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REVIEW ESSAY

PORT CITIES
The Search for an Identity

ANDREW GIBB, *Glasgow, the Making of a City*. London: Croom Helm, 1983. Pp. xiv + 197, maps, figures, tables, index, £12.95.

SHEILA MARRINER, *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside*. London: Croom Helm, 1982. Pp. viii + 176, 1 map, bibliography, index, £13.95.

HANS-DIETER LOOSE, Ed. *Hamburg. Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Bewohner. Vol. 1: Von den Anfängen bis zur Reichsgründung*. Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1982. Pp. 560, figures, bibliography, index.

K. DHARMASENA, *The Port of Colombo 1860-1939*. Colombo: Research Publications Service, Ministry of Higher Education, 1980. Pp. vii + 194, 4 maps, appendices, bibliography, index.

The term "port city" is used frequently in both general and scholarly historical literature. It is one of those powerful concepts that immediately evoke clear, and often more than just pictorial, images in the mind of the beholder: the bustle of nineteenth-century South Street, New York, or the more modern Brooklyn piers, the forests of tall sailing ship masts that once crowded the Mersey and suggest the romance of seafaring, the shipyards of the Clyde, the vast docklands and warehouses of London, the exotic smells of Suez, Singapore, and Shanghai,

Author's Note: *The first section of this essay rests heavily on a discussion paper entitled "Port Cities: The Conceptual Problems" that was presented to the Maritime History panel at the Australian Historical Association conference, Sydney, 28 August 1982, by Peter*

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or the red light district around the Reeperbahn in Hamburg's Sankt Pauli district. Conversely, many cities such as San Francisco and Charleston, Genoa and Alexandria, or Mombasa, Colombo and Fremantle will often instinctively be classified as "port cities." But, if that term is a common and suggestive one, it is also used extremely loosely and inconsequentially.

Virtually all studies on port cities fall into two extremes. On the one side are the works that deal, often in great detail, with the port and its various aspects, such as its physical development and cargo-handling equipment, shipping movements or trade statistics. Others analyze and discuss the city community as a whole, but in doing so relegate the port to a subordinate position; the port city is robbed of its maritime character, and becomes little more than a city that happens to be located on the shoreline. Both classical and "new" urban historians have thus tended to discuss port cities and their economic, social, cultural and political issues, as if there were no specific maritime functions and milieu that could have a significant influence on the total process of urbanization and spatial and social evolution.

This uncertainty about the concept of the "port city" is exemplified by the inconclusive proceedings of two important conferences. The first, held in 1966 at Greenville (Delaware), discussed the growth of the four major "seaport cities" of the United States in the period 1790-1825 (Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Baltimore) and their impact on the economic growth of their country.¹ Major themes included the activities of overseas merchants as shipowners, bankers and initiators of new business ventures, and the function of the port cities as the "centres for the introduction and diffusion of new industries".² Valuable also was Hutchins' insistence on macro-economic factors and the necessity to employ location theory for an understanding of both the individual centrality of the four cities and their mutual relationships.³ But very little was said about spatial and social factors, and one participant expressed his conceptual uneasiness:⁴

some of the speakers have talked about cities, some have talked about seaports, and others have talked about seaport cities. I believe that we need to examine more

Reeves (Dept. of History, University of Western Australia), Kenneth McPherson (Dept. of Social Sciences, Western Australian Institute of Technology), and the present author, Frank Broeze. They are jointly involved on a research project focusing on port cities in the Indian Ocean region.

closely which of the problems and questions that have been raised are uniquely city problems, which are seaport problems, and which are seaport-city problems.

At Santa Cruz, ten years later, the discussion centered on the “colonial city” in Asia,⁵ about which since the mid-1960s, a considerable body of literature had grown up. The seminal work is that of the geographer Rhoads Murphey,⁶ whose lead has been followed most imaginatively by Susan Lewandowski,⁷ both attended the conference. Murphey’s main interest is the historical role played by the ports that were created, from indigenous origins or newly, by the European colonizers in Asia and became the “beachheads of an exogenous system, planted by Westerners in a variety of Asian contexts, peripheral but nevertheless revolutionary.”⁸ Lewandowski specifically uses the concept of the “colonial port city” to discuss its spatial and social development,⁹ and by also drawing on the theoretical work on the “colonial city” in general she can present insights into its dynamics that are welcome and necessary complements to Murphey’s broader strokes.

Participants at Santa Cruz were asked to focus their work on three main themes: “city-hinterland relationships, morphogenesis, and the interactions between indigenous and foreign elites.”¹⁰ Elements that were highlighted included the mercantile communities and intercommunal relations, spatial and morphological change of the cities in relation to their social evolution, and the ways in which the cities stimulated economic, institutional and ideological change in their hinterland. These concerns came close to those of neomarxist social scientists who, in discussing the processes of underdevelopment and dependency, have adopted strong views about the centrality of “primate” cities.¹¹ Indeed, although twice debates were specifically addressed to the questions, “Why the *port* city?” and “What is the *port* city?”¹² the actual discussion soon veered away from these crucial issues. The Santa Cruz group lost sight largely of the ports themselves, and no more was concluded than that the “colonial port city in Asia” was a useful ideal-type that deserved further exploration.¹³ This failure to come to terms with the central issue can, regrettably, tend to reinforce only the Eurocentricity of much of modern Asian historiography as it stresses noncontinuity in the socioeconomic development of the port cities of that vast region. The same effect can be observed in the historiography of Southeast Asia for the period from the ninth century to the arrival of the Europeans, if one substitutes “the spread of Islam” for “European colonialism” as the main dynamic theme.

The historians' failure to grasp the elusive "port city" must be contrasted with the determined efforts of urban geographers to design a classification system of towns based on their specific and distinct functions.¹⁴ These include the largely qualitative scheme of M. Auroousseau, and the much more statistically based analyses of Chauncey D. Harris, L. L. Pownall, G. Alexanderson, R.H.T. Smith, and B.J.L. Berry. Although classification models have become increasingly sophisticated, they all suffer from two main flaws. Firstly, they are largely dependent on general census material for their statistical data, and, secondly, they derive their classification for each city or town from a comparison between its specific occupational pattern and that of the supposedly "normal" national distribution of occupations. The imperative need to look into the specific functioning of the city and to determine its economic base was proposed in 1939 by Homer Hoyt.¹⁵ He distinguished between two types of economic activity: that which meets only local (internal and "umland") demand, and that which meets nonlocal demand and serves national, and one should add, international markets. Unfortunately, Hoyt failed to develop a workable methodology to implement his insights. It is true that it is extremely difficult to construct precise "Gross City Product" aggregates, but it should not be impossible to establish acceptable approximations (e.g., on the basis of tax returns) that, in combination with a qualitative analysis and the use of location theory, would result in a much clearer understanding of the working of the urban economy. The clearer examples of what is possible can be found in studies of cities that happen to be political entities, and thus have a convenient statistical data base, as in Chiu's work on Hong Kong.¹⁶

It must be obvious that if the "port city" concept is to be used as a historical and functional-dynamic model, its main economic base for the nonlocal market must be its port. Indeed, the port must become the main dynamic force and the central organising principle of the port city, and not remain a "hidden function",¹⁷ a mere appendage. Great advances have recently been made by geographers to construct theoretical frameworks for both the external and internal development of ports. Hoyle and Rimmer, in their studies on ports in East Africa and Australasia, have firmly established the concept of port hierarchy.¹⁸ Drawing on the articles of the German geographer Weigend,¹⁹ they offer valuable insights into the crucial twin working spheres of each port: the fore- and hinterland. The historical development of the physical port facilities has been critically analyzed by James Bird,²⁰ whose six-stage

“Anyport” model has found wide spread acceptance, also among socialist geographers.²¹

But however useful these advances may be, they lack for the historian crucial social and political dimensions, and they do not relate to the overall evolution of the city. What is necessary, therefore, in order to properly understand the nature, functioning, and significance of port cities, is a dynamic multidisciplinary synthesis of port and city. The starting point must be that, in Stoianovich’s words, the port creates in the urban community that surrounds it a “distinctive form of environment,”²² a milieu that derives its uniqueness from the physical and economic dominance of the port. Hence the analysis must take its start at the places where goods and passengers are transferred between ship and shore, the ultimate rationale of the port; secondly it must include all aspects of urban development that are generated, dominated or significantly influenced by the port. this functional and historically dynamic “port sector” must, thirdly, be integrated into the total community that constitutes the port city and its people: location and morphology, economic functioning and performance, social structure and cultural character, political economy and culture.

From the proposed task description, it is obvious that a static and statistical approach cannot be sufficient. In order to understand the functional linkages that emanate from the port (to shipowning, shipbuilding and repair, provedoring and stevedoring, trading, finance, inland transport facilities, security services, communication industries, import and export industries), one must have a qualitative and historical insight into the specific circumstances of the origins and growth of each individual enterprise and sector. This cannot be achieved without a complete breakdown of aggregate statistical data that lump together, for example, employment figures in occupational categories that do not tell us anything about the nature of individual firms or their relationship to the port and its maritime industries. Often it is difficult also to distinguish sharply between a “port function” or a “general function.” A road network may serve both the port sector and the general urban population, and merchant bankers and corporate trading banks may change over time from being primarily related to the needs of overseas commerce to serving as general financial and investment institutions. The same applies to industries that originated through the port, but in due course can assume a much more independent role and position.

Even more complex problems arise when one considers the social, cultural, and political development of the port city. It would, for

example, be foolish to insist that the universities of Glasgow, Liverpool, Hamburg and Colombo were founded as a direct result of them being port cities rather than just large urban centers. Yet, on closer examination it will be found that they were to a certain extent shaped by factors that can immediately be related to the sphere of influence of the port and the people connected with it. The University of Hamburg was not founded until after the first world war as a result of the determined opposition from Hamburg's commercial and financial elite. Yet, it grew out of a colonial institute that itself constituted a striking example of how the cultural horizons of Hamburg were widened by its global shipping links. The influence of the University of Glasgow on the development of the city's and general marine engineering in the nineteenth century is equally well documented.

Similarly, problems exist in disentangling the influence of the port and the political power that is associated with it. Virtually all European settlements across the oceans, whether in Asia, Australia, or America, started as ports. Thus New Amsterdam and Boston, functionally, served very comparable purposes as Buenos Aires, Colombo or Sydney. Because of the early predominance of trading and migration concerns, political power was also vested in those centers. This could, of course, later be shifted, in order to prevent the economic hegemony of the port city from stifling the interests of the remainder of its political entity (through the establishment of Albany as the capital of New York) or to provide a balance between the various regional interests of a much larger polity (such as the foundation of New Delhi or Canberra). But for a long time, and in many other cases, considerable power—sometimes national, sometimes regional—remained vested in the port city. Even so, it is clear that political life became increasingly separate from functional beginnings.

All practical problems should, however, not distract from the necessity to adopt a vigorous conceptual framework, in which the urban community that constitutes the port city is seen as a dynamic organism whose development is predominantly influenced by its port. This definition implies that some settlements can exist for a considerable time before they can be classified as "port cities"; it also means that it is possible for an urban community to outgrow or transcend its "port city" character.²³ The latter evolution may be a specific example of the modern trend towards more fully developed, "general" cities, but such a shift can also occur through the withering of the port sector. Vivid illustrations of the latter development are the virtual death of the innercity dock areas of Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Antwerp and so

many other cities through the recent growth of bulk shipping and containerization, but the silting up of rivers or changing patterns of international trade can be equally powerful causes.

The previous passages can be no more than a preliminary sketch; the most pertinent point to stress is that a comprehensive qualitative as well as quantitative analysis from within is indispensable to establish the meaning of this particular (or for that matter, any other) classification. Theorists still can learn much from specific historical case studies. Urban, colonial and other historians, on the other hand, have largely moved forward without maintaining sufficient contact with urban and economic geographers and without a sufficiently rigid analytical framework. As a result their findings tend to be largely particularistic. This situation, which is both symptom as well as integral part of the current fragmentation of "history" as a discipline, does demand a more systematic methodological approach based on a strict functional/structuralist analysis. This requirement is all the more urgent in the case of port cities, as they both constitute the arena in which widely divergent social, economic, political and cultural systems meet, and at the same time form the crucial nodal points that allow the international (both regional and worldwide) economy to function. It seemed therefore useful to discuss the "port city" concept and sketch its significance, before using it in order to evaluate the contribution made by the four studies of port cities under review.

Andrew Gibb's *Glasgow, The Making of a City* demonstrates, with a wealth of generally well-chosen illustrations, diagrams and maps, that it is still possible to produce an aesthetically attractive book at an acceptable price. Moreover, covering the more than thirteen centuries of Glasgow's history in a mere 186 pages, it represents a remarkable *tour de force*. Gibb, a historical geographer, does not aim to provide a full economic history or social geography of Glasgow, but focuses strictly on the structural components of the townscape: "streets and houses, markets and mills, canals and railways, and at its centre, the River Clyde and its improvements" (p. xiv). The outline of the physical development of Glasgow is flanked, on the one side, by a discussion of the dynamic processes that caused the city to grow, and, on the other, an account of its population "from a viewpoint of growth, migration, and the relationships between people, their urban environment, and public health."

Gibb traces the setting of Glasgow and its physical changes with sure and assertive strokes, now and again providing a detailed discussion of particular examples or aspects in order to clarify general issues. He is

strong in his outline of the growth of medieval and early modern Glasgow, the expansion of modern housing areas and the spatial distribution of Glasgow's social classes. Making effective use of the massive material unearthed by the numerous committees inquiring into Glasgow's shocking housing and health conditions, Gibb paints a vivid picture of the material circumstances of Glasgow's modern poor. His critique of the spate of improvement and planning schemes adopted from 1866 to overcome the persistent slum conditions of the innercity wards is lucid and convincing; it is at the same time an eloquent condemnation of the legacy of the glorious British Empire to the majority of the people of what in its hey-day was one of its main ports and industrial centres.

Maps and diagrams have been effectively used to demonstrate both the demographic changes in the inner core of Glasgow and its suburban sprawl on both sides of the Clyde. Gibb has been less consistent in his description of the spatial development of economic activity in the city. His thorough analysis of the location of early modern workshops and the cotton mills that crowded the city centre in the early nineteenth century stands in contrast with the thinner account of the same themes for the period after 1840. There the emphasis shifts very much to the twin questions of housing and health, with also insufficient linkages being made between the industrial and residential sectors of the city. Moreover, the development of Glasgow's dockland has not been systematically treated, and though little is said of Glasgow's shipyards and locomotive shops, the growth and role of Glasgow shipping companies is entirely overlooked. In all cases, the perspective is macro-economic; no identification of individual firms is offered.

There is much to be commended in Gibb's book, but there are also gaps that even in his selective approach should not have occurred. There is little on what keeps the city together, and what links it to the world. The canals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are treated in some detail, less so the early railways, but there is hardly a reference to developments after 1840; the motorcar and aeroplane are entirely absent. The impact of railways, stations, and motorways on the morphology of the city is not indicated. Apart from a passing reference to tramways (p. 177), the evolution of transport within the city and its "umland" is entirely neglected. There is no discussion of the political structure and culture of Glasgow, and in consequence no assessment can be made of the influence of the various power groups in the city on its development. The annexations of 1911 are not explained or put into perspective. There is no account of the social life of Glasgow. Its people

have remained statistics; there is no attempt to describe or assess the Irish element, to trace the relations between Catholics and Protestants, to discuss education and cultural life (both “high” and folk, including sport and other leisure activities), to evoke the atmosphere of the shipyard districts and dockland. Very largely, there are no people in Gibb’s Glasgow. Yet, the references in the last chapter to the numerous projects and the urgent necessity to improve the quality of life do suggest strongly that the standards of life of Glasgow’s people needed to be discussed in more comprehensive terms. What Gibb’s book offers, therefore, is a solid, if selective, historical geography of Glasgow, largely in isolation from general development elsewhere in Scotland, Britain, or Europe. But it is a “general” overview, in which the port as sector—and even more as key organizing principle—has been almost entirely neglected.

Sheila Marriner’s *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside* constitutes an almost complete opposite to Gibb’s *Glasgow*. It contains no illustrations, only one unsophisticated map, no justified margin, and a prosaic type-face; and yet it costs £1 more. Marriner’s craft is that of the economic historian; spatial and visual elements are absent from her vision—despite her use of “development” rather than “history” in her title. But even if “history” would have been inserted, it is still unacceptable to overlook the morphological aspects of urban or regional growth. The development of Liverpool’s Central Business District, the layout of its dockland, the spread of its overspill population into working class suburbs around the public transport system, all require cartographic as well as graphic description and presentation. Urban historians and geographers should, however, not allow their initial disappointment to make them put aside this book; it contains a mass of wealth on Liverpool and its surrounding district, and as such will remain a general introductory text of considerable usefulness.

Merseyside only covers the period from 1750 to the present, neatly divided in two parts by an unexplained cut in 1870. The general impression is that of an encyclopedic coverage. In contrast to Gibb, who eschews the naming of individual firms, the reader is presented with a flood of industries and enterprises in Marriner’s survey of the economic activity of her region. But there is little indication of the relative importance of each sector or individual business unit, nor is there a more general functional and dynamic framework within which each can play their role in the growth of the city and its region as a whole. This rather indiscriminate account, somewhat surprisingly, stands in sharp contrast to Marriner’s conceptual introduction, and, indeed, the implications of

the overall organization of her book. She refers to the concept of "key industries" (p. 47), and states "Pride of place in Liverpool's growth must certainly be accorded to its position as a port . . ." (p. 5), but the latter is not explicitly taken as an organizing principle. Yet it underlies Marriner's adoption of a four-tiered chapter structure: landside and internal transport facilities; port, shipping and overseas trade; industrial activity; and, finally, social evolution or "quality of life." Contained in this approach are not only all elements that are essential for an understanding of the organic growth and development of an urban community (several of which were lacking in the Glasgow book), but also a keen appreciation of the often personal linkages that existed between the various sectors. Nevertheless, the account is not integrated and it is not evenly sustained for the whole period; port facilities and Liverpool's shipping receive considerably more attention for the hey-day of Britain's supremacy at sea than for the later period. The treatment of internal transport facilities is acceptable, but little attention is given to the development of inland transport after 1870 (also here the motorways are absent). Marriner briefly mentions the attempts of Liverpool to gain an airport of significance. Indeed, she emphasizes the need to understand the experience of Liverpool within the full national and global context of the markets of its economic and foremost its transport activity. But though many building stones are present, they have not been assembled; ultimately, the total in this case is less than the sum of the parts.

On the social aspects of the development of Merseyside, Marriner starts in a promising fashion by pointing at its unique sociocultural image and achievements: it "conjures up strong emotions of love and hate, of respect or contempt, of admiration or criticism; few people regard the region dispassionately" (p. 1). It has a reputation for being strike-prone, a prey of vandalism and social deprivation, but finds pride in its musical standing (both Philharmonic and pop), its comedians and its football prowess. The same themes as in Gibb's book, housing and health, take pride of place, but without any spatial dimension. Many other aspects are covered as well, both material (such as pollution, unemployment, trade unionism and strikes) and nonmaterial (such as religion, charity, education, and cultural life). The latter elements certainly contribute to making Marriner's overview a much completer one (there is even a short reference to pubs and their vital role in neighborhood communities), but there is no overall, structuralist approach, and these sections of the book come to resemble largely the classic tradition of the largely enumerative "general" histories. The

observation that Liverpool, as a seaport, attracted a much larger than national average floating working population (p. 152), is not related to its demographic and social evolution, and the specific character of Liverpool society and culture is not investigated.

Despite the great contrasts between Gibb's and Marriner's books, there are also several similarities. Both write with emotion. But although Gibb has the more clinical eye of the geographer, he is much more empathetic toward the plight of the "ordinary" Glaswegian; Marriner, on the other hand, is foremost concerned to point out that the past, present, and future of Merseyside are not only gloom. In consequence she underplays its uglier parts, and overexposes its more attractive sides; not only Merseysiders will be surprised by her views. Both also write without a strict organizational concept, and without having considered the usefulness of fundamental geographical concepts such as "hinterland" or "centrality," or economic location theory. Moreover, they don't take seriously their own observations that the port stood central in both urban communities, and that the structural decline of their cities since the Great War was mainly due to their inability to compensate for the recession in their port sectors. In the case of Marriner, this can perhaps be explained partly by a conscious attempt not to follow Francis Hyde's *Liverpool and the Mersey*²⁴ too closely, but the result is that the port has largely remained "hidden", a mere appendage.

→ The book edited by Hans-Dieter Loose is the first of two volumes entitled *Hamburg: The History of the City and Its Inhabitants*. It deals with the period from Hamburg's origins to its full incorporation into the second German Empire in 1888, when its status as customs-free city was abolished in exchange for the permission to build a large free port. It is the product of a team of Hamburg historians, each writing on his specialist period. The editorial control of Loose has remained limited to the choice of his team (besides himself for the period 1618-1712: Klaus Richter (origins to 1300), Peter Gabrielsson (1300-1517), Rainer Postel (1517-1618), Franklin Kopitzsch (1712-1806), Gerhard Ahrens (1806-1860), and Ekkehard Böhm (1860-1888)), and the identification of the six main themes that all, in their respective temporal slices, had to make the mainstays of their accounts. These six elements are: the morphology of the city, its demographic development, domestic politics, foreign relations, economic development, and cultural life.

Because of the scholarship displayed in the book, and its substance and scope, it will obviously remain for a considerable time the "standard" text. There can be little doubt that all seven chapters represent solid contributions, incorporating recent research and find-

ings. At the same time it cannot be overlooked that they are extremely diverse in their approach, the order and relative importance given to each of the six main organizational themes. It will certainly surprise many readers that the economic life of the city has been relegated to second-last position in Loose's task description, instead of serving as the material basis for a structural analysis. It is also abundantly clear that none of the team are urban historians, or indeed have cared to become acquainted with urban or general historical geography. There are no maps of Hamburg after 1300, and none at all of its region and hinterland. The most satisfactory in this respect is Richter's account of the rise of early medieval Hamburg (the reconstruction of which is assisted considerably by large scale archaeological excavations), but in the later chapters there is no attempt to provide a spatial analysis.

Moreover, the authors have been allowed to indulge in their specialties. Loose has assigned himself no less than 40 pages on foreign policy, and Kopitzsch takes 42 for a detailed account of the Enlightenment in Hamburg (which, rather surprisingly, deals only very briefly with its rich musical culture); many other, less extreme, examples could be brought forward. This might perhaps be excused in an otherwise strictly organized and balanced work, but here the kaleidoscopic effect outweighs what structural coherence there is.

Finally, despite Loose's insistence that the specific mention of Hamburg's inhabitants in the title was an explicit indication of intent, there is little about the social structure of the city, its people and how they experienced life. As in Gibb's *Glasgow* they remain statistics and anonymous, even if their health and charitable institutions are discussed extensively. But there is little on housing and working conditions, nothing on leisure and popular culture, as indeed there is nothing on the upper-class mansions of the Elbchaussee and their inhabitants.²⁵ Most specifically, the book is silent on the workers in Hamburg's port sector and their social environment.

These remarks should not be seen in isolation; Loose's *Hamburg* also contains many splendid and insightful passages. In particular the economic sections of Richter, Ahrens, and Böhm are excellent, as are Gabriellsson's account of Hamburg's internal political upheavals in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and Postel's analysis of the coming and lasting impact of the Reformation. The book is a good example of the classical "general" history, a fine and scholarly overview. However, it deals more with the events that happened to happen in Hamburg rather than with the comprehensive structural growth of the port city that it became once the extraordinary entrepreneur Wirad von

Boizenburg in 1188 founded the *Neustadt* (Hamburg's "new town" that was entirely geared to foreign trade and shipping).

Yet, there are several building stones visible for such an approach. It is demonstrated by several authors how much Hamburg's foreign policy was influenced by the concern for the welfare and promotion of its port, and similarly, how the merchants of the city attempted (largely successfully) to control power within its walls and territory. Overseas trade, river regulation, inland transport all are discussed extensively; Hamburg's shipping and internal transport facilities, however, have been comparatively neglected. There is a keen eye for Hamburg's export breweries and what are called the merchant's industries (in which imported raw materials like sugar are processed). Böhm even goes so far as to ascribe a vital role to the port and its trade and shipping in the modern industrial expansion of Hamburg (p. 530), but he draws no consequences from this insight. On the social level the occupational composition of Hamburg's population is known as early as 1375, and the predominance of maritime and related professions remained. But no sustained analysis is proffered and there is also no attempt to identify the specific Hamburgian elements in its cultural life. Its anglophilia is hardly touched upon and Rudolph's views on the cultural uniqueness of port cities have gone unnoticed.²⁶

Ironically, it is Kopitzsch who provides the most direct indication of where structural history of Hamburg could find its starting point. Acknowledging that the exchange and the port were the city's pivotal points, he approvingly cites Helen Liebel's statement that Hamburg and its people (in the eighteenth century) resembled London, Boston, Philadelphia, Amsterdam and Bordeaux and their inhabitants more than the cities of its German hinterland (p. 353).²⁷ It is this port-based and port-determined similarity that underlies the historicity and usefulness of the port-city concept; Hamburg's port was the very essence of its unique character that needed to be taken seriously and analyzed systematically.²⁸

K. Dharmasena's *The Port of Colombo 1860-1939* has a more modest theme than the previous three, but it is more successful in its organization and analysis. It deals with the rise of the port of Colombo after the construction of its new harbour, and the impact this had on the city of Colombo as a whole. Dharmasena has studied the geographical literature (Bird and Hoyle figure largely in his bibliography) and his analysis has become an effective multidisciplinary account. He gives a thorough review of both the seaborne and inland transport networks that focused on Colombo and, by 1910, made it the third largest port of

the British Empire, and the seventh of the world (Hamburg was ranked fourth, Liverpool eighth, and Glasgow much lower down the list). Dharmasena demonstrates in a wealth of statistical detail that Colombo's port fulfilled a double function as both the import-export gateway of Ceylon and the main coaling station of the Indian Ocean through which virtually all shipping to and from the Far East and Australasia passed.

The building and functioning of the port is recounted succinctly and lucidly. The circular causation of growing trade and shipping tonnages is matched by a discussion of port administration and the means used by the main customers of the port to ensure it fulfilled their needs. The spatial development of port and dockland is traced in detail, as are the labour implications of their growth. In particular this meant the importation of Tamils from India as construction and dock workers, but Dharmasena also included all other occupational groups and professions that were boosted by the port, its industries and services, and the people they employed.

In his last two chapters, Dharmasena deals with the twin problems of housing and public health. Through a judicious and creative use of both statistical and qualitative material, he is able to reconstruct the material living conditions of those who inhabited the crowded dockland district, especially the Pettah ward. These passages match very well those in Gibb's *Glasgow*; Dharmasena himself offers comparisons with Paris, London and New York. Indeed, throughout he is conscious of the need to provide an international framework for his study, in order to be able to present a comprehensive explanation of growth and evaluate the relative position and condition of Colombo.

Dharmasena, an economist, falls short of providing a full urban history, as he acknowledges himself; there is no account of the political, cultural, or religious life of Colombo. But in the tightness of his organization, the integration of macro- and micro-economic elements, and foremost the structural approach to his subject, he has certainly created the groundwork for a comprehensive study of this colonial port-city and provided a model that would find widespread emulation. Some may feel that the "colonial" port city because of its peculiar dualist nature and largely exogenous dynamism cannot be a suitable functional model to analyze European, American (Anglo- or Luso-Hispanic) or Australasian port cities. Certainly, demographic factors, ethnic relations, power structures, and hierarchies may be different, but it is nevertheless submitted here that underlying these contrasts there are

physical and economic structures, based on the port and its associated professions, industries and services,²⁹ whose functional symmetry is far more important in understanding the historical development of these individually always unique, but collectively classifiable as “port city,” group of urban communities.³⁰ In turn, it is conceptually strong case studies, such as that offered by Dharmasena’s *Port of Colombo*, that can assist urban geographers in their quest for an acceptable and workable classification scheme.

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NOTES

1. David T. Gilchrist, ed. *The Growth of the Seaport Cities 1790-1825* (Charlottesville, 1967).

2. *Ibid.*, 92.

3. J.G.B. Hutchins, “Trade and Manufactures,” in *Ibid.*, 83-91, developing the argument he presented earlier in his *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy 1789-1914* (Cambridge, MA: 1914), 9-12.

4. James P. Baughman, in Gilchrist, *Seaport Cities*, 196.

5. D.K. Basu, ed. *The Rise and Growth of the Port Cities in Asia* (Santa Cruz, CA: 1979).

6. R. Murphey, *Shanghai: the Key to Modern China* (Cambridge MA: 1953); “The City in the Swamp: Aspects of the Site and Early Growth of Calcutta”, *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 130 (1964), 241-256; “Urbanisation in Asia,” *Ekistics*, vol. 21, no. 122 (1966), 8-17, reprinted in G. Breese, ed. *The City in Newly-Developing Countries: Readings in Urbanism and Urbanisation* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966); and “Traditionalism and Colonialism: Changing Urban Roles in Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 29 (1969), 67-84.

7. S.J. Lewandowski, “Urban Growth and Municipal Development in the Colonial City of Madras, 1860-1900,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 34 (1975), 341-360; “Changing Form and Function of the Ceremonial and the Colonial Port City in India: An Historical Analysis of Madurai and Madras,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 11 (1977), 183-212; “Urban Planning in the Asian Port City: Madras, an Overview, 1920-1970,” *South Asia*, new series, vol. 3 (1979), 30-45.

8. Murphey, “Traditionalism and Colonialism,” 83.

9. It is nevertheless a significant slip that she, in “Changing Form and Function,” already in the second footnote deletes ‘port’ and uses ‘colonial city’ *tout court*.

10. Basu, *Port Cities in Asia*, xvi.

11. See, e.g., the project recently initiated by the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils on the “Metropolitan Primate Cities of Asia.”

12. Basu, *Port Cities in Asia*, 77-79, and 238-248.

13. *Ibid.*, xvi, and see also xxiv; here it may be stressed that Basu nevertheless deleted "colonial" from the title of the conference proceedings; even if a concept cannot be strictly defined, it can still exist and be used!

14. For an overview see, e.g., Harold Carter, *The Study of Urban Geography* (3rd ed., London, 1981), ch. 4, "Urban Functions and the Functional Classification of Towns."

15. In A.M. Weimer and H. Hoyt, *Principles of Real Estate* (New York, 1939).

16. T.N. Chiu, *The Port of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 1973); but see also Karl Löbe, *Metropolen der Meere* (Düsseldorf, 1979).

17. James Bird, *Seaports and Seaport Terminals* (London, 1971), 144.

18. B.S. Boyle, *The Seaports of East Africa: A Geographical Study* (Nairobi, 1967); "Early Port Development in East Africa: An Illustration of the Concept of Changing Port Hierarchies," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 58 (1967), 94-112; B.S. Hoyle and D. Hilling, eds. *Seaports and Tropical Development in Africa* (Nairobi, 1970); P.J. Rimmer, "The Search for Spatial Regularities in the Development of Australian Seaports 1861-1961/2," in B.S. Hoyle, ed. *Transport and Development* (London, 1973), 63-86.

19. Esp. G.G. Weigend, "Ports: Their Hinterlands and Forelands," *The Geographical Review*, vol. 42 (1952), 660-672, and "The Problem of Hinterland and Foreland as Illustrated by the Port of Hamburg," *Economic Geography*, vol. 32 (1956), 1-16, and "Some Elements in the Study of Port Geography," *Geo. Rev.*, vol. 48 (1958), 185-200.

20. James Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London, 1963); *Seaport Gateways of Australia* (London, 1968); and the already cited study *Seaports and Seaport Terminals*.

21. See H. Obenaus and J. Zalenski, *Geographie des Seeverkehrs* (Berlin, GDR, 1979), 198-201.

22. T. Stoianovich, *French Historical Method. The Annales Paradigm* (Ithaca/London, 1976), 86.

23. See James E. Vance Jr., *This Scene of Man. The Role and Structure of the City in the Geography of Western Civilization* (New York, 1977), 20-21, on San Francisco, New York and Montreal.

24. F.E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey, The Development of a Port, 1700-1970* (Newton Abbot, 1971) offers a comprehensive economic history of the region organized around the port; it has been emulated handsomely and effectively by D.A. Farnie, *The Manchester Ship Canal and the Rise of the Port of Manchester 1894-1975* (Manchester, 1980). Both studies show an excellent understanding of the interplay between geographic and economic factors, but they do not venture outside their field. More systematic and scholarly than Löbe, *Metropolen der Meere*, they display the same understanding of the dynamic influence of ports.

25. See, in contrast, the more popular works of Eckart Klessmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1981), where he specifically discusses the pauperization of the city's working classes (which made it a citadel of the socialist movement), and Paul Th. Hoffman, *Die Elbchaussee* (Hamburg 1937, latest reprint 1983).

26. W. Rudolph, *Die Hafenstadt. Eine maritime Kulturgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1980). See also Stan Hugill's narrower but fascinating, *Sailortown* (London/New York, 1967).

27. The original reference to H. Liebel, "Laissez-faire vs. Mercantilism. Hamburg and the Hamburg Bourgeoisie vs. Frederick the Great in the Crisis of 1763," *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 52 (1965), 211.

28. The uniqueness of Hamburg in German history is a continuous theme that underlies much of the city's historiography. It was addressed directly by Percy Ernst Schramm in his *Hamburg. Ein Sonderfall in der Geschichte Deutschlands* (Hamburg, 1964). Though not everyone today would agree with his specific conclusions, his question remains a central one.

29. Not surprisingly, these connections are best understood by the leading managers of liner shipping in geographically unfavored port cities like Bremen and Amsterdam. See for example A. Petzet, *Heinrich Wiegand* (Bremen, 1932), 189 [North German Lloyd, Bremen], and D.A. Delprat, *De Reeder Schrijft zijn Journaal* (The Hague, 1983), 293-294 [Steamshipping Company "Netherlands," Amsterdam].

30. Once the "port city" has been established as a model and classification, it is of course possible to develop a system of subcategories (including for example "colonial," "general," "passive," and also "naval" port cities), but at this place such an attempt would carry too far. It is, similarly, impossible to discuss here the problem of where to draw the physical/geographical boundaries of the "port city"—a question that probably can never be satisfactorily solved, but the importance and relevance of which is clearly indicated by the different areas covered by each of the four books reviewed here.