

Introduction

Sailors, ships, docks, harbours, slaves, exotic and routine products, warehouses, distinctive smells, fish, merchant princes and prostitutes, ethnic diversity and cosmopolitanism are among the characteristics which have made port cities and towns what they are and were, and which have caught the attention of many authors (Hugill, 1967; Rudolf, 1980; Mollat du Jourdan, 1993; Runyan, 1997; Walvin, 1997). Port settlements from early times were an urban type found on every continent (Villiers and Dutiel, 1997). A port's activities propel the emergence of a specific type of urban community and, in addition, may also reshape, reorder and transform its hinterland and configure its foreland (Wrigley, 1990).

Outside Europe, after the so-called 'Discoveries', the political economies in vogue endowed the elites of these ports with enormous economic and political influence, which extended to the cover vast areas of their forelands and hinterlands (Briost, 1997). Many visitors to ports in the past were not impressed by what they saw. Arthur Young writing about Bordeaux noted: 'the way of its merchants here is extremely lavish'. He described the harbour at Bordeaux as: 'one dirty slippery muddy bank with unpaved areas covered in detritus ... it was without the order, the arrangement and the opulence of a quay'.

There are problems that require attention in any quest to define what constitutes a port city. Some settlements may only become port cities after a former existence during which the port was of little consequence, as in the case of Santander. Others are like Seville, whose port's all embracing functions were overshadowed by the emergence of new functions and have since withered. Whatever the case, port cities represent a recognisable settlement type. It is argued here that several different types of port cities emerged within Europe, and especially Atlantic Iberia, largely as a consequence of the implementation of a particular brand of political economy:

The concept of the port city in historical studies ... has scarcely advanced beyond the stage of definition. That is a curious state of affairs for an urban type that has dominated urban civilisation from antiquity until the twentieth century. (Konvitz, 1978, p.115)

Such a statement may today appear unduly harsh; it does, however, have more than a ring of truth about it, as far as the study by geographers of historic European port cities is concerned. Although geographic concepts have been brought to bear on these kinds of cities in multi-cultural contexts (Broeze, 1989), perhaps one of the factors which has deterred scholars from grappling with this urban type is their incredible complexity and their capacity for abrupt change. Their problematic and discontinuous documentary records are a central issue. For instance, unravelling synchronisation of movement of goods from port hinterlands to ports and then simultaneously linking them with shipping activity and physical growth in the past is notoriously difficult to divine: take the case of wool intake to Bilbao and its dispatch by sea (Phillips and Phillips, 1997).

The notion of the port city as a generic settlement type has also been obfuscated by the general failure to grapple with these settlements in their entirety (Lee, 1998). Some studies that address ports are oblivious to their urban locales (Caselli and Lemaine, 1991). Others have examined the cities while relegating the port to an auxiliary position and the consequences of this are severe:

... we either have studies of ports with no reference to the cities which they relate to; or we have studies which discuss port cities as if there were no maritime functions that could influence the spatial and social evolution of the city. (Reeves et al., 1989, p. 29).

Whatever about the problems of definition, there is a vague scholarly consensus that port settlements represent a distinctive urban category (Price, 1974; Hohenberg and Lees, 1985; Barioch et al., 1988). Settlements so defined often have more in common with each other than with the states or the regions where they were/are located. Port cities have also had a global incidence and they represent some of the earliest known urban settlements (Lawton and Lee, 2002). Here one can invoke the example of the Phoenicians and their port network extending from Beirut via Syracuse to Gadir (Cádiz).

Even in antiquity, some of the great ports were planned and some enjoyed immediate spectacular success, as was the case with Alexandria. Europe's most populous city, Istanbul, strangely not always posted in urban league tables, must rank as one of the world's most complex, remarkable and longstanding port cities (Mantran, 1996; Mansel, 1997). Port cities were centres of diffusion on both sides of the Atlantic and, in the New World, they unleashed prodigious environmental changes as settlers fanned out and established their capitalist monocultures with all of the attendant implications for indigenous societies, their landscapes and nature (Cronon, 1990). Port cities were not simply passive agents in this endeavour; through them returned a host of plants (Schiebinger, 2004). This has transformed our back and front gardens and our botanical gardens (Hoyles, 1991). They augmented Europe's bio-diversity to an unprecedented extent (Hoyles, 1991; Miller and Reill, 1996; Walvin, 1997).

Gold, silver, spices, precious timber, dyes, highly valued medicines and drugs passed through them as did thousands and thousands of slaves (Blackburn, 1997). For some time, it made the Atlantic less white and more 'black' (Gilroy, 1993; Northrup, 1994). Ports linked Africa and Africans to a transoceanic system (Eltis, 2000; Thornton, 1998). The European thirst for new beverages and their accompaniments, from chocolate to gin, fundamentally changed the way Europeans lived and these new tastes were facilitated in the form of new social locales such as coffee houses and gin palaces. Nevertheless, port cities were agents of the world of colonialism and imperialism and they thrived in these contexts (Brotton, 1997). Alphabets, languages and religions were carried in and out of many ports (Cabantous, 1970). Mapmakers constructed new worlds in ports such as Amsterdam and Seville (Buisseret, 1993).

On the ground, port cities configured social structures with distinctive characteristics, not least in the attraction of foreign merchants who played catalytic roles in all aspects of the careers of these settlements. In this way, the study of port cities is intimately connected to our growing understanding of the complexity of urbanism (Jansen, 1996). Their study must also contribute to our knowledge of globalisation and the historical geography of modernity (Butel, 1997)

This study examines, within an Atlantic Iberian context, the evolution of metropole port settlements, the relationships between their forms, their changing functions and their shifting social configurations. In addition, their roles as trading breakpoints mean that the connections and movements between their forelands and hinterlands must also be explored. In Portugal and Spain, state-inspired political economies embodied in sophisticated monopoly policies had profound influences on the articulation of trade passing through ports with exclusive rights. They can be termed metropolises and it was these policies that made and undid them. Another kind of monopoly drove a wool trade to the ports of Bilbao and Santander. Inertia after the suspension of the monopoly allowed the monopoly ports to thrive for some time afterwards; the consequences of American independence and civil unrest unleashed by Napoleon had very different outcomes.

Three centres, namely Seville, Cádiz and Lisbon were endowed with consummate mercantile privileges. Effectively, many other peninsular port settlements were simply embargoed from

trading with the colonies, and the consequences of exclusion for four key ports are also examined. This study then focuses on the implications of state-sponsored commercial policies for the main ports of Atlantic Iberia during the monopoly period extending from 1503 to c.1778. It also briefly considers the implications of the suppression of monopoly for these centres over the remainder of the nineteenth century.

Can, for example, the demographic, functional and physical expansion of ports be linked to particular trading conjunctures? At centre-stage in the inquiry is an analysis of the changing urban fabric, functions, population, nature and volumes of trading, foreland–hinterland relationships, merchant ideologies and commercial networks under the auspices of the monopoly and its immediate legacies. The relationship between political economy, trade and port development during and in the aftermath of the monopoly form the core of the analysis. The book is concerned with the connections between policy, trade, urban growth and decline. It deals, in so far as is possible, with the institutions established to implement exclusionist policies at port level and omits consideration of the roles of municipal bodies and the church to urban growth. It is about ports, their changing fabrics, their evolution and exegesis and how monopoly policies influenced the kind of societies that emerged within them. After all, the arrival of such copious amounts of colonial goods at a number of specific ports recalibrated the peninsula's port hierarchy and facilitated the appearance of a distinctive urban social composition. The study seeks to pinpoint how and when they grew, but does not purport to examine either their social histories or the contributions of civic administrations to their careers.

The book is organised as follows. It begins with a consideration of the historiography of port settlements and this is followed by a discussion of their leading attributes and an assessment of the types of port settlements recognised in the literature. The context of these settlements is explored specifically on the Iberian Peninsula. As a counterpoint to urban evolution, there is a chapter that addresses the evolution of political economic structures, their reflection in colonial trading patterns and the emergence of different Atlantic worlds and their 'histories'. Linked to this is a section which deals with some of the key instruments that were devised to manage the Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic empires and how merchants organised commerce within these confines.

The remaining parts of the work discuss the relationships between the patterns and contents of trade and port settlement evolution in a series of discrete areas. To begin with, metropolises of Atlantic Andalusia, namely Seville and those of the Bahia of Cádiz, are scrutinised. Then Lisbon's role as an imperial metropole, capital city and premier port city are considered. As outports or anteports of the peninsula, the roles of some of the islands of the Atlantic archipelagos are evaluated. Castile's functions as a source of raw materials is then explored as are its links with the ever-expanding inner Atlantic world.

The fortunes of the remaining second tier of port settlements are then addressed. Their activities and functions were constricted by the political economies of their respective states over extended periods. Of them all, Oporto's mercantile career was least affected by these obstacles. The development of its hinterland as a prosperous viticultural zone consolidated its career as an Atlantic port. Corunna, Bilbao and Santander had all successfully participated in inner Atlantic commerce during the sixteenth century, but all of them had to wait until the late eighteenth century, or even the nineteenth century to emerge as significant Atlantic port settlements. In conclusion, an attempt is made to categorise these port settlements as a distinctive urban class in their historiographic setting.

Ports in literature

To date, port cities have been the subject of limited serious enquiry both implicitly as groups of interacting cities or even as encyclopaedic case studies as the works of Broeze (1989), Gilchrist (1967); Knight and Liss (1991) and CEHOPU (1994) illustrate. The sheer volume of individual analysis conducted and published in various languages in Europe may be responsible for the fact that few regional studies have appeared, nor has anyone yet attempted a continental synthesis. There have been some brilliant case studies such as those of Chaunu for Seville (1955–60), García Baquero González (1988) for Cádiz, Roncayolo for Marseilles (1990), or Clarke's pertinent study of La Rochelle (1981), as well as Devine and Jackson's work on Glasgow (1995), Loose (1984) on Hamburg, and Suykens and Aesert's (1986) study of Antwerp.

The only attempt to derive a broader perspective from Europe has been the Clark and Wood edited thematic volume (1994) which focuses upon port cities in 'The Transatlantic World in the Age of Expansion'. Its eclectic remit extends to a pungent cultural flavour addressing, for instance, slaves, white labour and American influences on Antwerp's material culture. The contents page serves as a compelling but daunting desideratum of what remains to be completed.

Konvitz (1993) has made an excellent and path-breaking study of the planning of early modern port cities with particular reference to France. By drawing on a rich variety of maps, etchings, plans, memoirs, paintings and state papers, this creative work demonstrates that state interventions in planning port settlement happened perhaps earlier than many would have supposed. Broeze has also made several useful contributions, not least in a trenchant review essay (1989). The sea (Steinberg, 2003; Lambert et al., 2006) and the Atlantic world (Gabaccia, 2004) have more recently engaged the attention of a wider community of scholars to judge by the appearance of editions of the *Journal of Historical Geography* (2006), *Social and Cultural Geography* (2005) and the foundation of the review *Atlantic Studies* (2004).

English geographers have been productively active chiefly in addressing the ramifications of modern port transformation and also have imbued some of this work with a deep historical flavour (Bird, 1980; Lawton and Lee, 2002). The contextualisation of ports in seaport systems has also yielded valuable insights into change (Hoyle and Hilling, 1984). Work on Africa and modern seaport change been the focus of a more recent work (Hoyle and Pinder, 1992). To date, little serious research has been accomplished by Europeans on urban cultural transfers to the New World (Thomas, 2004). This is especially the case in relation to Spanish urban transmission (Calderón Quijano, 1984; Cámara Muñoz, 1998). The Portuguese, not unexpectedly, have been more active on this front. Research has been completed covering how Portuguese urbanism in India was influenced by Renaissance idealism (Rossa, 1997). An attempt has been conducted to identify the principal features of Portuguese-built colonial Atlantic towns of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and their locational characteristics have been studied. Reverse cultural transfers via Portuguese port cities remain less well understood (Rodrigues, 2000). Anyone who has examined the hybrid civic architecture at Faro cannot fail to observe Indian influence.

Some of the earliest port cities undoubtedly emerged fringing the Pacific (Tindall, 1982). Many settlements there have been subject to detailed and pioneering scrutiny (Murphey, 1979). Indeed, recent research has confirmed that the European contribution to their expansion has been generally overestimated and often exaggerated (Broeze, 1989). The European Discoveries encountered a series of complex port settlement systems in fine fettle in China, Moghul India, Persia, Thailand, the rivers of south-east Asia and the archipelagos and peninsulas occupied by the Malays (Basu, 1979). The presence of well-established trading networks focused on ports such as these are attested to in the movements and observations of Arab, Central Asian, Chinese, Maghrebi and Persian travellers as exemplified in the journeys of Ibn Battuta (Gibb, 1994). State involvement

in building, or promotion, of port cities was often quite limited and *de novo* centres were very much the exception. In Asia, given the longstanding nature of coastal urban development, many settlements acted as imperial and/or colonial ports (Broeze et al., 1986).

In the New World, many excellent studies are available in relation to the evolution of seaport cities but, as yet, no synthesis had been accomplished for any macro-region. As background research on the emergence of the Portuguese and Spanish seaborne empires, the works of Boxer (1969) and Parry (1966) are most seminal. More has yet to be written on European endeavours overseas (Chaunu, 1964). An early collection of essays has set a kind of benchmark (Gilchrist, 1967). A limited number of works have appeared dealing with European state relationships with the overseas colonies in which ports figure prominently (Mauro, 1960; McNeill, 1985; Pearson, 1990; Kagan, 1986). The publication of an edited series offers a statement on the recent state of the debate and it illustrates the diversity of issues now being addressed under the banner of port cities (Knight and Liss, 1991).

The records of the authorities implicated in the administration of ports and trade is copious and sometimes overwhelming. Their survival has permitted the publication of some riveting research such as that of Chaunu (1955–60) of Mauro (1960) and Morineau (1985). Key ports were highly sensitive locales, many receiving enormous defensive investments, as at Cádiz, for instance (Calderón Quijano et al., 1978; Buisseret, 1998; Cámara Muñoz, 1998). Some monarchs were desperate to be able to view their ports. Painters and engravers such as Braun, Hogenberg and Van den Wjngaerde helped fill such voids during the reign of Philip II (Popham, 1936; Kagan, 1986). Indeed, the peninsular painting itinerary of the latter is significant in what it excluded and included: it covered two visits to northern Castile, one to Aragón, Cataluña-Valencia, Madrid and Andalusia (Kagan, 1986, p. 10). This monarch had an insatiable desire for place-informatics so he commissioned various statistical trawls (Martínez Taboada, 2000). He also persistently patronised the collection of urban informatics (Sanz Herminda, 2000). Later on, Carlos III of Spain ordered a series of models to be made of his major peninsular ports. In 1777, Alfonso Jiménez completed the only one for Cádiz. Others commissioned artists to represent their major ports and the output of Joseph Vernet for France represents a prodigious achievement (Boulaire, 2001). All of these portrayals of ports, domestic residences and public buildings illustrate their basic anatomies representing their ethos and constitute another series of unexplored texts. In Atlantic Iberia, these texts largely remain to be deconstructed.

What approaches have been employed to engage with these settlement types? Individual case studies reveal, as one would expect, an eclectic range of approximations. Many are focused on a restricted range of themes guided by the disciplinary tropes in vogue. Collections of essays concerned with these ports manifest what, to some, might seem a lack of control over the approaches to the topic and the themes selected for scrutiny. To be fair, however, the scale and range of issues relating to the study of port cities is almost hopelessly extensive and many different disciplines consider them part of their remit. This makes the task of theorising about the nature of their urban forms as difficult as that of achieving any consensual approaches to their study.

Several attempts have been made to classify ports by type in terms of their origins exemplified by Broeze et al. (1986), while others have tried to sort them out in terms of their range, scale and specialism(s) of their port functions (Jackson, 1996). Efforts have been made to allocate phases of growth to existing urban evolutionary typologies, although others have argued that recognisable stages in their growth can be fastened onto well-known eras of development as propounded by economic historians. Obviously, this task needs to be conducted within a broad perspective of urban definition (Jansen, 1996)

The work of Vance is important here, as it attempts to link trade cycles with urban change with especial reference to Anglo-America (Vance, 1970, 1990). Briefly, this geographer asserts

that five stages in the process of change can be identified. To begin with, accelerating prosperity in Europe promotes the voyages of exploration. This phase is replaced by essentially east-to-west traffic in basic raw materials such as fish, furs, tobacco and timber. With the consolidation of permanent settlement in North America, more regular two-way traffic increases; however, most of the interactions remain animated by Europe's increasingly voracious appetite. Transportation links remain pivoted on coastal hubs. The emergence of self-sustaining manufacturing characterises the fourth stage in which the legacies of earlier stages remain evident. The dominance of internal trade marks the consolidation of the last stage. Other models such as that of Rimmer (1977) clearly have been inspired by the works of Vance and of Brookfield (1975). In further examples, phases in the evolution of ships have been suggested as a means of understanding port city progression (Broeze, 1996).

Transportation specialists, mainly geographers, have attempted to identify and model recurrent characteristics in the morphology of port settlements as in the work of Bird (1963) on the ANYPORT concept. It is also pertinent to briefly mention the contributions of some key transport specialists to the debate (Hoyle and Knowles, 1998). Another important model has been devised to conceptualise relationships between the evolution of transport systems and economic and political change and development in Africa (Taaffe et al., 1963). What all of these models share is an acknowledgement of the pivotal role of seaport settlements as animators of development in the search for the identification of recognisable phases of change (Verlaque, 1974).

Considerable effort has also been expended in attempting to establish the relationships between urban growth and economic growth. This can involve an assessment of the connections between infrastructure provision and economic growth within specific hinterlands (Munnell, 1992), as well as dealing with issues relating to nodes and systems (McGee, 1971). Before the late nineteenth century, sea transport over the extensive period covered by this research was arduous, hazardous, laborious and extremely slow (McGrail, 1981). Despite all these restraints, we must acknowledge that it was the sea transport systems that emerged in the long period after the Discoveries that laid the basis for the kind of globalisation that we have inherited (Blaut, 1993).

In Iberia, the monopoly was a decisive influence, while elsewhere in Europe merchant aspirations and opportunism were paramount up to the end of the eighteenth century; on the peninsula, the state deliberately promoted port concentration and disturbed the interplay of other forces at work. The task of establishing reliable statistical procedures to assess these forces for any period before the mid-nineteenth century is a daunting assignment, especially in the context of a monopoly. Values of goods landed always became hugely inflated when bullion was involved or with high-value, low-bulk items such as spices. In their place, cruder criteria must be invoked such as natural (population) change, volumes of immigrants and the number of licensed foreign merchants or the value of their transactions.

The attributes of port cities represent the outcomes of the operation of a range of long-term processes and policies. The nature of Portuguese and Spanish colonialism and imperialism is pertinent here, as was the military-naval edifice that sustained them and the trading systems that they engendered and supported. At individual port level, the *consulados* of the sixteenth century, the enlightenment figures of the eighteenth century and the port authorities of the nineteenth century within an actor–agency framework attempted to deliver improvement through the founding of control institutions. The state also exerted influence on urban design, but the scale of these efforts has been disputed (Braunfels, 1988). There was rarely convergence between merchant aspirations and the needs of the state as seen from the capital. Trade, with its merchant agents and delivery systems, from docks to ships, was intimately connected to technological improvements on land and at sea (Blussé and Gaastra, 1981; Emmer and Gaastra, 1996; Tracy, 1993). But when then did port towns become port cities? In the past, the response had to be culturally specific and it related to how urban types were defined and their relation to an expanding realm of characteristics

and functions (Jansen, 1996). The geopolitical strategies of European states in times of hostilities sundered trading lines and brought crises to many port settlements, as did piracy and privateering in less hostile times.

All cities have a multiple nature; in port cities, maritime trade is a fundamental ingredient (Angolini and Roche, 1995). Many workers were needed to expedite their commercial activities. Merchant networks too were pivotal ingredients of these places. The activity domains of family networks within and between port cities straddled state boundaries (Saturno, 1989). Merchants were not simply agents of 'foreign' trade as their family networks crossed Europe and beyond into the New World (Jiménez Cordinach, 1991). Many port settlements were deeply influenced by a numerically minute merchant elite often acting in concert (Emmer and Gaastra, 1996). At other times, merchants were deeply divided and these fractures were often riveted along ethnic lines as at Cádiz. People who were at the heart of these settlements and created a culture of seafaring often expressed themselves in music, poetry and song noted by many authors (for example, Hugill, 1967; Rudolf, 1980; Rediker, 1987). Multi-ethnic was a recurrent feature of port city society (Conlon, 1989). Many individuals built striking monuments to record their presence and achievements (Lewandowski, 1989). Others repatriated some of their wealth to their home ports for philanthropic purposes (Bilbao Acedos, 2003).

Mercantilism, colonialism and capitalism all made a contribution through trading organisation to the process of globalisation (Hugill, 1993). War, resulting from the rivalry between European and Asian potentates, has often been cited as being responsible for major declines in trading activities. Yet in times of war, states depended on their merchants to make profits, which could be taxed. They also depended on them to procure and supply foodstuffs in times of shortages. In these circumstances, states turned a blind eye to conflict and allowed merchants to trade with 'enemy' merchants to acquire strategic items such as foodstuffs (Birmingham, 2004).

In this regard, the origin of the word *fund* is pertinent. It derives from the Arabic *funduq*, discrete residential quarters used by foreign merchants in Levantine ports, somewhat similar to the caravanserai used for overland travel (Chaudhuri, 1992). In these circumstances, banking and exchange operations emerged. In Asia, too, the evolution of the principal of extraterritorial rights for merchants in specific locales evolved as a means of facilitating exchange and trade. The Portuguese *Estado da Índia* worked with *feitórias* [districts of existing settlements or small defended settlements occupied by Portuguese merchants and administrators]; later on, joint stock companies appeared and, later again, companies were founded by the Dutch, English, French and Spanish to stimulate trade, as in the example of the East India Company (Cottrell and Aldcroft, 1981). Port cities were notorious centres where an informal economy was always in full bloom. Bootlegging, smuggling, cheating, deception, fraud, falsification, swindling and trickery were rampant and many operated as covert centres for piracy and privateering (Rediker, 1987).

Theorising port cities

Most of the research conducted on port settlements and port systems of the past has concentrated on contexts outside Europe. To date, there have been few state-wide studies of European port cities (for exceptions, see CEHOPU, 1994). What is clear, at this initial stage of work, is that several different types of port settlements may be recognised (Lee, 1998). 'Colonial port cities' has been suggested as a generic term to categorise many Asian settlements (Broeze, 1989). Here, too, there were different types of port. Ports such as Calcutta or Bombay served as gateway ports, as did those of Burma and Thailand. Others served as entrepôts such as Singapore, or as trans-shipment centres. Some served as bunkering ports and/or repair centres such as those on the Cape Verde. All of these

ports simultaneously discharged several functions; however, the emphasis differed in each one. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Colombo was the seventh largest port in the world, a position achieved by being at the top of the Singhalese network of centres devoted to servicing a pronounced export-orientated economy. Also, Colombo occupied a pivotal position on the Indian Ocean seaways (Dharmasena, 1989).

The colonial port city for some was the epitome of core–periphery relationships (Rowlands et al., 1987). The mediation of these relationships was one of the primary roles of the pivotal members of society in these ports. In some, it was a case of shifting agricultural produce from a periphery to voracious industrial complexes or food deficient areas, such as was the case in Cork and Munster in Ireland (O’Flanagan, 1999). In others, finance, insurance and redistribution were central functions and some of these centres, such as Amsterdam, have been labelled cities of finance (Spooner, 1983; Diedericks and Reeder, 1996). Several centres, and we may cite Amsterdam again, notched-up added value by processing raw materials, for example refining sugar.

At one end of the spectrum were politically autonomous port cities whose *raison d’être* was entirely based on trade. Their merchants enjoyed freedom to trade from the rulers of contiguous, often extensive, interior kingdoms. Italian city-states were not so different. The Hanseatic League settlements represent another category (Pietschmann, 2002). Their sustained achievements were in no small measure the result of the absence of oppressive state controls, but the main German ports came into their own quite late (Ellermeyer, 1986).

The major Asian port centres of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries provide a case in point. Their trading activities were beneficial to contiguous empires and so they obtained encouragement. Aceh, Makassar, Calicut and Hormuz were specific examples. Few could boast of a hinterland which produced valuable products, or goods suitable for maritime trade. They were entrepôts. Malacca was typical; like many other ports, it was situated at a choke point along sea routes where trade of various types converged. Porcelain and silk came from China, spices from the Moluccas, cloth from India, bullion from Europe and pepper from nearby Sumatra (Pearson, 1991, p. 70). Centres of this kind were break points.

Some of these Asian cities were quite sophisticated: their artisans also produced goods and their rulers encouraged the presence of foreign traders whom they treated benignly. Changan in China, during the heyday of the Silk Road, was an inland example. In other instances, such as at Cambay, royal interference was more evident, although even here merchants fared well (Pearson, 1991, p. 73). Trade was handled by small-scale actors known as peddlers and less often, but by no means infrequently, by organised merchant cliques (Curtin, 1984).

It is worthwhile noting the synergies, which developed between the port cities of the Italian city-states and those of the Hanseatic League. The former procured, packed and distributed many luxuries from the Orient; the latter dealt in more basic materials. The Europeans imposed on Asia exclusionist trading practices in a context where heretofore outside merchants were the principal animators whose activities the indigenous territorial rulers did not wish to curb. After their arrival, the Europeans introduced discontinuities in the practice of circulation.

In Europe, by contrast, governments actively promoted the interests of merchants because the state realised the advantages involved. Merchants could influence the state in Europe, whereas in Asia this was not the case. Some researchers have launched the not very satisfactory term ‘imperial port city’ to designate effectively a ‘stage’ in the evolution of some major Asian port cities. Others claim that they represent a particular generic type. These were port cities which belonged to large empires, but had achieved some degree of freedom of action. An example can be seen in pre-Portuguese conquest Diu. Another port type was in full flight in the latter half of the nineteenth century after the Indian Ocean was invaded by scores of large all-weather steamships. Their arrival on the scene required massive engineering activity and often the relocation of exiting ports. In this

way, purpose-built or expanded ports were key features of these centres. They were the ultimate phase in the careers of 'colonial ports' (Broeze et al., 1989).

Another version of the colonial port city is revealed in Keyder et al. (1993). These settlements were essentially commercial cities within agrarian empires such as those of the Chinese and the Ottomans. In these contexts, control and filtering of trade between city and elsewhere constituted their 'imperial' flavour. Once incorporated into western capitalist circuits, they were transformed into points on surfaces and networks representing hubs in core-periphery trade articulations. According to Keyder et al. (1993, p. 520) 'to study colonialism is to study port cities'. In an Ottoman context, these types of port centres only emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century at a time when that empire was fast fading.

Putting port cities at centre stage in this context is elementary, as the transportation of raw materials from the periphery to the core was a prime activity. In other contexts, periphery supplied periphery. The case of Cork's exceptionally profitable provisions trade is instructive, as it provided food and labour for the Caribbean and New England (O'Flanagan, 1999). These movements were part of even wider trading circuits which involved plantations (Curtin, 1998), deportees and slaves (Postma, 1990; Thomas, 1997; O'Callaghan, 2000), sugar, tobacco and idealisms (Harland-Jacobs, 1999). The agents who instigated these movements were central (Hancock, 1995). It has been argued that the best way of understanding the role and the inherent dynamics of port cities is to analyse them through the prisms of class, dependency and modernisation (Keyder et al., 1993, p. 520). They emerged in conditions of existing sophisticated lifestyles, especially in Asia (Ross and Telkamp, 1985).

It is questionable whether this type of city evolved in Ibero-America or in Africa outside centres dominated by Arabs or Indo-Persians. These cities were also large and dynamic and were not, as Braudel has asserted, 'parasitic, soft and luxurious' (1972, p. 4). In many south-east Asian areas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, more than 10 per cent of the pre-industrial population was urbanised, which was more than in contemporary Europe (Basu, 1979). In fact, cities such as Malacca had already developed as entrepôts before the European arrival. These settlements became the lynchpins linking Europe with her Asian colonies (Jackel, 1989). In centres such as Shanghai or Calcutta, the best and the worst of urbanism was exemplified (Murphey, 1979). Their ports' intensive trade catapulted them to become the largest urban concentrations in their respective states during the nineteenth century (Reid, 1989). The promotion of seaborne trade required finance, security, administration, transport, infrastructure, technology and a large resident labour force. A variant type of these port cities has been labelled 'semi-colonial', and Shanghai has been suggested as an exemplar (Eng, 1989).

Another more complex type of maritime settlement has recently been adduced. Titled 'mirror cities', their look-alike features stem from the intensive exchange of people and merchandise within the same polity (Steinberg, 1999). Evidence of early trade-twinning practices was exemplified in the Mediterranean by such instances as Athens and Alexandria, or Rome and Carthage (Crooks, 1999). The degree to which comparable claims could be reasonably made about the relationship between Cádiz, Havana and Veracruz, Acapulco and Manila is work for another day. In Iberia, the deliberate selection of a particular port to exclusively trade with the colonies led to the emergence of two metropolises and to the creation of an ultimately unstable port hierarchy in Spain; ironically, the reverse happened in Portugal. It was under these circumstances that primate port cities developed in Atlantic Iberia.

What sort of population thresholds distinguished these kinds of settlements? Those reported from Anglo, Ibero-America and the Caribbean varied from c.4,500 to 45,000. Price (1991, p. 263) recognises some three orders of magnitude in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and in the lead were colonial capitals with 30,000-plus residents (see Table I.1).

Table I.1 Population: New World port settlements, 1780–1800

Place	Population	Year
Philadelphia	42,444	1790
Havana	40,737	1778
Bahia	39,209	1780
Rio de Janeiro	38,707	1780
New York	33,131	1790
Buenos Aires	c.30,000	1778
Recife	18,207	1776
Boston	18,038	1790
Charleston	16,359	1790
Vera Cruz	c.18,000	c.1800
Cap Francais	15,000	1789
Cartagena:	15,000	1772
Port-au-Prince	6,200	1789
Basse-Terre	4,549	1797
Pointe-a-Pitre	4,425	1797

Source: Price, 1991, p. 263

How and when did, or do, port towns become port cities? This issue is more fundamentally linked to the formulation of an acceptable definition of an urban type (Jansen, 1996).

Over time and in different cultural and economic circumstances, port settlements are characterised by different types of attributes, some of which are captured, for a specific milieu, by the ‘ANYPORT’ model (Bird, 1963). Initially, port settlements act as ‘gateways’, with many residents discharging the roles of dispatchers (Kidawi 1989). In the next stage, the settlement’s many other functions become self-sustaining and several of these start to carve out new networks of linkages focused on the centre. By now, the settlement which essentially depends on a port generates wealth for its citizens and has, at this point, attained the status of a major port town or city. Another stage is evident when the port no longer discharges prime urban functions; it has been displaced by one or several new functions, which help to reshape its cultural, economic and social structure. For these reasons, any study of port cities, must trawl over many centuries, it must make connections, where relevant, with the political economies in vogue and it must, *de riguer*, be comparative.

The ports which form the basis of our research were the key settlements from which Europe launched a commercial, missionary and military conquest of what was then regarded as the New World, and they were and are located on the Atlantic coast of Iberia. As a region, Atlantic Iberia’s coastal limits are easy to determine: they cover the area extending from Tarifa in the modern province of Cádiz to Fuentearrabia on the river Bidasoa in Guipuzcoa (O’Flanagan, 2001). In regional terms, Atlantic Iberia embraces western Andalusia, all of Portugal, Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Provinces of Spain and the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands. It does not include the colonial Atlantic world.

Atlantic Iberia’s landward margins were not static and they corresponded to a large degree to the hinterlands that individual ports managed to engrave; nonetheless, these were mobile fixtures sometimes defined by Spanish territorial administration and fiscal policies (Muñoz Pérez, 1955). Further complications were added by the emergence of Madrid as state capital. Castile was

anomalous. In the sixteenth century, it maintained strong Atlantic commercial ties with the ports of the Low Countries. Thereafter, these links became greatly diluted.

This complex area is the old 'inner Atlantic' recognised by Braudel. Once upon a time, it was both a 'Finisterre' and an outer-periphery; the region was transformed by its engagement through Iberia's role in the colonization and commercialization of the New World. The leading ports of Atlantic Iberia all display minute crusty cores some few of which were to serve as platforms for spectacular expansion and growth. Most, because of trade interdiction, did not witness significant growth until the late eighteenth century.