MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

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VOLUME I
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To
Frank Graham Thomson

PREFACE

The purpose of these volumes is (1) to sketch briefly the history of municipal development from earliest times to the present day, (2) to describe the organization of municipal government as it now exists, (3) to indicate the chief problems of present-day municipal administration, and (4) to explain the methods which are being used in the attempt to solve these problems. The first and second of these divisions are covered in Volume One, the third and fourth in Volume Two. Under this arrangement the two volumes, although they naturally supplement each other, are devoted to entirely distinct fields,—the first dealing with history and organization, the second with activities and methods.

When Thomas Madox, two hundred years ago, undertook to describe the government of the English boroughs, he began his treatise with the observation that "whoso desireth to discourse in a proper manner concerning corporate towns and communities must take in a great variety of matter." Today, of course, this "great variety of matter" has grown to be so extensive that even in a thousand printed pages one cannot hope to "discourse in a proper manner" concerning every phase of the subject. The government and administration of the modern city have been woven into a seamless web too vast for the comprehension of any human eye or for description by any single pen. All that one can hope to do is to pick out the main threads, discover whence they have come, and try to indicate whither they seem to be going.

In these volumes, accordingly, the outstanding topics have been given the right of way and details have been omitted unless they seemed to be essential to the clarity of the discussion. The endeavor has been to get the facts hitched up to principles, and these principles set in their rightful perspective. On the other hand, no phase of the subject has been avoided, or dismissed in a few sentences, for the mere reason that it is technical, complicated, or difficult. There is nothing to be gained by indulging in the

vain pretense that all the problems of the modern municipality are simple when assuredly they are not. The man who believes that a mastery of municipal government presents no serious difficulties may rest satisfied on one of two things:—either that he has a remarkable genius for the study of this subject, or that he has not been into it very far.

Any military tactician will tell you that the best way to reduce a difficult position is to concentrate upon it an enfilading or cross fire from two or more vantage points,—to get at it from the front, from both flanks, and from the rear if possible. My own experience as a teacher of municipal government leads me to the conclusion that there is a good deal to be said for the same tactics in our intellectual assaults upon difficult problems of political science. It is for this reason that I have not hesitated, in the course of the present discussion, to come at the same themes again and again, from different angles, and in different chapters. The close relation between different portions of the subject, moreover, has sometimes made it desirable to give a few general explanations in one place while reserving further discussion for a later stage. What may seem to be repetition, therefore, is the outcome of a conscious intent.

Although these volumes deal with municipal government and administration on an international basis, the chief emphasis has been placed upon the experience, organization, activities, and methods of cities in the United States. This has been done not only because there are more cities in the United States, and more great cities, than in any other country, but because America is now furnishing the world with its best laboratory of municipal experimentation. Europe has as much to learn from us, in this branch of popular government, as we now have to learn from Europe. It was not so a generation ago, and the fact that the situation has so greatly changed may be looked upon as a tribute to the striking progress which American cities have made in the structure of their governments, in their administrative machinery, and in the efficiency of their business methods during the past quarter of a century. There are, indeed, some branches of municipal administration—such as public health, public recreation, public lighting, education, and fire protection—in which the more progressive among American cities need no longer pay any deference to their prototypes across the sea.

Several of my colleagues at Harvard have placed me under deep obligations by reading those portions of my manuscript and proof which deal with matters within their respective fields of special competence. For this service, which has brought me many helpful suggestions, I am indebted to Professors R. P. Blake, H. H. Burbank, W. S. Ferguson, James Ford, A. C. Hanford, A. N. Holcombe, H. V. Hubbard, H. J. Hughes, A. J. Inglis, C. A. McLain, M. J. Rosenau, and G. C. Whipple. For similar assistance I am also sincerely grateful to Professors Charles E. Merriam of the University of Chicago, William Anderson of the University of Minnesota, R. M. Story of the University of Illinois, and P. Orman Ray of Northwestern University; likewise to Mr. John Nolen of Cambridge, Mr. G. H. McCaffrey of Boston, Mr. F. H. Wentworth of the National Fire Protection Association, Mr. Edward Dana of the Boston Elevated Railway, and Dr. H. W. Dodds of the National Municipal League. In the preparation of the bibliographical references, and in many other ways, I have had invaluable aid from Mr. Joseph Wright, Superintendent of the Library for Municipal Research at Harvard University.

When any college teacher writes a book on a subject which he has been handling in the classroom year after year, his indebtedness to successive generations of former students is likely to be more extensive than he realizes. Let me take this opportunity, therefore, of tendering my acknowledgment to the keen-witted young men who have frequented my classroom during the past twenty-two years, who have asked me many, many questions that I could not answer, who by so doing have constrained me (I hope) to an attitude of intellectual humility, and have furnished me with food for daily reflection on the various matters that I have written about in this book.

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MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER I

THE DAWN OF URBAN CIVILIZATION

The Growth of Cities Made the Development of Civilization Possible.

The growth of cities has been one of the greatest factors in the progress of civilization. Despite the old saying that "God made the country and man made the town" it is readily demonstrable that the development of the arts and the sciences, to which the human race owes its power, has been very largely, indeed almost exclusively, the work of the city populations. It was the city that first made possible the intellectual advance of mankind. With the city came economic intercourse, division of labor, wealth, leisure and education. Broadly speaking, high culture is everywhere city-bred. So long as men remained in the nomadic, pastoral, or agricultural stages there was no stimulus to intellectual activity. The intimate contact of many minds is essential to the general advance of human intelligence. It is "the crowd, the hum, and the shock of men," as Bagehot says, that sharpens the intellect, stimulates initiative, and rouses the people to united action. When races progressed from keepers of flocks and herds to dwellers in villages and towns they entered a new intellectual, economic, and political era.

Some Examples.

If one will glance over the course of history, from the days of Memphis and Thebes to the present time, it will be readily observed that great and progressive nations have had many cities, while backward nations have had very few. The cities of Babylonia testified to the greatness of that ancient realm. Free cities, like Tyre and Sidon, were the prime centers of early commercial prosperity. The highest culture of the Greeks was reached in city-states. The home of Roman law and government was a great city, and when for a second time Italy

led the world she was a complex of city-states. The Hanse towns and the Flemish communes, the chartered boroughs of England, and the throbbing metropolitan centers of twentieth-century America—each in their day prefigure the highest attainments of the human race. It is an arguable proposition, indeed, that the degree of civilization which a nation has reached can be as readily gauged by the number and size of its cities as by any other test. The greatness of the Roman empire is plainly attested by the large number of prosperous cities that it contained; the collapse of civilization in the Dark Ages is proved by the obliteration or decay of these urban communities. City growth and civilization have always gone hand in hand. The massing of the population into cities throughout the civilized world at the present day is causing some alarm to gentle minds; but history affords no ground for the belief that a nation is weakened by the urbanization of its people. On the contrary, this process has been the outward mark of increasing national power and culture. Cities have promoted and not impeded the progress of civilization.

How This Was Effected.

Let us be more definite. In what ways did the growth of urban communities promote the early advance of civilization? First of all, it made division of labor possible, thus increasing the productive power of the people. With this increase in productive power, men were enabled to work less and to have leisure for self-development. It made co-operation possible and inspired the people to concerted action in the common interest. It led to the creation of new economic wants and provided at the same time the means of supplying them. It promoted discussion, facilitated the interchange of ideas, and furnished opportunities for transforming ideas into actualities. When people grouped themselves into cities and towns, moreover, they felt safer from their enemies; they could accumulate wealth with some assurance that it would not be taken away from them. Life, property and privileges were not always safe within the city gates; but they were safer there than anywhere else. The city enabled men to co-operate, to live what Aristotle called "a common life for a noble end." Ideas and feelings spread more readily there than elsewhere; the people soon created a social environment and bequeathed to their children a social heritage. Through daily intercourse and mutual dependence upon one another they de-

veloped a neighborhood consciousness and the beginnings of civic pride. All these things became possible when men left the land and gathered themselves into organized communities. Primitive man chose the sites; civilized man built the cities.

The Earliest Cities: Memphis and Thebes.

It is probable that cities first made their appearance in the valley of the Nile. Along this capricious stream there were scores of prehistoric communities, for the cultivation of the river valley required a huge amount of organized labor and necessitated the building of settlements in the immediate neighborhood. The earliest city of which we have any definite record is Memphis, the capital of Egypt under the Old Empire which came to its close about 2500 B.C.[1] With the advent of the Middle Empire, a new capital was established. This was Thebes, which remained the seat of the Pharaohs for a thousand years or more.[2] Although Egypt in these early centuries possessed a large population, Memphis and Thebes were the only two cities of importance. The country was agricultural for the most part, but a considerable amount of trade and industry was also carried on. The masses of the population were servile, bound to the land; the free workmen and traders in the towns were numerous, but they formed a relatively small element in the country as a whole.[3] There were no large industrial or commercial cities. Both Memphis and Thebes owed their importance to the fact that they were seats of political power. The ancient records of Egypt speak of them in unrestrained superlatives, but in all probability they were not large places. What their population was we do not know, nor have we any data on which to make an estimate that would be other than guesswork. Neither do we know how they were governed, although it is a warrantable inference that they were under the despotic rule of the Pharaohs as completely as all other portions of the country.

[1] Memphis was a walled city, situated on the west bank of the Nile, about twelve miles south of the present Cairo. Under the Hebrew name of Noph it is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament (e.g., Ezekiel xxx, 13, 16; Jeremiah ii, 16; Isaiah xix, 13). Tradition describes it as a city of temples and palaces, amazing in their grandeur.

[2] Thebes was known to the Old Testament writers as No Ammon; in the days of the prophets it was a rich and powerful city, whose punishment and desolation both Jeremiah and Ezekiel predicted. The *Iliad* makes mention of its "hundred gates" (Book IX).

[3] Eduard Meyer, *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums* (Jena, 1895), especially pp. 9-10.

Nineveh and Babylon.

The empires of Mesopotamia, in the fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, had many cities, the largest of which were also political capitals.[1] Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, is the best known among them, although the ruins of several others have been uncovered. For centuries the arrogant power of Nineveh dominated a wide area, an "exceeding great city," according to the Old Testament, and one "in which there were one hundred and twenty thousand people who knew not their right hand from their left."[2] Her ruins indicate that Nineveh was really a group of cities covering an area considerably larger than modern Paris and protected by an elaborate system of defenses. Babylon, the habitat of Nebuchadnezzar, and the bitter rival of Nineveh, was also "an astonishment among the nations."[3] The walls of Babylon, according to Herodotus, were fourteen miles long; which is a characteristic exaggeration, although the city was more populous than Nineveh and undoubtedly the largest of ancient communities prior to the rise of Rome. Nineveh was called the stone city; Babylon, the brick city. During the period of Babylon's greatest prosperity the Jewish exiles spent the years of their captivity in and around the city, and they were greatly impressed by its magnificence as their records attest. The Medes and the Persians sacked and destroyed Babylon in 538 B.C. thus fulfilling the Hebrew prophecy that the place would be turned into a desolation, without an inhabitant.

Tyre and Sidon.

Tyre and Sidon, the seaports of Phœnicia, were the earliest examples of commercial cities. They carried on extensive commerce, and dotted the shores of the Mediterranean, both north and south, with their trading posts and colonies. Penetrating to all corners of the ancient world, their commercial prosperity lasted for several centuries, and their trading posts became the sites of several modern cities. These Phœnicians were of Semitic stock, a race which has shown in all ages a keen commercial sense and a taste for life in proximity to the marts of

[1] In translations from ancient writing the term "city" has been indifferently applied to everything from a collection of tents in a desert oasis to a great walled metropolis. Rawlinson says that Egypt, in its most flourishing days, contained 20,000 cities, but to get this figure it must have been necessary to include every small group of mud huts in the Nile valley.

[2] Jonah iii, 3; iv, 11. Nineveh was destroyed in 606 B.C.

[3] Jeremiah ii, 41.

trade. Of Phœnician government, however, we know very little. Tyre and Sidon were city-states, each governed by a king, and the people as a whole possessed no regular political prerogatives. Apart from the invention of a workable alphabet, the greatest achievement of the Phœnicians was the founding of Carthage, about 800 B.C.

Carthage. Carthage also became a great maritime power and dominated the Mediterranean from the Pillars of Hercules to the Great Syrtis. At the pinnacle of her power Carthage probably had a population of three hundred thousand and possibly more.[1] But whatever her population the Sidonian colony was a great hive of industry; her woven goods were renowned everywhere. Her people excelled in making cheap goods in imitation of Egyptian and Greek wares. These the Carthaginian traders exchanged for raw products; their ships roamed southward to the coasts of Central Africa and sometimes as far northward as the shores of England. The government of Carthage was oligarchic—a plutocracy—for although there was a senate and an assembly, the governing authority rested with a self-perpetuating council of one hundred which was dominated by a small coterie of opulent traders. The city was one vast market and counting-house; its people had neither time nor taste for developing the cultural activities. The Carthaginian sway extended at one time over the whole North African coast, the Mediterranean shores of Spain, Corsica, Sardinia, and the eastern end of Sicily. Tribes and villages throughout this area were ruled with an iron hand and forced to pay heavy tribute. Aristotle deals with the constitution of Carthage in his great disquisition on the science of government, but only superficially, and though he is inclined to praise it, his description hardly justifies his panegyric.[2] Carthage, as a matter of fact, contributed nothing to the science of government and very little to any other field of human knowledge.[3]

[1] H. G. Wells, in his *Outline of History* (Vol. I, p. 217), says that the city "probably had the hitherto unheard-of population of a million." This figure is unquestionably far too high.

[2] *The Politics of Aristotle* (Jowett's edition, 2 vols., Oxford, 1885), Vol. I, p. xlvii.

[3] Notwithstanding the complete destruction of the city in 146 B.C., Carthage was restored about a hundred years later and became an important place during the second and third Christian centuries.

The Holy City.

There is one city of the ancient world which, despite its economic insignificance, cannot be allowed to go unmentioned, for in literature and tradition it bulks larger than any other. This is Jerusalem, which reached the climax of its prosperity in the days of David and Solomon. But the holy city of the Jews was a very small community when compared with Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, or Carthage. At the height of its ancient glory Jerusalem probably did not have a resident population exceeding twenty thousand. Several times it was pillaged and twice it was utterly destroyed. In its early stages the government of the city was of a priestly type, but after the revolt and secession of the Ten Tribes it became merged in the government of the kingdom of Judah. The part which Jerusalem has played in the drama of human history is out of all proportion to its ancient strength and prominence.

A Land of City-States.

None of these cities made any permanent contribution to the art of municipal government. They were monarchical capitals, or trading centers, or holy places, with no fixed political traditions. The hand of the despot lay heavily upon them all. It remained for the Greeks to develop a system of independent, self-governed cities, each the center of a vigorous political life. Miletus, Athens, and Corinth were not mere palace-cities, or centers of trade, but urban communities in the modern sense with a high degree of political and economic vitality. The geography of Greece favored the growth of independent cities and for a long period these cities enjoyed home rule in the fullest sense. The chronicles of Greek civilization begin and end in the cities; the whole effort of the Hellenic race was concentrated upon the betterment of urban life and conditions. Almost the entire free population of Greece lived within the city walls, although many of the people owned lands outside and maintained large bodies of slaves to cultivate them. Ancient Greece was a nation of cities. In the early centuries the fear of pirates and plunderers, in latter days the taste for oratory and politics, kept men from living scattered in the rural areas and brought them into settlements where they found both safety and companionship.[1]

[1] "Here rose a little state; another near
Grew by like means
And joined through love or fear."
Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle III.

Urban Greece.

There were many cities in Greece,—Athens, Corinth, Miletus, Sparta, Chalcis, Samos, Ægina, and Eretria are only the best known among them. There were scores of smaller communities located so closely together that one began where the other ended. Even the largest was not so large as to shut out a view of the surrounding country. It should not be imagined, indeed, that the people of the Greek cities were, like the population of the modern town, chiefly artisans, traders, and the like. Large numbers of them were engaged in agriculture; there were olive groves and vineyards within the city walls. Even at Athens life was so little removed from the truly rural that the crowing of the cock served as the town's *reveille*, and some literary connoisseurs have detected a barnyard flavor in the urban comedies of Aristophanes. Town and country were fused in Greek city.[1] Farmer, artisan, fisherman, and trader lived side by side. Each city, however, was substantially on a basis of self-determination; between them there was no common allegiance. Although all the Greek cities were peopled by men and women who spoke the same language, worshipped the same gods, and looked upon all non-Greeks as barbarians, there was no common Greek citizenship. Men were citizens of Athens, or of Corinth, or of Sparta,—not citizens of Greece.

Athens: Its Beginnings.

Athens, of course, was the largest and most important among Hellenic cities, contributing more to the progress of civilization than all the others combined. The beginnings of the city are veiled in prehistoric darkness; but we have the statement of Thucydides that the pressure of piratical raids drove the population of various small settlements to take refuge in a single sheltered location four miles inland from the head of the Piræus.[2] There, in the center of a fertile plain, surrounded on three sides

[1] There is an admirable discussion of this theme in W. S. Ferguson, *Greek Imperialism* (Boston, 1913), Ch. 1.

[2] As to the relative importance of the various factors which led to the founding of Athens and the other Greek cities there is a difference of opinion among the authorities. Some believe that community of religion was the most important factor; others maintain that the cities were, in their origin, places of refuge against attack. For a statement of the two views see N. D. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, pp. 167-176, and Rudolph von Ihering, *The Evolution of the Aryans* (New York, 1897), pp. 86-87. W. Warde Fowler, *The City-State of the Greeks and Romans* (London, 1908), pp. 42-46, believes that both these factors were influential, and other factors as well.

by rugged mountains, the new city grew rapidly in population and wealth. Although the Persians captured and burned the place in 479 B.C., it rose from its ashes and reached the height of its greatness in the age of Pericles. Never has any people unfolded itself in a shorter time with such brilliant and enduring results. Had Sparta and Athens proved able to unite their energies instead of weakening each other in fratricidal conflict, each would have accomplished a great deal more. But no two cities of the same race were ever more unlike in their ideals, purposes, and civic temperament. Sparta was oligarchical, harsh to strangers, and so unliterary that her people have left us hardly a line. Athens, on the other hand, was democratic, liberal, highly cultured, and, on the whole, a rather cosmopolitan place.

Its Status As a Community.

Like the other cities of Greece, Athens was not a municipality in the modern sense, but a city-state.[1] She was not subject to any government but her own. No distinction, indeed, could be drawn in ancient Greece between national and municipal government—the two were combined. Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Miletus, and Syracuse all possessed territory outside the city walls from which they drew their food supplies. This territory was essential to the existence of the city; but it counted for little or nothing politically. It was in the πόλις, the city proper, that all political life was centered. Its government performed both local and national functions. It declared war and made peace, ratified treaties, authorized the construction of streets and public works, levied taxes, policed the city, and managed the harbor.

Topography and Population of Athens.

The region around Athens, which the city controlled, was known as Attica. It was less than forty by fifty miles in area—about the size of a Massachusetts county. It was not a very fertile tract, but by careful cultivation was made to yield a large part of the city's subsistence. The city itself was in two parts—Athens proper, which surrounded the Acropolis, and the port or harbor-town, four or five miles away, known as the Piræus. The two were connected by a road which ran between long defensive walls. The city proper had an area of about two square miles and a population of perhaps one hundred thousand. Xenophon mentions that it had ten thousand houses. The

[1] Athens had in Attica, however, a number of villages and towns, each with its own local government. These were municipalities in the modern sense, or nearly so; they were not city-states.