

Cities of East Asia

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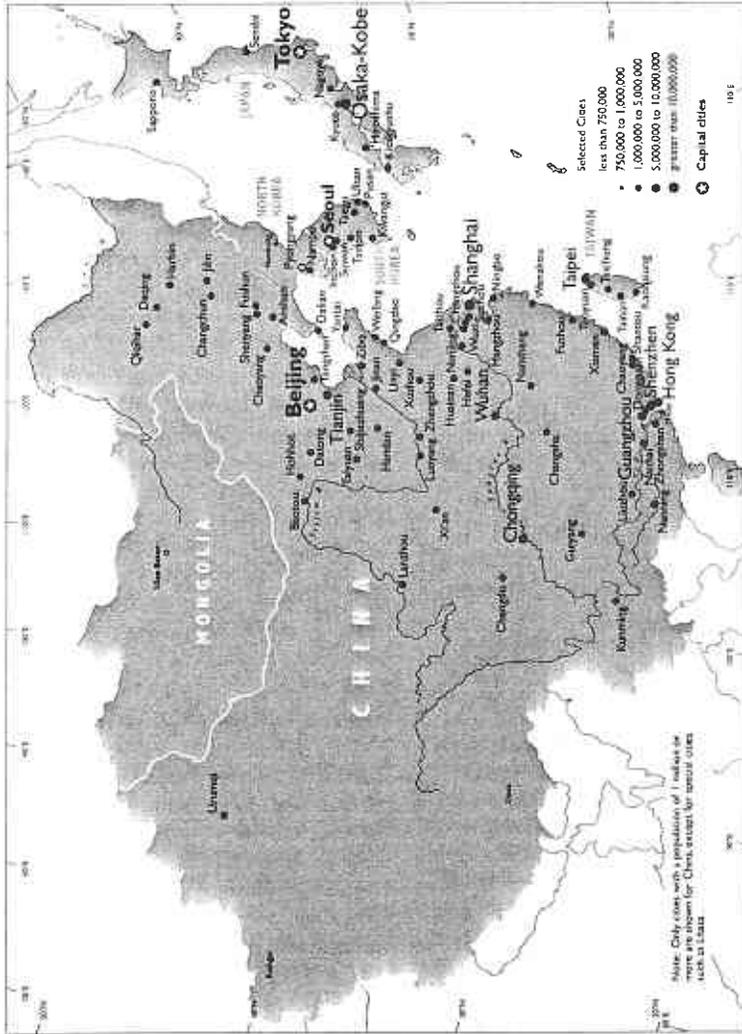


Figure 11.1 Major Cities of East Asia. Source: Data from UN, *World Urbanization Prospects: 2005 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unup/>.

KEY URBAN FACTS

Total Population	1.54 billion
Percent Urban Population	44.5%
China	40.4%
Remainder	69.9%
Total Urban Population	678 million
China	532 million
Remainder	146 million
Most Urbanized Country	South Korea (80.8%)
Least Urbanized Country	China (40.4%)
Annual Urban Growth Rate	2.4%
China	2.7%
Remainder	0.9%
Number of Megacities	4
Number of Cities of More Than 1 Million	105
China	84*
Remainder	25
Three Largest Cities	Tokyo, Shanghai, Osaka-Kobe
World Cities	Tokyo, Osaka, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul
Global City	Tokyo

\* See box 11.2.

## KEY CHAPTER THEMES

1. China is one of the original centers of urban development in history and has some of the oldest continuously occupied cities in the world.
2. Colonialism had a less important role in urban development in East Asia in comparison with other realms of the world, even though many large Chinese cities were treaty ports under colonialism and Hong Kong and Macau were entirely creations of colonialism, which formally ended in this region on the eve of the 21st century.
3. Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong/Macau, and Taiwan are already highly urbanized and deeply involved in the global economy, a status reflected in cities that are already in a “post-industrial” phase, with predominantly service-based economies and major high-tech sectors.
4. China has been following in the footsteps of the rest of the region since the late 1970s and is now one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in the world and a major player in the global economy.
5. China is unique in being the country with the largest total population and in still being primarily rural in its population distribution, yet it has the largest urban population and the greatest number of million-plus cities of any country in the world.
6. Some of the world’s most important world cities are in East Asia, especially Tokyo and Hong Kong, with cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul, and Taipei in the second tier. The larger cities especially reflect the wealth of the region.
7. North Korea is the lone holdout in East Asia in clinging to a rigid, isolationist, socialist system in its cities and economic development, in contrast with China and Mongolia, which are leaving that era to history.
8. Urban development in the region was heavily influenced by the Cold War, which lingers on in the Korean peninsula, and by the ongoing dispute between Taiwan and mainland China.
9. Most major cities of the region show evidence of the concentric zone and multinucleic models of urban land use.
10. Most cities of East Asia have experienced the usual urban problems: environmental pollution, income polarization, and, especially in China, migration, both internal and international.

East Asia exudes power and success. Nowhere is this more evident than in its great cities, such as Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Hong Kong, and Taipei (fig. 11.1). Emerging in the past half century to rival the old power centers of the world—North America and Europe—East Asia’s cities have been the command centers for the prodigious economic advances of much of this region.

These are also among the largest cities in the world; indeed, Tokyo has been widely recognized as the world’s largest metropolis for the last three decades. Compared with the often-struggling urban agglomerations found in poorer realms of the world, East Asia’s cities have been relatively more successful in coping with rapid growth and large size. Wealth does make a difference.

The region is still sharply split between China, which is rapidly urbanizing but still only about 43% urban, and the rest of the region, which is already around 71% urban. This dichotomy is reflected in many ways, including the character of the cities and the processes, past and present, that have shaped them. One can get some sense of the relative strengths and weaknesses of East Asia’s cities from various international rankings that are done from time to time. In the economic arena, a recent scholarly analysis of 314 cities in the world placed three Asian cities among the world’s top 6 “international cities”; 2 of them are in East Asia (Hong Kong and Tokyo).<sup>1</sup>

In “quality of living” (QOL) rankings, especially those produced for use by Western expatriates, however, Asian cities tend to fare less well. For example, in the 2007 Mercer QOL survey ([www.mercerhr.com](http://www.mercerhr.com)), 18 of the top 30 cities were in Western Europe; the rest were in Australia/New Zealand and North America. No Asian cities were in the top 30. Tokyo came out first in East Asia and ranked 35th internationally, followed (in order) by Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka, and Nagoya (38th, 40th, 42nd, and 54th internationally, respectively). Hong Kong came in 70th, Taipei 83rd, Seoul 87th, Shanghai 100th, and Beijing 116th, internationally. In other words, Japanese cities tend to lead the pack in East Asia from a quality-of-living perspective; those in China tend to rank last (ignoring the aberration of North Korea), reflecting that country’s ongoing struggle to come to terms

<sup>1</sup> This refers to “Class A” cities in Yefang Huang, Yee Leung, and Jianfa Shen, “Cities and Globalization: An International Cities Perspective,” *Urban Geography*, 28, no. 3 (2007), 209–231. The study is based on data about the distribution of global producer service firms.

with the consequences of the past and of recent rapid economic growth.

## THE EVOLUTION OF CITIES

*The Traditional or Preindustrial City*

East Asia, especially China, is one of the original centers of urbanism in world history. Many cities here can trace their origins directly back two millennia or more. One can see interesting parallels with the earliest cities in other culture realms, with their focus on ceremonial and administrative centers planned in highly formal style to symbolize the beliefs and traditions of the cultures involved.

In its idealized form, the traditional city reflected the ancient Chinese conception of the universe and the role of the emperor as intermediary between heaven and earth. This idealized conception was most apparent in the national capitals, but many elements of this conception (grid layout, highly formalized design, a surrounding wall with strategically placed gates, etc.) could be seen in lesser cities at lower administrative levels. The Tang Dynasty (618–906 A.D.) capital of Changan (present-day Xi’an) was one of the best expressions of the classic Chinese capital city. Inevitably, the demands of modern urban development have necessitated, in the eyes of planners at least, the tearing down of most city walls, and thus the removal of a colorful legacy of the past. The sites of the old walls commonly become the routes of new, broad boulevards. One of the few cities whose original wall has been retained almost in its entirety is Xi’an, because of its historic role.

Of all the historic, traditional cities, none is more famous than Beijing (Peking), the present national capital. Although a city had existed on

the site for centuries, Beijing became significant when it was rebuilt in 1260 by Kublai Khan as his winter capital. It was this Beijing that Marco Polo saw. The city was destroyed with the fall of the Mongols and the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368. Nanjing served as national capital briefly after that, but in 1421 the capital was moved back to the rebuilt city (now named Beijing, or "Northern Capital," for the first time), where it has remained with few interruptions since. The Ming capital was composed of four parts: the Imperial Palace (or Forbidden City), the imperial city, the inner city, and the outer city, arranged like a set of nested boxes. It is the former Forbidden City that can still be partially seen within the walls of what is today called the Palace Museum.

#### *The Chinese City as Model: Japan and Korea*

Changan was the national capital at a time when Japan was a newly emerging civilization adopting and adapting many features from China, including city planning. As a result, the Japanese capital cities of the period were modeled after Changan. Indeed, the city as a distinct form first appeared in Japan at this time, beginning with the completion of Keijokyo (now called Nara) in 710. Although Nara today is a rather small prefectural capital, it once represented the grandeur of the Nara period (710–784). Keiankyo (modern-day Kyoto) was to survive as the best example of early Japanese city planning. Serving as national capital from 794 to 1868, when the capital was formally shifted to Edo (now Tokyo), Kyoto still exhibits the original rectangular form, grid pattern, and other features copied from Changan. However, modern urban/industrial growth has greatly increased the size of the city and obscured much of its original form. Moreover, the

Chinese city morphology, with its rigid symmetry and formalized symbolism, was alien to the Japanese culture. Even the shortage of level land in Japan tended to work against the full expression of the Chinese model.

Korea also experienced the importation of Chinese city planning concepts. The Chinese city model was most evident in the national capital of Seoul, which became the premier city of Korea in 1394. The city has never really lost its dominance since. Early maps of Seoul reveal the imprint of Chinese city forms. Those forms were not completely achieved, however, in part because of the rugged landscape around Seoul, which was located in a confining basin just north of the lower Han River. Succeeding centuries of development and rebuilding, especially in the 20th century during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945) and after the Korean War (1950–1953), obliterated most of the original form and architecture of the historic city. A modern commercial and industrial city, one of the largest in the world, has arisen on the ashes of the old city (reinforcing the popular name for Seoul, the "Phoenix City," after the mythological bird that symbolizes immortality). A few relics of the past, such as some of the palaces and a few of the main gates, stand today as a result of restoration efforts.

#### *Colonial Cities*

The colonial impact on East Asia was relatively less intrusive than what occurred in Southeast and South Asia, but it was notable nonetheless.

#### *First Footholds: The Portuguese and the Dutch*

The Portuguese and the Dutch were the first European colonists to arrive in East Asia; the

Portuguese were much more important in their impact in this region, because the Dutch largely confined themselves to Southeast Asia. Seeking trade and opportunities to spread Christianity, the Portuguese made some degree of penetration into southern Japan via the port of Nagasaki in the later 16th century. Their greatest influence was actually indirect, however, through the introduction of firearms and military technology into Japan. This led to the development of stronger private armies among the *daimyo* (feudal rulers) of Japan, which in turn led to the building of large castles in the center of each *daimyo's* domain. These castles, modeled after fortresses in medieval Europe, were commonly located on strategic high points, surrounded by the *daimyo's* retainers and the commercial town. These centers eventually served as the nuclei for many of the cities of modern Japan.

The Portuguese also tried to penetrate China. Reaching Guangzhou (Canton) in 1517, they attempted to establish themselves there for trade but were forced by the Chinese authorities to accept the small peninsula of Macau, near the mouth of the Pearl River, south of Guangzhou. Chinese authorities walled off the peninsula, and rent was paid for the territory until the Portuguese declared it independent from China in 1849. With only 10 square miles (26 km<sup>2</sup>) of land (land reclamation in recent years has added a little to the total), Macau remained the only Portuguese toehold in East Asia, especially after the eclipse of their operations in southern Japan in the 17th century. Macau was most important as a trading center and a haven for refugees. The establishment of Hong Kong in the 19th century on the opposite side of the Pearl River estuary signaled the beginning of Macau's slow decline, from which it has never fully recovered.



Figure 11.2 Gambling is a pillar of Macau's economy. The Casino Lisboa (photo taken in 1999) was the flagship gambling house for a long time, until the Venetian Casino, the world's largest, opened in 2007. Macau's gambling revenues are reportedly now larger than those of Las Vegas. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

In the post-1950 era, Macau survived largely on tourism (a sort of seedy reminder of what Hong Kong looked like before being Manhattanized) and gambling (a downscale Asian version of Las Vegas, gangsters and all). In the 1990s, Macau attempted some modest industrialization, as it integrated economically with the Zhuhai Special Economic Zone just across the border, and sought to become a regional air hub by constructing an international airport (still underutilized) on reclaimed land (fig. 11.2). Since reversion to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1999,

the emphasis has been on gambling and tourism, with the addition of investments by Nevada gambling interests and construction of a number of new, gaudy casinos around the reconstructed harborfront that are starting to pull in large numbers of gamblers, especially the *nouveau riche* from a booming China. Right next to the emerging casino quarter lies the historic heart of old Macau that has been restored to its picturesque colonial-era glory and turned into a pedestrian-only area for the tourism business.

#### The Treaty Ports of China

It was the other Western colonial powers, arriving in the 18th and 19th centuries, that had the greatest impact on the growth of cities in modern China. Most important were the British and Americans, but the French, Germans, Belgians, Russians, and others were also involved, as were the Japanese, who joined the action toward the close of the 19th century.

It all began officially with the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which ceded to Britain the island of Hong Kong and the right to reside in five ports—Guangzhou, Xiamen (Amoy), Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai. Further refinements of this treaty in succeeding years gave to the other powers the same rights as the British (the “Open Door” policy). A second set of wars and treaties (1856–1860) led to the opening of further ports. By 1911, approximately 90 Chinese cities—along the entire coast, up the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) valley, in North China, and in Manchuria—with a third of a million foreign residents, were opened as treaty ports or open ports (fig. 11.3).

The treaty ports introduced a dynamic new order into traditional Chinese society. The

Westerners were there to make money, but they also had the right of extraterritoriality, which guaranteed them protection by Western legal procedures. Gradually, taxation, police forces, and other features of municipal government were developed by the colonial countries controlling the treaty ports. China’s sovereignty thus was supplanted in cities in the concession areas, leased in perpetuity by the foreigners for modest rents paid to the Chinese government.

#### Shanghai

The most important treaty port was Shanghai (“On the Sea”), which had existed as a small settlement for two millennia. By the 18th century, the city was a medium-sized county seat with a population of about 200,000 and was built in traditional city style, with a wall. Deposition of silt by the Chang Jiang over the centuries, however, had made Shanghai no longer a port directly fronting the sea. The town was now located about 15 miles (24 km) up the Huangpu River, a minor tributary of the Chang Jiang.

Western control of Shanghai began with the British concession in 1846 and expanded over the years to cover most of the city. In 1863, the British and American areas were joined to form the Shanghai International Settlement, which by the heyday of the 1920s contained some 60,000 foreigners, the largest concentration in China. Shanghai, as well as the other treaty ports, served as magnets for wealthy Chinese entrepreneurs and for millions of impoverished peasants seeking a haven in a disintegrating China. The wealthy Chinese invested in manufacturing and other aspects of the commercial economy; the peasants provided abundant cheap labor. By the end of its first century under Western control,

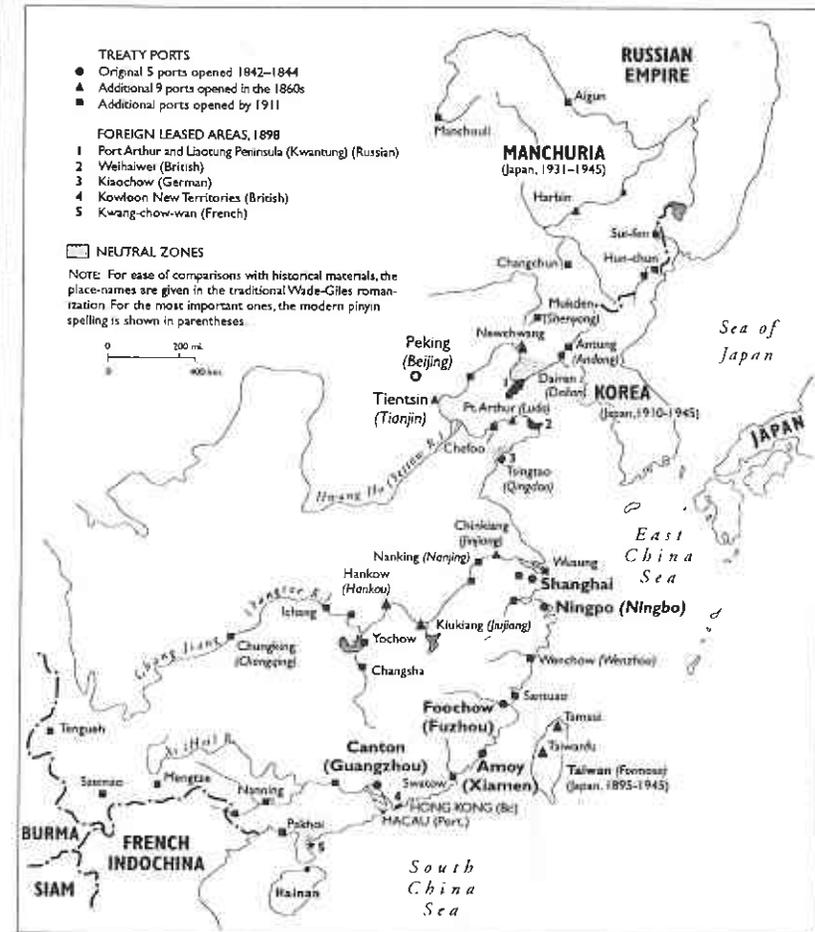


Figure 11.3 Foreign Penetration of China in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries. Source: Adapted from J. Fairbank et al., *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 577.

just before World War II, Shanghai handled half of China’s foreign trade and had half the country’s mechanized factories. The city’s population of 4 million made it one of the largest cities in the world; it was more than

twice the size of its nearest rivals, Beijing and Tianjin.

Shanghai profited from a natural locational advantage near the mouth of the Chang Jiang delta for handling the trade of the

largest and most populous river basin in China. During the 20th century, Shanghai's manufacturing was able to compete successfully with that of other centers emerging in China, despite the absence of local supplies of raw materials, because of the ease and cheapness of water transport. This was achieved also in spite of occupying a relatively poor site—an area of deep silt deposits, a high water table, poor natural drainage, an insufficient water supply, poor foundations for modern buildings of any great height, and a harbor on a narrow river that required regular dredging for oceangoing ships. Shanghai thus became one of the best examples in the world of how a superb relative location can trump a poor physical site to create a great city.

There was a colonial impact on other Chinese cities, too, of course. Particularly significant was the Japanese impact. In Manchuria (Northeast China), which the Japanese took over in the 1930s, many of the major cities were modernized and developed along Western lines—a style which the Japanese had adopted in the development of their own cities after 1868. The Japanese also introduced the beginnings of the industrial base that was to make Manchuria the most important industrial region in China up to that time. Industry was concentrated in a string of major cities, particularly Harbin, Changchun, and Shenyang, connected by the railway network that the Japanese built. As with Shanghai, in these cities there arose a new Western-type commercial/industrial city alongside the traditional Chinese city, which was eventually engulfed and left behind as a remnant of the past.

#### *The Japanese Impact*

The Japanese also greatly influenced the urban landscape in their two other colonies in

East Asia. During their rule of Taiwan (1895–1945) and Korea (1910–1945), the Japanese introduced essentially the same Western-style urban planning practices, filtered through Japanese eyes, that they later brought to Manchuria's cities. Taipei (renamed Taihoku) was made the colonial capital of Taiwan and transformed from an obscure Chinese provincial capital into a relatively modern city of about 250,000. The city wall was razed, roads and infrastructure were improved, and many colonial government buildings were constructed. The most prominent was the former governor's palace, with its tall, red-brick tower, which still stands in the heart of old Taipei and is now used as the Presidential Office and executive branch headquarters for Taiwan's democratic government. Like Taipei, Seoul was also transformed to serve the needs of Japanese colonial rule on the Korean peninsula. In Seoul's case, however, this meant deliberately tearing down traditional palaces and other structures and replacing them with Japanese colonial buildings as part of a brutal effort to stamp out Korean resistance to Japanese rule.

#### *Hong Kong*

Hong Kong ("Fragrant Harbor") differed from other treaty ports in that there was little pretense of Chinese sovereignty there (though the PRC government insisted after 1949 that Hong Kong was part of China). Hong Kong was ceded to Britain at the same time Shanghai was opened up in the early 1840s. Hong Kong became second only to Shanghai as the most important entrepôt on the China coast during the following century of colonialism.

The reason for the importance of Hong Kong is not difficult to see. In 1842, the city was established with the acquisition of Hong

Kong Island, a sparsely populated rocky island some 70 miles (113 km) downstream from Guangzhou (Canton). The Kowloon peninsula across the harbor was obtained in a separate treaty in 1858. Then, in 1898, the New Territories—an expanse of islands and land on the large peninsula north of Kowloon—were leased from China for 99 years (hence, reversion to China took place in 1997), creating a total area of about 400 square miles (1,040 km<sup>2</sup>) for the entire colony. The site factor that so strongly favored its growth was its inclusion of one of the world's great natural harbors (Victoria Harbor), between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. Indeed, the advantages of the harbor outweighed the site disadvantages—limited level land for urban expansion, an inadequate water supply, and insufficient farmland nearby to feed the population. The city's location at the mouth of southern China's major drainage basin gave Hong Kong a large hinterland, which greatly expanded when the north–south railway from Beijing was pushed through to Guangzhou in the 1920s. Thus, for about a century, Shanghai and Hong Kong, two great colonial creations, largely dominated China's foreign trade and links with the outside world.

#### *Japan: The Asian Exception*

Following the development classic capitals of Nara and Kyoto around the 8th century, other cities, principally the centers of feudal clans, were established in Japan. Most of these were transitory, but a sizeable number survived into the modern era. One of the best-preserved historic towns today is Kanazawa, on the Sea of Japan in the Hokuriku region. The city was left behind by Japan's modernization after 1868 and escaped the devastation of World War II because it had no industrial

or military importance. Historic preservation since the 1960s has retained much of the lovely 19th century architecture and character of the old city, a rare exception to the urban development patterns found throughout most of Asia.

Japan is referred to as the "Asian exception" because it had only a minor colonial experience internally. Indeed, Japan was itself a major colonial power in Asia. Hence, the urban history of Japan involved an evolution almost directly from the premodern, or traditional, city to the modern commercial/industrial city. Japan did have treaty ports and extraterritoriality imposed on it by the Treaty of 1858 with the United States, which led to foreigners residing in Japan as they did in China. However, this colonial phase was short-lived. Japan was able to change its system and reestablish its territorial integrity by emulating rather than resisting the West. Extraterritoriality came formally to an end in 1899, as Japan emerged an equal partner among the Western imperial powers. The relatively benign impact of the Western colonial presence in Japan can still be seen in a few places, nonetheless, such as the former colonial residential area in Kobe.

Gradual political unification during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) led to the establishment of a permanent network of cities in Japan. The castle town served as the chief catalyst for urban growth. One of the most important of these new castle towns to emerge at this time was Osaka. In 1583, a grand castle was built that served as the nucleus for the city to come. Various policies stimulated the growth of Osaka and other cities, including prohibitions on foreign trade after the mid-1630s, the destruction of minor feudal castles, and prohibitions on building more than one castle per province. These



Figure 11.4 The beautifully restored castle of Hikone, in Shiga Prefecture, central Honshu, is a classic example of an old castle town from Japan's feudal past. (Photo by Jack Williams)

policies had the effect of consolidating settlements and encouraging civilians to migrate to the more important castle communities.

The new castle towns, such as Osaka, were ideally located (fig. 11.4). Because of their economic and administrative functions, they generally were located on level land near important landscape features that gave the castle towns an advantage for future urban growth. Thus, Osaka emerged as the principal business, financial, and manufacturing center in Tokugawa Japan. The cities of that period were tied together by a network of highways that stimulated trade and city growth. The most famous of these early roads was the Tokaido Highway, running from Osaka eastward through Nagoya (which emerged as another major commercial and textile manufacturing center) to the most important city of this period and after—Edo (Tokyo).

Among the major cities of Asia, Tokyo was a relative latecomer. It was founded in the 15th century, when a minor feudal lord built

a rudimentary castle on a bluff near the sea, about where the Imperial Palace stands today. The site was a good one, however, for a major city—it had a natural harbor, hills that could easily be fortified, and plenty of room on the Kanto Plain behind for expansion. Tokyo really got its start, though, a century later, when Ieyasu, the Tokugawa ruler at that time, decided to make Edo his capital. Part of Tokyo still bears the imprint of the grand design that Ieyasu and his descendants laid out. They planned the Imperial enclosure, a vast area of palaces, parks, and moats in the very heart of the city. Much of the land on which central Tokyo stands today was reclaimed from the bay, a method of urban expansion that was to typify Japanese city building from then on, reflecting the shortage of level land and the need for good port facilities. By the early 17th century, Edo already had a population of 150,000, surrounding the most magnificent castle in Japan. By the 18th century, the

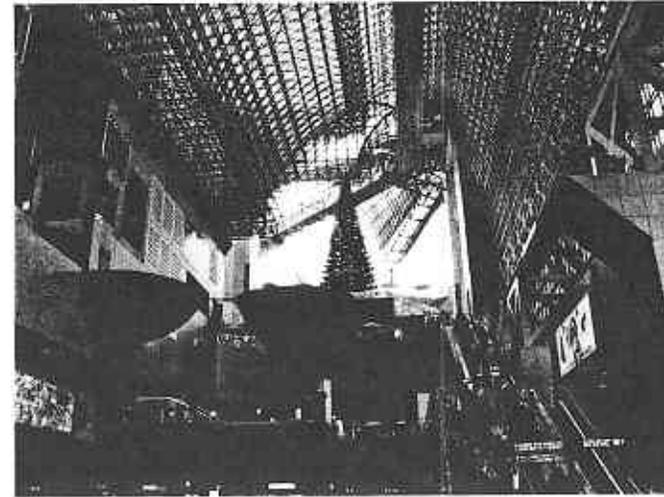


Figure 11.5 This dramatic entranceway to the train station in Osaka reveals the modernity of Japan and the sophistication of its transportation system. Yet Osaka still struggles to compete with Tokyo for economic growth and influence in contemporary Japan. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

population was well over 1 million, making Edo one of the largest cities in the world.

Edo's growth was based initially on its role as a political center, tied to the other cities by an expanding network of roads. An early dichotomy was established between Osaka, as the business center, and Tokyo, as the cultural and political center, that lingers even today in the rivalry between the two (fig. 11.5). With the restoration of Emperor Meiji in 1868, Japan's modern era began. The emperor's court was moved from Kyoto to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo ("Eastern Capital") to signify its additional role as national political capital. This transfer of political functions, combined with the great industrialization and modernization program that was undertaken from the 1870s on, gave Tokyo a boost that

launched it on its astounding 20th-century growth trajectory.

#### INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF EAST ASIAN CITIES

It is not easy to generalize about the internal structure of cities in East Asia. This is partly because of the basic division between socialist and nonsocialist urban systems that characterized the region for so long. It also is because of the imperfect fit of Western urban models to even the nonsocialist cities of the region. In most of East Asia, and now increasingly also in reformist China, the forces that have produced and continue to shape cities are much the same as in the Western world, but with

modifying local conditions peculiar to each country and society. These forces include (1) rapid industrialization focused in cities, combined with increasing inequalities between urban and rural residents, leading to high rates of rural-to-urban migration, rates which have now tapered off in the more developed economies (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), but which are escalating in China (and Mongolia); (2) private ownership of property and dominance of private investment decisions affecting land use; (3) varying degrees of government involvement in zoning and urban planning, some of it successful but a great deal of it ineffective; (4) high standards of living and consumption and increasing reliance on the private automobile (or motorcycle) for transportation, in spite of often very good public transport systems; and (5) a relatively high degree of racial (ethnic) homogeneity, but sometimes significant socioeconomic class stratification. These and other factors have had varying degrees of impact on the growth of cities and on how space is used in cities, and hence on the types and severity of problems. Western urban models of the internal structure of cities, discussed elsewhere in this book, do not entirely fit the cities of East Asia. Nonetheless, elements of each model can often be found, as noted in various places in this chapter.

### REPRESENTATIVE CITIES

With the exception of (British) Hong Kong and (Portuguese) Macau, the colonial era in East Asia ended with the defeat of Japan in 1945. The emergence of communist governments in the late 1940s in China and North Korea, joining the already communist government of Mongolia (established in the 1920s),

split the region into two distinctly different paths of urban (and national) development: the path of the socialist cities of China, North Korea, and Mongolia versus that of the nonsocialist (free-market) cities of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. This became the basic classification of cities of the region until the late 1970s at least. It also reflected the alignment of the Cold War era in this part of the world. In the late 1970s, China entered the post-Mao or Reform Era, in which free-market forces increasingly began to drive the economy and determine the path of urban development. Only North Korea remains basically wedded to a rigid socialist path, one of the last holdouts in the world as the great experiment with communism as an alternative path of national development came to a grinding halt.

One can also classify the major cities of the region on the basis of function and size. From this perspective, several cities illustrate distinctive types: megalopolises or superconurbations (Tokyo); recently decolonized cities (Hong Kong); primate cities (Seoul); regional centers (Taipei); and formerly socialist cities undergoing transformation (Beijing and Shanghai).

#### *Tokyo and the Tokaido Megalopolis: Unipolar Concentration*

Japan illustrates especially well the phenomenon of superconurbations or megalopolises. A distinctive feature of Japan's urban pattern is the concentration of its major cities into a relatively small portion of an already small country. In spite of more than a century of industrialization, Japan did not pass the 50% urban figure until after World War II. Between 1950 and 1970, the percentage of people living in cities with a population of 50,000 or more

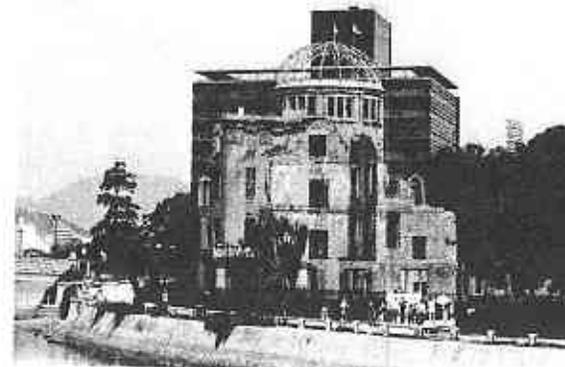


Figure 11.6 The A-Bomb Dome, officially the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, is now on the list of World Heritage Sites. It survived the nuclear explosion that ravaged the city on August 6, 1945, and now stands as a symbol of the need to eliminate nuclear weapons. (Photo by George Pomeroy)

rose from 33% to 64%, while the total urban population reached 72%, a figure comparable to that of the United States in the same year. In other words, Japan went through a process in 25 years that took many decades in the United States. Since 1970, the proportion of the population that is urban has continued to increase, but more slowly, reaching 78% by the late 1990s (and projected to reach 85% by 2025). As the urban population grew dramatically, so did the number and size of cities. Small towns and villages (those with fewer than 10,000 people) declined sharply in numbers and population, whereas medium and large cities grew rapidly, all the outcome of Japan's phenomenal economic growth after the war.

Almost all major cities are found in the core region. (The one significant exception is Sapporo, the regional center of the northern island of Hokkaido.) This region consists of a narrow band that begins with the urban node

of the tri-cities of Fukuoka, Kitakyushu, and Shimonoseki at the western end of the Great Inland Sea, which separates the major islands of Japan and stretches eastward along both shores of Honshu and Shikoku to the Tokyo region. In between, especially along the southern coast of Honshu, are strings of industrial cities, such as Hiroshima, which grew to importance in the last century (fig. 11.6).

Within this core is an inner core, containing more than 44% of Japan's total population of 126 million, known as the Tokaido Megalopolis (named after the Tokugawa-era road through this area) and consisting of three urban/industrial nodes: (1) Keihin (Tokyo–Yokohama), with more than 30 million people; (2) Hanshin (Osaka–Kobe–Kyoto), with more than 16 million; and (3) Chukyo (Nagoya), at nearly 9 million. There really are two distinct parts of Japan, in fact, in a classic core–periphery imbalance—the “developed” capital region centered on Tokyo, and the

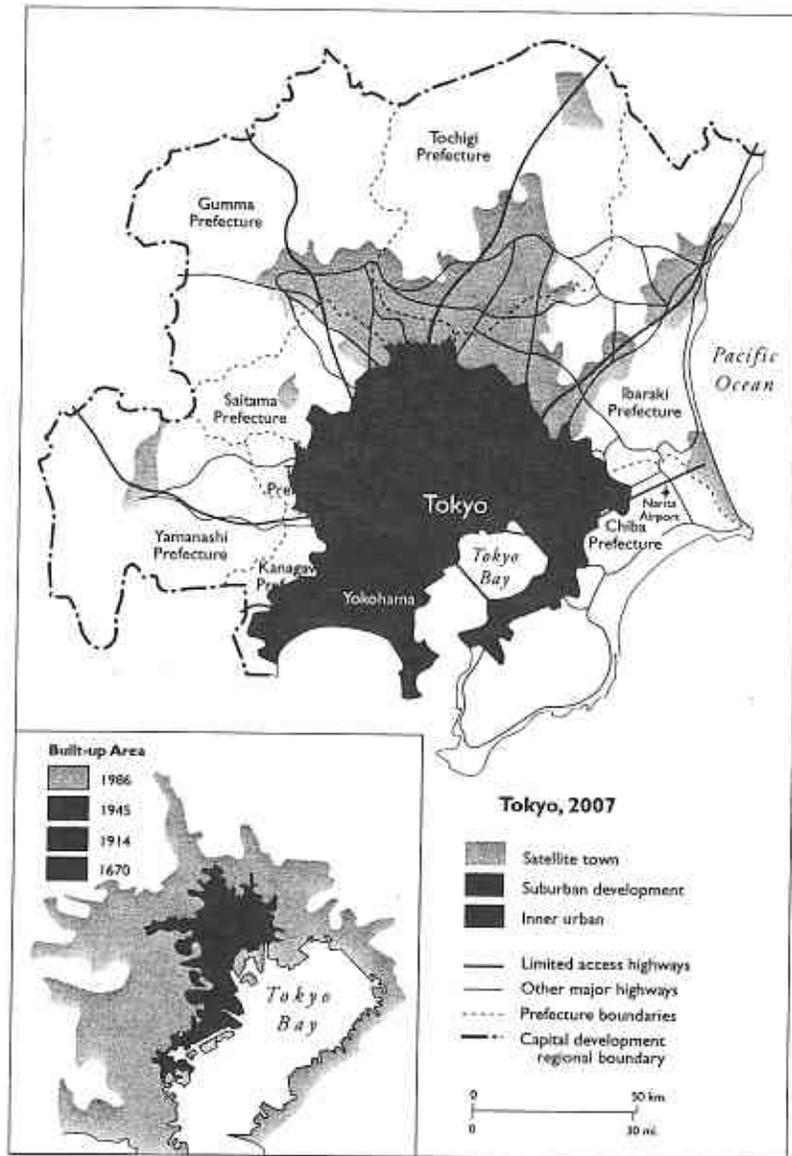


Figure 11.7 Tokyo Capital Development Region. Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

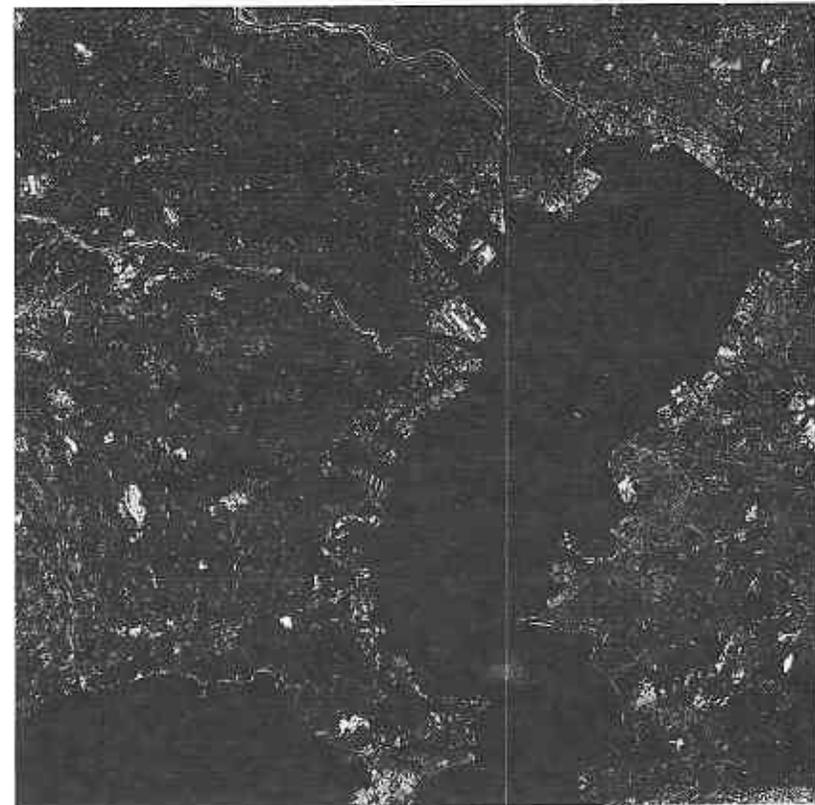


Figure 11.8 This Landsat image of the Tokyo Bay region illustrates the sprawl of Greater Tokyo, which completely surrounds the bay along a largely human-made coastline. The Tokyo Bay Aqua Line, a combination bridge-tunnel connecting Tokyo City (upper left) with Chiba Prefecture (lower right), is faintly visible (the white streak in the middle is the entrance to the tunnel). (Landsat image)

“underdeveloped” regions (in a relative sense) elsewhere in Japan (fig. 11.7). Rapid growth from the late 1950s through the early 1970s saw a shift from rural areas to big cities. Since then, migration and growth have been increasingly toward Tokyo at the expense of

long-standing rival, Osaka, a phenomenon dubbed *unipolar concentration* (i.e., urban primacy). Tokyo continues to expand, draining people and capital investment from the other regions, many of which are stagnating. The Osaka region (also known by the premodern name of Kansai) has not seen

### Box 11.1 Tokyo Consumers

As a marketplace, Tokyo has distinctive attributes that distinguish it from other Japanese cities. First, the sheer size and the average level of household income: on both counts, Tokyo definitely holds the edge, and year by year since the 1970s, the margin in Tokyo's favor has widened. Second, Tokyo has for more than a century combined East and West, past and present, with a style and verve that has sharpened the sophistication of consumers.

Beyond that, Tokyo's consumers are unusually willing to push the boundaries of fashion, to expand the range of wants by seizing on a product, and to initiate the buzz that starts a trend or launches a new fad. For clothing, accessories, and electronic consumer products, Tokyo is the mecca for shoppers looking for the latest fashions and technologies and, by the same token, for producers waiting to try out their latest offerings. Harajuku, Shibuya, and Aoyama are where Tokyo's young and well-heeled consumers congregate, sample the newest fashions in clothing and accessories, and pass judgment. For instance, Shibuya station, where six different train lines meet, caters to 2.2 million passengers per day and has more than 900 retail stores within the train station itself, with close to 600 restaurants and bars just outside the train station.

Ten percent of all electronics sales and a rising volume of sales of video games and software in Japan occur in Akihabara, which has come to be known as "Electric Town." The strength of this district lies in its wide product offerings, ranging from the newest finished product to the smallest parts imaginable, such as transistors and even vacuum tubes. Until 1995, more than 50% of all personal computers sold in Japan were through Akihabara. This sprawling electronics bazaar is where a vast array of products and components jostle for attention and where the pioneering shoppers—the ones who are willing to experiment with new products and to pay premium prices—play a decisive role. Producers need these intensively competitive and demanding markets, which give them rapid and valuable feedback. Akihabara, for example, is a vital part of the innovation system for electronic products, such as digital cameras and now video games, which are the lifeblood of the Japanese electronics industry.

Source: Shahid Yusuf and Kaoru Nabeshime, *Post-Industrial East Asia Cities* (Stanford University Press and World Bank, 2006), 37–38.

much growth of new industries to replace its former smokestack industries, such as steel and shipbuilding, and Osaka businesses continue to relocate to Tokyo. This combination encourages out-migration and depresses personal consumption. Nagoya has fared somewhat better than Osaka by managing to

maintain employment and central-city vitality. For people eager to be in the mainstream of modern Japan, living in or near Tokyo is essential.

Tokyo truly is a primate city; its dominance within Japan is awesome (box 11.1). Tokyo's roughly one-quarter share of Japan's total



Figure 11.9 The Ginza is the swankiest and most expensive shopping area in Tokyo. Major department stores and hundreds of boutiques compete for attention and the contents of shoppers' wallets in this affluent Japanese society, the richest in Asia. (Photo by Jack Williams)

population is concentrated in barely 4% of the nation's land area. The city's population density is 16 times that of the country. Whatever quantitative measures one uses, Tokyo has a disproportionate share, whether of workers, factories, headquarters of major corporations and financial institutions, institutions of higher education, industrial production, exports, or college students. As the national capital, Tokyo has all the major governmental functions. All 47 prefectural governments have branch offices in Tokyo, in order to maintain effective liaison with the national government. One observer likened the situation to that of the Tokugawa era of the 18th century, when the provincial feudal lords were required to maintain a second

household in what was then Edo (as hostages, in effect), as a means of maintaining the power of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The obedience to Tokyo remains, albeit in a new form.

Tokyo City itself has increased in population only slightly, while the 23 central city wards have actually declined. By contrast, the three key surrounding prefectures (Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa) gained significantly, evidence of the sprawl into satellite towns and cities. Because land has become so scarce and expensive in Tokyo, virtually the entire perimeter of Tokyo Bay now consists of reclaimed land (fig. 11.8).

Western influences played some role in the prewar development of Tokyo. However, the devastation of the 1923 earthquake and

**Box 11.2 Defining the Chinese City**

Mainland China has probably the most complicated and confusing system of urban and city definitions in the world owing to its *hukou* system (see box 11.3), which often excludes migrants without local *hukou* in the local population counts of the city, and to its way of designating urban areas, as explained below. This complexity is compounded by the rapidity of change in the country. A Chinese city or municipality (*shi*) is a political-administrative unit, usually covering an area much larger than the urban (i.e., urbanized) area as we know it. Many large Chinese cities today have urbanized cores (high-density built-up areas), surrounded by numerous towns and large stretches of rural (predominantly agricultural) land. These cities are so large in area that they are aptly called “regions,” and in some case, “provinces”—in fact, four of them are officially provincial-status “cities.” The most extreme example is Chongqing, which has an administrative area of 31,800 square miles (82,300 km<sup>2</sup>) (about the size of the entire country of Austria), and a population of 30.5 million in 2000. This figure cannot be taken as the population of the “metropolitan area” or “urban agglomeration,” however, as it is often mistakenly labeled by the less informed. The same situation also applies to Beijing, Shanghai, and many other large cities.

For studying city development, we need to delimit a city with a meaningful geographical boundary. Almost all cities of any size contain a continuous built-up area (urban core), and many also have nearby residential or industrial suburbs. In addition, many cities, especially in developed countries, have an extensive daily commuting zone closely related functionally to the urban core. However, the current geographical extent of the administrative boundaries of larger Chinese cities goes far beyond this familiar pattern by including rural counties, some with dense farming populations.

Three common population indicators of four of the largest cities in China (based on official census and survey data) are shown in the accompanying table and diagram (fig. 11.10). Among these “city population” indicators, C, which tabulates the population in the urbanized areas of all the districts of the city, is the closest to the concept of “urban

the urgent need for quick rebuilding precluded widespread adoption of Western urban planning ideas. World War II bombing had the same effect. In spite of ambitious plans drawn up immediately after the war, few were implemented. The result was a tendency for the city to grow haphazardly in a manner that resulted in congestion, a disorganized city layout, and the lack of a clear central business district (CBD). In many ways, Tokyo came to

resemble Los Angeles, except with a higher population density (and vastly superior public transport). Growth has been concentrated around key subcenters, such as Shinjuku (now the city government headquarters) and Shibuya, and along the key transport arteries (rail and expressway) radiating outward from the old historic core of the Imperial Palace (Chiyoda District) (fig. 11.9). Hence, the city has a distinct

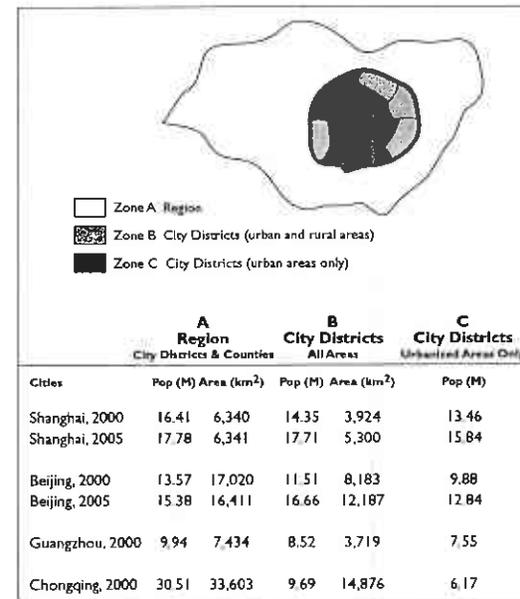


Figure 11.10 Conceptual Diagram of the Components of a Large City in China. (Kam Wing Chan)

agglomerations” used by the United Nations though it is still “overbounded” because it includes population in some urbanized areas which do not have much labor market linkage with the core city.

concentric ring pattern intermixed with elements of the multinucleic model. The city also has elements of the American-style “doughnut” model, because of spiraling land costs in the 1980s and desertion by middle-class people seeking affordable suburban housing. They commute to the central city to work in the daytime, but return to the suburbs in the evening. Unlike in U.S. cities, however, there are no serious racial/socioeconomic class

differences fueling this residential pattern, except for those relating to the minority *burakumin* (untouchables, a social legacy of Japan’s feudal past that stubbornly lingers on), and the Korean minority, who tend to live in their own ghettos.

Japan’s “bubble” economy burst starting in the early 1990s, when both residential and commercial land prices peaked at 200–300% of what they were in the early 1980s. Land prices

slid precipitously downward, returning to early 1980s levels or lower by the early 2000s. The bottom of the real estate bust appears to have been reached, at least for Tokyo.

#### Beijing: The Less Forbidden City

Beijing, the great “Northern Capital” for centuries, was a horizontal, compact city of magnificent architecture and artistic treasures of China’s past grandeur when the “New China” began in 1949, although the magnificence of the old city had suffered greatly from general neglect during the century of foreign intrusion, civil war, and “revolutionary reconstruction” since the 1840s. Centered on the former Forbidden City (Imperial Palace), Beijing was renowned for its sophisticated culture and refined society. The beautiful Beijing dialect (Mandarin) became the national spoken language (*putonghua*) after the collapse of the dynasty in 1911. The city’s only real function was as political and cultural center of a vast nation. There was little industry and a small population.

In 1949 the city was chosen as the national capital of the new communist government (Nanjing was the national capital during the republican era, from the late 1920s to 1949). During the 50 years after 1949, Beijing expanded from 1.7 million people in 24 square miles (62 km<sup>2</sup>) to a metropolis with an administrative area of about 6,500 square miles (16,800 km<sup>2</sup>). This huge Beijing administrative region housed 15.4 million people in 2005. It includes 16 city districts and 2 counties, but some of the districts and counties are only partly urban. Nor is this large area a “metropolitan area” as it is often mistakenly conceived (box 11.2). Only 12.8 million in this area are considered “urban.” The population growth occurred as a result of the

physical expansion of the administrative area, natural population growth, and net migration. During the 1960s and 1970s, migration to the city was strictly regulated. Indeed, because of its prime importance as the restored national capital, migration to Beijing was the most strictly controlled among all China’s cities. Only the well-educated and those needed for the jobs created by the central government could move to Beijing; for the rest, it remained the “forbidden city.”

Functionally, Beijing was also transformed into a *producer* city, as it became one of China’s key industrial centers, while retaining its ongoing function as center of government, culture, and education. Other functions such as commerce and services were greatly curtailed in the command-type economy geared to central planning and five-year plans, much like those of the then Soviet Union. Beijing became even more strongly the power center of China, analogous to Moscow.

The changes inflicted on Beijing’s urban landscape were enormous in the Maoist era (1949–1976), especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Although objectives, policies, and urban plans for Beijing fluctuated during the Maoist era, the end result was the transformation of Beijing into a vast, gray city of arrow-straight, wide boulevards and huge Stalinist-style state buildings, punctuated by seemingly endless rows of drab apartment blocks for the working class, with an emphasis on uniformity, minimal frills, and lowest possible construction costs. The city lacked a human scale and was deliberately designed to emphasize the power of the state (i.e., the Party). The charm of traditional middle-class courtyard houses in *hutong*, or narrow alleys, in the old city was totally lost in the need to subdivide the housing space for



Figure 11.11 Traditional, single-family courtyard houses in a *hutong*, or alley, of old Beijing. Many of these houses today hold several families. These houses are disappearing rapidly to make room for high-rise apartments and offices. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

multiple families, but often without the necessary updates and maintenance (fig. 11.11). A huge area in front of the Tiananmen (Gate of Heavenly Peace) entrance to the Palace Museum was cleared of structures, greatly expanding the existing square. As the largest open square of any city in the world, Tiananmen became the staging ground for vast spectacles, parades, and rallies organized by the government. Mao and other party leaders would orchestrate the scene from on top of the gate like a latter-day imperial court (this area is now open to tourists). Not surprisingly, after Mao died in 1976 his body was embalmed and put in a crystal display case inside a huge mausoleum on the south end of Tiananmen Square, exactly along the north-south axis running through the Palace

Museum. The parallel with the display of Lenin’s body in Red Square in Moscow was intentional, as was the attempt to link Mao with the imperial tradition and the role of Beijing as the center of China. Though the square was designed and used mostly by those in power, it also became the staging ground for mass protests organized by students, intellectuals, and workers, from the famous May Fourth Movement in 1919 to the failed pro-democracy movement in 1989, which a shocked world watched on television (fig. 11.12).

The greatest sacrilege, in the eyes of some critics, was the tearing down of Beijing’s city walls, with only the one around the former Forbidden City having been spared. The sites of the walls became ring roads designed ostensibly to ease traffic flow. Only a few

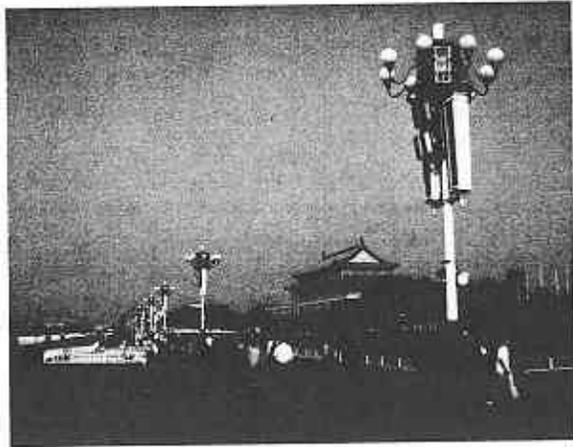


Figure 11.12 The Monument of People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square in Beijing looms behind a parading group of PLA soldiers on a chilly morning in December 1989, shortly after the infamous crackdown of the student-led democracy movement that convulsed through China. The square is in the heart of Beijing and is symbolic of so much that is socialist China. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

crumbling city gates were kept as relics of another era. A subway system lies under the Second Ring Road. Removal of the walls totally shattered the original form of Beijing and forever altered its architectural character.

To be fair, the government was faced with enormous problems, especially in providing housing and meeting basic human needs. Historic preservation tends to take a backseat to more urgent practical needs in almost every country. Moreover, the government kept the Forbidden City (plus some other national treasures, such as the magnificent Temple of Heaven and the fascinating Summer Palace in northwest Beijing) and worked toward restoration of its former grandeur, transforming the huge enclosure into the Palace Museum (Gu Gong)—a

collection of former palaces, temples, and other structures, many housing collections of art from the imperial ("feudal") past. The motive was largely political, but the net result was indeed historic preservation. The Palace Museum remains one of the world's top cultural treasures (fig. 11.13).

China's large cities in the Maoist era were both production (manufacturing) centers and administrative nodes of an economic planning system that focused on national, regional, and local self-reliance. The functions of business and commerce were weak. Most cities tried to build relatively comprehensive industrial structures, resulting in much less division of labor and exchanges than would be found in a market economy. The periurban (adjacent rural) areas controlled by the municipalities



Figure 11.13 The opening of a Starbucks right in the heart of the Palace Museum became a symbol of globalization and China's opening to the outside world. Critics, however, considered the coffee shop at that location a symbol of voracious American capitalism trampling over Chinese culture. The store was closed, replaced by a Chinese-owned teahouse in 2007. Currently, there are over 250 Starbucks franchises in China, the best market outside the United States. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

provided food, mainly vegetables, for the cities. Some satellite towns accommodated the spillover of industries. Without a land market, many self-contained work-unit neighborhoods dominated the landscape of large cities, which expanded in concentric zones. Beijing was no exception (fig. 11.14).

The new policies in the late 1970s were meant to cover some of the aforementioned weaknesses and to transform Chinese cities through a series of market reforms. Those reforms have brought rising affluence, especially in the eastern coastal provinces and cities, reflected in the urban consumption boom of the 1980s and after. In Beijing, this has resulted in thousands of new stores and restaurants. Beijing now has major commercial/financial districts, such as Xidan, a busy

shopping area with modern architecture and expensive shops, and Wangfujing, an old retail strip that received a major facelift in 1999.

Growing per capita income also fueled a housing boom in the 1990s. With a real estate market beginning to function, a greater demand for floor space has intensified use of urban land. Greater separation of workplace and housing has become increasingly feasible for a portion of the labor force. In the late 1980s, suburbanization began on a noticeable scale. Foreign investment now focuses not only on export processing but also on retail, insurance, finance, and producer services which increased the functional differentiation of city centers and suburbs linked by highways.

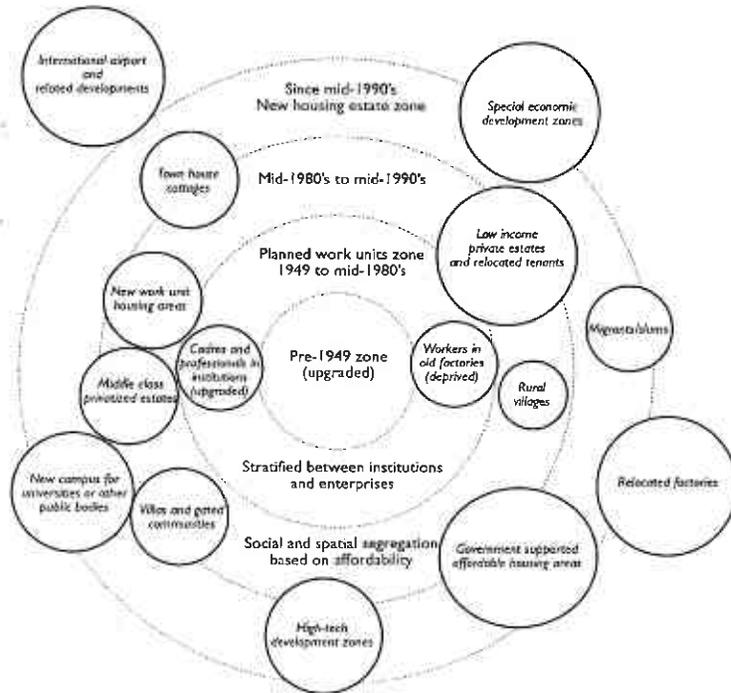


Figure 11.14 Model of the City in the People's Republic of China. Source: Adapted from Wang Ya-ping, *Urban Poverty, Housing and Social Change in China* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 44.

To attract industry, Beijing's government has established more than a dozen development zones, mostly in the urban fringe. For example, Zhongguancun, set up in the Haidian District close to China's top universities in the northwest part of the city, is China's "Silicon Valley." Beijing's growth is increasingly linked to the southeast with Tianjin, an international port city with provincial-level status, and to the east with Tangshan, a major center of heavy industry and coal mining, to form one of China's emerging conurbations. This process of

outward expansion will intensify along with China's integration with the world, especially as it is now a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Beijing, as the home of many major multinational firms, will continue to be a major player in the globalization of the Chinese economy.

The rise in personal income also paralleled a noticeable increase in income disparities and social differentiation. In the outskirts north of Beijing, expensive, detached, Western-style bungalow houses have begun to appear, catering to expatriates and the new rich. At the same

### Box 11.3 Cities with Invisible Walls

The development strategy pursued by China during the Maoist era (1949–1976) was based on strictly controlling rural-to-urban migration. The major means for doing this was the *hukou* (household registration) system, set up in 1958. Under this system, all citizens were classified as either urban or rural residents. Urban residents had state-guaranteed food grains, jobs, housing, and access to an array of subsidized welfare and social services (known as the *iron rice bowl* system). Rural residents had very few of those and had to rely on themselves or their collectives. These obvious disparities generated strong incentives for rural residents to migrate to urban areas. However, for the great majority of the rural population, the option of migrating to the cities was not available. The government used strong administrative measures to stem migration to the cities. By law, anyone seeking to move to a place different from where his or her household was registered had to get approval from the *hukou* authorities (typically the public security bureau), but approval was rarely granted. In essence, the *hukou* system functioned as an internal passport system, similar to the *propiska* system used in the former Soviet Union and the *ho khau* system in Vietnam. Although old city walls in China had largely been demolished by the late 1950s, the power of this newly erected migration barrier has been likened to "invisible" city walls.

Since the late 1970s, development of markets and the demand for cheap labor for sweatshop productions for the global market have led to easing of some migratory controls. Rural migrants are now allowed to work in cities in low-end jobs shunned by urban residents, but they are not eligible for basic urban social services and education programs. It is estimated that in 2005 about 150 million people were in this category (the so-called floating population, i.e., migrant workers), most of whom are in the cities. This two-tier system of urban citizenship and the unequal treatment of the migrant population have drawn much concern from inside and outside China.

time, with the relaxation in migration controls since the mid-1980s, Beijing now has a large migrant ("floating") population of about 4–5 million. These mostly rural migrants fill many low-level jobs shunned by the locals. However, these migrants are not given legal residency status (*hukou*) in the city and are often denied access to many urban services (box 11.3). Most come from the countryside and are poor. Several migrant communities have sprung up in Beijing's outskirts, such as "Zhejiang Village" (fig. 11.15) and "Xinjiang

Village." Living conditions in these migrant villages provide a stark contrast with those of wealthier neighborhoods. In the inner city, laid-off workers from bankrupt state enterprises are gradually forming Beijing's new urban poor.

In the early 1980s, the government became serious about planning for the aesthetics of Beijing's future, trying to bring air and water pollution under some control, and giving the city a more human feel. The 1990 Asian Games provided the stimulus for much beautification



Figure 11.15 Lunchtime in the “Zhejiang Village” on the outskirts of Beijing, a major garment wholesaling center run by migrants from Zhejiang Province in east China. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

effort and for improvements in urban infrastructure, such as extending several major expressways across the city and connecting the central city with the airport. Another round of even larger-scale construction was carried out as Beijing prepared to host the Olympic Summer Games in 2008. Many residents hoped the Olympics would transform Beijing into a truly world-class city. But there were also concerns that this massive reconstruction could have a negative impact on the poor, as old houses were torn down and farmers’ land expropriated to make way for the well-to-do and for showcases to the outside world. The 2008 Olympic Games definitely put the spotlight on Beijing (and China as a whole).

#### *Shanghai: China’s Future?*

Shanghai is considered by many to be China’s most interesting and vibrant city. This is

because of its unique colonial heritage and because in many ways it is the “New York of China”—the center of change and new frontiers in social and economic behavior. Shanghai still is the largest and perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in China (along with perhaps Guangzhou) and has one of the highest standards of living.

Of all China’s cities, Shanghai also offers a good example of the past Chinese socialist city, because of its special role within socialist China in both urban planning and national economic development. Shanghai city itself is part of the Shanghai administrative region, comprising 14 city districts and 1 county covering a huge area of 2,400 square miles (6,300 sq km) with a combined total population of over 17.8 million (in 2005) and an urban population of 15.8 million in this region (fig. 11.16).

Shanghai came the closest to a true “producer” city in the socialist era. Prior to the

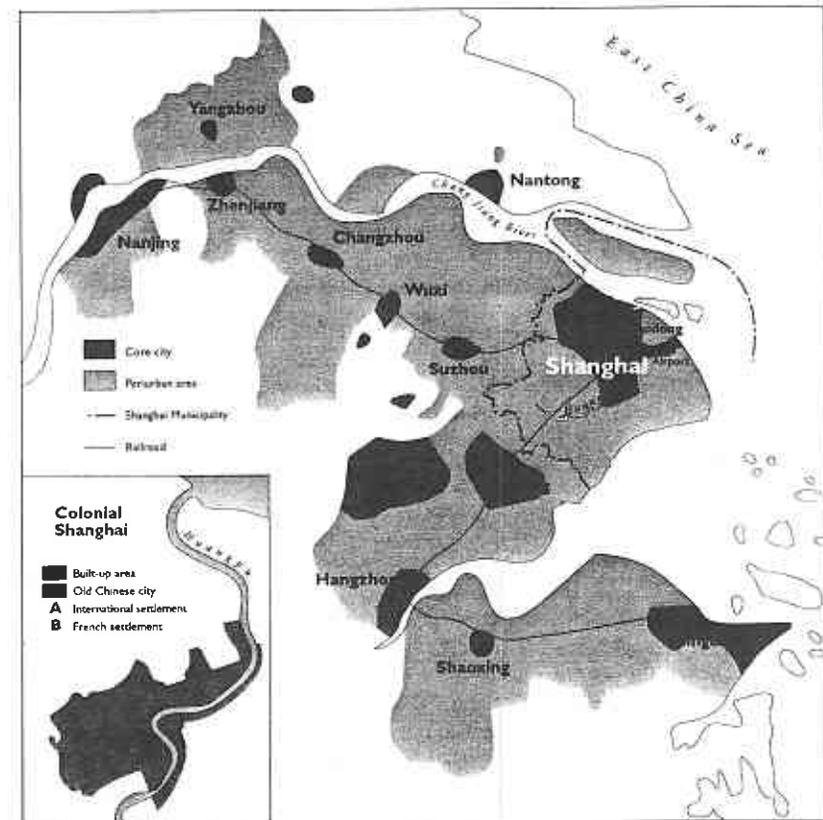


Figure 11.16 The Shanghai Region. *Source:* Adapted from Gu Chaolin, Yu Taofang, and Kam Wing Chan, “Extended Metropolitan Regions: New Feature of Chinese Metropolitan Development in the Age of Globalization,” *Planner* 18, no. 3 (2000): 16–20.

reform era, revenues for the Chinese government relied heavily on taxes on state-owned enterprises (SOEs); Shanghai, being the prime center of SOEs, was a major generator of government revenues. This revenue cash cow was heavily favored by the central government and was therefore protected. Not only was compe-

tition limited for industry, but prices of manufactured goods were often set high in Shanghai’s favor. Between 1953 and 1978, the economic growth of Shanghai averaged about 9% per year, far above the national average. In 1978, this region accounted for 8% of China’s GDP and 18% of its exports.



Figure 11.17 Since the early 1990s, Shanghai's new CBD has arisen across the river in Pudong, centered on the futuristic TV observation tower around which modern high-rise buildings have sprung up. Pudong and Shanghai are depicted by the government to be the "Head of the Dragon" in development of the Chang Jiang Valley and the rest of China. (Photo by Jack Williams)

As with many cities in the Maoist era (with the exception of Beijing), little was reinvested in Shanghai in terms of new construction and upgrading of facilities. The downtown area, particularly around the Bund, or riverfront district, where the major Western colonial settlers built trading houses, banks, consulates, and hotels, had the look of a 1930s Hollywood movie set. In 1933 the Park Hotel was built on Nanjing Road, a major commercial artery. That hotel remained the city's tallest building for 49 years, until 1982, when high rises were again constructed. It was the relative neglect of many cities, including Shanghai, that contributed to the impression that the Maoist government was "anti-urban," although the reality was far more complex.

With the reopening of China in the late 1970s, under the "New Open Door" policy, foreigners again returned to China, particularly the coastal zone in Guangdong in the

south, this time at the invitation of the Chinese. Although Shanghai was designated as one of the 14 "open cities" (for foreign investment) in 1984, Guangdong was really the initial region developed in cooperation with foreign (including Hong Kong) capital. Thus, in the 1980s Shanghai lagged behind Guangdong in attracting foreign capital and in economic growth; its share of the nation's exports declined sharply, to only 7% in 1990 (compared to 20% for Guangdong). The portion of national GDP accounted for by Shanghai also slipped to only 4%. The city's turning point came in 1990 in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen catastrophe, as the government struggled to regain foreign investors' confidence. China decided in April 1990 to open up Pudong ("East of the Pu," i.e., the Huangpu River, which bisects Shanghai), an essentially farming region on the east side of the old city core (fig. 11.17).



Figure 11.18 In this corner of the People's Park, Shanghai, Saturday morning is time for the "marriage market," when parents help their adult children, most of whom live overseas, look for prospective spouses. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

The new development plan established a package of preferential policies, very similar to those in China's five export-oriented special economic zones (SEZs), to woo foreign capital. These policies included lower taxes, lease rights on land, and retention of revenues. The Pudong plan emphasized high-tech industries and financial services rather than simply export processing. Pudong was also supposed to be the answer to choking congestion in the old city center and the catalyst for the renaissance of Shanghai as a whole (fig. 11.18). Foreign investors were encouraged to get in on the ground floor of what is touted as one of China's most ambitious undertakings. Among the foreign

investors, Taiwanese businesses have been some of the most important in Pudong. Shanghai is now home to several thousand Taiwanese companies, with an estimated 200,000–300,000 Taiwanese residing nearby. A "Little Taipei" has emerged in the Zhangjiang High-Tech Park in Pudong.

With the full backing of the central government, Shanghai improved its infrastructure and throughout the 1990s greatly strengthened its role as China's prime economic and financial center (figs. 11.19 and 11.20). The Shanghai Stock Exchange opened in December 1990 and was designated to become the financial hub of a more powerful future China. The skyline of Pudong is intentionally



Figures 11.19 and 11.20 These two photos dramatically illustrate the transformation of Shanghai since the end of the Maoist era. In the mid-1970s, Nanjing Road, a key commercial artery of old Shanghai's International Settlement, slumbered in socialist stagnation. By the end of the 1990s, much of Nanjing Road had been turned into a glittering, throbbing pedestrian mall devoted to high mass consumption and the free-market economy. (Photos by Jack Williams)

futuristic, with flickering neon-lit glass-and-steel skyscrapers, including a TV observation tower that has become an icon for Pudong and the New China. It is quite a contrast to the neo-classical Bund on the other side of the river. Today many of the world's big corporations have set up offices or plants in Shanghai. One survey in the late 1990s even showed that Shanghai had outdistanced Beijing among China's top university graduates as the most popular city in China in which to make a career.

In the bigger scheme, Shanghai is part of a larger, dynamic, and sprawling Chang Jiang delta region composed of a dozen closely linked cities and surrounding counties. This region, stretching from Hangzhou and Ningbo in the southeast to Suzhou and Nanjing in the northwest, contains about 70–80 million

people, including many millions of migrants. Wuxi, Suzhou, and Changzhou, and newer county-level cities, such as Kunshan, Jiangyin, Zhangjiagang, and Xiaoshan, are major industrial cities in the urban system. Shanghai definitely has reacquired some of its prerevolutionary glamour (box 11.4). Shops and architecture in some sections have a very cosmopolitan feel and again there is a sizeable expatriate community. The government hopes that Shanghai will become the “Head of the Dragon”—an economic powerhouse that will stimulate development of the whole Chang Jiang valley (the “body” of the dragon) and the whole nation. Critics, however, point to a host of problems: serious interjurisdictional rivalries among local governments, inadequate port facilities, unwise location of



Figure 11.20

the new international airport in Pudong, overheated real estate development, serious traffic congestion, and severe pollution. Perhaps most important, Shanghai still lacks a well-established legal system that can truly protect citizens' rights and rein in officials from abuses of their powers. These are criticisms that could be directed at all of China today, for that matter.

#### *Hong Kong: Business as Usual after 1997?*

At the stroke of midnight on June 30, 1997, Hong Kong was officially handed over to

China and became the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). This was an extraordinary historic event, marking the end of the colonial era in Asia and the rise of China's power. Hong Kong was one of the last two colonial enclaves left in all of Asia by the late 20th century. The other colony, Macau, likewise was returned to China by Portugal in December 1999 and became the Macau SAR. Hence, as China entered the new century, its humiliating experience with foreign colonialism finally ended after almost 160 years.

The 1997 event committed China to guarantee Hong Kong 50 years of complete

### Box 11.4 Shanghai Impressions

Kam Wing Chan (December 17, 2005)

Shanghai is enchanting, though quite cold (2°C). This morning I woke up in a warm big bed in the classy Park Hotel to seven windows of glistening modern and ultra-modern skyscrapers with a rising sun behind. What a different Shanghai from what I knew nine years ago!

It was also intense. I arrived quite late last night and missed my dinner. After checking into the hotel, I decided to get some food. In a nearby basement food court, I easily found my favorite beef noodle soup and dainty Shanghai wontons. This was a type of food court I had never seen before—with only chain restaurants. The McD's, Burger King, Pizza Hut, and Yonghe (a noodle chain from Taiwan) all were fighting fiercely face-to-face for a share of the pie in a tiny basement in this global city. Behind all this (figuratively) and me (literally), there were a bunch of 6–7 year olds (where are they from?) running around. On closer look, they were snapping and gobbling up unfinished noodles and food left on the tables. One even approached me for the beef in the soup while I was still working on it! They were obviously hungry, but they also seemed to enjoy themselves doing this, almost like playing a game. They ran and giggled—is that happy or sad?

When I got out of the food court, I realized that I was already on China's busiest pedestrianized shopping street, Nanjing Road. Even though it was already close to 10 p.m., this place was still full of people; many shops were still open. I decided to take a walk and get a feel for the town. There were many slim women, even in their winter coats, scarves, hats, and boots (they must be in vogue), quite chic, of course. I took some pictures of a few illuminated old Western, mostly neoclassical buildings, but soon found myself caught in a struggle, having to continuously fight off solicitations by different kinds of strangers—three flirting women “wanting to make friends,” four rather persistent “tour guides,” and three beggars in a span of only 20 minutes. What a busy place! With so many years of China experience, I thought I could mingle in a Chinese street crowd; apparently, I couldn't. I think I had the right color, black, for my jacket, but I looked (I was?) a bit older than the average crowd on this street—I had left my Kangol hat in the hotel room. Or perhaps any unattached man strolling alone on a Friday night is an obvious target.

autonomy in its internal affairs and capitalist system. China would have control only over Hong Kong's defense and foreign relations. Since 1997, Hong Kong has been under the model known as “one country, two systems.” The latter refers to the “socialist” system in the PRC (even though it has deviated from many

“socialist” norms) and the full capitalist system in Hong Kong. In the years before the handover, the biggest concern was what would happen after 1997. Indeed, in the decade preceding the transition, these concerns triggered an exodus of about half a million Hong Kongers, mostly wealthy professionals,

to Canada (especially Vancouver and Toronto), Australia, and the United States. Other observers believed that the inherent assets of Hong Kong, which had fueled its extraordinary economic rise, would see Hong Kong through the stresses of political transfer. So far, the optimists seem generally vindicated, at least on the economic front.

Back in 1949, when Shanghai and the rest of China fell to the communists, few thought that Hong Kong could long survive under British rule. The UN embargo on China during the Korean War effectively cut off most of Hong Kong's entrepôt trade with China. The population soared from half a million in 1946 to more than 2 million by 1950, with refugees fleeing the raging civil war and communist takeover in China. Huge squatter settlements appeared, and the economy was in shambles. The British, in collaboration with Chinese entrepreneurs, including many wealthy industrialists who had fled Shanghai and other parts of China, began to turn Hong Kong's economy around. They did it by developing products, “Made in Hong Kong,” for export. It was a spectacularly successful transformation, with investment pouring in from Japan, the United States, Europe, and the overseas Chinese. Cheap, hardworking labor was available. Site limitations were overcome by massive landfill projects, and freshwater and food were purchased from adjacent Guangdong Province.

During the Cold War period of the 1950s and 1960s, Hong Kong commanded a unique geopolitical position. One of the paradoxes of Hong Kong was that China continued to permit this arch symbol of unrepentant Western capitalism and colonialism to exist and thrive on what was rightly Chinese territory. The Chinese did this partly because Hong Kong made lots of money for them,

too—several billion dollars a year in foreign exchange earned from the PRC's exports to Hong Kong and from investments in banking and commerce. Moreover, a struggling, isolationist, socialist China saw practical advantage in keeping the door open a crack to the outside world, and also in not being responsible for solving Hong Kong's then staggering problems. Banker's Row in Central District came to symbolize the financial powerhouse that Hong Kong had become, with the Bank of China, the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), and the Chartered Bank of Great Britain lined up side by side. The first two are regarded today as among the most important architectural structures of the 20th century and in some ways are symbols of Hong Kong's emergence as a true world city.

One of the top tourist meccas in the world, Hong Kong is, by any standards, a stunning sight, whether one is arriving for the first time or the hundredth (fig. 11.21). The skyline is spectacular, especially at night, with its glittering, ultramodern high-rise buildings packed side by side along the shoreline and up the hillsides. There is so much money to be made in Hong Kong that every inch of space is extremely valuable and must be used to maximum advantage. The authorities have used remarkable ingenuity in designing the road system and other features of the built environment, especially on crowded Hong Kong Island. Kowloon, on the mainland side, has relatively more land, but even there the intricacy of the urban design is impressive. After the international airport moved to Chek Lap Kok on the north shore of Lantau Island in 1997 (now widely regarded as one of the finest airports in the world), building height limitations in Kowloon were ended. The Kowloon side is now taking on the Manhattan-like

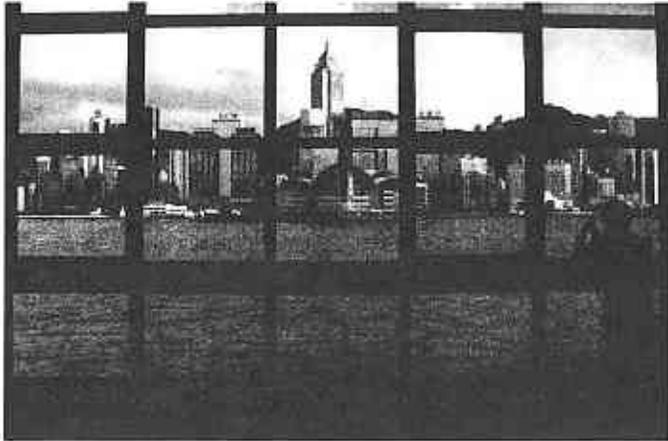


Figure 11.21 This view of Hong Kong Island, taken from Kowloon across the harbor, dramatically conveys the modernity and wealth of modern Hong Kong. The Central Plaza building towers over the wave-like profile of the Convention Center, where the handover to China took place in 1997. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

profile of Hong Kong Island. There seems no limit to the construction boom and demand for new buildings and other structures. Hong Kong remains incredibly dynamic.

Less eye-catching to the average tourist, but themselves impressive social accomplishments, are Hong Kong's public housing and new town programs. The two were begun simultaneously in the 1950s as measures to cope with the large influx of refugees from China. The programs gradually expanded into some of the world's largest. Today, about half of Hong Kong's population of 7 million lives in public housing. Indeed, because of much lower rents, public housing has been a major mechanism for decentralizing the population outside of the main urban area. Reclamation has been a main strategy for creating new land for the city. Many of the large new towns, such

as Shatin and Tuen Mun, were built almost totally from scratch.

Until the late 1980s, the economy that had fueled the creation of this machine—with the goal of making money, as much and as fast as possible—was heavily based on consumer goods manufacturing and exports, especially textiles, electronics, and toys. The top markets became the United States, Europe, and Japan. But with China's opening in the late 1970s, integration with China escalated rapidly. Hong Kong quickly took advantage of the cheap land and labor in the Pearl River Delta and has steadily outsourced its manufacturing to the delta (whereas company headquarters remain in Hong Kong). Currently, well over 100,000 Hong Kong–invested enterprises operate in the delta region and employ several million workers. In economic terms, the delta and

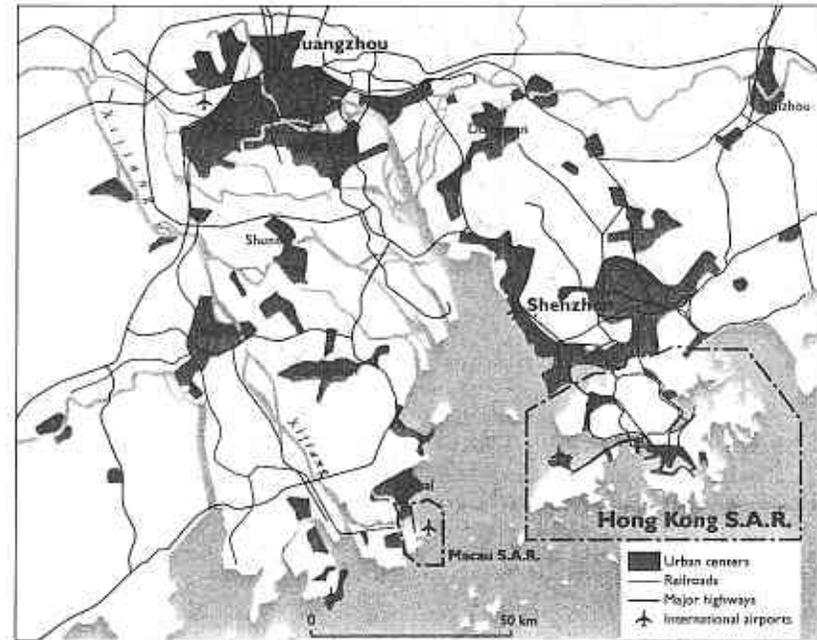


Figure 11.22 Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta. *Source:* Adapted from various sources.

Hong Kong now form a highly integrated region, one of the world's major global export centers, with Hong Kong serving as the "shop front" and the delta as the "factory" (fig. 11.22).

Hong Kong is the banking and investment center for China's trade, as well as the regional headquarters for many international corporations. In the rapid opening of China, Hong Kong has played a crucial role as the intermediary between China and the world, including serving as middleman for Taiwan's huge economic dealings with the PRC. Tourism remains vital, with the bulk of tourists now coming from the PRC, for whom Hong Kong is often their first taste of the Western capitalist world.

Immediately after handover, the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 pushed Hong Kong into a recession that continued past the 9/11 events. A series of mishaps further undermined people's confidence in the new SAR government. Rising economic competition, including from other Chinese cities (especially Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou) made many wonder if Hong Kong could maintain its strength and standard of living. It has since pulled out of that recession, but a host of serious problems continue:

1. There is a widespread perception that Hong Kong lacks strong local political leaders in the current SAR structure, and

this weakness has shown in several administrative and policy blunders in such incidents as the public health scare brought on by the bird flu and SARS, and the issues of right of abode and freedom of the press.

2. Environmental problems, especially air and water pollution, have significantly worsened since 2000. The government fears loss of foreign investment, vital to the economy.
3. Guangdong and its cities grow ever stronger, and there is fear of their siphoning off the port and other functions currently dominated by the SAR. Hong Kong still has to define its niche in the evolving global economy of which China is a huge and growing part.
4. The new towns have lost some of their vitality because of changes in the economy. Originally patterned after the British "garden city" concept, as self-contained centers where people lived and worked without need to go to the central city each day, the new towns increasingly have reverted to nothing more than well-planned bedroom suburbs, with workers sometimes having to make long commutes to jobs. Once-thriving factories in the new towns are now largely used as warehouses.
5. Maintaining a balance in relations with mainland China has been a very delicate issue. Many people (inside and outside of Hong Kong) have concerns over the SAR's political and legal autonomy and there are also rising concerns among native Hong Kongers about the inevitable cultural integration of Hong Kong into the PRC.

Whatever happens, Hong Kong's future is irrevocably tied to that of China.

#### *Taipei: A Regional Center in Search of a Region*

Although regional centers are found throughout East Asia, a particularly good example is the city of Taipei, which has been emerging from its provincial cocoon in recent years and acquiring some of the aura of a world-class city, following in the footsteps of Hong Kong. There is some ambiguity about how to classify Taipei, because after 1950 it became the "temporary" capital of the Republic of China (ROC) government-in-exile and, as such, experienced phenomenal growth beyond what it might have undergone if it had remained solely the provincial capital of an island province of China. For certain, if the communists had succeeded in capturing Taiwan in 1950, as they had hoped, Taipei would be a vastly different place today, probably something akin to present-day Xiamen (Amoy) across the Taiwan Strait. Instead, Taipei skyrocketed from the modest Japanese colonial capital city of a quarter million in 1945 to the present metropolis of more than 6 million that completely fills the Taipei basin and spills northeast to the port of Keelung, northwest to the coastal town of Tanshui (now a high-rise suburban satellite), and southwest toward Taoyuan and the international airport (fig. 11.23). Functionally, the city shifted gears from being a colonial administrative and commercial center to becoming the control center for one of the most dynamic economies in the postwar world.

When the Republic of China government retreated to Taiwan in 1950, the provincial capital was shifted to a new town built expressly for this purpose in central Taiwan, not far from Taichung. Taipei was theoretically concerned with "national" affairs and hence had all the national government offices re-created there

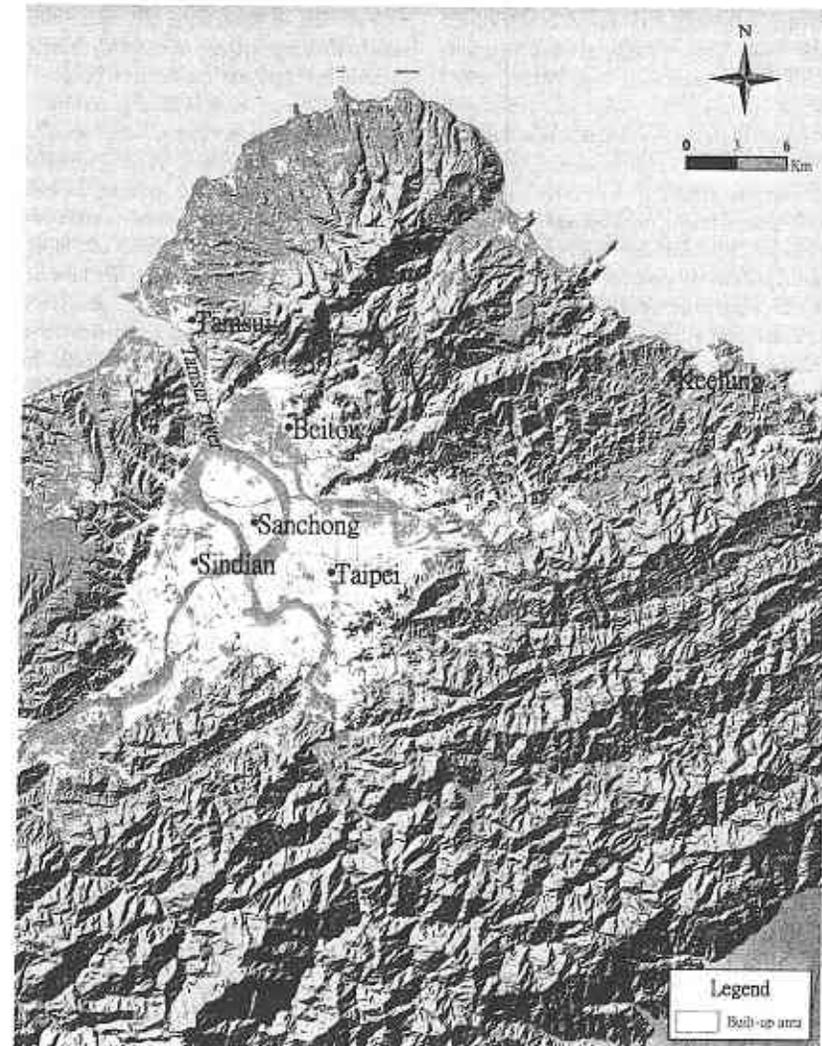


Figure 11.23 The Taipei Metropolitan Region, with 6 million people, is one of Asia's largest. This relief map was generated from Taiwan DEM data. *Source:* Bor-Wen Tsai, National Taiwan University, October 2007.

(transplanted with administrators and legislators from Nanjing). The provincial capital dealt with agriculture and similar island (local) affairs. This artificial dichotomy, designed to preserve the fiction that the ROC government was the legal government of all of China, held until the early 1990s, when the government finally publicly admitted it had no jurisdiction over the mainland. The impact on Taipei over the decades was great, resulting in a large bureaucracy and the construction of national capital-level buildings in the city. Huge tracts of land formerly occupied by the Japanese were taken over by the government after 1945, and the single-party authoritarian political system under the Kuomintang (KMT) allowed the government to develop the city in whatever way it desired, largely free of open public debate. This even included renaming many streets in Taipei after well-known mainland cities and places, to ease the homesickness of exiled mainlanders. After President Chiang Kai-shek died in 1975, a huge piece of military land in central Taipei was transformed into a gigantic memorial to Chiang, one of the largest public structures in Taiwan. In 2007 the Taiwanese government (under the DPP) attempted to rename the CKS Memorial Hall as the "National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall" as part of an ongoing effort to reduce the memories of the KMT era in Taiwan. The renaming ran into legal difficulties and intense political wrangling, however. In the interim, the site is simply known as "Memorial Hall." Two huge concert halls, also built in the classic palace architectural style, were added to the immense grounds of the memorial in the 1980s to signify Taipei's coming of age as a world-class city and a center of sophisticated culture.

Taipei has come to assume many primate-city functions, although statistically it is only

twice the size of Kaohsiung, the main heavy industrial center in the south. No longer touted as the "national" capital, with the gradual dissolution of the provincial government in central Taiwan in the 1990s, Taipei remains overwhelmingly the center of international trade and investment and includes a large expatriate community. Culture, entertainment, and tourism are all focused on Taipei. Japanese especially like to visit Taiwan, because of its colonial heritage; the city's culture has a distinctly Japanese flavor to it (some people regard the Japanese food in Taipei as even better than that in Japan). The metropolitan region also is one of the island's key industrial areas; most of the manufacturing is now concentrated in a number of satellite cities, to the west and south of the capital. The old port of Keelung, once the key link with Japan, serves as the port outlet for the Taipei Northern Industrial Region. As with Seoul, most of the city's huge population increase over five decades was the result of immigration from the densely populated countryside, a migration that in recent years has been primarily toward the suburban satellite cities. By 2005, the Northern Industrial Region had a total population of 9.5 million (out of Taiwan's nearly 23 million people), of which Taipei Municipality accounted for 2.6 million, and the surrounding satellite cities 3.9 million, or 6.5 million total for the urban agglomeration. The city has been growing toward the margins. Eastern Taipei ("New Taipei"), focused symbolically around the World Trade Center, has seen astounding growth, with hundreds of new high-rise luxury apartment buildings and office towers. Taipei in 2004 also became the site (temporarily) of the world's tallest building, with the opening of the 101-story Taipei 101. Large-scale suburbanization has also taken

place, as affluent yuppies have moved to the northern suburbs, to high-class residential neighborhoods in Tienmu and Neihu, or southward toward Hsintien. Taipei, to some extent, reflects elements of the concentric zone model and the multinucleic model. In some respects, Taipei looks like Seoul on a smaller scale, with modern buildings; broad, tree-lined boulevards; and a high standard of living. Substantial cleanup and improvements came with the 1990s as the political system was democratized, the environment became an important concern, and urban development became an open topic for public input. An excellent mass rapid transit system helps to ease the transportation crush, composed of hordes of motorcycles and increasing numbers of private automobiles. As with cities around the world, parking is a monumental problem for all drivers.

#### *Seoul: The "Phoenix" of Primate Cities*

Seoul exhibits urban primacy in an especially acute form. It is home to 10 million people, more than 25% of South Korea's total population of 47 million, putting it in the ranks of the world's megacities (one of four such cities in East Asia). More than 40% of the country's population lives within the greater Seoul metropolitan region. In 1950, Seoul had barely more than 1 million people, just slightly more than second-ranked Pusan (Busan), the main port on the southeast coast. By 2005, Pusan had about 4 million people.

As the national capital, Seoul has a large tertiary sector devoted to the national government and the large military forces that South Korea must maintain. In addition, there is a large expatriate community, composed mostly of U.S. military forces and civilians (mostly business people and diplomatic

personnel). Seoul is the political, cultural, educational, and economic heart of modern South Korea, the nerve center for the powerful state that South Korea has become. Although Seoul does not rank with Tokyo or New York as a true global city, it is moving in that direction, and it certainly has become much more cosmopolitan in the past 10 years, with the democratization and globalization of South Korea as well as Taiwan. In some ways, the new international airport, one of the world's finest, which recently opened at Incheon, west of Seoul, symbolizes the full coming of age of Seoul as a major player in the global economy.

The rise of Seoul to become one of the largest cities in the world is surprising, if only from a locational viewpoint. The city's site, midway along the west coast plain of the Korean peninsula, where most people live, was originally a logical place for the national capital of a unified Korea. However, since the division of the peninsula in the late 1940s and the bitter stalemate between North and South Korea since 1953, Seoul's location just 20 miles (32 km) from the demilitarized zone (DMZ) makes the city highly vulnerable. Suggestions for moving the capital functions to a more southerly and theoretically more defensible site have regularly met with indifference or outright opposition. Most Koreans believe that national reunification is inevitable, and when that happens, Seoul would then resume its historic role as national capital, revered by all Koreans for what it symbolizes.

The city was nearly leveled during the savage seesaw fighting in the Korean War, when the North occupied the city twice. Growth since the 1960s has been primarily the result of massive rural-to-urban migration, encouraged by Korea's transformation into an



Figure 11.24 Seoul constructed an impressive subway system for the Olympic Games in 1988. Each station is different in its architecture and artistic decoration. This is the handsome Kangnam station. (Photo courtesy Seoul city government)

urban/industrial society. The economic takeoff started in the 1960s, as the South embarked on an export-oriented industrialization strategy, much of it concentrated in the Seoul area. Urbanization thus accelerated, and the South passed the 50% urban mark in 1977. Seoul has spilled over into other areas, including south of the Han River, and has completely filled the basin of the river; it now covers an area equal to the island of Singapore. The southerly expansion was made possible by increasing the number of bridges across the Han from the original 2 to more than 20.

Seoul has its own grandness and beauty, such as in the layout of new districts or restored monuments. But parts remain terribly congested and shabby, especially some residential areas built on steep hillsides, the result of spontaneous rather than planned urbanization. Seoul could be said to have come of age when it host-

ed the Olympic Summer Games in 1988, which gave authorities the rationale to spend billions of dollars to beautify the city and upgrade its infrastructure. In addition to a huge Olympics complex (used also for the Asia Games and other events), an extensive subway system was completed (fig. 11.24). The downtown CBD is a typical conglomeration of high-rise luxury hotels and office buildings, interspersed with relics of Korea's past. Newer high-rise residential/commercial districts, such as Kangnam south of the Han River, now contribute to a multinucleic pattern of development. Just south of the downtown and the prominent Mt. Namsan (whose observation tower still affords the best overall view of central Seoul) is Itaewon District, long the center for U.S. military personnel, a honky-tonk reminder of an era of the past and of the uneasy fit of American pop culture with Korean values.

## URBAN PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

The relatively clear-cut dichotomy between the socialist path of China, North Korea, and Mongolia and the nonsocialist path of the rest of East Asia that characterized the region through the 1970s is no longer valid. China has been abandoning orthodox socialism, for all practical purposes, since the late 1970s, though one-party rule remains. North Korea occasionally hints that it might be tempted to do so also, but then slips back into its Stalinist suspicion of the outside world (box 11.5). Mongolia, like Russia, abandoned not only a socialist system but also single-party rule and is now struggling to join the world, too. The colonial era is now completely over in the region. As a result of all these changes, urban problems and solutions take on new guises and, except for in North Korea, are becoming increasingly similar across the region.

### *The Chinese Way*

To appreciate what China has attempted and accomplished in the reform era, one needs to briefly review urban development policies before then.

#### *The Maoist Era (1949–1976): Anti-urban?*

By nationalizing the economy, taking control of all the means of production, and adopting a planned, or command, type of economy, China's government after 1949 thought it had the solution to the country's immense problems. Events proved it wrong. The overwhelming emphasis on industrial growth; the suppression of personal consumption (the "nonproductive" side of cities); the guaranteeing of the needs of urban dwellers through the

*iron rice bowl* welfare system to the relative neglect of rural areas; the enforcement of strict controls over internal migration within the country through the *hukou* (household registration) system; and strict monitoring of peoples' lives in the cities through neighborhood committees all in combination with other policies produced an artificial, unworkable urban and national system that was clearly failing by the mid-1970s, when Mao died. The system had to change.

#### *The Reform Era (1978–): Opening China*

Starting in the late 1970s, China's leaders began to make significant changes in policy across the board, abandoning or severely diluting some of the key policies of the Maoist era, including some of those in urban development. Two major exceptions were the Communist Party's retention of a rigid, one-party, authoritarian political system and the heavy control of the economy by the state.

The major policy change was in the *kaifang* ("opening") policy, or what might be dubbed the "New Open Door" policy (a voluntary opening this time, in marked contrast to the forced "Open Door" of the colonial era in the 19th century). China was opened to foreigners for investment, trade, tourism, technical assistance, and other contacts. The policy of self-reliance was set aside. Rapid growth in links with the outside world had a profound impact, but especially on cities and urban development in the coastal zone, which was earmarked for preferential treatment. The establishment of export processing zones with concessionary tax policies to attract foreign investment included the designation of four special economic zones (SEZs) (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen, and Shantou) in Guangdong and Fujian in 1979 and of 14 "coastal open

### Box 11.5 The Isolation of Peripheral Cities

Isolation can be a huge handicap for cities, but isolation is a relative concept in that it can arise from either physical or human geography. Four cities in East Asia—Pyongyang, Ulan Bator, Urumqi, Lhasa—play important roles in their respective regions, yet really are isolated—peripheral geographically and in terms of their linkages with the rest of the world.

Pyongyang is perhaps the biggest anomaly of the four. The government of North Korea rules this austere, reclusive nation of some 22 million from the capital city of Pyongyang. With an estimated 3.5 million in its metropolitan region, Pyongyang is three times larger, in classic primacy fashion, than the next two largest cities, Nampo and Hamhung. This is hardly a surprise, given the centrally planned, Stalinist system that continues to hang on, long after the Soviet Union, Maoist China, and communist Mongolia saw the light. Leveled to the ground during the Korean War (1950–1953), Pyongyang was totally rebuilt in the true socialist city model, with broad boulevards and massive government buildings, a superficially modern showcase of socialist dogma, but a city that gets terrible reviews from the few foreigners who have managed to visit. Pyongyang is little more than a grandiose monument to the whims of North Korea's autocratic rulers. The city may be geographically sited in the heart of East Asia, but it might as well be in the middle of Siberia.

By contrast, Mongolia's capital city of Ulan Bator (Ulaanbataar), although much smaller at about 800,000 people, is the center of a country now doing everything possible to integrate with the outside world. The main problems are Mongolia's tiny population (2.9 million), sprawling land area, and geographical isolation. Ulan Bator is also a primate city, many times larger than number two city, Darkhan (about 71,000). As Mongolia sheds its socialist past and democratizes, the country is rapidly urbanizing and trying to find alternatives to the processing of animal products for its small economy. Tourism is growing, but industry is never likely to be significant here. It will be difficult to overcome the country's geographical limitations; hence, Ulan Bator will likely remain largely a minor regional center.

Urumqi is also a regional (but not a national) capital, for the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in China. An ancient city, Urumqi has become a booming metropolis of over 2 million, with a largely Han Chinese population, as the center of China's administration and development of Xinjiang. As such, Urumqi in recent decades has increasingly taken on the character and physical appearance of a Chinese city, very similar to those found throughout the eastern, more populous part of the country. Although geographically the most isolated of these four peripheral cities, Urumqi is actually very much in touch with the outside world, largely because of China's prodigious economic growth in recent decades. The city is the focal point of large-scale tourism, industrialization, and development of the region's oil and other resources. Urumqi is also the center of efforts by the Chinese government to contain separatist tendencies among Xinjiang's largely Muslim population (especially among the Uigur). Hence, the city's geopolitical importance may well exceed its economic role.

Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, is similar in many ways to Urumqi, although much smaller (under 300,000 in the urban area). If not for Chinese rule, Lhasa would be even more geographically isolated as one of the world's highest cities (nearly 12,000 ft in elevation). Also an ancient city and the center of Tibet's unique Buddhist culture under the Dalai Lama (now in exile in India), Lhasa was thrust into the modern world with China's takeover in the 1950s and became the focal point of China's efforts to contain Tibetan separatism, drawing much international attention in the process (fig. 11.25). Like Urumqi, Lhasa is rapidly becoming essentially a Chinese city, with the Han Chinese population steadily increasing and Chinese urban forms displacing much that was traditional and Tibetan. Also a primate city, Lhasa is several times larger than second-place Shigatse (at 80,000). Without Xinjiang's natural resources, and with a smaller population, Tibet remains one of China's poorest regions, and Lhasa's economy is largely dependent on tourism and services, subsidized by the Beijing government in its determination to ensure that peripheral regions (and their key cities) like Xinjiang and Tibet remain firmly within the PRC. One powerful demonstration of this effort was the opening in 2006 of the first railway linking Tibet with the rest of China (via Qinghai province to the north). Tibetan nationalists view the railway as one more tentacle of Beijing's grip. Beijing, in turn, sees the railway as an essential tool to further bring Tibet into the modern world and irrevocably into the PRC.



Figure 11.25 The Tibetan capital of Lhasa is dominated by the Potala Palace, now a World Heritage Site but no longer the home of Tibet's traditional ruler, the Dalai Lama. (Photo by George Pomeroy)

In sum, these four cities, in their historical as well as recent development, illustrate that isolation can be imposed by nature or by government, and that overcoming isolation is no easy task.

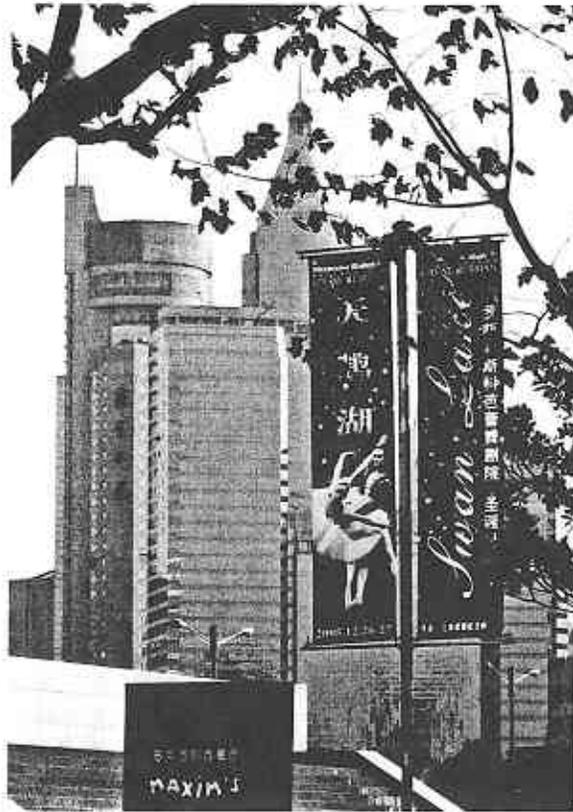


Figure 11.26 Modern high-rise buildings in Shanghai serve as a backdrop for banners advertising the appearance of a Russian ballet troupe, while a sign for Maxim's Restaurant (a popular restaurant chain in East Asia) pokes up in the foreground—dramatic symbols all of China's globalization and modernization. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

cities" in 1984. At the end of the 1980s, Hainan Island became both a new province and the fifth SEZ, while Shanghai's Pudong district joined the category of "open" zones. By the mid-1990s, practically the entire coastal region was one large open zone. One of the most notable consequences was the

creation of the new city of Shenzhen, just across the border from Hong Kong. A small village at the border-crossing point became, within one decade, a city of several million, with a large proportion of migrants (without the local *hukou* status). Today its population is over 10 million, much larger than its neighbor,



Figure 11.27 Migrant workers shine shoes on a street in Wuhan, a city in central China. Migrant workers are found in all of China's major cities, performing all manner of jobs in a desperate search for employment and income, symptomatic of China's severe need for job creation in the economy. (Photo by Kam Wing Chan)

Hong Kong. Shenzhen today makes a striking sight when viewed from one of the vantage points in Hong Kong's New Territories. Most of the land along the Hong Kong side is undeveloped farmland or nature preserves, while immediately on the other side rises a sprawling Manhattan-like urban landscape.

The negative side of China's New Open Door era has been to increase imbalances between rural and urban areas, between provinces and different regions, and between socioeconomic classes. There is nothing remotely egalitarian about China anymore, within the city or in the countryside. This was

the result of a deliberate policy by the Chinese government, which followed Deng Xiaoping's famous dictum, "To get rich is glorious." In addition, the government has relaxed controls in many areas. With decollectivization and the return to private smallholdings (under the Household Responsibility System), agriculture showed significant increases in labor productivity, with greatly improved living standards in the countryside. At the same time, though, many rural workers became unneeded, putting pressure on the government to relax restrictions on internal migration. Out of this has emerged the "floating

### Box 11.6 Environmental Hazards

The cities of East Asia face environmental hazards from two fronts—problems caused by humans and those caused by nature. Human environmental problems are the result of the region's huge population and economic success. Rapid urbanization and industrialization inevitably lead to increased concentrations of humans in crowded urban settings consuming ever-increasing quantities of goods and services. The result is escalating strains on air, water, and land resources, and thus on the overall quality of life, even as the material standards of living rise. One can see this paradox around the world, of course.

Within East Asia, thus, development success spread in the post-World War II era from Japan, where it all started in the 1950s, through the "Little Tigers" of South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong/Macau in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally on into China in the 1980s and 1990s. That tidal wave of success, however, brought with it like a cancer some of the world's worst environmental pollution. The expanding cities became centers of extreme air and water pollution. Rural areas became debased by the careless disposal of toxic wastes by industry and by the mountains of garbage created by urban dwellers. Increasing population pressure put enormous strains on precious land, causing dangerous deforestation, improper use of slopelands, wasting of land on frivolous activities such as golf courses, suburban sprawl that gobbled up valuable farmland, and pollution of coastal fishing areas by urban and industrial sewage. The abuses went on and on. The presence of high mass-consumption societies in densely populated areas makes for a lethal combination, especially in the face of numerous natural hazards. Much of maritime East Asia lies in a highly active earthquake zone, and the urban centers and economies in much of the region are vulnerable. This maritime realm also lies within the typhoon belt of Asia, so that the destructive winds and torrential rains and flooding associated with typhoons periodically wreak havoc, especially on the region's urban areas.

population" of migrant workers, estimated at 150 million, who provide plentiful low-cost labor and help make Chinese industry competitive in international markets. The migrants fill many jobs shunned by urban workers, but under the current *hukou* policy these migrants do not have the same citizens' rights and social benefits. This two-tier system of urban citizenship and unequal treatment of the migrant population have become major concerns and the source of many problems in the cities.

There has also been an exponential growth in the number of people living in towns

(distinguished from cities) over the past 30 years, because of the government's relaxation of controls over entry into the economy by non-state-owned enterprises. This has led to a burgeoning of rural enterprises (Township-Village Enterprises, or TVEs) and of small-scale entrepreneurs going into business for themselves, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s. These activities absorbed more than 100 million rural laborers from the countryside, who can now fairly easily gain permission to move to a town in many provinces, as long as they have a job and

China is currently the most vulnerable state in the region. The sheer enormity of its land mass and population, combined with its breathtaking economic growth, has made its environmental impact gargantuan in scope and severity. Water, for example, is in critically short supply in most of the north and west, and the country is struggling to meet its huge demands for potable water in coming decades, made worse by terrible pollution of available water in rivers, lakes, and underground aquifers. The air in China's cities is among the worst in the world, just as the country is in the midst of massive industrialization and wholehearted adoption of automobiles. Meeting the country's vast energy needs in the coming decades will put huge strains on China's own energy resources as well as those of the rest of the world.

Japan was the first to take notice of the environmental cost of development, starting in the 1960s and 1970s. Thanks to its abundant wealth and a growing environmental consciousness, it has started to make significant progress back to an environmentally responsible, "green" country. With about a 20-year lag, the "Little Tigers" have followed in Japan's footsteps. Taiwan has made the most progress, followed by South Korea. Hong Kong is just beginning its efforts, made more difficult by its proximity to China. Indeed, the rest of East Asia cannot avoid being impacted by China's bad environment, especially from air pollution that drifts eastward over the region. Air pollution truly is not confined by national boundaries. Likewise, China's growing contribution to greenhouse gases means that the rest of East Asia (not to mention the rest of the world) is hostage to China's eventual success (or failure) in gaining control of its environmental impact.

If global warming does result in significant sea level rises, then East Asia is doomed, because so much of its modern economy and a good share of its population are concentrated in low-lying port cities that will be drowned. The other environmental problems facing cities will become moot issues in the event of such a worldwide calamity.

a place to live. The government hopes to divert some of the rural population to small towns.

The new focus on markets and private enterprise in cities, alongside the state-owned economy, has created a demand for advertising and the need to spruce up storefronts and display windows. Urban life appears increasingly similar to that of the rest of East Asia and has unquestionably improved for most residents, because it offers greater variety and quality of goods and services, in contrast to the stifling

conformity and drabness of the Maoist years. In fact, some sections of many large cities today have the look of wealthier cities like Hong Kong or Taipei (fig. 11.26). One of the costs, however, is that economic polarization and social polarization seem to be on the increase. There is an expanding class of urban poor in China, consisting of migrants and laid-off state-owned enterprise (SOE) workers. Unemployment is likely to worsen in the face of continued population growth and difficulties in creating jobs fast enough to absorb the surplus population (fig. 11.27).

Impacting virtually everyone, rich or poor, is the critical state of the environment. Reputedly, a majority of the 10 most polluted major cities in the world are found in China today (box 11.6).

#### *Other Paths in East Asia*

As with big cities around the world, the industrial cities of East Asia are experiencing profound problems of overcrowding, pollution, traffic congestion, crime, and shortages of affordable housing and other services. Yet most people in the cities of East Asia are relatively well off, with the obvious exception of many migrant workers. This has been a region of extraordinary economic growth and advancement in recent decades, such that residents of these cities have standards of living among the highest in the world. They dress smartly, are well fed, and have considerable disposable income. Westernization (or, more properly now, globalization) is very evident in its impact in terms of popular culture and lifestyles. Retail stores of all types provide every conceivable consumer good for affluent residents. At night, the cities glitter with eye-popping displays of neon, nowhere more dazzling than in Japan.

Expensive land is a major constraint to the development of these cities. Increasingly, thus, the major cities are following in the footsteps of most other large cities with high-rise syndrome. There is even a growing competition among the cities of the region to see which can build the tallest skyscraper, as if having the tallest building somehow conveys status and superiority. Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul, and others are involved in this one-upmanship. Even Japan's cities, long characterized by relatively low

skylines (because of earthquake hazards), have succumbed to the trend toward high-rise construction, such as in the cluster of 50-plus-story buildings centered around the city government complex in Tokyo's Shinjuku District, or the new high-rise profile in the port of Yokohama. Japanese cities, and now increasingly other cities in the region, also make maximum use of underground space, with enormous, complex underground malls interconnected by subway systems.

Movement outward from the central city (suburbanization) is the only other alternative to going upward or downward. New communities have sprung up, including bedroom towns where people, for less money, can obtain better housing with cleaner air and less noise, even though doing so often means long commutes to work. Fortunately, most of the large cities have developed relatively good public transport systems. Nonetheless, the automobile culture is spreading rapidly, with the private automobile purchased as much for status as for convenience in getting around. The automobile culture first took hold in Japan in the 1960s, but other countries have followed suit and even China is now firmly on the private automobile bandwagon and just replaced Japan as the world's second largest market for automobiles.

#### *Closing the Gap: Decentralization in Japan*

The Japanese have been struggling for several decades to decentralize their urban system and reduce the relative dominance of Tokyo, by and large without success. The task really has two dimensions: improving living conditions in Tokyo and physically decentralizing



Figure 11.28 Chiba Port already handles the largest volume of freight among Japan's port cities and also illustrates the widespread practice of creating artificial land for urban expansion in Japan's post-World War II growth. (Photo courtesy Chiba government)

the urban system. Within the Tokyo area, the solution to overcrowding and the still high cost of land lies in finding new land, such as through continued landfill projects to expand the shoreline and make greater use of Tokyo Bay, as well as moving further outward toward less-developed areas in the Tokyo region. A prime example of the latter is the Tokyo Bay Aqua Line, an expressway across the middle of Tokyo Bay connecting Tokyo (in the north and west) with Chiba Prefecture and designed to enhance development along the eastern and southern shore. The hope is that Chiba Prefecture, occupying the whole peninsula opposite Tokyo City,

will be the new high-growth area for the Tokyo region, anchored around three new core cities—a high-tech Kazusa Akademia Park, Makuhari New City, and Narita Airport (fig. 11.28).

An alternative supported by many is to decentralize. How to decentralize is a tough question over which there is anything but consensus. Over the decades, Japan has had a succession of National Development Plans, all of which have addressed in some way the need for more balanced regional development. Proposals for relocating the national capital out of Tokyo have gone nowhere. Various kinds of subcenter ideas have been tried;

however, none have been substantially successful in reducing the drawing power of Tokyo. Neither has the decline of regions such as the Kansai been stopped, in spite of efforts such as the opening of the new Kansai International Airport on an artificial island off the coast of Osaka in 1990, in an effort to give Tokyo's Narita some competition. In 2001 the government launched a major effort at revitalization of the Kansai, with limited results so far.

Nonetheless, the dream persists. If Japan had not suffered serious economic stagnation over the past decade or more, the prospects for real change would be better today. Now, fearing that Tokyo might be supplanted as Asia's premier business center by some other city, such as Hong Kong or Singapore, the government has stepped up efforts to revitalize the capital. In sum, the inability of Japan—with its enormous wealth and relative social homogeneity—to solve this regional imbalance problem does not suggest a high probability of success for solving the same problem in other countries.

#### *Seoul: The Problems of Primacy*

Somewhat like its larger cousin, Tokyo, Seoul suffers from the typical problems of urban primacy. There is crushing traffic congestion, made worse by a growing middle class determined to have the status symbol of a private car in a society where status means almost everything. There is smothering air pollution caused by too many motor vehicles, by the burning of charcoal and coal, by the presence of thousands of factories, and by a basin topography that traps pollutants beneath temperature inversions, as occurs in Los Angeles or Mexico City. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing; with land

so scarce and expensive, the small Korean homes cluster together like bees on the steep, rocky hillsides. Elsewhere, especially south of the Han River, huge apartment complexes march to the horizon in a monotonous precision of layout. Property values soared in the 1980s as redevelopment contributed to large-scale real estate speculation, a problem common in East Asia (and now raging in China). The property bubble burst in the early 1990s with a gradual decline in prices, spurred further by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. That crisis hit South Korea hard and actually contributed to a decrease in Seoul's total population from its peak of 12 million in 1999 to the present roughly 10 million. The economy has since recovered much of its vigor.

Seoul would probably be even larger and more congested than it is today if the government had not adopted a policy of promoting urban/industrial growth elsewhere in the country. In spite of the attraction of Seoul to would-be migrants, considerable urban growth has occurred in secondary and tertiary cities, including Pusan, Ulsan, Taejon (Daejon), and Kwangju (Gwangju). The government also has attempted to decentralize the Seoul metropolitan region by constructing new towns, such as Guri, Banweol, and Sungnam. These have had limited impact, however. As in Japan's case, South Korea has debated the merits of moving the national capital out of Seoul for some time. President Roh Moo Hyun, elected in 2002, made balanced regional development and relocation of the capital a top priority, and plans were formulated to build a new capital city at Gongju, about 100 miles (160 km) south of Seoul. Construction was to start in 2007 and be completed by 2030. However, the prospects for a full-scale relocation are as dim

as they are for Tokyo, and for many of the same reasons (money, politics, history, culture). Indeed, South Korea's high court ruled the relocation unconstitutional. The debate continues.

#### *Taipei: Toward Balanced Regional Development*

Taipei has made dramatic progress in recent years in solving some of its urban problems. Completion of a mass rapid transit system and stepped-up enforcement of traffic rules have brought order to what was once one of the worst cities in Asia for traffic chaos. Pollution (especially air pollution) has been drastically cut through various programs. While housing is still expensive, it is becoming relatively more affordable. Overall, the city is cleaner and is decidedly a better place in which to live or raise a family. Although many people have moved to the suburbs, a large residential population still lives within the central city, so that the "doughnut" model does not fit Taipei. The multiple nuclei model is perhaps more applicable.

In part to solve the problems of overcrowded Taipei, the national government embarked on an island-wide regional planning program in the early 1970s. The end result was a development plan that divided the island into four planning regions, each focused around a key city. The Northern Region, centered on Taipei, has about 40% of the island's total population. Through a variety of policies, including rural industrialization, massive investment in infrastructure, and programs to enhance the quality of life and economic base of other cities and towns, Taiwan has managed to slow the growth of Taipei (never as severe as the dominance of Tokyo or Seoul in their countries)

and to diffuse some of the urbanization. Taiwan, for instance, has developed its own sleek version of Japan's "bullet" train; it started operation in late 2006 and has cut the travel time between Taipei and Kaohsiung to about 90 minutes. The rivalry between Taipei and Kaohsiung is often fierce. Historically, these two cities have been controlled by the two main competing parties, the KMT and the DPP, which have their power base in the North and the South, respectively. The current central government policy under the DPP is aimed at lowering the relative proportion of population and economic activity in the Northern Region and spreading it more evenly among the other three regions. The Central Region (around Taichung) has actually seen the most rapid growth in recent years. There is even a fledgling movement afoot to shift the island's capital functions from Taipei to Kaohsiung for the same reasons promoted in Japan and South Korea. Like those two states, the prospects for change in Taiwan are equally remote.

#### PROSPECTS

Urban dwellers in many poorer cities around the world must look with some envy at the more prosperous cities of East Asia. To citizens of the region, however, and especially to urban planners, the overall problem of most cities of East Asia is how far short the cities still fall from expectations. As leading Japanese observers put it:

- "Japan's foremost urban centers lack anything resembling the character and depth of their European counterparts. Instead, they seem to be forever under construction."

- “There is huge potential demand for urban redevelopment.”
- “Japanese city planning shows little vision regarding a living environment.”

These may be excessively harsh criticisms from idealistic planners (perhaps biased because of their Western training). Much the same could be said of the rest of the region. The continuous demolition and construction that leaves little history and character are the price of rapid growth and economic success. But it is fair to say that cities of East Asia are also in many respects ingenious designs by generations of people trying to create hospitable urban habitats in the relatively unfavorable environment of high population pressure and scarce land.

So where do these countries and cities go from here? East Asia is unquestionably going to be a region of continuing high economic growth, with strong continued urbanization, especially in China. There are vast amounts of capital in the region for urban development. Marshalling that capital to maximize the quality of urban life is the challenge facing all of these states. East Asia is in the forefront of the information technology and transportation revolutions, which are rapidly diminishing the importance of distance and national boundaries. Transnational urban linkages within the region and between the region and the rest of the world, especially Southeast Asia and North America, are going to become stronger. The cities of East Asia are destined to play leading roles in world affairs in the 21st century, belonging as they do to one of the three power centers of the global economy. The top player of all may well be China with its great cities superseding those of Japan, which dominated the region in the 20th century. There are many who predict the 21st century will be the “Chinese century.”

### SUGGESTED READINGS

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# Cities of the World

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