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REVIEW ESSAY

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Colonial urbanism and South Asian cities*

In Gillo Pontecorvo's landmark 1966 film, the French colonial city of Algiers strikes a dramatic posture, split in two by a fortified barrier administered by imperial forces.[1] The *cordon sanitaire* between the European quarter and the 'native' *qasba* partitions the disciplined spaces of the colonial city, setting apart what appear to the moviegoer as materializations of radically different concepts and histories of urban design, planning and sociality. This enforced physical and cultural incommensurability between 'white town' and 'black town' encapsulates a powerful stereotype that inflects urban history research on a range of empires, places and times.[2]

The paradigmatic image of the racially partitioned colonial city has been dismantled in recent scholarship on British India as more a figure of political desire on the part of colonial administrators than an accurate description of urban cultural geography.[3] Mounting evidence of the 'dual city' model's limitations provides an opportunity to reconsider to what extent

[1]G. Pontecorvo, director of *La battaglia di Algeri* [*The Battle of Algiers*] (Italy, 1966).

[2]On boundaries in French colonial cities in North Africa, see J. Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, 1980) and P. Rabinow, 'Techno-cosmopolitanism: governing Morocco' in P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, 1995), 277–319. See also J. Abu-Lughod, 'Tale of two cities: the origins of modern Cairo', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, VII, 4 (1965), 429–57. For classic elaborations of the 'dual city' model, see S. J. Lewandowski, 'Urban growth and municipal development in the colonial city of Madras, 1860–1900', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXIV, 2 (1975), 341–60 and S. M. Neild, 'Colonial urbanism: the development of Madras City in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Modern Asian Studies*, XIII, 2 (1979), 217–46.

[3]See especially S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London, 2005).

colonial urbanism constituted a coherent set of ideas and practices. The current essay surveys several recent books on modern South Asian urban history that represent, perhaps, the first wave of a major emerging field in the historiography of the region.[4] All of these works provide rich material for considering the transformation of cities there during the colonial period. Rather than describing a fixed material form or attributing unified instrumentality to the making and governance of cities, it develops a thematic and descriptive account of trends that shaped urban worlds in the colonial subcontinent. These dynamics suggest that urbanism in colonial South Asia was fundamentally about spatial segregation of populations.

Colonial South Asian cities inscribed social and economic hierarchies upon expanding urban terrain. These hierarchies were constructed out of different overlapping social divisions. One can trace a broad trend over colonial history wherein racialized understandings of the city were gradually displaced by class divisions. Urban segregation during the colonial period, as I suggest, is a key antecedent for forms of class segregation (often overlapping with religious, ethno-linguistic or caste segregation) that structure postcolonial South Asian cities, their neighbourhoods and suburbs.

I begin by sketching the historiographic context that frames recent work on major South Asian colonial cities. Next, I consider cities as *spaces of social control*, tracing symbolic and material ways in which the Raj ordered urban spaces and their inhabitants. Shifting angles, the subsequent section looks at cities as *spaces of autonomy*, examining formal and informal modes and institutional spaces of contestation, negotiation and transgression of colonial urbanist projects. Working from these two understandings of South Asian cities during British rule, I recast the chronology and salient characteristics of colonial urbanism.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Colonial period South Asian cities have – for a number of reasons – long been peripheral in humanistic and social scientific scholarship. First, the bulk of the subcontinent's population was historically rural, and urban population expansion since the mid-twentieth century is only recently garnering widespread scholarly attention.[5] Second, Gandhian nationalist thought, still hugely influential, tends to regard the village as heart and soul of the subcontinent, and the city

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[4]I consider in detail the following books: Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*; W. J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis, 2007); S. Hazareesingh, *The Colonial City and the Challenge of Modernity: Urban Hegemonies and Civic Contestations in Bombay City 1900–1925* (New Delhi, 2007); P. Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Aldershot, 2007); and S. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Malden, MA, 2007). Other works that fit within the emerging canon of modern South Asian urban history include J. Nair, *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century* (New Delhi, 2005); J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London, 2005); G. Prakash,

Mumbai Fables (Princeton, 2010); P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis, 2011); and N. R. Rao, *House But No Garden: Apartment Living in Bombay's Suburbs, 1898–1964* (Minneapolis, forthcoming).

[5]The increased attention owes something to the straining of urban resources and infrastructures in recent decades, but also to late 1990s popular and academic interest in 'globalization' and 'global cities'. See, *inter alia*, M. Castells, *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban–Regional Process* (Oxford, 1989); S. Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, 1991 and 2001); A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996); and M. Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London, 2006). The surge of scholarly interest in

as imposed colonial modernist perversion. The focus on 'village India' long remained a staple in postcolonial political discourse on India (the dominant nation-state in the region in terms of population, geopolitical and economic heft, and visibility in popular and scholarly writings). Glorification of the rural as authentic essence, and derision of the urban as western imposition, dovetail neatly with orientalist predilections that shaped early historical research on South Asia. With several notable exceptions, historical scholarship on modern South Asia before the late 1990s inherited this legacy and displays a rural orientation.[6]

In studies empirically grounded in urban areas the city often appeared as an inert setting where other subjects could be traced. Such scholarship focused not on cities *as such*, but viewed them as arenas for colonial economic and political domination,[7] anti-colonial and nationalist organization,[8] or as ethnographic sites.[9]

Several of the works alluded to above provide crucial foundations for exploring colonialism's implications for South Asian urban history. While often not their explicit purpose, studies located in urban spaces have shown how cities structured (and were themselves shaped by) conflicts, exchanges and movements that characterized the colonial period in South Asia. The debate between Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rajnarayan Chandavarkar over the role of culture in the making of colonial labour worlds positioned Calcutta and Bombay as crucibles where state subjects were thrust into relations of capitalist production for global markets.[10] Likewise, David Arnold's work on the police presented Madras city as a

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cities was linked to a revival of older theoretical writings on urbanism, such as W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA, 1999) and H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991).

[6]On the late development of urban historical scholarship in South Asia and its descriptive rather than analytical focus, see Nair, *op. cit.*, 4–8. On South Asian cities as a subject of historical analysis, see Kidambi, *op. cit.*, 2–8. In addition to those discussed and categorized below, earlier works that consider different aspects of modern South Asian urban history include books like K. L. Gillion, *Ahmedabad: A Study in Indian Urban History* (Berkeley, 1968), N. Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1803–1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Delhi, 1981) and M. Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City, 1845–1875* (Bombay, 1991), and edited volumes such as J. S. Grewal and I. Banga (eds), *Studies in Urban History* (Amritsar, 1981) and H. Spodek and D. M. Srinivisan (eds), *Urban Form and Meaning in South Asia: The Shaping of Cities from Prehistoric to Precolonial Times* (Washington, DC, 1993).

[7]Among works on labour and industrial history, on Calcutta see D. Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal, 1890–1940* (Princeton, 1989) and L. Fernandes, *Producing Workers: The Politics of Gender, Class, and Culture in the Calcutta Jute Mills* (Philadelphia, 1997). See also, on

Bombay, R. Chandavarkar's two works, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1994) and *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India, c. 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 1998), and M. D. Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India: A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills, 1854–1947* (Berkeley, 1965). On Ahmedabad see M. Mehta, *The Ahmedabad Cotton Textile Industry: Genesis and Growth* (Ahmedabad, 1982).

[8]C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad, 1880–1920* (Oxford, 1975) and *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, 1983); D. E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928* (Berkeley, 1991); G. Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880 to 1915* (Cambridge, 1973); J. Masselos, *Towards Nationalism: Group Affiliations and the Politics of Public Associations in Nineteenth Century Western India* (Bombay, 1974).

[9]F. Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700–1935* (Berkeley, 1977); K. I. Leonard, *Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad* (Berkeley, 1978).

[10]See Chakrabarty, *op. cit.* and Chandavarkar, *op. cit.* 1998.

prime arena where colonial institutions manifest characteristic dominance and coercion.[11] Scholarship on nationalism and culture underscored the role of urban centres as loci of negotiation and contestation. Jim Masselos's writings on Bombay highlighted the centrality of the emerging municipal sphere in the making of nationalist politics.[12] Douglas Haynes cast Surat as a key centre for fashioning new forms of publicity, sociality and domesticity.[13] Research on labour, police, nationalism and the public sphere began to identify the particular material, institutional and popular constitution of the urban in colonial South Asia.

Some pre-1990s works explicitly on urban history laid the foundations of a narrative that recent scholarship has sought to complicate. Anthony King described colonial cities as frameworks for organizing racially different groups into divided but interdependent zones. King illustrated this dual structure with sketches of military settlements (cantonments), civil stations (especially the prevalent imperial domestic form: the bungalow) and hill stations.[14] Veena Oldenburg's work on mid-nineteenth-century Lucknow showed that cities were foci for imperial reorganization and control of social and political space.[15] In Lucknow, discourses of security and sanitation established clear demarcations between colonial areas and the Indian town. Oldenburg's book detailed the particular processes and discourses that constituted colonial urbanism as a segregative regime.[16]

The scholarship considered above provided a loose framework for the history of modern South Asian cities. Since the late 1990s researchers have increasingly taken up the project of writing explicitly urban histories.[17] The following sections of this essay consider several key recent books that engage with the city as a discrete historical subject.

CITIES AS SPACES OF SOCIAL CONTROL

From one perspective, colonial urbanism functioned as a means of and reason for social control and segregation. This section provides a broad chronology and a thematic account of the repertoire of technologies constituting South Asian colonial urbanism, incorporating practices such as military occupation, the dual city model and colonizer–colonized spatial segregation, discourses of public health and sanitation, planning and improvement projects, and urban policing. I also note gradual modal shifts in colonial disciplinary attitudes towards the city, from the control of spaces to the regulation of bodies. Even as the body increasingly became the site of application of colonial urbanism, practices of segregation of space remain crucial through the colonial and into the postcolonial period.

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[11]D. Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859–1947* (Delhi, 1986).
[12]Masselos, *op. cit.* See also J. Masselos, *The City in Action: Bombay Struggles for Power* (New Delhi, 2007).
[13]Haynes, *op. cit.*
[14]A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment* (London, 1976). On hill stations, see D. K. Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley, 1996).

[15]V. T. Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877* (Princeton, 1984).
[16]On 'indigenous patterns' and 'European patterns' of urban development, see J. E. Brush, 'The morphology of Indian cities' in R. Turner (ed.), *India's Urban Future* (Berkeley, 1962), 57–70. For a typology of British colonial cities, see T. R. Metcalf, 'Imperial towns and cities' in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2001), 224–53.
[17]G. Prakash, 'The urban turn', in *The Cities of Everyday Life, Sarai reader II* (New Delhi, Amsterdam, 2002), 2–7.

Policies related to maintaining a military presence played a foundational and enduring role in fixing colonial urban power. British forces advanced and consolidated empire, and the establishment of garrisons represented the primary iteration of colonial urbanism. Cities were organized to enable military intervention when necessary and to safeguard the needs and ensure the discipline of soldiers. Permanent military stations – initially walled forts, later sprawling cantonments – were the classic forms of spatial segregation under the Raj. Military areas combined with civil stations for European residences and institutions to form what during the early colonial period was imagined as the inviolable 'white town'. Cantonments were nerve centres for instilling discipline and exercising control.[18] While people and ideas constantly transgressed the sections of the split colonial city, the division of zones was decisive as both ideology and material practice.

From the late nineteenth century, the conceptual architecture of bounded zones began to break down. However, hierarchies defined by class and occupation, which in part replicated colonizer–colonized racial boundaries, were maintained across space through discourses of bodily regulation. These were deployed in the name of sanitation and public health to contain labouring and sexualized bodies within certain spaces of the city.[19] Though physical coercion remained central in urban governance, symbolic forms of power were increasingly inscribed upon the built form of cities. Recent works by Glover, Chattopadhyay, Kidambi and Legg effectively move beyond the dual city narrative by providing accounts of cities as technologies and spaces of social control.

William Glover's study of Lahore examines the articulation between symbolic power over space and the continuing production of regimes of segregation.[20] His architectural history of the prime city of the Punjab region identifies the role of the built environment in shaping a colonial milieu that combined imperial domination with the ostensible improvement of the colonized population. Glover describes a 'colonial spatial imagination' that sought to integrate colonial society and its material forms (28–31). The book presents cities as key structures for conditioning everyday experiences of empire.

The Raj's cities projected the image of enlightened and improving liberal governance, but worked via the production of highly segregated and disciplined spaces. Glover locates the space of engagement outside the overwhelmingly native old city, viewed by British officials as immune to civilizing intervention and potential source of political unrest if tampered with (52–7). Rather, he looks to construction projects in undeveloped areas and the expanding civil station zone, where officials could build unencumbered by the existing native city. Urban pedagogy sought to 'improve' Lahore's social and architectural life via new built forms. Glover discusses the pretensions to 'exemplary urbanism' represented by settlements for colonially designated criminal tribes. These towns were built in the 1880s on an ordered grid pattern,

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[18]See Oldenburg, op. cit.; N. Gupta, 'Military security and urban development: a case study of Delhi 1857–1912', Modern Asian Studies, V, 1 (1971), 61–77; and Hosagrahar, op. cit., on the planning of military cantonments in the remaking of colonial cities. For a critique of the 'dual city' model, described as the 'black town/fort dichotomy', based on an analysis of burial practices and suburbs in Patna, see R. M. Brown, 'The

cemeteries and the suburbs', Journal of Urban History, XXIX, 2 (2003), 151–72.
[19]On spatial regulation of sex workers, see K. Ballhatchet, Race, Sex, and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793–1905 (London, 1980) and A. Tambe, Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay (Minneapolis, 2009).
[20]Glover, op. cit.

which officials saw as a formative model for instilling discipline in the congenitally unruly (42–4). Raj officials designed new spaces to instil moral and rational qualities through ordered structures and clear lines of sight, in contrast to the durable opacity and attendant degeneracy of existing urban spaces (48).

Like colonies and settlements in undeveloped areas, building projects in Lahore's civil station deployed architecture as a technology for advancing colonial designs for the subject population. Despite being British-dominated elite landscapes, newly constructed spaces in the civil station were meant to encourage mixing between colonizers and colonized, and to have a transformational effect on Indians. Glover analyses the symbolic resonance and intended educative and socializing effects of a 'collaborative landscape' composed of banquet halls, colleges, clock tower, zoo, botanical garden and courthouse (60–79). He also traces the linked development of a programme of pedagogy to train architects from among the growing Punjabi middle class (79–91). These projects combined to produce new collaborators in empire and to convey an impression of inclusiveness and imperial benevolence.

Swati Chattopadhyay's book on Calcutta in the early nineteenth century sketches the relationship between colonial ideologies and urban policies in a manner akin to Glover's approach.[21] She argues that British ideas about the native town developed in dialogue with colonial interventions there. Just as Chattopadhyay repudiates the white town/black town model as a useful empirical description of the city, she elaborates its functions as a productive idea for advancing colonial urbanism. While her overall concern is to 'problematize representation of the city' rather than to provide empirical description, Chattopadhyay's book nevertheless explores structures of power in colonial Calcutta (3).

Chattopadhyay traces a discursive continuity between artistic and literary representations of the city, which marked Calcutta as a 'pathological space', and technologies such as health maps (23). The latter provided a means to translate racist ideas inherent in literary accounts of the city into practical discourses of governance. Health maps drew upon ethnographic data and theories of disease to present a template for colonial officials to reorganize and regulate city space (70–3). These urbanist practices undermined the notion of fundamental separation between the unruly native and protected British cities by identifying the mobile native body as site of disease and infection (74). By emphasizing the wide scope of colonial urban power, Chattopadhyay shows that city space was not so neatly divided as colonial representations implied. She presents colonial urbanism as an intrinsically racialized set of practices, which conceived the native body as mobile, contagious and threatening. The language of public health, as Chattopadhyay shows, was crucial in the making of colonial Calcutta over the nineteenth century, and remained so elsewhere in subsequent years.

Prashant Kidambi's book on colonial Bombay diagnoses a mounting urban crisis.[22] He charts the city's emergence as an industrial metropolis that neglected to develop the social infrastructure for burgeoning working-class areas, resulting in problems of governance. This drove a 'fundamental shift in political rationalities' wherein the colonial state shifted from an attitude of disinterest in urban governance beyond European zones to one of active intervention in native localities. There had been no firm white town/black town boundary since the 1860s destruction of the ramparts surrounding the British fort. However, the city was divided by an esplanade separating predominantly poor native areas to the north from a zone of

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[21]Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*   [22]Kidambi, *op. cit.*

concentrated colonial and native wealth and institutional buildings in the south of the island city (34–5). Kidambi documents increasing colonial and elite Indian concerns about the 'unintended city' to the north, which was not under the purview of state intervention (36). This began with the foundation of the municipality in 1865, which was largely ineffective until an epidemic disease crisis near century's end (36–48).

Attempts to control the 1896 plague outbreak entailed a thrust of state power into Bombay's native localities (chapter 3). The Indian Plague Commission spearheaded a powerful assault against 'insanitary neighbourhoods' in Bombay (67). What had been a crisis response during the plague era settled into a broader policy of urban renewal and planning initiated by the Bombay Improvement Trust into the twentieth century.[23] The Trust, founded in 1898, drew on English and Scottish models, identified slums as the source of disease, and fixed on both poor neighbourhoods and the bodies of their inhabitants as loci of intervention (71–2). The Improvement Trust, often challenged by Indian landlords or shop-owners, and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, largely failed to deliver on its mandate to enact a sanitary city with sufficient housing for its burgeoning populace (82–5, 97–8, 102–12). If public health discourse authorized colonial interventions in Bombay's localities, collective violence by the turn of the century justified continued police presence and violence throughout the industrializing city (chapter 5). Treating these developments chronologically, Kidambi charts the increasingly intrusive role of state power, wielded by colonists and later Indian elites, in South Asian urban space.

In Chattopadhyay's Calcutta and Kidambi's Bombay, a picture begins to emerge of colonial urbanism's developing repertoire of rhetoric and practices. Sanitary threat and contagion were identified as key urban problems, and located in the neighbourhoods and dwellings, and later in the bodies, of the poorer segments of the subject population.[24] Official agencies of urban power presided over by British officers and later native elites targeted these spaces and groups. These works identify key shifts, but demonstrate that hierarchies of race and class continued to shape colonial urbanism. As such, a modified version of the dual city model – split between elites (initially European, increasingly Indian) within a plethora of protected zones with permeable boundaries, and subordinates (marginalized Indian groups) primarily residing outside these areas – remained evident throughout the colonial period. The construction of a new colonial capital amid a dense, poor, north Indian city in the early twentieth century underscores the continuing prevalence of spatialized hierarchies in colonial urbanism.

Stephen Legg's book on the making of New Delhi, like Glover's account of Lahore, casts the colonial city as 'showcase of imperial sovereignty and modernity'. [25] Legg sketches the contours of colonial urban governance in Delhi, drawing on plans for responding to everyday and extraordinary threats to public order to reveal officials' and planners' concerns. Viewing the city from the perspective of an increasingly embattled colonial state reveals how urban governance inscribed powerful notions of hierarchy upon urban space.

[23]On class alliances and enduring tensions between the Trust and the municipality, see S. Hazaree-singh, *The Colonial City*, *op. cit.*, chap. 1, and Kidambi, *op cit.*, chap. 4.
[24]See Nair, *op. cit.*, 48–51 and M. Mann, 'Delhi's belly: on the management of water, sewage and

excreta in a changing urban environment during the nineteenth century', *Studies in History*, XXIII, 1 (2007), 1–32.
[25]Legg, *Spaces*, *op. cit.*, 1, 29.

Concerns about imperial security in Delhi were manifest in 'obsession with boundaries and segregation' (46). A chapter on housing for government employees in the new capital details policies of residential ordering by salary: higher-paid employees were located closer to the government centre (43, 45). While notionally based on rank, dominance of Europeans over high government service positions resulted in a scenario of 'racial difference masquerading as class difference' (53). The correspondence of rank to race, and in turn to location, only gradually broke down with the 'Indianization' of colonial administration over the first half of the twentieth century (53).

Hierarchical spatial arrangements were complemented by security schemes designed to segregate native spaces – particularly the old city – from the new imperial capital. Anxieties about crime and contagion, expressed in discourses of urban order and sanitation, authorized the making of a glacis, or cleared space, as a borderland between the old and new city (46, 56). To address threats of nationalist agitation in the 1930s, the Raj sought to discipline bodies and sentiments in the capital (82). Techniques included conveying the 'impression of constant surveillance' and deployment of urban warfare vehicles, planes and tear gas (84, 104–7). Legg suggests that this 'theatricality of urban discipline' was meant to produce a pacifying 'moral effect' among the population (105). In an analysis of colonial plans for combating nationalist uprisings, Legg demonstrates that the physically separated spaces of New Delhi and Old Delhi were to be administered jointly under military counter-insurgency procedures (96).

Even as Delhi was conceived as a unified theatre of control in schemes for pacifying anti-colonial agitators, the urban landscape was partitioned into zones to facilitate policing (88). As such, police practice disaggregated Delhi into sections defined by race, class and community. Legg shows that urban maps presenting spatially the demographics and potential for disorder of various areas were a key disciplinary technology (128–48). Police maps described the borders between Hindu and Muslim areas, and they were linked to counter-insurgency schemes. These maps were designed to facilitate the unrestrained deployment of state violence towards controlling the unruly elements of the subject population while protecting the ruling elite.

In Legg's Delhi, the social hierarchies underlying colonial urbanism continued to carve out spaces of focus and inscribe separate disciplinary zones into the mid-twentieth century. In keeping with critiques such as Chattopadhyay's of the dual city model, segregation in colonial Delhi was far more complex than the impression conveyed by a model of hermetically bounded urban worlds for colonizer and colonized. The counter-insurgency strategies devised for Delhi in the last decades of imperial rule demonstrate the ways in which colonial urbanism incorporated differently configured parts of the city into unitary schemes of control.

While Legg's book on Delhi shows how colonial urbanism functioned by spatializing social hierarchies, his subsequent research on sex work in Delhi alludes to other dimensions of colonial segregation. One recent article sketches the development of prostitution policy in colonial Delhi.[26] The nineteenth-century enclosure and housing of prostitutes within particular zones of the city sought to regulate the access of soldiers to sex and its presumed health risks. With the city's expansion after its 1911 designation as the capital, however, political authority was fractured across several jurisdictional divisions. In response, administrators sought to disseminate anti-prostitution propaganda and canalize sex work into

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[26]S. Legg, 'Governing prostitution in colonial Delhi: from cantonment regulations to interna- tional hygiene (1864–1939)', *Social History*, XXXIV, 4 (2009), 447–67.

particular zones. The developing repertoire of colonial urbanism combined practices of segregation of space with a focus on controlling city-dwellers' bodies and sentiments.

Ashwini Tambe's work on prostitution in Bombay elaborates the picture of colonial segregation and regulation.[27] Tambe charts the development of a controlled enclave for European sex workers in the area of Kamathipura during the late nineteenth century (58). This expanded an established state policy of regulating European soldiers' access to sex.[28] Tambe also details the location and practices of Indian sex workers, who were subject to a lesser degree of state surveillance (98–9). Both Indian and European sex workers were located in Kamathipura, other segregated zones dedicated to prostitution and working-class native areas (61–3, 95). Research on sex work by Tambe and Legg underscores the importance of social segregation in colonial urban policies.

Several key idioms of urban governance in British India – military fortification, zoning and residential segregation, construction and improvement projects, public health and sanitation, policing and counter-insurgency, control of bodies and sexuality – combined to regulate the lives of urban populations within changing city spaces. It is notable, however, that those technologies of state that rendered South Asian cities *spaces of social control* were similar not only across colonial contexts but also across many urban areas globally. While timelines vary geographically, by roughly the turn of the nineteenth century cities and urbanism were prime spaces and technologies for producing disciplined societies.[29] While notions of racial difference were crucial in the production of class in South Asian colonial cities, they were also significant in ostensibly non-colonial (or no longer colonial) locations in Europe and the Americas. If the preservation of racial difference was a characteristic element of colonial urbanist discourse, then urban power took on 'colonial' characteristics in metropolitan areas with ambivalent relations to imperial forms. As such, scholarship on South Asia and other colonized places provides a useful touchstone for research on changing modes of urban governance as one of several technologies of control that upset the presumed flow of ideas and power from metropole to colony.[30]

In the history of South Asian colonial urbanism, the city's emergence as a space of social control was simultaneous with its emergence as a *space of autonomy*. Because of the particular history of devolution of colonial authority from precisely the moment 'the municipal' became a locus of power, the period from the 1880s onwards saw increasing native formal and informal urban authority. The decades around 1900 represent a key transition or culmination of colonial urbanist projects.[31]

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[27]Tambe, *op. cit.*

[28]Colonial restrictions on interracial sex were already in place. See Ballhatchet, *op. cit.*

[29]This trend is visible globally. See, *inter alia*, P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003); Rabinow, *op. cit.*; and G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971).

[30]For other work that recasts the history and directionality of intellectual flows in this context see, on South Asia, R. V. Mongia, 'Race, nationality, mobility: a history of the passport',

Public Culture, XI, 3 (1999), 527–56; and C. Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj: How Fingerprinting Was Born in Colonial India* (London, 2003). On the unified cultural terrain across empire, see K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 2004).

[31]Kidambi, *op. cit.*, argues that earnest colonial intervention in native localities began in the 1890s (chap. 3). Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, eschews chronology, but identifies contestations and colonial pressure regarding the use of 'public space' in Calcutta in the 1880s (20, 137), and cites texts from

CITIES AS SPACES OF AUTONOMY

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a novel unit of political engagement – the municipality – emerged on to the global political scene. This new terrain of politics was indelibly transnational in that 'networked transformations in municipal regulatory frameworks' linked together cities in Australia, Europe, North America, India, South Africa and elsewhere.[32] Just as British officials were refining colonial urbanism as an ensemble of techniques for social control, municipalities in the subcontinent were becoming authorized arenas for elite native political participation. Municipal power was integral to a broader transition that opened local and eventually provincial spheres for Indian self-government, cast by the Raj as institutional democratization.[33] The successful nationalist movements that resulted in the decolonization of the subcontinent are often regarded as the culmination of these processes. The simultaneous emergence of cities as spaces of social control and of political autonomy, however, traced a number of trajectories that are not easily reduced to victorious nationalisms.

Urban space, as detailed above, was a staging ground for colonial disciplinary violence and 'improvement' projects. Cities also evidenced the ambivalence of late colonial power, the increasing agency of the colonized in negotiating the political order, and the emergence of protean anti- and counter-colonial movements. Recent scholarship helps situate cities as sites where the transition from colonial domination to native elite power took place. It also offers evidence of political movements, social practices and transnational connections engendered by the development of the city, as municipal entity and as inhabited space. This section attempts to draw out some of these connections, first by situating cities as spaces of formal political autonomy.

The gradual and fitful process of the colonial devolution of institutional power reinvented the South Asian city as a space of political negotiation. From the mid-nineteenth century, local leaders could sit on municipal bodies, which gained formal legal authority with Viceroy Ripon's 1882 resolution. Indians were often restricted to half or fewer of the seats on municipal boards, and the franchise was limited by property ownership and other factors. Nevertheless, by 1882 the municipality was, in principle, a venue for the formal political participation of colonial subjects.[34]

Elites dominated the municipal sphere of government from its emergence. As Kidambi shows for Bombay, Ripon's policy resulted in the 1888 reforms of the Bombay Municipal Corporation that gave a greater stake to Indians in the body.[35] Dominant Indian elites often shared interests or colluded with colonizers in urban policy-making. Douglas Haynes's work

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1880 and 1900 as exemplary of British and Bengali discourses of space 'crossing paths' and articulating competing claims (275). The processes of urban governance, suggests Glover, *op. cit.*, that were designed to 'make Lahore modern', occurred between *c.* 1860 and 1910.

[32] Andrew Brown-May, 'In the precincts of the global city: the transnational network of municipal affairs in Melbourne, Australia at the turn of the nineteenth century' in P.-Y. Saunier and S. Ewen (eds), *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Movement, 1850–2000* (London, 2008), 21.

[33] For a concise and unequivocal account of the cynicism and economic self-interest that drove colonial reforms, see S. Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947* (Delhi, 1983).

[34] See J. G. Leonard, 'Urban government under the Raj: a case study of municipal administration in nineteenth-century south India', *Modern Asian Studies*, VII, 2 (1973), 227–51.

[35] Kidambi, *op. cit.*, 48.

on Surat provides a detailed account of how elections in the municipal sphere from 1883 resulted in the dominance of English-educated elites and a small group of older Gujarati elite families.[36]

Throughout the latter decades of British colonial rule in the subcontinent, as spheres for Indian political participation expanded, the urban arena retained a crucial position. The gradual democratization of colonial administration, especially in the municipal sphere, continued with the Government of India Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. Municipal boards and government units at the local and district levels served as crucial venues for the elaboration of nationalist political demands.[37]

The case of Bombay bears out the role of urban institutions and political networks in the articulation of anti-colonial positions. Against a background of the colonial city as space of segregation and social control, Sandip Hazareesingh's work examines confrontations over urban policies that shaped Bombay from the First World War through decolonization.[38] He thematizes the late colonial period in Bombay as a struggle in which capitalist developmentalism won out over an emergent, globally mediated language of 'urban citizenship'. In describing the context of these developments, Hazareesingh presents the city as an authorized space for contesting and negotiating the colonial present and possible political futures in South Asia. A key focus here is on the political possibilities voiced in the *Bombay Chronicle* by its activist editor B. G. Horniman (83–4). Hazareesingh contemplates the convergence represented by a brief alliance of Horniman with M. K. Gandhi, uniting an urban agenda addressing questions of labour, housing and transportation with nationalist resistance to arbitrary colonial laws (110, 124–5). Horniman's deportation and Gandhi's retreat from mass mobilization strategies represent to Hazareesingh the denouement of 'the quest of urban citizenship' as a political horizon in the late colonial moment (139, 147–8, chapter 4).

Hazareesingh's work covers events in Gandhian politics that are touchstones in any narrative of the history of South Asian nationalism. He provides a fresh interpretative context by embedding this history firmly within the urban political scene of Bombay. Such a view relies upon an understanding of the late colonial city as an autonomous and ambivalent space that was the subject of political struggles, rather than merely their location. This perspective on nationalism has important stakes for rethinking late colonial politics. Hazareesingh suggests that participants saw the struggle for the city as integral to the fight for the nation-state, and Gandhi's rural emphasis in his vision of *Swarajya* ('self-rule') appears as one strategy within a broader political language. The threat Horniman's *Chronicle* posed was less in its abstract emphasis on home rule than in its 'critiques of the urban colonial regime [that] offered practical insights into how Swarajya might be lived locally' (119). Hazareesingh's take on the increasingly autonomous urban domain as constitutive of politics, rather than an incidental location, breaks down understandings of nationalism by reinserting the productivity of specific cities.

Seeing the urban itself as foundational in the making of politics does more than broaden the thematic scope of nationalism in British India. Such an orientation can underscore the subcontinent's embeddedness in transnational networks of various kinds. While a public sphere centred on the press and pamphlets was emerging in wartime Bombay, the newspaper format

[36]Haynes, *op. cit.*, 116, 150–2.   [38]Hazareesingh, *op. cit.*, chap. 1.
[37]Masselos, *Towards Nationalism, op. cit.*

was becoming a key global technology for political protest (107). Hazareesingh casts Bombay within a transnational framework, locating Horniman among 'international movements for social change' around urban questions (122). While more suggestive and gestural than the empirically grounded narratives that make up the early sections of the books, Hazareesingh's final chapter situates 'urban citizenship' and 'civic rights' movements within a transnational history of labour activism and urban progressivism (chapter 4; see especially 212–16). Hazareesingh's history of Bombay presents a counter-narrative of South Asian nationalism. By rigorously contextualizing his account within a key city in the independence movement, he both demonstrates the importance of the urban as space of political autonomy and indicates the relevance of transnational political ideas in this development.

If the nationalist movement was embedded within formal political spaces in Bombay, other examples suggest that informal arenas of urban power were also crucial domains of autonomy in colonial South Asia. Legg's work casts Delhi as a fundamentally negotiated space, of which the municipal domain was one arena.[39] Imperial Delhi was the site of intensive building activity, boundary-making and military repression during the early twentieth century. Each of these aspects of the capital's construction and consolidation was fiercely debated by city-dwellers and officials in formal and informal arenas. The competing interests of the partly Indianized Old Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) and imperially dominated New Delhi body (NDMC) provided a framework for the playing out of competing visions of the city.

Despite New Delhi's dominance in the urban area, contestations over improvement projects reveal a tangle of municipal bodies that created openings for Indian nationalist elites as well as common city-dwellers to complicate the workings of colonial urbanism. A project to demolish a section of the old city wall, adjacent to New Delhi, and perform 'slum clearance' elicited official and popular challenges to the plan itself and other specific elements. The scheme was first proposed in the 1860s and renewed in 1889, but varied forms of opposition delayed the demolition through its reintroduction in the 1920s into the following decade (190–200). Legg's account of the debates, including a revealing discussion of the varied public representations of the symbolic meaning of the wall, shows how the urban terrain emerged as a site of multilateral negotiation in the late colonial period (198–9).

Negotiations over the city proliferated beneath the level of formal politics. Public sphere representations, informal engagements of city-dwellers with the state and urban practices produced and occupied spaces of autonomy within the colonial city. Legg suggests that petitions filed during the 1910s and 1920s – demands of state employees for accommodation or rent allowance and requests for compensation by the displaced or evicted – formed a 'counter-discourse' to the colonial state's urbanist project (66–70). Practices that remade the 'lived space' of the city – such as hijacking of lighting supplies or keeping livestock in government quarters – supplemented entreaties to officials by actively 'resist[ing] the hierarchies embedded in the city' (74–5). Legg's work provides brief glimpses at rarely visible interventions into the making of colonial Delhi. While difficult to account for in a systematic fashion, this domain of urban political engagement and practice is analytically indispensable. It provides a basis for thinking beyond the powerful ordering impulse of colonial urbanist technologies of control such as those considered in the previous section. Further, focus on everyday practices reveals

[39]Legg, *Spaces*, *op. cit.*

non-elite interventions in the late colonial city, parallel to the formal political domain of elites who entered into, and later inherited, the institutions of colonial urbanism.[40]

Substantial consideration of urban structures and practices of the city might supplement a narrative seeking to move beyond elite urbanist ideologies (whether colonial or nationalist) in conceiving the South Asian city. One such gesture is Glover's account of the bungalow as a key component of the colonial city.[41] Writing against Anthony King's landmark work on the bungalow as a trans-imperial domestic form,[42] Glover unsettles the narrative of an effectively flattened and pacified colonial world. His analysis of literary texts, memoirs and official housing reports reveals the 'disquieting' effect of the bungalow on many colonial observers. The anxiety he locates was induced by a gnawing sense that the Indian iteration of the dwelling – constructed out of local building materials and embedded in Indian landscapes – 'was more naturally suited to Indian communities than it was to the British community' (181). Glover claims that Indian, rather than British, propriety was 'true of most of the new spaces in the colonial city' (181). As such, colonial urbanism – the ensemble of disciplinary regimes it constituted, the modes of intervention it worked through – produced unintended consequences and was subject to frequent and, at times, thorough reversals. In effect, the very spaces of colonial comfort in the heart of a segregated elite zone undermined the imperial project.

The thematization of the colonial city as a space of autonomy and ambivalence is not conducive to the kind of structural accounting as the city seen as space of control. Taken together, however, these aspects of colonial urbanism's identity allow us to reassess received models, suggest other angles of approach, sketch a loose chronology, and trace postcolonial legacies and continuities.

CONCLUSION: TRAJECTORIES, GENEALOGIES AND BOUNDARIES OF COLONIAL URBANISM

Colonial urbanism provided a powerful evolving repertoire of technologies for social control, and opened emerging autonomous or ambivalent spaces for articulations of competing visions for the city. In some of its idioms, such as the technology of public health and sanitation, colonial urbanism worked both as an instrument for social control and as a project of progressive urban politics. Indeed, a crucial aspect of South Asia's modern urban history is the simultaneity of the city's formation as space of control and as space of autonomy. In the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century two clear tendencies are in evidence: the colonial state's consolidation of disciplinary regimes across the terrain of the city, and the emergence of the urban as a venue and topic for negotiation and contestation between and among colonizers, South Asian elites and common city-dwellers.

The chronology and characteristic features of the city's life as a *space of control* can be roughly sketched. From the mid-eighteenth century, colonial cities developed as military, and later civil and residential, European zones, fortified by material structures and state violence against

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[40]Chattopadhyay emphasizes that Calcutta's spaces of autonomy were foundational in the articulation of an elitist and patriarchal nationalist urban regime.

[41]Glover, *op. cit.*, chap. 5.
[42]A. D. King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture*, 2nd edn (New York, 1995).

areas populated by the colonized poor. Boundaries between 'white town' and 'black town' were hardly hermetic, as colonial texts suggested. Numerous practices – including burial, commerce and labour – crossed implicit boundaries.[43] Nevertheless, the segregated city, with multiple zones rather than dual 'halves', provided a conceptual template for colonial urbanism that structured the making and regulation of space. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, poorer city-dwellers were systematically subjected to a developing repertoire of urban discipline. This entailed building and improvement projects laden with the symbolism of colonial civilizing and extensive campaigns to ensure public health and sanitation. Whereas the military and police regulated boundaries in an earlier era, construction projects and sanitation initiatives subjected entire cities to governance. There was a shift in state orientation from containment of disorderly spaces to regulation of threatening bodies: from divided to disciplined city.[44] Throughout these changes, colonial urbanism consistently organized the population by segregation of space.

Production and regulation of space continues to frame state urbanism in postcolonial South Asia. Material from the late colonial period, during which an elite administrative cadre of colonial subjects was emerging, helps historicize the contemporary urban condition. Legg's work on the twentieth-century remaking of Delhi highlights the relationship between the elite – initially British but steadily Indianizing – government city of New Delhi and the largely poor Old Delhi, which was increasingly marginalized in urban politics by the new capital.[45] Legg notes the structures and methods of policing the two entities, but shows that 'they were united by forms of government and discipline that prioritized the urban elite' (117). In the 1910s, this group was still predominantly European, and housing preference for government employees based on rank masked a racialized, bourgeois urban geography of residential segregation (46, 51). With increases in Indian posts and occupational ranks over the following decades, by the late 1930s racial segregation had been largely overwritten by class segregation (53–4).[46] Scholarship on contemporary South Asian cities bears out the endurance of this shift, and the continuity of spatial segregation.[47] The characteristic modes of power that guaranteed British racial dominance in the colonial era – military and police presence, zoning and

[43]See Brown, *op. cit.*, on cemeteries; Chattopadhyay, *op. cit*, on servants (126–32); and J. Heitzman, *The City in South Asia* (London, 2008), 118–23, on commercial activity.

[44]On this shift, see I. Pande, *Medicine, Race and Liberalism in British Bengal: Symptoms of Empire* (London, 2009), chaps 5, 6.

[45]Legg, *Spaces, op. cit.*

[46]On state targeting of lower-class groups during the inter-war period and the emergence of middle-class dominance in urban politics, see N. Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India* (Cambridge, 2001), 14–15, 18.

[47]See especially Nair, *op. cit.*, on Bangalore, the locus of colonial military development and capital investment, and the primary city in a semi-autonomous princely state. She accounts for bourgeois dominance of urban space, and traces a direct continuity between colonial and post-

colonial bourgeoisies (74–6). On the production of elite space in postcolonial Calcutta see D. Chakrabarty, 'Of garbage, modernity, and the citizen's gaze' in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, 2002), 65–79; S. Kaviraj, 'Filth and the public sphere: concepts and practices about space in Calcutta', *Public Culture*, X, 1 (1997), 83–113; and A. Roy 'The gentleman's city: urban informality in the Calcutta of new communism' in A. Roy and N. AlSayyad (eds), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (Lanham, MD, 2004). For Mumbai, see J. S. Anjaria, 'Guardians of the bourgeois city: citizenship, public space, and middle-class activism in Mumbai', *City and Community*, VIII, 4 (2009), 391–406. On the segregation and stigmatization of sex work in contemporary Mumbai, see S. P. Shah, 'Producing the spectacle of Kamathipura', *Cultural Dynamics*, XVIII, 3 (2006), 269–92.

residential segregation, public health and sanitation as discourses for controlling sexuality and labour – continue to produce class power and segregation along those lines in contemporary South Asia.

The aspect of the colonial city as *space of autonomy* is, for historical and archival reasons, less amenable to descriptive, thematic summarization than disciplinary urbanism. The limited political authority Indians held in colonial period municipal governance makes it difficult to distinguish projects clearly within this domain from the broader institutional workings of colonial urbanism. The emergence of the municipality as an authorized site of formal political participation by colonial subjects can be dated to the period from the 1880s onward. This historical development was part of a key global process, only briefly considered in the literature on colonial South Asian cities.[48] Recent scholarship on municipalism, primarily in Europe, has suggested that urbanist agendas served as platforms for bypassing national politics and co-ordinating progressive projects transnationally.[49] These early twentieth-century political figures in Europe had their counterparts in South Asia. Urbanists in British India negotiated what was often a far more constrained political terrain, split between a reactionary colonial state and elite-dominated nationalist parties. Describing late colonial South Asian cities from the perspective of urbanist connectivity may provide an avenue both to see beyond provincializing colonial and statist nationalist networks and to examine robust global engagements in an era before nation-states were in place. Urbanist projects might reveal cities' ambivalent relationships with the production of colonial (or later, national) state space as a political-economic territorializing process.[50]

Providing a thematic account of informal negotiations and contestations within the urban scene is difficult owing to the scattered and limited evidence available of this level of engagement.[51] A key foundation for such an approach would be a nuanced assessment of the ideological and material working of colonial urbanism, which takes account of its contested character, the rise in new techniques and sites of governance, and its central role in the organization of space.

Research into colonial South Asian urban history can provide a sense of the contexts – transnational in scope – that constrained and enabled elite and popular participation in formal

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[48]While the transnational engagements of modern South Asian urbanisms have rarely been the explicit topic of scholarship, recent works cite evidence for the global circulation of ideas. See Legg (*Spaces* and 'Governing prostitution'), *op. cit.*, Hazareesingh, *op. cit.*, Kidambi, *op. cit.* and Glover, *op. cit.* On the work of urban planner Patrick Geddes in India and internationally, see chaps 7–9 of H. E. Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London, 1994). See also Nair, *op. cit.*, 158.
[49]P. Dogliani, 'European municipalism in the first half of the twentieth century: the socialist network', *Contemporary European History*, XI, 4 (November 2002), 573–96; O. Gaspari, 'Cities against states? Hopes, dreams and shortcomings of the European municipal movement, 1900–1960' in *ibid.*, 597–621; P.-Y. Saunier, 'Taking up the

bet on connections: a municipal contribution' in *ibid*, 507–27. See also P.-Y. Saunier, 'Changing the city: urban international information and the Lyons municipality, 1900–1940', *Planning Perspectives*, 14 (1999), 19–48 and Saunier and Ewen (eds), *op. cit.*
[50]On the making of 'state space' in late colonial South Asia, see M. Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago, 2004).
[51]For exemplary uses of petitions and legal records to examine common city-dwellers, see Legg, *Spaces*, *op. cit.*, and Tambe, *op. cit.* For a penetrating use of colonial texts to locate political participation of labourers in early colonial Madras, see A. Balachandran, 'Of corporations and caste heads: urban rule in company Madras, 1640–1720', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, IX, 2 (2008).

and informal negotiations and contestations over urban practice. These engagements, the work of emerging institutions such as municipalities and improvement trusts, and the politics of the city-dwelling masses shaped late colonial urban worlds and continued to be salient into the postcolonial era. Study of the complex interplay between control and autonomy in urban terrain might allow us more effectively to situate the voices of the people amid the structures and practices of the colonial city.

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