CHAPTER TWO

Urbanisation: Problems of Theory

Studies of the origins of pre modern urbanism have a long history among sociologists and historians. Scholars like Max Weber (1958), Moses Finley (1975) and Adams (1966) have enriched our understanding of pre modern cities. In archaeology the term 'Urban revolution' was introduced by Gordon Childe to describe the transition from the pre-literate agricultural societies to more complex civilized societies (Childe 1950). This revolution occurred in different parts of the world independently and at different times. Childe tried to develop an archaeologist's definition of the city. He enumerated a set of ten criteria which he believed would be found in all early urban centres. But since then most of the traits have been found missing from one or other of the early urban centres. Thus, monumental public buildings were absent in China (Chang 1974). Writing was absent among the Incas (Millon 1979). In fact, even the formation of cities as physical entities which has been emphasised by Childe was apparently not true of all the cases. Egypt lacked cities until the late second millennium B.C. (Adams 1979). Maya centres of the early phase without a resident population cannot be called cities according to some scholars. Various traits express the individuality of

1These ten criteria were, 1. emergence of settlements larger in size having greater density of population; 2. emergence of non-food producing classes; 3. emergence of surplus production siphoned off by a divine king; 4. building of monumental structures; 5. Emergence of a ruling class; 6. emergence of systems of writing; 7. emergence of exact and predictive sciences; 8. emergence of sophisticated artistic traditions; 9. emergence of long distance trade; 10. emergence of an urban community replacing the kinship based groups.
each civilization and any generalized set of traits for the identification of cities might be misleading. Since Childe wrote his famous piece on urbanism, archaeologists have used insights from ethnography, sociology and politics to understand the phenomenon of urbanism. They have realised that even though different cultural traditions present diverse cultural characteristics, the effect of urbanisation everywhere was to bring in a new set of social and economic institutions decisively and relatively rapidly into positions of dominance. The core trends which are universal to all urban societies are social stratification, political differentiation (emergence of state), craft specialisation and urbanism (Adams 1966). Thus, the trait complex approach has given way to an attempt to understand underlying processes. In most cases cities are the final outcome of this process. Let us discuss the key features associated with urbanisation.

**Social Stratification**

In a historical context social stratification refers to the emergence of societies where the basic means of livelihood are differentially distributed. This means that there would be one set of people who do not have unencumbered access to basic resources needed for sustaining life. Obviously its counterpart is the presence of a group which tries to monopolise rights over the resources crucial for the survival of the entire population. In order to obtain access to the basic resources the deprived groups have to perform personal service, military service or drudge labour for the holders of those resources. The upper strata are thus able to manipulate

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2 Indian scholars tend to use the ten criteria given by Childe as some kind of a mantra for identifying the ancient cities. They tend to forget that Childe was primarily trying to identify certain societal processes (which he outlined in the beginning). Thus, what needs to be discovered is these processes and not certain archaeological features as ends in themselves. The archaeologically identifiable traits are necessary to understand these processes but not ‘the processes’ themselves.
the labour of the lower strata for their own needs. The emergence of such a society is obviously related to the notion that basic resources are scarce. What is important to us is the fact that differential access to basic resources is related to a process of deracination of the deprived groups. Ethnographic examples show that the individuals denied rights of access to land are considered distant relatives or non-kin. The process of stratification is inextricably connected with the decay of communal property and the emergence of individual property rights and deprivations based on individuals as units. In other words stratification is related to the emergence of private property. Such differential access to basic resources, and exploitation of human labour presupposes that the egalitarian kinship system has been modified and manipulated in favour of the powerful. As such, stratified society creates conflicts, and pressures among individuals and groups which are increasingly difficult to manage for the kinship networks. Thus, the stratified community evolves new institutions to maintain differential access. These new institutions emphasising the centrality of power and obedience rather than sharing and equality are called the state. So, stratification is invariably linked with the state.

State

State is an institution manned by specialised personnel. These institutions are located in a more or less well defined territory. State tries to monopolise rule making in its territory. This tends towards the creation of common political culture shared by all the citizens. In the historical context the state emerged when kinship institutions could not resolve social conflicts arising out of differential access to basic resources (Fried 1967:235). A new complex of institutions evolved by means of which the power of society was organised on a basis.
superior to kinship. The leaders in the emergent structure could use force to enforce their decisions. To be able to enforce their commands leaders of the state had specialised units of coercion like army or police. The primary function of the state i.e. the maintenance of a specific order of stratification, led to the emergence of a number of characteristic institutions. The new institutions needed new kinds of personnel. The army and the officials who specialised in the job of administration were far removed from the job of basic subsistence. As such their survival depended on their ability to make others part with the produce of their labour. This expropriation of the produce might be in the form of forced labour on the land of the king or some kind of a regular tax. The king and the officials try to maximise their returns to improve their power and status. Also more and more members of the community try to latch on to positions of power. As such the early state is basically expansionist in nature. It tries to conquer and subjugate the surrounding population so that it can exploit their labour. Officials not involved in subsistence work and performing functions in a variety of situations in different parts of the state require forms of wealth which can be transported and exchanged easily. In this situation the emerging elite try to control the circulation of valuables like precious stones because it gives them control over a range of social activities like exchange of women and performance of rituals. The elite consciously and strategically employ valuables to maintain social inequality, strengthen political control and fund new institutions of control (Ratnagar 1991:39). These features of the nascent state stimulate exchange. As pointed out earlier the stratified society was also related to the decay of communal property rights. Individual profits could not have been earned on collectively owned land or property.
Individual property rights would stimulate exchange because individual units of production could not produce everything they needed. Although, inter-tribal exchange is not absent in kinship societies, most of the exchange takes the form of gifts which are part of a larger network of the circulation of women and the creation and strengthening of social relationships between different groups. With the decay of kinship networks exchange emerges as a specialised activity no longer embedded in the kinship network. The exchange networks of the state no longer coincide with the kinship boundaries. Economic traffic creates its own boundaries cutting across and stretching beyond the area of the kinship network. We are not suggesting that kinship based exchange disappears altogether but that new patterns of exchange antithetical to kinship emerges. In favourable conditions this kind of spurt in demand by the elite leads to craft specialisation and the emergence of a merchant class.

Craft Specialisation

Craft specialisation generally refers to the phenomenon of the emergence of a group of people who spend most of their time and labour in producing tools and ornaments. For example the metalsmiths would produce tools and weapons of a particular metal. The craftsmen producing ornaments of precious stones or sea shells are engaged in activities which are not food production activities. The emergence of a class of craft specialists presupposes certain kinds of organisational structure. First of all it presupposes that some one else produces food for them. The institutional mechanisms for the mobilisation of food for the craftsmen might vary from place to place. As many of the objects made by the craft specialists requires raw material found in faraway places, it presupposes some mechanism of procuring
it, presumably long distance trade. Such articles might be too expensive to be affordable for all but the rich and powerful. In other words the presence of craft specialists presupposes a demand for such items. These demands are usually generated by a class which is rich and powerful.

There has been some discussion about the nature of craft specialisation in early urban societies. It has been pointed out that craft specialisation as conventionally understood is related to division of labour which leads to greater efficiency. As such specialisation is understood as a response to rise in demand. It is contended that specialisation emerges as a response to political development. Valuables in tribal societies are used in marriage, payments for blood compensation and as payment for ritual services. The emerging elite of the state society inherit such mechanisms of control from their tribal past. This elite use valuables to create and maintain social inequality and forge alliances. As such it has been suggested that craft specialisation simply refers to a person possessing special skill. The ruling elite patronise him to gain power and prestige (Ratnagar 1991:38-39). It has been suggested the bronze age urbanism cannot be explained by economic growth in the sense of an expansion of the market or rise of effective demand or proliferation of commodity production (ibid.188). This formulation gives us an insight into the emergence of craft specialisation. It shows how the macro-economic demands are geared to the needs of an emergent political power group. It indicates that highly skilled individuals can be present in pre-state societies too. The thing to be noted is how skilled labour is harnessed to the needs of the emergent elite. Compared to the tribal society the new political elite generates higher demands for products of specialised
skill. This is because the function of valuables has changed. They have become instruments of control. The elite would try to have more and more of such valuables. How so ever skewed the market, there is a demand and supply system. The emergent craft specialisation is a response to the demands of a power elite. As has been pointed out the glorious achievements enjoyed by the few depended on the subjection of the many, who actually produced them. Mobilizing and centralising the productive forces meant that the goods and services previously enjoyed by all in relatively egalitarian self subsistent communities could be greatly multiplied and so invested in hitherto impossible production of more specialized goods and services (Southall 1998:8-9).

What is an Urban Centre?

Socially stratified, politically organised societies with craft specialisation often produce urban centres. If the rulers, craft specialists, merchants and the rich people converge in a limited geographical space, an urban centre is likely to emerge. The functions of these groups determine the nature of the settlement. If we examine urban centres as units of settlement they perform specialised functions in relation to a broader hinterland (Trigger1972). This relationship of interdependence, favourable to the urban centre, usually emanates from its advantageous geographical location (location on trade routes, control of natural resources etc.). As pointed out earlier, while numerous inhabitants of an urban centre

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3 The most obvious characteristic of a town is the way it concentrates its activity into as confined an area as possible, cramming its inhabitants closely together- obliging them to crowd through streets sometimes too narrow for traffic, and eventually to build upwards (Braudel1989:180-81).
may engage in food production their specialised functions are non agricultural in nature. The primary functions of an urban centre are activities like administration, ritual service, and trade. Since the inhabitants of an urban centre perform a variety of economic, political and ritual functions a variety of people stay there. There would be rich and poor, rulers and the ruled, buyers and sellers, craftsmen and traders (Wirth 1938). The rulers, priests, craftsmen and traders depend on agriculturists to produce their food. Thus, the residents of urban centres have to necessarily establish a relationship with a hinterland. The residents of the hinterland supply food and raw material. This mobilisation of surplus might take the form of tribute to an urban deity who might be believed to own land, the source of all produce. The surplus mobilisation might take the form of tax imposed by the king or it might take the form of exchange in return for goods supplied by the craftsmen and merchants from the city. Given the fact that a large number of people with diverse professions stay in the city, the relationships among the residents are impersonal (Wirth 1938). Also the inhabitants of such a settlement satisfy an economically substantial part of their daily needs in the local market.

Social scientists increasingly regard urbanism as a dependent variable. It reflects the economic aspect of the broader range of changes taking place in a given society (Southall 1998:7-8, Fischer 1975). However, we need to remember that the city acts as a 'container' meaning that the concentration of rulers and the ruled, merchants and buyers, priests and

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Commenting on the towns of medieval France Braudel said, "Any town of unequivocally urban status would be surrounded by a ring of bourgs each of them linking it by extension to the Liliputian world of villages...Every town, small or large would have a supply zone on which it was dependent. A town was like a huge stomach, drawing on not one but several successive areas and zones of influence." (Braudel 1989:182-185)
devotees in a small geographical area brings in a qualitative change in the structure of the urban centre. The urban centre provides shelter to artists, architects, litterateurs and innovators of various kinds. A new landscape is created. In the city are concentrated the innovations and changes that occur in the larger society. What needs to be emphasised is that the idea of concentration needs to be extended beyond mere population to include its more profound social, cultural and politico-economic implications, since these are even more highly concentrated (Southall 1998:8-10). As has been stated by Braudel the town stood above all for domination. When we try to define or rank it, the basis is its capacity to command and the area it commanded (Braudel 1989:181).

What is clear is that only states have the organisational ability to regulate and promote production and control distribution on a regional and intra-regional scale. Unfettered by local kinship network, rulers create networks of exchange with faraway lands. They are hungry for various craft products. That is why scholars believe that the locus of transformation lay in the realm of social organisation. To be able to understand urbanism one needs to understand larger processes like the emergence of the state and civilization. There could be states without cities but there was no city without state. For a historian the validity of the exercise on studying urbanism is that urban centres were like light houses which give us an entry into the happenings in the past. Often with the co-terminus beginning of writing, our understanding of the beginnings of such seminal processes as the emergence of state and class can be better understood in ancient city. In such a context the study of the process of urbanisation provides us a glimpse of the past which can enrich our understanding of some of these processes. Also,
the theme of urbanisation connects us to the study of a process which happened in many parts of the world across time and space. This means that we move out of the insularity of history and effectively learn from other disciplines like Economics, Sociology and Anthropology. We shall briefly review some of the theories of the origin of state.

Theories of the Origin of the State

The theories of the origin of state can be broadly grouped into two sets of hypotheses.

1. State emerged as a result of technological innovations and surplus production
2. State emanated out of conflict over scarce resources.

Gordon Childe (1950) was the proponent of the first type of causality. He believed that civilized societies emerged as a result of increased food production caused by improvements in technology. According to him social stratification and increase in population became possible only because of increased surplus which enabled people to have greater leisure time. "Thus" he says "each primary producer paid over the tiny surplus he could wring from the soil with his still very limited technical equipment as tithe or tax to an imaginary deity or to a divine king who thus concentrated the surplus". Some scholars have questioned the validity of this hypothesis. The idea of a surplus over and above the needs of the cultivator is not acceptable to scholars. One cannot define a potential level of productivity at a given stage of technology, from which actual consumption could be substracted, to define the surplus (Orans 1968). We have the example of the Mayan civilisation flourishing on slash and burn cultivation without domestication of any draft animal, wheeled transport or developed metallurgy (Millon 1979). There is no inherent tendency among the farmers to produce at the
highest potential level consistent with the technological advance. The introduction of more efficient methods of production need not lead to greater output, which would give an opportunity to the powerful groups to siphon off the surplus. The 'domestic mode of production is a 'production for provisioning', meaning that more efficient tools of production will lead to greater leisure and lesser work for the cultivator. Ethnographic studies all over the world have shown that pre-state economies are under-productive. They seem "not to realise their own economic capacities, labour power is under used, technological means are not fully engaged, natural sources are left untapped" (Sahlins 1972). In fact agricultural surpluses are defined and mobilised in a particular institutional setting. The presence of urban centres in third world countries where millions die of malnutrition and famine effectively negates this way of conceptualising "surplus" (Harris 1959). Besides, in many instances the basic tools of agriculture and craft work show no signs of systematic improvement before or immediately after state formation (Cohen 1979).

While food production was a pre-condition for the urban revolution it was not sufficient by itself. That is why Martin Orans has visualised 'surplus' as the 'gross amount of deployable wealth' (Orans 1968). In this kind of formulation one is not looking for the marginally higher productivity above biological needs; instead one has to look into a chain of socio-cultural processes which can be generated through political or religious symbols. One can conceptualise culturally defined requirements of population stimulating exchange as also improvements in production technology and modes of transport. Thus, the notion of 'surplus' becomes a part of an interdependent network of cause and effect affecting social change. It
is no longer considered an independent variable.

Julian Steward tried to work out a sequence of the stages of evolution of communities from the hunting gathering level to the state level. He integrated archaeological data and anthropological theory and tried to account for the specific forms of social institutions in terms of adaptation to specific techno-environment. The locus of cultural process was in the dynamic articulation of these environmental and socio-cultural systems. Steward found that the early states he had investigated were located in semi-arid areas. According to him the existence of states in such a setting was related to their organisational requirements. People needed irrigation for an assured supply of food. Irrigation in turn required organisation and co-ordination by some authority. This need for a co-ordinating authority led to the emergence of the state. It was Karl Wittfogel who systematically propounded the theory of 'irrigation civilization'. According to him the effective management of water for irrigation required an efficient societal organisation. In this kind of 'hydraulic economy', state power embodied in the despot assumed the managerial functions. Robert McAdams who has examined this hypothesis in Mesopotamia does not find evidence in support of it. The earliest neolithic communities in the Diyala region and in southern Mesopotamia were located along natural water channels which dissected the plains due to the natural meandering of the rivers (Adams1965, Adams and Nissen1972). Human communities would not need a large organisation for exploiting these channels. In the early written records there are very few

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5 Interestingly enough five out of the seven stages linked to levels of socio-cultural integration, are not due to any evolving form of techno-ecological adaptation. This goes against the general hypothesis of techno-ecological adaptation being the determinant of social change. For a review of Steward's formulation see Friedman, J. and M.J.Rowlands (1978).
references to problems relating to irrigations because irrigation was not the concern of kings but of minor officials (Adam 1966). In modern times tribesmen staying in southern Mesopotamia dig irrigation canals themselves indicating that irrigation canals do not always require state organisation. Irrigation might or might not be a part of the overall concern of the state. It cannot be elevated to the status of a theory of the origin of state. The significance of the hypotheses propounded by Steward and his followers is that they introduced geography into the discussion on the origins of state. Study of ecological variables has been an important component of the study of the early state ever since.

Scholars like Marvin Harris (Harris 1977) Carneiro (1970) and Morton Fried (1967) have propounded a model of state formation that can be called 'scarcity model'. They start with the assumption that early agricultural societies have an inherent tendency towards population increase. Such population increases sometimes exceed the carrying capacity of land and put pressure on the organisational structure of the society. Fried defined state as the organisation evolved to maintain unequal access to the basic resources. This kind of organisation was preceded by stratification and the emergence of private ownership. The need for unequal access to basic resources occurred because of growing population pressure (ibid.204). Carneiro offers a much more elaborate and sophisticated theory of population growth leading to state formation. He believes that increasing population pressure in a naturally or socially circumscribed region led to war and subjugation of one group by another. This gave rise to social stratification and state. Environmental circumscription occurred when

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6 See the discussion by Robert Fernea in Kraeling and MacAdams (eds.) 1960.
a population lived in an area surrounded by mountains, jungles, deserts or some other natural barrier. Social circumscription occurred when a tribe was surrounded by other groups, so that it did not have the possibility of expansion into new areas in case of population increase. Population kept increasing in the centre, leading to increasing pressure on scarce resources. Beyond a certain point the only possibility of survival was the subjugation of other groups. This process led to the subjugation of all other groups by one group in a particular area (op. cit.). This group became the ruling class of the emergent state society.

The hypotheses outlined above start with the assumption that the neolithic societies have a natural tendency towards population growth. Some ethnographic data have been used to support this hypothesis. For example it has been shown in the case of the !Kung Bushmen that sedentarization leads to the reduction in the artificially maintained longer periods of child birth (Cohen 1979). Similarly, Fried has used material from the Tikopia to show that demographic pressure led them to progressively reduce access to basic resources (Fried 1967:200). Since state has been defined as an organisation created to deprive the larger segment of society from access to basic resources, the Tikopia material has been used to prove that population pressure caused the emergence of state like polities. Fried has also used evidence from the Kachin of Myanmar and other communities in Africa to support his views (Ibid.202-204). Similarly Young has tried to account for the origin of the urban centres in Mesopotamia solely on the basis of population increase (Young 1972). Scholars like Marvin Harris see all pre-modern societies as developing in response to demographic pressure (Harris 1977).
The belief in human reproductive increase outstripping the productive ability is not well founded. Population may or may not increase. It is a social rather than a biological phenomenon. The notion of relentless population increase unresponsive to any other variable is not acceptable to many scholars. "Most of the societies most of the time do not seem to have had over-population problems, and if some societies some of the time had these problems, then the reasons are not self evident." Demographic variables respond to a host of economic, technological, social and ideological factors. In fact during late Roman and early Byzantine periods in both western and eastern Europe there was a sustained population decline (Cawgill 1975).

Certain ethnological and archaeological data also indicate the weakness of 'population increase' hypothesis. In Iran urban development followed a period of depopulation rather than population increase (Wright and Johnson 1975). The Chimbu tribesmen of New Guinea have a population density of 400 persons per square mile. Despite such a high population density they have no social ranking or stratification (Flannery 1979). Many human groups engage in various kinds of practices which maintain the population at a homeostatic level (ibid.). So, increase or decrease in population will have to be explained by its social context. In Mesopotamia, during the early phase of urbanisation, we have evidence of a population shift rather than of population increase (Adams1972). The concept of carrying capacity itself is quite vague. It is not testable. More important is the fact that the selection of the key components of the natural environment at a given state of technology for deciding the carrying capacity of a delimited area is itself arbitrary. In selecting components for the
subsistence system one has to find out what food sources are crucial. This selection means ignoring some important food sources (Brush1975). A food item that is marginal at one time may be decisive for survival at another. A food item available only in small quantities and usually ignored may be the one that at critical moments prevented starvation. There are no fixed variables; rather, there are ranges of variables in subsistence systems. Some of the variables are technological, interactional (exchange factors) ritual and dietary. Even site selection, cutting, burning, cropping, fallowing, use of different kinds of seeds, ground prepration, weeding, harvesting etc, can have significant impact on food production individually and collectively (ibid.).

Curiously enough the hypotheses about population increase and consequent scarcity of natural resources do not indicate how the problem of scarcity of resources was resolved. The ruling elite is normally connected with a luxurious life style and diversion of resources for luxury objects. If a systemic crisis of scarcity was emerging it is not at all clear how this problem would be resolved by the emergence of the state.

Trade symbiosis and war have also been suggested as stimulants for state formation. But they also have been found to be dependant variables. War has been found to occur in pre-state societies and states have been formed where there is no possibility of trade symbiosis (Flannery1979).

In order to develop an approach which specified social determinants in evolution Adams and Flannery have suggested a multi-causal explanation. Adams attacked the simple minded technological determinism of Wittfogel. He emphasised that urban revolution has to
be understood primarily as a change in the realm of social organisation. But partially due to the lack of data and partially because of the kind of material he is handling, he takes recourse to typical cultural materialist position when required to provide his own explanation. So, he also suggests no more than a generalised kind of approach emphasising environmental adaptation, population growth or trade symbiosis as instrumental causes of change. No specific social dynamic is postulated, so that the causes of evolution have to be sought outside the social framework. Flannery's article rejects the cultural materialist position and provides insights into the problem (op.cit.). He uses the concept of control hierarchy applied to various societies. In this scheme the immediate production process is at the lowest level, the goals of production and distribution at the next level and the administrative and ideological maintenance at the third and highest level. He has discussed a number of ways in which control can shift from one level to another. A special purpose institution related to lower level control hierarchy can develop into a general purpose sub-system, due to various kinds of stresses a society undergoes. A war leader might be a minor functionary in a normal situation but in time of war he can become the most important official. Similarly, irrigation control may be taken over by higher levels of control hierarchy in certain situations. The evolution of certain institutions from system serving (special purpose) to self serving (general purpose) puts additional stress on the system. This might lead to establishment of yet another special purpose institution. This process of segregation and centralisation leads to state formation.

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7 See Adams (1966). For a critique of his hypotheses see the review by Wittfogel in American Anthropologist No. 69, 1967 and the introductory chapter of Friedman and Rowlands 1978.
Thus, any one of the variables like population growth, social circumscription, warfare, irrigation, trade symbiosis, can lead to change. Flannery's model clearly indicates the weaknesses of the cultural materialist approach by showing that evolution can be directed from above. But as in the case of Adams' model the evolutionary mechanisms that are sought to account for changes are something external to the system. Be it warfare or be it irrigation, the social system does not seem to contain in itself the social properties which would account for the actual forms of control and their evolution. "What evolves is social structure and not functional hierarchies" (Friedman and Rowlands 1978).

A very useful model of state formation has been provided by Friedman and Rowlands (1978). They criticised the cultural ecological understanding of pre modern societies. Since cultural ecologists defined societies as ecological units, exchange has no role in social transformation. Friedman and Rowlands argued that understanding the process of social reproduction provides a better insight into the understanding of social evolution. Social reproduction of even the most archaic communities is related to food production on the one hand and marriage relations with other groups on the other. Since kinship is the basis of the circulation of women as well as goods, exchange and production are inextricably bound together. Social transformations need to be located in this web of relationships. As such, this model effectively denies the validity of the cultural ecological understanding of social change. We shall briefly discuss their model.

The tribal system's basic production and exchange units are local lineages. While domestic units form the units of production in these societies, women are exchanged with
other similar groups for their biological reproduction. Exchange of goods also occurs along the kinship network. The structure linking production and exchange determines the specificity of the tribal system. Economic activity in these systems is directly related to the super-natural. A local lineage which produces a surplus is able to convert it into a community feast in which prestige is gained, because the production of such surplus is considered the bounty of the gods. As influence is defined in terms of genealogical proximity to the god and the founder ancestor, the particular lineage will be considered an older lineage, a direct descendant of the founder ancestor. Such a lineage would give its women to other lower status groups in exchange for a bride price which is commensurate with the high prestige of the wife giver. Thus, differences in prestige are continually converted into the relative ranking of the lineage through asymmetric alliance. These alliances generate a flow of bride price, debt payments and food at matrimonial and funeral ceremonies and various other kinds of services from the lower to the higher ranking lineage. In this way surplus produced by certain lineages leads in turn to increased control over the labour and produce of other groups. In favourable circumstances, the relative affinal rank turns into an absolute one, in course of time. The chief is considered a direct descendant of the territorial deity. As a living lineage occupies the position of mediator between the gods and other lineages, it receives tribute and corvee as the cost of performing functions necessary for the welfare of the community as a whole. In this way the chief acquires control over the labour of the community.

The upper strata show their status through the possession of valuables brought in exchange from distant neighbours. The higher the ranking, the wider the exchange network
i.e. the chiefs have access to valuable goods from the greatest distance. Thus, we have a situation where the leadership continually generates the surplus to get valuables in exchange. Thus, the extension of control over local labour goes hand in hand with an expanding network. The development of rank itself becomes the development of the productive force.

The conical clan structure leads to a hierarchical ranking system which is absolute. Economic flows along the affinal and feasting relations are converted into vertical tributary relations. Thus, we have a typical segmented hierarchy in which the ruler has absolute monopoly of the highest deity. This has been called the 'Asiatic state' by the writers. The emergent class formation is that of the king and a quasi-sacred aristocracy on the one hand, and commoner lineages, increasingly excluded from rituals, and slaves, produced by debt and capture, on the other. In the 'Asiatic state' nobles become the channel through which the local economic surplus is transferred to the king. The local produce grows because the nobility demands more of it for its rituals and feasts which is the basis of its power. In order to meet their increasing need for various kinds of valuables, the powerful nobles bring in craft specialists from different areas to their own settlement. Thus, the 'Asiatic state' sees the beginning of craft specialisation. Craft specialisation does not emerge as a result of any technological innovation but as a result of relocation of craftspersons in one centralised area. Inter regional exchange develops markedly in this period for the rulers need exotic objects for

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8 We are not clear why the authors have chosen the term "Asiatic state" for this level of development.
burials, rituals etc.

The prestige goods economy of the 'Asiatic state' is further elaborated in the 'dualistic state'. The prestige goods economy itself undermines its source of control based on genealogical proximity to the deities. Centres producing prestige goods ultimately shift to a new form of control which is based on their economic power. Monopoly over the sources of prestige items is a new form of control which is different from the control based on genealogical proximity to deities. In the power structure of the dualistic states there are two parallel sources of authority - one based on ritual proximity to the deities and the other based on economic control over production of valuables. In this kind of system there is a large scale increase in production of valuables. This causes a high demand for labour. Thus, there is large scale import of labour from neighbouring groups. That is why we find evidences of some kind of population explosion in the political centres in this historical phase. The emergence of political elites mutually dependent on each other for valuables leads to the emergence of large political centres.

The next phase called 'Territorial and city states' emerges out of the expansion of the prestige goods system. The increasing demand for prestige goods itself fosters the possibility of centres producing those items, becoming more important bases of power. Higher demand leads to increasing regional division of labour. The sub centre might become economically more important than the politically dominant centre. Thus, the political hierarchy might break down into a number of centres competing over labour and land. This leads to conflict among the states, and in this phase fortified cities appear.
The emerging administrative institutions focus their activities on long distance trade as their political structure is dependent on external trade. They have to organise production, ensure supplies of raw materials and food. The growing external trade fosters a new division of labour. The increase in external trade depends upon the capacity of the system to maintain an increasing number of non-food producers. We have the evidence of abandonment of dispersed settlements and nucleation around the urban centres. Of course this nucleation itself might depend on some techno-environmental factors. The emergence of urban territorial states as a whole depend on competition for labour, land and external trade among competing units. Similarly, the possibility of intensive farming provides a spur to nucleation. The emergence of the territorial state is characterised by a fully developed areal economy in which the local centres become dependent upon the production of a wider area.

The model provides interesting insights into the process of state formation. It does not talk about technology as an independent variable, rather it talks about compatible autonomous structures like ecosystem, kinship and relations of production. Except in a limiting sense, it finds no correlation between technology and the social forms of appropriation of nature. Rather it is believed that there is a gap between the actual production and the potential productivity of a given level of technology. Social structures can harness a given technology to produce more food. Such an analysis would give considerable autonomy to the process of the evolution of the state in different societies. However, the writers introduce many sub stages in the evolution of state. This is useful in an analytical sense but it also obfuscates the contrasts between state and the preceding social formations. It provides insights and details
about the processes of the formation of the apparatus of the state. Also, theories analysing evolution of societies in systemic terms are being increasingly questioned. This model assumes the unfolding of a evolutionary plan which is directional, sequential and cumulative. None of these implicit assumptions might bear scrutiny. Systemic categories reify social systems and try to explain changes in terms of the needs of the system. System analysts assume that they have grasped the social reality in its totality. Scholars are increasingly questioning system analysts' capacity to grasp the total reality. They would rather concentrate on the activities of the real human actors and their motives in bringing about changes.

The general model presented above does not apply directly to empirical situations. There will be space variants according to particular geographical settings. Nevertheless those variants generated by local settings should be considered regional specificities of general processes underlined in the model. In the following section we shall try to work out certain identifiable processes and traits associated with pre-urban and urban societies.

In tribal society, settlements should be small and almost equal in size. They should be uniformly distributed without any settlement hierarchy. The individual household units would also be of roughly equivalent size but there will be at least one larger structure having stronger ritual importance. Minor ritual remains like clay figurines, hearths, pottery etc. can be expected from all the houses. However, evidences for the ritual activity focussing on fertility, prosperity and ancestor-worship are likely to be variable for various units depending on the position of the occupants in the segmentary hierarchy. The evidence for increasing control over the religious affairs of the community can be found in redistribution and ritual
feasting. There will be evidence for the exclusive control of elite over high status goods. They are used mostly for burials and ritual offerings. The art forms are generally abstract and geometric.

The "Asiatic state" is characterised by the emergence of monumental buildings which indicates the absolute ranking and the emerging class structure of society. A two tiered settlement hierarchy would emerge. There should be evidences of increase in rural population and concentration of craft specialists in the centre. There would be evidence for long distance trade and conspicuous consumption of luxury items among the elite groups. Shang China and late Ubaid and early Uruk in Mesopotamia provide examples of this type of social organisation.

The next phase which sees a more clear cut separation of religious and secular structures was marked by an increase in specialised craft production. The direct control exercised by the religious political hierarchy led to greater uniformity in craft products. One would expect high status items described throughout the political hierarchy. There would be an increase in long distance trade. There should be evidence of a reorganisation of function at the centre due to the emerging dualism in religion and polity. Along with religious architecture there would be evidence for the construction of storage, administrative, and other secular public buildings. The western Chou period and middle and late Uruk period were examples of this phase of development. This phase saw the emergence of three to four tiered hierarchies of settlement.  

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9 Wright and Johnson (1975) have taken the formation of three to four tiered settlement hierarchies as indicative of the emergence of the state. They have shown that there was a decline of population before the emergence of urban society. The present interpretation indicates that the collapse of population itself was the result of increased warfare and demand.
The full flowering of the city state phase showed evidence of a rapid nucleation of population. The residential areas would be divided into numerous wards having smaller temples and public buildings. Evidence of commerce, markets, mediums of exchange, secular kingship and oligarchic control over large landed estates and dependant labour class will be found. An increased emphasis on warfare also characterises this phase. Separate administrative complexes and palaces will be found which indicate the emergence of secular kingship. This kind of social structure is found in Eastern Chou period in China and early dynastic period in Mesopotamia.

One major problem with systemic approaches is that they abolish the role of action oriented understanding of change. As has been pointed out (Sewell 1992) states are consciously established, maintained, fought over, and argued about rather than taken for granted. It is with this understanding that we can make better use of systemic models.

When such sophistication has been achieved in the theoretical understanding of urbanism and archaeology has also taken tremendous strides in the direction of identifying societal developments, where does Indian archaeology stand? We have not been able to work out the transition from chiefdom to urban societies, let alone divide them into various sub-phases as Friedman and Rowlands have done.

As stated in the beginning the present study deals with the beginning of urbanism in the Malwa region. In our view, for regional studies on urbanization, a useful beginning would be an understanding of the emergence of urban centres in a cultural- ecological perspective. Cultural ecology is defined as human adaptation to the natural environment and the

for labour by the emerging state authority.
surrounding people with whom they are in contact, in the light of their historical experiences (Service 1971: 5-14). It has been observed that the cultural ecological approach does not provide explanation for changes occurring due to migration, war, disease, climatic changes and many other factors. These variables surely cannot be ignored when one is examining the process of social change. However, the historical processes by which a society acquires many of its basic traits are complementary to studies of adaptive processes. There are extensive borrowings of many cultural traits and trait complexes from diverse sources. But every community has to come to terms with the environment (Steward 1979). Since adaptation to the environment is a continuing process, migration or other such factors of cultural change are small episodes in the panorama of societal development. That is why, a proper understanding of the environmental setting is essential to the study of social change. We shall be making an in-depth study of the preceding neolithic and chalcolithic cultures in their ecological settings and try to assess their contribution to the emergence of urban centres in the region selected for study. In so doing we shall be examining the exchange networks which existed even before the coming of the urban phase. Of course the hotly debated topic of the relationship between technological change and urbanisation will not be totally ignored. Furthermore, we shall be looking into the diverse forms of adaptation to micro-environmental zones i.e. the existence of hunter gatherers, agriculturists and pastoral-nomads and the symbiotic interaction among these communities. This will lead us to an examination of evidence which may be culled from relevant literature.

We have, however, to concede that our sources for the study of the process of urbanisation are not too encouraging. Compared to the Ganga valley, the Malwa region is
certainly better explored, and excavation reports from sites like Maheswar and Navdatoli can give us some idea of the pre-urban cultures in the region. However, for the urban phase, except for the reports from sites like Ujjain, Mandasaur etc. we know very little to fall back on. The excavations for the urban phase are vertical in nature. They do not give us any idea of the settlement patterns within the city. Very many sites belonging to the urban phase have been explored, but their dating remains suspect. The reports do not indicate whether the sites belonged to the early phase of urbanism or the later phase. For a geographical perspective on urbanisation one needs an understanding of the interaction among various sites since they affect each other's location and size. Cities do not grow in a vacuum, rather, their existence is predicated upon an articulation of a set of relationships with the surrounding areas (hinterland). Unfortunately, no such study of the settlement pattern exists. No attempts have been made for site catchment analysis either.

We face similar problems in discussing the literary sources. References to the Malwa region are very few in the early literature. Besides, the dating of these texts is suspect. In the later phases there are very many references to cities like Ujjain. Kalidasa's Meghadūtam, Skanda and Shiva Purāṇas in particular have glowing descriptions of this place. But they belong to a much later period and can only be of partial value to us. We shall also use the ethnographic studies done for this area though, they are very few. So far very little attention has been given to studying the patterns of interaction among various tribal groups and the peasant communities. Also these studies have not been done with ecology in mind so that the relation of the tribal communities with their surroundings is not focussed upon.

The handicaps we face in the study of the beginnings of urbanism in the Malwa region
should not prevent us from formulating hypotheses. Such an attempt is long overdue. The phase of 'sherds and patches' archaeology has lasted too long and there is a need to come out of 'Wheeler's trenches'. We have to make a beginning with whatever data we have, since, there will never be too little information to formulate hypotheses nor will there ever be too much of data to arrive at 'objective history'. We can remember the memorable preface of Marc Bloch to his study of French rural history:

There are moments in the development of a subject when a synthesis, however premature it may appear, can contribute more than a host of analytical studies, in other words there are times when for once the formulations of problems is more urgent than their solution... The gaps in my account are naturally enormous. I have done my best not to conceal any deficiencies... When the time comes for my own work to be superseded by studies of deeper penetration, I shall feel well rewarded if confrontation with my false conjectures has made history learn the truth about herself. (Bloch 1978)