



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond colonial urbanism: state power, global connections and fragmented land regimes in twentieth-century Hyderabad city

Eric Lewis Beverley* 

Department of History, Social & Behavioral Science, 3rd Floor, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY 11794, USA

*Corresponding author. Email: eric.beverley@stonybrook.edu

Abstract

Urban histories of modern South Asia have centred on British Indian cities and the reign of colonial urbanism, with dependence on metropolitan imperatives and models regarded as givens. Focusing on Hyderabad, one of the subcontinent's five largest cities and capital of an autonomous princely state throughout the colonial era, this article establishes the analytical utility of *princely urbanism* as a framework for writing the history of South Asian cities. Characterized by state-directed planning, transnational urbanist networks and multiple overlapping property regimes, this mode of city development and its resonance points to hidden genealogies of modern urbanism.

Three projects in twentieth-century Hyderabad reveal the particular dynamics of urban change that shaped the city:

Between the conclusion of World War I and the mid-1940s, a state agency called the Hyderabad City Improvement Board (CIB) remade the housing stock, residential geography and industrial and transportation infrastructures of the expanding capital city. The CIB defined its work based on urbanist principles such as safeguarding the public good, and the entitlement of urban dwellers to affordable working-class housing, agricultural work-spaces, clean and healthy neighbourhoods and mosque and temple access. These values corresponded to ideologies of benevolent reciprocity between state and subjects, and were mediated by and infused with globally circulating urbanist ideas.

~ ~ ~

In 1918, Hyderabad officials approached the prominent Scottish urban thinker and sociologist Patrick Geddes to develop a plan for a showcase vernacular-language, secular Islamic, public university in the city. Geddes went on to produce a report (1922) laying out plans for Osmania University that would situate the institution within the ecology of local landscapes and cultural practices and connect it to urban infrastructures. Shaped by close engagement with transnational urbanist trends, Geddes' plan referenced models and examples elsewhere in the subcontinent, as well as in Europe and West Asia. The cultural world that emerged around

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press.

the university – from early ties with Muslim students and intellectuals across South Asia and beyond, to subsequent connections with long-distance migration flows and global technological research – situated Hyderabad as a concourse in global flows of people, capital and ideas.

~~~~

In the 1930s and 1940s, as the British sought to gradually scale down their presence in Hyderabad in anticipation of the decolonization of neighbouring British India, they began returning lands around the imperial military cantonment to Hyderabad administration. Deliberations over the fate of some categories of property reveal a complex layering of multiple land regimes in cantonment areas and greater Hyderabad – from colonial leaseholds, to endowed or entitled lands, to numerous categories of state, royal or institutional property. Along with a new politics of urban dwellers demanding public amenities and referencing ruling ideologies of Nizam and Raj regimes, debates over the city and the ambivalent forms of property that produce them point to diverse genealogies of South Asian urbanism.

~~~~

The above developments reveal contingent tendencies that constitute what we might call *princely urbanism*, which gave form to cities and urban life in South Asia's so-called princely states.¹ As these vignettes show, urban change in twentieth-century Hyderabad was shaped by three key dynamics: state-directed planning, global networking and fragmented urban sovereignty. Global trends of rapid urbanization – expansion of built-up areas, populations and municipal boundaries – took varied forms, emerging from divergent political and historical contexts. Scholarship on urbanization in South Asia has tended to implicitly take core colonial cities as normative examples from which to derive typologies and theories. Key works have tracked a familiar transition from colonial dominance in political, social and economic domains into an era of anti-colonial nationalist contestation, followed by the inheritance of colonial machinery of government by new nation-states. Urban histories of modern South Asia have traced a similar teleology of colonial urbanism. Existing scholarship emphasizes the Raj's sovereign control over cities and production of a unitary spatial order, and traces the inroads of British imperial state and private capital to the exclusion of other flows. It charts a familiar dynamic in the history of late colonialism in general by locating the emergence of urbanization paradigms and politics at the interstices of colonial power and nationalist contestation, the latter consolidating itself during the inter-war era and into World War II.² In contrast, Hyderabad, capital of an autonomous

¹The term 'princely states' was part of the colonial lexicon for describing polities such as Hyderabad that were not formally colonized, and which despite being subordinated to colonial authority remained sovereign powers. While recognizing its limitations and misleading implications, this article nevertheless uses the term in keeping with the convention observed in other articles from this Special Issue. For a discussion of the problematic assumptions bound up in that term, which remains the standard designation in current scholarship, see E.L. Beverley, 'Introduction: rethinking sovereignty, colonial empires, and nation-states in South Asia and beyond', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 40 (2020), 407–20.

²For critical surveys of the early 2000s wave of scholarship on South Asian urban history, centred as it was in work on large colonial cities, see P. Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Aldershot, 2007), chs. 1, 8; J. Nair, 'Beyond

Muslim-ruled princely state that was never formally colonized, reveals a divergent picture of urban power characterized by state-centred planning carried out by a dynastic regime, and a fragmented spatial terrain. The vantage from Hyderabad, as from other non-British imperial or princely urban spaces, provides an opportunity to rethink scholarly assumptions about the nature of South Asian cities in the colonial and postcolonial eras.³

Rather than developing a binary between colonial and princely urbanism as rigidly separate forms, this article engages in a close analysis of Hyderabad's urbanism to develop a heuristic model for exploring modern South Asian urban history. Enumerating and examining the tendencies that make up Hyderabad's princely urbanism can open up core colonial cities (and other cities in South Asia and elsewhere) to fresh considerations. Such an approach might reveal how fragmented property regimes, diverse global influences and longer genealogies of urban practice have been occluded by the conventional starting point of top-down coloniality in the making of South Asia's urban modernity.

This article moves between detailed exploration of the particularities of urbanism in Hyderabad and comparative and connective reflection to indicate broader implications. Following a description of the concept and contexts of princely urbanism, the article begins by sketching the political setting in which Hyderabadi urbanism emerged: Asaf Jahi sovereignty and related property forms. It will then detail the three key elements of Hyderabad's princely urbanism: state planning, subcontinental and global connections, and fragmented property regimes. The article concludes with reflections on how attention to princely urbanism as concept and historical practice might help generate a more robust genealogy of South Asian – and global – urban history.

Princely urbanism as concept

All South Asian cities are part of a broader, expansive and diverse domain of urban development, and there is no innate distinction between colonial and princely cities. Nevertheless, elaborating the concept of princely urbanism and exploring examples of distinctive elements helps highlight the central importance of state-centred planning initiatives, diverse influences and fragmented property forms with long histories. Similar trends are present and significant in colonial cities, but are often overshadowed by dominant colonial state power negotiated or challenged and then inherited by nationalist elites.⁴ Juxtaposed against colonial

nationalism: modernity, governance and a new urban history for India', *Urban History*, 36 (2009), 327–41; E.L. Beverley, 'Colonial urbanism and South Asian cities', *Social History*, 36 (2011), 482–97. For a survey that includes more recent works on South Asian urban history, see D. Bhattacharyya, 'The Indian city and its "restive publics"', *Modern Asian Studies*, 55 (2021), 665–95.

³On the divergent genealogies of city form and sociality in French India, see J. Namakkal, *Unsettling Utopia: The Making and Unmaking of French India* (New York, 2021), ch. 5.

⁴R.M. Brown, 'The cemeteries and the suburbs: Patna's challenges to the colonial city in South Asia', *Journal of Urban History*, 29 (2003), 151–72; S. Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London, 2005); P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis, 2011); W.J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis, 2007); D.E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928* (Berkeley, 1991); J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous*

urbanism, conceived from the starting point of top-down British power over cities and containment within imperial capital flows, princely urbanism as a set of parallel tendencies and persistent dynamics facilitates more fluid and expansive accounts of South Asian urban history.

The histories of princely cities and towns feature dynamics that are less prominent in Raj cities and often muted in scholarship on them. Dominant colonial cities such as Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata), Madras (Chennai) and Karachi developed into large urban settlements because they were centres of British Indian government and commerce. Consequently, their histories and historiographies often centre on colonial emergence and expansion, and imperial political and social control, followed by nationalist resistance, negotiation and eventually inheritance by postcolonial nation-states.⁵ A similar progression and timeline casting South Asian urbanism from colonial origins to nationalist transitions shapes much scholarship on British Indian cities with longer histories, such as Delhi, Dhaka, Lahore, Lucknow, Surat or Benares (Varanasi).⁶ Key continuities and legacies in the making of social and political power from earlier historical eras that shape urban form and property are often occluded in histories that begin with the colonial establishment of power. In princely cities, sovereign rulers who claimed authority based on connections to non-European political orders directed state-led urbanism initiatives that concretized state patrimonial networks in urban structure and capital, and explicitly combined regional political values and aesthetics with globally circulating urbanist trends and technologies. Explorations of cities such as Hyderabad, or other princely towns and cities – from Bahawalpur to Baroda to Bhopal, Kolhapur to Jaipur to Rampur, Cooch Behar to Cochin, Mysore to Srinagar – have the potential to bring into sharp relief the invocation of resonant provincial and transregional urbanist modes in the making of modern South Asian cities. As a heuristic device, we might roughly define *princely urbanism* as a broad set of features and tendencies centred on three key elements: first, state-directed urban planning conceived in an idiom of patrimonial sovereignty grounded in the notion of benevolent reciprocity

Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism (London, 2005); S. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Malden, MA, 2007); G. Prakash, *Mumbai Fables: A History of an Enchanted City* (Princeton, 2010).

⁵See sources referred to in the previous note, and M. Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City, 1845–1875* (Bombay, 1991); S.J. Lewandowski, 'Urban growth and municipal development in the colonial city of Madras, 1860–1900', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 34 (1975), 341–60; C.H. Nightingale, 'Before race mattered: geographies of the color line in early colonial Madras and New York', *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008), 48–71; S. Patel and A. Thorner (eds.), *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (Bombay, 1995); S. Patel and A. Thorner (eds.), *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (Bombay, 1996).

⁶In addition to the works cited above on Delhi, Lahore and Surat, see, on Dhaka, S.U. Ahmed, *Dhaka: A Study in Urban History and Development, 1840–1921* (Dhaka, 2010); on Banaras, M.S. Dodson (ed.), *Banaras: Urban Forms and Cultural Histories* (New Delhi, 2012); and M.S. Dodson, *Bureaucracy, Belonging, and the City in North India 1870–1930* (Abingdon, 2020); on Lucknow, V.T. Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877* (Princeton, 1984). For considerations of other urbanist trajectories in relation to venues of cultural engagement and built structures in these cities, respectively, see M. Desai, *Banaras Reconstructed: Architecture and Sacred Space in a Hindu Holy City* (Seattle, 2017); S.B. Freitag (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800–1980* (Berkeley, 1992); M. Rajagopalan, *Building Histories: The Archival and Affective Lives of Five Monuments in Modern Delhi* (Chicago, 2016).

between regime and subjects maintained by state elites; second, mediation by global idioms of urbanization and planning expertise; and, third, ambivalent urban authority in a context of fragmented sovereignty over space. Hyderabad provides a key example.

The context of princely urbanism in Hyderabad

Hyderabad urbanism entailed state policy aimed at remaking spaces and infrastructures in a city characterized by diverse logics of property grounded in claims and legal regimes linked to a range of formal sovereign authorities and intersecting transnational circuits. The Asaf Jahi government intervened to remake Hyderabad's urban fabric from the early twentieth century onwards. Official princely urbanism was a vehicle for producing afresh much of the housing stock, open space and the transport and industrial infrastructures of the eponymous capital city, largely via bodies such as the CIB and Municipal Corporation. Hyderabad's patrimonial political networks empowered numerous additional, small-scale urban authorities as mediators with the urban populace. State nobles and service grant holders, or their appointees, exercised legal, developmental and policing authority on landed estates within the city. Colonial officials pursued their own, often competing, sometimes complementary, urban policy in Secunderabad Cantonment and the Hyderabad Residency sectors, the civil and military areas administered by the Raj in Hyderabad city. This plurality of urban powers and their overlapping territorial claims had implications for urban governance, land control and development. Hyderabad's status as capital of an assertively autonomous and Muslim-ruled state situated the city within networks of migration expertise and commerce throughout the Muslim world and the Indian Ocean and beyond, including – but by no means limited to – imperial connections with Britain and its empire.

From the eighteenth century through World War II, in terms of political status, quanta of connections, dynamics of expansion and sheer size, Hyderabad was comparable to many top-tier cities in the world. It was the political capital of a polity that, though decidedly a lesser player, remained autonomous from British colonial rule in legal terms and institutional practice. The city received significant numbers of migrants and visitors from British India, but also from a variety of other locations in the Indian Ocean region and beyond (Yemen, Iran, Ethiopia; Europe and the US). It was one of the four or five largest cities in the subcontinent from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Hyderabad expanded rapidly like nearly all large cities in South Asia (and much of the world) over the middle decades of the twentieth century. Its urban footprint exploded out of the old walled city core from the first decade of the twentieth century, and more than doubled in population between 1931 and 1951 to become one of only five South Asian cities above the one million mark.

The geography of political jurisdiction and land tenure in urban Hyderabad comprised multiple political and aesthetic regimes, and materialized divergent idioms and moments of capitalism and other economic modes. The Asaf Jahi city was composed of state lands (*diwani*); royal lands held privately by the ruling dynasty (*sarf-i khas*); and hereditary land grants made in prior eras under different regimes and held by officials, nobles, soldiers, divines, their descendants or the designated agents. In addition to these lands connected to political entities, nobility

or officials, Hyderabad had lands endowed to Hindu, Muslim or Christian trusts; properties titled to specific social groups on the basis of hereditary cultivation or community entitlements applied to certain kinds of spaces, such as claims of certain *dalit* (lower caste) or *adivasi* (aboriginal) groups to lands that were forested or adjacent to water bodies. All these lands were subject to varying jurisdictions that facilitated a range of leaseholds, usage rights and forms of private or collective ownership.

The fragmented and overlapping forms of property that made up the urban fabric of Hyderabad were subjected to state development initiatives and municipal governance schemes starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Agencies and entities charged with urban intervention, such as the Hyderabad Municipality (founded 1869, initially as a Board and later a Corporation) and the CIB (founded 1912, active after World War I, to become the Andhra Pradesh Housing Board in 1960, then bifurcated into Telangana and Andhra Boards in 2014), had varied and shifting geographical shapes and remits. Rather than displacing existing entitlements in the city, urbanist bodies worked through them.

Greater Hyderabad was a dual city that hosted a British military, civil and administrative establishment as part of the requirement of the treaties guaranteeing Asaf Jahi political sovereignty. This meant that alongside the expanding princely capital sketched above, substantial parts of the metropolitan area, to the north and east of the old walled capital, comprised a quintessentially colonial city. This was composed of a Raj military cantonment in Hyderabad's smaller twin city of Secunderabad, a British Indian political administrative centre in the Hyderabad Residency and connected civil and commercial areas.

These contexts – state urbanism in response to rapid city expansion, transnational connections linking princely cities with global circuits, overlapping jurisdictional and property regimes – defined the contours of princely urbanism. Similar dynamics – dual princely and colonial cities, fragmented and overlapping property, state urbanist initiatives and wide-ranging flows of capital and ideas that did not match colonial circuits – shaped city and town development in other South Asian princely states. Closer examination of the three key dimensions in Hyderabad provides material for rewriting Raj-centric genealogies of South Asian urbanism in the colonial era.

Planning and improvement in Hyderabad: non-colonial state urbanism

The work of Hyderabad's pre-eminent body for urban development, the CIB, during the inter-war era elucidates the character of Asaf Jahi state urbanism.⁷ The Hyderabad CIB was one of several improvement bodies that emerged in South

⁷For a detailed discussion of the work of these agencies in the making of Hyderabad city and state, see E.L. Beverley, *Hyderabad, British India, and the World: Muslim Networks and Minor Sovereignty, c. 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 2015), ch. 7. See also A.S. Naik, 'Back into the future: the City Improvement Board of Hyderabad', in A. Versaci, Z. Nour, D. Hawkes, H. Bougdah, M. Ghoneem, A. Catalani, F. Trapani and A. Sotoca (eds.), *Cities' Identity through Architecture and Arts: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Cities' Identity through Architecture & Arts, Cairo, Egypt, 11–13 May 2017* (London, 2018), 221–8; F. Karim, *Of Greater Dignity than Riches: Austerity and Housing Design in India* (Pittsburgh, 2019), 38–43.

Asia and elsewhere from the 1898 founding of the Bombay Improvement Trust up to the mid-twentieth century (themselves influenced by improvement schemes in late nineteenth-century England and Scotland).⁸ While improvement or development bodies in British India and Britain consisted in large part of nominated and elected elites (both British and Indian, combining officials and private interests, in cities such as Bombay), the Hyderabad CIB was composed entirely of royal appointees including engineers, state bureaucrats and nobles, land-grant administrators and only briefly one money-lender and one merchant, both appointed. As such, the Hyderabad body exercised the power to plan and carry out schemes largely unencumbered by competing visions or claims to the city and speculative property markets, as often constrained the work of British Indian improvement bodies.⁹

The Hyderabad CIB's extensive construction of housing, public spaces and industrial and transportation infrastructures suggests a variety of complementary intellectual sources. Planners looked to international models as well as regional and local styles of construction and modes of habitation to provide marginal urban populations with suitable housing and salubrious environments. Looking to international urban projects (some examined in person by engineers travelling from Hyderabad), the CIB tapped global circuits to devise schemes. In addition to housing and roads, the CIB emphasized the need for parks and open spaces in Hyderabad's urban fabric, especially around the Musa River which ran through the city. These imperatives were in keeping with the global urbanist focus on light and air as critical to sanitary and healthy urban living. With an eye to regional practices and conditions, the CIB designed housing for large families, installed cooling ventilation and interior courtyards, and separated toilets from living spaces. Planners' combination of global urbanist and regional cultural considerations suggests that the city's position in political hierarchies and global networks facilitated carefully calibrated interventions that concretized the specific form of princely urbanism there.

Work of a later planning body, the Hyderabad Town Planning Department (TPD), demonstrates the deployment of the Hyderabad city planning template on a smaller scale in provincial capitals and industrial towns across the state. As with the CIB, the TPD built working-class housing, sanitary urban landscapes with integrated parks and amenities (shops, hospitals, recreation centres) and state-run factories. The TPD also carefully established links between existing urban centres or planned new towns and rail and road networks connecting to

⁸Scholarship on improvement bodies, particularly in British colonial cities, is substantial and expanding. For recent examples, see N. Ghosh, *A Hygienic City-Nation: Space, Community, and Everyday Life in Colonial Calcutta* (Cambridge, 2020); M.W. Sugarman, 'Slums, squatters and urban redevelopment schemes in Bombay, Hong Kong, and Singapore, 1894–1960', University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 2018; and S. Tejani, 'Disputing "market value": the Bombay Improvement Trust and the reshaping of a speculative land market in early twentieth-century Bombay', *Urban History*, 48 (2021), 572–89.

⁹On the way controversy and local opposition impeded the implementation of Bombay Improvement Trust schemes; see Kidambi, *Making of an Indian Metropolis*, ch. 4. On Improvement Trusts and their role in stimulating land markets and urban property speculation, see Tejani, 'Disputing "market value"'; and D. Bhattacharyya, 'Interwar housing speculation and rent profiteering in colonial Calcutta', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 36 (2016), 465–82.

the capital and beyond, within Hyderabad state and into British India. TPD economic and town planning projects, largely realized following World War II, situated Hyderabad as both conceptual model and apex in a regional urban hierarchy linked up with a broader global economy. Like the CIB's, the TPD's planning work expanded and realized a princely urbanist vision in Hyderabad that provided infrastructures for state patrimonial hierarchies and their core values through the exercise of centralized state urbanist power.

Princely urbanism's global connections

While the work of the CIB, TPD and other parallel or subsequent large-scale planning and municipal entities in Hyderabad tapped global sources for models, other networks and effects of princely urbanism in Hyderabad facilitated robust transfers of ideas, capital and legal instruments within South Asia and further afield. This is visible in specific projects and moments such as the planning history of Osmania University, and Hyderabad land holdings in British Indian and other world cities.

Patrick Geddes' Osmania University plan

In 1918, on the strength of his previous work in British India and other princely states, Hyderabad officials commissioned renowned Scottish urbanist Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) to help plan a flagship state institution in Hyderabad: a vernacular-language, secular Islamic, public institution of higher learning.¹⁰ Geddes' 1922 report on the site and layout for Osmania University, researched in collaboration with state architect Mohammed Fayazuddin, sought to integrate the space of the university with local livelihoods and urban infrastructures, customizing global development models to suit the context of Hyderabad.¹¹

Already an established authority in urban design and botany, Geddes had developed plans for cities from Edinburgh to Tel Aviv, as well as dozens of planning reports for South Asian cities.¹² He extensively worked and travelled in South Asia from 1914 to 1925, doing freelance work and setting up and chairing the Bombay University Sociology and Civics Department from 1919 to 1924. His planning work characteristically integrated built forms and infrastructures with existing natural, agrarian and social ecologies. A substantial number of his planning reports for South Asian cities, some of which were implemented, were commissioned by rulers of princely states (among others, Baroda, Gwalior, Indore, Kapurthala and Patiala). The capacity for compact, state-centred planning – a key component of

¹⁰Letter from Abdul Majid, Hyderabad, India, to Patrick Geddes', 21 Mar. 1918, Patrick Geddes papers, University of Strathclyde Archives and Special Collections (PGP), GB 249 T-GED/9/1409; 'Letter from Akbar Nazar Hydari, home secretary, Hyderabad, India, to Patrick Geddes', 22 Jun. 1918, PGP, GB 249 T-GED/9/1413; S. Nanisetti, 'How the Osmania University came about', *The Hindu*, 28 Jan. 2019. On the cultural politics of the Osmania educational project, see K.S. Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (Honolulu, 2013).

¹¹'Draft report: "Osmania University site and layout" by Patrick Geddes', 1922–23, PGP, GB 249 T-GED/12/1/207. The below discussion of Geddes' plans for Osmania, unless otherwise noted, is drawn from this source.

¹²For a critique of Geddes emphasizing the coloniality of his planning practice and the limited scope for local input his style permitted, see N.H. Rubin, 'Geography, colonialism and town planning: Patrick Geddes' plan for Mandatory Jerusalem', *Cultural Geographies*, 18 (2011), 231–48.

the princely urbanism this article identifies – facilitated the employment of prominent urbanists. Geddes' own prolific work left an aesthetic and intellectual stamp on South Asian princely cities more broadly.

Geddes' Osmania University report documents the holistic approach that was the hallmark of his urbanist planning and intellectual work. In his vision, the university plan would seamlessly integrate social, ecological and cultural interventions. Osmania was to be a public institution that would realize his vision of planned, locally grounded, urban environments in Hyderabad. This entailed extensive site selection work in at least 10 distinct neighbourhoods of the city to identify a location that would facilitate population expansion and suburbanization, sustainable integration with forested and agrarian spaces, smooth land acquisition and linkages with road and rail infrastructures. Central criteria for site selection were elevation, transportation connections, necessary investment into rebuilding existing structures, current land use and ease of acquisition. Taking all of these factors together, Geddes and his team eventually settled on a large swathe of land in the north-east of the city including parts of the neighbourhoods of Edinpet (now known as Adikmet) and Amberpet.

Two central concerns of Geddes' were access to irrigated arable land for students and faculty of the Agricultural College, and reciprocity between the university and settled peasants in neighbouring farmed areas. Elaborating the importance of agriculture, Geddes noted his extensive work in related fields (horticulture, fruit-growing, forestry and especially botany) in Cyprus, Palestine, elsewhere in India and Europe. Drawing on the example of the Irish Agricultural Movement, Geddes precluded potential concerns about disrupting the local peasantry by casting the Agricultural College as a force for mutual benefit and prosperity. Osmania would recognize water-rights claims of neighbouring cultivators and follow a progressive agricultural approach that could become a template for cultivating semi-arid tracts elsewhere in Hyderabad state. Geddes' plan was for Osmania to quickly establish a Model Farm and develop schemes for improving barren rocky terrain and poor pasturelands. Through partnerships with local peasants, he suggested, the Agricultural College would work towards resolving similar state-wide agricultural challenges. This vision of Osmania's role in shaping an 'agricultural public' on the outskirts of the city, and its explicit modelling on global sources, shares key features with CIB and TPD state urbanism in the emphasis on patrimonial reciprocity situated in an internationalist framework.

Geddes saw the planning of the university's spatial layout as tantamount to designing a substantial quadrant of the expanding city itself, and proposed a Suburban Extension Plan as one component of his work on Osmania. Such a plan would help avoid haphazard growth and speculative purchasing having the effect of driving up land prices in the area. It would also provide a means for Geddes to expand the public mandate of the university beyond its educational and research mission and the aforementioned engagement with the agricultural world. The report proposed the university parcel be expanded to include space for suburban parks and public gardens. Specifically, Geddes envisioned Botanical Gardens and a Zoological Park on the greater university grounds. These were to be modelled after spaces in South Asia and beyond, from Agra, Pinjaur, Calcutta, Bombay, Mysore and Burdwan, to gardens and parks planned by

Geddes in Patiala and Lucknow, to Edinburgh (also based on Geddes' plan). For Geddes, including these amenities was a means of establishing Osmania and Hyderabad as peers of established cities with great urban universities, such as Paris, Oxford and indeed Edinburgh.

While the Zoo and Botanical Gardens were not to ultimately become part of the university campus, their proposed inclusion points to the ways Osmania was part of a larger vision. Urbanism in Hyderabad employed and drew ideas from global intellectuals such as Geddes, and was conceived in light of both global models and ideas of local or regional practice. The garden plans in Geddes' Osmania report resonate with CIB and global urbanist ideas about the value of green spaces in expanding cities. Geddes' larger vision of the university is of a piece with the utopian planning ideas he proposed, and while some elements did not come to fruition, the location and overall layout of Osmania realized Geddes' vision.¹³

Once constructed, Osmania University became a key node connecting Hyderabad to other networks in South Asia and beyond. Kavita Datla's work on the intellectual and political conception of the university demonstrates the active recruitment and attraction of key scholars from British India and internationally.¹⁴ If Hyderabad as a city has been a global concourse co-ordinating multiple different flows, Osmania and its spatial environs became a prime node in these networks – from the city and regional hinterlands, to Deccani and South Asian Muslim populations, to Muslim students from the larger Indian Ocean world. In the early decades of the twenty-first century, Osmania and its environs in the north-eastern reaches of the city became a hub for training and commercial development in robotics and info-tech fields. The presence of substantial populations of Muslim students from Yemen, the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Central Asia and elsewhere at Osmania represents a realization of the vision of secular Islam elucidated in Datla's work as a cosmopolitan and hospitable respite from imperialism, despotism or ultra-conservative Islamism that shape life in many of these locations. The predominance of Muslim connections is specific to Osmania and Hyderabad, while the openness to global circuits and the state-led character of its development illustrates princely urbanism within Hyderabad.

The Hyderabad Estate in Bombay

While state projects in Hyderabad city yoked together globally circulating urbanist ideas with princely idioms of authority, Hyderabad urbanism was also exported to other locations. The same patrimonial networks that shaped the city also found footholds in colonial capitalist urban land economies and symbolic orders. In 1909, the Nizam's agents purchased a house in the affluent locality of Malabar Hill in Bombay. The Nizam's 'Mount Nepean' house served as the headquarters

¹³For a discussion of his Osmania plans and other urbanist ideas of Geddes' and Mohammed Fayazuddin's for Hyderabad with an eye on their visions for integrating built environment with natural landscape, see R. Stephens, 'Hyderabad biophilia', *Domus India*, 8 (2019), 36–45. On the central place of urban gardens in the larger economic and social vision of the nearby state of Mysore, see E. D'Cruz, 'Home grown modernity: gardens and urban development of Bangalore under the princely state of Mysore, 1881–1947', *The Round Table*, 111 (2022), 582–97.

¹⁴Datla, *Language of Secular Islam*; D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton, 1978).

for Hyderabad's commercial and political negotiations in the foremost entrepôt of the British-dominated Indian Ocean. The estate was also a status symbol, adjacent to the Maharaja of Baroda's Bombay house, and amidst several other prominent houses in Malabar Hill and its environs maintained by other South Asian princely sovereigns, including Bandsa, Bhavnagar, Bikaner, Gwalior, Indore, Kolhapur and Patiala.¹⁵

The fraught history of Hyderabad's Malabar Hill house shows how urban property holdings facilitated the transposition of jurisdictional claims and connected ethical frameworks from one place to another. Running into disputes over land use, maintenance requirements and payments for services rendered, the Nizam sought to bypass local laws of Bombay city, at times successfully holding that Hyderabad laws and practices should apply to the property. The Nizam tried to make over the estate to his young son in a *waqf* (Muslim charitable trust) deed to be executed upon the ruler's death, which occurred in 1911. However, in 1927, British officials contested the legitimacy of the *waqf*, claiming that as a contingent deed it was invalid in terms of Islamic law. Legal proceedings pitted interpretations of Islamic legal texts from Bombay and Calcutta judges against a staunch position taken by Hyderabad's highest legal official S. Aravamudu Aiyengar, a Tamil Brahmin. In his brief on the case, the latter explained the nuances of Islamic inheritance and trust law to British Indian judges, securing the property for the Nizam. The case of the Nizam's estate in an upmarket Bombay locality suggests that Asaf Jahi sovereignty created an opening for intervention into other property markets, trafficking in legal principles and royal prerogative disaggregated from the social and political context of Hyderabad city.

Geddes' central role and the models he drew on in planning Osmania University, and the politics of the Hyderabad Estate in British Bombay, illustrate the circulations that constituted princely urbanism in Hyderabad: a fusion of global urbanist ideas with patrimonial logics, their concretization in state urban development, then sporadic and selective flow of these forms to other locations. The work of other architects and planners shaped urbanism in other princely states to materialize temporally divergent idioms of spatialized royal sovereignty, often setting transregional connections into motion. Geddes' own plans for princely cities such as Gwalior, Kapurthala and Indore (many implemented in substantial chunks), the architectural work of Otto Königsberger in Mysore, a longer history of state architectural patronage in Jaipur and varied trends elsewhere illustrate the effect of state-centred planning in princely cities that allowed for the realizations of coherent urbanist visions distinct from those in core colonial cities.¹⁶

¹⁵On the productivity of Hyderabad trusts in transporting jurisdictional and sovereign powers across space, see E.L. Beverley, 'Territoriality in motion: waqf and Hyderabad state', *The Muslim World*, 108 (2018), 630–51. The discussion of the case here is drawn from 641–5.

¹⁶On Geddes' work in other South Asian cities, see M. Beattie, 'Sir Patrick Geddes and Barra Bazaar: competing visions, ambivalence and contradiction', *Journal of Architecture*, 9 (2004), 131–50; D.E. Goodfriend, 'Nagar Yoga: the culturally informed town planning of Patrick Geddes in India 1914–1924', *Human Organization*, 38 (1979), 343–55; N. Khan, 'Geddes in India: town planning, plant sentience, and cooperative evolution', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29 (2011), 840–56; S. Srinivas, *A Place for Utopia: Urban Designs from South Asia* (Seattle, 2016). On modernism and architecture in Mysore, see V. Baweja, 'Messy modernisms: Otto Koenigsberger's early work in princely Mysore,

Hyderabad state and its elites held land in Delhi, Calcutta and elsewhere in British India, in addition to endowed properties in Jerusalem, Mecca and London, all of which provided opportunities to export princely urbanism across the subcontinent and beyond.¹⁷ That other princely states held properties in the Malabar Hill environs of the Hyderabad Estate suggests a broader phenomenon of the expansiveness of princely capital in establishing trusts or purchasing speculative properties. These princely holdings, as the Hyderabad property in Bombay suggests, introduced different legal rationalities and historical practices that could undermine municipal law and practice in colonial cities. In princely cities, the ambivalence of urban property control – and hence urban power as such – became a terrain for contesting the meanings of princely urbanism, and a frame for the emergence of new urban publics.

Fragmented property forms and urban publics

The internal terrain of Hyderabad city itself was composed of a layering of diverse land regimes and urban imaginaries just as Hyderabad's urbanism was a product of global ideas and thinkers. If circulating capital and property logics introduced new textures to cities elsewhere, these also infused and fragmented the urban fabric of Hyderabad itself. This internal complexity, and the attendant tensions that shaped cities such as Hyderabad, forms a third key component of princely urbanism. The historically layered and overlapping spatial orders internal to the city are critical to the longer-term resonance of princely urbanism. The diversity of land regimes provides a basis for future claims-making, and gives rise to antecedents of contemporary urban publics. Trends in the World War II era – when the British began to anticipate decolonization and contemplate the fate of urban lands they controlled in Hyderabad – reveal both the complex layering of multiple urban land regimes, and emergent publics voicing claims to the city.

In some domains, Hyderabad city was subject to the colonial urbanist tendencies that prevailed in British India. As noted above, the Raj exercised *de facto* control over the Secunderabad military cantonment area and the British Residency political establishment in the city. These zones were venues for extending policies in line with colonial urban visions. These included Raj attempts to maintain racial and

1939–41', *South Asian Studies*, 31 (2015), 1–26; J. Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis, 2011). On Jaipur, see C.B. Asher, 'Jaipur: city of tolerance and progress', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 37 (2014), 410–30; S.N. Johnson-Roehr, 'Centering the Chārbāgh: the Mughal garden as design module for the Jaipur City Plan', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 72 (2013), 28–47; V. Sachdev, 'Negotiating modernity in the princely state of Jaipur', *South Asian Studies*, 28 (2012), 171–81. For works that track examples of comparable trends in other princely cities and towns, see C. Bellamy, 'Alternative kingdoms: shrines and sovereignty in Jaora', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 40 (2020), 444–53; N. Jigyasu, 'Alternative modernity of the princely states: evaluating the architecture of Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda', *Creative Space*, 5 (2018), 59–70; R. Khan, 'Princely architectural cosmopolitanism and urbanity in Rampur', *Global Urban History* (blog), 3 Aug. 2017, <https://globalurbanhistory.com/2017/08/03/princely-architectural-cosmopolitanism-and-urbanity-in-rampur/>; J.P. Sharma, 'Sacralizing the city: the Begums of Bhopal and their Mosques', *Creative Space*, 1 (2014), 145–65; J.P. Sharma, 'From Marrakesh to India: a colonial Maharaja's pursuit of architectural glory in Kapurthala', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 1 (2012), 269–300.

¹⁷O. Khalidi, 'Indian Muslims and Palestinian Awqaf', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 10 (2009), 52–8.

functional segregation (by preventing construction, habitation, agricultural production, or the expansion of Muslim or Hindu places of worship in the proximity of British military or residential quarters), to enforce colonial regulations on commerce (alcohol sale, taxation, excise regimes), and facilitate the expansion of colonial capitalist networks into the city. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, Hyderabad officials effectively defended urban dwellers' entitlement to spaces of labour, dwelling and worship in the city, and used legal and diplomatic means to wrest territory and legal sovereignty over urban spaces from British control.

Many of the property forms that shaped Hyderabad – estates of nobles, royal lands, service grants, endowed religious spaces – crosshatched colonially administered lands in Secunderabad and the Residency area, forming peninsular extensions or archipelagic enclaves of jurisdictional difference. Alongside these property forms in *de facto* Raj urban spaces of Hyderabad, sat colonial institutional and commercial establishments, privately owned lands, unclaimed wasteland and properties held under a variety of tenancy arrangements, including 99-year leases ubiquitous in cantonments across the British empire.

Sorting out property in princely Hyderabad and British Secunderabad

When the British were preparing to release hold of cantonment lands during the World War II era, as the trajectory to decolonization became clear, they grappled with the diversity of urban property forms in the city. Official documentation of this process illustrates the complexity of the urban landscape.

In April 1941, as the British planned the rendition of the Secunderabad Cantonment to Hyderabad state control, they sought to assure the rights of those with property in cantonment lands.¹⁸ This was in keeping with perceived Raj obligations to their subjects in the colonial enclave, many of whom were from an emerging middle class employed in government service, professions or commercial pursuits. The move to 'guarantee the security of the existing land tenures in the area' entailed cataloguing the numerous forms of property in the cantonment, and in the larger city.¹⁹ In the British understanding, expressed by cantonment officer Major Chapman, the very status of property in Hyderabad was shaped by a fundamental ambivalence. From one perspective, 'sovereign rights in such lands vest in the Nizam', and thus all property was state property. Yet some lands could be regarded as private since they had been 'in the possession of private individuals for so long a time that the rights of possession by the Nizam's government may be held to have expired by proscription'.²⁰ Drawing from a 1927 report by former Resident William Barton, Chapman went on to describe the uncertainty regarding the means by which cantonment lands were initially acquired by the British or other Secunderabadis. Barton's report noted multiple forms of possession: military occupation, low cost purchase of what had previously been wasteland, unauthorized

¹⁸'Security of land tenures in the town area of the Secunderabad Cantonment after rendition', National Archives of India (NAI), Hyderabad Residency Records, Judicial Branch, Residency Office, S. no. 33, A326, 1941.

¹⁹Letter from Major Chapman, Military Estates Officer, Secunderabad of 28 Apr. 1941, in *ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

practices of squatting and private occupation, plots sold as ‘sites for a bazar, or for building houses or bungalows’.²¹ While Barton suggested that officials should assume the existence of private right to lands, Chapman noted to the contrary that ‘it has never been authoritatively determined if there was such a thing as private possession of land in the cantonment’, and concluded that ‘rights of the Nizam’s Government vis a vis private individuals’ was indeterminate, and any attempted resolution would open up political questions.²²

With the very existence of private land in Hyderabad in doubt, the inquiry went on to identify a wide array of different tenure forms. These included leased lands, such as 30-year improvement leases that were renewable up to 90 years, and a wide array of non-lease holdings. Among them were military lands and squatted property as noted above, as well as open spaces which ‘merely vested in the Cantonment Authority for certain specific purposes such as markets, slaughter houses, gardens, etc.’ which thus could be handed over to Hyderabad without compensation.²³ A Hyderabad reply to the Secunderabad inquiry identified a critical distinction between areas that had been built up before or after the 1930 cantonment property survey, and criticized British officials for ‘treating these old unauthorised occupancy areas as if they were granted by competent authority’.²⁴ Hyderabad officials agreed to renew leases and guarantee tenures on buildings constructed after the 1930 survey for which full records of occupants and ‘the nature of tenures’ were provided.²⁵ However, the Nizam’s government held that pre-1930 survey properties could be resumed without compensation as construction and rent-free occupancy had been granted by cantonment officials without competent authority. Taken as a whole, materials from this 1941 cantonment inquiry illustrate a fundamental ambivalence, often contested, regarding the nature and status of urban property in Hyderabad’s northern areas.

A second case from 1941 on the question of compensation for one property underscores the several imaginaries and legal statuses of urban property in tension with one another.²⁶ The case pertained to lands in the neighbourhood of Bholakpur in the larger urban locality of Bhoiguda. These lands were made over from Hyderabad to Secunderabad in 1933 for the construction of social housing by the Secunderabad Town Improvement Trust (which borrowed schemes and

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.* On the ambivalent status of private property in British Bombay, see N. Rao, ‘Space in motion: an uneven narrative of urban private property in Bombay’, in A. Gandhi, B. Harriss-White, D.E. Haynes and S. Schwecke (eds.), *Rethinking Markets in Modern India: Embedded Exchange and Contested Jurisdiction* (Cambridge, 2020), 54–84.

²³Secretary to the Resident to Military Estates Officer, undated, in ‘Security of land tenures in the town area of the Secunderabad Cantonment after rendition’, NAI, Hyderabad Residency Records, Judicial Branch, Residency Office, S. no. 33, A326, 1941.

²⁴Hyderabad to Military Estates Officer, 9 Apr. 1941, in ‘Security of land tenures in the town area of the Secunderabad Cantonment after rendition’, NAI, Hyderabad Residency Records, Judicial Branch, Residency Office, S. no. 33, A326, 1941.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Payment of compensation for the patta land near the Tower of Silence acquired for the purposes of the construction of houses for the poor in cantonment, Secunderabad Cantonment Town Improvement Trust’, NAI, Hyderabad Residency Records, Judicial Branch, Residency Office, J349, 1941.

sourced materials from the Hyderabad CIB, discussed above).²⁷ While the rocky area had been designated as wastelands and hence Hyderabad state property, the Nizam's officials recognized the area in question as having been under the control of B. Ranga Reddy, a *pattada* and *deshmukh* in Hyderabad state. These designations identify Ranga Reddy as a holder of a land title with revenue obligations (*pattadar*), and as the hereditary chief authority of a demarcated area of land, often conferred by a land grant for state service (*deshmukhi*). In 1933, Hyderabad officials fixed a level of compensation for Ranga Reddy's lands in Bholakpur, taking into view the increasing real estate values in the area. Payment of the determined compensation to Ranga Reddy would allow Secunderabad to take possession of the heretofore rocky and undesirable, but now valuable, property. Notably, these particular lands were in close proximity to a Tower or Silence, an edifice used for the practice of aerial burial (in this era, consumption of corpses by vultures) historically undertaken and viewed by many as a religious obligation by the Parsi community.²⁸ Most of the Ranga Reddy lands in Bholakpur were made over to the Secunderabad Town Improvement Trust in 1933 while a small portion were retained by the *deshmukh-pattadar*.

The 1941 process, when Secunderabad and Hyderabad officials negotiated the terms of rendition of cantonment lands from Raj to Nizam administration, revealed the fragmented and overlapping nature of the Bholakpur lands as urban property. The tracts were at once state-declared waste and the object of a speculative land market, officially titled as *patta* and part of a hereditary service grant as *deshmukhi*, site of government-constructed social housing (and possibly supporting institutions; records note plans for a slaughter-house), and potentially part of a religious site subject to trust and endowment law. This case, along with the larger rendition process, illustrates the numerous property imaginaries that co-existed, or were in tension, in Hyderabad. The fragmentation of forms of authority multiplied the possibilities for claims-making in the princely city. A later case, from the moment of decolonization and national integration, shows how such claims provided a basis for constituting urban publics.

Urban publics in the princely city and beyond

Growing populations in the city expressed their needs and made demands of princely urbanist regimes in Hyderabad. These publics addressed British cantonment or Hyderabad officials, or land-grant holders and other nesting authorities within these polities. Hyderabad city as a whole, including Secunderabad, was expanding rapidly in population, from roughly 400,000 in 1921 to over a million by 1951, with new neighbourhoods emerging on heretofore urban fringes, infrastructure expansion and growing middle classes who increasingly asserted claims to the city. While the decolonization of British India was being negotiated in Delhi and London, the implications for Hyderabad and Secunderabad remained

²⁷The way British Secunderabad housing schemes were modelled on CIB housing schemes illustrates that Hyderabad's princely urbanism in some cases could shape colonial urbanism.

²⁸For an early twentieth-century legal case over the legality of Tower of Silence construction in Bhoiguda heard in Bombay, see *Pestonji Jivanji vs Edulji Chinoy* (1908) 10 BOMLR 287, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1392593/>.

unclear.²⁹ Muslim rulers of Hyderabad, and many other groups within the state and elsewhere, were wary of integration into what was shaping up as a majoritarian democracy likely to be dominated by upper-caste Hindu leadership.³⁰ It was clear, however, that the British would cease to control Secunderabad, which they had administered since the early nineteenth century. As the Raj made plans for the handover of Secunderabad's neighbourhoods to the Nizam, perhaps thence to be handed over to a new national leadership, residents of Secunderabad voiced their demands for urban amenities.

In March 1947, a sizeable and diverse group of 'residents and taxpayers of Bowenpalli (cantonment) village' petitioned the Secunderabad Municipal Board to air grievances and request resolution.³¹ The Bowenpalli locality consisted of a few neighbourhoods to the north of the urban centre of Secunderabad town that were under the administration of the Secunderabad Cantonment Board, even as some parts of the area belonged to the Salar Jang Estate, a service land grant held by descendants of a storied nineteenth-century Hyderabad minister. The petitioners raised a number of concerns: insufficient electricity (despite a thorough network of poles), poor lighting, inadequate public and in-house water connections, insufficient drainage infrastructure and the inability to connect rows of houses to main drains, dangerous and pestilent open drains, deplorable road conditions and, especially glaring given the above, already high and rising taxation and rent costs spurred by wartime inflation. Grievances arising from deficient urban amenities and infrastructures ranged from people 'falling into ditches and colliding with each other in darkness', children falling into open drains and people injuring themselves while traversing flooded or uneven roads, to 'quarrels daily at the water stand posts', and 'filthy water...stagnated in the pits by the side of the houses forming breeding centres for mosquitos'. The petition concluded with a plea for consideration on behalf of the 'generally...poor and middle classes' of the locality, followed by house numbers and signatures in *nagari* and *nastaliq* (scripts used for several South Asian languages, including Hindi and Urdu), Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati and Roman script, along with several thumbprints.

The Bowenpalli petition shows how the urban public emerged as an increasingly vocal constituency in mid-twentieth-century South Asian society out of expanding

²⁹On princely states and decolonization, see Y.K. Bangash, *A Princely Affair: The Accession and Integration of the Princely States of Pakistan, 1947–1955* (Karachi, 2015); I. Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge, 1997); S. Purushotham, 'Internal violence: the "police action" in Hyderabad', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57 (2015), 435–66; B.N. Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron–Client System, 1914–1939* (Columbus, 1978)

³⁰On Hyderabad's integration and spectre of Hindu majoritarian dominance and violence, see S. Jha, 'Democracy on a minor note: the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-Ul Muslimin and its Hyderabad Muslim publics', University of Chicago Ph.D. thesis, 2017; A.G. Noorani, *The Destruction of Hyderabad* (New Delhi, 2013); Purushotham, 'Internal violence'; S. Purushotham, *From Raj to Republic: Sovereignty, Violence, and Democracy in India* (Stanford, 2021); T.C. Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India: Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad* (Cambridge, 2015).

³¹Letter dated 26 March, stamped 28 March 1947, received by the Hyderabad Resident 29 March 1947, addressed to The President, Municipal Board, Secunderabad (Cantonment), in 'Representation regarding inadequate municipal amenities in Bowenpalli village', NAI, Hyderabad Residency Records, Accounts Branch, Residency Office, A13/A/47, 1947.

and developing city landscapes in a fragmented terrain of sovereignty. The demand of this protean Hyderabad urban public centred on amenities – infrastructure, housing, lighting, electricity, water, sanitation – that were the focus of urban change and emerging forms of technical expertise in cities worldwide.³² In princely urban settings like Hyderabad, such projects were the outcome of state-directed planning. With reference to their demand for lighting, calculated to pressure cantonment officials, petitioners highlighted the expansion and improvement of illumination in Hyderabad city carried out by the Nizam's Electricity Department. Bowenpalli petitioners' demands were not met. One Mr Chatrapatirao in the British Hyderabad Residency tersely noted in April 1947: 'No action at present.'³³ The cantonment rendition, and subsequent 1948 integration of Hyderabad into the Republic of India, did little to resolve these urban concerns, or to generate a unitary urban legal framework. Indeed, insufficient sanitation and road infrastructure continue to be constant sources of grievance in Bowenpalli, and Bholakpur and other lands in Hyderabad have remained subject to disputes over possession, land use and popular livelihoods over the years.³⁴

³²M.H. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in Urban America* (University Park, PA, 1995); M.V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Pittsburgh, 2008); M. Gandy, *The Fabric of Space: Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); A. Chazkel, 'The invention of night', in G. Santamaría and D. Carey (eds.), *Violence and Crime in Latin America: Representations and Politics* (Norman, OK, 2017), 143–58.

³³Note by Mr Chatrapatirao dated 12 Apr. 1947, in 'Representation regarding inadequate municipal amenities in Bowenpalli village', NAI, Hyderabad Residency Records, Accounts Branch, Residency Office, A13/A/47, 1947.

³⁴For a historical and ethnographic account of Bholakpur focused on labour, class and housing, which also notes the primary role of the landlord Ranga Reddy, see I. Jonnalagadda, 'Histories from Bholakpur: of settlements, survival and slums', 2 parts, in *Roti, Khata Aur Makaan by Hyderabad Urban Lab* (blog), 28 Oct. 2014, <http://housing.hydlab.in/?p=120>, <http://housing.hydlab.in/?p=124>. On Bholakpur in the regional politics of waste, class and infrastructure, see V. Gidwani and A. Maringanti, 'The waste-value dialectic: lumpen urbanization in contemporary India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 36 (2016), 112–33; A. Maringanti and I. Jonnalagadda, 'Rent gap, fluid infrastructure and population excess in a gentrifying neighbourhood', *City*, 19 (2015), 365–74. For a 1999 case regarding whether Hyderabad Parsi lands fit under the Hindu Endowment category for legal purposes and disputes over management of these properties, see *Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Andhra Pradesh vs Deputy Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh*, 2000 (1) ALD 482, 2000 (1) ALT 256. On aerial burial at the Bholakpur Tower of Silence, decimation of vulture population and incineration by solar concentration technologies, see 'Parsis opt for solar panels in absence of vultures', *Gulf News*, 11 Jul. 2003, <https://gulfnews.com/uae/parsis-opt-for-solar-panels-in-absence-of-vultures-1.360908>; 'Parsis pray for return of the scavenger bird', *Times of India*, 17 Feb. 2013, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/parsis-pray-for-return-of-the-scavenger-bird/articleshow/18535858.cms>. On Bowenpalli sewage and road problems, see 'In a relief to 1000 Hyderabad families, sewage diversion at lake in Bowenpally to begin in June', *New Indian Express*, 12 Jun. 2019, www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/2019/jun/12/in-a-relief-to-1000-hyderabad-families-sewage-diversion-at-lake-in-bowenpally-to-begin-in-june-1989076.html; 'Sinkhole opens up on Hyd Road near Bowenpally, disrupts traffic', *The News Minute*, 20 Jun. 2018, www.thenewsminute.com/article/sinkhole-opens-hyd-road-near-bowenpally-disrupts-traffic-83339. On persistent garbage problems in Bowenpalli and schemes to resolve them, see S. Mungara, 'SCB to convert Cantt area into garbage-free zone', *Times of India*, 29 Jul. 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/scb-to-convert-cantt-area-into-garbage-free-zone/articleshow/81098359.cms>; M.S. Gopal, 'Now, electricity from Bowenpally market yard waste', *Telangana Today*, 28 Jun. 2019, <https://telanganatoday.com/now-electricity-from-bowenpally-market-yard-waste>.

Princely urbanism, colonialism and the geographies and genealogies of South Asian cities

As the above contextual sketches and cases have sought to demonstrate, the first half of the twentieth century in Hyderabad saw princely urbanism crystallize as state policy, but also as a condition of fragmentary and divided urban power. Forms of urban power in Hyderabad flowed from different logics, canons of law, types of claims and formal sovereign authorities. These forms of power existed within a context of centralized planning directed by a patrimonialist state, expansiveness beyond the borders of Hyderabad and legacies into the postcolonial context. This concluding section reflects on the legacies of princely urbanism in Hyderabad, and the salience of this history and conceptual framework for the study of urbanism in South Asia and other places shaped by uneven histories of imperial power.

Through several political shifts and persistent volatility, Hyderabad city has remained an urban core and driver of infrastructure expansion across changing hinterlands and larger imperial or national political geographies. Hyderabad was integrated into the new nation-state of India in 1948. It then became the capital of a new linguistically defined Telugu province of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, which itself was carved up into two Telugu provinces in 2014 with the city serving as *de facto* joint capital for a decade. Hyderabad is scheduled to become capital solely to the new state of Telangana in 2024. All of these moments, or their anticipation, triggered substantial migration, capital reorientation and infrastructural and political reconfigurations moving in multiple directions. The city and the political units in which it was embedded also experienced seismic political economic shifts, with the rise of postcolonial state capitalism under the Nehru–Gandhi Congress after 1948, then profound neo-liberal reinscriptions of space and capital from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.³⁵

The urban histories and genealogies we can trace in Hyderabad continue to be shaped by legacies of princely urbanism, with state agencies for development remaining intact across the period. The City Improvement Board and Hyderabad Municipality continue to operate under different names, along with a host of other state-run urbanist entities and development authorities. The case of Hyderabad provides a basis for examining, and highlighting, parallel dynamics elsewhere in South Asia.

Rethinking South Asian urbanism and its geographies in the era of British imperial dominance

Hyderabad and other princely state urbanisms underscore trends also visible in colonial cities. Places such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, Lucknow, Lahore, Karachi, Dhaka, Kathmandu and numerous smaller urban areas display similar

³⁵C.Y. Krishna, 'Cinemascesapes of the city: a history of cinema in Hyderabad', English and Foreign Language University (Hyderabad) Ph.D. thesis, 2019; A. Maringanti, 'Neoliberal inscriptions and contestations in Hyderabad', University of Minnesota Ph.D. thesis, 2007; D. Parthasarathy, 'Rural, urban, and regional: re-spatializing capital and politics in India', in T. Bunnell, D. Parthasarathy and E.C. Thompson (eds.), *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia* (Dordrecht, 2013), 15–30; D. Parthasarathy, 'Fasting, mining, politicking? Telangana and the burdens of history', *eSocialSciences* (2010), <https://telanganautsav.wordpress.com/2010/05/21/fasting-mining-politicking-telangana-the-burdens-of-history-d-parthasarathy/>; S. Shivanand, 'A region in time: the underdevelopment of twentieth-century Hyderabad-Karnataka', Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) Ph.D. thesis, 2019.

dynamics of fragmentation and ambivalence that undermine the unitary narratives that often frame popular and scholarly writing on these cities. The longer histories stretching into the early modern period that have critical stakes for formal sovereign authority and performance of power in princely cities such as Hyderabad, Mysore or Jaipur underscore how colonial impacts are significant, but often only one among many historically layered hinterland and global connections.³⁶

Princely cities are an object of study unto themselves, but can inform broader understandings of South Asian urbanism in general, including in colonized locations. For this task, it may be most productive to disaggregate cities from the familiar story of colonialism, nationalism and related urban trajectories and visions, start with close micro-studies of princely cities, and use these to reflect back on the existing historiography. This task allows scholars to think outside of, and revise, dominant colonial (and national) frames and considerations in South Asian historiography.

Urban politics, development paradigms and flows of people and commodities or materials that shape princely cities often connect with or resemble those of colonial cities, but can sometimes highlight important dynamics obscured by a focus on colonial-national transitions. Examples include employment of international architects and planners, global intellectual circuits (including through universities), expert networks leveraged by improvement bodies and state control or investment in tension with the autonomous municipal domain of politics. In the built forms of key colonial cities such as Delhi or Bombay, princely connections, buildings and capital are significant elements, such as the role of princely houses in New Delhi's layout and imperial symbolism, and similar unofficial scenarios in Bombay that emerge from the inroads of princely investment capital, and intersect with broader global connections and circuits through the Indian Ocean, Muslim world and beyond.³⁷

Princely urbanisms such as Hyderabad's actively fragmented the urban terrain of British India and other places, as seen in the Bombay Malabar Hill house, now known as the Hyderabad Estate, but also holdings or claims in Delhi, Jerusalem, London, Kolkata, Yemen and other locations. The characteristic fragmentation and multiplicity of property regimes seen in princely urbanism can provide a method for approaching cities more broadly, and opens new vistas for analysis of urban practice in South Asia and beyond.

An emphasis on princely cities expands our sense of the range of connections through South Asia during the era of British colonial dominance. Scholars of South Asian urbanism have examined in detail relationships between princely states and British India, and to some degree other places in Europe.³⁸ While west-facing links were often the most robust, and visible, in many instances cities (populations, urbanist paradigms, sites of display and royal symbolism) were shaped by other

³⁶Nair, *Mysore Modern*; Asher, 'Jaipur'; Johnson-Roehr, 'Centering the Chārbaġh'.

³⁷N. Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the Western Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge, 2011). The circuits Green tracks linking Bombay, and Hyderabad to Indian Ocean flows extend in different ways through numerous Western and South Indian princely states and colonial cities.

³⁸Copland, *Princes*; W. Ernst and B. Pati (eds.), *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism* (London, 2007); S. Legg, 'An international anomaly? Sovereignty, the League of Nations and India's princely geographies', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43 (2014), 96–110; Ramusack, *Princes*.

circuits and connections via Africa, Asia and the Americas. The case of Hyderabad reveals Muslim and Indian Ocean connections of groups – such as Sidis or Hadramis from the Horn of Africa and South Arabia – and ties to architects or education networks beyond more familiar South Asia–Europe channels.

In the era of decolonization and creation of postcolonial nation-states, princely states and cities underscore long-term trends that are less visible from the perspective of British India and its cities. Anti-colonial resistance and the inroads of nationalist parties such as the Indian National Congress became an increasingly significant trend in the states over the inter-war era. Nevertheless, a range of other political forces shaped urban politics and form in princely cities. These dynamics point to useful vantage points from which to reflect on the politics of decolonization and nationalism in South Asia and the way princely cities and towns fit into the larger narrative. Several Hindu-ruled states (Rajputana, Maratha states, Kuch Bihar) became staging grounds for extremist Hinduist majoritarian politics. This is reflected in the ways in which the layouts and iconography of their capital cities resonate with emergent dynamics in postcolonial urbanism.³⁹ Conversely, built forms in cities and towns of Muslim-ruled states such as Hyderabad, Bhopal, Rampur, and even smaller towns like Jaora (in present-day Madhya Pradesh) reflect different political visions and hierarchies, which had ambivalent relationships to postcolonial urban developments, and these circuits often remain vital.⁴⁰

The above examples of urban publics, historically layered property regimes, governance and capital flows in princely cities reveal divergent urban genealogies that are salient for reconceptualizing contemporary South Asian urbanism. This is true for India, where almost all of the largest among the erstwhile princely cities are now located, but has implications for Pakistan and Bangladesh, and perhaps also Myanmar (Burma), Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. A broader comparative and connective framework for thinking about cities that were proximate to, but not formally integrated into, imperial terrain elsewhere could include cities and urban practices in places as far flung as Johor Bahru and Yogyakarta in Southeast Asia, Doha and Muscat in the Perso-Arabian Gulf and Kano and Sokoto in Saharan West Africa.⁴¹ Princely urbanism in Hyderabad underscores dynamics such as multiplicity, layering and tensions of globally connected urban genealogies in the subcontinent and elsewhere that help reveal histories that move beyond colonial urbanism.

³⁹M. Bhagavan, 'Princely states and the Hindu imaginary: exploring the cartography of Hindu nationalism in colonial India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67 (2008), 881–915.

⁴⁰Bellamy, 'Alternative kingdoms'; D'Cruz, 'Home grown modernity'; Khan, 'Princely architectural cosmopolitanism'; Sharma, 'Sacralizing the city'.

⁴¹For considerations of the British imperial system that emphasize parallels between South Asian dynamics and those in the western Indian Ocean, see J.M. Willis, 'Making Yemen Indian: rewriting the boundaries of imperial Arabia', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41 (2009), 23–38; J. Onley, 'The politics of protection in the Gulf: the Arab rulers and the British Resident in the nineteenth century', *New Arabian Studies*, 6 (2004), 30–92.

Acknowledgments. This article is the product of a 2019 workshop, *Princely Cities: Towards a New Urban History of South Asia, c. 1860–1960*, at the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, England. The workshop itself, and the process of turning my presentation there into an article, provided the opportunity to bring together some ideas I have been mulling for some time about the utility of princely state examples for historicizing South Asian urbanism. For their initial invitation to the workshop, careful curation and generous engagement with ideas, and feedback as my paper developed, many thanks to Prashant Kidambi and Kate Boehme. I learned much from papers, comments and discussions in Leicester, and am grateful to all participants (especially Janaki Nair, Garima Dhabhai, Sanjukta Ghosh and Varsha Patel) as well as to the CUH staff for their support. This article also benefited greatly from the close scrutiny of the Stony Brook History Department working group (comments from Alix Cooper, Janis Mimura, Donna Rilling and Joshua Teplitsky were especially useful), notes on my presentation for the Hyderabad Deccan Gol Mez (thanks to Anant Maringanti and Hyderabad Urban Labs for hosting, and to Yamini Krishna, Swathi Shivanand and Nisha Mathew for their edifying feedback), and for written comments on drafts from Prachi Deshpande, Nikhil Rao and Svati Shah.

Cite this article: Beverley EL (2024). Beyond colonial urbanism: state power, global connections and frag-mented land regimes in twentieth-century Hyderabad city. *Urban History*, 51, 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S096392682200058X>