

# The city in the Islamic World: From Imitation to Modernization: A Reading of The Arab City and Modernity

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Riad El-Rayyes published Khalid Ziyadeh's *The Arab City and Modernity* in 2019. This book builds on a significant body of works by the author, who has written about modernisation and modernity since authoring a book on the causes of European progress. He has also written about the books published following the wave of eighteenth-century diplomatic missions to Europe which carried the desire for modernisation to the Islamic world. Furthermore, Ziyadeh has written books on Arabic and Islamic cities, and texts relating to them. For its part, this book contributes to a growing scholarship on cities in the Islamic world in the modern era, and is among the texts, both by Arabic and non-Arabic scholars, which focus on urban history. This is a work which mounts a considered challenge to many of the long-standing stereotypes concerning Arabic and Islamic urban history.

The book consists of five chapters: the first of these both introduces and problematises the term "city"; the second chapter is dedicated to Ottoman urban history, while the third focuses on Ottoman urban elites; chapter four focuses on modernisation, and the final chapter focuses on history, society, and modernity.

It should be noted that Ziyadeh's interest in urban history dates back to the 1980s, and that he gathered the material for this book when he was working on

his first publications. His interest in the city did not wane, despite the time he spent researching other topics in the intervening period. At the outset, he highlights two boundaries which will serve as a framework: the first is that, geographically, the cities in question are those in the eastern Mediterranean. Secondly, the historical period covered is the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period during which European modes of urbanisation represented a "sweeping current" (p. 11). The book transcends this historical period outlined in the introduction, as Ziyadeh jumps to the nineteenth century, and even covers the twentieth century modernisation of certain cities following World War I. He also goes beyond the geographical boundaries when discussing issues pertaining to cities beyond them, though there are few examples of this. This is all done with the aim of clarifying and explicating certain phenomena which many researchers have previously considered more local or regional in nature.

Ziyadeh titles the opening chapter in a way which foregrounds his awareness of the difficulties faced by those who study urban history in the Islamic world: "The Islamic city: the term and its problematisation". This chapter begins with a description of Alexandria from Ibn Khaldun, written at a time when the balance of power in Egypt was moving away from the city to Cairo. For their part, Muslim geographers presented

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the “Islamic city” according to inherited frameworks, and in his conclusion Ziyadeh does not skirt around this truth; emphasising the point, he states that Muslim geographers did not find “anything wrong with copying their predecessors word-for-word”. Unsurprisingly, we find travel writers from the sixteenth century repeating verbatim what had been written centuries earlier by al-Balawi, al-Idrisi, and al-Bakri.<sup>(2)</sup> There is a significant problem concerning some texts which cover the history of these cities, namely those texts which were written during a particular historical period, and whose titles bear the names of these cities, but which only mention the cities themselves in passing.<sup>(3)</sup>

There are differing views on how to think about the ‘city’ in the sources: the perspective on the city in the eyes of the travel writers is not the same view found in the books of the tax authority or market authority, which differs in turn from the perspective of the philosophers and jurists. These different texts are quoted to show the difference between their perspectives. Ziyadeh spends some time presenting the idea of a historian-stroke-philosopher of the city. This discussion introduces Ibn Khaldun, and there are many citations from his *Muqaddima*. The conception of the city in this text can be said to lie at the intersection between the built environment, the city, and its government. Ibn Khaldun drew on many sources for this, including Greek texts which returned to prominence in discussions of urban history by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century. On reviewing texts by these thinkers, whether they were philosophers, historians, or jurists, it becomes clear that their understanding of the city springs from ancient Greek sources, which paid special attention to cities, and how they flourish and decline.

The “Islamic city” is a term born of Orientalism, and the author shows the links between Western orientalist scholarship and the emergence of a number of concepts, including “the Islamic city”, itself the product of a European rationalisation which

“builds models and value systems, and tends towards abstraction” (p. 26). Ziyadeh investigates several models which were employed in discussions of the “Islamic city”, initially discussing the work of Louis Gardet,<sup>(4)</sup> who made the link between the emergence of cities and desert trade. There is a description, based mostly on the works of al-Mawardi, of the four main areas within a city: the marketplace, the fortress, the cloth market, and the mosque, and he considers that these four “are recurring features of a model which is ever present” (p. 28). The author cites a study carried out in 1976 and overseen by the British Arabist Robert Bertram,<sup>(5)</sup> which both Arab and Iranian researchers participated in, all of whom were prisoners of the concept of the “Islamic city” (p. 29). There is also discussion of the line connecting various European orientalist studies informed by Max Weber’s view<sup>(6)</sup> that eastern cities had lost their independence at a time when western cities were the height of civilisation and rationalisation.

However, the Orientalism which gave us the idea of the “city” was not unified, and there were in fact many differing schools of Orientalism. In light of this observation, Ziyadeh discusses a study by Claude Cahen on *Popular movements and urban autonomy in Islamic cities in the Middle Ages*, as well as Axel Havemann’s study “The Vizier and the Rais in the Islamic World” (p. 33), and Lapidus’ chapter “A History of Cities in the Mamluk Empire”. All these authors attempted to study the city in the Islamic world without using western cities as a model example.

The book’s second (and longest) chapter is focused on the “Ottoman city”. Before discussing the chapter’s contents, the following observations should be emphasised:

- Scholarship has only recently begun paying attention to the Ottoman city, compared with the Western and Arab research on the classical periods of Islamic history.

2 On this point, see the journey of Abu al-Hasan al-Tamkruti to Istanbul in the year 1589: Abu al-Hasan al-Tamkruti, *al-Nafha al-Miskiyya fi al-Sifara al-Turkiyya*, Edition: ‘Abd al-Latif al-Shadhli (al-Rabat; al-Matba‘a al-Malakiyya, 2002)

3 Perhaps the best example of this is the book “*Kitab Tarikh Damascus*” whose author dedicated it to dragomen, Arabic literature, and the different fields of the Islamic sciences. See: Abu al-Qasim Ibn ‘Asakir (al-Hafiz), *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq – Hamāha Allāh – wa-Dhīkr Faḍliha, wa-Tasmiyyat man Halla Bihā min al-Amāthil aw Ijtāza bi-Nawāḥiha min Wardiha wa-Ahliha*

4 Louis Gardet, *La cité musulmane, vie sociale et politique* (Etudes Musulmanes I.) (Paris: Vrin, 1954)

5 Robert Bertram Serjeant (ed.), *The Islamic City* (Paris: UNESCO, 1983)

6 Max Weber, *La ville*, traduit de l’allemand et introduit par Aurélien Berlan, coll. “Politique et sociétés” (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), p. 280.

- What distinguishes this new scholarship is its ability to make use of archival documents, since the Ottoman state was highly bureaucratic and archival records abound
- A large number of studies have focused on Istanbul, since it was the capital of the Ottoman state and contains a large number of cultural artefacts. A mere glance at the index of publications of the Turkish Historical Association<sup>(7)</sup> reveals a huge number of studies published by the Turkish institution alone on the subject, on top of the hundreds of works on Istanbul produced in Europe, America, and the Arab world.

As in the first chapter, the author lists those texts which have dealt with the Ottoman city, discussing many of them and presenting their conclusions. Among all these texts, Ziyadeh considers a study by H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen titled *Islamic Society and the West*,<sup>(8)</sup> to be the first which deals with the Ottoman city. Perhaps its most important finding was that “the characteristic which distinguishes the city is sects, whose importance we cannot overstate. If religion was the Islamic foundation (of the city), then sects were the stones with which the foundation was built” (p. 50).

Ziyadeh goes on to provide a summary of Robert Mantran’s study *Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century*,<sup>(9)</sup> a study he considers to be distinguished by its extensive use of Ottoman archival documents, as well as for its departure from the stereotypes of other orientalist studies. In this exemplary study, there are few impressions, unfounded theories, and prejudices (p. 52). The study also covers the transition of the city from the Christian era into the Muslim era, which happened without it losing its openness. Istanbul was, after all, a multi-confessional capital city, home to many languages and nationalities, though the Ottoman Sultans had tried to give the city a more Islamic character prior to 1517 by building mosques. Ziyadeh utilises this exceptional study to mention a number of key episodes in the city’s history from the seventeenth century until the beginning of the twentieth, and in the chapter he brings into focus the

fact that Istanbul was “the first (Middle-Eastern) city to undergo reforms of the European type” (p. 55).

The author finds discussion of the newfound reliance on documents and different archives (which have taken the place of the previous heavy reliance on annals, travel writings, and geographical writings) to be an appropriate point to discuss the accomplishments of Andre Raymond in his study *Artisans and Merchants in Eighteenth Century Cairo*<sup>(10)</sup>. Raymond himself made rich use of the records of sharia’ courts in Cairo (p. 58), as well as letters from consuls, which combined to provide him with information on prices, currency, and precise indicators of economic development. Building on this, he was able to analyse the financial and food crises which hit Cairo throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This exemplary study enabled him to produce his foundational text on the great cities of the Ottoman period, in which he lists the common features of a number of large Arab cities (p. 60). Perhaps the most important conclusion Raymond reached was that the Arab city was organised, contrary to the view of Western scholars who claimed that it lacked organisation. Raymond also concluded that the Arab city did not go into decline during the Ottoman period, rather that it witnessed steady growth which is manifest in a number of indicators (increasing population, expanding urban area), even when compared with the Mamluk period. These conclusions reflect the wide-reaching revisions which Western scholars of the Ottoman city in particular, but also of Ottoman history more generally, have reached.

Another pioneering work in this field is the encyclopaedic work titled *The City in the Islamic World*, which both Western and Arab scholars contributed to. The book primarily focuses on frameworks, distancing itself from the term the “Islamic city” and instead using “the city in the Islamic world”. Ziyadeh spends a great deal of time presenting the book’s contents and the most important issues it covered, and in doing so he finds himself returning to Raymond (who also contributed to it), praising his critique of orientalist scholarship.

7 Yusuf Turan Gunaydin, *83 Yılnın Kitapları: Türk Tarih Kurumu Bibliyografik Kataloğu 1932-2014*, (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu)

8 Gibb, Hamilton and Bowen, Harold, *al-Mujtama’ al-Islāmiyy wa’l-Gharb*, Translation: Ahmad Aybash (Abu Dhabi: Dar al-Kutub al-Wataniyya, 2012).

9 Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la second moitié du XVIIe siècle: Essai d’histoire institutionnelle, économique et sociale* (Paris: Maitsonneuve, 1962)

10 André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*. Damas: Institut français, 1974

He also returns to the multiple sources used in the study of urban history, frequently referring to the sharia ' court records, which have by now become "unparalleled source material", and remarking that the process of "benefitting from them and their use, and using them to draw up methods" is still in its infancy (p. 65). At the same time, Ziyadeh notes that European sources, especially consular and commercial sources, present themselves insistently to urban historians studying the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

After concluding the section in which he critiques studies of the Ottoman city and attempts to define his own framework, Ziyadeh moves on to discussing Ottoman cities, beginning with Istanbul. Rather than going into depth describing its multi-civilisational foundations, residents, and artisans, he prefers to highlight the circumstances surrounding the city's transition from being the capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire, to becoming the capital city of the Ottoman Islamic Empire. This entails description of the demographic shifts in the city which began in the fifteenth century, and which subsequently conferred it its cosmopolitan status. In the same discussion, Ziyadeh covers the economic and political transitions which caused Izmir to become "the first Ottoman city to benefit from the global economic system, and display a cultural pluralism which later manifested itself in the schools and newspapers which were founded there" (p. 73).

When discussing Arab cities during the Ottoman period, Ziyadeh focuses on the fact that these cities had been able to prove their Arab credentials throughout the Mamluk period and remained desperate to defend that status during the Ottoman period. These cities developed due to the impact of the demographic revolutions taking place globally at the time, as well as the European merchants' activity, which turned many of these cities into leading commercial centres. The modernising reforms carried out by the Ottoman state (under Ibrahim Basha in Syria and Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt) also played a large role in modernising Arabic and Islamic cities: it meant the cities of the eastern Mediterranean were opened up to

European trade, which in turn led to conflicts between pro-modernisation factions and those who thought that nothing but harm would come from opening up to trade (p. 68).

Aleppo, Alexandria, and Cairo garner special attention from the author, since the infrastructures of these cities were altered in line with the modernising aspirations of the Ottoman state: hospitals were built and public services (including police forces) were set up, as well as councils such as the Ornato council<sup>(11)</sup> in Cairo, which was tasked with "organising streets, roads, and buildings" (p. 81). These cities also saw the establishment of new religious institutions such as churches due to the demographic changes they experienced.

But modernising was not without cost. The price paid for modernising in Beirut, for example, was the removal of what remained of the old city during the First World War. In this regard, Beirut is no exception when the fate of other cities in the Middle East is considered. Modernity did not arrive in Beirut via Europe exclusively, but also from the Ottoman state. The latter had adopted a policy of modernising its administration and legal and educational systems, and saw Beirut as a model example of a city willing to respond to the call for urbanisation (p. 92). This modernising current was exemplified by the French mandate in Lebanon, which according to Ziyadeh, turned the city on its head in many respects. The old city disappeared, and the modern core of the city began abandoning the suburbs and immersing themselves in its new urban economy. This is partly what distinguishes Beirut from other neighbouring cities. The Ottoman control of Arab cities contributed in large part to deep-seated changes to the demographics of these cities: by opening them up to foreign communities their social fabrics and economies were altered. The reforms enacted by the Ottoman state led to profound changes. The ideas which circulated in the missionary and national schools played a large role in paving the way for modernity, and as part of this process the cities become a ripe environment in which these currents and ideas could compete.

In the third chapter, titled "Urban elites: 'ulamà, civilian elites, and the military", Ziyadeh discusses

11 Reimer treated the history of the Ornato council in Alexandria in a detailed study tracing the development of the council from its creation in 1834 in a chapter titled "Urban Government and Administration in Egypt, 1805-1914"

The author covered the same topic in another detailed article. See:

Michael J. Reimer, "Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20 (1988), pp. 531-553.

the transformations to the social fabrics of Arab cities since the seventeenth century. The author establishes the link between the decline of the Ottoman state starting in the late sixteenth century, as well as the socio-political changes which Arab cities underwent during that time. Economic changes, a financial crisis, and the desire to introduce reforms designed to restrict the army all eventually led to the emergence of elite families who dominated the cities, and extended their influence to the surrounding rural areas, which had been a significant source of wealth (p. 112).

As evidence of this, he cites what happened to the great Arab cities from Algeria to Tripoli under the Karamanli dynasty, and to Baghdad under Mamluks of Georgian origin. On the other hand, Arab families came to prominence in the Arab Levant, most notably in the cases of Fakhr al-Din al-Maani in Lebanon, and the al-Azm family which ruled Tripoli, Saida, and Damascus. However, all of these were short lived dynasties.

Here the author turns to discussion of studies which have dealt with the emergence of notables and elites in the Arab cities. The first such study presented in the chapter is Albert Hourani's "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables"<sup>(12)</sup> published twenty years ago. In that study, Hourani introduced his comparative analysis of his concept of the notables, which was informed by the "patriciate". Hourani distinguished between three types of notable: the 'ulamà, who were traditionally the ones who spoke in the name of the Islamic city, the military elites, who had laid down their routes during the Ottoman period, and the civilian notables who came from the influential families in these cities (p. 117)

The second such study is Philip Khouri's *Urban notables and Arab nationalism*<sup>(13)</sup>, published in 1993. Hourani and Khouri's theses can be seen as mutually complementary, as Khouri too was informed by the Weberian school, seeing himself as "indebted to Weber's theories on the relationship between ideology and political bureaucracy" (p. 124). Khouri stressed the complete alignment between the notables (urban elites) and the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul, to such an extent that politics was defined as the mutual interaction between the local elites and the

Ottoman government (p. 125). Nevertheless, Khouri disagreed with Hourani's use of the term "notables" in his analysis of the structure of political authority, as according to Khouri its usage suggested the existence of a unified political class, which was not the case (p. 125).

As for the 'ulamà, they had secured a vitally important role for themselves during the Ottoman period. Having become part of the ruling elite, they were seen as a conservative force during a period of reform and modernisation. There is ample evidence in the history of Arab cities during this period to confirm this view. The role of the 'ulamà in politics diminished in these cities, as the modernisation of education led to the emergence of new educated elites who were convinced of the necessity of political reform. The aim of this reform was to "reduce the role of the cities and join them together with the intention of strengthening the concept of the nation, which would transcend narrow and sectional loyalties" (p. 130).

In the fourth chapter "Modernisation", Ziyadeh discusses case studies of modernisation in four cities from the Islamic world: Cairo, Aleppo, Beirut, and Istanbul. The chapter begins with discussion of Cairo from the time of the French occupation in 1798, which was a pivotal year not just in the history of Cairo, but in the history of all Middle Eastern cities. The French began the process of modernising the city by issuing laws and making changes which affected all the main arteries of the city, by extending roads and erecting new structures. These initial changes were met with opposition among the general population. This opposition brought into sharp relief not a difference in representation, but also as the clash between the wider understanding of the city in the Islamic world as compared to how it was conceived of in positivist European laws. The French had no choice but to resort to institutionalising their efforts by creating a council which brought legislative and municipal authorities together (p. 141).

Three years were sufficient for the efforts of the French authorities to bring about large-scale change to Cairo. These were "both an effect and a cause" and paved the way for the changes of the subsequent decades. The speed of the transformation under the French did

12 Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables", in: William R. Polk & Richard L. Chambers, *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 41-68)

13 Philip Khouri, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

not give the Egyptians a chance to take stock, and their resistance was transformed into admiration. The ruler of Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali, was among the first to be impressed by the French-led urban transition, and he did not hesitate for a moment in adopting the European vision for the city. From the moment he came to power in 1805, "it was as if he was continuing the work which the French had begun before him" (p. 146). This modernising trend continued with his successors, reaching its zenith during the reign of Khedive Ismail, who was enamoured with French culture and implemented the advice of the French architect Georges Eugene Haussmann. Perhaps the most important thing to be noted following these attempts at modernisation is the expansion which the city experienced. The governor of Egypt, for various reasons, preserved the old city, and sought instead to build new districts. This led to a duality unprecedented in the urban history of the Islamic world. This led to the establishment of two different societies, with each going in different directions. While the modern city was growing, neglect was afflicting the old city on several levels (p. 152).

In Aleppo, the situation was different. While Cairo began witnessing large-scale changes and the early stages of modernisation in the early part of the nineteenth century, the earthquake which struck Aleppo in 1822 was an ominous sign for a city which subsequently saw significant decline. This downturn was only made worse by the departure of its European and Jewish residents who had contributed so much to its openness. Tense relations with the central government in Istanbul may have deepened this crisis, and despite some economic growth in the second half of the nineteenth century, it continued to experience demographic decline. While the French had a positive role in Cairo, their role in Syria was marked by its negative impact as "they focused their efforts on pitting the countryside against the city by undertaking land surveys and seizing large holdings from their owners, the important families of the cities" (p. 158). The situation in Aleppo did not settle until the Syrian Revolution (1925-1927), which unlike Damascus, the city played no part in. The latter had undertaken modernising infrastructure projects, starting with the expansion of the railway network, which enabled the expansion of the city and the emergence of new districts, including the eventual emergence of Armenian and Assyrian areas.

Modernisation in Aleppo only began in earnest after the First World War, with the building of wide streets furnished with cinemas, cafes, and bars. This meant that Aleppo had managed to enter the modern world in a space of time, a process which in Cairo had taken a long time.

As for Beirut, modernisation proceeded there much as it had in Aleppo, as the city transformed in a short time from an old city into an exceptionally modern one. This transformation was perhaps not linked exclusively to the French Mandate, but also to another political transformation: the declaration of the independent state of Greater Lebanon, with Beirut as its capital, or as the author himself puts it, with "Beirut being the state itself" (p. 163). The city was soon afforded all the trappings of a modern city with the building of hospitals, universities, and various schools. On top of this, the city's layout was modernised, and urban planning came to be governed by regulations and laws.

Ziyadeh sees Istanbul, the fourth city covered in this chapter, as having preserved its traditional system of laws and regulations, despite having undergone an unparalleled process of modernisation (p. 166). This process began in the third decade of the eighteenth century, and comprised the building of European-style palaces, engineering schools, as well as a printing press. In this way, its path of development did not differ from that of other Ottoman cities.

Through this overall view of the four cities presented by Ziyadeh, it appears that in each case their passing through the gates of modernity is linked to the West. When I say the West, I do not necessarily mean colonialism, though colonialism of course had a clear influence on modernity and modernisation. Rather, the West here represents a model which these cities followed when their urban infrastructures were redeveloped. The advent of modernity was also connected to the elite families which served as conduits of modern ideas. Lastly, the transformations these cities experienced were linked to political transformations. We have seen how municipal councils played a role in reshaping the city; indeed, they oversaw the organisation of urban space, and the reforms enacted by the Ottoman state clearly left their mark on the city. Moreover, there was the role played by roads in the modernisation of these cities, as the Arab cities witnessed a new dynamism through

the expansion of the railways and paved roads: as Fernand Braudel once said: “cities are their roads”.

In the fifth chapter, titled “History, society, and modernity”, Ziyadeh covers some interrelated issues. Perhaps what distinguishes this chapter is the way it alternates between the theoretical and the applied through its discussion of the following three issues:

- The relationship between history and ideology, and how the combined efforts of archaeology and ideology contributed to the discovery of cities in the Arab and Islamic world. This was not a process connected solely to colonialism, as is evident in many examples from Egypt, in which French archaeologists stressed Egypt’s Pharaonic history in order to sever any ties with its Ottoman history. The same process took place in North Africa, where French archaeologists tried to exclude the Islamic period, in an attempt to connect the region’s present at the beginning of the twentieth century to its Roman past. This matter can also relate to nationalist ideology, as in Lebanon where the idea of “Phoenician Lebanon” rose to prominence and likewise, in Turkey, where nationalists put Ottoman history to one side, paying closer attention instead to the ancient cities of Anatolia.
- The author displayed great engagement with the sociological currents which have been central to the study of the city. Max Weber’s study of the city has become a pillar for historians and a framework for discussing the Arab and Islamic city; this trend goes back to Weber’s rejection of the existence of any city outside of the geographical boundaries of the West, on the basis that they did not meet enough of the conditions he laid down when defining his concept of the city. Indeed, he spoke of “ghost cities”. Weber thought that the West alone had produced a complete set of the requirements needed for a city (p. 181). After the Orientalists had cited these requirements to such a large degree, historians have gone to great lengths to refute Weber’s theories on the city.
- In the chapter, Ziyadeh uses a George Balandier<sup>(14)</sup> quote on the issue of the dynamic nature of imitation and modernity as a launchpad for discussion; as it happens, neither modernity nor

imitation earn the description of being dynamic. This point is most evident in his discussion of how the nobility presented a challenge to modernity. In the nineteenth century, the requirements to be considered a member of the elite changed with the introduction of the new school system, and it became possible for the middle-class to gain new positions in this new nobility. These new elites were split into two factions: those who had opposed colonialism and adopted nationalist ideas, and those who had no hesitation opening up to the West, with some of them even having no qualms working openly with colonial authorities. All the while, the working class was busy resisting westernisation in all its forms and remained isolated in the old and established urban social fabric. In addition to this discussion, which alternates between the theoretical and the practical, the author covers the role of political parties as they relate to the dynamic nature of modernity and imitation.

In this final chapter, Ziyadeh returns to the issue of the history of modernisation in the Arab world, especially as it relates to periodisation. In his view, modernisation took place in three phases: the first phase was the era of Tanzimat reforms in the first half of the nineteenth century, whose aim was to strengthen the state’s institutions by reforming their administration and modernising the education system and army. The city was a theatre in which this modernising wave played out, as the Tanzimat reforms sought to modernise the built environments, albeit in an unsystematic fashion, and despite attempts to modernise municipal government. The second phase was the colonial period, starting in the 1830s and lasting until after the First World War. It is worth noting that the impact of colonialism on the Arab urban environment varied from one country to the next and differed from one colonial power to the other. The third period is the period of independence, when national governments were established. It was during this period that modernisation plans were drawn up, which had these very cities in their sights. The author utilises the issue of urban planning (which was included in every government development plan) to present the most important findings of studies in

14 See the sixth chapter, “La tradition et le modernité”, in: George Balandier, *Anthropologie politique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993), pp. 193-226.

the field of urban planning, including the proceedings of a conference on urban planning in the Arab world.

In short, rather than limiting himself to providing an overview of the transformations which Arab cities experienced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the author was obliged to go beyond that period to review the transformations which took place in Arab cities during the colonial era and beyond it. This approach was necessitated by the view that modernisation was a long-term process. A desire to present the findings of previous research was present in every chapter of the book; the author was not content to simply list these findings and gave expert critiques of them as well as highlighting their methodological and ideological underpinnings. On top of this, the book is noteworthy for its discussion of theories the city, whether they stemmed from

sociology, anthropology, or political science. Earlier I praised the book for its ability to alternate between theoretical and practical discussions, as well as for the close attention paid to defining terms and concepts. This applies equally to the discussion and tracing of the idea of the city as it appears in writings both new and old, as well as to the ideas of modernity and modernisation. A final distinguishing feature of this book is its ability to link the local to the global, and the attention paid to historical context when discussing the urban fabrics of Arab cities; at every opportunity the book stresses the strong connection between the way life was in the urban centres of the Ottoman Empire in the east of the Arab world, both in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean and the cities of North Africa.



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