

The City



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著者:Andrew Lees

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The City: A World History tells the story of the rise and development of urban centers from ancient times to the twenty-first century. It begins with the establishment of the first cities in the Near East in the fourth millennium BCE, and goes on to examine urban growth in the Indus River Valley in India, as well as Egypt and areas that bordered the Mediterranean Sea. Athens, Alexandria, and Rome stand out both politically and culturally. With the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, European cities entered into a long period of waning and deterioration. But elsewhere, great cities—among them, Constantinople, Baghdad, Chang'an, and Tenochtitlán—thrived. In the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, urban growth resumed in Europe, giving rise to cities like Florence, Paris, and London. This urban growth also accelerated in parts of the world that came under European control, such as Philadelphia in the nascent United States.

As the Industrial Revolution swept through in the nineteenth century, cities grew rapidly. Their expansion resulted in a slew of social problems and political disruptions, but it was accompanied by impressive measures designed to improve urban life. Meanwhile, colonial cities bore the imprint of European imperialism. Finally, the book turns to the years since 1914, guided by a few themes: the impact of war and revolution; urban reconstruction after 1945; migration out of many cities in the United

States into growing suburbs; and the explosive growth of "megacities" in the developing world.

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