

reached a high degree of social differentiation, to which burial habits, human sacrifices, and the presence of large-scale mausoleums attest. That the ceremonial center served as an administrative and religious focus and performed an economic redistributive function for nearby villages and hamlets is evidenced by the existence of storage pits, archives of oracle bones, and bronze and other ceremonial utensils as well as the dwellings of the craftsmen who produced them. Invariably, these complexes assumed a square or rectangular form with a north-south orientation, and available evidence suggests that the structures within them corresponded to heavenly constellations, underscoring their cosmic relationship and their orthogenic role and centripetal character on earth.

The Western Chou period (?1122–770 B.C.) saw a significant areal extension of these “dispersed” ceremonial centers, but it was not until the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 B.C.) that the “compact city” emerged. The dense population and workshops which had gathered around the walls of the ceremonial complex were now enclosed by an outer wall without causing serious distortion to the cardinal bearing of the urban settlement as a whole. During the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.), the number of these compact cities grew rapidly owing to disunity and intense strife. Under these conditions, the city enjoyed far more autonomy than it previously had, but it is important to note that this autonomy was ephemeral, for the city lacked ideological, political, or legal basis as an independent entity. Social stratification within the city, except for the presence of royal clans, aristocracy, and priests, was still the same as that found in the society at large. City and countryside shared similar tempo of life, value system, and mores; the wide gap between the two, so typical of modern urbanism, had not yet emerged, even though a certain degree of secularization of the ceremonial center had taken place over this period of time.

Drawing detailed examples from all seven regions of primary urban generation as well as regions of secondary urban generation, Wheatley finds much validity in the assertion that the ceremonial center, despite cultural differences, is “essentially urban in character,” not so much in terms of the characteristics of the Western city as in terms

of organizing and regionalizing principles, effective use of space, and its integrating function for the social, political, and economic sectors of human activities.

The author thus maintains that religion was the pervasive, though by no means the exclusive or an entirely independent, factor in the genesis of urbanism. Extracultural factors such as technology (there were no major technological innovations in Shang or early Chou that brought noticeable changes in the method of production), population pressure, commerce, large-scale irrigation (à la Wittfogel), and warfare are merely parametric conditions. Some of these probably contributed indirectly to the process which produced the ceremonial complex; however, they were more important in the transformation of the ecotype which provided the milieu for their validation. While reminding us that the ceremonial center is not a necessary stage in the development of a city, Wheatley argues that “it is likely to prove to have been a functional and developmental phase in the evolution of urban forms in general.”

The present study is the first systematic analysis of the origins of the city with special reference to North China. Wheatley makes extensive use of archeological reports on recent excavations which serve as a corrective to the ideological bias of the Chinese classics written in Chou and later times. Though thought-provoking, Wheatley tends to overstate his thesis, and his conclusions are bound to be tentative, not simply because of the pioneering nature of the book but also because of the fact that archeological evidence is biased toward static forms and therefore ill-suited to the processual approach. Furthermore, now that the dust of the Cultural Revolution has settled the Chinese have revived a vigorous interest in their ancient world, and future archeological findings promise to be rich.

Finally, sociological concepts (along with the jargon) are widely used in the book, and when combined with the author's somewhat repetitive style render the book difficult for untrained readers. Occasionally, an inconsistency also creeps in. But these are minor blemishes in an essentially interesting work which should be read by all seriously interested in urban studies.

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