

Growth of Historical Towns into Metropolises: A Case Study of Varanasi

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This presentation

- Introductory remarks
- Varanasi as historical city
- Human settlement and emergence of towns
 - ▣ Historical account of population settlement
- Towns in Indian sub-continent
 - ▣ Genesis, emergence and decline
- Future of large towns and metropolitan areas
- Concluding observations



Varanasi: the oldest living city?

- Known by the name Kashi, Benares, Banaras
- A large number of researchers consider Varanasi as the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world.
- By 2nd millennium BCE, Varanasi was considered as the seat of Aryan religion and culture.
- Before that Varanasi has been capital of Kingdom of "Kashi" during 6th century BC- period when Lord Buddha gave the first sermon (at Sarnath).



Varanasi: the oldest living city?

- Benares is recorded as town of importance in the history along with several towns in the Indo-Gangetic plains.
- Reported to have significant level of population settlement for over 3000 years
- However, unlike several towns and cities during ancient and medieval times, e.g. Chunar, Jaunpur, Kannauj, Mirzapur etc, Benares has grown into what is known as metropolitan town in India--a city with population more than a million.



A digression: Urban population settlement

- The terms towns, cities, metropolises in India are defined as settlements of population with
 - Minimum 5000, predominantly non-agri work-force, high-population density (also statutory towns, declared as such)
 - Therefore, we have a heterogeneous mix of towns in India from a min of 5000 population to millions (some of the largest metropolitan cities in the world)



Urban population settlement: Varanasi

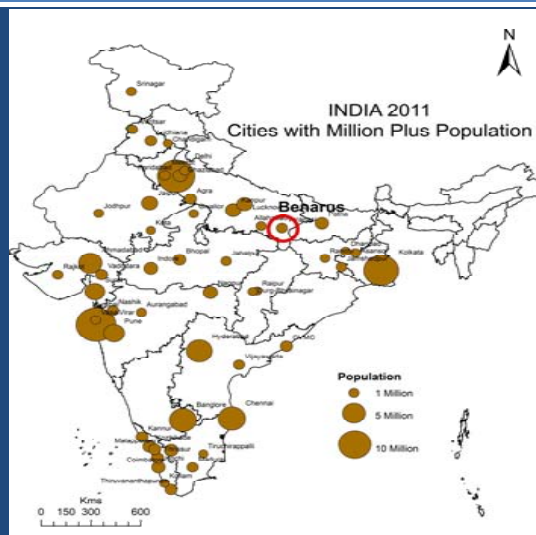
- In 2011, population of Varanasi city is reported to be 1.2 million (more than 1.4 million if agglomeration, i.e. outgrowth and census towns around Varanasi are included)
- This paper seeks to answer the question:
 - why only a few historical town survived and grew into large cities--**only a few historical towns**.
 - alternatively, why a majority of historical towns (ancient and medieval) either remained mufosil small town, e.g. Lalgunj, Khajuraho or remain as small/medium towns, e.g. Jaunpur, Kannauj, and several others??
- Varanasi is taken as the case study!!



Location map of metropolises in India: 2011

Census 2011:

- A total of 53 cities with population more than a million
- Number more than doubled within two decades
- Benares or Banaras (historical name Kashi, now known as Varanasi)



Estimated population of Banaras over the last 3,500 years:

Different sources has been used, so at best the population figures are indicative/illustrative at best.

Population estimates are as good as the assumption one make to estimate the size of population. See Mizushima, and several others for details.

Year	Population	Growth rate, %
2001	1,231,220	82.5
1901	215,223	12.9
1800	190,583	12.1
1700	170,966	13.7
1623	110,304	-26.6
1600	150,280	12.2
1500	133,965	11.1
1400	120,540	11.0
1300	108,625	10.7
1200	98,105	11.2
1100	88,245	69.8
1000	51,960	69.8
CE 500	30,595	62.6
0	18,815	54.8
BCE 500	12,150	48.5
1000	8,180	46.1
1500	5,600	—

Estimated population of Varanasi since CE (Chandler, 1987)

Year	Estimated Population
630	65,000
1027-1000s-1192	Decline, 1000 temples destroyed
1192-1398	Provincial Capital
1398	Lost importance
1640*	50000 (more than 400 temples)
1700**	75,000
1750	125,000 (capital, temples built)
1800	1,79,000
1829	1,83,000
1850	1,85,000
1872	1,75,168

*Spinning and weaving became significant

**capital, temples contributed by Marathas, Sikhs, Nepal

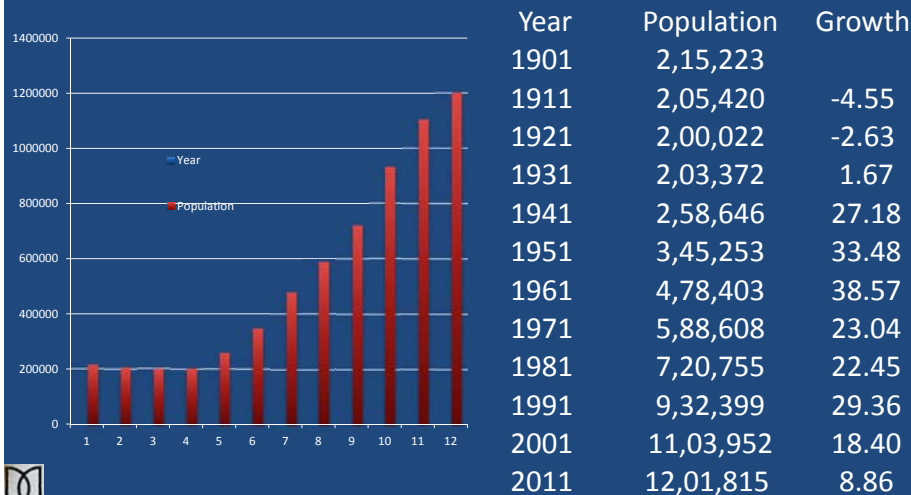


Settlement of population in Banaras in 1828-29

	In the City	In Secrole (Sikrou) and the vicinity.
Number of Inhabitants,.....	1,81,482	11,876 in Native houses, 7,092 in European houses, including cantonments.
Number of houses or Chouks,.....	30,205	2,754 Native houses, 114 European estates.
Muhallas, as classified in the census,.....	369	21
Pukka houses, (of brick or stone,).....	11,325	73 from 1 to 7 stories in height.
Kucha-pukka houses, (mixed,).....	2,328	88
Kucha houses, (of mud,).....	16,552	2,639
Ruins of houses, or blank spaces in streets,.....	1,498	72
Gardens,.....	174	114
Shivalas or Hindoo temples,.....	1,000	7
Masjids or Moosulman mosques,.....	333	5
Proportion of Proprietors to Lodgers in seventeen Muhallas re-examined, and in the villages,.....	4,310 to 4,504	7,753 to 1,684
Proportion of males } men,.....	3,424	3,354
and females } women,.....	3,564	3,151
} boys,.....	1,085	1,698
} girls,.....	7 41	1,234
Proportion of adults to children,.....	4 to 1	24 to 1
Average ratio of inhabitants per chouk,.....	6	6
Ditto for pukka houses in the city,.....	7	
Ditto for kucha houses ditto,.....	4½	

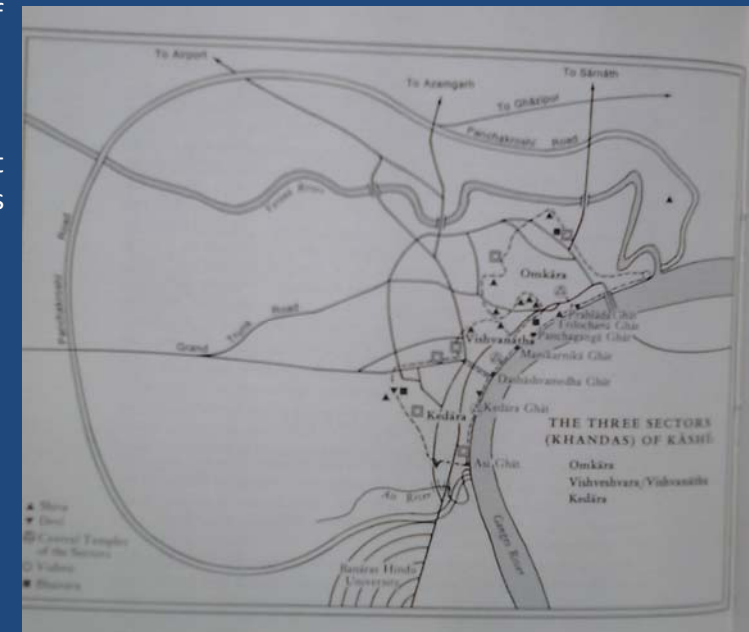
Cited by OP Kejariwal in "Banaras Illustrated" by James Prinsep

Population since 1901 (authentic, Census of India)



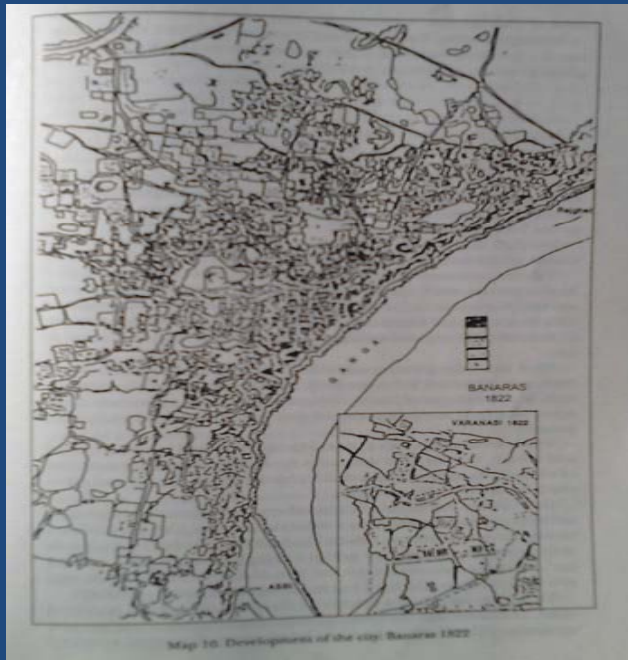
Sketches of Banaras or Kashi

Outer most line depicts a religious "walk-way" still followed by hindus

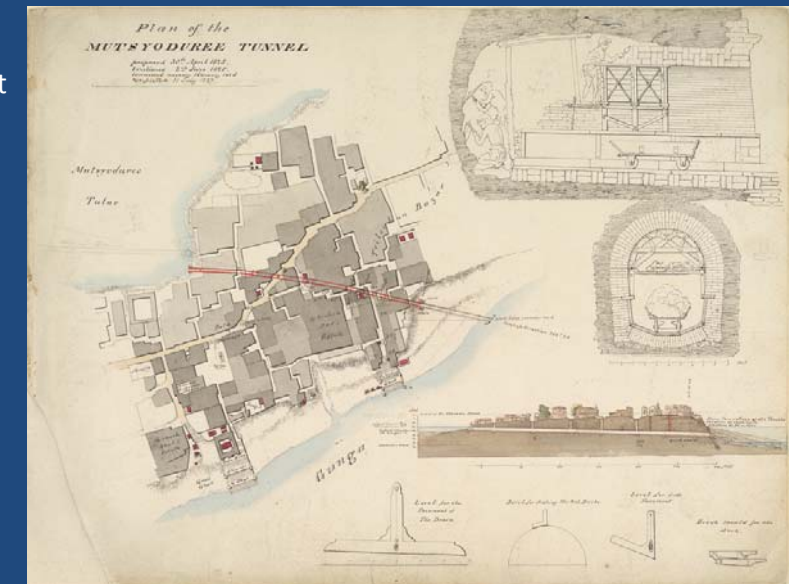


Settlement areas of Banaras: 1822

The settlement depicted here are the main population settlement and surrounding areas, not necessarily part of Kashi/Banaras as shown earlier



Main settlement areas of Banaras (James Princep)



Economics and politics of population settlement

- Invention of food cycle
- Surplus production and population settlement in non-agri-production activities--- rise of “support” population or “bureaucracy”
- Surplus agricultural production and rise of share of non-primary economic activities
- Aristotle on population settlement: an optimum level of population settlement required for “good governance”



Politics and economics of population settlement: rise and fall

- Rise of intermediaries for supporting “non-productive” population: case of “army, bureaucrats, other intermediaries”, e.g. traders etc
- Rise of a large number of towns, i.e. population settlement as base for good governance: feudal patronage--- supporting the population engaged in non-agri activities, un-sustainable after feudal set-up is dismantled, e.g. Chunar, Jaunpur, Kannauj, Mirzapur and several others..



Summary and conclusions

- Population settlement engaged in non-agri activities result of surplus agri-production.
- Historically, urban settlement of population a necessity for governance.
- Rise of non-agri activities, production of non-primary goods and services in modern times
- Substitution of capital and labour for space (land) and existence of positive externalities raising the factor productivities.
- Rise in the share of non-primary products in consumption basket



Summary and conclusions (continued)

- Population settlement that could sustain the demand for non-primary goods, services.
- Banaras could sustain the demand, survived. Other settlements that emerged as governance settlement could not sustain.



Thank you

