. While European and Asian metropolitan cities also have extensive private highway networks, they utilize public transport systems to a much higher degree than their US counterparts.

Public transportation systems play an important role in many metropolitan cities. Early public transit systems were designed to help circulate residents and workers within downtown areas, and later to help connect residential areas in the region to jobs and amenities in the city centre. As urban areas have become increasingly polycentric, a phenomenon especially prevalent in the United States, public transit struggles to serve a more complex metropolitan region. Compared to private transport, public transportation has the potential to be more environmentally sustainable, cost effective, and essential in limiting traffic congestion and pollution in cities. High density ensures that the demand for public transport options is maximized, and creates the potential for individual fares to be minimized.

Public transportation systems are also a major resource to the urban poor who are unable to afford private cars, and allow for commutes of greater distances than walking or riding bicycles. According to Liu and Guan, under ideal flow conditions public transit best serves commutes of 3–8 km in Chinese cities, and 4–9 km in congested scenarios.<sup>22</sup> In New York City, public transport is used to complete about a third of all trips. Despite their advantages, public transport infrastructures require a high degree of public planning and funding to build and operate. Because of their high costs, public transportation projects are often achieved through public–private partnerships where the private sector receives toll revenue or other exclusive rights after assisting in the initial investment.

The US highway and road system has stood as the epitome of private transportation infrastructure for decades but will very soon be overtaken by China’s national trunk highway system in total length. The need for paved high-speed roads in America grew with the widespread use of the automobile that began in the early 1900s with the introduction of affordable cars like Henry Ford’s Model T. As the automobile became cheaper, more reliable, and faster than other modes of travel, the urban physical form was forced to adapt through street widening projects and other innovations. Access-limited highways would become the dominant method to get cars in and out of the city quickly and efficiently. Eisenhower’s Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 put forth the first major federal funding for highway construction, initially designed to connect America’s cities for strategic military purposes. The highway system helped connect America’s metropolitan regions in a tighter network of trade and commerce aided by the growth of the trucking industry. The amount and proportion of goods transported by 18-wheelers has grown substantially since the 1950s. The highways also had the unintended effect of separating home and work into greater distances. Easier commutes, combined with new home financing options helped create a powerful draw to suburban single-family real estate. (See [Ch. 42](#) for more on this topic.)

Like municipal infrastructure, good transportation infrastructure has the power to draw investment and development. For firms and industry, it means easy transportation for workers, potential customers, and shipping. Urban residents need a good transport system to get to and from work as well as getting to other locations. Service business and retail tend to locate themselves close to these two groups. Development has been shown to cluster near transportation infrastructure, especially in close proximity to key points like highway exits, interchanges, and train stations. Within local and regional contexts, suburban shopping malls are often built near highway interchanges, and have outcompeted traditional retail corridors through ease of access by car to a large variety of stores.

While it can foster development and investment, transportation infrastructure can also have negative consequences for the urban physical form. Due to the nature of federal financing, most of the original planning and development of America’s highways came down to engineers and high-level state and federal officials. While providing some input, city planners and politicians watched as urban and interstate highways were built through cities with little thought for the undesirable consequences including the loss of historic neighbourhoods and displacement of disadvantaged groups. In downtown Hartford, Connecticut, I-91 runs along the Connecticut River cutting the city off from the riverfront. Infrastructure like highways and rail lines can serve as physical and psychological barriers that divide up spaces in cities, often isolating poor residents. During the 1960s, highway expansion contributed to rising racial tensions in America’s cities as sections of low-income African American neighbourhoods were seized and demolished through eminent domain law for highway right of way construction. Similarly, China’s urban highways have been built with little regard for its poor and powerless residents who live in the way.

Since municipal and transportation infrastructures are critical for the sustainability and health of a metropolitan city, financing them can be especially difficult for cities in demographic and economic decline. Growing cities on the other hand have a greater ease in financing their infrastructure projects through a healthy tax base and other revenue sources, but must plan for and anticipate growth before it happens. No matter the type of city and its larger context, it can be difficult to convince short-sighted politicians and investors to commit to projects without tangible benefits or returns. A long-term, big picture outlook is required for infrastructure development and redevelopment.

Transportation infrastructure redevelopment is a major challenge facing the United States today given its aging and under-maintained highways, subways, and bridges, broadcast to the nation by the collapse of the I-35 West bridge in Minneapolis in 2007.<sup>23</sup> Efforts to expand and repair the US highway infrastructure have been met with political opposition, budgetary restrictions, and decreasing federal support. Alternative funding options are needed to produce the capital necessary for maintenance and construction. Road tolls are one of the oldest methods, extracting small fees from travellers for each use. Public-private development of highways has also been experimented with in some parts of the United States and in other countries. Typically this involves partnering on initial investment and agreements on splitting future toll revenue. Other highway systems have been funded by groups that receive exclusive advertising or naming rights.

Chinese cities are overpopulated and recent increases in private automobile ownership are causing serious congestion problems. China is now the largest market for automobiles in the world, and while its freeway system may soon be longer than that of the United States, it is still inadequate to meet the rapidly growing demand. Lasting ten days and stretching 100 km, the Beijing-Zhangjiakou freeway traffic jam in 2010 made all too clear the lagging road system relative to the massive volume of vehicle flow. The number of traffic accidents in developing cities is proportionally high due to high population density, rapidly increasing vehicle traffic, and weak enforcement of traffic regulations. In Mumbai alone, about thirteen pedestrians die each day crossing dangerous intersections and streets.<sup>24</sup> Policy favouring the growth of private cars while investing in some public transport infrastructure is setting developing countries onto the same path that has limited efficient metropolitan integration in developed countries.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the contemporary era, we cannot understand cities and their challenges fully without understanding their increasingly complex metropolitan contexts. The most obvious reason for rethinking the city as the metropolitan city is the broad importance of scale, especially in developing countries where the largest cities or mega-cities have been experiencing accelerated metropolitan expansion. Regardless of the focused attention on the tremendous size of developing mega-cities, scale by itself reveals little about the underlying challenges facing these cities. That is why we have used scale as a mere launching pad to explore four salient dimensions of the contemporary metropolitan city.

With growing metropolitan scale, the distribution of wealth and poverty has become more regionally differentiated and fragmented. For developed countries, metropolitan inequality has undergone a more complex spatial reconfiguration through the shifting balance between the further decline of manufacturing and uneven vitality of advanced services in central cities versus suburban rings. The Detroit and New York metropolitan regions appear to represent the two polar ends of a wider and longer spectrum of spatial inequality. In developing countries, wealth remains more

concentrated in the urban core of very large cities but finds more company with poverty due to a greater influx of rural migrants. Early metropolitan extension has begun to draw some wealth out to mix with less developed hinterlands, as exemplified by Shanghai.

While globalization can be seen as a macro-structural economic force capable of reshaping the contemporary metropolitan city, it makes more sense to view it as penetrating the city from below and the city-region sideways. The bottom-up pressure from global forces, in conjunction with local factors like government policy, can open up new development opportunities for cities that were once non-global. The horizontal influence from globalization manifests itself through the accentuation of the regional tendencies and outcomes of urban development, both within and between national boundaries. Both effects, illustrated through the examples from China, India, Europe, and Africa, help embed the metropolitan city more deeply into the spatial nexus of global–local economic ties.

In the face of sharper and more complex spatial divisions of wealth and stronger local and regional effects of globalization, the traditional role of municipal government in redistributing resources is never more challenged and eroded. The highly localized municipal government in the United States confronts the greater challenge of how to govern more regionally as capital flows intensively across local political boundaries and services need to be delivered more efficiently at the larger regional scale. While this is an acute problem for cities and towns in the state of Connecticut, which no longer has county government, the misalignment of transnational and trans-local economic flows and local administrative boundaries and powers is more widespread, reinforcing the tension between the autonomous locality as a competitor in the marketplace and the growing imperative of cooperating between local governments.

Finally, the growing metropolitanization of the city poses greater challenges to the provision and integration of the infrastructure of both utilities and transportation. We have seen the irony of many developed economies like the United States falling behind in building and maintaining physical infrastructure, while developing economies such as China race ahead with a massive build-up of railroads and highways. The reality however is more complex. The wealthy government of China may be able to finance all the infrastructure build-up, but it has not ensured its quality (exemplified by the recent deadly accidents involving high-speed trains) and nor has it resolved the coordination with the rapid growth of other sectors such as the rapid expansion of automobiles to avoid severe traffic congestion.

Through the four analytical lenses, we have extended our understanding of the metropolitan city from its simpler past, as portrayed by a number of other chapters in this book, to its more complex present. This integrated framework should also help us follow the trajectory of metropolitan development as it unfolds in the rest of the 21st century.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This chapter was a product of true collaboration that developed during 2009–2012 when Henry Fitts (Trinity Class of 2012) worked as a student research assistant at the Center for Urban and Global Studies at Trinity College. Xiangming Chen would like to thank the Mellon Foundation and Trinity College Mellon Challenge for Urban and Global Studies for financial support that has made it possible for Trinity students to participate in valuable and fruitful research opportunities. Comments and suggestions for the earlier drafts from Peter Clark, Nick Bacon, Tomas de'Medici, Michael Magdelinkas, and some participants at the Conference on 'Cities in Global Perspective,' University

of Pennsylvania, April 14–16, 2011, are appreciated.

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# SUBURBS

JUSSI S. JAUHAINEN

THE explosive growth of the world's urban population is inextricably linked with suburbanization.<sup>1</sup> Massive suburbanization has been a global phenomenon, making suburbia the true 21st-century city. As we will see, this development is linked to long-term social, political, economic, and technological processes in cities and beyond.<sup>2</sup> But suburbs can be dated from ancient times. For this reason it is important to study their evolution in historical perspective. Here the focus is on the modern period, starting with the early 19th-century industrial city and continuing the story through the great expansion of the post-World War II era up to the present day. The first section discusses changing interpretations and theories about suburbs, both unplanned and planned. A typology of suburbs is then presented with examples from different continents, followed by an explanatory framework to help understand the massive and complex development of suburbs.<sup>3</sup> A comparative approach helps to understand both the specificity and the pervasiveness of suburbs in the modern and contemporary era.

## CHANGING INTERPRETATIONS

There is no authoritative or orthodox definition of the 'suburb'. Early definitions were rather basic, emphasizing the prefix 'sub'. Even today, 'suburb' is most commonly thought to mean a dispersed area adjacent to a city, having a lower population density, limited industry, commerce, and retailing, while its inhabitants, the suburbanites, have modest means. According to this view, suburbs lack the proper amenities of the city, thus making them a less significant area without proper identity or self-government. A pejorative tone has often been used when discussing suburbs or suburbanites.

Much of the older analysis of the suburbs was based on case studies of particular places. Research has identified the emergence and the trajectory of suburbs dating back to ancient towns and cities in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Rome. It has also shed light on extra-mural communities in medieval times and on the growth of major suburbs around early modern towns, especially capital cities like Paris or London.<sup>4</sup> For the modern era various scholars have argued for the bland homogeneity of segregated low-density suburbs, especially those in the United States. They presented the modern suburbs as places where people lose their community ties.<sup>5</sup> In this older literature there was much less interest in the internal diversity, power, and governance of the suburbs or how and with and what effect former urban and rural communities with their own identities were swallowed up by suburban expansion.

However, there is currently a new wave of research on the history of the suburbs with novel approaches emerging. Interest in particular places is being replaced by an analysis of broader societal processes from various perspectives.<sup>6</sup> This 'new suburban history' seeks to escape from the traditional urban-suburban dichotomy and to challenge the orthodoxies of the earlier literature. In place of the stereotype of a homogeneous non community, suburbs are being explored as increasingly differentiated places of many communities and identities.

The new research interest also reflects the changing world of the suburb in contemporary society.

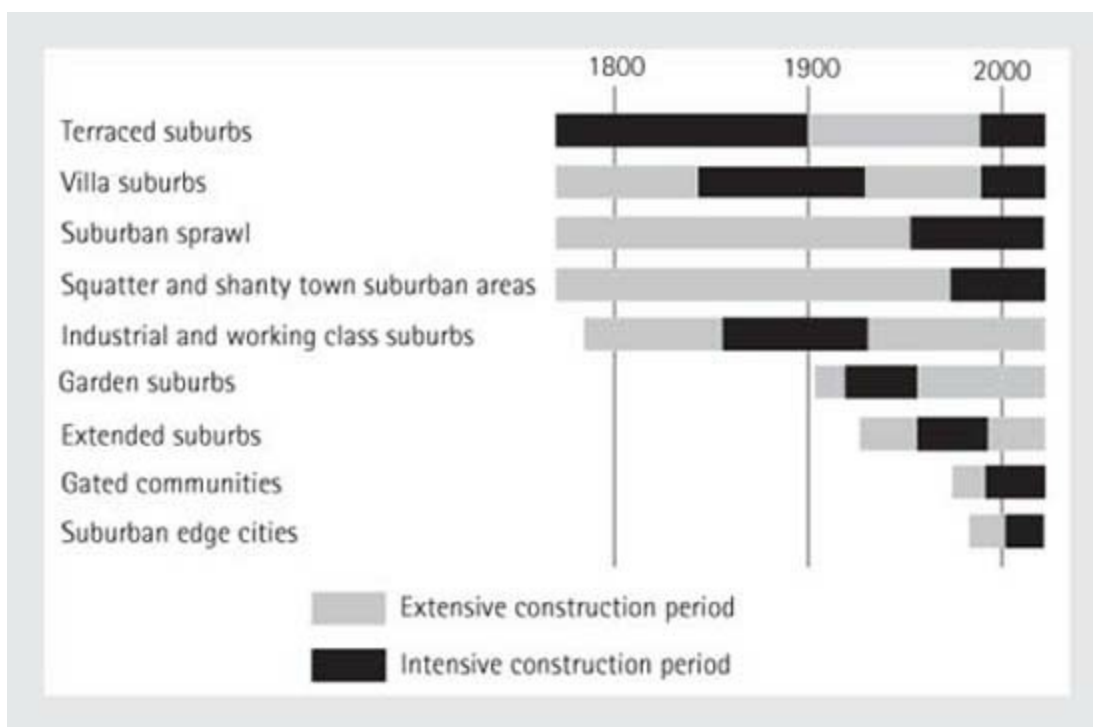
Many metropolises around the world incorporate suburban areas with over a million inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> People commute or migrate from the central city to the suburbs for better work, shopping, or leisure opportunities. Population densities in the suburbs may be substantially higher than in the emptying and expensive downtown business districts. Suburban areas have become very significant in economic terms, especially in the vast, fragmented, and multimodal metropolises of the United States.<sup>8</sup> Looked at closely, contemporary suburbs decompose into many different areas. Various novel terms, such as boomurbs, edge cities, edgeless cities, exurbs, megalopolis, metroburbia, new polycentric metropolis, urban fringe, and the like have surfaced to describe this complex situation in more developed countries as well as the varieties of suburban areas in less developed countries.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, a particularly sensitive issue is the perception of the suburbs. While suburbs have been conventionally portrayed in relation to the city proper, as somewhere mentally and physically inbetween the city and the countryside, inferior or subordinate to the city, recent work has shown an increasing interest in studying how the suburbs are seen from within. Suburbia looks different on the ground compared to the view from above or from outside. This new perspective is not confined to research, but can be found in the popular media, television series and movies, as well as, for example, in the suburbanites' self-broadcasting on YouTube. To be a suburbanite is no longer something to be embarrassed about, but constitutes separate and distinctive identities. Suburbs are heterogeneous sites and offer alternative discourses and perspectives to central city ideologies. The suburbs are rising on the public as well as historical agenda.

### **SUBURBS IN THE MODERN ERA: A TYPOLOGY**

While suburbanization is driven by many interrelated and general economic, political, and other long-term processes, it is also shaped by national and local conditions: thus topography, natural resources, and other locally contingent factors modify how the built suburbs develop.<sup>10</sup> Since the 19th century, suburbanization has been an essential part of accelerated urban growth. Though individuals have populated the expansive suburbs, the major drivers of expansion have been market forces along with the state, municipalities, and other public authorities. Public and private development as well as planning have fostered population decentralization with regional development policies, municipal land-use plans, and related housing and job creation all contributing to suburbanization.<sup>11</sup> The temporal development of suburbia varies spatially: a trend visible in one suburb may appear later in another context or country.

There is a spectrum of suburban development. At one end one can identify unplanned, unregulated suburbs, at the other planned, regulated suburbs. Nonetheless one can identify a basic typology of modern suburbs including terraced suburbs; villa suburbs; industrial and working-class suburbs; garden suburbs; extended suburbs; gated communities; squatter and shanty town suburban areas; suburban sprawl; and suburban edge cities. The typology (see [Fig. 42.1](#)) addresses the spatial and temporal development of the suburbs but cannot be exhaustive due to the diversity and dynamism of suburbanization over time and space. Therefore by necessity the categories are to a certain extent flexible and overlapping. Moreover, suburbs in one category are not exactly similar in different parts of the world and especially over time. Some suburbs born unplanned convert later into planned areas and some planned suburban areas fall into unregulated sprawl.



**FIGURE 42.1** Typology of suburbs from the 18th century to the present.

*Terraced suburbs* first emerged in Britain and France during the 17th and 18th centuries, mainly in the capital cities. Thus the West End of London saw the growth of important planned or semi-planned terraced squares for the elite classes and similar developments are also seen in the New Town of Edinburgh towards the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century suburban terraces—usually without squares—became a major form of housing for the middle-, white collar, and artisan classes. In south London, for instance the Victorian suburb of Camberwell became an extensive area of terrace-lined streets with individually decorated housing façades and small plots of land for gardens.<sup>12</sup> Terraced row houses for respectable citizens also proliferated on the outskirts of Belgian and Dutch towns and in major North American cities like New York and Philadelphia. These inner suburban areas of Western cities often experienced degradation and decline during the middle decades of the 20th century, as urban respectability increasingly moved to new outer suburbs and beyond. With reurbanization from the later 20th century, such areas have become gentrified and even smart once more.

*Villa suburbs* for the fashionable classes with spacious detached houses and often large walled gardens already appear on the periphery of West European cities before the end of the 18th century, reflecting new attitudes to privacy and nature and a growing upper-class flight from the dirt and noise of the city as well as from the growing working class. These areas became symbolically a sort of segregated green ghetto dedicated to the elite, as Lewis Mumford noted, and with a gender-specific social life. By 1900 spacious villa suburbs had proliferated on the edges of many Western cities, both large and small, their houses often exhibiting an exotic mix of architectural styles.<sup>13</sup> Romanticist architectural trends favoured natural urbanism and straight lines were increasingly avoided in street planning to create an aesthetic continuum. In the 20th century new suburban development, de-urbanization, and densification led to the decline of many of these villa areas, but as with early terraced suburbs, they experienced physical, social, and visual upgrading in the latter decades of the 20th century, and became once again very popular among the affluent. Villa suburbs have benefited from new trends in historical preservation and environmental conservation as well as post-modernist fashions for the pastoral and the picturesque.<sup>14</sup>

*Industrial and working-class suburbs* have their roots in the transformation of the modern city in Europe and North America during the 19th century. Rapid disorganized growth and a deficit in infrastructure investment caused problems in hygiene, housing, and other aspects of social life perceived negatively. Manchester was the archetype of the early industrial town with its challenges, made widely known in the mid-19th century by Friedrich Engels.<sup>15</sup> Urban centres could not accommodate the population of a growing industrial society. The situation was aggravated by the development of central business districts, railways, and public buildings and amenities in city centres, leading to a major reduction in the housing supply there. In addition, the growth of large-scale factory production, often in new bigger sites on the periphery of towns, created the need for housing for workers near their jobs. While many early working-class districts grew up initially as shanty towns, as for instance around the new factories in the northern outskirts of Paris, already in the 19th century there was an increasing trend for the planning of industrial suburbs. An early example, incorporating some ideas of an industrial suburb, was that of the Catalan engineer Ildefonso Cerdà who created a large extension plan for Barcelona in the mid-19th century. The key issue was to open Barcelona to industrial development by creating enlarged suburban areas that could accommodate the workforce for a growing industrial city. The planned area was to extend from the dense central city and its recently demolished city walls and to absorb the surrounding villages up to almost ten kilometres away. The plan was based on a geometric spatial and urban design with repetitive hexagonal blocks. It was also a project of social engineering and environmental sustainability attempting to integrate workers and other social groups and provide access to sanitation, greenery, drinking water, and the like.<sup>16</sup> More or less planned, industrial suburbs are found in other West European cities before and after World War I, sometimes linked to large industrial companies: thus in eastern Berlin there was a proliferation of industrial or working-class districts including Siemensstadt for workers for the Siemens company.

A key 20th-century planning figure was the Swiss-French architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier. His Modernist vision was to tear down the existing densely built and outdated historical city centres and dense inner suburbs and to construct new modern vertical cities there for the business and public sector and privileged residential classes.<sup>17</sup> For suburban dwellers who worked in the outer industrial zone—the industrial city—Le Corbusier proposed planned industrial suburbs following repetitive and standardized geometric layouts with prefabricated industrialized housing.<sup>18</sup> These areas, which he named ‘garden cities’,<sup>19</sup> emphasized the spatial order of standardization, geometric lines, and modern technology to cope with the increasing pace of modern life. This spatial order would enhance the moral life of the suburbanites.

Only a few plans of Le Corbusier were developed as designed. Nevertheless, Modernist principles influenced the spread of industrial and working-class suburbs during the 20th century. In the Soviet Union the state built standardized residential districts for the workers (*microrraions*), in which multi-storey housing, public services, green areas, and transport were provided. Their construction had already started in the 1920s, but the major development took place in the 1950s–1980s all over the Soviet Union from Lasnamägi in Tallinn (Estonia) to Vladivostok (Russia) near North Korea and Japan. Suburbanization was restricted and the border between rural and urban areas remained clear. In the outer area there were areas for small summer cottages that are nowadays being converted into all-year use and they become part of the suburbs. In Western Europe after World War II, in order to deal with acute housing shortages, the state and urban authorities undertook massive construction of planned suburbs for the lower classes, based on a Modernist division of space into housing, industry,

and leisure uses with mobility underpinned by large-scale public transport. Many of these large suburban apartment and housing suburbs were segregated socially and physically from the main urban community, were poorly built, and deteriorated quickly.<sup>20</sup> Today, many such areas have widespread social deprivation and discontent and need comprehensive renewal.

*Garden suburbs* were another response to the problems of industrial cities.<sup>21</sup> Inspiration came from the book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* by the self-trained planning theorist Ebenezer Howard.<sup>22</sup> For Howard, newly built garden cities outside big cities would create a good life for inhabitants through the fusion of the best aspects of urban and rural life while avoiding their problems.<sup>23</sup> Jobs, higher wages, civic life, social interaction, traditional collective community values, clean air, natural beauty, and open space would be available for up to 32,000 people. Functional, social, and aesthetic development was carefully designed with the idea of establishing harmonious small-scale communities.<sup>24</sup> The early 20th century saw the construction of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities outside London and Wythenshawe near Manchester. But Howard's ideas saw their greatest impact in the spread of garden suburbs (often confusingly called garden cities) across Europe, North America, and beyond. The first proper garden suburb project in the United States was Forest Hill Gardens in Queens, New York, in 1908. Influenced by this as well as Howard's ideas, Clarence Stein and Clarence Perry were involved in the making of Radburn garden city, part of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, in 1929. In Finland after World War II the architects Otto-Iivari Meurman and Aarne Ervi created a fusion between the garden suburb idea and Modernist Functionalism. The result, Tapiola, had reasonably priced housing, efficient public services, a beautiful natural landscape, and good connections to the nearby Finnish capital city of Helsinki. Garden suburbs appeared also in Australia and around the cities of less-advanced economies, for example, Ciudad Jardín Lomas de Palomar in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the quartier de l'Étoile in Beirut, Lebanon, or the neighbourhood of Garden-City in Cairo, Egypt.

*Extended suburbs* also have their roots in early 20th-century planning theory. The North American architect Frank Lloyd Wright envisaged the low-density and low-rise *Broadacre City* in the 1920s–1930s. He presented the idea in his book *The Disappearing City* in 1932. Wright believed that a specific spatial order would produce a new moral and social order combined with individual freedom and democracy. The plan was for the production of extended spatially segregated or zoned suburban areas merging town and countryside. The result would be a healthy, visually pleasant, and culturally uplifting, semi-urban environment. The original small-scale plan covered over sixteen square miles divided into four areas that each contained many different housing types and facilities. Families would live in detached housing having a one-acre plot of land. This would give people greater individual control over their environment and foster a sense of community. There would be a train connection but the majority of inhabitants would use private cars in a network of landscaped freeways and parkways having large shopping malls at their junctions.<sup>25</sup>

Wright's original ideas were subsequently modified and applied to create large-scale extended suburbs around many North American cities. Local planning regulations and the policies of the Federal Housing Administration, a federal agency established in 1934 that insured inexpensive loans to enable the construction of suburban housing across the United States, supported their development. In addition, from the 1930s the federal government spent heavily on interstate and intra-urban highways that enabled large numbers of households to move from the inner city to nascent low-density suburban areas.<sup>26</sup> The private sector was also actively involved in this process. These standardized

suburbs became dominated by detached single-family homes, so-called sitcom suburbs.

The most famous post-war example of an extended suburb was Levittown, New York, built by the private developers Abraham, William, and Albert Levitt. Levittown became a major prototype of mass-produced suburbia containing by the 1960s over 17,000 homes for 82,000 people. The relatively inexpensive houses were located on individual plots creating a very large, repetitive, and socially and ethnically segregated suburban area. The vast majority of inhabitants were young, married, middle-income white couples.<sup>27</sup> However, cohesive social networking overturned the myth of standardized suburbs as non-community areas.<sup>28</sup> Later suburban housing projects showed a more mixed pattern of social and racial segregation. Nevertheless, the careful selection of wealthy inhabitants exists in many smaller private suburban projects in the form of gated communities.

*Gated communities* are wealthy, consumption-oriented, socially homogeneous, privately governed, and segregated from their surroundings by a closed perimeter of walls and fences and strict entrance control. If extended suburbs are primarily a North American phenomenon, gated communities are increasingly global in their distribution and can also be found on the outskirts of cities in Latin America, South Africa, the Middle East, Russia, and China. Complex patterns of proximity and connection exist between gated community associations, inhabitants, and the surroundings in which the service staff reside. In less developed countries they frequently stand as fortified bulwarks of affluent urbanity against the perceived disorder of the deprived squatter and slum suburbs that encircle the city (see also above, [Ch. 36](#)).

*Squatter and shanty town suburban areas* outside the city core, are globally very numerous and visible, and currently mainly exist in less developed countries. A spatial poverty trap exists consisting of severe job restrictions, gender disparities, worsening living conditions, social exclusion and marginalization, lack of social interaction, and a high incidence of crime.<sup>29</sup> Such areas have a long historical pedigree and can be found from early times in most regions of the world. In the 19th century many European and North American cities had shanty towns on their outskirts: one finds them for instance around Paris, Berlin, and Athens.<sup>30</sup> However, their number and extent have risen with urbanization. Depending on the history, context, size, and development stage, these areas have different names such as slum, *barrio*, *favela*, shanty town, etc.<sup>31</sup> Starting frequently as ribbon development on the main roads into the city, these peripheral areas often come to combine formal private rental and public housing, unlicensed self-build housing, informal private subdivisions and squatter shacks, hostels, refugee camps, and pavement dwellers. In metropolitan regions some of these slum districts are inside the city limits but most are outside, often far outside.<sup>32</sup> For example, though major Indian cities Delhi, Chennai, and Mumbai differ in their economic activities, in each the poverty hotspots are located in the suburbs.<sup>33</sup>

In 2010, in the world there were over 200,000 slums having over 1,000 million inhabitants (for the notorious Kibera slum, Nairobi, see [Plate 33.2](#), p. 635). One-third of urban dwellers in less developed countries live in slums. The global number of slum inhabitants is expected to double by 2030.<sup>34</sup> Materially, these areas are dominated by improvised and self-build dwellings constructed from scrap materials with inadequate infrastructure. Often, at least initially, the areas lack public services such as proper sanitation, electricity, and water. Inhabitants do not own the land and have limited security. However, the picture is not all bleak: in more established districts inhabitants can live with self-respect and there is a sense of community identity, quite different from the pejorative portrayal of such districts from outside. The squatter suburbs often experience a cycle of

development: as they become more established and mature, such areas may acquire basic services, inhabitants acquire title deeds, and they turn into ordinary working-class suburbs, as one can see for instance in Latin American cities (see above, Chs. 26, 36). With the relentless inflow of people, many areas merge into megaslums as continuous belts of informal housing and poverty at the urban fringe of large metropolises.<sup>35</sup> Newcomers frequently live tens of kilometres away from the city centre. Nevertheless, globally a majority of the urban poor live in medium, small, and even very small towns.<sup>36</sup>

China is a special case as it transforms from a socialist regulated urban system to a modernizing urban economy. Under the Communist party, the state has very much regulated migration and suburbanization. Since the economic reforms of the 1980s these controls have become less effective or more selective. In general, the pro-growth policies, among which is a focus on improving the lives of the poor, have resulted in a reduction in the number of slum dwellings.<sup>37</sup> However, millions of temporary unregistered and less qualified migrant jobseekers (*nongmingong*) are forced to stay at the urban fringe, many of them in improvised and very densely built housing areas, especially in large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. By contrast, in North America and Europe suburban slums have become rare since World War II. However, recent immigration flows from North Africa to Europe have resulted in shanty towns in certain port cities, such as Patras in Greece and Naples in Italy, as well as in large capital cities attracting immigration, such as Madrid and Lisbon. In addition, poor minorities, for example, Roma, are often forced to live in shanty towns, especially in many larger south-eastern European cities.

*Suburban sprawl* is very common in the contemporary period, albeit its origins date from earlier. Particularly important has been the rise of large metropolises in the late 20th century (see above, Ch. 41). Most unplanned and semi-planned growth and development has occurred away from the city centres because of land and housing prices. It is the most common type of suburbanization in more developed countries. For example, between 1970 and 1990, the Los Angeles metropolitan area grew by 45 per cent while its built surface expanded by 300 per cent. Suburban sprawl also exists in less developed countries. In every continent, especially in larger cities, the surface area grows much faster than population, for example, in Antanarivo in Madagascar, Beijing in China, Cairo in Egypt, Johannesburg in South Africa, and Mexico City in Mexico. There the suburban sprawl also consists of both middle-class up-scale sprawl and low quality housing and amenities for the poor overlapping with shanty towns and squatter suburbs.<sup>38</sup> Market forces, consumerism, and public policy support the growth of this kind of sprawl. Often private developers and builders promote such areas because of easy access to cheap land. Families are eager to move there because of better, more spacious housing and greater access to nature. There is also competition for taxpayers by municipalities on the metropolitan fringe, so the planning authorities passively tolerate it by loosening regulation and even support it through road construction and zoning regulation. Sprawl forms a particular suburban landscape notable for a mixture of housing. There are traditional houses, functional housing units, and post-modern villas, often close to one another. A strong sense of community identity or social networking is at a discount in these sprawling areas, though they sometimes incorporate planned developments including extended suburbs and gated communities. Suburban sprawl also exists in less developed countries but here the poor quality of housing and amenities means they overlap with shanty towns and squatter suburbs.

*Suburban edge cities* at the urban periphery have become economically very important since the 1980s, first in the United States and later in other more developed countries. Famous edge cities are

Tyson's Corner west of Washington, D.C., and Century City in Los Angeles. The development of these multifunctional areas was originally based on the decentralization of people, housing, employment, manufacturing, and services from the city centre and the inner urban areas. In the post-industrial city, many central areas have lost their economic functions to the shopping megamalls, logistical centres, and technology parks in the suburbs. Later edge cities became areas of direct investment without connection to the downtown areas. Some authors refer to this as the post-suburban period.<sup>39</sup> In Europe, there are fewer edge cities and the public sector has been more involved in their development. They are normally found as specialized centres in larger metropolitan areas such as the Randstad in the Netherlands and Val de Seine and Noisy-le-Grand in Paris.<sup>40</sup>

In recent years, metropolitan decentralization has continued in and beyond edge cities. Various kinds of new suburban forms and functions have appeared. *Edgeless* cities consist of low-density commercial and residential development. *Boomburbs* are fast-growing municipalities without business centres.<sup>41</sup> Both areas have particular political, economic, social, and spatial elements such as fragmented local jurisdictions, politics of separation, service-based information economy, and heterogeneous and segregated communities in a spatial setting of inequality. These are found around many United States metropolitan areas, for example, in Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Dallas.<sup>42</sup> Sometimes the edge cities have become functionally independent from the rest of the urban area, but they seldom possess political autonomy. All these areas are examples of the new suburbia, whose identity, functions, and physical realm no longer develop in direct reference to the old urban core.

## RECENT TRENDS: CHANGING SUBURBANIZATION AND THE MODERN SUBURBS

As we have seen, many kinds of suburbs have emerged over time. Their development is related to major and intertwined quantitative, qualitative, and symbolic changes in the process of suburbanization.

The first key change regarding suburbanization is quantitative: the explosive growth of urban dwellers. Whereas in 1950, the world's urban population numbered around 729 million, by 2010, it had almost quintupled to 3,486 million people. The rapidly enlarging suburbs have absorbed much of this urban growth.<sup>43</sup> A growing number of the population lives in the suburbs.<sup>44</sup>

Since 1990, the largest absolute urban growth has taken place in East and south-central Asia, South America, and western Africa—see above, [Chs. 26, 28, 35](#)—driven by strong economic growth, especially in Asia, and the rise of cities as governmental and business centres. Here metropolitan cities are usually very extensive, with an urban core surrounded by vast areas of suburbs of different types including shanty towns, gated communities, edge cities, and the like. In the less developed countries, capital cities host immensely large, fast-growing slums and shanty towns without adequate infrastructure and with everyday problems of survival.

In more developed countries, suburbanization has continued to take place, despite increasingly sluggish rates of urbanization since the 1970s. In the United States suburban growth, already important from the 1920s, accelerated from the 1950s, facilitated by the rapid growth of private car ownership. All types of suburbia—extended suburbs, suburban sprawl, gated communities, and edge cities—have proliferated. Massive suburbanization also took place in Western Europe, but at a less rapid pace and varying between countries. Britain was in the suburbanization forefront. Already with



extensive suburbs, including working-class housing and villa and garden suburbs before World War II, after the war the country's suburbanization turned increasingly into urban sprawl. This flight from the central city, clearly visible since the 1970s, was named as counter-urbanization. It indicated the relative loss of weight of the traditional urban core to the emerging sites at the urban edge. Both in Europe and North America the situation became even more complex in the 1980s when urban revitalization started and affluent whites were attracted back to redeveloped city centres. The back-to-the-city movement was conceptualized as re-urbanization, which became evident first in larger and later in smaller towns. In the United States, between 2000 and 2010 both central parts of metropolitan regions and inner dense suburbs achieved growth at the expense of outer suburbs and exurbs.<sup>45</sup> However, not all suburban areas are growing, mostly due to de-industrialization. Shrinking suburbs are a new phenomenon of post-industrial societies, their cities, and their planning.<sup>46</sup> The current urbanization process consists of many parallel and divergent trends.

The second key change has been the qualitative transformation of the suburbs. Although suburbanization is a global process, suburbs on the ground are diverse and react differently to broader economic, social, and political trends. Moreover, the same suburban areas can change materially and socially, sometimes several times over longer periods. For example, garden cities or suburbs were planned comprehensively and built apart at the urban fringe to avoid the problems of the industrial and commercial city of the early 20th century. Often now these areas with their aesthetically and socially attractive environment are close to the core of the broader urban region and well integrated into it. They are mostly inhabited by the wealthy, transforming their earlier progressive status into a conservative one. Another example is the planned working-class suburb, built on a massive scale after World War II. Some once-functional working-class districts have turned into decayed and separated realms of the urban underclass and ethnic minorities. Similar diversity affects the unplanned suburbs. Many early shanty-town slums have been upgraded into decent housing areas, while at the same time some old urban sprawl areas have become socially deprived and physically degraded.

The third key change regarding suburbanization is symbolic. Many modern suburban areas have matured with over fifty or even a hundred years of development behind them. Meanwhile new suburbs are emerging that are becoming urban by their own characteristics and not anymore in relation to the old urban core. To reinforce local identity, the history of the suburbs is sometimes reinvented and the suburban landscape filled with symbols—for example, in the form of neo-traditional buildings. New urbanism and similar planning and design movements have fostered this new symbolism of the suburbs. These nostalgic movements valorize the past and mimic the design principles of traditional communities for houses, streets, public spaces, and broader land use in new suburban areas.<sup>47</sup> New urbanism has been most popular in the United States and some Latin American countries.

Part of the symbolic change is linked to the political transformation of the suburbs. For many decades, the suburbs were dominated by the central city. Nowadays, especially in more developed countries and growing metropolitan regions, many suburbs have turned into economically and politically powerful areas transforming the power relationship between the central city and the suburbs. Such suburbs form strong wealthy enclaves within the broader urban region. These enclaves, sometimes with their own administrative jurisdiction, grow due to the inflow of wealthy taxpayers and successful businesses from the traditional urban core or selective immigration of such activities from outside the urban region. Within the metropolitan region one often witnesses political tensions

between the historic core city and such enclaves, which sometimes form alliances against the urban core, thus creating challenges to organizing public amenities such as transport to serve the whole metropolitan region. They have also been influential in opposing attempts by city jurisdictions to extend their territory by annexing the suburbs.

### EXPLANATORY PERSPECTIVES ON THE MODERN SUBURBS

Different writers have interpreted the development of the suburbs from a range of economic, social, and technological perspectives. Thus, the economic interpretation claims that behind the spatial evolution of modern suburbia are structural economic forces. According to geographer David Harvey, capital inevitably exploits the suburbs for growth.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the history of suburbanization is also a history of capitalism and its continuous changes. From the 19th century onwards, many cities became concentrations of growing industry. This industry was increasingly labour-intensive, so cities needed suburban space to accommodate factories and other industrial plants and their related labour force. After World War II, the suburbs and suburbanization offered other important opportunities for capital investment not only in industry but in the service sector and construction, often supported by the state. The suburbs had many advantages compared to the expensive central parts of cities. The land value in city centres was high due to many competing economic activities and the old built environment needed costly renewal. The substantially lower land value in the suburbs made them attractive for investment, but to exploit this, there had to be favourable conditions at the local, regional, national, and supranational levels. These included positive planning regulations for land and buildings, easy access to inexpensive land and building materials, the growing availability of mortgages, the long-term shift of employment and population away from city centres, and supportive transport policies to facilitate the movement of labour and goods.<sup>49</sup> In recent times transnational capital has turned to suburban slums as a reservoir of cheap labour for the mass production of consumer goods.

This economic interpretation of modern suburban development links up with two broader theories. The natural evolution theory sees suburban residential growth taking place from the inside out in the city. Central urban areas are developed first to minimize commuting costs and then the process shifts to the suburbs. Later on, more affluent people move to more spacious housing in the outer suburbs, leaving the denser downtown which is then filled by lower income groups. Transport innovations including the motorcar extend the spatial reach of the middle class living in the suburbs. No less important, the relocation of employment and more diversified housing stock in the suburbs encourages their expansion. In contrast, the fiscal–social explanation model explains suburbanization mostly as a result of the urban core’s fiscal and social problems—including high taxes, the declining quality of public services, racial tensions, crime, congestion, and environmental degradation—that push wealthier people and economic activities away from the city centre to the suburbs.<sup>50</sup> How far these two theories are applicable outside North America, especially in the cities of less developed countries, deserves attention.

However, the logic of capital accumulation offers only a partial explanation of suburbanization. Suburban places are shaped interactively by broader economic forces together with the local suburbanites living there. According to Doreen Massey, there is a need to pay attention to the social constitution of locally differentiated places. The suburbs are the outcome of particular and specific spatial forms of social processes and social relationships. The role of human agency is important for understanding suburbia as a variety of places and as porous networks of social relations.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the social interpretation of the modern suburbs has focused on gender, class, and race. Starting from gender, the modern suburbs have been portrayed as an economically efficient location for a growing labour force. While many men headed towards employment in expanding industry on the urban fringe or to the white-collar jobs in downtown offices, suburban women took over domestic affairs. They became full-time mothers taking care of the children and housekeeping, living their lives in the suburbs.<sup>52</sup> In this process the suburban home was feminized and the suburbs saw a distinctive, gendered division of labour. However, not all scholars accept that women ever fell into such a passive and subordinate position. In fact, in many suburbs of more developed countries women contribute to the labour force almost as equally as men and, in the sprawling slums of less developed countries, women are often even more active in the labour force than their male counterparts. It is true however that there are significant gender-specific differences in the mobility and spatial patterns of the suburbs due to issues of child care, domestic household activities, employment, and leisure preferences.

The class explanation focuses on land and car ownership. According to this, the denser areas of suburbs are served by mass transport, and often contain rented or less-expensive apartments, targeted mainly at the working class. Conversely suburban areas only accessible by private car consist of mainly owner-occupied detached houses for the growing middle and upper-middle classes. Such areas have become increasingly extended and sprawling, comprising individualized family properties.<sup>53</sup> In the United States, and to a lesser extent in Western Europe, the class division has an ethnic dimension. The share of the non-white people living in dense poorer suburbs is much greater than in the wealthier low density areas, to which white families have migrated. This 'white-flight' idea has been among the controversial research themes in suburban studies, especially in the United States.

Research on the internal ethnic differences of suburbs has a long tradition. In the early 20th century, Chicago was a rapidly growing industrial and commercial city that attracted many immigrants from Europe and elsewhere. Drawing on ideas of plant ecology and Social Darwinism, the Chicago School of Urban Studies explained in the early 20th century how different ethnic groups competed for a good location in the suburbs. Stronger ethnic groups moved up the social ladder and relocated to better parts of the suburbs away from industrial pollution. The expanding ethnic groups, who remained in the older suburbs, pushed the weaker ethnic groups away, while inferior groups were doomed to cluster together in decaying areas.<sup>54</sup> Socio-spatial segregation within the suburbs was thus seen as a natural and moral process. But this analysis has been criticized as too mechanistic and specific to Chicago. True today, about two-thirds of all suburbanites in the United States are white compared to two-fifths in primary cities. But in recent years there have been interesting patterns of ethnic suburbanization. In the 2010s, for the first time in the United States, the majority of all ethnic groups in large metropolitan areas live in the suburbs.<sup>55</sup> Also in Britain, for example, a significant part of the Asian and younger Muslim populations have moved to the suburbs, for example, to balance family and community support with a greater personal freedom.<sup>56</sup>

The technology interpretation of the modern suburbs refers mainly to the development of transport and related infrastructure. Early modern suburbs were within a walking distance of the city centre, in which many suburbanites worked. From the early 19th century the continuing expansion of the suburbs required some forms of public transport. The principal European cities had horse omnibuses from the 1820s and horse tramways from the 1860s and these increasingly extended into the more respectable suburbs. From the mid-19th century until the early 20th century, the railway was a key promoter of the

suburbs increasing the mobility of the suburban commuter. No less important was the spread of electric tram or underground railway systems around 1900. At the same time, public transport provision had its own priorities, initially at least favouring better-off suburban areas to poorer ones.

During the 20th century, the extension of mass transport systems and growth of private cars expanded further the daily commuting area. Accordingly, the suburbs grew larger and could accommodate more people. One was able to commute tens of kilometres daily, even over 200 kilometres, from the suburban edge to the city core. Improved transport systems also facilitated the relocation of industry from central parts of cities to the suburbs and to the urban fringe, thus modifying commuting patterns.<sup>57</sup> Private car usage has contributed heavily to the growth of urban sprawl, especially in the United States where 76 per cent of the workforce drives alone to work.<sup>58</sup> As we have noted, it has also led to a greater segregation of suburban communities, between those dependent on public transport and those only accessible by car.

## CONCLUSIONS

The suburbs are the everyday environment for many millions of people. Suburban growth has been particularly rapid in recent decades, and the suburbs continue to expand spatially on every continent. Looking at developments from the early 19th century to the present, one finds broad similarities across the world, linked, for instance, to industrialization, planning policy, and transport changes. Such trends do not occur at the same time in all places. There are time lags between more and less advanced societies, though the growing connectivity of a globalizing economy has narrowed such differences, resulting in a time–space compression in the evolution of the suburbs. But while broad structural forces have influenced the growth of suburbia, so has human agency. Suburban development reveals distinct local trajectories, not least when the suburbanites mobilize, sometimes assisted by the planning authorities or visionary urban planners. One must consider the suburbs always in the plural, internally always heterogeneous in their detailed layout but also showing large differences between the types of suburb, as explained in this chapter.

While suburbs have probably existed as long as cities, still, they have experienced the largest transformation during the past two centuries. Not only is the quantitative growth of suburbs striking across the globe, but the qualitative and symbolic changes are important as well. The suburbs are becoming separate territories in their own right, no more necessarily dependent on the central city but establishing their own political agendas within broader metropolitan areas. To be a suburbanite is no longer to be less urban.

The suburbs are in continuous change. In the suburbs, now as in the past, one finds the extremes of urban life from the everyday struggle of shanty-town slums to the bland repetitiveness of monotonous housing plots, and to the exclusiveness of villa suburbs and gated communities. To understand this complex phenomenon, researchers have to search for novel approaches and hybrid concepts to grapple with suburban diversities and their evolution over time and space.<sup>59</sup>

## NOTES

1. The editor kindly helped revise this text.
2. Ruth McManus and Philip J. Ethington, ‘Suburbs in Transition: New Approaches to Suburban

History', *Urban History*, 34 (2006), 317–37. According to their viewpoint, suburban history needs to focus on how suburban life adapts to changing socio-cultural dynamics over time.

3. Laura Vaughan, et al., 'Do the Suburbs Exist? Discovering the Complexity and Specificity in Suburban Built Form', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34 (2009), 475–88.
4. Francis M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982); Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); J. W. R. Whitehand and Christine M. H. Carr, *Twentieth-Century Suburbs: A Morphological Approach* (London: Routledge, 2001)
5. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, 'Introduction', in Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–10.
6. Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, eds., *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority. Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
7. In 2010 there were more than 450 cities with over 1 million inhabitants. For example, the following suburban cities have over a million inhabitants and are at the same time located inside a larger metropolitan area: Kawasaki, Saitama, and Yokohama (Tokyo, Japan); Bekasi, Depok, South Tangerang, and Tangerang (Jakarta, Indonesia); Thana (Mumbai, India); Fardabad (Delhi, India); Caloocan and Quezon City (Manila, Philippines); Guarulhos (São Paulo, Brazil).
8. Paul L. Knox, *Metrourbia USA* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).
9. Bernadette Hanlon et al., *Cities and Suburbs. New Metropolitan Realities in the US* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
10. Paul L. Knox and Linda McCarthy, *Urbanization. An Introduction to Urban Geography* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2005).
11. Kruse and Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*.
12. J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1962); H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961).
13. Donald J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London: Batsford, 1976), ch. 5; idem, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 161 *et passim*.
14. Nancy G. Duncan and James S. Duncan, 'Deep Suburban Irony: The Perils of Democracy in Winchester County, New York', in Roger Silverstone, ed., *Visions of Suburbia* (London: Routledge, 1997), 161–79; see also their intensive case study: James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, *Landscapes of Privilege. The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
15. Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1845).
16. Ildefonso Cerdà, *Teoría General de la Urbanización y Aplicación de sus Principios y Doctrinas a la Reforma y Ensanche de Barcelona* (Madrid: Imprenta Española, 1867). In the early 20th century, important studies and practices about the best suburban forms were conducted by Raymond Unwin, *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding! How the Garden City Type of Development May Benefit Both Owner and Occupier* (Westminster: Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, 1912).
17. In 1901, Tony Garnier presented the principle of functional urban zoning in the city of Lyon

(France). The urban space was divided into industry, work, leisure, and transport. Le Corbusier followed this idea and became the most influential Functionalist architect and Modernist urban planner.

18. Le Corbusier, *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning* (London: John Rodher, 1925), 166, 175–6.
19. This concept of garden cities was quite different from Ebenezer Howard's Garden City.
20. Famous urban riots took place in many large decayed suburbs, for example, in Baltimore (USA) in the 1970s, in Brixton near London (UK) in the 1980s, and in the *banlieus* of Paris (France) and suburbs of Malmö (Sweden) in the 2000s.
21. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History. Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* (London: Penguin, 1961), 555.
22. The book was originally published in 1898 with the name *To-Morrow: The Path to Real Reform*.
23. 'Town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation': Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965), 48.
24. Knox, *Metroburbia*, 17.
25. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City* (New York: Payson, 1932).
26. Knox, *Metroburbia*, 27–9.
27. Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow. An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 296.
28. Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners. Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (London: The Penguin Press, 1967).
29. United Nations-Habitat, *State of the World Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide* (London: Earthscan, 2010).
30. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 13–46.
31. In Brazil, the oldest *favelas* were independent settlements of fugitive African slaves. Most modern *favelas* emerged in the 1970s when many people moved from rural areas to cities. Currently one in five inhabitants in larger Brazilian cities live in *favelas*.
32. Mike Davis, *The Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006), 30.
33. Isa Baud et al., 'Matching Deprivation Mapping to Urban Governance in Three Indian Mega-cities', *Habitat International*, 33 (2009), 365–77.
34. United Nations-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums. Global Report of Human Settlements 2003* (London: Earthscan, 2003).
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36. Celine Ferre, Francisco H. G. Ferreira, and Peter Lanjouw, 'Is There a Metropolitan Bias? The

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37. United Nations-Habitat, *State*.
38. United Nations-Habitat, *State*, 10–11.
39. For example, Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Hanlon, Short, and Vicino, *Cities and Suburbs*.
40. Marco Bontje, 'Edge Cities, European-style: Examples from Paris and the Randstad', *Cities*, 22 (2005), 317–30.
41. These new areas have many other names such as cyberbia, perimeter city, suburban downtown, stealth city, and technoburb. See Paul L. Knox and Steven Pinch, *Urban Social Geography* (New York: Pearson, 2010), 32.
42. Hanlon, Short, and Vicino, *Cities and Suburbs*, 85–107.
43. According to one forecast, by 2024 there will be 1,000 million more people living in urban areas than in 2010; most growth will take place in the suburbs; see United Nations Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision Population Database*, <http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/index.asp>.
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## PORT CITIES

CAROLA HEIN

SHIPS have been the most reliable and fastest means of long-distance transportation of goods and people for hundreds of years; their ports and shipping lanes have long provided the infrastructure for political and trading empires across the world. Among the major port cities are numerous capital cities, where the collaboration between political and economic forces has been particularly strong, but the presence of the political leadership at times has also prevented economic development. As a result, many of the leading seaports are metropolises that are second cities rather than capitals. Cities and ports that controlled larger networks (such as London, Amsterdam, Marseille, Hong Kong, or New York) have influenced and shaped other ports and port cities around the globe, including Calcutta, Lagos, Yokohama, Marseille, and Shanghai. Port cities around the world have thus long been an important category of cosmopolitan and cultural centres, pioneering new cultural, political, economic, and social practices.

There is no single urban form that characterizes port cities, but their urban fabric is a palimpsest that registers the streamlining of technologies, the growth of exchange, and simultaneous political, economic, and social changes that result from port traffic. The urban environment of port cities is the result of specific local constellations of actors, of their relation to the foreland and the hinterland, as well as of global transformation.<sup>1</sup> New developments—from mega-hubs and deep-water ports to waterfront redevelopment and leisure ports—exemplify the different ways in which port cities have developed. Port cities continue to produce innovative architecture and urban planning, and to manifest the spatial impact of globalization.

For centuries, port and city were closely intertwined and port authorities and city governments had to collaborate closely. In the last 200 years, port and city have grown apart.<sup>2</sup> While shipping lanes are relatively malleable, allowing for easy adaptation to changing political and economic situations in the foreland, the hinterland—from the city itself to its larger region—is written into the fixed infrastructure of rivers, canals, railroads, and highways and other roads. The infrastructure that gives access to the port traverses the urban area; sometimes it competes with the port for land, especially when the port seeks to expand. A city and its metropolitan area are thus essential in supporting the port function. Similarly, national governments can determine the fate of a port and its city, whether through development policies, promotion of overland transportation, or the development of an extensive (colonial) hinterland.

Indeed, the hinterland, conceived as the larger tributary region (in terms of agriculture, raw materials, or consumer markets) has been an important factor in the growth or decay of a port through its history. In modern cities, factors shaping the size of the hinterland, such as railroad pricing or the range of overnight trucking, have co-determined shipping companies' port selection.<sup>3</sup> Larger changes in the hinterland—due to wars (such as the erection of the Iron Curtain after World War II) or economic transformation (such as the creation of the European Union and its predecessors)—can be as devastating or as stimulating for a port as the rerouting of shipping lanes.

Following a brief historical introduction that illustrates the interaction between ship, port, and city in the pre-modern era, this chapter explores the modern era from the mid-19th century, characterized by major global changes, transformation of shipping networks, and new players following industrialization. Using select case studies, the analysis tracks how technological, political, economic, and social changes and differences affected the growth or decay of specific port cities and how individual cities have situated themselves on the global map. Such changes also leave us with remnants in the built environment that allow for further development. The chapter first discusses the late 19th to the early 20th century, when European nations and port cities dominated and controlled global harbours. The main maritime control centres and the greatest ports were European, including London, Liverpool, and Hamburg. During this period, steamships emerged as the main carriers of goods and people, rendering travel cheaper, faster, and more reliable, and facilitating the immigration waves of the 19th century. Starting in the early 20th century, the United States turned into a major global player, with New York and San Francisco becoming port centres in their own right. The opening of new markets in China and Japan in the 19th and 20th centuries brought new port cities such as Hong Kong, Canton, and Shanghai to the global centre stage. Since the 1960s, extensive globalization and containerization have reshaped all ports and port cities. These dynamics spurred governments to both transform and revitalize former inner-city ports and construct new deep harbours. In conclusion, the chapter demonstrates that the global interconnectedness of port cities allows us to study how local initiatives and global transformations mutually constitute each other.

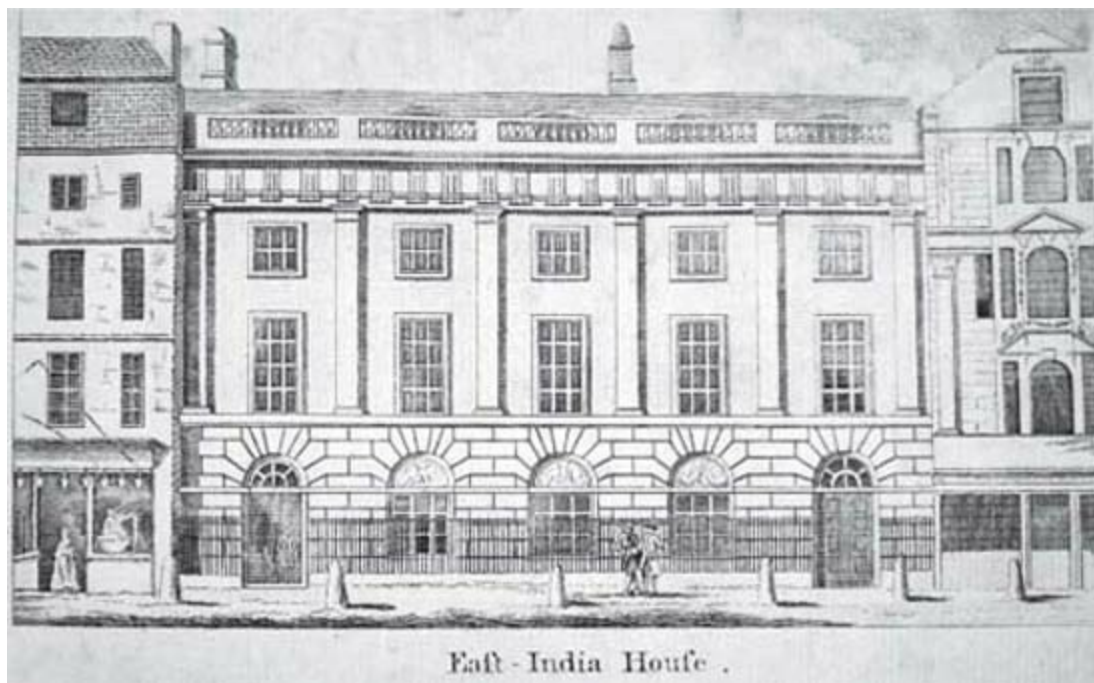
### **BRIEF HISTORICAL PREVIEW**

In the pre-modern era, nation-states, together with merchant communities, helped sculpt far-flung shipping networks of ports, assigning different roles and forms to individual cities and harbours. Colonial realms—whether Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish—exerted control over particular sections of the oceans, creating national spheres of influence connecting European maritime centres with colonial ports. Goods that transited through Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese ports brought wealth to the European centres and manifested the reach of their empires (see above, [Chs. 19 and 40](#)).

Increased trade and new technology forced cities around the world to transform their ports and even their larger metropolitan areas. Loading and unloading on busy major rivers in London, Hamburg, Philadelphia, Glasgow, and Edinburgh involved transferring goods from large ships to smaller ships to bring them to land, an increasingly unsafe and inefficient process. As early as 1802, trading companies sailing to the West Indies obtained permission to build a new harbour complex, the West India Dock, on the Isle of Dogs outside London. The new complex—with capacity for 600 ships, different loading and unloading wharves and five-storey warehouses—was surrounded by a six-metre high wall that provided a secure environment for transferring goods from ship to land.

Governments and trading communities also shaped far-flung cities' urban forms over time, by using them for both military and commercial purposes. The Spanish government planned numerous cities according to the Law of the Indies in South America. It also constructed a new fortress near the harbour of Havana in the 16th century in order to use the city as a centre for its military and colonial activities in the Caribbean. Merchants and soldiers crafted new forts, stores, and settlements in the colonies, laying the foundation for future cities. Portuguese trading posts (*factorias*) built around the African coast, for example, reflect foreign influence and stand as monuments to early global networks.

London is an example of a city where government and trading companies worked together to build networks and influence the form of port cities around the world. British ships linked the port and city of London with seaports from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean up to the early 20th century. Multiple layers of the urban environment in London as well as in other port cities of the British empire register the growth (and decay) of the empire and its trading connections. The close connection between public interests and private investments appears notably in the workings of the East India Company. Founded in 1600 by a group of merchants, the company had monopoly privileges over British trade with the East Indies. Its impressive neoclassical London headquarters, located on Leadenhall Street in the City of London, seen here in the 1760s (Plate 43.1), demonstrates both the importance of the company in the British capital, as well as the office's key function in the larger network of the company. The East India Company developed numerous trading ports; the three towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras served as military and economic bases for trade with the home country and expansion inland. Calcutta was the administrative seat of the company starting in 1773 as well as the capital of British India, and had special connections to the metropolis. Its two-square-mile esplanade, known as Maidan, displayed numerous neoclassical buildings such as the government house, the courthouse, and the post office, as well as other administrative, residential, and leisure institutions.<sup>4</sup>



**PLATE 43.1** East India House, Leadenhall Street, London c.1760; headquarters of the British East India Company. (Drawing by Samuel Wale.)

### **THE WATERFRONT AS SITE OF EXCHANGE: ERA OF COLONIZATION, INCREASED TRADING NETWORKS, AND TRADING ELITES**

Colonization and the massive, five-fold expansion of world trade in the 19th century altered networks around the world. Bangkok had traditionally traded with China, but developed into an international centre for rice export to mostly Asian markets (mainly Hong Kong and Singapore) after 1850. The city came to host Western trading houses, banks, hotels, and steam rice mills and to receive Chinese immigrants.<sup>5</sup> Other towns became international port cities precisely because they did not have local or regional importance. During the Tokugawa era in Japan, Kobe was a fishing village, while nearby Osaka held a dominant position. After the Meiji Restoration Kobe's development as a city and port

depended on international trade and the treaties from the 1850s that allowed foreigners to trade with Japan. The circumstances around those treaties shaped matters elsewhere as well. US naval ships initiated the opening of Japan some years before the Russians could expand eastwards; the Russian government opted to develop Vladivostok as a jumping-off point for Russian expansion into Eastern Asia in 1860, and as a military and trading port.<sup>6</sup>

In this period, the waterfront became the most important image of a port city, both a maritime business card and a welcome sign for travellers coming over the sea. Ships coming into harbour in Constantinople, Smyrna, or Salonica, in Hong Kong, Canton, or Shanghai would be greeted by European-style architecture, even if the cities beyond the waterfront took on a very different aspect and even if the actual form and function of each waterfront differed extensively. Waterfronts around the world also showcased a city's international character and the presence of global trade and other facilities to arriving and departing passengers. They hosted ships, goods, and warehouses as well as sailors and migrants, all of which established or reinforced their character and function as gateways of the world. The presence of foreign traders also sparked the construction in the larger urban area of port-related facilities, company headquarters, religious institutions, and residences.

Merchant family networks of specific national or ethnic backgrounds established social links and helped trade networks thrive. Trading elites—often polyglot businessmen—held posts in local government and intervened in the built form of their home cities on numerous levels: injecting their knowledge into the construction of shipping facilities and infrastructure, stock exchanges and town halls, political buildings such as consulates, and economic facilities such as customs offices. They also introduced new approaches to leisure, culture, and even law and politics to the cities in which they were active, at home and abroad. Some of these institutions, notably educational and religious facilities, were recognizable through their architectural design.

Local traders also transformed port networks and created new foreland and hinterland relationships. In the 1860s, the trading elite of Rotterdam consolidated the city's role as a transit port, connecting the industrial areas of western Germany to Britain and the world. They notably decided to build the Nieuwe Waterweg, a new ship canal connecting the city directly to the North Sea. The canal brought the city into global and European networks. In contrast, the rival city of Amsterdam established itself as a modern staple market, building its global fortunes on colonial relationships that were to disappear with the end of empire. The city built the Noordzeekanaal in 1872, but still lacked a modern canal to the Rhine.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Hamburg and Bremen, and Philadelphia and New York were neighbour ports that also engaged in fierce rivalry for international trade.<sup>8</sup>

Chinese treaty ports are another good example of how foreign interventions and local dynamics shaped these cities. Opened for trade between foreign powers and the Chinese government, they concentrated trade with foreign merchants (see above, [Ch. 17](#)). From the Sino-British Opium War in 1842 to the Japanese occupation in 1937, only forty-eight select treaty ports, including Canton, Amoy (Xiamen), Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai, and Tianjin itself, Chefoo (Yantai), Swatow (Shantou), and the Yangzi ports of Hankou (now part of Wuhan) would open to foreigners. Most of them had pre-existing settlements, mostly Chinese cities, with the exception of the German port of Qingdao. Surveyors and engineers designed Western-controlled areas in the ports. Canton's so-called Thirteen Factories (i.e. residences of factors, or trading agents) on the banks of the Pearl River housed Western traders, envoys, or missionaries, offering from the 18th century onward a mixture of Western-inspired classical façades and Chinese interior spaces.<sup>9</sup>

Other actors shaped port cities. Foreign architects working in China and Western-trained Chinese

designers brought foreign ideas into Chinese cities, notably into the concession areas, territories within Chinese cities that were governed by foreign powers. In Shanghai, groups including the British (from 1843), the French (from 1849), and the Americans (from 1861) held distinct areas, known as the International Settlement and the French Concession (after 1862). The most comprehensive expression of the Western presence was the so-called Bund, a South Asian term for embankment. This broad avenue was an open corridor granting public access to the river. Though the Bund has taken on multiple forms throughout China (administrative, leisure, or work-oriented), it gave birth to an array of headquarters of Western firms in each city.<sup>10</sup> As foreign businesses and other institutions erected educational, religious, or residential buildings, they further introduced Western design principles.

Japanese treaty ports similarly responded to global visitors, as can be seen in the urban development of Nagasaki (the oldest one), as well as Kobe, Osaka, and Yokohama (Japan's first modern port city). They maintained distinct features as places of early contact and exchange with foreigners, from architecture to food. In Nagasaki, the influence of foreigners in the port city was not limited to ships, warehouses, or their presence on the waterfront. Villas erected by Western traders in the wider urban area also spoke of the power of economic networks. The Scottish entrepreneur, Thomas Blake Glover, for example, who had come to Japan in 1859 from Shanghai, built the first Western-style house, the Glover Residence in Nagasaki, a good example of the mixture of Japanese and Western elements. While the structure of the building (post-and-beam frames set on boulders and the roof supports) is typically Japanese, the verandas, latticed arches and glass-paned doors reflect foreign influence. It is possible that Glover picked up this mixed style from his time in Shanghai, where such single-story foreign residences combining disparate influences were common. On his visits to Europe, Glover stayed in Aberdeen where he also owned a house, illustrating the extent of the economic networks of the time.

Glover's history also illustrates how the personal connections and experiences of individual actors can shape ports and cities. As a trader, Glover sold ships, guns, and gunpowder to rebellious Japanese clans in the 1860s, and he was active in bringing the first steam railway locomotive to Japan. He commissioned warships for the Japanese navy, which were built in Aberdeen. Furthermore, Glover brought the first dry dock to Japan and helped found the shipping company that would become the Mitsubishi Corporation. From 1870 to 1890, the corporation was active in two of the Japanese open ports, working with foreign agents, before becoming a major partner of the government in the modernization of Japan.

The corporation itself shaped urban form. In 1871, Mitsubishi established its headquarters in Tokyo in proximity to the new Meiji government district. Mitsubishi started to work hand-in-hand with the government, profiting from its new policies and winning contracts that had earlier been filled by foreign companies. The multitude of Mitsubishi buildings throughout Tokyo—from shipping facilities to headquarters and villas—highlights the reach of port networks into the city and how the diverse port functions are interconnected throughout a city. The company opted for a Western architectural style as a symbol of modernity, wealth, power, and affinity with its Western trade partners. On several occasions, the company employed Josiah Conder, a British architect, first professor of architecture at Tokyo University, and adviser to the government. Conder designed the first Mitsubishi headquarters building, the Fukagawa Mansion, and the Minato-ku hilltop villa, and also numerous public buildings; his work and his positions highlight the links between business and politics in the construction of Tokyo as a port city and as a global player.

## THE AGE OF STEAM

Industrialization, visible in the new steamships, freed shipping from the unpredictability of wind. It also augmented the numerous tangible and intangible actors and factors that shaped global networks as well as the built environment of individual cities. The first steam and sailing ship hybrids crossed the Atlantic in the early 19th century, but it was not until the 1880s that port views of New York, San Francisco, or Boston would show a large number of steam ships. This long change was a major technological shift that accompanied and provoked structural, financial, and labour changes. Steamships allowed for reliable scheduled transportation of goods around the globe, resulting in increased globalization.

The new vessels—and expanded trade—required harbours around the world to rebuild their facilities: the form and size of the wharfs, the equipment to load and unload the ships, the service and storage facilities for fuel. In London, the construction of Brunswick Wharf by 1830 provided a place where steamships no longer had to wait for the tide to enter the dock, but could cast off at their own timing. New docks were built, including the Royal Albert Dock (1880) serving steamship lines trading in the southern hemisphere.

Warehouse districts from London to Hamburg, Yokohama, and Baltimore resemble each other closely. They were built based on similar construction techniques, and with similar goals at around the same time. Hamburg built a new duty-free warehouse district, the Speicherstadt, after joining the German Reich in 1871. The city evicted some 24,000 people from the harbour zone of the Kehrwieder and Wandrahm islands and demolished both elite and workers' housing. In their place, it built red brick warehouses with rich decoration, narrow windows, and towers for winches and lifts. The ensemble, where goods such as coffee, tea, spices, or carpets were stored, was the first of the city's single-function areas; others included an office district and new housing areas.

The new use of steamships and the growth of passengers crossing the oceans, helped some shipping companies become global players. The Blue Funnel Line from Liverpool, the Cunard Line from Southampton, the North German Lloyd from Bremen, and the Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft (HAPAG) were among the leading shipping companies of the time. The global reach of HAPAG is visible in its list of offices around the world, and in the prestige of the locations and buildings where the company is headquartered, from an office building in Tsingtao to the Bourse building of Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup> In New York City the North German Lloyd, Cunard, and other shipping companies were located in central areas on Broadway and in adjacent streets.

Meanwhile, New York was emerging as the United States gateway for immigrants to the East Coast. New York's port function shaped infrastructure construction and the setting of buildings in Manhattan and the surrounding area. Eventually ninety-nine piers lined up on Manhattan's west side up to 59th Street, and commercial properties dotted the shoreline.<sup>12</sup> The so-called High Line delivering merchandise via rail, linking several port-related buildings, including Bell Telephone and the present Chelsea Market building. While well-to-do citizens moved away from the tip of Manhattan, the Stock Exchange on Wall Street and the Produce Exchange remained, as did companies that conducted harbour business.

As global shipping and shipping speed increased, new transportation patterns meant altered trade patterns. The opening of new thoroughfares, especially the Suez Canal (in 1869), the Kiel Canal (1895), and the Panama Canal (1914), shortened trips extensively. New cities became dominant; others lost their prominence. The creation of the Suez Canal, for example, went hand-in-hand with the

development of three new planned port cities: Port Said, Ismailia on the Suez canal, and Suez.<sup>13</sup> The cities became cosmopolitan centres attracting migrants from various backgrounds and serving as places for the exchange of goods, people, and ideas. Architectural styles became synonyms of the sponsor's origins (for example the Italian consulate was in neo-Venetian style). Distinct districts were developed for Arabic and European populations, as well as for Greek settlers. Construction knowledge was imported from diverse European sources, as were construction materials. Canal workers were similarly multi-ethnic: Italians, French, Greeks, Dalmatians, Arabs from Upper Egypt. While these towns served as melting pots, they also featured segregated areas along class and racial lines similar to colonial towns.

In many countries, hinterland infrastructure was non-existent, so colonial port construction was accompanied by railroad building within the nation. German colonizers, for example, redesigned the port of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania and made the city the capital of German East Africa between 1891 and 1914. The Germans tried to make Dar-es-Salaam the first port of the colony and the main access point to its hinterland, constructing numerous buildings—the state house, the city hall, church, and post office—according to their own architectural preferences. Captured in 1916 by Allied troops, the port had to compete with British-controlled Mombasa.<sup>14</sup>

As we have noticed already, throughout the 19th century port cities were the hub not only for trade but also for migration. Cities such as Hamburg, where the HAPAG was active, served as departure points for passengers of all classes, from the elite travelling for pleasure to immigrants, with New York and other east-coast cities being examples of immigration ports. Various facilities for passengers, from hotels and boarding houses to ticket offices and waiting facilities, sprang up on waterfronts next to facilities for the men who worked on ships.

In fact, not only elite networks transformed cities. With the new steamers came a transformation of the workforce, which came to include Chinese seamen who mostly originated from the larger Guangzhou (Canton) area. Hong Kong, which had grown into a hub under British rule, was the point of emigration for Chinese workers and the point of departure for Chinese sailors on European vessels. And this workforce similarly transformed cities. In the late 19th century, Chinese, like other sailors, found temporary homes in the waterfront areas as it took time to load and unload. And at times they stayed on, developing Chinatowns in port cities around the world, such as in the Limehouse district next to the West India Docks in London; Rotterdam's Katendrecht, a traditional dock area; Hamburg's St Pauli area; but not in the US, as America did not allow Chinese to enter.<sup>15</sup> The built appearance of these ethnic enclaves, the Chinatown gate, and the Chinese characters on the shops are iconic images that identify them as part of a global network among port cities.

As places of passage for people from faraway destinations, port cities were also places prone to diseases carried by ships (or by rats on board) and sailors leading to the creation of specific quarantine facilities, hospitals, and research institutes (i.e. for tropical diseases).<sup>16</sup> Cities built specific facilities to prevent the transmission of disease by immigrants (including fever hospitals and quarantine stations), at both ends of their trip (some of the most famous facilities being New York's Ellis Island and Hamburg's Ballinstadt).

The roots of the global port of New York lay partly in the creation of an institution beyond state lines: the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. In the early 1900s, the waters between Manhattan and New Jersey were bustling with activity, but there was no coordination of shipping. In 1921, the two states signed an agreement and the new port authority was able to pursue a single

policy and modernize the port district.<sup>17</sup> It also undertook the construction of bridges connecting Staten Island and New Jersey, and New Jersey and Manhattan, leveraging some state funding with bonds sold to the public. The Port Authority's engineer Othmar Ammann, for example, designed the George Washington suspension bridge linking New York City and New Jersey between 1923 and 1931. This and other bridges responded to port needs, sustained metropolitan development, and took into account the interests of companies.

Ports compete over handling, facilities, and prices, as well as infrastructure and its pricing, the availability of shippable goods and consumers. The competition among ports on the American east coast (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore) led to the emergence of New York/New Jersey as the leader and speaks to different commercial, financial, and organizational structures and effectiveness as well as their capacity to prepare for the future. Meanwhile, New Orleans and Chicago, on different coasts, have been able to build on their own advantages.

### AGE OF PETROLEUM

Many actors were interested in rapid connections between production and consumption sites in different parts of the world, among them American and European oil companies. They helped create and shape shipping passages, and the global network of petroleum shipping maps the extent to which port cities continued to be a key factor in global trade. The Suez Canal, new harbour installations, and new port cities stand as examples. Already in the early 1890s, the Shell Transport and Trading Company perceived petroleum as fuel that might replace coal and bought land in Suez to sell petroleum as a combustible; it ordered the first tanker ship, the SS *Murex*, to carry petroleum from Russia and Asia through the Suez Canal (safety regulation had forbidden such transport before 1892). A new company, Royal Dutch Shell, born in 1907 from the fusion of the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company and the Shell Transport and Trading Company,<sup>18</sup> combined Dutch interests in the production of petroleum in Sumatra (Indonesia) with the capacities of a British trading company headquartered in London and working in Russia and Asia. By 1907, Royal Dutch Shell already owned thirty-eight petroleum tankers.<sup>19</sup>

Petroleum emerged as the most important fossil fuel of the 20th century. A good that is mostly transported by ship, it has transformed ports and cities extensively in the years since, both as cargo and as fuel. The growing political importance of oil and its geopolitical implications made it a major factor in colonialism, and wars. World War I was a turning point, as the military progressively depended on gasoline for its ships, tanks, trucks, and cars. Petroleum transformed ships, ports, and cities, as it required the installation of petroleum tanks, refineries, and pipelines.

Ports around the world needed to add petroleum storage facilities in their harbours for refining and refuelling. Major oil companies created port installations in numerous cities. The city of Hamburg, for example, has had its own petroleum harbour in the Veddel area since 1879, importing petroleum from abroad, especially from Venezuela and Mexico; and the city has overshadowed nearby Bremen in the petroleum trade since 1884/5, when it also built its first storage tank. In 1890, the local leader in oil trade, the Riedemann company, established the Deutsch-Amerikanische Petroleumgesellschaft (DAPG) with a partner in Bremen and the American Standard Oil Company. For some time, the city developed into Germany's top refinery centre. During World War I, it tapped local oil reservoirs and further integrated the city into its hinterland. Refineries processed petroleum on the Grasbrook and in the Harburg areas of the port. In 1937–1938, the DAPG, the predecessor of Esso/Exxon, erected its



headquarters on the Binnenalster, diagonally opposite from the offices of the HAPAG, Hamburg's leading shipping company, emphasizing the Alster as the first address of the city's business. For the importance of Hamburg's shipping connections by the 1920s see [Plate 43.2](#).

The port of Houston similarly stands out for its focus on petroleum shipping. A railroad centre in the second part of the 19th century, its growth sped up after a hurricane destroyed Galveston and its port in 1900 and after the discovery of oil in the area in 1901. Completion of the Houston Ship Channel (1914) led oil companies to erect numerous refineries and move their headquarters there.

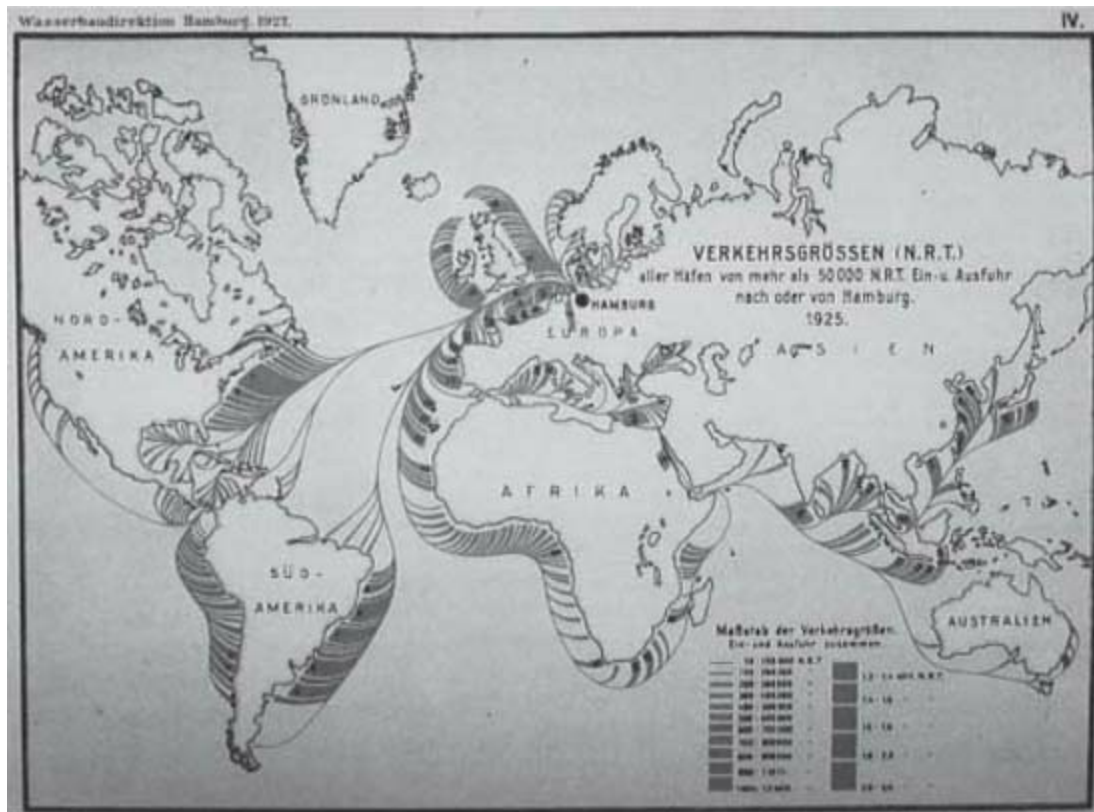


PLATE 43.2 Hamburg shipping connections, 1925.

Baku is a particularly striking example of the transformation of harbour and city following the discovery and start of extraction of oil in the mid-19th century. Foreign investors, including the Rothschild and the Nobel brothers, helped develop oil production. The city rapidly grew and displayed its new wealth in architectural monuments, including the railway station and the mansions of oil magnates that originally lined Baku Boulevard, parallel to the sea.<sup>20</sup> Along with the technologies necessary for exploiting the petroleum, oil companies brought architectural and urban concepts. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, for example, developed the town of Abadan in Iran as a refinery site at the end of a pipeline in the Shatt-el-Arab area between 1920 and 1950. It was laid out as a company town to address social and ethnic anxieties. Housing districts separated expatriates from local workers, highlighting how colonial social structure was translated into urban form: here spacious compounds for British expatriate workers contrast with barrack-like huts for locally recruited workers, as well as a locally administered town for nationals.<sup>21</sup>

Ports and port cities have long been military targets, and in World War II ports in Europe and Japan suffered extensive destruction, losing population as well as port infrastructure, and experiencing extensive damage to the urban centre. Many of these ports had already suffered greatly from the decline in world trade due to the Great Depression.<sup>22</sup> The ports of Yokohama and Tokyo, which had just been rebuilt and improved with government support after massive destruction in the 1923 Great

Kanto earthquake, were again largely destroyed. After the war, the American military took over the Japanese ports and it was not until 1951 that the Harbour Law gave control of them back to local governments. By 1950, most of the destroyed cities had rebuilt and were growing again. The ports of Tokyo Bay developed rapidly as part of the capital's national post-war growth. Tokyo opened the Shinagawa container terminal in 1967 and continued to expand it. During World War II submarine attacks showed the vulnerability of oil tankers; in response, the US began to construct more pipelines between 1942 and 1943, giving that country a particularly high density of pipelines.

After World War II, post-colonial nationalization efforts in various countries forced a restructuring of global oil networks and transportation infrastructures, and inspired the construction of new refineries as well as the redevelopment of administrative buildings and other oil-related structures. Iran nationalized oil assets in 1951, and the Anglo-Egyptian oil fields were nationalized in 1964. The closure of the Suez Canal between 1967 and 1975 led to a further reorganization of the production and transport of petroleum, with more refineries being built close to consumption sites as well as increased construction of pipelines. In Nigeria, the discovery and sustained production of oil since the late 1950s led to the conception and construction of the new capital city Abuja in the 1980s in the centre of the country. As money flowed into the country, there was an increased demand for consumer goods as well as raw materials, which resulted in a need for further shipping facilities. To amend long waiting periods in the port of Lagos, the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) developed a master plan for investments in the port system with the goal to determine size, timing, and location of interventions, particularly of the construction of a new ocean terminal.<sup>23</sup>

### **CONTAINERIZATION: THE END OF THE WATERFRONT?**

Starting in the 1960s, the port and city began to grow apart physically. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, ship sizes increased, passing the barrier of 50,000 tons gross.<sup>24</sup> Few ports were able to handle oil and bulk carriers of that size, so their terminals disappeared from urban waterfronts as new ones were developed on the outskirts. Ports and cities in all parts of the world faced pressure from changing global systems and new local production patterns. Most importantly, containerization led to wholesale restructuring of shipping networks, trade patterns, port facilities, port city hierarchies, and urban form. Containerization allowed for much higher tonnage of transshipment per eight-hour shift (from 100–200 to 2,500–3,000 tons).<sup>25</sup> It facilitated the transport of goods and the speed and ease of transshipment not only in the port but, through trucks and trains, deep into the hinterland. These efficiencies resulted in major socio-economic transformations, as well as changes in land use and other physical aspects of port cities. After its development in the US, the container was rapidly adopted around the globe: the number of containers increased from 47,221 in 1968 to 132,000 in 1970 and 277,000 in 1972.<sup>26</sup> As the container became the primary means of packaging and transporting goods on ships (and on land), the numbers of people necessary to load and unload ships dropped precipitously.

The new shipping conditions had a powerful and multifaceted impact on ports and cities around the world. The old configuration of the waterfront, with its 'finger piers' and storage and shed arrangement, was inadequate for the new container ports. Many port authorities and city governments adapted their ports rapidly to maintain their city's edge in a tight competition. As a result, most of the warehouses that had served for storage were no longer necessary. The old ports did not offer enough inexpensive land to host the new containers, and rapidly became obsolete as cities had to claim new

land away from the old warehouses. Lack of space pushed container terminals to inland locations such as Greenfield in Utah, Butte in Montana, Kano in northern Nigeria, and Nei Li in Taiwan.<sup>27</sup> The Port of Marseilles lost traffic to the nearby new port of Fos. The transformation of New York City's harbour was exemplary: the city lost much of its shipping function within two decades after the opening of the Port Arthur and Port Elizabeth container terminals in 1964. Similarly, the old London port lost its functions through the 1970s, following the opening of a container terminal at Tilbury at the mouth of the Thames River in 1968. Numerous ports lost their former standing and experienced high levels of unemployment. In Europe port cities in the later 20th century suffered the highest level of economic contraction of all urban centres. However there were some winners, gaining new leadership, such as Rotterdam. Perhaps one of the best examples of the effect of the relocation of cargo facilities is the rapid development of the Port of Oakland, which offered wide berthing facilities and good access to transportation, and the concomitant decline of the Port of San Francisco, which was limited by its existing finger piers and topography.

The old waterfronts became ghost districts, challenges to urban development. Waterfront revitalization projects starting in the 1970s in Baltimore, London, Hamburg, Shanghai, Sydney, and other port cities faced similar challenges of revitalization and transformation. With similar built heritages and decline in traditional usage, port cities adopted comparable responses. Leisure and port geography have become closely related issues, as we can see in Baltic Sail, a maritime festival around the Baltic Sea; Titanic quarter, a waterfront redevelopment project in Belfast; and BallinStadt, the Hamburg-based emigration museum.

While waterfront redevelopment plans worldwide have inspired and reflected each other, they have also been specific to each location, reflecting local planning cultures. Amsterdam started rebuilding its waterfront in the 1970s, redeveloping land—wharves, piers, etc.—that had been dedicated to shipping and trade and separated by other infrastructure from the city. Rem Koolhaas prepared an urban master plan for the IJ-Plein in 1981–1988. Adriaan Geuze and his colleagues from the Group West 8 built the Borneo-Spoerenburg housing complex in 1993–1996, with new types of three-storey row-houses as an interpretation of traditional Dutch canal housing.

After World War II, when large parts of Rotterdam's city centre and its waterfront were destroyed, the city had seen major reconstruction, including a revival of shipping on the waterfront. By the late 1970s, the city had redeveloped its old harbour as a mostly pedestrian waterfront, with traditional ships and historically inspired architecture. The Waterstad Plan of 1986 proposed a mixed-activity development that would redefine the waterfront as the main symbol of the city. The Kop van Zuid neighbourhood, built since the 1990s on an old and abandoned port area, became a model for mixed-used water-front revitalization with a maritime flair. The new development has benefited the city as a whole and has attracted a broad range of people to the area.

Waterfront (re)development has emerged as an anchor project for old and new cities alike. Historic waterfronts in Baltimore, San Francisco, Boston, New York, Barcelona, Genoa, London, Sydney, Melbourne, Hamburg, Bilbao, or Shanghai, have been redeveloped and have received extensive scholarly interest for attention to brownfield site regeneration, historic adaptation, and the creation of new urban districts. Entirely new waterfronts focused on upscale housing, tourism, culture, and leisure activities, are being imagined and built on land reclaimed freshly for this purpose in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Manama. The palm islands in Dubai, for example, continue the tradition of artificial islands, such as the ones in Kobe, and of land reclamation projects in Hong Kong and other cities. These and other new developments in the area, such as the World in Dubai—a

new development off the waterfront that does not have infrastructure or other ties to the city, requiring movement from one island to the other by boat or helicopter—or the Pearl in Qatar embody contemporary attempts to construct an urban image worthy of a global city.

## **DUAL DEVELOPMENT: DEEP PORTS AND WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT**

As Rotterdam pursued innovative redevelopment of its old waterfront, its new port became a major player among global ports. It is ranked 3rd in global cargo volume (386,957,000 metric tons) after Shanghai and Singapore, and 10th in container traffic (9,743,290 TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit, the measurement of standard containers, and a standard for the capacity of containerships and transshipment)), the first non-Asian and non-Middle Eastern city as of 2009. A similar dual approach towards waterfront redevelopment and port renewal is evident in Japan, where the three cities of Chiba, Yokohama, and Tokyo collaborate within one large metropolitan area. The cities respectively rank 20th, 25th, and 46th in global cargo volume. Their combined global cargo volume of 332,692,000 metric tons would put them 7th. Tokyo and Yokohama are 25th and 39th in container traffic, combined 6,365,769 TEU ranking them 17th. While the three ports are jointly contributing to the economic predominance of the global metropolis Tokyo, their respective waterfront developments have been designed to highlight the different and local particularities of each place.

In the Tokyo Bay, Yokohama produced the first comprehensive plan for redevelopment in 1965. On 186 hectares of former industrial land (including a Mitsubishi site), the 1981 master plan projected Minato Mirai (Port of the Future), a new development including housing and a multitude of business, commercial, and cultural functions. The Landmark Tower, the Convention Centre, and the Clock 21 Ferris Wheel, as well as the traditional red-brick restored warehouse district and nearby Chinatown, have made the district a tourist attraction. The new port district resulted from close collaboration between national and local governments as well as investors. Chiba came to host infrastructures that were too big for the capital, such as Narita International airport, and other large-scale developments, including Tokyo Disneyland. Tokyo developed its waterfront to showcase the global character of Japan's capital through landmark projects by internationally recognized architects, including the influential Modernist Tange Kenzo.

Another Japanese city that combined port expansion and waterfront revitalization is Kobe. Population growth and port congestion inspired plans in the 1960s to build artificial islands facing the old waterfront and its historic and modern buildings. Since then, Port Island and Rokko Island have been built and host new port functions as well as providing housing, an amusement park, and sport facilities.

## **OTHER GLOBAL DYNAMICS SHAPING PORTS**

Along with containerization and waterfront redevelopment, political changes have reshaped ports. Within Europe, the end of World War II, the Cold War, and the fall of the Iron Curtain provoked huge changes in port and hinterland relations. Some harbours have been trying to catch up and overtake their Western neighbours, notably Helsinki, formerly the easternmost Western European port. Tallinn, a historic port and one of the Soviet Union's military and commercial ports on the Baltic Sea, embraced its independence in 1991 and launched itself onto the global stage, receiving recognition from Jones Lang Lasalle & Lasalle Investment Management as a rising star as early as 2003. The city

has a better and larger harbour than Helsinki and is located on the continent, allowing for direct transshipment onto trains. Its port is blossoming as the new gateway to Russia. Meanwhile, Sevastopol, which hosts the Russian Black Sea Fleet, has not repositioned itself with a European identity.<sup>28</sup> Instead it continues to turn towards Moscow, and the Crimean War remains the main reference for identity and landscape design.

Shifting global patterns since the 1960s, notably the emergence of the Middle East and China as global players, have increased the importance of Asian and Middle Eastern ports over European ports. A look at economic statistics on leading global ports published by the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) in 2008 shows Singapore and Shanghai as ranking respectively first and second in terms of total cargo volume and TEU. They are followed by several other Asian, mostly Chinese cities (as well as Dubai Ports for containers), while the ports that are at the centre of waterfront redevelopment activities—with the exception of Rotterdam (respectively ranked 3rd and 9th)—Hamburg, New York/New Jersey, or Antwerp are ranked between 10th and 20th.<sup>29</sup>

New ports have emerged notably in China, where many goods originate and where leaders since the 1970s have emphasized the growth of ports. The new port of Shanghai is a great example of the ways in which a shift in trading patterns can rewrite urban form. Here we see the creation of a new (possibly the biggest) container terminal on a man-made area between two islands, connected to the land by the new Donghai Bridge, more than 30 kilometres (18.6 miles) long to the Yangshan deep-water port. Singapore has established itself as a major oil refinery centre for South East Asia. While international oil companies had been present since the 1890s, it was primarily after independence in the 1960s that the country emerged as an international business centre, home to several major oil companies and a refinery hub. Other new ports are being planned in Saudi Arabia, where the government is aiming to diversify its economy and is pursuing several economic city projects including the King Abdullah Economic City, a new port city located on the Red Sea. Discussion on deep-water ports is also underway in Europe and the US.

## CONCLUSION

Globally, present-day port cities are thus responding to similar challenges and opportunities, rebuilding old waterfronts and developing new ports. They are united by future challenges, notably environmental risks, such as rising water levels and flooding due to climate change or the opening of new shipping lanes resulting from melting sea ice.<sup>30</sup> Change occurs too in response to local histories, networks, topographies, politics, and cultures.

Port cities connect urban systems beyond continents and countries, forming an almost autonomous network semi-detached from national societies. Nineteenth-century trade networks built on exchange networks between specific cities that had existed for centuries. These linkages inspired cultural and other forms of exchange between cities, which in turn fostered close political, economic, and cultural ties between some cities in South America and the Caribbean on one side of the world and cities in France and Spain on the other. New technologies, notably containerization, and new trade patterns, notably the dependence of Western countries on imports from China, have rewritten trade networks and urban forms once again.

Changing port functions and activities—growth as well as decline—have had major implications for cities as a whole, from the utilization of the waterfront to construction of infrastructures, the location of company headquarters, and housing facilities. While some cities are disappearing from

shipping networks, others are struggling to accommodate growing port functions. Whether or not these cities have expanding harbours, many have had to redevelop areas that are no longer adequate since the emergence of container shipping.

Port cities are the spatial embodiment of global economic flows between sea and land. Even as the relationship between port and city have been revolutionized in the last fifty years, the needs of ships and traded goods are inscribed in port infrastructures, the city as a whole, and its larger hinterland. Global transformation and local initiatives interact in port cities to shape the multiple layers of the built environment.

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## CONCLUSION: CITIES IN TIME\*

PENELOPE J. CORFIELD

BUILDING and living in towns was not the first thing that humans did. Yet becoming globally urban is one of our great collective achievements through time.<sup>1</sup> From the start, the characteristic gregariousness of *homo sapiens* indicated an intrinsic capacity to co-reside, in all climes and latitudes. The chapters within this volume provide a rich analysis of the intricate processes, by which villages and hamlets grew into small towns and large cities—and sometimes declined. Problems as well as achievements have been integral to the process. Nonetheless, despite much turbulence, the collective urban saga has developed, not steadily but inexorably in the very long term, from the first creation of one ‘Babylon’ into an urbanized world ‘Babylonia’.

No instant theory or single factor explains the waxing and waning of towns and cities. The preceding chapters show that, in terms of their origin, they can be divided into urban centres which grow unbidden and urban centres which are ‘planted’, whether for political, imperial, military, commercial, or other reasons. The distinction, however, tends to become obliterated over time. Once established, all towns and cities have common requirements. They need sustainable resources (including water, food, raw materials and, integral to growth, a stream of population recruits) plus a viable economic role (including the economic functions of administrative and religious centres: see above, [Chs. 7, 10](#)). Urban viability also depends upon a complementary rural support system, linked by commercial networks. Trade in turn needs political/societal security to operate successfully. Towns also require a modicum of organization to sustain settled populations, living in compact areas at relatively high densities. So supportive administrative, fiscal, and legal frameworks are essential, as are favourable socio-cultural belief-systems which accept mass living. These interlocking factors—not only socio/economic but political/cultural—are pluralistic, as are the long-term outcomes.

Major interpretations of urban change therefore avoid highlighting one static causal factor. But, historically, three Grand Narratives (long-term interpretations) have offered classic accounts of urban development through time, which is, of course, integrally yoked with space. The first half of this chapter reviews the strengths and weaknesses of these models, when applied globally. None fits all circumstances. Yet their collective insights point to key features within urban history. Accordingly in the second half, those central elements are recombined into a new and different three fold pattern, again taking an aggregate view of developments over the very long term.<sup>2</sup>

At the margins, it is accepted that town and countryside often overlap.<sup>3</sup> Yet whenever a substantial aggregation of people dwell in tolerably close proximity, whilst engaging chiefly in non-agricultural occupations and living by non-landed timetables, then an urban centre exists.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, whenever the proportion of the total population living in towns expands significantly, then a process of cumulative ‘urbanization’ is in train. Incidentally, that latter process was redefined as the advent of ‘the urban’ by Henri Lefebvre.<sup>5</sup> He contrasted that historic experience with the earlier existence of ‘the city’. However, his usage risks confusion. The terms are commonly used in tandem, not as alternatives. Hence the expansion of the non-rural population as a percentage of the whole is best

defined not as ‘urban’ but as ‘urbanization’. That term indicates a cumulative trend, which can also go into reverse.

Over time, socio/economic and political/cultural changes have promoted a range of specialist places: from ‘sin cities’ to ‘holy cities’, via metropolitan regions; capital cities; administrative centres; ports; finance capitals; commercial centres; manufacturing towns; market towns; cities of learning; inland resorts; seaside towns; gambling cities; garrison towns; dockyard towns; dormitory towns; suburban conurbations; retirement towns; and even ‘gangster towns’, like Al Capone’s Chicago in the 1920s. Many unique stories ensue. Yet there is also a collective urban history. (For more on definitions and approaches, see the first section of [Ch. 1.](#))

## CITIES IN CYCLICAL HISTORY

One influential broad-brush Grand Narrative of historical change, which was traditionally but not invariably favoured in rural societies, saw history as a cyclical process. Changes do occur but ultimately revert to their starting-point, as do the cycles of the seasons or the phases of the moon. Notably, cyclical interpretations incorporate not only the rise of cities and their associated ‘civilizations’ (now generally termed ‘cultures’, since many so-called ‘civilized’ societies have behaved in distinctly brutal and uncivilized ways) but also the decline of cities and even their complete disappearance.

Plenty of historical examples confirm the latter point. Ancient Ur of the Chaldees is covered by the sands of southern Iraq. The ruins of Chichen Itzá were long smothered by the jungles in Mexico’s Yucatán peninsula. And the site of the once-great Alexandrian port of Herakleion lies four miles off shore, under the blue seas of the Mediterranean. These quondam urban centres survive now as tourist sites, peacetime conditions permitting. Such a cyclical rise and fall from ‘dust to dust’ might happen anywhere. Thus the historian T. B. Macaulay, writing in Britain’s bustling metropolis in 1840, imagined a future traveller from New Zealand, standing on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St Paul’s Cathedral.<sup>6</sup> His readers were jolted to think about impermanence, although in fact urban centres with a viable *raison d’être* often rally after even major devastations rather than disappear.

Cyclical histories not only accounted for variable urban fortunes but they also attributed great motor force to the urban experience itself. Something had to give spin to the cycle. Economic growth led to towns with concentrations of consumers and wealth, even if assets were unevenly distributed. Yet with riches came luxury—and, with that came physical, political, and cultural decadence. Corrupt and corrupting cities would become vulnerable to attack and eventual decay. In 14th-century North Africa, the classic account by Ibn Khaldûn proposed a five-stage cycle: from primitive nomadism; to rural husbandry; to city-dwelling; to great urban-based empires; and then to cultural and civic collapse/death. Then the cycle would restart, from its rural roots. As Ibn Khaldûn explained, the process was organic and inescapable:

The goal of civilization is sedentary culture and luxury. When civilization reaches that goal, it turns toward corruption, and starts becoming senile, as happens in the natural life of living beings.<sup>7</sup>

Another very different author, a Protestant clergyman in mid-18th-century Britain, posited a variant but somewhat similar sequence. He detected nine historical stages which he itemized as: ‘*rude*;

*simple; civilized; polished; effeminate; corrupt; profligate; declension; and RUIN*.<sup>8</sup> Town life, as within Ibn Khaldûn's model, led to the benefits of civilization and social polish yet simultaneously risked producing luxury, effeminacy, and corruption.

Urban living was thus essential for change and yet inimical to a favourable outcome in the long term. The model dramatized a policy dilemma. Do the urban benefits outweigh the urban disadvantages? Or do the bright lights of Vanity Fair lead but to decadence and Desolation Row? (For different cultural receptions, including praise, censure, and familiarization: see above, [Chs. 24, 39](#)).

Those responsible for municipal governance habitually grapple with the problems in supplying, cleaning, and policing great towns, while city dwellers simultaneously vote with their feet—often flocking into towns to provide the net recruitment from the countryside that fuels urban growth.

Yet, either way, outcomes are not cyclically pre-determined. Towns and cities do not always rise to grandeur. Nor do they invariably become corrupt. Nor do they automatically fall, after rising. Plenty of small and medium-sized urban places persist in a comparatively steady state. Local and regional capitals, for example, are often sustained by enduring local roles. They may not become urban giants but they do not disappear. Alan Everitt dubbed them 'the Banburys of England', taking one attractive small town as an exemplar.<sup>9</sup> Hence cycles of inevitable growth and decay are not universal. Geo-history sustains continuities, alongside or rivalling cyclical patterns. And it also witnesses innovations, as many more new towns, in times of sustained urbanization, join the urban ranks than old ones disappear.

## CITIES IN LINEAR HISTORY

A second Grand Narrative proffered an alternative interpretation. In this case, history became developmental, linear. This rival model eventually tended to usurp traditional theories of cyclicity, especially in Western thought. And, in the 19th century, it achieved its confident apotheosis in the concept of Progress.

Linearity, like cyclicity, incorporated the idea of a continuing journey from a beginning to an end. But the finish was not the same as the starting point. Christian teaching viewed history as a progressive upwards journey towards a 'shining city on a hill'. The urban metaphor was a beacon of hope for salvation. St Augustine further clarified the model to differentiate the sinful this-worldly 'City of Man' from the virtuous otherworldly 'City of God'. But while believers were alerted to avoid urban snares, they might also revere one holy city, as a symbol of the true pathway. Many religions around the world found, and find, such urban inspiration. For example, 16th-century Calvinists looked to John Calvin's Geneva as a godly haven, even though many individual Genevans were religious back-sliders.<sup>10</sup> And today many cities are foci for spiritual and religious worship. This role makes them noted gathering places for this-world business and settlement, as well as centres of religious administration and/or pilgrimage: not least to Rome; Constantinople/Istanbul; Jerusalem; Mecca; Medina; Qom (Iran); Amritsar and many others in India; Lhasa; Kyoto; and Ife (Nigeria). In earlier periods, to take other examples: the same functions were observable at Heliopolis in ancient Egypt and at the Incan holy city of Cuzco.

From the 18th century onwards, moreover, a secularized version of linear change was developed, initially in Europe and North America. It began as Improvement, turning into ebullient Progress. Urban growth was seen as part of a cumulatively benevolent trend. Its components included:

spreading literacy, multiplying commerce, technological transformation—and the advent of political liberty. This equation upgraded the old rural dream that ‘city air sets one free’, invoked by peasants fleeing from feudal landowners (see above, [Ch. 23](#)). So potentially the urban march of ‘Progress’ would eventually liberate everyone. The ideal city would also follow—this time, with luck, upon earth.<sup>11</sup>

In 1741, a young recruit to Birmingham showed how individuals internalized this optimism. William Hutton arrived there, aged 18, and recalled his excitement:

I was surprised at the place, but more at the people. They possessed a vivacity I had never beheld. I had been among dreamers, but now I saw men awake. Their very step along the street showed alacrity.<sup>12</sup>

Birmingham was still, by 21st-century standards, a small town, with just over 20,000 inhabitants at that date. Yet it already differed perceptibly from village society. Furthermore, Hutton’s realization that urban residents tend (by and large) to walk more rapidly than people in rural settlements has been confirmed by later research.<sup>13</sup> So the equation of urbanity with vivacity had some outward justification. For fans of town life, rusticity meant backwardness and inertia. Rural England was no more than a ‘healthy grave’, pronounced the clerical wit Sydney Smith in 1838.<sup>14</sup>

There was, however, much irony in that assessment. Many fast-growing towns in Smith’s day were actually ‘urban graveyards’. They incubated diseases, pollution, congestion, and high mortality—and the larger the cities, the worse the environmental pressures, before improvements in water supply and refuse clearance. Furthermore, analysts feared that the massing of people into towns, free from the traditional ties of village society, would heighten crime, disorder, and conflict. The historian Lewis Mumford, generally an admirer of city life, feared a new degradation in the form of ‘insensate’ industrial cities where hard-faced businessmen disputed with impoverished, ‘defective’ workers.<sup>15</sup> Urbanization might lead to dystopia rather than utopia. Even today, despite improved understanding of public health needs, there are still unenviable lists of the world’s most polluted cities—headed in 2011 by the industrial/mining city-region of Linfen in China’s Shanxi province, with its massive population of over 4 million.<sup>16</sup> In other words, linear change might invert from progress to the reverse.

Nonetheless, a single global pathway, whether for praise or blame, is too simple for universal application to all urban places. Even in periods of widespread urbanization, some towns expand while others halt or decline outright (as earlier chapters have shown). Moreover, not all towns become industrial Coketowns. Nor are all manufacturing centres merely ‘insensate’. Urban problems can be tackled: Linfen municipality, for example, is beginning a programme of environmental rescue. Thus while linearity is good at identifying cumulative trends—like global urbanization since *c.* 1850—it underestimates the diversity of outcomes. Linear models also tend to erase medium- and short-term fluctuations, rendering change too smooth and unidirectional. Hence a verdict in one generation might be very different a generation later.

## CITIES IN REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

The ‘lumpy’ changeability of history prompted in 1848 a robustly different Grand Narrative from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For them, conflict was central. History developed not in a smooth linear progression but via intermittent revolutionary jumps. Each stage of economic development

generated its own inner ‘contradictions’ or fault-lines. Class conflict then provided the motor force that exploded into revolution. Five core stages, as codified later on the authority of Stalin, switched history from primitive communism (tribal labour); to ancient slavery (slave labour); to feudalism (serf labour); to capitalism (waged labour); and ultimately to the ‘highest’ stage, true Communism (communally shared labour).<sup>17</sup>

Towns were not crucial in the very earliest times. But their growth soon added the grit of conflict into history. Marxist historians saw towns and their associated commerce as central factors in destabilizing rural feudalism.<sup>18</sup> The ensuing urban capitalism was ripe for further revolution. Dystopian industrial cities housed masses of resentful and exploited wage-workers, who were generating wealth for others whilst themselves living in squalor. That was the message from Engels in 1844, which was later endorsed by Mumford’s critique of ‘insensate’ Coketowns. Urban revolution would follow. Towns were both solvents of the old and crucibles for revolution.

As a model, the Marxist view was highly schematic. But it allotted a crucial role to economic conflicts, which frequently recur in different guises. Marxism thus seemed grounded in gritty reality. It opposed the smugness of Progress. Furthermore, Marxism as an intellectual system drew elements from both cyclicity and linearity: with the former, it shared the concept of discrete economic stages; and, with the latter, it had an underlying utopianism about the ‘end’ of history. At the ‘highest’ stage, conflict would disappear. Hence the state, no longer needed for class rule, would ‘wither away’. As Engels declared:

It [the advent of Communism] is the ascent of man [humanity] from the Kingdom of Necessity to the Kingdom of Freedom.<sup>19</sup>

However, when applied to the entire history of the globe, the Marxist stages proved to be insufficient in number and form to encompass historical variety. Even in Victorian Britain, the towns and cities were far more protean than the factory ‘Coketowns’ invoked by Marx and Engels. Moreover, many initially blighted places had embarked upon reform programmes, albeit with varying results, by the later 19th century.<sup>20</sup> Cooperation turned out to be part of history, as well as conflict.

Because the Marxist schema saw urbanity as both problematic *and* potentially transformative, it was not surprising that between them the 20th-century states, established in the name of Marxist Communism, displayed great ambivalence about the role of towns. For Marx and Engels, the faults of the ‘bourgeois city’ did not mean that people should return to what they termed ‘the idiocy of rural life’. Noted Communist leaders (Stalin; Ceaușescu) accordingly tried to hurry history along its predestined trajectory by herding rural populations into newly built mass towns. Brutalist high-rise apartment blocks were seen as empowering assertive workers to ‘punch the sky’. Nevertheless, cities might also foster ‘decadence’ and ‘corruption’—and opposition to one-party rule. Hence other Communist leaders (Mao; Pol Pot) forced intellectuals and professional people into the countryside to shed their bourgeois ways. They had to learn from the ‘revolutionary’ perspective of the unsullied peasantry—and to bow to the historic will of the Communist Party.

Both policies were extremely high-handed. Neither was a success. In Communist Russia and Eastern Europe, planned new towns without viable business infrastructures could not flourish in the long term. Conversely, Communist governments which enforced stark policies of ‘rustification’—like China’s Cultural Revolution in 1966—produced not harmony but disaster. Mortality soared; education was disrupted; political disorder spread; output slumped. Moreover, as soon as economic growth was adopted as the new policy objective, the associated processes of hectic urbanization

resumed. As a result of this dynamic, contemporary China, which remains under one-party rule with a Communist label, has over 600 million townspeople who daily confront the very problems of environmental blight, political exclusion, and social inequality that led Marx and Engels to predict a proletarian revolution in capitalist Britain over 160 years ago. Urban history thus defies neat Marxist stages.

Historically, the revolutionary model of history has been given the tribute of a very public testing. Its strong declarations, however, could not encompass all the varieties and sequences of history in all world regions. The historic stages did not appear in the same sequence everywhere. Nor did Communist regimes satisfy their citizens that they were living in history's apogee. In fact, equality, exploitation, and urban blight have appeared and reappeared under many different systems. As in the case of linearity and cyclicity, when but one type and sequence of change is taken as universal, then the model fails. The plurality of outcomes has implications for politicians who may seek to direct the course of urban history. If they rely upon a single slogan or assumption about change (whether enforced urbanization; or, conversely, total deregulation) they eventually find the limits to political will. Cities, like economies, are mass creations that respond to more than top-down directives: *'what is the city but the people?'*

### LONG-TERM FORCES: CITIES AND TURBULENCE

Part two of this chapter accordingly rejects pre-ordained models. Instead, the strong features of these Grand Narratives are recombined in a manner that is intelligible in terms of pluralist processes but open-ended in terms of outcomes. Both linear and cyclical histories stress the role of cumulative long-term trends, occurring gradually over time. Cyclicity further points to the underlying power of continuity, as things revert to their starting point. Meanwhile, the conflict-based Marxist model of revolutionary history highlights the role of upheaval, as producing the potential for seismic change. Combining these insights, urban history can be reanalysed in terms of the interaction of three distinct features: persistence, micro-change, revolution.<sup>21</sup> Since Part one ended with drastic turbulence, Part two starts by readdressing that theme.

Certainly, cities in history do arrive and disappear, sometimes rapidly. Their populations may also experience radical upheavals; and they themselves may generate or contribute to either positive or negative turbulence, leading to seismic change.

Crises may be disastrous but also educative in means of coping.<sup>22</sup> Cities are blockaded or besieged: most famously, in epic mythology, Troy. Or they are sacked by victorious enemies: imperial Rome faced multiple sackings not only by 5th-century 'barbarians' but also in 1527 by mutinous troops of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. At other times, citizens are massacred or expelled. Or decimated by epidemics. Or cities are burned or razed, either in wartime or after natural disasters. Or flooded: New Orleans, notoriously, in 2005. Or they are hit by earthquakes, such as the one that made the fabled walls of Jericho come 'tumbling down'. Dire impacts are worsened when residential densities are high, and when the crisis arrives unexpectedly.

Ultimate among these upheavals is urban death. Precisely how many places have totally vanished is uncertain, as more 'lost' cities are intermittently found under jungles, sands, and sea. Plentiful examples are already known. Thus the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-dara once led their own Indus Valley culture but are signalled now only by ruins and fragments of an (as yet) undeciphered language (see above, [Ch. 5](#)). Another case is that of Fatehpur Sikri in Uttar Pradesh.

Now a world heritage site, the giant redstone palace and its associated small town were built by the 16th-century Mughal Emperor Akbar. Yet his plan failed within less than a generation, for lack of assured water supply from drying lakes. It was an extreme instance that highlighted the essential urban need for basic resources.

Shocks and crises, however, are by no means always fatal. Both small towns and large cities often rebuild after disasters. This phoenix-like quality has already been noted. It depends upon a continuingly viable economic infrastructure, a supportive political/ social context (such as an end to warfare), and enough public will.

Throughout history, there have been many more urban births than deaths, as the total stock of urban centres has risen. Often, the process is gradual, as towns grow from quondam villages. Yet urban birth or renaissance may be experienced as a rapid shock or upheaval. ‘Instant’ cities acquire new populations at headlong speed. One well-known example occurred in the California gold rush, when San Francisco mushroomed from a homestead of 200 people in 1849 to a boomtown of 36,000 by 1852. In such cases, the advent of orderly town government followed upon the disorderly urban birth. Conversely, planned cities created by political *fiat* begin with ‘instant’ administrations. Sixteenth-century Madrid, 18th-century St Petersburg, and federal capitals like 19th-century Ottawa and 20th-century Canberra, provide counter-examples of places that begin with order and become (comparatively) less decorous over time.

Turbulence is thus part of town life, even if tempered by countervailing forces. In particular, great urban centres often carry a ‘shock’ reputation for moral and social unruliness. Warning mythologies of ‘sin cities’ famously include the Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah, which met with divine destruction for their turpitude. Yet, in reality, many towns live successfully with red light districts and the provision of organized drinking, gambling, drug-taking (whether licit, semi-licit, or illicit), and prostitution, provided that such urban services do not drive out other urban functions or lead to serious dis-functionality through policing failures or criminal gang rivalries. Indeed, a mildly raffish image and a reputation for sexual opportunities may lure international tourists and promote commerce (Amsterdam; Bangkok), as well as prompt debates about the ethics of the sex trades. At the same time, concentrated entertainment cities, which lack other economic ballast, remain highly vulnerable to changing fashions in demand as well as to fluctuations in disposable consumer income. Thus Las Vegas (already experiencing a relatively high suicide rate) is facing further problems in the post-2008 global financial crisis, as is Dubai, with a marked exodus of migrant workers and the abandonment of many ambitious building projects.

Hostile assumptions about urban turbulence, however, need to be balanced by its positive role. The radical stimulus generated by quick interactions between substantial concentrations of people, especially when there is no censorship, help to promote innovation, experimentation, and the effective transfer of ideas. Again, this effect is variable. Urban innovation is no more guaranteed than is urban breakdown. Other factors are relevant, including the nature of the power structure (whether monolithic or pluralistic—on which see above, [Chs. 9, 23](#)). In addition, the state of education, the extent of creative freedom, the technologies of communication, and cultural expectations play an important part. The general point, however, is that urban populations often themselves generate, as well as experience, structural change. Strikingly, the tag of ‘creative cities’ has been attached to the world’s first cities, which emerged in ancient Mesopotamia. Hence, historically, urban societies—and, even more so, urbanizing societies—are more prone to foster and circulate cultural and technological innovation than are rural communities. (See above, [Ch. 2](#), [Ch. 38](#).)

Above all, it is the association of city populations with political revolution or fundamental upheaval that gives them the greatest reputational boost—whether viewed with approval or with horror. Massed crowds have an elemental force, prompting fear, excitement, awe, and/or reluctant admiration. Paris in 1789 and St Petersburg (Petrograd) in October 1917 are classic prototypes. In fact, as these examples indicate, mass urban uprisings leading to the forceful toppling of an entire political system occur relatively rarely. Nonetheless, even the potential threat from determined gatherings of discontented city crowds can, in certain circumstances, force major changes upon collapsing regimes (Berlin 1989; Tunis, Cairo 2011). Masses and cities together generate a frisson of coiled power and, sometimes, that power is awakened and applied. Its elemental component was well caught by Charles Dickens, when retrospectively imagining the Parisian crowd's taking of the Bastille. A massed urban population with a purpose may become as potent as the world's deepest oceans:

With a roar that sounded as if all the breath in France had been shaped into the detested word, the living sea rose, wave on wave, depth on depth, and overflowed the city.<sup>23</sup>

### **LONG-TERM FORCES: CITIES AND DEEP CONTINUITIES**

Dickens' metaphor of the living sea is magnificent, catching the ebb and flow of the urban crowds. Yet the oceans also have their (literally) deep continuities, as do towns and cities. Alongside the upheavals and dynamics, which affect the histories of individual towns, there are persistent factors, which counterbalance and stabilize all urban systems.

Continuity in history tends to be unsung and under-analysed. It lacks glamour and may well foster inertia. Yet renamed as stability, its role provides a key counterpoise to the often bewildering components of change. It is well observed that, after great upheavals, people quickly seek to reimpose continuity. And persistence also operates at a structural level, as seen in continuities within the physical histories of towns and cities and in enduring elements in their social, cultural, and political roles.

Functioning cities do, after all, have an intrinsic stability in their location, which is further entrenched by communication networks and transport systems. They inhabit their own space, unlike armies on the march. In their locational stability, they share the profound continuity of geo-history, which, in the words of Fernand Braudel, operates at 'a slower tempo, which sometimes almost borders on the motionless'.<sup>24</sup> In practice, even the geographical environment is not immune from change, whether violent or gradual. Nonetheless, it remains steady from moment to moment, which is why the sudden razing of a townscape in warfare causes intense disorientation. Indeed, the faithful reconstruction of lost buildings (the rebuilding of Warsaw's historic centre after World War II being an example) marks a will to recover a lost normality. In the same spirit, old street and city names are sometimes restored, after controversial changes—even after long lapses of time. So St Petersburg became Petrograd (1914) and Leningrad (1924), before regaining its original name almost eighty years later (1991).

Moreover, towns and cities generally stay put—not only because there is an economic/ geographic rationale to their original positioning but also because their built environments and established communications networks represent huge amounts of stored overhead capital. In terms of urban longevity, the low-lying Jericho is the historic out-rider. It has experienced some 10,000 years of



continuous urbanity on the same attractive oasis site, watered by springs and sheltered by palms.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes, there are cases of localized shifting, as places expand, contract, and redevelop over time. For example, Tunis is situated somewhat to the west of the ancestral Carthage, although their joint urban sprawl now links the two centres. In general, however, mentioning the locational stability of towns and cities tends to cause surprise, so much is that factor taken for granted. That fixity remains even when places gain or lose specific functions, such as becoming a capital city (Berlin; Beijing) or losing that status (Istanbul; Rio de Janeiro). Indeed, in deference to the power of traditional expectations, rulers in settled states only very rarely change their choice of capital cities. These are habitually entrenched by history as well as geography.

‘Fixity’ and continuity can be detected in urban topography and layout too. Great cities with long histories are palimpsests, the developments of one era half-replenishing and half-replacing those of earlier times. Even when some buildings are destroyed, the underlying geological inheritance survives, as often do ancient plot lines, land-use patterns, site boundaries, street contours, other surviving buildings, and the social topography of daily usage. Piazza Navona in Rome (shown in [Plate 44.1](#)) is an eminent exemplar. Its elliptical contours reveal precisely the public stadium, built by Emperor Domitian in the 1st century CE, and itself standing on the site of a traditional recreational area outside Rome’s old city walls. The surrounding buildings date from many eras. Some rest on the stadium’s foundations. Others date from the 17th-century Baroque refurbishment. Yet others are more recent. Throughout, the Piazza remained a favoured place for urban entertainment and the ‘social parade’. And it retains that role today, as part of a 2000-year-old living history.

Social traditions regularly help to buttress the known and settled. In even the newest of ‘mushroom’ cities, whether growing in planned blocks or by informal settlement in shanty towns, people negotiate the shock of rapid urbanization. Meeting places emerge. Information networks provide ways of familiarization. Popular music vocalizes emotions. Neighbourhood allegiances develop. Family ties are, as ever, deeply persistent. Experiences at high-density are intense and shared, while the characteristic urban ‘churn’ of population turnover provides both a safety valve and a mechanism of replenishment. The urban environment is often less chaotic than it seems. Economic opportunities, both formal and casual, are engendered, provided that the urban economy retains its basic viability. And political responses equally promote the ordering of incipient disorder by providing municipal services, educational facilities, welfare networks, and policing, especially the control of under world crime.

Alongside the much-trumpeted shock of the new, many famous world cities continue today to showcase strikingly the allure of the old. In the mid-19th century, Benjamin Disraeli penned this exchange between a youth and his mentor, an older man of the world:

*Coningsby*: Ah! But the Mediterranean! What would I not give to see Athens!

*Sidonia*: I have seen it and more wonderful things. Phantoms and spectres! The Age of Ruins is past. Have you seen Manchester?<sup>26</sup>



**PLATE 44.1** Piazza Navona, Rome, aerial view.

The dramatic mix of new wealth, civic culture, factories, smoke, and industrial slums made Lancashire's Cottonopolis the 'must-see' city of Victorian Britain. Yet today Athens as a world-renowned historic destination, at least, may smile. Its classical heritage keeps it, with Rome, as the most popular of Europe's many tourist cities, even if precise visitor figures remain hard to gauge.<sup>27</sup> Evidence of urban longevity, encapsulated in impressive monuments, attractive old buildings, and original street layouts, has become a priceless asset. It makes visible, in each unique permutation, the reassuring continuity that renders town life possible. Moreover, historic city centres have an ever greater impact now that so many 'downtowns' risk a bland homogenization through the workings of international business and globalized architecture. Indeed, various places which impatiently discarded their old buildings are now conserving or even reconstructing them. One example is Datong in China's Shanxi province, which is rebuilding its once-magnificent fortified walls.<sup>28</sup>

Elements of similarity between widely scattered towns and cities world wide confirm the persistence of common patterns. It is true that, over time, the scale of urbanization has varied greatly. Whereas 2,000 years ago, at the time of the emperor Augustus, only Rome and Alexandria had attracted approximately 1 million inhabitants apiece, in 2009 a global count found over 470 urban places of that size or more.<sup>29</sup> Yet human responses to city life consistently replay a medley of possibilities, fears, hopes, and dreams. The allure of urban 'bright lights' is both literal, contrasting with the 'dark' countryside—and metaphorical. This potent imagery recurs widely, across time and space. Ancient Babylonian creation legends hymned the power of the gods: 'They shall make bright [Babylon, the first city-shrine].' Light was equally associated with cities in Song-dynasty China, a period of significant urbanization. Lantern festivals drew crowds to town: 'Lights were as bright as day.' Twentieth-century blues in urban America also pulsed with hardships and hope, ambivalence and admiration. Two lines from a Chicago song in 1953 caught a much-repeated mood: 'Bright lights, Big City / Gone to my baby's head...'.<sup>30</sup>

Between the contrasting poles of revolutionary turbulence and deep continuity, towns and cities negotiate their histories—whilst, simultaneously, they are subject to slow and incremental modifications. Gradual changes provide gentle momentum. They combat inertia but also cushion or even avert drastic upheavals. ‘Slow cities’ are especially praised by the *Cittàslow* movement (1999), inspired by Italy’s Slow Food campaign. Urban centres are encouraged to resist hectic development and to retain their individuality. In that way, they can resist the ‘fast-lane, homogenised world, so often seen in other cities throughout the world’.<sup>31</sup> Either way, all changes, whether fast or slow, generate long-term trends, which shape the contours of urbanization.

Built environments are themselves never completely old or completely new. They are subject to both natural erosion and human adjustments. Resources are recycled between generations—sometimes over great gaps of time. A proportion of the water supply for contemporary Rome travels through classical Roman aqueducts. And today’s railway between Lahore and Karachi rests on brick foundations which were salvaged from ancient Harappa. Such borrowings and slow accretions foster interpretations of urban growth as an organic process. An established city is tellingly described as a coral reef: ‘a biological masterpiece—[with] millions [of people] teeming around the accumulated and layered achievements of the centuries’. Or growth may be seen as blight. So William Cobbett denounced metropolitan London in 1821 as an ‘infernal wen’—a monstrous tumour, battenning upon the body politic.<sup>32</sup> Either way, the process appears irresistible, deep-rooted.

Behind the scenes, meanwhile, it requires much human organization to keep cities functioning from day to day. Basic municipal administration takes the form of regular cleansing, watering, regulating, and policing. Added to that, the micro-behaviour of residents and visitors impacts crucially, for good or ill, upon every urban environment. Dropped litter, piled rubbish, abandoned vehicles, defaced buildings, and vandalized streetscapes signal neglect, which can generate a negative spiral. Hence some experts argue that prompt repairs to all public dilapidations, down to mending every broken window, will help to curb urban crime and anti-social behaviour. Needless to say, the realities are not so straightforward. Crime covers many categories, including ‘invisible’ white-collar crime, which may occur in clean and tidy cities. Furthermore, patterns of criminality are affected by variant cultural attitudes, as well as by local policing methods (see above, [Chs. 36, 37](#)). As a result, not all poor, ramshackle towns are crime-ridden and violent, while not all rich, well-kept cities avoid sectors of blight, poverty, exploitation, illegality, even ‘unseen’ slavery.

All places, however, are subject to gradual changes, whether as steady improvement or slow decay. Good maintenance is more likely to promote cooperation and positive energy—let alone a thriving tourist industry—than is neglect, especially gross neglect. Hence there is a strong socio-economic case for the authorities to ensure that urban fiscal resources are robust enough to invest in infrastructural urban and environmental welfare. (For related discussions, see above, [Chs. 11, 36, 37, 42.](#))

Continual adaptations have the eventual effect of softening the harshness of drastic change. Big land-hungry roads and railways, perimeter shopping malls, and central high-rise blocks, despite their tricky wind-channelling effects and blank street frontages, have their advocates. But others prefer low-rise housing, mixed land use, in-town shopping, local parks, and pedestrian-friendly streets. A song about Dublin ‘in the rare old times’ became an instant classic in the 1970s, as it lamented how: ‘The great unyielding concrete makes a city of my town’.

Nevertheless, even brutal intrusions into established cityscapes are eventually assimilated, adapted, or even removed. Imaginative renovations can find alternative uses for past novelties that

have become obsolete, such as defunct railways, factories, and wharfs. Time's whirligig blends multiple forms of change and continuity. And, indicatively, urban centres with the most aesthetically pleasing mixes of old and new are regularly listed among the world's most beautiful cities: Udaipur ('the Venice of the East'); Rome; Prague; Paris; Isfahan; Budapest; Bangkok—especially when an old/new cityscape is offset against the perennial sea: Venice; Vancouver; Sydney; Stockholm; St Petersburg; San Francisco; Rio de Janeiro; New York; Istanbul; Cape Town.

Cumulative small adaptations, protracted over time, generate not only individual outcomes but also collective trends. Despite occasional examples of 'instant' cities, the aggregate pace of urban change tends to be gradual. Specific places rise, hold steady, or fall. Even highly urbanized societies may see a marked economic reorientation of cities whose original *raison d'être* is eroding, as in Rustbelt America's steel towns (Pittsburgh; Cleveland; Detroit). Yet such places tend to mutate their roles rather than disappear completely.<sup>33</sup> The sum of many mixed experiences produces both the gradual appearance—and sometimes the disappearance—of urban cultures around the world. Stark disruptions and challenges, such as warfare, diseases, famines, natural disasters, political confrontations, disrupt the flow. But micro-changes and small adjustments work to smooth the curves, whether of growth or decay. As a result, long-term trends in urban history take the form not of sharp zigzags but, in the apt words of Peter Clark, a flowing 'roller coaster' (Ch. 1, p. 4 *et passim*).

Key requirements for incremental urbanization, as shown in earlier chapters, are other correlated long-term factors. These include: reliable agricultural surpluses; good trading networks (especially long-distance trade); commercialization and/or financial transfers. Often also: industrialization; technological adaptation; supportive political structures; and plentiful population recruits, to counteract high urban mortality. The types of factors are similar to those needed for basic urban existence—but multiplying and intensifying upon a mass scale to promote variegated patterns of growth (see above, Chs. 21, 23, 34). Yet urbanization is not merely the product of other trends. Urban populations contribute to their own growth. They promote commerce, industries, services, political organization, cultural (including religious) identities—and innovation (above, Chs. 34, 38).

Meanwhile, many of the major social trends that accompany gradual urbanization are themselves characteristically gradual. An element of literacy and numeracy was commonly required among historic urban rulers and administrators. Then, as cities grew, these centres fostered some widening access to literacy and education, while mass urbanization has the same impact on a mass scale. The spread of literacy thus constitutes both an effect and a further cause of urban growth. Emblematic public buildings in city centres signal this widening cultural access. Traditional focal points might include palaces, temples, shrines, churches, mosques, theatres, stadiums, gymnasias, and famous libraries. In today's urbanized world, every substantial civic centre has an array of schools, universities, museums, art and cultural institutions, community meeting places, diversified sports facilities, and a plethora of government buildings, whether local, regional, national, or international. These places offer access to a massive urban knowledge grid, which is fuelled by both public and private input. So urban networks have the dual effect of conserving the urban experience and constantly renewing the urban capacity for innovation.

Implicitly, too, diversity within towns has the potential to erode social barriers based upon class, caste, gender, or ethnicity, although the pace of change varies with the cultural context. In particular, the majority presence of women in many, if not most, urban centres is generally under-appreciated. Even outwardly macho places like garrison- and dockyard-towns have sizeable female populations, reflecting the relatively higher demand for female labour in towns and for male labour in the

countryside. Not everywhere fits this pattern. In early 21st-century Dubai, women comprise only 27 per cent of all residents, among a population of migrant male labourers. But this ‘strange arrival’ is the dramatic urban exception to prove the rule.<sup>34</sup>

Incremental urbanization gradually ‘liberates’ women from rural occupations, and, in democratic urban societies, it provides the basis for a slow expansion of female participation in civic life (for a comment on that effect in African cities, see above, [Ch. 30](#), p. 637). Ethnic mixing also tends to be promoted, especially in urban centres that are sited on major migrational pathways—unless there are countervailing cultural, religious, or political pressures. There is also the potential for cross-class relationships within towns that are not highly regulated. Admittedly, democratic cities often retain steep social *inequalities* alongside formal political equalities. So the pace of cross-class (as opposed to inter-ethnic) mingling tends to range from slow to glacial. Yet a trend remains a trend, even if not a rapid one. Towns and cities are meeting places and hence mixing places. They have the capacity to liberate human potential. So gradual change continually mediates between tradition and upheaval—in its steady cumulative style. (For more on the global rise and sometimes fall of urban societies, see above, [Chs. 2–6, 12–20, 25–33](#); for long-distance contacts, [Chs. 19, 43](#); and for migration/ethnicity, [Chs. 8, 22, 35](#).)

## CONCLUSIONS

Currently, the process of prolonged urbanization,<sup>35</sup> which began in the 18th century, continues to promote urban specialization and diversity, which in turn depends upon collective inter-dependence and macro-connectivity. And these developments are happening globally. Thus Africa, historically the least urbanized world-region, now has a new mega-city in the Nigerian port of Lagos, which is second only to Cairo as Africa’s most populous conurbation.

Viewed globally, more planetary terrain than ever before is devoted to urban living. On the other hand, the spatial densities of towns and cities (even allowing for their sprawling suburbs) means that the world’s teeming population is highly clustered rather than evenly spread. The planet is not covered in concrete. There are undoubted and quantifiable economies of scale.<sup>36</sup>

That factor means that, in terms of sustainability, there are gains as well as losses. The energy consumption of the world’s urbanizing economies is contributing to global warming via harmful carbon emissions. And effective remedies can follow only if city populations become convinced of the need to adapt.

Clearly, there is no guarantee. Traffic management remains a major problem, bringing conflicts with individual aspirations for mobility. Yet the phoenix-like history of urban resilience, currently demonstrated by the city of Sendai after Japan’s 2011 earthquake/*tsunami*, suggests that positive responses will eventually come forth, even if not as rapidly as climatologists are urging. Urbanized societies do not appear (or disappear) at random. They embody sustained trends, fortified by deep continuities. They are also primed to respond to the challenge of crises. Indeed, the whole process of urbanization marks a historic shift to sustained micro-change, generating adaptive urban populations on a global scale.



**PLATE 44.2** *Metropolis* by George Grosz (1917).

Ultimately, therefore, answers will not be found by quitting cities but by harnessing their will to find solutions. The iconic image of George Grosz's *Metropolis* (Plate. 44.2) depicts the great city as both threat and promise. It is a great human achievement—pulsing with creative organization and disorganization—and alive.

## NOTES

- \* With gratitude to Peter Clark for skilled editing, Ben Wilson for great questions, Peter Jones for 'Bright Lights', and Tony Belton, as ever, for constructive criticisms.
- 1. See E. L. Glaeser, *The Triumph of the City* (London: Macmillan, 2011), 1–15, 268–7; P. Wood and C. Landry, *The Intercultural City; Planning for Diversity Advantage* (London: Earthscan, 2008), esp. 25–65; and, polemically, J. Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Random House, 1969), 6–48.
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