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Introduction

Aidan Southall

The new emphasis on urban anthropology is an inevitable aspect of the dialectic growth of anthropology, but the strength of the demand for teaching urban anthropology and the extent to which younger scholars are turning towards it as their main focus of interest has been remarkable. As a major aspect of the equally new concern with complex societies, the study of urban anthropology marks an important step in implementing the traditional claim of anthropology to deal with man everywhere and as a whole. Further, it requires a radical change in the usual public image of anthropology. Although there is no denying the depth of the intellectual stimulus which continues to flow from study of the rich variety of man's cultural arrangements at both social and cognitive levels, anthropologists have long been aware that an exclusive interest in small, isolated, exotic cultures was a quicksand which would engulf them if they could not realize the broader relevance of their insights. They had every incentive to become more and more concerned with the transformation of erstwhile countrymen and peasants into city dwellers, industrial workers, and national elites. This turning towards urbanized aspects of foreign cultures has recently merged with the desperate search for more meaningful data on and interpretations of the deepening crisis of urban culture in America and other Western countries. To provide quick, easy, almost magic answers to the problems of urbanization is a naive hope, neither possible nor the best contribution for anthropology to make.

The best contribution of anthropology is, as always, to provide con-
Aidan Southall

Introducing accounts of what is happening to people in varied real life situations and to set these in a broader framework of time and space. To understand how urbanization is taking place among non-Western peoples to whom it is an entirely new experience, as in much of Africa and Oceania, and how it is spreading in its industrial form to those acquainted only with its earlier manifestations, as in Asia, is vital to Western peoples for a number of reasons. It is important for the richer urban industrial nations of the West to realize the implications of their galloping consumption of the world’s resources for the poor masses of non-Western nations and for the increasingly urban society into which these people are being irresistibly drawn. It is also important for the Western nations to study with care and humility the new urban forms emerging in the non-Western world, to see if they offer any lessons as yet unthought of in Western ethnocentric assumptions.

The following accounts of urban data and urban theory, arising from studies mainly in Africa, Latin America, Japan, India, Indonesia, and the Pacific, confront us with the diversity of the subject but reveal a number of common themes. As is the way with anthropologists, all the contributors have intensive knowledge of particular localities and regions, which they have sought to relate to a wider and more universal framework. Through reading the written record and continued intellectual wrestling with colleagues who have been interested in similar problems, in different places, they have been moving toward generalization.

The relation of urban to rural and of city to nation and state is one of the oldest human themes; it is illustrated here by a range of situations and views. The links between the institutions of town and country, between urban and rural populations, and between urban and rural phases in the careers of individuals have to be distinguished.

Anthony Leeds properly insists upon the intertwining of local and supra-local, or urban and national, institutions. The conventional analogy between the self-contained tribe (itself a concept of very dubious validity) and the local community as viable autonomous units of study is false to him. It is better to treat any convenient locality within an urban area heuristically as an arena of action and interests. These may have some significant concentration and coherence within it, but assuredly run beyond it in diverse directions and contexts that must equally be studied if the picture is not to be falsified. Both the impact of locality power on the centers of power and local impact on the power centers have to be taken into account. The typical favelas of Rio de Janeiro does harbor and nurture its own distinctive way of life, but it also generates power and impels the representatives of supralocal institutions, which it confronts, to curry favor with it. The same is true of the barriadas in Lima, the vecindads in Mexico City, the foyadis in Bangkok, the bidonvilles and housing estates in African cities, and localities in urban areas all over the world.

Oscar Lewis shows how the urban locality in Mexico City can retain many features of behavior which its inhabitants brought with them from more rural areas, despite the different institutional framework in which they find themselves. Secondary relationships may be more numerous but have only a minor psychological effect, whereas primary relationships are successfully maintained and even deepened in significance. Correcting the implications of Robert Redfield’s urban secularization hypothesis, Lewis finds no general drift to anomic. The urban poor even strengthen their participation in the Catholic Church rather than become secularized; their family and compadrazgo ties are not noticeably weakened; and many traditional practices remain as significant for the urban as the rural poor. The retention of solidarity relationships by the urban poor is a necessity for survival and has been widely noted, not only in Asia and Africa, but in the North American ghettos. At different status levels the opposite process is now taking place in Western countries; urban middle- and upper-status persons are carrying city ways, city outlooks, and city involvements with them out into the countryside, either by residence there or by the decentralized establishment of distinctly urban functions and institutions in what was the countryside. As a result of both processes the former countryside is in many respects ceasing to be rural in a sociological sense.

This brings rich possibilities of further confusion and misunderstanding as to what various writers mean by “urban.” Many essays further debate on the definition as barren, assuming that it is easy enough to know by common sense whether what we are studying is urban, even if we cannot agree on a definition. It is doubtful whether such an amateur view is adequate when anthropologists attempt, as they must, to work towards valid generalizations over wide ranges of time and space. Some assume that “urban” refers to population aggregates of a certain size, at a certain level of density, others that it means major dependence on occupations other than agriculture or direct subsistence production; while still others relate it to some general kind of social complexity. Peter Lloyd’s examination of the nature of Yoruba cities from this point of view provides as good an
emergence and maintenance of profoundly personal relationships, as Lewis has emphasized.

The spatial mobility which means a fairly frequent movement of population in many cities feeds into this definition by still further increasing the number of people in social interaction over a period of time. Also, difficult to define or quantify as they are, we have to include those forms of mass participation which have always been characteristic of cities and cannot occur to the same extent except in cities: football matches, circuses, political rallies, national ceremonies, mobs, and riots. All these are intrinsically urban. Woodstock and other contemporary mass festivals in the countryside are an interesting exception but cannot reverse the trend. In any case they are of urban people. Peasant revolts end up in the city. Anonymous social interaction is characteristically urban. Loneliness is more intense against the background of fleeting mass interaction. There has rightly been a reaction against the exaggeration of urban anomie, recognizing that most members of the urban masses everywhere achieve quite effective solidarity relationships with a few neighbors, kinsfolk, and friends. But account still has to be taken of the fact that they must do this in the context and against the background of fleeting mass interaction.

It is important to note that Michael Banton adds the moral commutation of consensus and agreement on norms and conformity with customary patterns of behavior in his discussion of density. This moral density is higher in villages than towns, and higher in small towns than large cities. While also recognizing that towns are not self-contained units, Banton suggests that the more a city constitutes an independent set of roles, the tighter is the social network and the higher the moral density. Marked cleavages in a city, or extreme and all-embracing pressure from monolithic institutions, may generate a high level of consensus and moral density, as in the case of South African mine compounds or American black ghettos. The objective of urban anthropology is to bridge the gap between microsociological studies of interpersonal relations and macrosociological studies of urban structures. Empirical studies of interpersonal relations in non-Western cities are still extremely few and far between, as a result of which the conclusions drawn from sample surveys and microsociological studies are superficial and liable to misinterpretation.

Takao Yazaki concisely documents the long, unbroken continuity of the Japanese urban tradition, undoubtedly the most significant non-Western urban tradition for the contemporary world, because it is the only one in
which the problems of industrialization were successfully mastered while
maintaining autonomy from the West. It is the only case to date of in-
dustrialization without Westernization, though no doubt another example
is now emerging in China. The Japanese urban tradition began rather
suddenly in the eighth century with adoption of the already ancient Chi-
nese urban model. The intertwining urban, political, and economic evolu-
tion of Japan over a thousand years shows certain formal parallels with
the West—the alternation of centralization and decentralization, of feudal
and bureaucratic structure—but striking contrasts too—the place of mer-
chants in the urban system, the fact that the cities linked to the castles of
the feudal barons were never themselves walled or fortified, and the ex-
traordinarily detailed and meticulous efficiency of administrative control
over cities, extending to every ward and every individual household and
family. One startling aspect of this was the capacity to organize and main-
tain a level of individual and family mobility between town and country
otherwise quite unheard of anywhere in the world before the industrial
era. Robert J. Smith’s remarkable research demonstrates this mobility and
in the process shows the astonishing detail and accuracy of the Japanese
urban demographic record at a time when comparable data were quite
unavailable in the West. Eighteenth-century travelers noted the Japanese
cities and the traffic on the highways as greater than anything they had
seen in Europe. Despite the dramatic suddenness with which the trans-
formation seemed to take place after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Smith
notes that in many important respects Japan was prepared for this trans-
formation long before.

In India, on the other hand, despite its own ancient and extensive
urbanization, the greatest contemporary cities derive from the colonial
impact rather than from the indigenous urban tradition. They have been
fed by a huge stream of migration, which has become a permanent fea-
ture. The percentage of the Bombay population born elsewhere has re-
mained between 64 and 84 for over a century without any clear trend up
or down. The caste ecology of cities has largely remained, despite this
high migration rate. William L. Rowe recognizes that the urban and rural
aspects are simply parts of a single system. The city enables the village to
survive through migrants’ cash remittances. Many northern migrants to
Bombay come without their wives and families. They suffer caste indig-
nities and humiliation in the city, which they are able to hide from their
rural kin generation after generation (as Rowe has informed me in per-
sonal communication). They keep their two lives separate but succeed

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in retaining their status and land rights in the village. On the other hand,
many southern migrants to Bangalore are so destitute that retaining village
ties is hardly worth their while, so that they are more likely to move to the
city permanently, complete with wives and families (personal communica-
tion).

Caste associations have provided a bridge between the solidarities and
the institutions of the migrants’ home places and the cities to which they
have gone in search of greater opportunities, just as ethnic associations
have done in Africa or in the United States. Up to a certain point the caste
associations continue to play the caste game, by struggling to better the
relative status of their members within local systems of caste relations.
But beyond that point they have begun to play a more purely political or
economic game by acting as pressure groups and reservoirs of power and
support which can maneuver to secure for their members political privi-
leges, or monopolistic control over certain sections of industry, outside
and beyond mere caste considerations. At the same time many associa-
tions with quite secular names, as in the field of labor organization, re-
main the main channels for the expression of particular caste interests.

In Suva City, the capital of Fiji, where immigrant Indians outnumber
Fijians in the urban population by more than two to one, Rusiate R.
Nayacalevu not surprisingly finds a great retention of Fijian customary
behavior between kin and affines in the city. It is true that urban housing
is generally relatively small, so that the expression of rank differences through
the spatial positioning of persons in the house has become more difficult;
and, since fewer kin are available to each Fijian than in his home village,
he is inclined to draw neighbors and fellow employees into joint activities
which used to be restricted to kinfolk. But the village also is having to
accommodate to the presence of non-kin; while, at the same time, many
villagers commute daily to work in town, so that we find a continuity,
rather than a polarity, between urban and rural relationships.

The Toban Barat migrants to Medan, the large capital city of Sumatra,
also succeed in utilizing rural kinship obligations with some modification
in the urban context, so that Edward M. Bruner sees the greatest change
not in kin relations but in those with non-kin. For, as is the case with many
of those African peoples whose traditional structure was stateless, positive
relationships with non-kin, except as enemies, were simply not possible
unless they could be approximated to some kinship category. The minimal
lineage binds together its members both in town and country. Circum-

stances restrict the usual urban residential unit to the nuclear family, as opposed to the rural extended family. It is a question of the urban transformation of kin ties, not of mere persistence, but not of breakdown, either. Brunner has made the important general point that, where the institutions and controls of the state are shaken to their foundations and remain in doubt for considerable periods, as has been the case in postwar Indonesia, ethnic groups in the cities are forced to rely more heavily upon the adaptation of their own local and traditional institutions (personal communication). This applies to a number of other countries, as for example Zaire, and, more horrifyingly, to the new nations of Indo-China.

The great cities of Southeast Asia represent an important part of the world's urbanization. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen a massive increase of the older migrations of Indians eastwards to Rangoon and Singapore and of Chinese to Saigon, Manila, Bangkok, and Djakarta. Before the fifteenth century, when the advent of the Portuguese heralded the European empires in Asia, the great cities had for a millennium been either the inland temples capitals of divine kings, symbolically planned to represent the universe, as at Angkor, or had been port cities controlling the trade between China and India to the West, like Malacca or Palembang. The colonial cities of the nineteenth century were described as parasitic, funneling wanted products out to the West without inducing economic transformation. Now that most of them have become the capital cities of independent countries, local elites have been co-opted alongside the white elites, who remain in even greater numbers than before, though they have retreated from open political dominance to more subtle diplomatic, commercial, military, and general aid-to-development dominance. Considering that the gap between urban luxury and both urban and rural poverty is also greater than before, and that they serve as channels through which the United States alone consumes 80 per cent of the world's natural resources—ten times its share by population size—these Asian cities can hardly be considered less parasitic than before. The spatial segregation and social solidarity of the immigrant ethnic communities of Chinese and Indians remain marked, and, in the conditions of extreme overcrowding and underemployment, doubtless necessary to survival.

Ethiopia provides another case of the continuing importance of ethnic ties in its capital city, Addis Ababa. Most of the country's ethnic groups were only conquered by the dominant Amhara at the end of the nineteenth century; and the city owes its origin to the military camps of various generals, whose huge followings consisted of the particular ethnic groups whom they had subdued and brought into service. The distaste of the dominant ethnic groups for manual work has led to a certain identification of types of occupation with ethnicity. William A. Shack suggests historical parallels between the urbanization of Ethiopia and Japan, based on the dominance in both cases of an imperial, feudal, and military structure. Indeed, Japan and Ethiopia are two of the very few countries which have successfully resisted colonial conquest, both suffering military defeat but being rather soon reinstated without loss of cultural continuity. This is clearly associated in both cases with a determination to preserve this cultural autonomy; but in other respects the Ethiopian urban tradition differs markedly from that of Japan, since Ethiopia had no large permanent cities till the end of the nineteenth century and even now is only very slightly industrialized. Furthermore, the great ethnic heterogeneity of Ethiopia, contrasted with the basic homogeneity of Japan, leads to profound differences in the structure of urban life.

While large-scale migration is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary urban growth, it is obvious that it has ethnic importance only where the source of migration is ethnically heterogeneous, as in most of Africa, Sumatra, or Fiji. However, the great metropolises everywhere now draws upon such a wide and international catchment area that ethnic problems are also appearing everywhere. Their long history includes the extremely diverse migration to the United States, the vast migration of Indians eastward and Chinese westward or southward to the huge cities of Southeast Asia, the West Indian or Pakistani communities in English cities, Algerians in French cities, or Chinese in Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, and Saigon. But the importance of ethnic diversity, if present, depends upon the type of stratification and degree of industrialization, as well as the particular characteristics of certain ethnic groups. The basic orientation of the receiving society affects the implications of ethnicity, as in the persistence of ethnic and racial discrimination in the United States, as compared with most Latin American countries, where status distinctions are mainly expressed in other ways.

Kenneth Little states that in the new mining town of Lunun in Sierra Leone, the Temne miners aim at bettering and educating themselves, rather readily adopting the idea of the nuclear family based on monogamy and companionate marriage, allowing their ties with extended family and clan, as well as their belief in ancestral spirits, to weaken; whereas the Fohani in Lunun, with an aristocratic background, keep aloof and to themselves, concentrating on activities such as cattle trading which are
compatible with the retention of much traditional behavior despite urban residence. On the other hand, in the mining and industrial areas of Southern Africa the oppression by white minority governments cemented all Africans together and damps down the expression of ethnic differences except as convenient categories of social classification; and employment by huge, monolithic enterprises accentuates this effect by necessitating the use by Africans of effective labor organization which largely ignores ethnic differences. Distance from home is another relevant factor. It had been shown by Mayer in East London, South Africa, that migrants whose homes were so near that they could visit them frequently at weekends did not need to stress their kinship and ethnic solidarity in town because the rural actuality of it was so readily accessible as to remain real to them without such reinforcement. J. Clyde Mitchell tests this idea further in a sophisticated statistical study of migrants to the Zambian Copperbelt towns. He confirms the East London study by showing that "the degree to which an individual is able to become caught up in urban life depends upon the extent to which he is able to maintain his participation in events and affairs in his rural home without finding it necessary to absent himself completely from the town for long periods." The more distant the migrant's rural home, the lower his urban involvement, as measured by the presence of his wife in town, the spending of more time in town than in country (especially of long unbroken periods in town), and the expectation of long continuous future residence there. Although the more distant migrants had spent less time in town, their wages and skill were somewhat higher on the average than those of nearer migrants.

The reasons for migrants leaving distant homes are explored in a different way by Stillman Bradford in his study of Peruvian migration from the highlands to the coastal boom town of Chimbote or the capital city of Lima. Only a minority of the migrants, or even their fathers, had previously been farmers. Most came from intermediate small towns or cities. In one study, three quarters of those who had completed primary education (as only 11 per cent of the population had) became migrants and were living away from home (the spread of schooling in Africa has been equally closely connected with an increase in migration). Bradford finds, in effect, that it is those best equipped to do so who migrate to the big cities. Those who do not make a successful adjustment often return home, but those who stay tend to drop most of their characteristically home traits and identify fully with the city (personal communication). This situation is clearly different (perhaps a further stage in the process) from the

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situation revealed by studies of either Africa or northern India, but perhaps more similar to that of Southern India in the rather complete break which many make with their past. However, while it is true of very low-status migrants in South India, in Peru it is both the more educated and those of somewhat higher status who seem most likely to leave permanently. Of course, this reflects the great differences of general social structure in the two cases.

William Mangin's study relates to another aspect of Peruvian migration, in which some dwellers in the central slums of Lima had the courage to reject the intolerable living conditions to which they were subjected, seize public land outside the city, hold it steadfastly in the face of brutal attacks by the police, and create new communities out of nothing, with no outside assistance and in the face of official hostility and misrepresentation. The new communities now account for a fifth of the population of Greater Lima. We are thus led back to another variant of the evidence from all continents on how urban masses generate their own solidarities and defeat the threatened annihilation of large cities. It also leads us on to some of the most intractable problems which will haunt the world's great cities for decades to come. These are the problems of how to humanize big city life for the poor in their frighteningly growing numbers, how to help through official programs without stifling the initiative and dignity of the people themselves and actually undermining their lives through blundering policies, how to understand, accept, and facilitate the people's own efforts, which at present seem always to alarm the Establishment as subversive.

The Peruvian elite, according to Mangin, sees the barriada residents as lawless, lawless, jobless, recently arrived, rural, Quechua-speaking Indians. He shows them as well-established, Spanish-speaking, coming from provincial towns rather than rural areas, successfully establishing their own system of law and order where none was offered to them, and energetically aiming at secure employment and good neighborly respectability. Allowing for the cultural and structural variations which we have been noting, a similar picture emerges in any part of the world where social investigators have come to terms with urban masses as human beings and persons. In this basic respect, Anthony Leeds has presented the facada of Rio de Janeiro in a similar light, and has elsewhere drawn attention to the growing horrors of the huge high-rise apartment complexes being constructed for the poor of Rio as much as forty miles from the city center. Urban experts are now calling these "shunsscrapers." Chicago's
South Side, St. Louis, and parts of New York City have known slum
scrapers for several decades, and they are now invading the tormented cities
of Asia, such as Singapore, Bangkok, and Hong Kong. An alternative and
equally deadening model may be found in the tens of thousands of utterly
standardized one-story cement bungalows which house the half million
Africans of Soweto township outside Johannesburg. Urban renewal in the
United States is said to destroy more homes than it creates. Everywhere
in the world mushrooming cities are posing an agonizing dilemma be-
tween physically unsightly and often officially illegal settlements, which
none the less represent some positive achievement and adjustment by
their inhabitants despite lamentedly inadequate services, and, on the other
hand, mass-produced official schemes of astronomical cost. These are
technically modern and efficient on the drawing board but often disas-
trous in practice, through ignorance of the real needs and convenience of
the people at whom they are aimed and rapid deterioration and break-
down resulting from bad maintenance and the impossibility of paying
rents which are always higher than those of the previous accommodation,
from which the inhabitants were involuntarily removed. The counter-
approach which is beginning to emerge is, of course, that the inhabitants
themselves must be involved at all stages and must have some say and
responsibility for their own destiny. Since anthropology became a field-
work discipline rather than an armchair hobby, this has been an implicit
principle; and it is here that urban anthropology may perhaps bring to-
gether both theoretical and practical concerns of the greatest moment.

Local Power in Relation
to Supravalent Power Institutions

Anthony Leeds

Introduction

This paper is an effort to develop some concepts and a model to deal with
(a) the institutions of the territorial state, (b) the social unit—the com-
munity, and (c) the human-geographical unit—the locality, in a single
frame of reference and as a single, systemic totality.

In former days, sociology dealt almost exclusively with sociocul-
tural entities loosely called "tribes." These were "natural" units in the
sense that they usually possessed a distinctive language or dialect; com-
prised socioeconomic systems or subsystems; had a series of discrete
characterizing customs; and, finally, recognized themselves and were rec-
ognized by the use of some name as being separate. Such tribes are mark-

1. The paper stands essentially as written in 1964 with, however, expansion of theo-
retical considerations, clarification and tightening of definitions, and the like. The
paper, elaborated deductively as a model, was intended as a theoretical work and a
kind of position paper growing out of theoretical work on the nature of cities I had
been doing for several years. It is also concerned, though this has not been under-
stood, with epistemological problems, particularly the status of our units of study. It
was not intended as a data paper or abbreviated monograph. The favela material is
only exemplary; it was not, then, properly field data at all, being based on three very
brief visits to favelas combined with some reading. Subsequent fieldwork of about
twenty months not only confirmed what I was arguing deductively from scraps of
data but indicate that I underestimated the argument. Data from the fieldwork are
beginning to appear as indicated in the bibliography but are not germane, in the
sense, to the ends of this paper. The responsibility is mine for retaining the original
form, despite criticism at the seminar and several suggestions to build the theory out
of the data. This was an inductive procedure I deliberately eschew because I
thought—and think—it has consistently tended to block fruitful theoretical vision.