

Globalization and the City:

Two Connected Phenomena in Past and Present

Andreas Exenberger, Philipp Strobl, Günter Bischof and James Mokhiber
(eds.)

With contributions by Günter Bischof, Andreas Dibiasi, Robert Dupont,
Andreas Exenberger, Erik Gilbert, Beate Löffler, Manfred Kohler, Franz
Mathis, James Mokhiber, Robert Musil, Christof Parnreiter, Philipp
Strobl, Tobias Töpfer and Brigitte Truschnegg.

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The Phenomenon of Global Cities in the Ancient World

Brigitte Truschneegg

Introduction

This chapter looks at selected cities of the ancient world and asks if any of them could be defined as “global cities”, a term from contemporary urban research. Following introductory remarks concerning definitions, source materials, perspective and research, I will examine the similarities and differences of the well-known ancient cities of Alexandria, Carthage, Babylon, Athens and Rome to present day global cities.¹

What Makes a Global City, and What Conditions in Antiquity Require Special Consideration?

The organizers of the conference from which this book developed have described global cities as cities “where globalization takes place in much more pronounced ways than anywhere else: as economic exchange, migration, communication, technological development and political conflict, as cultures clashing and amalgamating, and also as a violent process”.²

¹ I have been researching the perception and the prestige of ancient cities in Greek and Latin literature for some time; therefore, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to the interdisciplinary conference on which this volume is based. For help in translation, I thank Kate Carabona!

² <http://www.uibk.ac.at/fakultaeten/vwl/forschung/wsg/symp11.html> (accessed 1 Jul 2012).

The term *global city* as it was introduced and understood by Saskia Sassen in 1991 has been expanded from its original strictly economic definition to include the economic, political and cultural importance of a global center.³ If global cities are currently understood to be centers of importance for large parts of the world,⁴ the definition of “global” when applied to ancient cities must refer to the world as it was then known. In addition to this restriction, we also must deal briefly with the term “city”.

What Defines a Global City from Today's Perspective and to What Extent Do Ancient Cities Meet These Criteria?

In classical studies and contemporary urban studies, statistically quantifiable terms (e.g. town, city, megacity), functional terms (i.e. capital city, residential city, diocesan city) or terms of settlement typology (e.g. rural town, seaside town) predominantly describe the scale, function, character and importance of an urban settlement.⁵

Classical scholars frequently ask what criteria define ancient cities, but their answers are either too general or extremely restricted due to the historically and culturally different forms of settlements. Historian and sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) understood the ancient city to be a self-regulated market and/or a political-administrative center.⁶ Franz Kolb expanded this definition in 1984 to include typological and functional aspects of a settlement, describing a city as “a place where the material, intellectual accomplishments of human civilization appear in a compressed form and from which the political, social, economic and intellectual-cultural activities of a society are controlled”.⁷

In recent years, studies on the city as a field of human experiences have expanded to include social-psychological approaches, which put more emphasis on the self-perception of the urban population.⁸ The urban character of the cities discussed here includes several relevant aspects such as size, politics, culture, economic importance

³ Sassen (1991).

⁴ Like the GaWC (Globalization and World Cities Research Network), see <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc> (accessed 1 Jul 2012).

⁵ Kolb (1984), 11-17.

⁶ Weber (2000[1922]), especially 1-34.

⁷ Kolb (1984), 11 (translation by the author). He added the following criteria: the unity of a settlement, a population of more than 1,000 inhabitants, central administrative and economic functions for the surrounding territory, diversity of architecture, division of labor and social stratification; Kolb (1984), 15.

⁸ Falk (2005), 1-24.

for the surrounding area etc.; nevertheless, we must acknowledge that we do not have a specific and all-embracing definition of a city.

Urban Research in Classical Studies

Contemporary research in the field exemplifies the diversity of urban research. In recent years, a large number of specific studies have appeared on various cities⁹, either covering the entire development of the city or a specific period of time.¹⁰ In addition, scholars have analyzed cities with regard to the different cultural spheres and the locations,¹¹ and they have examined cultural, geographical or periodic specifications.¹² They have done extensive research on urban life in general, home decor, working life etc. Still other scholars have focused on urban life as seen from the perspective of individual social groups such as slaves or local elites.¹³ When we try to integrate ancient cities, current issues¹⁴ and contemporary terminology – as I will in this chapter – we see interesting parallels. At the same time, this approach sharpens our understanding of the diversity of cities in different historical periods.

Source Material

We have basically two groups of sources for research on ancient cities: written sources (e.g. literature, inscriptions, coins, papyri) and archaeological sources (e.g. sacred and secular architecture, objects of art and everyday life, settlement structures). The archaeological materials provide information about the particular building structure and the settlement expansion, which, in turn, allow us to draw conclusions about the composition of the population and its density.

⁹ E.g. Habicht (1995) about Athens in the Hellenistic period; Mertens (2003) and Helas (2011) on Selinus/Sicily; Wenning (2002) on Petra/Jordan; Berges (2006) on Cnidus/Greece; Eck (2004) on Cologne/Germany; Kenzler (2007) on Ephesos/Turkey; Beard (2009) on Pompeji; Kolb (2002) and Ziemssen (2010) on Rome etc.

¹⁰ E.g. Krause/Witschel (2006) on cities in late antiquity; Matthai/Zimmermann (2009) on images of cities in Hellenistic period.

¹¹ Mertens/Schützenberger (2006) on the cities in the Magna Graecia to 400 BC; Schwertheim/Winter (2003) on urban development in Minor Asia.

¹² E.g. Erath (1997) on the presentation of cities in Greek pictorial art; Brands/Severin (2003) on the Christianization of the late antique city.

¹³ E.g. Weiß (2004) on the situation of slaves in the city; Panzram (2007) on the structural representation of local elites in cities of the Iberian Peninsula; Goodman (2007) on Rome and its periphery; Matthai/Zimmermann (2009) on the way of life in a Hellenistic polis.

¹⁴ E.g. Truschnegg (2011) on the role of the ancient city as a cultural asset; Freitag (2008) on the problem of shrinking cities in Ancient Greece.

Written sources, literary and non-literary, provide descriptions of physical urban structures and a variety of information on economic, political, social or cultural specifications of the city and its residents. Furthermore, they address the importance of the city and the expectations associated with it and, by comparing it to other cities, provide a larger historical context.

Our interpretation of these sources depends on several factors: state of preservation, fragmentation, tradition, subjectivity and cultural specificity of the original written sources, plus the situation and cultural interpretation of archaeological research.

Selection of Cities – A Matter of Perspective and Criteria

I chose the cities for this study (Alexandria, Carthage, Babylon, Athens and Rome) according to several criteria. Cities appropriate for such a comparison should have a certain density of population; they should be urban centers at the intersection of global networks in the world as it was known at that time. These cities' importance and impact extended, for varying lengths of time, far beyond their particular historical period.

Geographically, the cities are primarily located in the south and east of the Mediterranean region and in the Ancient Near East. Chronologically, they occupy about 1,000 years between the fifth century BC and the fifth century AD and include two fundamental features: an extended time period and a wide geographical range. These features caused great cultural diversity and have contributed to the development of different perspectives in and about ancient times. The diversity of cultural identities has been an important subject in recent studies.¹⁵

The cities covered in this chapter reflect a western perspective derived from the written and material culture of classical antiquity, Christianity and the scientific debate that has dominated the western world. From the perspective of Ancient Near Eastern written and archaeological sources or from an Islamic cultural background one could have included cities such as Assur, Nineveh, Seleucia/Ctesiphon on the Tigris, or Antioch on the Orontes.

¹⁵ On cultural identity in the Ancient Mediterranean, see Gruen (2011); fundamental on the diversity of the perception and cognition of space see Downs/David (1982).

My research is based on the perception of cities in Greek and Latin historiography and thus conveys a western perspective, of which I am well aware.¹⁶ Greek and Roman sources are marked by ethnocentrism and an accompanying pejorative description of the ‘Other’ and ‘strangers’, which is also reflected in the scientific debate.¹⁷ It is also important to point out the diachronic perspectives of ancient and contemporary urban perception. Aware of these special conditions, I will apply a contemporary framework of criteria to urban structures from the first millennium AD.

Ancient Cities of “Far-reaching Political, Economic and Cultural Significance”?

The following ancient cities have been examined to determine if they are examples of “far-reaching political, economic and cultural significance”: Alexandria/Egypt, Babylon/Mesopotamia, Athens/Greece, Carthage/Africa and Rome/Italy. All these cities were powerful political centers over differing periods of time. We now need to determine whether they were examples of economic and cultural centers as well, and, if they were, whether their importance and impact extended beyond their own time and territory. Were they “global” in ancient times in the way today’s global cities are? In order to answer that question, we need to look at a brief description of the cities and evaluate the importance and symbolic value of their urban design.¹⁸

Alexandria

Located in the Nile Delta of Egypt, near the Egyptian village of Rhakotis, the city of Alexandria was founded in 332/31 BC by Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) and designed by the Rhodian architect Deinocrates.¹⁹ A causeway connected the city with the Island of Pharos, which had an offshore lighthouse (destroyed in the fourteenth century) and two harbors. Since the time of Ptolemy I (367-283 BC), a great wall protected the city, which was divided into five districts. Orthogonal streets criss-

¹⁶ For his helpful advice and a critical reading of the manuscript, I thank Robert Rollinger.

¹⁷ Generally on guidelines in ancient ethnographic texts see Müller (1972); Harrison (2002), 1-8; Construction of the ‘Other’ see Nippel (2002); an example on the ‘decadence’ of the Persians in Greek sources see Briant (2002).

¹⁸ Cf. Döring/Thielmann (2008), 7-14; on the function and meaning of architecture, especially in the cultural exchange see Pirson/Wulf-Rheidt (2008), 312-319.

¹⁹ Specifically: Fraser (2001); Grimm (1998); generally: Jansen-Winkel (1996); for the history of reception see Dally (1999), 13 and 63-71.

crossed the city, which, for ancient times, were quite large; the east-west street, used for processions, was 30 meters wide and 7 kilometers long and ran through the city center. An extensive palace was located at the eastern port.

Due to destruction, overbuilding and the natural change in water level, archaeological knowledge of the city is very incomplete; almost nothing recognizable remains of the ancient city. The city itself was both geographically and administratively a foreign city in its own country (one sector of the city was a Greek polis)²⁰ and was therefore referred to in ancient sources as “Alexandria near Egypt”.

Foundation with Far-ranging Consequences

The establishment of Alexandria marks the beginning of the Hellenistic period, which is considered the culmination of Greek urban culture.²¹ The Hellenistic kings following Alexander the Great played an important role in the founding of cities and in the building of architectural features; through this, they continued the policies of Alexander the Great. The settlements of the Greeks and Macedonians formed military and administrative bases and ‘islands of Greek civilization’. Usually, Greeks constituted the leading social group of these newly founded cities, and the Greek language became both the official language and the *lingua franca*. The Egyptian city Alexandria and the Syrian city Antioch on the Orontes were the end points of a major trade route leading from Central Asia to the Mediterranean. As centers of a large hinterland, they had greater opportunities for expansion than the major cities of Greece and those of the Aegean region. Alexandria served as a model of urban planning for other cities which were founded following Alexander the Great, for example Seleucia on the Tigris,²² built around 300 BC by Seleucus I (358-281 BC), or Antioch on the Orontes, the second capital of the Seleucid Empire.²³

²⁰ Kolb (1984), 84.

²¹ Cf. Kolb (1984), 121-126.

²² Seleucia had a turbulent history and is definitely an example of a city in ancient times with far-ranging importance in the ancient Near East. It was captured in the second century BC by the Parthians and destroyed in the middle of the second Century AD by the Romans. The Parthians developed Ctesiphon as a residence opposite Seleucia. The combined cities Seleucia/Ctesiphon probably had 500,000 inhabitants in the time of the Sassanids (Second Persian Empire 224-662 AD).

²³ Kolb (1984), 126.

Alexandria grew rapidly if the estimated population figures are correct.²⁴ In the beginning of the third century BC, the city had approximately 100,000 inhabitants; in the Roman Imperial period, it had almost 300,000 (Diodorus 17,52).²⁵ By comparison, approximately 100,000 inhabitants have been calculated for Antioch Carthage or Constantinople during the same period. A later source from the twelfth century that used ancient templates mentions 47,000 homes in Alexandria. The city obviously attracted people from different backgrounds. The largest population groups were Greeks, Macedonians, Jews, Egyptians and Syrians. In addition, Persians, Ethiopians, Arabs, Indians and Italians have been mentioned.

Politics – Economy – Science

Politically, Alexandria took over the role as a royal residence between 320 and 311 BC and replaced Memphis, which is unfavourably located south of the coast, in this function. From a structural perspective, the architecture of the Palace District (Brouchion) bears witness to the city's importance as a royal residence.

Economically, Alexandria became a far-ranging economic center by trading the Egyptian agricultural surplus and perfumes as well as raw-material from India and Arabia. Alexandria was the trading hub for cereals, handicrafts, textiles, glass, etc. for the entire Mediterranean region. Papyri report that, in the middle of the third century BC, so many foreign traders stayed in the town that currency exchange problems arose.²⁶

Culturally, Alexandria was a center of science and research for the entire Mediterranean region. The Museion of Alexandria included a library of 900,000 scrolls and employed teachers with fixed salaries, especially in the fields of natural sciences,

²⁴ Cf. Kolb (1984), 124.

²⁵ Determining exact population numbers poses several problems, which are indicated here briefly: (1) The almost total lack of statistical data and a lack of interest by ancient sources in these questions has resulted in a serious shortage of information. The existing sources often do not include all the inhabitants inside a city but concentrate on some social groups, e.g. citizens. (2) Using residential buildings as a source for residential density is difficult. Housing was often constructed from less durable materials and was not always the focus of archaeological research. (3) Numerical data from literary sources often seems to be problematic. This results in significant differences in the determination of specific population figures in the research literature. On difficulties and specific examples, see Oliver (2007), 74ff.; Freitag (2008), 2; comprehensive: Scheidel (2001); critically: Mathis (2011), 109-111. In contrast, other researchers suggest in the zenith of Alexandria up to one million people, see Jansen-Winkel (1996), 465.

²⁶ See generally to Alexandria: Clauss (2004); Kolb (1984), 124.

mathematics and literature (the Greek Septuagint translation of the bible originates in Alexandria).²⁷ During Roman times, as a pool of intellectual and political movements, Alexandria was also a center of (Anti-Roman) uprisings and ethnic clashes. Ancient sources reflect the impressive development of Alexandria. Diodorus of Sicily, an author from the first century BC, recorded the perception of Alexandria as follows in his 40 books on universal history:

“The city in general grew so much in later times that many considered it to be the first city of the civilized world, and it was certainly far ahead of all the rest in elegance and size and riches and luxury.”²⁸

As we have seen, it is possible to identify several aspects of Alexandria that allow comparing it to a *global city*.



Figure 1: City Map of the Ancient City of Alexandria²⁹

²⁷ Grimm (1998), 45-51.

²⁸ Diodorus 17,52,5.

²⁹ Ameling et al. (2006), 71 (picture: Peter Palm, Berlin).

Babylon

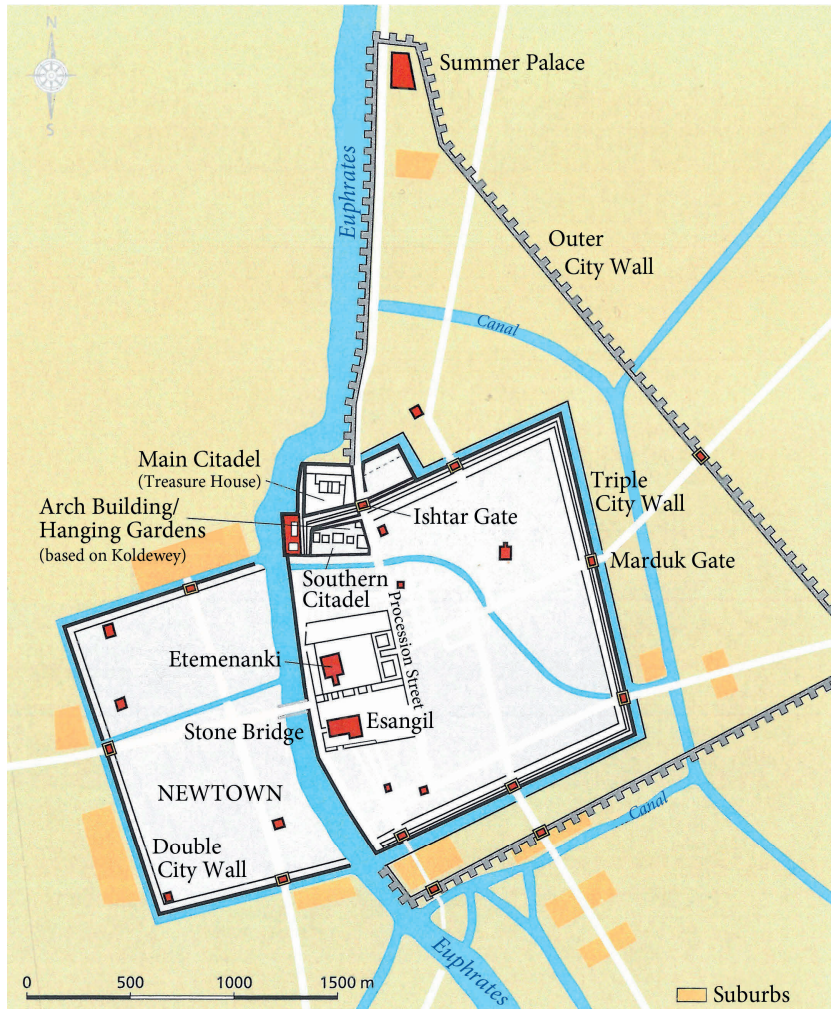


Figure 2: City Map of Babylon³⁰

The Mesopotamian city of Babylon plays a significant role in the perception of cities in antiquity. At the beginning of the second millennium BC, the city on the Euphrates

³⁰ Ameling et al. (2006), 21 (picture: Peter Palm, Berlin).

south of today's Baghdad was built as the capital of Babylonia by King Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC). Under his reign, Babylon expanded to become the political, cultural and religious center of the Ancient Near East. The city experienced a second boom after the destruction of the Assyrian Empire in the sixth century BC. The Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II (604-561 BC) made this city the commercial and intellectual capital of his empire. The Neo-Babylonian rulers built great palaces influenced by the Assyrian models. At the same time, they preserved the tradition of Mesopotamian temple structures. This period of urban development will be a strong focus for possible matches with a *global city*.

Babylon boasted important monuments,³¹ the most famous probably being the Etemenanki, a ziggurat (terraced tower) with a presumed height of 96 feet, better known as the so-called "Tower of Babel".³² An inner ring wall enclosed a rectangle with an area of 405 hectares, an outer ring wall an area of 1,000 hectares. The city itself was divided by the river Euphrates, and the temple of the city god Marduk (Esagil) stood east of the river next to the famous tower. Palaces and administrative buildings were located in the north. The famous royal processional way ran along the river and through the Ishtar Gate to the New Year's temple outside the city. The entire city formed a symmetrical grid with eight gates and main roads at right angles.

Political – Economic – Cultural

Politically, Babylon undoubtedly constituted an urban power center in terms of planning and demographics. The city was a political-administrative and cultic center from the Old-Babylonian through the Neo-Babylonian Empire. From the eighteenth century BC to the foundation of Seleucia in 300 BC, the city of Babylon was the leading and most important city in this area.³³ The political dominance of Babylon resulted in the rise of the city god Marduk to the top of the Mesopotamian pantheon. Political and ritual actions were closely linked, and the king of Babylon led the annual New Year celebration in honor of Marduk. This feast day demonstrated the far-ranging and long-term significance of Babylon because every king in power between 1300 and 224 BC, including Kassites, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks, attempted to participate.

³¹ In the following: Van de Mierop (1999), 86-91.

³² *Genesis* 11,1-9.

³³ Cf. Van de Mierop (1999), 224-225.

Babylon was also an economic center that managed the temple economy (especially date plantations), the palace economy, surplus agricultural products (export) from the hinterland and significantly shaped the economy of the entire empire. Trade included the import of metals, wood, luxury goods, spices, lapis lazuli and incense, and the trading routes went from the Persian Gulf and Arabia to the Anatolian-Syrian-Palestinian area to Afghanistan.³⁴

Babylon was a center of science, especially in the field of astronomy and divination (i.e. the ability to read divine signs and practice rituals for favorable effect). In Assyrian times, a network of observation points was installed around the country to observe celestial signs. Between the middle of the seventh to the middle of the first century BC, the Astronomical Diaries effectively provided the basic materials for mathematical astronomy. The Roman author Pliny reported in the first century AD in his books on natural history that Babylon was in ruins, except for the temple of Jupiter Belus (corresponds to Marduk), where the astronomical school continued.³⁵ Van de Mieroop describes the importance of science in the context of the city's significance as follows: "Cosmogonic myths do not focus on the creation of natural phenomena and man's environment, but on the organization of the environment, especially the establishment of cities for man to live in."³⁶

In the Neo-Babylonian period, Babylon again became the cultural center of Mesopotamia as evidenced by a revival of Sumerian-Old Babylonian traditions, epic poetry, mathematical tradition, etc.³⁷ Science was closely linked with the temple and the royal ideology. The city played a fundamental role in the understanding of culture in general.

"The urban background had a strong impact on the culture in general. The outlook on the world centered on the city, which was regarded as the only habitat suitable for a cultured person. Anything outside the city walls was regarded with suspicion, or even fear."³⁸

In addition, after the Persian domination in sixth/fifth century BC, Babylonian culture lived on for another 500 years. The most recent Babylonian clay tablet dates from

³⁴ Jursa (2008), 39-78.

³⁵ Plinius, *Naturalis Historiae* 6, 30,121-123.

³⁶ Van de Mieroop (1999), 226.

³⁷ Generally on the cultural history of the ancient Near East see Klengel (1989), 394-403.

³⁸ Van de Mieroop (1999), 226.

the first century AD. Babylon's influence extended over parts of the Ancient Near East and Central Asia over a period of almost 2,000 years.

Global Repercussions

Undoubtedly, Babylon gained far-reaching *global* significance in the centuries that followed, if only in limited areas. Babylon is the most famous city of the Ancient Near East in western (Christian) culture although its importance as a center of political power steadily decreased after the fourth century BC.³⁹ On the one hand, the Biblical references to the Tower of Babel,⁴⁰ the visions of Daniel and the Apocalypse of John have all affected the way the city has been perceived. On the other hand, Greek and Latin descriptions depict Babylon as a negative symbol of an "oriental" city of immense size, luxury and wealth.⁴¹

"Babylon is the richest city in Asia", reports Xenophon, in *Cyrupaedia* (7,2,11) in the fourth century BC, and his contemporary, Aristotle, emphasized the tremendous size of the city.⁴² Curtius Rufus (first century AD) mentions its beauty and antiquity in his report of Alexander the Great's conquest of the city in 331 BC: "But it was the city itself, with its beauty and antiquity that commanded the attention not only of the king, but of all the others."⁴³

An excerpt from the work of Cassius Dio, a Roman consul and historian from Bithynia, provides a striking example of Babylon's power over the centuries. He offers a glimpse of the city at the beginning of the second century AD, when its heyday had already passed, but its prestige still survived; it was important enough for a Roman emperor to visit it: "Trajan learned of this at Babylon; for he had gone there both because of its fame – though he saw nothing but mounds and stones and ruins to justify this – and because of Alexander [the "Great"], to whose spirit he offered sacrifice in the room where he had died."⁴⁴

³⁹ See in the following Rollinger (1999), 371-382; on the literary reception of Babylon to the present see for example Haas (1998), 524-552.

⁴⁰ *Genesis* 11,1-9.

⁴¹ See for example Herodot 1,178-187; Diodor 2,7-10; Strabon 16,1,5-7; Arrian, *Anabasis* 7,17.

⁴² Aristoteles, *Politik* 127a, 25-31.

⁴³ Curtius Rufus 5,1,24 (translation by the author).

⁴⁴ Cassius Dio 68,30,1.

Athens

Athens is – next to Sparta – the most famous city in Greece. Above all, images of the conserved buildings, such as the Acropolis, have left a lasting impression. Athens, without doubt, played a central political and cultural role in Greece, especially in fifth and fourth century BC. In fact, how far-ranging was its influence?

In Mycenaean times, a palace had already been built on the Acropolis with a polygonal ring wall, which became a central urban sanctuary in the Archaic period.⁴⁵ From the second half of the fifth century BC on, numerous new buildings arose in the center of Athens. On the three-hectare plateau of the Acropolis, a monumental temple to Athena Parthenos (the Parthenon), a market area with the temple of Hephaistos, as well as *porticus* and *palestrae*, were constructed. Athens was also connected to the port city of Piraeus by a wall eight kilometers long. Only a few ruins remain from the city wall erected under Themistocles after the destruction by the Persians (480 BC). Despite the favorable conditions for growth, Athens never developed into a major city in the modern sense. Also, despite the Periclean buildings of the fifth century BC, some contemporaries pointed out that the architectural features of the city did not show an ideal settlement pattern. The Greek writer Heraclides Kritikos reported at the end of the third Century BC that

“the city [(Athens) ... is] poorly designed, in the ancient manner, it is completely dry and has no good water conduit; the roads are narrow and angular, indeed the city is old. Most of the houses are poor, few are comfortable. At first glance strangers might doubt that this is the praised city of Athens.”⁴⁶

This reinforces once more how much our current perception of a city is based on the number and condition of preserved buildings (in contrast to other ancient sites) and on a city's lasting influence. A significant number of buildings currently perceived as representative date back to Hellenistic (e.g. Stoa of Eumenes) and Roman (e.g. Odeon, Nymphaeon, Roman Agora) expansion phases, and the structures preserved mainly from ancient Athens (Acropolis and temples) are not elements of urban features.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Goette (1997), 168-186;

⁴⁶ Herakleides Kritikos, *Fragment I,1* (= Pseudo-Dikaiarchos, *Fragment I,1*), translation by the author following the edition of Arenz (2006).

⁴⁷ Kolb (1984), 129.

Policies – Trade – Culture

Politically, Athens defended itself successfully against the Persians in the first third of the fifth century BC, subsequently developed its supremacy in Greece and gradually expanded its hegemonic claims in the Attic-Delian-Confederacy (founded in 478/77 BC). This policy of aggrandizement led to the confrontation with Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC). This war damaged Greece for decades and limited the political power of Athens.⁴⁸

In economic terms, Athens became the largest Greek commercial center in the fifth century BC. The peninsula of Piraeus was extended to the port of Athens (a naval and commercial port). A large commercial district (*emporion*) with five columned halls and a number of ship sheds provided the appropriate framework.

The Athenian comedian Hermippus recorded a compilation of various products that were traded in Athens at that time:

“From Cyrene, silphium stalk and ox-hide, from Hellespont mackerel and preserved fish, of all kinds, from Italy groats and ribs of beef. From Sitalces [king of Thrace] a skin condition to make the Spartans itch, from Perdiccas [king of Macedon] a fleet-load of lies. Syracuse, providing pigs and cheese [...] from Egypt rigging of sails and papyrus, from Syria frankincense. Fair Crete supplies cypress-wood for the gods, Africa, much ivory to buy, and Rhodes, raisins and dried figs that dreams are made of. And from Euboea, pears and fleecy apples, from Phrygia, slaves, from Arcadia, soldiers for hire. Pagasae supplies servants and runaway rogues. Hazelnuts and glossy almonds Paphlagonians provide, for they are the feast’s embellishments. Phoenicia, the fruit of the palm and finest flour, Carthage, rugs and fancy-woven pillows.”⁴⁹

This list clearly documents the far-ranging significance of Athens as a commercial hub, and this was also reflected in the high customs duties. Exports included oil, wine and honey, as well as articles of art, and the impact of this was long-term.⁵⁰ In addition, agriculture – despite limited arable land – was an important factor in the Athenian economy. Small domestic businesses produced for the domestic market. The silver mines in Laurium guaranteed a veritable amount of this valuable metal.

⁴⁸ Schulz (2003); Funke (2003).

⁴⁹ Hermippus, *Fragment* 63,3, part of a play titled “Basket Carriers” which listed in context all the goods carried by ship. See Zimmermann (2011), 741, who points out the embedding of this passage in the contemporary debate on luxury goods in Athens.

⁵⁰ Funke (2003), 58-68.



Figure 3: Aerial view of the Acropolis of Athens⁵¹

⁵¹ Nollé/Schwarz (2005), 81.

These factors also had social consequences; during the fifth century BC, the total population of the Athenian polis increased rapidly. Because of a policy favorable for foreigners (everybody who was not an Athenian citizen), many of them lived in the polis of Athens. The total population of Attica is estimated at around 300,000 inhabitants, of whom only 15 % were Athenian citizens with political power. 40,000 are assumed to have been strangers (*métoikoi*), with families living in and closely around Athens.⁵²

The Cultural Role of Athens – Global Repercussions

The cultural role of Athens has been well attested, both in its self-perception and its lasting influence.⁵³ The increasingly important cultural role of the city is associated with its advancement in the era of the Peisistratids and its political rise after the victory over the Persians. The Athenians staged impressive plays, both tragedies and comedies, which processed socially and politically relevant issues. Athens was a magnet for artists, philosophers (Sophism) and intellectuals from all over the Greek world.

The Funeral Oration by the statesman Pericles (490-429 BC), commemorating the fallen troops in the Peloponnesian War, can be cited as an example of Athens' self-perception. It documents an idealized political self-understanding:

“Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states. We are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences [...] nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life.”⁵⁴

Contemporaries soundly criticized the development of democracy in Athens, quite contrary to later-borns. However, they also noted that Athens was the “School of Hellas” and a model for the rest of the Greeks – in art, literature, philosophy and science. This view continued beyond the fourth century. Athens remained a center

⁵² Funke (2003), 60.

⁵³ See Eder (1999), 195-196; Näf (1999).

⁵⁴ Part of the Funeral Oration by the statesman Pericles commemorating the dead soldiers from the first year of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC (Thukydides 2, 35-46).

of learning (in addition to Alexandria, Antioch, and Pergamum) and a traditional center of art and science until late antiquity.

The meaning of Athens to the Greek world has been addressed repeatedly. As the Swiss historian Beat Näf notes, the history of the city of Athens is quite impressive and global:

“Among the great places of antiquity that are of decisive importance for the culture and heritage of the western world, Athens plays a most important role. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the historical influence of Rome is greater. Since time immemorial Jerusalem, in particular, has been in competition with A[thens] with respect to the question of which city was the foundation of history and culture and which should be regarded as such. [...] The suggestive power of the symbol of A[thens] to provide historical, political, social or cultural orientation always depended on what could be ascertained with certainty about A[thens] based on the ancient sources and the information and images of A[thens] provided by them. Likewise, the essential classifications of the symbols associated with A. are already to be found in the ancient sources.”⁵⁵

The global role of Athens emerged later as scholars became aware of the city’s origins. Raimund Schulz, for example, makes no secret of his enthusiasm: “never has a city in so short a time unharnessed so much tradition-building energy that even millenniums later people look upon it as a spiritual mother”.⁵⁶

Carthage

Located on the North African coast in what is now Tunisia, Carthage was founded by the Phoenician city of Tyre at the end of the ninth century BC.⁵⁷ Built directly on the sea, it was bound on the west and north by hills and slopes. Carthage defended its interests both passively and aggressively, as evidenced by wars against the Sicilian Greeks and their allies. Until 264 BC, there were several treaties and no major problems with the Romans. The growing competition among the leading powers in the western Mediterranean world erupted in the Punic Wars (264-241, 218-201, 149-146 BC), which ended with the destruction of Carthage. After reconstruction under

⁵⁵ Näf (1999), citet after: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/Athens-ct-e1303340#e1303350> (accessed 21 Aug 2012).

⁵⁶ Schulz (2006), 53 (translation by the author).

⁵⁷ See Huß (1995); archaeology: see Niemeyer (2000, 2007).

the Roman Empire, Carthage gained importance as a provincial capital and the center of Christianity in North Africa.

Carthage had a fixed grid of streets and an insulating building density. A seawall was built in the fifth century BC. The initially simple port facilities were expanded; Carthage possessed three harbor facilities in the third century BC. After its destruction in the third Punic War 146 BC, renewal plans were drawn up by the Romans, first by Sempronius Gracchus (122 BC), then later over by Caius Iulius Caesar. Beginning in the first century AD, Carthage grew into a lavish Roman provincial capital city (province of Africa Nova) with monumental buildings. In the second century AD, the city received particularly intensive support and again became one of the most important centers of the empire.

Economy – Politics

Carthage was a large city that played an important economic and political role in the western Phoenician colonies; it had trade links throughout the Mediterranean world. The city coordinated the Phoenician expansion movements in the West, which led to the establishment of western Phoenician bases under the protection of Carthage. As a mother city, Carthage founded numerous colonies in Africa, the Mediterranean islands and Spain. The urban population grew rapidly; approximately 200,000 residents are estimated for the third/second century BC.

Carthage was the most powerful force in the western Mediterranean for several centuries and was able to extend its dominion of the region. It was considered a political and military protecting power for the Phoenician colonies. This perception of Carthage is reflected in the famous conflicts of the Punic settlements with the Greeks in Sicily and the Romans, conflicts that ultimately affected the entire western Mediterranean – which at the time was at least half of the known world.

After its destruction and reconstruction, Carthage grew into a metropolis and contributed greatly to the urbanization of North Africa.⁵⁸ This evoked both praise for the country life in literature and criticism of a progressive urbanization. Tertullian (*De Anima* 30), around 200 AD, said the following about North Africa:

⁵⁸ Ameling (1993), 3.

“Everything is developed, everything is explored, everything is accessible to commerce and industry. Pleasant estates tread on notorious desert, farmland replaces virgin forest, cattle herds displace wild animals. Sandy deserts are sown, barren soil planted, swamps drained. There are so many cities (*urbes*), people are everywhere, communities are everywhere, life is everywhere”.

Perception and Lore

In the introduction to his study of Carthage, Walter Ameling argues that the influence of Carthage on the history and culture of the Mediterranean world was bigger than “the continued concentration on the ancient history of Greece and Rome indicates”.⁵⁹ He also points out that Carthage was often in conflict with Rome over many issues.⁶⁰

Again, tradition plays an important role in our knowledge and perception of a city. While we know that Punic literature existed, very little of it has survived in Greek or Latin versions. The same is true for architecture: few structures have survived from the Punic period (before the Roman conquest).⁶¹ Therefore, the lack of recorded material on Carthage makes judging its potential qualifications as a *global city* difficult. The term as used here refers primarily to the political and economic influence over the Carthaginian colonies throughout the western Mediterranean.

Rome

Rome concludes the examination of ancient cities and their qualifications as *global cities*. Rome influenced first the Western, then the Eastern Mediterranean, and ultimately much of the known ancient world; it was certainly one of the most important cities in antiquity for its great influence in many areas over a long period of time.

The archaeological findings date the first settlement on the Palatine and the Quirinal to the tenth century BC.⁶² With the successful expansion on the Italian peninsula from the fourth century BC on, the political elite (patricians, plebeians, nobility) accelerated

⁵⁹ Ameling (1993), 1.

⁶⁰ Ameling (1993), 3.

⁶¹ Huß (1995), 96-98.

⁶² The founding date (21 April 753 BC) is a literary fiction, which goes back to the Roman author Varro from the first century BC. It is based on a recalculation of the generations from the traditional end of the kingdom to its postulated beginnings. For a summary of the archaeology, see Heinzlmann (2001), 1083-1106.

the city's architectural design (i.e. the construction of temples, aqueducts, market systems). In the second half of the third century BC, a rural exodus occurred at the beginning of the Second Punic War, which led to a rapid population growth in Rome (high density, mixed-population). By the end of the second century BC, up to 300,000 people (including the rural proletariat that had moved there) lived in Rome.⁶³ From then on, Rome was the center of the western Mediterranean world. Using the resources of the Mediterranean, the city became a metropolis with cultural influence throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Already in the first century BC, the Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus remarks on the expanded *suburbium* of Rome:

“If anyone wishes to estimate the size of Rome by looking at these suburbs he will necessarily be misled for want of a definite clue by which to determine up to which point it is still the city and where it ceases to be the city; so closely is the city connected with the country, giving the beholder the impression of a city stretching out indefinitely.”⁶⁴

Eighty public construction projects have been identified during the period between 200-133 BC.⁶⁵ Previously, the architecture of Rome – when compared to major cities of the east, such as Alexandria – looked rather provincial.

Here are some examples of this building boom: In 184 BC, the Romans opened the first three-aisled basilica (designed for public and semi-public transactions), based on the Hellenistic model (*Basilica Porcia*) and built the *Pons Aemilia*, the first stone bridge over the Tiber. The expansion of the Tiber and the conversion of the former military colony of Ostia into a port city were important for the city's food supply. Securing the city's water supply via aqueducts was just as important.

Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus and Caius Iulius Caesar commissioned impressive monuments in the city center and the Field of Mars in the mid-first century. The Emperor Augustus later expanded the Roman Forum and made it a place of cultic worship of his family (*Forum Augusti*). The dynasties that followed him legitimized their rule with an ideologically imbued architectural program. The Baths of Titus, with their large garden, and a Latin and Greek library restored and strengthened local pride. After the fire of Rome in 64 AD, Nero built wider roads in the Hellenistic style.⁶⁶ The

⁶³ On the problem of determining the number of inhabitants, see Scheidel (2001), 1-82.

⁶⁴ Dionysios of Halicarnassos (4,13,4), cf. Kolb (2007), 44.

⁶⁵ Jongmann (2001a, 2001b).

⁶⁶ Most of the roads remained narrow and irregular, and the common people crowded into close quarters with apartment blocks up to 30 meters high.

Colosseum (72-79 AD), the largest amphitheater in Rome and the largest single construction in the ancient world, was built as well.

The *Forum Transitorium* from the Flavian period (last third of the first century AD) replaced the old food market. The most magnificent of the Roman Fori (*Forum Traiani*) was financed by the Dacian wars and built as a triumphal monument (including Trajan's column and *Basilica*). A pedestrian promenade led from the *Colosseum* to the Fields of Mars and Trajan built the then largest thermal baths (surpassed by the Baths of Caracalla in 212 AD and by the Baths of Diocletian in 306 AD). Triumphal arches as demonstrations of power commemorated victories: The Arch of Titus (conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD), the Arch of Septimius Severus (victory over the Parthians 203 AD), and the Arch of Constantine (victory over Maxentius 312 AD). During the tetrarchy in the fourth century AD, Rome experienced another building boom with major construction projects, which made it the largest city in the Roman Empire.



Figure 4: Model of Imperial Rome in the fourth century AD⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Source: Ameling et al. (2006), 92 (picture: Corbis Images).

We know much about the architectural fabric of Rome, and literary sources offer a wealth of information as to the size of Rome.

Economic Hub

After successful expansion in the third and second centuries BC, Rome developed an efficient profit-oriented slavery system.⁶⁸ Inscriptions indicate that more than 200 different trades and professions, formed into almost 170 professional associations, supplied Rome and the surrounding area with goods. The extant sources we have (especially inscriptions) indicate a high degree of specialization. Evidence shows that many women were active in trade and crafts. The social elite funded factories, and inscriptions on tombs document the freedmen's ambitious entrepreneurship. The massive building program employed more than 10,000 workers, who lived with their families in Rome. The major economic challenge lay in the food supply. From the time of Augustus, about 200,000 subscribers received 5 bushels of grains per month, which demonstrates excellent administrative skills, appropriate logistics for the supply and the operation of large storage facilities. Rome had about 254 large bakeries in the fourth century AD.⁶⁹ The markets of Trajan had five tiered terraces to provide the necessary space for the business market. Rome was undoubtedly a transshipment point for goods; however, it was an import rather than an export center.⁷⁰

Cultural Metropolis

Rome became the cultural center of the Mediterranean world and attracted increasing numbers of Latin and Greek scholars. In order to provide the large number of administration officials that were required, the Romans encouraged the education of the common people.

The culturally diverse inhabitants of Rome came from different regions of the ancient world. There was also great diversity in religions, including the famous mystery cult of Mithras, which was established in Rome between the second and fourth century

⁶⁸ Kolb (2007), 75-80.

⁶⁹ Equally complex – according to late antique restoration directories – was the water supply for the city: Eleven aqueducts brought approximately 700,000 cubic meters of water daily to Rome. From there the water was conducted over 250 distribution houses to 1,300 public wells, 867 public baths (11 large thermal baths) and 1,352 water points. See Kolb (1984), 163.

⁷⁰ Jongmann (2001b), 1081.

and expanded from there into the Roman provinces. Judaism and, of course, Christianity experienced similar dissemination. Festival Calendars regulated leisure time, with games and events taking place on over 200 days a year. The data on population numbers at the time of Augustus vary between 250,000 and one million.⁷¹

Athenaeus, second century AD, wrote about Rome as the epitome of the civilized world (all cities of the world having established a colony there):

“Rome may fairly be called the nation of the world. And he will not be far out who pronounces the city of the Romans an epitome of the whole earth; for in it you may see every other city arranged collectively, and many also separately; for instance, there you may see the golden city of the Alexandrians, the beautiful metropolis of Antioch, the surpassing beauty of Nicomedia; and besides all these that most glorious of all the cities which Jupiter has ever displayed, I mean Athens. And not only one day, but all the days in an entire year, would be too short for a man who should attempt to enumerate all the cities which might be enumerated as discernible in that celestial city of the Romans, the city of Rome so numerous are they.”⁷²

Summary

Starting in the second millennium, several cities in the ancient world emerged that had far-ranging economic, political and cultural significance, all aspects of global cities when applied to ancient standards. A key factor, however, is duration; each of the cities meets the criteria of having far-reaching significance for shorter or longer periods. This, however, is a minor point when considering the question from the present.

The cities most in accord with modern terminology are probably Alexandria and Rome, both of which competed for preeminence between the first century BC and the first century AD. Alexandria’s key economic position between Central Asia and the

⁷¹ Similar figures are also given in Stambaugh (1988), 89-90; Kolb (2007), 79. Some evidence for the determination of population figures could be the number of beneficiaries for money and grain donations (men only), not included are women, children, slaves, soldiers and residents. The Aurelian wall (271/82 AD) included a settlement area of 1,373 hectares. Excluding the public land, one estimates approximately 1 million people could have lived in the offered space. Late Antiquity directories of the region name 46,602 *insulae* (residential units); however, the *insula* cannot necessarily be assumed to be of uniform size, see Kolb (1984), 162-163.

⁷² Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 1,20b.

Mediterranean region and its political role as a royal city of the Ptolemies, who developed the city over the centuries into a great science metropolis, constitute the decisive arguments. The economic resources of the Mediterranean world allowed Rome to become a metropolis and thus a transmitter of Roman culture throughout the Roman Empire.

But also prestige, based on long-term and far-reaching reference, played an important role. Babylon, the former center of political power and cultural diversification in Mesopotamia, was very widely recognized in antiquity and beyond although this regard has been based on only a few specific aspects of the former metropolis (e.g. the luxury, the decadence and the Tower), derived from classical and Christian sources. Athens, whose economic and political importance is well attested within Greek ancient sources, draws its *global* significance from its legacy as a reference point for (Athenian) democracy, philosophy and art.

All observations depend on their sources, the transmission of these sources and their subsequent implementation into current research. The example of Carthage shows this very clearly. Its reputation as long-standing political and economic presence in the western Mediterranean region is based on relatively sparse archaeological and written sources and (in retrospect) a very Rome-oriented research position.

Despite all the restrictions (sources, research practice, perspectives) and the fundamental problem of transferring modern terminology to ancient conditions, the ancient cities presented in this chapter displayed qualities of *Global Cities* for certain periods of time in antiquity and beyond.

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