Weber's Perspective on the City and Culture, Contemporary Urbanization and Bangladesh

A.I. Mahbub Uddin Ahmed

Introduction

Max Weber's (1922) theory of city owes much to earlier work of Tönnies (1887) and Simmel (1903). He takes a structural perspective on city. He studies city from all aspects of social structure, economic, political, religious and legal institutions. Thus cities are treated in terms of their relations to other cities, to other parts of their society, as integral parts of the social and political order. Thus Weber's theory of city is close to systematic theory of urbanism (Mumford, 1961:606; Wirth, 1938:8).[1]

Weber developed his theory of city as a critique of metropolis. To Weber, like his predecessors Marx, Tönnies and Simmel, metropolis is the paradigm of an inhuman, debasing social environment.[2] Mass urbanization nullified opportunities for political participation, which was one of the crucial characteristics of the city.

The main objective of this paper is to explore Weber's ideas on the city and culture as evolved in his writings and to situate those within the context of contemporary urbanization, especially Bangladesh. The main argument of this paper is that Weber's theory of city is the theory of the origin of capitalism. He relates city, culture, authority, religion and rationalization as symbiotic, and are geared to the development of capitalism in the west. Thus, his theory of city and city culture is multi-dimensional and poses the problem of coherence and contemporary relevance for both the Western and the Eastern societies. Especially, the Weberian framework can hardly explain the contemporary Third World urbanization, including Bangladesh.

Part-I: Weber's Perspective on the City

Definition of City

Weber's most important ideas on city and city culture are found in his essay "*The City*" (1922), which was based on the materials he developed since 1889 and was written between 1911 and 1913.[3] He commences by examining the existing definitions of the city including Simmel's. He rejects Simmel's concept of city in terms of size in unequivocal terms.[4] Instead, he argues: "Size alone, certainly, cannot be decisive" (Weber, 1922:1213). Weber gives a cumulative definition of the city in his ideal-type construct (Mellor, 1977:193). His ideal city is the medieval guild city, which combined economic enterprise and religious activity as well as private and public life. Therefore, community life progressively deteriorates with the development of capitalism. Weber constructs an ideal-type of city, which exhibits the following features:

- where authority had rested on a rational rather than on a charismatic or traditional basis;
- where the law was enforced on an universalistic basis rather than on a personal basis;
- where grouping existed on the basis of class rather than family and clan;
- where citizens were governed by trade groups rather than by religious groups; and
- where city's strength derived from an economic base rather than a military base.

Next, he develops three perspectives on city, sociological, economic and political, administrative and legal.

(a) Sociological perspective: From the sociological perspective, "anonymity" is the defining criterion of city. "Sociologically speaking, this would mean: the city is a settlement of closely spaced dwellings which form a colony so extensive that the reciprocal personal acquaintance of the inhabitants, elsewhere characteristic of the neighbourhood, is lacking" (Weber, 1922:1212).

(b) Economic perspective: To Weber, "market center" is central to his economic definition. He develops economic typology of city: consumer city versus producer city, industry city versus merchant city and admits that actual cities represent mixed types and are classified by their predominant economic components (Weber, 1922:1215-17).

> If we were to attempt a definition in purely economic terms, the city would be a settlement whose inhabitants live primarily from commerce and the trades rather than from agriculture. … Accordingly, we shall speak of a "city" in the economic sense of the word only if the local population satisfies an economically significant part of its everyday requirements in the local market, and if a significant part of the products bought there were acquired or produced specifically for sale on the market by the local population or that of the immediate hinterland. A city, then, is always a market center (Weber, 1922:1213).

(c) Political, administrative and legal perspective: From economic definitions he turns to the political and administrative conceptions of the city as a **corporate body** with a given territory, having military control. Weber regards the seigneurial castle and castle-seated princes as a universal phenomenon in Antiquity and in the middle Ages. This is a unique Western phenomenon. "That cities have not existed outside the occident in the sense of a political community is a fact calling for explanation" (Weber, 1923:235-36).

As an explanation for the civic political unity in the West, Weber dismisses (a) economic reason, (b) specific Germanic spirit, (c) feudal or political grants of the middle ages, and (d) march to India by Alexander the Great. To him, the main elucidation lies in the revolutionary character of the western political units, in the formation of fraternity or *conjuratio*.

> The first example in the middle ages is the revolutionary movement in 726 which led to the succession of Italy from the Byzantine rule and which centered in Venice. … Previous to that time the *dux* (later doge) Venice had been appointed by the emperor, although on the other hand, there were certain families whose members were constantly to a predominant extent appointed military tribunes or district commandants. From then on the choice of the tribunes and of the *dux* was in the hands of persons liable to military service, that is those who were in a position to serve as knights. Thus the movement was started. It requires 400 years longer before in 1143 the name *Commune Venetiarum* turns up (Weber, 1923:236).

Characteristics of the Commune

The defining characteristics of the commune was the oath of brotherhood involving (a) common ritualistic meal, (b) ritualistic union, (c) burial of dead on the acropolis, and (d) dwellings in the city (Weber, 1923:237). In these cities, the burghers participated in the military duties. The city community must have five characteristics.

> To develop into a city-commune, a settlement had to be of the non-agricultural-commercial type, at least to a relative extent, and to be equipped with the following features: 1. a fortification; 2. a market; 3. its own court of law and, at least in part, autonomous law; 4. an associational structure (*Verbandscharakter*) and, connected therewith, and 5. at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, which includes administration by authorities in whose appointment the burghers could in some form participate (Weber, 1922:1226).

Such a city commune (*Gemeinde*) appeared as a distinct "bourgeois estate" (*Bürgertum*) and was only known in the West (Weber, 1922:1226).

> But ordinarily, there existed no association which could represent the commune of burghers as such. The very concept of an urban burgher and, in particular, a specific status qualification of the burgher was completely lacking. It can be found neither in China or in Japan or India, and only in abortive beginnings in the Near East (Weber, 1922:1228-29).

In his juridical analysis, Weber stresses the character of urban landownership and legal status of persons in the Occidental city. The absence of private property in the East may be one of the fundamental factors in the non-appearance of ideal-type city. The significance of private property in the development of the medieval city can hardly be overemphasized.

> The Occidental city thus was already in Antiquity, just like in Russia, a place where the ascent from bondage to freedom by means of monetary acquisition was possible. This is even more true for the medieval city, and especially for the medieval inland city. In contrast to all known urban development elsewhere, the burghers of the Occidental city engaged in status-conscious policies directed toward this goal (Weber, 1922:1238).

> … the decisive common quality of the ancient Occidental and the typical medieval city lies in the institutionalized association, endowed with special characteristic organs, of people who as "burghers" are subject to a *special law* exclusively applicable to them and who thus form a legally autonomous status group (Weber, 1922:1240).

The existence of 'burgher rights' was crucial in the formation of 'fraternal association.' The Medieval city was a 'cultic association' constituted by the oath of brotherhood by the burghers.

> The medieval city, after all, was still a cultic association. The city church, the city saint, participation of the burgher in the Lord's Supper, the official celebrations of the church holy days—all these are obvious features of the medieval city (Weber, 1922:1247).

> The Occidental city—and especially the medieval city, … was not only economically a seat of trade and the crafts, politically in the normal case a fortress and perhaps a garrison, administratively a court district, but beyond all this also a sworn confraternity (Weber, 1922:1248).

Critical conditions for the existence of an Urban Community

Weber sets two conditions for the existence of an urban community. They are:

(a) political and military autonomy: opportunities for an autonomous administration by authorities in the election of whom citizens participated;
(b) ability to defend this new democracy against feudal lord, opposing cities, and the peasantry.

The city is a free association in which the individual participates in his personal right. The new political community, with its democratic forms of association, depended on the presence of a new class—the urban bourgeoisie. "…the characteristic of the city in the political definition was the appearance of a distinct 'bourgeois' estate" (Weber, 1922:1226). Thus the city is dominated by the bourgeoisie whose class interest is preserved by the secular, rational, individualist, market-oriented community formations of the medieval cities.

Economic independence of individual households resulted in the emergence of the new class of merchants and craftsmen. The development of free labour and identity of interests in defending new association against feudal lord led to the emergence of city as a community.

In his discussion of the emergence of the Western cities Weber focuses on the process of the development of rational-legal institutions occurring at cities that enabled the individual to be free from traditional groups, and develop his individuality. For the first time,

> … the burgher joined the citizenry as an individual, and as an individual he swore the oath of citizenship. His personal membership in the local association of the city guaranteed his legal status as a burgher, not his tribe or sib (Weber, 1922:1246).

> All safely founded information about Asian and Oriental settlements which had the economic characteristics of "cities" seems to indicate that normally only the clan associations, and sometimes also the occupational associations, where the vehicles of organized action (*Verbandshandeln*), but never the collective of urban citizens as such (Weber, 1922:1233).

Usurpation and City Commune

Weber identifies the process of the formation of the corporation of burghers as the formal-legal and their authorities as legitimately constituted. However, revolutionary usurpation of rights also occurs in most important cases.

> In a formal legal sense the corporation of the burghers and its authorities had their "legitimate" origin in (real or fictitious) privileges granted by the political and at times by the manorial powers. It is true that to some extent the actual process corresponded to this formal pattern. But quite often, and especially in the most important cases, the real origin is to be found in what is from the formal legal point of view a revolutionary usurpation of rights (Weber, 1922:1250).

There are two types of usurpation, (a) spontaneous and (b) derived. Generally, a combination of both types is found to occur.

> We can distinguish a "spontaneous" and a "derived" formation of medieval city associations. In the "spontaneous" case, the commune was the result of a political association of the burghers in spite of, or in defiance of the "legitimate" powers or more correctly, of a series of such acts. Formal recognition by the legitimate authorities came only later, if at all. A "derived" burgher association was formed through a contracted or legislated grant of more or less limited rights to autonomy and autocephaly, issued by the city founder or his successors; it is found frequently in the case of new foundations as a grant to the settlers and their descendants (Weber, 1922:1250).

> The "spontaneous" usurpation through an act of rational association, a sworn confraternization (*Eidverbrüderung: coniuratio*) of the burghers, is found especially in the bigger and older cities, such as Genoa or Cologne. As a rule, however, a combination of events of both kinds occurred (Weber, 1922:1250).

There are four main goals of the *coniurationes*: (i) unification of the local landowners for (a) protection, (b) defense, (c) peaceable settlement of internal disputes, and (d) securing of administration of justice; (ii) monopolization of economic opportunities of the city; (iii) delimitation of the obligations owed to the city lord as far as taxation is concerned; and (iv) organization of wars of the communes. The mass of the burghers within the city is forced to join the sworn confraternization.

> … But there were further goals. One was the monopolization of the economic opportunities offered by the city: only the members of the sworn association were to be permitted to share in the commerce of the city. In Genoa, for example, membership was a prerequisite for permission to invest capital in overseas trade in *commenda* partnerships. (Weber, 1922:1252)

Such temporary *coniurationes* became permanent political associations and their members were treated as urban citizens, who were subject to a special and autonomous law. "The 'bourgeois law' was, rather, a status right of the members of sworn fellowship of burghers; one was subject to it by virtue of membership in a status group which comprised the full citizens and their dependent clients "(Weber, 1922:1254).

There was the presence of nobility with family charisma-- the patrician domination, a patriciate—in the patrician city. The domination by the old patrician families was broken as a result of the triumph of the *demos*, the *plebs*, the *populo*, the *liveries* and the craft guilds. The Italian *populo* at the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, were the sworn confraternity of the craft guilds and financed the struggles against the domination of the patricians.

> The Italian *populo* was not only an economic category, but also a political one. It was a separate political community within the urban commune with its own officials, its own finances, and its own military organization. In the truest sense of the word it was a "state within the state"—the first deliberately nonlegitimate and revolutionary political association. … The association of *populo*, which confronted these knightly families, rested on the confraternization of the occupational associations (*arti* or *paratici*). The separate political community created by these associations was in the earliest cases … officially known by such names as *societas*, *credenza*, *mercadanza*, *comunanza*, or simply as *populo* (Weber, 1922:1302)

Thus *populo* initiated brutal and fierce conflict against the nobility and its success, especially by the lower guilds, brought an element of democracy into the city councils (Weber, 1922:1306). There flourished illegitimate rulers like city *tyrannis* and *signori*a. The Italian *signoria* was "the first political power in Western Europe which based its regime on a rational administration with (increasingly) appointed officials (Weber, 1922:1318) and whenever chances were available, it entered into the circle of legitimate powers.

Non-development of City Commune in the Orient

There are two reasons for the non-development of *conjuratio* in the orient.

(a) The peculiar character of the organization for defense: In the orient, the military organization was not based on the principle of self-equipment as in the occident. State had the military monopoly. This overdeveloped oriental state was due to irrigation culture (Weber, 1923:237). The water question conditioned the (a) existence of the bureaucracy, (b) the compulsory service of the dependent classes, and (c) the dependence of subject classes upon the functioning of the bureaucracy of the king.

> The occidental city is in its beginnings first of all a defense group, an organization of those economically competent to bear arms, to equip and train themselves. Whether the military organization is based on the principle of self-equipment or on that of equipment by a

military overlord who furnishes horses, arms and provisions, is a distinction quite as fundamental for social history as is the question whether the means of economic production are the property of the worker or of a capitalistic entrepreneur. Everywhere outside the west the development of the city was prevented by the fact that the army of the prince is older than the city (Weber, 1923:237)

In India the castes were not in a position to form ritualistic communities and hence a city, because they were ceremonially alien to one another. …

(b) Ideas and institutions connected with magic: This is reflected in the monopolization of communion with the gods by priests. In the West, there was an extensive freedom of the priesthood; the rites were performed by the city officials and the treasures of gods and priests were owned by the polis; and the priestly offices were filled by auction as there were no magical barriers. Weber identifies three factors that destroyed magic in the West. They are: (a) prophecy among the Jews: the prophetic tradition destroyed magic within the confines of Judaism; (b) Pentecostal miracle: the ceremonial adoption into the spirit of Christ; and (c) the day in Antioch: it was the day when Paul espoused fellowship with the uncircumcised. These led to the destruction of magical barriers in the west.

> The magical barriers between clans, tribes and peoples, which were still known in the ancient polis to a considerable degree, were thus set aside and the establishment of the occidental city was made possible (Weber, 1923:238).

> When Christianity became the religion of these people who had been so profoundly shaken in all their traditions, it finally destroyed whatever religious significance these clan ties retained; perhaps, indeed, it was precisely the weakness or absence of such magical and taboo barriers which made the conversion possible (Weber, 1922:1244).

> However, Judaism was none the less of notable significance for modern rational capitalism, insofar as it transmitted to Christianity the latter's hostility to magic. … Probably this hostility arose through the circumstance that what the Israelites found in Canaan was the magic of the agricultural god Baal, while Jahveh was a god of volcanoes, earthquakes, and pestilences. The hostility between the two priesthoods and the victory of the priests of Jahveh discredited the fertility magic of the priests of Baal and stigmatized it with a character of decadence and godlessness. Since Judaism made Christianity possible and gave it the character of a religion essentially free from magic, it rendered an important service from the point of view of economic history (Weber, 1923:264-65).

Next, Weber surveys the lack of communal features in the Orient, especially in a patrician city like Mecca (Weber, 1922:1226-34). He compares Christianity with Islam and reasons why Islam failed to destroy magical barriers.

> The often very significant role played by the parish community in the administrative organization of medieval cities is only one of many symptoms pointing to this quality of the Christian religion which, in dissolving clan ties, importantly shaped the medieval city. Islam, by contrast, never really overcame the divisiveness of Arab tribal and clan ties, as is shown by the history of internal conflicts of the early caliphate; in its early period it remained the religion of a conquering of tribes and clans (Weber, 1922:1244).

Weber also speaks of the relationship between Indian caste, Chinese geomancy and the development of capitalism vis-à-vis the city. "Obviously, capitalism could not develop in an economic group thus bound hand and foot by magical belief" (Weber, 1923:265).

Hierarchy of Factors in the Development of the Medieval City:

Käsler (1988) constructs a hierarchy of six factors in the writings of Weber, which he finds related to the development of the medieval city. They are:

1. Political autonomy, in some cases independent foreign policy, independent military.
2. Autonomous law creation by the cities and by the (old) guilds and the (later) crafts.
3. Own judicial and administrative agencies (autocephaly).
4. Power of taxation over its burghers who were free from taxation and other charges by outside powers.
5. The right to hold markets, autonomous trade and craft regulation and monopolistic powers of exclusion.
6. Specific attitude to non-citizen strata, which resulted from the contrast to the specifically non-urban political and feudal-   manorial structures.

Relationships between City and Culture

Implied in the writing of Weber was the notion that God was born and buried in the city. Weber sets forth two-way relationships between city and culture. In general terms, culture, as espoused in the protestant ethic, contributed in

the development of capitalist spirit and capitalism as such. And since it was in the city that protestant values were nurtured, it became a crucial variable in the emergence of capitalism in the West. City contributed in the development of culture in five specific ways, it produced (a) party and demagogue, (b) art, (c) science, especially mathematics and astronomy, (d) religious institutions like Judaism and Christianity, and (e) theological thought.

> The contribution of the city in the whole field of culture is extensive. The city created the party and demagogue. … The city and it alone has brought forth the phenomena of the history of art. Hellenic and Gothic art, in contrast with Mycænean and Roman, are city art. So also the city produced science in the modern sense. In the city civilization of the Greeks the discipline out of which scientific thinking developed, namely mathematics, was given the form under which it continuously developed down to modern times. The city culture of the Babylonians stands in an analogous relation to the foundation of astronomy. Furthermore, the city is the basis of specific religious institutions. Not only was Judaism, in contrast with the religion of Israel, a thoroughly urban construction—a peasant could not conform with the ritual of the law--but early Christianity is also a city phenomenon; the larger the city the greater was the percentage of Christians, and the case of Puritanism and Pietism was also the same. That a peasant could function as a member of a religious group is a strictly modern phenomenon. Finally, the city alone produced theological thought, and on the other hand again, it alone harbored thought untrammeled by priestcraft. The phenomenon of Plato, with is question of how to make men useful citizens as the dominant problem of his thought, is unthinkable outside the environment of a city (Weber, 1923:234).

Thus, city culture, which ultimately led to the emergence of secularism, was essential to the development of city. The reason why Oriental cities were markedly different from the Occidental ones to the extent that they would not be called "cities," lies in the absence of the development of such a city culture. Hence, the culture of the burghers became synonymous with the culture of the bourgeoisie, which became one of the causal agents of urban development in the West.

Part-II: Weber and Contemporary Urban Development

Contemporary Urban Development

The urban transition is labelled as a "profound human transformation," or as a second transformation, which is "comparable to the domestication of plants and animals ten thousand years ago that made a sedentary life possible" (Gugler, 1997:xv). The twentieth century is seen as the "century of the urban transition" as half the world's population will live in urban areas by the end of the century (Gugler, 1997:xv). One of the most striking features of contemporary urbanization is the predominance of the Third World, where two-thirds of the world's urban population live. The magnitude of this transformation of the 'South' is also "without precedent in human history" (Gugler, 1997:xv). This type of urbanization has become one of the forms of urbanism called "Third World entrepôt" (Giddens, 1989: 569).

There are number of characteristics of contemporary world urbanization. The United Nations (2002) has identified 20 major key features of world urbanization. Of them, the most important ones are:

> 1. The world's urban population reached 2.9 billion in 2000 and is expected to rise to 5 billion by 2030. Whereas 30 per cent of the world population lived in urban areas in 1950, the proportion of urban dwellers rose to 47 per cent by 2000 and is projected to attain 60 per cent by 2030.

> 2. Virtually all the population growth expected at the world level during 2000-2030 will be concentrated in urban areas. During that period the urban population is expected to increase by 2.1 billion persons, nearly as much as will be added to the world population, 2.2 billion.

> 3. Almost all of the population increase expected during 2000-2030 will be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions whose population will likely rise from approximately 2 billion in 2000 to just under 4 billion in 2030.

> 4. Rural-urban migration and the transformation of rural settlements into cities are important determinants of the high population growth expected in urban areas of the less developed regions over the next thirty years.

5. There are marked differences in the level and pace of urbanization among the major areas constituting the less developed regions of the world. Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole is highly urbanized, with 75 per cent of its population living in urban settlements in 2000, a proportion higher than that of Europe. Moreover, this proportion is twice as high as the one estimated for Africa or Asia.

6. Despite their high levels of urbanization, the combined number of urban dwellers in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania (1.2 billion) is smaller than the number in Asia (1.4 billion), one of the least urbanized major areas of the world in 2000. Furthermore, by 2030, Asia and Africa will each have higher numbers of urban dwellers than any other major area of the world, and Asia will account for 54 per cent of the urban population of the world, up from 48 per cent in 2000.

7. Most of these large cities are located in developing countries. With 26.5 million inhabitants, Tokyo is the most populous urban agglomeration in the world in 2001, followed by São Paulo (18.3), Mexico City (18.3), New York (16.8) and Mumbai (16.5). By 2015, Tokyo will remain the largest urban agglomeration with 27.2 million inhabitants, followed by Dhaka, Mumbai, São Paulo, Delhi and Mexico City, all of which are expected to have more than 20 million inhabitants.

8. Thus, Dhaka in Bangladesh grew at an average annual rate of 7.0 per cent during 1975-2000 and Delhi in India increased at a rate of 4.1 per cent annually over the same period. But they are exceptional cases. Among the 17 mega-cities as identified in 2001, just 5 grew at rates above 3 per cent per year and 8 experienced moderate or low growth (below 2 per cent per year). In the future, just four of today's mega-cities will exhibit growth rates of 3 per cent or more (Dhaka, Delhi, Jakarta and Karachi).

Third World Urbanization

The urbanization process in the Third World is multi-faceted and is characterized by various features: (a) primacy and overurbanization (Richardson, 1984: 134-35; London, 1980, 1985), (b) protracted poverty, (c) rural-urban migration, (d) informal labour market featured by widespread unemployment and underemployment (Sethuraman, 1981:188-200), (e) "misallocation of labour" (Gugler, 1988:78), (f) inadequate urban housing and services, (g) populist pressure on governance, (h) changing nature of class conflict between rural classes and urban classes (Lipton, 1977) and (i) low life chances like high infant mortality rates, low life expectancy, limited access to health care, low levels of literacy and limited years of schooling, and insufficient diet (Guglar and Flanagan, 1976). The nature of misallocation of labour is aptly described by Gugler:

> Much misemployment focuses on getting crumbs from the table of the rich. The member of the local elite or middle-class, the foreign technical advisor, or the tourist who is begged for a morsel, or made to maintain a company of sycophants, or has his wallet snatched away. The relationship is vividly portrayed in three activities: the army of domestics that cleans and beautifies the environment of the privileged; the prostitutes who submit to the demands of those able to pay, and who in the bargain become outcastes; and the scavengers who subsist on what the more affluent have discarded, and who literally live on the crumbs from the rich man's table (Gugler, 1988:78).

The Third World states, by their "urban bias" in the economic development of the nations, has unwittingly created the antagonism between urban and rural classes. Thereby ensuing series of political protests and picketing along with traffic jam, which have become a regular feature of the Third World cities.

> The most important conflict in the poor countries of the world today is not between labour and capital. Nor is it between foreign and national interests. It is between the rural classes and the urban classes. The rural sector contains most of the poverty, and most of the low-cost sources of potential [national economic] advance; but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organization, and power. … Resource allocations, within the city and the village as well as between them, reflect urban priorities rather than equity or efficiency (Lipton, 1977: 40, 45).

Explanations of Contemporary Urban Development

The contemporary urban theory has moved far away from a Weberian position and advocates a theory of "created environment," which is related to major patterns of political and economic change. Thus, Harvey (1973, 1982, 1985)

views urbanism as one aspect of the created environment through restructuring of space brought about by the spread of industrial capitalism.

> Capitalist society must of necessity create a physical landscape--a mass of humanity constructed physical resources – in its own image, broadly appropriate to the purposes of production and reproduction. But I shall also argue that this process of creating space is full of contradictions and tensions and that the class relations in capitalist society inevitably spawn strong cross-currents of conflict (Harvey, 1985: 3)

Likewise, Castells (1977, 1983) sees city as an integral process of collective consumption, which in turn are an inherent aspect of industrial capitalism. Therefore, class conflict between capital and labour is replaced by the class conflict between landlord and tenant.

Wallerstein's (1974) world-system paradigm stresses the dependency argument and links the urban development with the common economic system of the First World and Third World. Therefore, urban primacy of the Third World could be understood by the process of restructuring, export of industrial operations by the "core" nations to poor "peripheral" nations. Thus, the Third World urbanization is the result of the process of "deindustrialization" of the advanced capitalist nations.

Thus, these positions are far removed from the Weberian perspective on the city. They raise the limitation of the Weberian perspective in explaining the nature, form and causes of colonial and post-colonial urbanization of the colonized and colonizing nations. However, given the United Nations' (2002) findings that in near future, Dhaka in Bangladesh would be the second largest city in the world and that Bangladesh's rate of urbanization would be the highest in the world, it is important that we extend our analysis to Bangladesh.

Part-III: Weber and Bangladesh Urban Development

State, Class and Urban Development in Bangladesh

The urban development of Bangladesh can be divided into three phases, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. The urban development during the pre-colonial phase was related to the political history of the country, especially to the evolution of state. It was the despotic nature of the hydraulic state and the monopolization of the means of violence by it that prevented the development of urban community in the Western sense of the term.

The social weakness of the indigenous merchants was also a deterrent factor in the establishment of urban autocephaly in Bangladesh. The magical barriers of the Hindu caste and the Muslim clan prevented the fraternization of the Pala, Sena, Afghan and Mughul trade guilds. As a result, urban development became apolitical. It remained an adjunct of fortress.

Though hardly any authentic literature is available on the urban development of Bangladesh, the rudimentary observations by the Indologists are more or less applicable in the case of Bangladesh. Thus it is observed that most cities in Bangladesh could be classified as producer city/consumer city.

> Doubtless most of the Indian towns grew out of the villages, or originally clusters of villages, but the most famous of all grew out of camps. … Nearly all the movable capital of the Empire or kingdom was at once swept away to its temporary centre, which became the exclusive seat of skilled manufacture and decorative art. Every man who claimed to belong to the higher class of artificers took his loom or tools and followed in the train of the king (Maine, 1872:214).

During the Mughal period, Dhaka was the provincial capital of Bengal and it flourished at the expense of Pandua, the former capital during the Afghan regime. Artisans like goldsmiths, conch-shell makers and spice traders migrated to Dhaka from Pandua and settled here (Karim, 1956:62). Similarly, when the capital was transferred to Murshidabad from Dhaka, the latter was reduced to a glorified village and the former became one of the largest cities of that time (Ahmed, 1948). "Murshidabad … is as extensive, populous, and rich as the city of London, with this difference that there were individuals in the first possessing infinitely greater property than in the last city"

(Clive, 1756-59:ccii). Thus Dhaka, Pandua and Murshidabad were princely cities. Their fate was tied to the fate of the prince.

> The example of India shows how much these official towns were bound with the prince—to the point of absurdity. Political difficulties, even the prince's whim, uprooted and transplanted the capitals several times. … As soon as its prince abandoned it the town was jeoparadized, deteriorated and occasionally died (Braudel, 1973:414).

However, the development of the *conjuratio* was lacking, though a rudimentary tendency was found in Murshidabad. The trading houses of Murshidabad were more or less fraternized and they were conscious of their class interest too. As a result, patronized by the English East India Company, the nascent bourgeoisie, under the leadership of Fateh Chand (Jagat Seth), united the merchants of all religions and race to fight for their burgher's rights against the feudal tyrant Siraj-ud-dollah. The defeat of Siraj at the battle of Plassey was the most glorified event in the annals of urban history of Bengal as it freed the urban centres of the feudal clutches and exploitation. The possibility of the development of institution like *popolo* and usurpation of power, either by spontaneous or derivative formation, was annihilated by the British annexation of Bengal. A new era of colonization, Westernization and sponsored urbanization began.

The urbanization that began to take its roots in Bengal during the colonial and post-colonial period exhibited a different pattern. The most distinguishing feature was its dependency on the colonial industrial/administrative manoeuvre. A new phenomenon of metropolitanization began at the expense of city. The city lost its indigenous community character as mentioned by Weber. Since Weber never explained metropolitanization, the relevance of Weber to account for the recent urban development of Bangladesh appears remote.

Trend of Urbanization in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is still an agrarian society though nearly one quarter of the population lives in the urban areas. Table-1, which gives the trend of urban growth in Bangladesh for last one century, shows a very slow and retarded urban growth for Bangladesh. The large number of urban population since 1981 is due to the definitional change of urban area in those censuses. The high urban growth rate from 1974 through 2001 was due to the extended definition of urban area in 1981. Though the urban population has increased from 2.4 per cent in 1901 to 23.1 per cent in 2001, the exponential growth rate indicates much slower growth for the said period, from 1.4 during1901-11, it increased to 3.2 during 1991-2001. The overall trend is curvilinear, unstable and periodically fluctuating. It reflects both global and internal dynamism as well as statistical manipulation by the politicized administration of a peripheral state.

Table-1 Urbanization in Bangladesh, 1901-2001

Census year	Total population	Urban population	Percent urban	Variation	Exponential growth rate
1901	28,928,000	702,035	2.43	-	-
1911	31,555,000	807,024	2.56	14.95	1.39
1921	33,254,000	878,480	2.64	8.85	0.85
1931	35,604,000	1,073,489	3.02	22.20	2.00
1941	41,997,000	1,537,244	3.66	43.20	3.59
1951	42,063,000	1,819,773	4.33	18.38	1.69
1961	50,840,000	2,640,726	5.19	45.11	3.72
1974	71,479,000	6,273,602	8.78	137.57	6.66
1981	87,120,000	13,228,163	15.18	110.85	10.66
1991	106,314,000	20,872,204	19.63	57.79	4.56
2001	123,851,120	28,605,200	23.10	37.05	3.15

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Population Census-2001: National Report (Provisional).
(Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2003):T-5.1:28

Table-2 shows that the urban hierarchy changes over time, the win-loss game of city ranking is indicative of unstable economic growth and lack of urban policy. The urban expansion has occurred only in terms of population size, devoid of urban facilities, let alone urbanism. Data from 1901 indicates how colonial economic interest led to the rise and fall of urban centres like Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Sirajganj, Pabna, Jamalpur and Madaripur throughout the century. It is interesting to note that four cities, Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Barisal, have never changed their rank throughout the century. This is indicative of regional primacy.

Table-2 Ranking of Cities in Bangladesh, 1991-2001

City	2001	1991	1901	Rank difference 2001-1991	Rank difference 2001-1901
Dhaka	1	1	1	0	0
Chittagong	2	2	2	0	0
Khulna	3	3	-	0	-
Rajshahi	4	4	4	0	0
Sylhet	5	-	-	-	-
Rangpur	6	5	-	1	-
Barisal	7	7	7	0	0
Mymensingh	8	6	-	2	-
Jessore	9	8	-	1	-
C.Nawabganj	10	10	-	0	-
Comilla	-	9	6	-	-
Sirajganj	-	-	3		-
Brahmanbaria	-	-	5		-
Pabna	-	-	8		-
Jamalpur	-	-	9		-
Madaripur	-	-	10		-

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Population Census-2001: National Report (Provisional).
(Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2003):T-5.3 and T-5.4:32-33

Table-3 clearly demonstrates a retarded trend towards primacy within among urban hierarchies in Bangladesh. Usually, primate cities in a given country range as much as thirty times greater in population than the same country's next largest city (Gottdiener, 1994:255). In the case of Bangladesh, Dhaka's population is 3 times greater than the next largest city, Chittagong. Similarly, Chittagong's population is 2.5 times greater than the next largest city, Khulna. Whereas Khulna's population is around 2 times greater than the next largest city, Rajshahi.

Table-3 Trend of Urban Primacy in Bangladesh, 1991-2001

	2001				1991		
City	Population	Per cent	Rank variation	City	Population	Per cent	Rank variation
Dhaka	10,712,206	61.21	-	Dhaka	6,844,131	58.52	-
Chittagong	3,385,800	19.35	-68.39	Chittagong	2,348,428	20.08	-65.69
Khulna	1,340,826	7.66	-60.40	Khulna	1,001,825	8.57	-57.34

Rajshahi	700,140	4.00	-47.78	Rajshahi	544,649	4.66	-45.63
Sylhet	320,280	1.83	-54.25	Rangpur	191,398	1.64	-64.86
Rangpur	251,840	1.44	-21.37	Mymensingh	188,713	1.61	-1.40
Barisal	224,660	1.28	-10.79	Barisal	170,232	1.46	-9.79
Mymensingh	209,660	1.20	-6.68	Jessore	139,710	1.19	-17.93
Jessore	192,240	1.10	-8.31	Comilla	135,313	1.16	-3.15
C.Nawabganj	163,400	0.93	-15.00	C.Nawabganj	130,577	1.12	-3.50
Total:	17,501,052	100.00		Total:	11,694,976	100.00	

Source: Estimate by the author

Given that, Bangladesh's urban experience does not fit the pattern of the Third World urbanization either. In terms of primacy, the pattern is more similar to the developed countries rather than the Third World. However, in some ways, it is possible to use Weberian typology and theory to account for the urban development of medieval Bangladesh. But it cannot explain the contemporary urban development in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

Apparently Weber did not reach a conclusion for the entire investigation, with the result that he effected no systematic contrast (Käsler, 1988:47). He essentially sees city, especially the medieval city, which is an ideal-type construct, as an agent of social change from feudalism to capitalism.

> Yet, neither modern capitalism nor the "state" as we know it developed on the basis of the ancient city, whereas the medieval city, though not the only significant antecedent developmental stage and certainly not itself the carrier of these developments, is inseparably linked as one of the crucial factors with the rise of both phenomena (Weber, 1922:1323).

Thus he locates city and city culture as parallel to his theory of religion in relation to capitalism. Both are linked to the process of demystification and rationalization. "Weber's study of the city is as central to his investigation of the development of capitalism as his work on religion" (Mellor, 1977:191). In one sense, it is the city which harboured Protestantism and the ascetic culture of early capitalism. "The new form of capitalist social association developed in the medieval city. The urban forms of social association – law courts, the guilds, churches and municipal administration — adopted rationalistic standards of conduct and gave birth to capitalist enterprise" (Weber, 1922:1323). Thus city was also a catalyst to social change. "Urbanization under specific economic and political circumstances was a necessary linkage in the chain of conditions leading to capitalism" (Mellor, 1977:191).

Like ideal-type capitalism, this ideal-type city is found at a watershed, the transition from the feudal order to the capitalist society of Western Europe. "The medieval city therefore foreshadowed not only the social and cultural structure of the Western cities, but also their political character, i.e. the dominance of an elite, the rationality of organization which in itself renders null individual participation, and the apathy of the citizenry confronted with a community power structure with only residual autonomy" (Mellor, 1977:194). In this sense, one can label Weber, like Marx, as eurocentric.

Weber's theory of city has obscure contemporary relevance as the content is remote and the argument is elusive (Mellor, 1977:189). By focusing on comparative study of the medieval and the ancient cities, "He thus sought to avoid the problem of theoretical obsolescence by purposively selecting an already antiquated urban arrangement, discounting the superficially urban industrial and bureaucratic centres of his own time as regressive. If it had suited his purpose to describe the contemporaneous, expanding industrial metropolis, the generalizations he might have proposed would nevertheless have become outdated" (Flanagan, 1993:1-2).

But given his depth of analysis, a comparative study of urban development in the East and the West as well as in the Antiquity and the middle ages, can be undertaken. "Unsatisfactory and limiting as is Weber's approach, it is still possible to argue that it tells us more about the nature and derivation of urbanism than do the statements of either Simmel or Wirth" (Mellor, 1977:194). But the irony is, like his God, his ideal type capitalism and city are dead as well.

Notes

[1] "In the rich literature on the city we look in vain for a theory of urbanism presenting in a systematic fashion the available knowledge concerning the city as a social entity. … But despite the multiplication of research and textbooks on the city, we do not as yet have a comprehensive body of competent hypotheses, which may be derived from a set of postulates implicitly contained in a sociological definition of the city, and from our general sociological knowledge, which may be substantiated through empirical research. … The closest approximations to a systematic theory of urbanism that we have are to be found in a penetrating essay, "Die Stadt," by Max Weber, …" (Wirth, 1938:8).

[2] Influenced by Weber, one of the proponents of the Chicago School, Wirth made a sweeping condemnation of capitalist urbanization (Wirth, 1926; 1956; 1964).

[3] The essay was published posthumously by Marianne Weber in 1921 in the *Archiv* and in 1922 edition of *Economy and Society* which she oversaw. After the fourth edition in 1956, edited by Johannes Winckelmann, the text can still be found in *Economy and Society,* but now under the title 'Non-legitimate domination (typology of cities)'. Käsler (1988:42) considers the essay unfinished.

[4] Simmel and Weber were responding to the need for a more comprehensive theory of urbanism. Simmel's theory was couched in terms of neo-Kantian formalism, whereas Weber's theoretical point of view was a form of social behaviorism (Martindale, 1958:50-51)

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