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Making Ancient Cities: New Perspectives on the Production of Urban Places

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Recent theoretical and methodological shifts in approaches to the built environment have reoriented how and why archaeologists investigate ancient cities. This volume examines these developments and their implications through culturally and chronologically diverse case studies. Its primary goal is to examine how ancient cities were made by the people who lived in them. It takes the view that there is a mutually constituting relationship between urban form and the actions and interactions of a plurality of individuals, groups, and institutions, each with their own motivations and identities. Space is therefore socially produced as these agents operate in multiple spheres. The volume provides examples of top-down actions by political authorities, often manifested in varying degrees of urban planning achieved through the exercise of structural power (Wolf 1990, 1999), mid-level actions of particular socioeconomic groups or neighborhoods and districts, and grassroots actions seen in the daily practice of households and individuals. It is clear that these processes operated simultaneously in ancient cities, although there is an ebb and flow as to when and where any of these spheres of agency might have had the greatest effect on particular urban landscapes. It is also apparent that these spheres had competing or conflicting interests that materialized in changing patterns of public and private space through time. This is manifested in the concept of heterarchy and multifocal distributions of power discussed in several chapters of this volume.

Tremendous variability is evident in the development and layout of ancient cities, not only between regions, but also within

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them. Detailed analyses of individual urban centers and their life histories, as well as comparative analyses within and between regions, are crucial to understanding this diversity. This volume includes both types of studies, bringing together a number of experts in the social aspects of ancient urbanism who represent a wide variety of regional and chronological specializations. This book is therefore global in scope, and the case studies address the social production of city space in both Old and New World regions, including Mesopotamia, the eastern Mediterranean, the Roman Empire, China, eastern Africa, North America, and Mesoamerica. Individual essays address both theoretical and methodological approaches to ancient cities, urbanism, and urban form in each of these geographical areas and, in many cases, make comparisons between urban sites within and between regions. The thread that links these diverse case studies is their emphasis on city space and how it articulates with the social processes that produce, transform, reproduce, or destroy the built environment. Although many chapters address top-down, mid-level, and bottom-up processes, the chapters are organized by which level is emphasized. The opening chapters (Creekmore, Nishimura, Wynne-Jones and Fleisher, Magnoni et al.) focus on household and mid-level actions, whereas the middle chapters (Fisher, Fitzsimons) address the tension between high- and mid- or low-level actions, and the remaining contributions (Buell, Kelly and Brown, Razeto, Stark) address mainly top-down planning by elites and state institutions, or the role of cosmology in shaping the city.

The cities explored in this volume are, in many cases, not the usual suspects that populate textbooks and edited volumes. And yet, most are not unusual examples for their respective regions. Too often a single, earlier-discovered, better-known, or exceptional city or subregion stands as the type-city for a given area, and cities that do not fit that mold are given less consideration in discussions of urban space. Our volume addresses this issue by introducing cities that receive less attention in the general literature, alongside some of the best-known cases, and investigating each with new approaches that, while grounded in the empirical analysis of archaeological remains, engage issues of power, materiality, agency, meaning, and identity. These diverse cases and approaches encourage readers to consider regions and perspectives with which they are less familiar, and to look at familiar regions or cases in a new light.

In what follows, we place our volume in context with a discussion of changing archaeological perspectives on ancient cities, including a brief review of other current offerings on the subject. This is followed by an introduction to the regions covered in the volume and a review of the major themes addressed by its contributors, focusing on the production of urban space at various socio-spatial scales, its intersection with the encoding and communication of meaning in urban environments, and the role of these processes in sociopolitical transformation. Finally, we conclude by outlining some of the challenges and prospects for further study of the social production of space in ancient cities.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ANCIENT CITIES

By the time V. Gordon Childe (1936) coined the term "urban revolution" to describe the momentous economic and sociopolitical transformations that accompanied their rise, ancient cities had long been a focus of scholarly inquiry (e.g., Fustel de Coulanges 1963 [1864]). Despite this, the systematic investigation of the remains of early cities by archaeologists to explain these changes is a comparatively recent phenomenon, spurred on by the emergence of New Archaeology in the 1960s and early 1970s and, later, processual archaeology. The goal of such investigations has typically been to reveal the origins, form, and function of ancient cities as a reflection of broad social evolutionary trends and regional patterns associated with the rise of state-level societies (Adams 1966; Ferguson 1991; Redman 1978; Sjoberg 1960). As a result, the emergence of urbanism has usually been viewed as the inexorable result of processes of demographic growth, nucleation, and politico-economic development. Such approaches tend to emphasize the function of cities within settlement hierarchies, catchment areas, and regional systems of production and exchange. Within these patterns and processes, the recursive relationship between cities and the social lives of their inhabitants has rarely been considered.

The rise of postprocessual critiques in the 1980s and 1990s brought with it two interrelated developments that have changed how archaeologists look at past built environments and the people who lived in them. The first is the recognition of the agency of people of the past, which has come to occupy an important, if not central, role in archaeological discourse (see reviews by Dobres and Robb

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2000; Dornan 2002; Gardner 2007). Agency theory is informed by the works of Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), and others who argue for a mutually constituting relationship between human action and social structure. Bourdieu sees this relationship as enacted through *habitus*, an individually unique set of unconsciously internalized dispositions and categories that largely determines individual action and perception of the world. Giddens's structuration theory retains the linkage between routine actions and social reproduction, but is instead based on the assumption that human beings are knowledgeable agents who are largely conscious of the conditions and consequences of their actions. Through the "duality of structure," agents are at once constrained by the rules and resources of structure (thus ensuring social reproduction through the routinization of action) and yet able to make conscious choices in their social actions, opening the potential for social change. While agents act with intention, their knowledge is not perfect and their actions can also result in unintended consequences (e.g., Joyce 2004).

A second important development that arose out of the postprocessual critique is the "spatial turn" seen in archaeological inquiry and the social sciences more generally (see Blake 2003), also influenced by Giddens and Bourdieu, as well as other prominent social theorists who privilege the spatial dimensions of social life (e.g., Foucault 1977 [1975]; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). This has led to a growing recognition that cities and other built environments, as spatial contexts in which human interaction takes place, play an active and central role in social production and reproduction (de Certeau 1988:98–99; 1998:142; Low 2000; Soja 1989:14, 2000:11). Agency and the social dimensions of space are interrelated through the concept of *place*. Whereas space might be seen as the passive, neutral physical location in which social action occurs, a place is "lived space" imbued with meanings, identities, and memories that actively shape, and are shaped by, the daily practice and experiences of its inhabitants and historically contingent social processes (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Mumford 2003 [1937]; Preucel and Meskell 2004; Rodman 1992). Cities, therefore, are made. They are at once products and facilitators of social life. As the studies in this volume demonstrate, they are created in the place-making of multiple agents or stakeholders, often with competing interests, from the top-down planning of ruling elites through the bottom-up actions of households. As Soja (2000:6–7) argues,

[O]ur "performance" as spatial beings takes place at many different scales, from the body … to a whole series of more distant geographies ranging from rooms and buildings, homes and neighborhoods, to cities and regions, states and nations.… [A]lthough there is some "distance decay" out from the body in the degree to which we individually influence and are influenced by these larger spaces, every one of them must be recognized as products of collective human action and intention, and therefore susceptible to being modified or changed.

In this way the production of space in cities is actively implicated in processes of sociopolitical transformation (e.g., Fisher, Chapter 6; Fitzsimons, Chapter 7; Wynne-Jones and Fleisher, Chapter 4, all in this volume).

Seeing built environments as places acknowledges not only the agency of the people who create them, but also the agency of the buildings themselves. Ian Hodder (1982, 1992) has long maintained the need for archaeologists to see material culture as actively engaged in the production of social life, rather than as the passive by-product of human behavior. There has been a growing acknowledgment of the agency of things in the social sciences in general and in archaeology more specifically (e.g., Gosden 2005; Hodder 2012; Knappett and Malafouris 2008). George Mead's (1934) work has been particularly influential in this regard, emphasizing the central role of the physical world in the constitution and maintenance of the self and social identity and suggesting that relations between humans and objects are social relations (see also Gell 1998; McCarthy 1984). Actor-Network Theory situates agency in the relationships that people have with other people and objects, and proponents such as Latour (2005:71–72) contend that anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor. Like other human and material actors, cities and their individual buildings have biographies (Kopytoff 1986) or "life histories" constituted in the meanings accumulated over the duration of their existence and that of their "ancestors" and "descendants," as well as the memories of them held by their human occupants (Düring 2005; Hendon 2004:276, 2010; Pred 1984, 1990; Tringham 1995).

The affective relationships that people often form with the places in which they live further blur the distinction between human and material agents. Often expressed in terms of *place attachment* or

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place identity, these emotive aspects play an important role in the development of individual and group identities at various socio-spatial scales (Altman and Low 1992; Proshansky et al. 1983; Russell and Snodgrass 1987; Tuan 1977; see Fisher, Chapter 6 and Magnoni et al., Chapter 5, both in this volume). Research in environmental psychology has demonstrated that people often develop identities associated not only with their home and neighborhood, but also at the level of the city itself, whether a particular city or the "urban experience" in general – what Proshansky et al. (1983:78) refer to as "urban identity" (Graumann and Kruse 1993; Hummon 1986; Lalli 1992; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). The unique aspects of urban life are produced through a range of phenomena and their meanings, from the physical elements of the built environment and complexity and variability of the visual and aural scene, to the "epochs and anecdotes" of individual biographies and the "little pleasures and annoyances" of daily practice in urban environments (Graumann 2002:109; Proshansky et al. 1983). The critical mass of people and the creative synergies and opportunities for social (and economic) interaction that it generates were likely as important to the urban lifestyle in the past as they are today. It is this urban experience and people's identification with it that Cowgill (2004:526) sees as an important part of what defines a city.

Studies of city space often emphasize aspects that correspond to Rapoport's high- or mid-level meanings, including cosmologies, philosophy, and worldview (high-level), as well as notions of identity, status, wealth, and power (mid-level) (Rapoport 1988:325, 1990). These meanings are most often discussed in terms of monumental architecture, tombs, and formal planning of infrastructure. Less apparent, and more often neglected in studies of city space, are low-level meanings, including implicit messages about expected behavior embodied in architecture and the articulation of space (Rapoport 1988:325). Rapoport (1988:325) makes it clear that these are not discrete categories, but rather ideal types that structure a continuum. While these levels of meaning serve as a useful heuristic tool for thinking about how meanings are materialized in past built environments, it is important to emphasize that meanings often defy easy categorization and frequently cross-cut levels. Furthermore, these levels of meaning are not exclusive to particular scales of spatial production. For example, Bourdieu (1973) and others have demonstrated that high-level meanings were an important element in the construction of houses, where

they play an important role in shaping daily practice. At the same time, mid-level meanings associated with status and power are in evidence at all spatial scales, from the coordination of monumental buildings and processional routes in a city to the "indexical" meanings communicated by individual houses (Blanton 1994).

Each level of meaning described by Rapoport (1988, 1990) is found throughout cities, meshed with different scales of spatial production, including the cityscape itself, which might be characterized by large-scale planning of infrastructure and public buildings; an intermediate/supra-household scale that includes districts and neighborhoods, or at least coordination among groups of neighbors; and the scale of individual households and their constituent spaces. Recognition of these multiple scales of socio-spatial production and levels of meaning encourages us to examine more closely the agents that produce city space. These agents are found in a complex web of social relations that combine both heterarchical (Crumley 1995) and hierarchical relationships. Although data to examine equally each of these levels and relationships are not always available, when possible, a multilevel analysis will provide a more complete understanding of the production of urban space.

The changing perceptions discussed here have resulted in the asking of new questions about the materiality and social production of ancient cities, as well as new approaches to old questions of urban origins, form, and change over time. Several studies challenge long-held assumptions about the kinds of spaces and social relationships that constitute a city (Hirth 2008; McIntosh 2005; A. Smith 2003; M. L. Smith 2003a; Soja 2000). Even cities that, on their surface, fit classical models of urban space are shown to have complex and often unique histories that emerge upon closer examination (e.g., Laurence 1994). In a series of recent articles, Michael Smith (2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) reinvigorates an empirical and comparative perspective by applying interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of ancient and modern cities. Although Smith (2011:2) criticizes some of the theoretical ideas expressed in this volume and focuses on mid-level "empirical urban theory," by improving the linkage between low- and high-level theory, his work pushes researchers to pursue difficult questions about cities. Smith's efforts to articulate a more rigorous and comparative approach to urban structure and planning are adopted to varying degrees in several of this volume's chapters.

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The study of ancient cities has been further transformed by recent methodological advances. On one level, there are analytical techniques applied to ancient city plans, such as space syntax analysis, that provide insight into patterns of movement, visibility, and social interaction (Ferguson 1996; Fisher 2009; Grahame 2000; Laurence 1994; A. Smith 2003). In addition, recent advances in archaeological geophysics, including the use of ground-penetrating radar, resistivity, and magnetometry, allow ancient urban areas to be investigated for archaeological features at a relatively low cost and time investment when compared to excavation (Aspinall et al. 2008:144–155; Gaffney and Gater 2003). These methods meet the need for a greater number of relatively complete city plans for both comparative research and intrasite spatial analysis (Marcus and Sabloff 2008b:19; 2008c:324), without resorting to prohibitively expensive and time-consuming extensive excavations (see Creekmore, Chapter 2, Fisher, Chapter 6, and Nishimura, Chapter 3, all in this volume). This advantage is tempered by the extent to which these plans compress life histories into a snapshot of an apparently fully formed, static city. When archaeological data are available, these snapshots can be complemented by life history and microscale studies of the development of individual structures or portions of the city (e.g., Benech 2007; Nishimura, Chapter 3 in this volume). In addition to these theoretical and methodological advances, the database of ancient cities has been growing as a result of ongoing survey and excavation throughout many regions of the world (Marcus and Sabloff 2008b:3), meaning that we have never been a better position to compare ancient urban form and development on a global scale.

Our challenge is to apply these new ways of looking at ancient cities to understand better the complex interrelationship between urban form and social life. As these theoretical and methodological developments take hold in the study of ancient cities, we are now at a point where we can assess their impact and examine the results obtained from regional or site-specific studies as well as cross-regional comparative studies. *Making Ancient Cities* is a response to this challenge.

THIS VOLUME IN CONTEXT

This volume follows in a long tradition of archaeological studies of cities. In addition to current texts devoted to particular cities,

regions, or concepts (e.g., Algaze 2008; Arnauld et al. 2012; Aufrecht et al. 1997; Coulston and Dodge 2000; Gates 2003; Fash 2009; Hansen 2000, 2006; Kenoyer 1998; McIntosh 2005; Nichols 1997; Osborne and Cunliffe 2005; M. E. Smith 2008; Van de Mieroop 1999), there have been a few recent edited volumes that explore various aspects of past urban environments in multiple world regions (Marcus and Sabloff 2008a; M. L. Smith 2003a; Storey 2006). These volumes demonstrate the continued relevance and vitality of ancient cities as an area of archaeological inquiry. Of these, Monica Smith's approach has the most in common with the present volume and represents one of the more recent attempts to see ancient cities as a new social order in which numerous groups, both nonelite and elite, had to coexist. Some contributors to Smith's volume examine the role that these various groups played in the formation and development of particular cities.

In contrast to Smith's (2003a) emphasis on social processes in cities, Storey's (2006) volume focuses primarily on the demography of preindustrial urban populations and largely declines to place these populations in the contexts of the specific urban built environments they might have inhabited. Marcus and Sabloff's (2008a) volume shares the global perspective of the present volume and of Smith's (2003a) book. In addition to regional studies, there are introductory, concluding, overview, and response essays that focus on issues such as how to define "the city" and how scholars have studied ancient cities. Although the editors (Marcus and Sabloff 2008c:325) acknowledge in the conclusions that the process of urbanism can involve both top-down decision making directed by elites and bottom-up decisions made by commoners, this theme is touched on in only a few essays. By contrast, the present volume is less concerned with the definitions and trajectories of urbanism, focusing instead specifically on how particular ancient cities, or their constituent parts, were produced by the social actions and interactions of their inhabitants.

This volume avoids restrictive definitions of "city" or "urban" based solely on population size or density – factors that are notoriously difficult to substantiate in archaeological contexts (Trigger 2003:120–121; see also M. L. Smith 2003b:8). Instead, we take a broad view of cities, which recognizes the differentiation or specialization of roles evident in urban environments vis-à-vis their hinterlands (Trigger 1972; Southall 1973:6), as well as the unique opportunities for social interaction and information production and exchange

that are a vital part of the urban experience (Knox 1995; M. L. Smith 2003b). This approach encompasses highly nucleated, high-density cities, such as Rome or the cities of China, the eastern Mediterranean, or Mesopotamia, as well as settlements that resemble McIntosh's "clustered" cities (McIntosh 2005:185), and low-density (Fletcher 2010, 2012), dispersed or multicentric urbanism, including cities of Mesoamerica, the east coast of Africa, and the Native American site of Cahokia, which is often ignored in more traditional considerations of ancient urbanism. Many of this volume's chapters emphasize the functions that define cities, and residents are viewed as active participants in the activities that generate and give meaning to cities and urban space. There are significant political and economic differences between a city the size of Rome and a 10–40 ha city elsewhere, but we contend that the processes that produce urban built environments are similar in each case. Although the chapters address different times and places, and range from regional analyses to case studies of single sites, macroscale to microscale, and synchronic to diachronic, they are linked by the application of the theoretical perspectives discussed here, as well as an emphasis on the importance of cities as generators of sociopolitical change. In the following section we introduce the world regions and cases covered in this volume, highlighting their contributions to these topics.

MAKING ANCIENT CITIES IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia is well known as the location of what is often touted as the first city in the world – Uruk – that emerged in the mid-fourth millennium BC as part of a process of urbanization that saw the subsequent spread of city-states across the arid but irrigated zone in and around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in southern Iraq (Algaze 2008; Nissen 1988; Pollock 1999). Less well known is that cities also developed in Upper Mesopotamia around the same time as Uruk, in areas mostly devoted to dry farming. This process is brought to light by recent excavations at the sites of Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar (Emberling and McDonald 2003; Gibson et al. 2002; Oates et al. 2007; Ur 2010; Ur et al. 2007). These early cities do not seem to have had many contemporary peers in the region, although urbanism was widespread by the third millennium (Akkermans