

Bombay in Transition: The Growth and Social Ecology of a Colonial City, 1880–1980. By MEERA KOSAMBI. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1986. 204 pp. Tables, Figures, Plates, Appendix, Notes, References. SEK 110.

Meera Kosambi's book is primarily a case study of Bombay's spatial growth and social development during the period from 1880 to 1980. Kosambi examines Bombay's gradual rise to the position of major metropolis in Western India. Its spatial configuration receives detailed attention. In addition to studying many aspects of the city's form, Kosambi examines population changes, as well as ethnic and linguistic groups and the location of their settlements.

Bombay, in the century from 1880 to 1980, needs to be understood in relation to its history. Kosambi's description of the city's weak relationship to its hinterland serves to highlight how much of Bombay's growth and present dominance were a direct result of British trade in Western India. Initially this consisted primarily of sea trade between Britain and Gujarat, because Bombay Island was quite effectively cut off from the early road systems that crisscrossed the interior. Only in the British period were road and railway systems built that tied the city to its region and thrust it into economic dominance.

The book's eight chapters draw heavily on Bombay's decennial census statistics. The introduction cites much of the relevant literature on the city. Chapter 2 describes Bombay's early evolution, and sketch maps show the configuration of Bombay Island in 1670, 1815, and in the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 3 includes detailed information on the growth of the city's population, including statistical accounts of the inhabitants' places of birth, age and sex, and religious and linguistic affiliation. These data largely refer to the pre-Independence period. Chapter 4 details the spatial patterns of population growth by density, religion, language group, and occupation. Several black-and-white photographs juxtapose images of specific places at different times. These illustrations show the remarkable impact of population growth on congestion and density in the city. There is a dearth of visual documentation of places over time in India, and although suffering from a rather low quality of reproduction, Kosambi's photographs are very helpful in visualizing the tremendous changes that have occurred in Bombay.

Chapter 5 takes up the post-Independence period. A chart showing population increase from 1901 to 1981 and contrasting the city's growth with that of the suburbs neatly illustrates the concentration since 1951 of population in the suburbs. Chapter 6 offers factorial analyses of the social aspects of the city at different periods. These take into consideration demographic, ethnic, and occupational variables as well as building types. Chapter 7 presents statistical comparisons of the growth of Bombay's population over time. For example, they indicate the predominance of males in the

period 1881–1921 and the lessening of age and sex discrepancies in the period 1921–81. Changes in the occupational composition of the population and of male and female participation in the labor force should be of interest to researchers. The stable ethnic composition is noted and the linguistic groupings are studied. The growth of Bombay before and after Independence is very sketchily compared to the growth of other colonial ports in India (Madras and Calcutta) and to port cities elsewhere. Chapter 8 concludes the book with an account of the suburban expansion into the areas that now constitute Greater Bombay.

Kosambi's book is replete with useful empirical information and should serve as a convenient work of reference. But the book also sets out to make theoretical and cross-cultural statements about the "generic colonial port city," and in this effort it is not as successful. The reader who wishes to attain an overall grasp of colonial port cities, of their importance and general characteristics, will find other works more useful. In this regard Kosambi helps the reader by citing much of the significant literature but omits some important recent contributions. Examples include Dilip K. Basu, ed., *The Rise and Growth of the Colonial Port Cities in Asia* (Santa Cruz: University of California Center for South Pacific Studies, 1979); Susan J. Lewandowski, "Changing Form and Function in the Ceremonial and Colonial Port City in India: An Historical Analysis of Madurai and Madras," in K. N. Chaudhuri and C. J. Dewey, eds., *Economy and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 299–329; and Frank Broeze, "Port Cities: The Search for an Identity," *Journal of Urban History* 11, no. 2 (Feb. 1985): 209–25.

Kosambi has developed a significant compendium of facts about Bombay, but one wishes for more discussion of their implications and for comparisons with other work. The failure to extrapolate her findings to suggest generic characteristics of colonial port cities is an impediment, even for the reader who wants only a general understanding of Bombay's development. Such discussion as occurs is insufficiently integrated with the empirical work that makes up the body of the book. However, given the paucity of good, accessible, empirical, detailed case studies on Bombay, this book is a welcome contribution.

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