THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CITY

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1. *The Hypothesis of the Muslim City*

1.1

The concept of a "Muslim" city was forged between 1920 and 1950 by the French Orientalist school of Algiers, notably by its chief protagonists William and Georges Marçais and, after them, by Roger le Tourneau.[1] It was then supplemented by Jean Sauvaget and Jacques Weulersse, of the "Damascus school."[2] This theoretical quest was accompanied by a noteworthy succession of monographs on a number of large Arab cities: by Gaston Deverdun on Marrakesh (1959); by Jacques Caillé on Rabat (1949); by Roger le Tourneau on Fez (1949); by R. Lespès on Algiers (1930); by Marcel Clerget on Cairo (1934); by Jean Sauvaget on Damascus and Aleppo (1934, 1941); and by Jacques Weulersse on Antioch (1934).[3]

All these scholars were, it will be noted, French; a fact pointed out by Stephen Humphreys who spoke of "the great French tradition of Islamic urban studies" and of "a thin but steady stream of publications

[1] See W. Marçais, "L'Islamisme et la vie urbaine," in *Articles et Conférences* (Paris, 1961); G. Marçais, "L'urbanisme musulman," in *Mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie*, 2 vols. (Algiers, 1957); and R. Le Tourneau, *Les villes musulmanes de l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1957). Janet Abu-Lughod has shed a good deal of light on the development of this Orientalist tradition from the Marçais brothers to G. von Grunebaum in "The Islamic City," *IJMES* (1987). I have myself tackled this problem in "Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no. 1 (1994).

[2] J. Sauvaget, "Esquisse d'une histoire de la ville de Damas," *REI* 4 (1934); idem, *Alep: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne* (Paris, 1941); J. Weulersse, "Antioche, Essai de géographie urbaine," *BEO* 4 (1931); and *Paysans de Syrie et du Proche-Orient* (Paris, 1946).

[3] G. Deverdun, *Marrakech des origines à 1912*, 2 vols. (Rabat, 1959–61); J. Caillé, *La ville de Rabat jusqu'au Protectorat français*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1949); R. Le Tourneau, *Fès avant le Protectorat* (Casablanca, 1949); R. Lespès, *Alger, étude de géographie et d'histoire urbaine* (Paris, 1930); and M. Clerget, *Le Caire*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1934). For J. Sauvaget and J. Weulersse, see note 2 above.

(the majority of them by French scholars) on various aspects of the topic."[4] This is not merely a feature of scholarly sociology, of particular interest by virtue of an absence of comparable work in the parts of the world dominated by Great Britain. France was during this period a colonial power whose sway extended over the whole of the Maghreb and over the Levant; and, as such, it is not surprising that the work carried out by these noteworthy scholars should have been influenced by the spirit of the time: a spirit that led members of the dominant caste—the "ruling institution" in H. A. R. Gibb's phrase—to regard the urban realizations of subject populations (viewed as outdated and even backward) with a degree of condescension. The colonizers' profound antipathy towards the "Turkish" period which had preceded French colonization in all these parts was a further factor, inclining these scholars to discount what existed before the arrival of the French—who regarded themselves as bearers of a modern civilization with ambitions, indeed, to renew the Roman *imperium*.[5]

Such a rapprochement was hard to avoid, given that the colonized Mediterranean regions did in fact indelibly bear the mark of an ancient civilization whose lustre and prosperity were notably in evidence in a wondrous network of prestigious cities: Volubilis, Jamila, Timgad, Dougga, el-Jem, Palmyra, and Apamea were only some of the pearls among the multitude of ancient cities that developed, following the Hellenistic flowering, in the lands conquered by the Romans. Roman ways had set in place there an urbanism whose regularity, quality of municipal institutions and vigorous civic spirit were regarded as difficult to match. The existence of cities endowed with a grandiose, virtually perfect urban organization side by side with irregular Arab cities, full of an exotic charm but apparently chaotic in structure, was a spur to noteworthy works like those of Sauvaget on Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia; but it provided food, too, for some peevish comparisons. "Nothing," wrote Le Tourneau, "is more alien to a Muslim city of the Maghreb than the rectilinear avenues of a Roman city, or of a modern city. The aerial photograph of any Muslim city gives the impression of a maze or labyrinth."[6] (fig. 1) The parallel between Roman city and

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[4] R. S. Humphreys, *Islamic History* (Princeton: University Press, 1991), 228.

[5] An anthology of "anti-Turkism" could be made out of the work of French scholars from H. de Grammont's *Histoire d'Alger* (Paris, 1887) to J. Sauvaget.

[6] Le Tourneau, *Les villes musulmanes*, 20.

"modern" city (French, in the case of the Maghreb) is not, needless to say, fortuitous.

1.2

There is no great difficulty in defining the principles underlying the Orientalist approach vis-à-vis the Mediterranean Arab cities. Chief among these is the assumption that in a globalizing civilization like the Muslim one every phenomenon must be regarded as specifically Muslim. The Orientalists' initial training (geared chiefly towards the study of religion and its superstructures) led them naturally towards such an extreme viewpoint. R. Ilbert judiciously notes in this regard that, "it is because most Orientalists started out from a simple initial assumption . . . of the fundamental role of Islam in the structuring of space that they found this when they came to the subject."[7] It is not astonishing, then, to find Islam mentioned in connection with institutions, with the organization of political life, with social and economic activities, of course; but also with the physical structure of city or house, which, from this perspective, can only be designated as "Muslim."

Viewed from such a religious standpoint, *sub specie aeternitatis*, urban phenomena appear as constants within a historical continuum stretching over some thirteen centuries, and within a Muslim world covering three continents, as far as distant China. In his "Urbanisme Musulman," G. Marçais makes reference, one page after the other, to the Fustat of the Fatimids, to the Fez of the Marinids, to the Algiers of the Ottoman deys, in order to describe a city whose illustrative examples are barely more than Maghrebi and represent no more than the particular state of the *madina* (the term used by geographers to designate the ancient centres) at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The comparison between an urbanism of Antiquity, supposedly endowed with every perfection, and a "Muslim" urbanism characterized, at first sight, by a profound irregularity and by a rejection of all intelligible rules brought Orientalists to some discouraging conclusions regarding the physical structure of cities. The observation of R. Le Tourneau, quoted above, is characteristic of this uncomprehending stance. "Besides," sighs the despondent G. Marçais (without drawing

[7] R. Ilbert, "La ville musulmane: réalité et abstraction," *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale* 10–11 (April 1982): 12.

his conclusion), "it is not that Muslims are satisfied with narrow streets that they have failed to see the advantage of the straight line as a path from one point to another."[8] This reference to the Ancient World had especially prejudicial consequences for J. Sauvaget, since it was precisely he who had studied—with precision—the structure of the great Syrian cities in the Roman period; cities whose architecture is still evident in the layout of modern Arab cities (fig. 2). Damascus and Aleppo, he says, provide only "degenerate" images (he uses the word *dégénérescence*) of the city, as reflected in what has befallen the ancient colonnaded avenue to the suq. Of this last he supplies a brilliant demonstration, supported by an eloquent diagram.[9]

Nor is the Muslim city any more endowed (J. Sauvaget once again) with the municipal institutions that marked the cities of Antiquity (and accompanied the development of the medieval western communes). This observation is one of his chief contributions to the Orientalist conception of the Muslim city.[10] Bereft of any specific administration, the city is directly subject to the authority of the prince who governs it on the principles of oriental despotism.

This concept of a dislocated city, divided into antagonistic communities, is perhaps the contribution of J. Weulersse, based on the study of a very particular city—Antioch—which was effectively divided between highly diverse communities (Sunni Muslim Turks, Alawis, and Christians) and was described by the geographer as disjointed, broken up into sectors closed in on themselves, and potentially hostile. From this finally rather local state of affairs, stemming from an exceptional confessional and ethnic diversity, J. Sauvaget derives a law that he applies to Aleppo, where, he says, in the Muslim period, we may note the "dislocation of the urban centre, its fragmentation into small cells that are individualized and particularized, sometimes even antinomic."[11] Deeply impressed by the spectacle of a Sunni Latakia plunged within a rural Alawi environment, J. Weulersse (cited above) makes a similar generalization:

> In the East, the city gives the impression of a foreign body, a cyst as it were, within the country, of a creation imposed on the countryside it dominates and exploits...As such, the economic activity of the cities

[8] G. Marçais, "L'urbanisme musulman," 227.
[9] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 247.
[10] Sauvaget, "Esquisse," 455–456.
[11] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 248.

> gives an essentially parasitic impression. The city…consumes without producing.[12]

These different themes have been regularly sounded in connection with other cities to be found in a totally different environment.[13]

1.3

The "Muslim" city is, then, characterized above all by *what it lacks*: the regularity, regulation, and civic spirit of the city of Antiquity; the communal institutions of the medieval city. It is wedded to decline. Under the Ottomans, notes M. Clerget, Cairo "becomes slowly extinguished…allowing the fragments of its glorious past to crumble little by little…Cairo is returning…to the kind of dispersed population favoured by the first Arabs."[14] Here we are concerned only with the Ottoman period so disliked by Orientalists. J. Sauvaget, though, goes still further with the following generalization. The Muslim period, he writes, with regard to Aleppo, "is marked by no positive contribution…All that might be attributed to it is the dislocation of the urban centre." The achievement of Islam "is essentially negative." The city becomes "a loose, inorganic assemblage of quarters."[15]

Dealing as we are here with a "non-city" and a "non-urbanism," it is no surprise that, when they proceed to try and define the major characteristics of the structure of the Muslim city, the authors should find themselves a trifle short on positive criteria and should limit themselves to a listing of not very significant and sometimes not very pertinent features. They conjure up city walls, palace, or fortress (which are not truly specific characteristics), the presence of a central principal mosque (which applies equally to the central cathedral) generally linked to markets where a corporate organization is in evidence (this is found in the West), the existence of public baths (proclaimed as Muslim because necessary for the carrying out of ritual ablution, forgetting the opulence of baths in Antiquity), separate quarters, an omnipresent type of house organized around a courtyard (invariably described as "Muslim," even though its existence in Antiquity and its presence

[12] Weulersse, *Paysans de Syrie*, 86–88.
[13] See, for example, the reflections on the *baldi* (city-dwellers) of Algiers, described as an original population set within a different and hostile rural environment.
[14] Clerget, *Le Caire*, 1:178–180.
[15] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 247–248.

throughout the Mediterranean are commonplace realities). Gustave von Grunebaum, whose "The Structure of the Muslim Town"[16] supplied, in 1955, the standard and approved Orientalist account, considers the elements noted immediately above, but without attempting to draw from them a description of the *structure* of the Muslim town as promised in the title of his article. He gives detailed consideration to urban *institutions* (the justice of the *qadi*, the supervision of morals by the *muhtasib*), which are, as one might expect, Muslim—as is the population (or the majority at least, since religious minorities are to be found there). His conclusion, while less abrupt than J. Sauvaget's, is not unexpected: "The Islamic town did not represent a uniform type of civilized life as had the Greek or Roman town."[17] It is only fair to note, nonetheless, that G. von Grunebaum marks a clear development in certain respects vis-à-vis strict Orientalist tradition: he points out the existence of different models, in Iran and Turkestan; he notes the beginnings of decay in the organization of the world of late Antiquity; he calls attention (in the wake of the seminal article published by Robert Brunschwig in 1947)[18] to the interest of Muslim jurists regarding urban problems. The fact is that when von Grunebaum's article was written Oriental doctrine on the Muslim city was already beginning to be revised; so that, in a certain sense, the article might be regarded simultaneously as the epitome of the doctrine and its swan-song.

2. *The challenge to Orientalist viewpoints on the Muslim city*

2.1

There is nothing surprising about such a challenge. In the 1950s, the colonial era within which Orientalism had evolved was entering its final phase. France herself, the favoured site for these urban studies, closed the colonial book in the 1940s (in the Levant) and the 1950s (in Morocco and Tunisia), before the final closure in 1962 (in Algeria). The end had come for a latent Eurocentrism and for the tendency to undervalue civilizations which might, from now on, be more expediently

[16] G. von Grunebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town," in *Islam, Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (Routledge and Kegan, 1955).
[17] Von Grunebaum, "Structure," 154.
[18] R. Brunschvig, "Urbanisme médiéval et droit musulman," *REI* 15 (1947).

viewed in terms of an understanding and analysis of differences, rather than emphasis on supposed inferiority against a Western model. It does not seem overstated to see this approximate time as marking the end of Orientalism, the latter's final major enterprise being the publication by H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen of their *Islamic Society and the West* (1950–57). These two introductory volumes were to be followed by a general picture of Muslim society. This venture was in fact aborted; partly because research was then insufficiently advanced to bring it to fulfilment, and partly on account of the general approach, which (as the title reflects) conformed very closely to the spirit of Orientalism who saw the East as a mirror of the West.

The reassessment—to which the historians of the Turkish school of Lufti Barkan contributed so greatly from the end of the 1930s—of the importance and interest of an Ottoman heritage assumed an equal supplementary importance, in so far as it led to a revaluation of the pejorative vision imposed by Orientalists of the Algiers and Damascus schools with respect to Arab cities prior to colonization. The development of a parallel interest in the inexhaustible archives of the Ottoman period and the progressive use to which these latter were put served to confirm that Arab cities had not, at this time, seen the generalized decline described by specialist and also that elements of administration had been in place. Specifically, this revised viewpoint cast a vivid light on the problem posed in Sauvaget's (in many ways magisterial) work on Aleppo and successfully resolved the obvious contradiction that existed between the unbelievably negative assessments he brought to bear on the Ottoman period and the glittering picture emerging from his own work—a contradiction from which he had contrived to free himself only by an unconvincing final pirouette: "The Aleppo of the Ottomans is a mere *trompe l'oeil,* a sumptuous façade behind which lie only ruins."[19]

2.2

The entry into the scholarly field of specialists from other disciplines clearly contributed to challenging the theory of the implicit primacy of Islam in studies of the city and to breaking the kind of monopoly established in these studies by specialists in religion. Historians brought

[19] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 239.

a more marked awareness of the need to reset the development of cities within a chronological context, stretching over twelve centuries, from the creations or refoundings of the seventh century to the end of the Ottoman period (beginning of the nineteenth). In this context, Claude Cahen's book, *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*, published in 1959, was seminal. Sociologists brought to the debate an interest in social data and pointed out that, in fact, phenomena studied from an Islamic perspective were generally urban phenomena. Geographers contributed to restating these studies in terms of space (and mapping the various aspects of this), and to reminding that the Muslim world is not merely synonymous with the Arab (or simply Maghrebi) world studied by the Orientalists. In this respect, the contribution of Eugen Wirth, recently manifested in his *Orientalische Stadt* (Mainz, 2000), has been of prime importance.

2.3

An improved knowledge of late Antiquity (to which we are especially indebted through excavations like those of J. Balthy at Apamea) confirmed the intuitions given expression by J. Sauvaget, *in extremis*, in his *Alep*.[20] The progressive disorganization of layout within Antiquity was brought to light specifically by Claude Cahen in 1958, then by Samuel Stern in 1970, and, finally and very forcibly, by Hugh Kennedy in his article "From *Polis* to *Madina*" (1970) where he notes that in the urban communities of fifth- and sixth-century Syria "there was no classical town plan to affect later growth... The 'streets' were narrow winding paths, there was no agora, no colonnades, no theatre."[21] It is, then, quite fruitless to set a flawless ancient urbanism (which no longer existed when the Arab conquest came) over against an anarchic Muslim urbanism. In addition, excavations carried out recently at Palmyra and Bet Shean have revealed significant transitional stages between the late Roman period and the Umayyad period, suggesting continuity rather than any

[20] See, in his *Alep*, 248 (the penultimate page of the book!), his observation on the "reduction of the framework of city life to forms more rudimentary actually set in place by the Byzantine period."

[21] Cl. Cahen, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain," *Arabica* 5 (1958): 226; S. M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," in *The Islamic City*, ed. A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern (Oxford, 1970); and H. Kennedy, "From *Polis* to *Madina*," *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 13–14.

brutal break.[22] The debilitating conclusion drawn from this comparison, with regard to Muslim cities, has thus lost part of its relevance.

2.4

However, it is in the discounting of any possible identification of a *Muslim* model—universal and existing, in a sense, outside time—that the revision of the Orientalist conception of the city has doubtlessly found its most radical expression. In his seminal article on Muslim urbanism Georges Marçais speaks of the cities "in Muslim lands" (defined predominantly, in climatic terms, as "countries of thirst"), and, with regard to mainly Maghrebi cities, sets forth examples ranging from the age of conquest to that of the Barbary corsairs. At the opposite end of the chain of those transmitting the doctrine, G. von Grunebaum concedes more cautiously that, "in Iran and Turkestan the original layout of the city would be somewhat different." This is not, though, allowed to hinder his dauntless traversing of the lengthy period separating the first creations of the seventh century from the Ottoman period.[23]

It is an obvious fact (so obvious there is no point in lingering over it) that the Muslim world covers an enormous territory, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Far East, that it stretches into regions whose physical nature and, above all, climate are highly various; whereas the Arab world on which the analyses of Orientalists are almost exclusively based (when, indeed, they do not restrict themselves, according to the particular case, to the Maghreb or the Mashriq) represents only a small part of this immense whole, in terms of surface area and population alike. Oleg Grabar, dealing with artistic forms (though the rationale underlying his approach is, of course, equally applicable to urban structure itself) has clearly shown the difficulty involved in using the sole concept of "Islamic" when considering phenomena and production with respect to regions as various in their historical and cultural traditions, and in their natural characteristics, as those of the "Muslim world" in its widest sense, from Morocco to China, and from Central Asia to tropical Africa.[24] How, after all, are we in the cases of the Maghreb or

[22] Khaled Asʿad, "Ikhtishaf … suq fi Tadmur," *Annales Archéologiques Syriennes* 37–38 (1991); Yoram Tsafrir and Gideon Foerster, "Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997).

[23] G. Marçais, "L'Urbanisme musulman"; von Grunebaum, "Structure."

[24] O. Grabar, "Reflexions on the Study of Islamic Art," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 8.

Indonesia to tackle the problems of providing a city or dwelling with water from a solely Islamic perspective?

Equally thorny is the problem of a-temporality that appears to be entailed in describing a city as a kind of unvarying entity, from the time Islam was preached to the dawn of the nineteenth century. This calls irresistibly to mind J.-Cl. Garcin's questions about the Muslim house which cannot be provided with "an interpretation *ne varietur*," and his enlargement on the subject: "Analogous observations might be made on the 'interpretation' still too often accorded to 'the Muslim city' and the way it is laid out."[25] It is because they have placed themselves beyond time that Orientalists—and indeed most contemporary interpreters—have behaved as though the ancient city whose remains they had before their eyes provided a directly usable image of the "classical" (medieval) city, when in fact it is merely the "modern" (i.e., largely Ottoman) version of the city, shaped by three or four centuries. The "classical" city can only be *reconstructed*, by means of an analysis basing itself on ancient sources. The history of these cities has been too lengthy and has entailed too much contrast for it to be provided with a trans-historical, truly homogeneous interpretation.

2.5

These considerations lead one to think that there is no "Muslim" city of the kind Orientalists have wished to identify. Moreover, the attempt, frequently made, to search out elements in the Quran or in Tradition, which might form the basis for the description of such a city, have produced little more than a meagre harvest of general prescriptions about the protection of private life or the constraints of neighbourhood. The only truly significant text that can be produced is the oft-invoked *hadith* of Muslim: "If you are in disagreement about the width of a street, make this of seven cubits."[26] In contrast, judicial or jurisdictional decisions made by judge or *faqih* have, over the centuries, enriched reflection on the city. This is clearly shown in the work of Robert Brunschvig and,

[25] J.-Cl. Garcin, "Habitat médiéval et histoire urbaine," in *Palais et Maisons du Caire, I, Epoque mamelouke*, J.-Cl. Garcin et al. (Paris: CNRS, 1982), 216.

[26] See, for example, the interesting study by B. S. Hakim, *Arabic-Islamic Cities* (London, 1986). See the observation by J. Berque, *L'Islam au temps du monde* (Paris: Sindbad, 1984), 206: "To derive more on the matter from the Quran or the Sunna would surely be to go beyond any reasonable extrapolation."

more recently, of Baber Johansen.[27] Although J. Sauvaget has written of the lack of interest and the ignorance of the *ʿulama* in this sphere, they did contribute to forging an urban doctrine; but this is, of course, a matter of history, not of theology.

Both this explicit negativity, and the minute critique of false characteristics propounded to define the "Muslim" city have opened the way for a certain nihilism. Having eliminated the irregular road system and the cul-de-sac (found in the ancient East), the house with central courtyard (which is also found in Antiquity) and the division of the city into quarters, Eugen Wirth concluded that the suq, the central business district, is probably "the only and fundamental distinctive criterion for the Near Eastern City which can be considered as Islamic cultural heritage." His proposition is, accordingly, to "renounce the term 'Islamic city' and to prefer the more general 'Oriental city'...Islam seems to be more the inhabitant or occupant of Middle Eastern urban systems than the architect."[28]

It seems to me that this is going too far and I would suggest, bearing in mind the variables of time and place indicated above, that an attempt be made to describe an Arab city that is largely Mediterranean (but naturally also including Iraq, Arabia, and Yemen), taken during the final period of its development, from the beginning of the sixteenth century and before the great mutations produced from the nineteenth century onwards. The profound linguistic and cultural unity of the region under consideration, its community of historical destiny over this period, the existence of still widespread remains of the cities of this time (supplementing the exceptional wealth of Ottoman documentation)—all these things give rise for hope that these "traditional Arab" cities will present sufficient common features and original characteristics for a genuine "urban system" to be demonstrated with regard to them; one that can, of course, be usefully set against other systems—Balko-Anatolian, Irano-Afghan, Moghul, and so on. The work of which this article is part aims, in fact, to make a contribution to such comparisons.

[27] Brunschvig, "Urbanisme médiéval"; B. Johansen, "The Claims of Men and the Claims of God," in *Pluriformiteit en verdeling* (Nijmegen, 1980), and "The All-Embracing Town and its Mosques," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 32 (1981).

[28] E. Wirth, "The Middle Eastern City: Islamic City? Oriental City? Arabian City?" (Lecture given at Harvard University, 1982), typescript, page 9.

The twofold limitation, spatial and temporal, that we take upon ourselves will not, of course, solve every problem, especially the one Orientalists have thought to be able to tackle from a religious perspective. The notion that there is a common urban domain, at any rate from Morocco to Afghanistan, does not rest solely on the impression of a vague set of common features or of a sense of "déjà vu." Certainly there is, far beyond the Arab domain, a common urban one: certain urban structural characteristics to which we shall return (a concentration of markets in the heart of the city, the existence of enclosed quarters, the statistical predominance of dwellings with central courtyard) will be found from Marrakesh to Herat. But there is nothing specifically Muslim about such features. Sometimes they predate Islam. They are bound up with the fact that these diverse regions where the natural constraints are fairly similar are occupied by populations whose commonly shared characteristics (notably concern for the protection of family life) are broadly determined by their religious affiliation; occupied by populations whose social and professional life is deeply affected by the existence of institutions which themselves bear a Muslim character (justice, *hisba*). In short, these cities are (as Wirth noted) Muslim because they are inhabited by Muslim populations. Yet this statement takes us no further along the road to the definition of any particular urban structure that might exist. It is in the bringing together of features, some of which are not specific to the Muslim sphere and others of which exist in other Muslim countries, that we may hope to conjure up the picture of an original urban system for which "traditional Arab city" seems the most appropriate designation. As Jacques Berque observes: "The meaning of a whole lies not in its elements, but in the way it effectively combines these."[29]

3. *The structure of the traditional Arab city*

If we limit our inquiry to a corpus of large Arab cities situated from Morocco to Iraq, and from Syria to Yemen, in the period from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth (which, for virtually all of them, represents the period of Ottoman domination), the major

[29] Berque, *L'Islam au temps du monde*, 219.

features of urban structure appear fairly constant and exhibit a rationale such that we are justified in speaking of a coherent *urban system*.[30]

3.1

The basic features are the very marked separation existing between zones of economic activity and zones of residence, and the very strong centrality of urban organization (fig. 3). This structure determines the existence of two strongly contrasted zones: a "public" zone occupying the city centre and a "private" zone chiefly devoted to residence. The researches of Baber Johansen have shown how Hanafi jurists were perfectly aware of this division of the city, in connection with the reparation due for crimes where the perpetrator remained unknown (*qasama*). In the "public" zones, those marked out by the presence of a broad avenue, a large market or an important mosque, responsibility fell on the political authorities. In the "private" zone, a residential district with cul-de-sacs, the people living in the neighbouring houses were to answer for the consequences of any crime committed there.[31]

The urban centre was organized around the pairing constituted by the main suqs, generally set out around the "covered market" (*qaysariyya* or *bedesten*, according to region), and the principal mosque. This was well demonstrated by Louis Massignon in his studies on Iraqi and Moroccan cities, where he stressed the role of the goldsmiths' market (*sagha*), commonly the place where currencies were exchanged. The layout is a standard one: the "mother-cell" of Fez, in the city of the Qayrawanis, is made up "of two mosques, the sanctuary of Moulay Idris and the Mosque of the Qayrawanis, and a central market, the Kisariya."[32] At Aleppo, the market district is set out around the Great Mosque and the suqs that constitute the *qaysariyya*. It is in this district that major and international trade takes place—whence the necessity of the moneychangers' market. In Cairo, a street bearing the significant name "street of clipped coinage" (*al-Maqasis*), situated behind the *sagha*, recalls these functions. Especially precious, costly articles were sold in

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[30] I have tackled these problems in *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985), and in "La structure spatiale de la ville," in *Sciences Sociales et Phénomènes Urbains dans le Monde Arabe*, ed. M. Naciri and A. Raymond (Casablanca, 1997).

[31] B. Johansen, "Eigentum, Familie," *Die Welt des Islams* 19 (1979): 19–24; idem, "Claims of Men," 64–66.

[32] Le Tourneau, *Fès*, 122, plan on page 375.

the "covered market," which was sometimes an enclosed construction, or a grouping of markets (Aleppo) and caravanserais (Khan al-Khalili in Cairo). Here were find numerous caravanserais (*funduq, khan, wakala, samsara*, according to the city), where international and wholesale trade were transacted. Also in this centre were markets (suqs) specializing in large-scale trade. Crafts of special importance might also be found there, despite the nuisance this must have presented for neighbours; an example of this is the presence of the *nahhasin* (makers of copper utensils and traders in these) in Cairo. These trades were organized on the principle of strict specialization, which found expression in a division into professional bodies and a fairly rigid geographical distribution.[33] The presence of the Great Mosque, which was also a university, sometimes of international standing (as, for example, with the Qarawiyyin in Fez, the Zaytuna in Tunis, and al-Azhar in Cairo), made this quarter a district marked out by religion and culture alike. Al-Azhar, the chief centre for higher education in the Arab world, brought together a hundred or so teachers and three thousand students.

By contrast, the presence in this "hyper-centre" of the political power and the administration was not uniform in character. The most important courts were to be found there situated, usually, in the main mosques, as were a number of "administrative" services; in Cairo, the *dikkat al-hisba* was close by the trading zone that the *muhtasib* was supposed to supervise. Quite often, though, the higher authorities (sovereign or governor) were settled on the edge of the city (Cairo, Damascus), or even right outside (the Bardo in Tunisia); this was for reasons of security (so as to be safely away from possible popular uprisings) or of convenience (so as to have available the necessary space to lodge their troops). Thus, in Aleppo, the Ottoman pashas had abandoned the Citadel to take up residence outside the walls, in the monastery of shaykh Abu Bakr. Algiers is exceptional in having a remarkable concentration of the organs of power in the centre of the city: the palace of the dey (Janina); the *dar al-sikka* (mint); the *bayt al-mal* (financial administration); the premises of the *shaykh al-balad* (city administration); the prison of the *mizwar* (police); and so on.[34] Only at a very late date (in 1817) was the Janina transferred to the Qasba, in the upper city, for reasons at once

[33] I shall return to these economic functions in more detail in a second contribution to this work, "The Economy of the Traditional City."

[34] T. Shuval, *La ville d'Alger vers la fin du XVIIIème siècle* (Paris: CNRS, 1998), 164–172.

of internal security (fear of unrest among the janissaries) and external security (the risk of naval bombardment), thus placing Algiers in the most common situation.

The central district was commonly crossed by relatively broad and regular streets grouped around a central thoroughfare ("Straight Street" in Damascus, of Roman origin, the Qasaba in Cairo (fig. 4), laid out by the Fatimids, the main street crossing Algiers from Bab ʿAzzun to Bab al-Wad); around a number of parallel streets (in Aleppo on the line of the ancient street, from Bab Antakiya to the Citadel); or around a network of virtually orthogonal streets (in Tunis). Relatively straight, rectilinear streets linked the central zone to the city's gates, allowing quite easy access—essential for economic activity—to the commercial centre. In Tunis the plans clearly show how these essential dual thoroughfares unfold towards the gates of Bab al-Banat and Bab Suwayqa in the north, Bab al-Bahr in the east, and Bab Jadid and Bab al-Jazira in the south.

The dense nature of the commercial centres (large markets and especially caravanserais) permits a fairly precise demarcation of these centres whose dimensions naturally varied according to the importance of the cities and to their economic activity: a little over 2 hectares in Algiers, 6 in Tunis, 9 in Damascus, 10 in Mosul, 11 in Aleppo, 12 in Baghdad, but around 60 in Cairo, the second city of the Ottoman Empire in terms of population and activity. The importance of these centres, along with their very marked individuality vis-à-vis the organization of the city, sometimes led them to be accorded a particular name: as, for instance, with the Mdineh in Aleppo, with Qahira in Cairo (in the centre of the Fatimid foundation which, in fact, stretched out fairly extensively beyond the economic central zone proper) (fig. 5), with the Rabʿ in Tunis (a name applied to virtually the whole of the covered suqs surrounding the Zaytuna).[35] The number of economic establishments and the link with the Great Mosque account for the common stability of these centres which, for the most part, have not changed their location from the most ancient times up to the modern age; the Qasaba, the central thoroughfare of the Fatimid city, was still the heart of the city of Cairo in the sixteenth century. Only a single

[35] On the Tunis *rabʿ*, see the analysis by A. Henia, *Propriété et stratégies sociales à Tunis* (Tunis, 1999), 240–246. Shuval is quite right (*Ville d'Alger*, 182) to make an upward correction of my assessment (above one hectare) for the area of the economic centre in Algiers.

case is known of the centre being moved. This was in Mosul, where the suqs, set normally around the Great Mosque, were moved and set up close to the Citadel and to the spot where the great trade route crossed the Tigris. The circumstances of this, and the reasons for it, are unclear.[36]

Such a highly centralized structure gave the city considerable suppleness; for, in any period of expansion, the central zone of the markets and the Great Mosque could grow by biting into the residential districts stretching around them. A case in point occurred during the Ottoman period which saw a considerable expansion of the great Arab cities of the Empire. In Aleppo this urban development took the form of a virtual doubling of the Mdineh, from 6 to 11 hectares. In Cairo, similarly, the zone of major economic activity grew from around 40 hectares to around 60.

3.2

Beyond this central region stretched the city's "private" zone, chiefly devoted to private dwellings. It was this zone that saw the development of the "quarters" (*hawma, hara, mahalla*, according to the particular city) that are one of the distinctive features of the Arab city. They were relatively enclosed in most cases, communication with the outside being by a single street, this main thoroughfare (*darb*) then branching into the interior in usually irregular streets and ending, finally, in cul-de-sacs (fig. 6). The separation of one quarter from a neighbouring one was effected not by a wall but by a back-to-back structure joining the final houses of the quarter to the final houses of the quarters abutting. The gate (*bab*) allowed the quarter to be closed at night, this providing a sense of security; but it was not a thorough-going defence against an attack from outside. The quarters were modestly equipped for inhabitants' daily lives: with an oven, sometimes with a bath and an oratory (*masjid*). But the essential feature was the *suwayqa* (minor market) of which J. Sauvaget has provided classic descriptions for Damascus and Aleppo. This unspecialized market catered for the daily needs (food, articles for common use) of the population which bought in any further provisions from the city suqs.

[36] Dina Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 202–203.

The irregularity of the streets and the abundance of cul-de-sacs which has so intrigued Orientalists was thus a local phenomenon within the city, one answering to the various needs of the population living in the city's quarters, and not a general characteristic. We have noted how in the centre and towards the gates traffic was catered for by direct, regular thoroughfares. Within their quarters, the inhabitants could be content with irregular streets and cul-de-sacs which, in point of fact, were conducive to their security. The only communications they needed were with the city centre where their active life was passed and where they fulfilled their chief religious obligations (Friday prayer); they had no need of direct contact with the outside. Each quarter consisted of a kind of population pocket, open only towards the centre. In actual fact, the cul-de-sacs represented statistically a little less than half of the road network, their development being restricted to within the quarters: 52 per cent of the road system in Fez and 41 per cent in Aleppo. In Algiers there was a very marked contrast between the lower city, corresponding to the centre (24.5 per cent cul-de-sacs) (fig. 7), and the upper city, where the indigenous population lived (59.9 per cent) (fig. 8). The cul-de-sac was thus a functional feature, localized within a specific sector of the city.

The quarters provided dwelling for a population that could hardly have exceeded around a thousand inhabitants (around 200 families), so that they lived there in a familial environment, akin to a village where everyone knows everyone else; under the supervision of shaykhs, but above all, no doubt, thanks to a self-surveillance that made a major contribution to security. Potential troublemakers, people of bad morals, could, where necessary, be made subject to measures of expulsion that might be submitted to the authorities (some cases went as far as Istanbul). These quarters were the scenes of an active collective life, with familial celebrations (circumcision), collective festivities (a ceremony based around a local saint), rejoicings and processions (like the Damascus *ʿarada*); these were enlivened by groups of "youth" (*futuwwa*) who might possibly transform themselves into self-defence groups or might activate traditional rivalries with groups from other quarters, leading to outright pitched battles, sometimes conducted outside the city.[37]

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[37] For various aspects of the life of the quarters, see especially J. Lecerf and R. Tresse, "Les ʿArâda de Damas," *BEO* 7–8 (1937–38); and Nawâl al-Messiri, "The Concept of the Hâra," *Annales Islamologiques* 15 (1979).

This division into quarters should not be regarded as a totally negative factor, inclining the city towards fragmentation and anarchy, as suggested by J. Sauvaget and J. Weulersse. On the contrary, such a division was an element that assured the city's stability, made for effective government of the population; it was conducive to its administration in the zone where the greatest part of the population lived and certainly helped facilitate the urbanization of newcomers recently arrived from the rural zones.

3.3

A further characteristic of the city's spatial structure was the fairly rigorous graduation of activities and residence from the central district out towards the extremities of the city. It was noted above how the city centre brought together the most lucrative economic activities, especially those linked to international trade (trade in cloths, and in particular products like coffee, which had begun to play a considerable part in the economy of the region). From this centre, activities tended to spread outwards through the city on a principle of decreasing importance: the less important the trade, the closer to the periphery. Here on the edge would be found activities requiring a good deal of space (rope-makers, mat-makers, traders in grain or other foodstuffs) or giving rise to nuisances not easily tolerable in the centre (ovens, slaughterhouses, tanneries).[38] Any modification of a trade's geographical position within this system may be interpreted as a sign of its progress (if coming closer to the centre) or its decline (if moving further out). A recently introduced activity, like the major trade in coffee, found its immediate spot in the centre of Cairo by virtue of its economic importance; the 62 *wakala* devoted to this business which appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century are all to be found close by the Qasaba, near the Khan al-Khalili, the Gamaliyya quarter, and al-Azhar.

An organization of this kind was so logical and corresponded so clearly to a "natural" spread of the activities in question that it might be viewed as broadly spontaneous in character. Such a finding must be qualified, nonetheless, in the light of what we know about the regular activities of the *muhtasib* and of the judges specifically concerned with the inhabitants' welfare; in the light, too, of surviving records of inter-

[38] See further in "The Economy of the Traditional City," in this present work.

vention by the authorities in the most serious cases. The removal of the tanneries in Aleppo, Cairo, and Tunis to more outer districts—made necessary by a phase of urban development—sprang from a decision made at the highest level of the political authority.

Such graduation seems, likewise, to characterize the way in which the city was divided with regard to the residence of the different social strata. This has been shown in various recent studies, which, on this point, portray a situation totally at odds with the Orientalist thesis of a social mix stemming from an egalitarianism supposedly characteristic of Muslim society. Jacques Revault's research on high-grade dwellings in Tunis clearly shows how the residences of the élite described by him are localized in a district immediately around the central zone (fig. 9). In her work *Habiter au Caire*, Nelly Hanna identifies three zones, moving from the city centre outwards, that have witnessed the development, respectively, of a prosperous dwelling, an average dwelling and a modest dwelling. Studying the various kinds of ancient construction in the city of Aleppo, J.-C. David localizes them as follows: in the centre, close to the Mdineh and the Citadel, a zone of high-grade dwellings; in a district further out a zone of more modest dwellings; and in the peripheral zones a popular dwelling.[39] Such an arrangement is thoroughly logical. The bourgeoisie of merchants and shaykhs stuck to the zones near the centre, site of the markets and the great mosque-university where they carried out their activities. In those zones characterized by a great density of construction, land was scarcer and more expensive, while the peripheral zone, generally given over to poor and polluting economic activities, was devoted to popular dwelling. Nelly Hanna has calculated the annual rent for a piece of land of a hundred cubits as 171 paras in the centre of Cairo, 76 in the intermediate zone, and 17 on the periphery. The average prices for the houses she studied (which merely, of course, represent a sample, with the most substantial ones over-represented) amounted, respectively, to 20,684, 8,931 and 4,825 paras in these same zones.[40]

In the districts close to the centre, then, was to be found a rich, bourgeois dwelling of the type that has been well studied in Fez, Tunis, and Cairo: characterized by its development around a central

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[39] J. Revault, *Palais et maisons de Tunis*, 4 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1967–78); N. Hanna, *Habiter au Caire* (Cairo: IFAO, 1991); J.-Cl. David, "Alep, dégradation et tentatives actuelles de réadaptation," *BEO* 28 (1975).

[40] Hanna, *Habiter au Caire*, 185–207.

courtyard, by vast dimensions permitting a specialization of rooms, and by an elaborate decoration. The presence of a collective dwelling of the *rab*ʿ type (blocks rented out in apartments) facilitated access for the Cairo middle class to the zones close to the centre.[41] Likewise, constructions of the caravanserai type (*funduq, khan, wakala*) frequently played this role for the middle class in Cairo and other great cities. In the "intermediate" districts, houses potentially retained the general character of the house with courtyard, but on a reduced scale. More elementary houses without a courtyard, of the kind studied by N. Hanna in Cairo, were also found.[42] On the periphery a poor type of dwelling developed, comprising elementary houses (one or two rooms),[43] or else a communal dwelling of the *hawsh* kind: a courtyard surrounded by very rudimentary shacks.[44] Still more precarious dwellings of the "shanty town" type very probably existed—though of these, for obvious reasons (fragility of materials and improvised nature of the construction), no trace has remained. The existence, in Fez and Tunis, of toponyms like al-Nuwayl, designating "mud huts covered with a thatched roof" in the districts on the fringes of the cities, is significant.[45] We may note in passing how much this variety of dwellings is at odds with the Orientalist conception of a uniform Muslim house with courtyard—of which most of the examples studied, especially in Fez, Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, and Aleppo, are actually mansions, large or small, relevant only to the middle and wealthy classes of these cities; and that is not to mention the kind of tall dwelling lacking in a courtyard of which we have so many examples around the Red Sea.

[41] J. Revault et al., *Palais et demeures de Fès*, 3 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1985–92); Revault, *Palais et maisons de Tunis*, 4 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1967–78); B. Maury et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire, II, Epoque ottomane* (Paris: CNRS, 1983); A. Raymond, "Le rabʿ," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 50 (1984).

[42] N. Hanna, "Bayt al-Istanbuli," *Annales Islamologiques* 16 (1981).

[43] This poor dwelling is little known for the obvious reason that it has left no trace. One might, paradoxically, refer to the medieval one revealed by the excavations of W. Kubiak and G. Scanlon at Fustat. (*Final Report on Fustat C*, 1989.)

[44] The *hawsh* is precisely described in the *Description de l'Egypte (Etat Moderne II–2)* (Paris, 1822): E. F. Jomard, "Description de la ville du Kaire," 662, 696; M. de Chabrol, "Essai sur les moeurs," 516–517. For a Hijazi variety, see S. al-Hathlul, *Al-Madina al-ʿarabiyya al-islamiyya* (Riyadh, 1994), 86.

[45] Raymond, *Grandes villes*, 323.

3.4

The arguments developed above have already called attention to the importance of segregational factors which—with respect to the spatial organization of the traditional Arab city—are simply an expression of the profound inequality of the social structure. Recent researches have shown, in this regard, just how erroneous the Orientalist conception of an egalitarian society was: one that, in some degree, realized the religious equality existing within the community of believers. What is so striking when studying the realities of the social life of Muslim societies in the modern age is, on the contrary, the depth of social inequality. Perusal of the inheritances preserved for us by the court registers (*mahkama*) shows the marked difference existing between rich and poor. Moreover, these registers mainly inform us about the patrimonies of the most comfortably off; those of the poorest classes naturally eluded any kind of record following these people's deaths. In Cairo, during the two decades immediately preceding 1700, the proportion of the most insignificant inheritance to the most substantial is that of 1 to 10,000. In Damascus, around 1700, the proportion is 1 to 4,000. Whatever the imperfections of this kind of calculation (which involves patrimonies rather than incomes), the margin is obviously a wide one. When we apply to this comparison an index designed to measure social inequality, that of Gini (whereby 0.00 represents an equal distribution and 1 an absolute inequality), the resulting figures indicate a very strong inequality: the index is 0.74 for Cairo and Damascus round about 1700—a significantly similar figure which appears to confirm the reliability of such calculations. For Algiers at the end of the eighteenth century, the index of social inequality, at 0.80, is higher still.[46]

[46] A. Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIème siècle* (Damascus: IFD, 1974), 2:375; C. Establet and J.-P. Pascual, *Familles et fortunes à Damas* (Damascus: IFD, 1994); C. Establet, J.-P. Pascual, and A. Raymond, "La mesure de l'inégalité sociale dans la société ottomane," *JESHO* 37 (1994); Shuval, *Ville d'Alger*, 141–142. By way of comparison, in Algiers at the end of the eighteenth century, the 10 per cent most substantial inheritances shared 74 per cent of the total amount. In France, in 1996, 10 per cent of households accounted for 50 per cent of patrimonies. (*Le Monde*, 2 March 1996.) We might also mention Cairo, where, in 1996, according to M. Kharoufi ("Mobilité du centre ville au Caire," in Naciri and Raymond, *Sciences Sociales*, 167), 20 per cent of the population appears to have had use of 40 to 50 per cent of the *national income*.

When compared to those for other societies and other periods, these figures point to an inequality so huge that it is hardly surprising it should find expression in the spatial structure of the city. Many writers, reluctant to abandon Orientalist theses, have hesitated to accept a reality that appears beyond argument when we view the city overall, from a broadly statistical viewpoint, as has been done for Tunis, Cairo and Aleppo. The graduation outwards, from zones of prosperous dwellings in the city centre to zones of poor dwellings on the periphery, appears a perfect illustration of those differences whose importance has been underlined above, even though many individual examples may, of course, be supplied of rich and poor persons living side by side.

These tendencies towards a segregational organization likewise appear in the customary grouping of religious and ethnic minorities; something which should not be regarded as a specifically Ottoman feature, even if the phenomenon was effectively accentuated by the Ottoman practice of the autonomous running of communities. The formation of enclosed quarters for Christians and Jews is a fairly general feature in which the concern to live a separate, homogeneous communal existence with one's own kind—a concern broadly shared by the dominant element (Muslim) and the dominated element (*dhimmi*s, or "protected people")—played an important role alongside the wish of the dominant group to keep different communities apart (so as to supervise them as necessary) (fig. 10). This situation is general in the large Arab cities. What does vary greatly is the geographical siting of the communities within the city itself. When, though, they possess a certain importance and are markedly distinctive, "minority" Muslim communities are grouped together in the same way: the Kurdish quarter of Salhiyya, in Damascus, provides a very ancient example of this. In some cities, grouping by community goes to extreme lengths; this is the case in Jerusalem, with its Muslim, Christian, Armenian, and Jewish sectors, and Antioch, where the city is divided into Turkish, Christian, and Alawi sectors, their siting reflecting their respective political and social importance—the Turks, as the dominant element, occupying the centre, and the Alawis, a poor and ill-treated minority, being thrust out to the edges of the city.

By reason of the dominant caste's natural propensity to remain somewhat exclusive (reinforcing its concern to keep itself apart from the "masses"), the quarters of the élite were often voluntarily segregated: the Mamluk élite in Cairo isolated itself in this way, in the district of the Birkat al-Fil pool, to the south of Qahira; then, in the eighteenth century, in the district of another pool, the Azbakiyya, situated broadly to the west of the urban centre.

3.5

We cannot conclude this description of the structure of the Arab city without tackling the problem of its administration, especially as this is an area where Orientalists, led by Jean Sauvaget, have been very negative—maintaining that the Muslim city received little administration, or even none at all. Rather more thorough studies have shown that this supposed under-administration on the part of the political authorities was a mere myth. The re-siting of the tanneries in Cairo or Tunis, a crucial event in the sphere of urban structure, was ordered at the highest level (the Sultan for Cairo, the Bey for Tunis). The development of the Mdineh in sixteenth-century Aleppo stemmed from successive, even coordinated, action by the pashas of the province. If the activity of the *muhtasib*s has been clearly recognized, especially in al-Andalus, R. Brunschvig and B. Johansen have pointed out the role of the *qadi*s in the running of the city[47] on a more elementary level. Increased interest vis-à-vis the institution of the waqf/*hubus*, in its more specifically urban aspects, has demonstrated the crucial role this played in the organization of the city.[48]

Above all, we are beginning to appreciate the importance of the part played by the communities (*tawa'if*) administered by their shaykhs in the running of the city and the administration of the inhabitants. The extreme diversity of these (professional bodies, geographical communities within their quarters, religious and ethnic communities), together with the variety of geographical zones through which they were spread (central districts for the professional bodies, residential districts for the communities in their quarters) means that they comprised tight networks able to ensure a multiple control over the lives of inhabitants and over urban life. Cairo contained more than 250 professional bodies and 100 communities within quarters, plus various religious and ethnic *tawa'if*s. It is here, perhaps, that we should seek the equivalent of institutions of "civil society" whose apparent absence so worries specialists in the political sciences.

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[47] See their articles quoted above, notes 18 and 27.

[48] A. Raymond, "Les grands waqfs et l'organisation de l'espace urbain," *BEO* 31 (1979). On general aspects, see *Le waqf dans l'espace islamique*, ed. R. Deguilhem (Damascus: IFD, 1995). On these problems see my contribution, in the present volume, on the administration of the city.

4. *Conclusions*

It, therefore, seems that, with respect to the vast Mediterranean Arab domain, we may indeed speak of an *urban system*; one whose coherence sits ill with the speculations of Orientalists about the supposed disorder of the Muslim city. The dislocation diagnosed by J. Sauvaget and J. Weulersse springs from a negative interpretation of the city's division into separate units. If we take, however, into account the city's unarguable success (and its development even, in the period under consideration here), we might also say that these cells, far from threatening the city's overall unity, were actually, each in its own sphere, conducive to the organization and running of the whole. Even in the apparently extreme cases of Jerusalem and Antioch, so utterly split into their multiple religious and ethnic communities, a federating element was at work to ensure the overall functioning; the part played by the market quarter in providing the link between apparently disparate components is evident enough.

In any case, it is not at all clear in principle how cities utterly formless and anarchic, like those described by J. Sauvaget in his most extreme theses, could have stood the test of centuries. We rather need to acknowledge the existence of a strong internal structure underlying the development of these cities into modern times—notably in the case of Aleppo with whose destiny the historian has concerned himself while making no attempt to resolve the glaring contradiction between a disaster he proclaims and a greatness that shows through almost despite himself. It is the very internal logic of their organization and their capacity to evolve—no doubt, with a certain robustness in the face of time's vicissitudes—that have rendered so lasting and so successful the most noteworthy examples of this urban system, from Marrakesh to Baghdad.