

Flammable Cities



FLAMMABLE CITIES

Urban Conflagration and the
Making of the Modern World

Edited by
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Afterword by Stephen J. Pyne



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“A remarkably robust survey of cultures, cities, and histories that affirms the universality of fire’s impact within the urban setting.”

—Stephen J. Pyne

In most cities today, fire has been reduced to a sporadic and isolated threat. But throughout history the constant risk of fire has left a deep and lasting imprint on almost every dimension of urban society. This volume, the first truly global study of urban conflagration, shows how fire has shaped cities throughout the modern world, from Europe to the imperial colonies, major trade entrepôts, and non-European capitals, right up to such present-day megacities as Lagos and Jakarta. Urban fire may hinder commerce or even spur it; it may break down or reinforce barriers of race, class, and ethnicity; it may serve as a pretext for state violence or provide an opportunity for displays of state benevolence. As this volume demonstrates, the many and varied attempts to master, marginalize, or manipulate fire can turn a natural and human hazard into a highly useful social and political tool.

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