

Liam Matthew Brockey (Ed). *Portuguese Colonial Cities in the Early Modern World*. Surrey: Ashgate. 2008. xvi + 282 pp.

My interest in this book comes from my involvement in, and study of, various cities created as focal points of early Portuguese mercantilism and later colonialism – having lived and worked in (and written about) Maputo for several decades, and worked in, or studied, Luanda, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador da Bahia, amongst other such urban areas. As an architect/planner and social scientist I am particularly interested in early Portuguese urbanism – starting in the mercantile period from the 16th century – and how in fact this later changed in the middle and late colonial periods, deeply imprinting itself physically on such cities even today, despite current rapid urbanisation and change. While there is a substantive literature on such early Portuguese urbanism – generally comparative with Spanish colonial urbanism – which highlights the less ‘formal’ nature of this urban development, in the sense of geometrical order, less is written about how such urban spaces were in fact created and developed socially, including what concerns their governance. This is of contemporary relevance, as the emerging urban areas worldwide today are mostly in overall lower-income parts of the globe, where the concepts of ‘formal order’ are – and will continue to be – severely challenged¹. Hence my interest was raised to review a book where the “... contributions focus on the social, political and economic aspects of city life in settlements as far apart as Rio de Janeiro, Mozambique Island, and Nagasaki”. My focus on contemporary (and future) urban space and form requires an understanding of context – the political and economic ‘structural’ context which produced such urban spaces – and the social and cultural ‘agency’ which has in turn shaped their form. This entails an historical analysis.

In the light of this, it should thus be said that I read this book (mostly) twice – as on first reading its strictly historicist focus left me with as many queries as answers. Hence it did not in itself provide the overview I sought – but did point me in the direction of a more comprehensive overview (especially C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, 1969) which provided this wider embed-

¹ See Jenkins & Williams (forthcoming, UK: Routledge) for a fuller discussion of this.

ding for the archival-based detailed reported in the book's chapters. It was thus possible to return to the book, and some parts more so than others, to re-read the rich detail which the authors provide. The book is avowedly targeted at urban historians, and hence rather specialised, but does contain material of interest to other scholarly discourses such as my own – and thus serves as an important access route to such detailed contextualisation of early forms of (colonial) urbanism. Some chapters are more communicative of the detail within context than others, and hence more amenable to wider use – and perhaps therefore also to readers of this journal.

The book's genesis was a conference hosted at Princeton University's Center for Historical Studies in 2004, and the book is published within an Ashgate series entitled 'Empires and the Making of the Modern World 1650-2000' – which "seeks to explore the complexities of the relationships among empires, modernity and global history" and "...in so doing ... to challenge the orthodoxy that the experience of modernity was located exclusively in the West". The book has a useful introduction by the editor, indicating the rationale for dividing this volume into three themes: Religion and Empire; Cities and Commerce; and Politics of Empire – and hence avoiding the more usual geographical organisation. The first two sections have three chapters and the last, four chapters. Authors are historians in the USA, Portugal, the UK, France, Italy and Spain. While the thematic organisation is upheld in the chapters' principal focus, and each tends to have a geographical focus, most chapters include material of relevance to other themes and places.

Overall the book provides detail on the socio-economic and political life in these early global cities – demonstrating the often differential emphasis between local agency and Portuguese centralism, with 'local' contexts impinging significantly in many cases. They thus illustrate essential tensions between the structural realities of local and imperial political economies, and the agency of the residents, with a focus on Portuguese settlers and their descendants. The role of Portuguese institutions such as state religious institutions, charitable and commercial institutions, and governance institutions is the main focus. The material in the first section covers ranges from the treatment of Jews across the empire; through the tensions between Jesuits and local governing institutions in Salvador, Brazil; to the role of Catholicism as a focal imperial manifestation in Japan. The second section discusses the macro-regional and local *entrepôt* role of Mozambique Island vis-à-vis empire and hinterland; the basis for economic regeneration in the Provinces of the North (India), despite emerging Asian and European challenges; and the economic role the charitable institution *Santa Casa*

da Misericórdia served in Macao. The third section examines how local government institutions based on metropolitan models were transferred and adapted in Bahia, reflecting tensions between imperial and local power bases; contrasted with local governance and physical decline in Goa, despite efforts to 'plan' its regeneration; the role of the first academies in colonial Brazil and their shift of emphasis to local as opposed to metropolitan culture; and social miscegenation which was deeply embedded in Angolan society in Luanda.

As noted above, for this reviewer, certain chapters provide more detail as to how urban space and form was produced through political, economic, social and cultural dynamics – although overall the focus on the institutions per se, has left the study of these connections aside. Given that there is a substantial historical analysis of the early (and later) colonial Lusophone urban space and form, there thus still seems to be gap in relating this literature to that which this book represents of social institutional history (at least as far as the reviewer is aware). In conclusion, the book is well written, but for an urban social historical audience, particularly one interested in early forms of globalisation. It tends to focus on the 'trees' instead of the wider 'wood', although it complements other literature in this respect in its new archival detail. Ideally more inter-disciplinary work between social historians and those interested in the physical city (typically architects, planners and geographers) can help link the spatial and formal aspects of early urbanism with the study of the institutions which helped create and maintain these. This, I believe, is important as we face urban futures where post-Enlightenment forms of urban order are significantly challenged – not in that there can be any simple extraction from any construction of the past, but in inculcating an understanding that other social and institutional forms of urbanism – i.e. urbanism as a process – are fundamentally more important than the physical manifestation of urbanism as a product.

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