

GROWTH OF NEW DESIGNATED CITIES IN CHINA

Gu Chaolin(顾朝林) Zhen Feng(甄峰)

Department of Urban and Resources Sciences, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210093, P. R. China

Qiu Youliang(邱友良) Ye Shunzan(叶舜赞)

Institute of Geography, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100101, P. R. China

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ABSTRACT: The opening of the economy has contributed to the rapid urban development in China over the last 17 years from 1979 to 1996. It is worthwhile to note three new development trends of Chinese urban system. The first trend identifies the emergence of mega-urbanization regions. The second trend rebuilds a closer tie between the Chinese urban system and the global urban system through the development of the world (global) cities and international cities. The third trend shows the fast-polarized development in hinterlands and peripheries around advanced economic regions. However, the research literature on Chinese urbanization in English has shown the scarcity of good databanks and the analysis results are incomplete. Some researchers also always question the quality of the data. Using the most completed and most recent data, this paper reviews the growth of China's new designated cities since 1949. This paper also seeks to examine the various policies and to explore the underlying factors that have affected the growth of China new cities. From the development of China's cities in the past 47 years from 1949 to 1996, it is easy to find that metropolitan cities developed with a relatively high rate compared with smaller ones, but the ratio of number and population to whole country cities remained stable; Chinese urban system development had entered a phase of small cities development; in terms of cities regional distribution, the south and east region is still the central area of urban development.

KEY WORDS: urbanization, new designated city, China cities, urban development

1 INTRODUCTION

Many western scholars such as Chang Sendou (1963), Cheng Tiejun *et al.* (1994), and Skinner G. W. *et al.* (1977) put their research interests in the traditional Chinese cities and drew conclusions, i.e., there is a unique Chinese urban system model and a unique Chinese city model. In the 1980s, many scholars began to study the development of Chinese urban system since 1949 (Chang, 1981; Chen, 1991; Cheng *et al.*, 1994; Cui, 1992; Gu, 1992, 1994; Hu, 1997; Ma *et al.*, 1987; Pannell *et al.*, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986; Qin, 1993; Sit, 1995; Skinner, 1977; Yeh *et al.*, 1990; Zhang, 1991). Since 1949, the urban non-agricultural population of China has increased by almost 6.9 times (from 42.38 mil-

lions in 1952 to 276.18 millions in 1996) and the number of cities has increased sharply from 136 to 666. During that period the proportion of the population considered as living in urban places rose from 10.6 percent to 29.37 percent. In addition, China launched its economic reform in December 1978. With the initial success of the rural reform, urban reform measures started in 1984. Chinese urban system has experienced rapid changes since then.

In particular, the development process of new designated cities over last two decades has been combined with the economic globalization and can be evaluated from the idea of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL) that contrasts with the traditional thinking of global division of labor. Urban growth in the Chinese urban system was largely confined to the

new cities at the county level.

2 STANDARD OF CHINESE NEW DESIGNATED CITIES

China was the earliest origin of cities in the world and one of the countries whose cities were the most developed in ancient times. The existence of original cities in China can be dated to 2500 B. C. (Gu, 1992). Ancient Chinese urban system reached a peak in the Tang Dynasty. In total, about 600 cities (seats of Prefecture or over) and 3000 towns (Dynasty county seats) were built in ancient China from the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100–771 B. C.) to the end of the Qing Dynasty (1911 A. D.). Historically, China's urban places always were seats of administrative centers, for instance, county seat, prefecture seat, and province seat, not autonomous administrative entities. Chinese cities, in a modern sense, are administrative entities (administrative regions) in which residents are mainly non-agricultural population and economic activities are dominated by manufacturing and service industries. Certainly they also possess other functions sometimes, such as economic, cultural, transportation and information centers, etc.

China's system of municipalities and towns in a modern sense did not start until the beginning of this century. In 1912, the Municipality and Village Organization Law, which was very similar to the European city and town system, was promulgated by the Bei Yang (the Qing Dynasty name for coastal provinces of Liaoning, Hebei and Shandong) Government. The Municipality Decree was issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the form of Great President Amesty, Republic of China in 1921. It was the beginning of Chinese modern municipality system. In the same year, Nanjing and Shanghai were defined as special cities, Wuxi, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Anqing, Nanchang, Hankou (Wuhan), Guangzhou and Wuzhou as common cities. In fact, these cities did not set up their local governments because of the civil war. The Southern China Revolutionary Government designated the first municipality, Guangzhou in

1925. Strictly to say, in that time, the Guangzhou municipality was only an autonomous community, it was not yet an autonomous administrative entity.

The government of the Republic of China started to reform the former municipality system while Nanjing was selected as capital of the nation. The Special Municipality Organization Law and the Common City Organization Law were issued in 1928. According to these laws, municipality and city were defined as local administrative region that had an autonomous right. Since then, China's municipality or city has become an autonomous administrative entity. Consequently, China's cities must be officially designated.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), a city is defined as a place where the total population exceeds 100 000, at least 70 percent of them are non-agricultural population, or alternatively, some important strategic centers for the region or the country are also designated as cities. Even though the criteria of the official designated city have been revised four times, the definition of the city has not been changed in China since 1955.

3 THE DESIGNATION OF NEW CITIES

3.1 The Designation of New Cities before 1949

After establishing its capital in Nanjing, the Republic of China began to reform the former municipality system. It set cities as local administrative areas, also autonomous groups. In July 1928, the government issued Special Municipality Organization Law and Common City Organization Law, which supplied the legal basis of modern municipality and city system. After that, city, as a kind of organizational system for administrative division, has gone through a lot of evolution and been followed to now. According to records, in 1928, 8 cities, Beiping (Beijing), Tianjin, Harbin, Shanghai, Nanjing, Qingdao, Hankou (Wuhan) and Guangzhou, were designated as special municipalities; 17 cities, such as Suzhou, Hangzhou, Bengbu, Wuhu, Changsha and so on, were designated as common cities. City Organization

Law was issued in May 1930, renamed the special municipality into the provincial-level municipality and the common city into the provincial-governed municipality. Due to the law having enhanced the criteria of designated cities, there were only four provincial-level municipalities—Beiping (Beijing), Shanghai, Nanjing and Qingdao, and nine provincial-governed municipalities—Tianjin, Hangzhou, Jinan, Hankou (Wuhan), Guangzhou, Shantou, Chengdu, Guiyang and Lanzhou. Just before the beginning of the War of Resistance against Japan, the number of cities of the whole nation started to increase to the level of 1928. At that time China had 23 cities, six of them were provincial-level municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Nanjing, Qingdao and Chongqing), other 17 cities belonged to provincial-governed municipalities (Baotou, Lianyungang, Hangzhou, Xiamen, Nanchang, Jinan, Wuchang, Hankou, Changsha, Guangzhou, Shantou, Guilin, Chengdu, Zigong, Guiyang, Kunming and Lanzhou). During the war, the number of new designated cities were 26 in all. After the victory of the War of Resistance against Japan and the returns of Taiwan and Northeast China, the number of cities increased suddenly to 43 in 1945, and 60 in 1947. According to the records of Administrative Units in China, there were 66 designated cities in 1948, twelve of them were provincial-level municipalities.

After the founding of P. R. China, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (C. P. C.) prescribed such cities that their total population exceeded 500 000 could be designated as cities. Up to the end of 1949, China had 136 designated cities, 12 of them were provincial-level municipalities, 55 of them were provincial-governed municipalities, and 69 of them were special area governed municipalities (Fig. 1, Table 1)

3.2 The Designation of New Cities during Economic Reconstruction Period

It was a period of fundamental transformation of social-economic system in China, while urban eco-

nomical development was characterized by turning consumer-cities into manufacturing cities. Especially from 1949 to 1954, the State Council published the Decision about Designating City and Town Organizational System, which was the first formal legal document about city and town designation after the founding of P. R. China. The documents emphasized population, economic, political and military factors, etc., at the same time, stressed especially administrative status and subordination relationship of cities, and prescribed that cities were administrative units under the control of a province, an autonomous region or an autonomous prefecture. The developmental characteristics of designated cities showed two points: one was that the organizational system of some small cities in east China were withdrawn, and some pivotal cities became the key of construction; the other was that some new industrial cities were set up in hinterland, thus city system began to develop steadily and healthily. According to the statistical data, China's urbanization level increased from 10.64% in 1949 to 15.39% in 1957, with an annual progressive average increase rate of 70.5% during that period. In the same period, 71 new cities had been set up, and distributed mainly in Hunan, Sichuan, Henan, Yunnan, Gansu, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Hebei, Anhui and Fujian; at the same time, 23 old cities in Anhui, Shandong, Zhejiang and so on were withdrawn. Among the above-mentioned 71 cities, Fengfeng in Hebei, Huludao in Liaoning, Runan in Henan, Laohekou in Hubei, Beipei and Hechuan in Sichuan, and Hekou and Malipo in Yunnan were cancelled in succession for some reasons (not listed in Table 1). Up to the end of 1957, China had 176 designated cities, increasing 29.4% opposite to 136 cities in 1949, with an annual growth of 5 cities (Table 1).

3.3 The Designation of New Cities during the Period of the Great Leap Forward Movement and 3-Year Natural Disaster

During the period of the Great Leap Forward

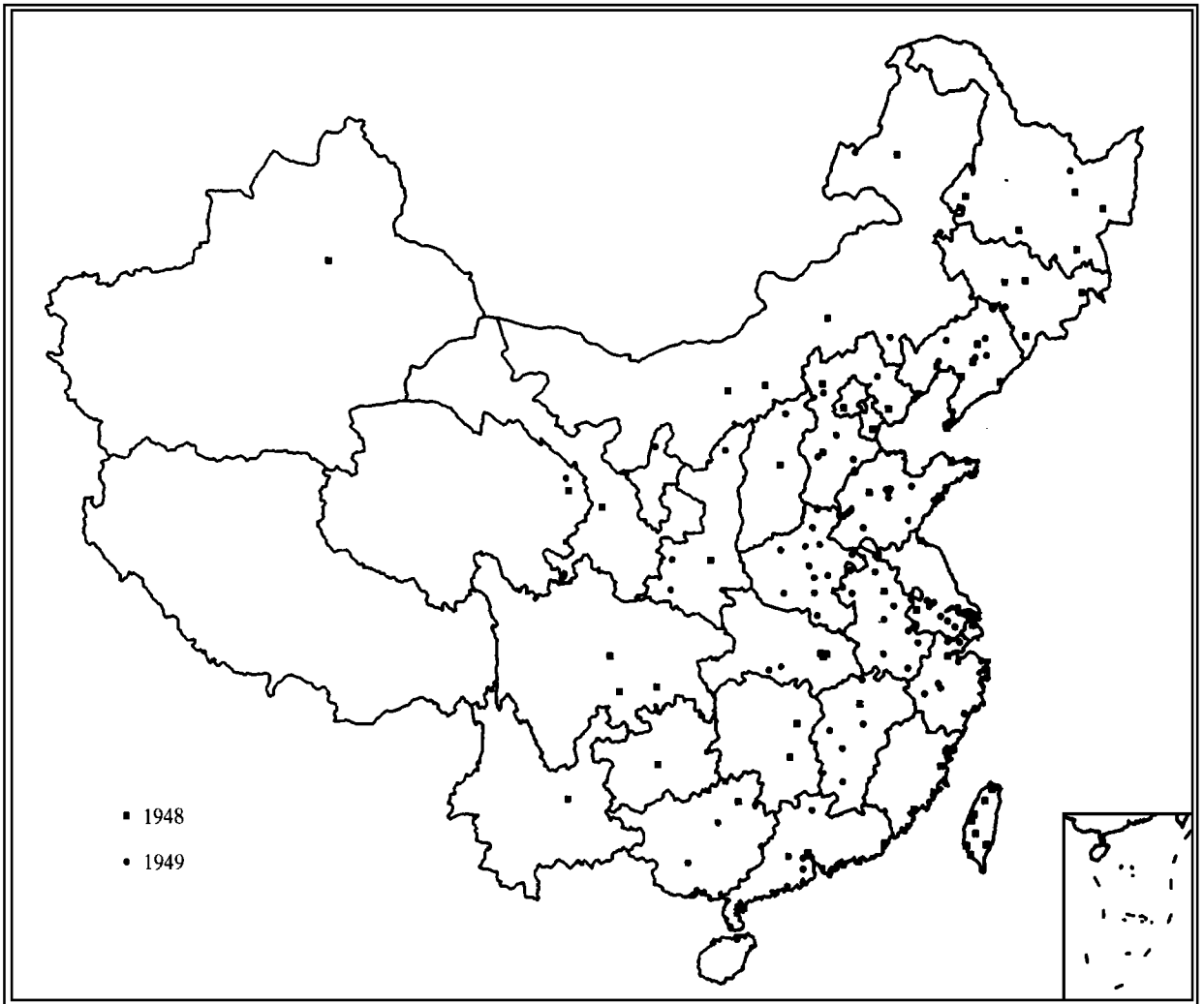


Fig. 1 Cities in China in 1948 and 1949

Movement in 1958–1960, the development of industry focused on smelting steel and iron, and agricultural front also started a great upsurge of People's Communes, which made China's urban population suddenly rise to 130.73 million in 1960 comparing to 99.49 million in 1957. In those three years, there were 44 new designated cities, with 31.4% net increase rate of urban population, and the level of urbanization leaped to 19.7%, which added to much burden to many cities, consequently accompanied by the insufficiency of municipal construction. Because of a mass of rural population rushing into cities during the Great Leap Forward Movement, the proportion of industry and agriculture became imbalance, and the national economy also fluctuated severely, which led to serious

urban employment and supply problem. Therefore, China had to cut down urban population, and reduce towns organizational system. In October 1963, the central government decided a policy of "readjusting the municipality system and shrinking suburbs", which issued a set of new standard of city and town designation. Comparing to the standard of 1955, it mainly improved the population size criterion of city and town designation, and further put forward the standard of non-agricultural population in municipality system. After 1961, China withdrawn 52 cities one after another, about 30 million new urban population were mobilized back to the rural areas from the cities and towns (corresponding to 25.7% of urban population at that time). According to urban statistical data

Table 1 Statistics of cities in China since 1949

Province	1949 ^①		1950– 1957 ^①		1958– 1965 ^①		1966– 1976 ^②		1977– 1985 ^③		1986– 1993 ^④		1994– 1996 ^⑤		
	OC	NC	WC	NC	WC	NC	WC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	EC	
Beijing	1	1		1											
Tianjin	1	1		1											
Hebei	8	3	2	1	1				3		18		4	1	
Shanxi	2	3		1				3		3		7		5	
Inner Mongolia	6	3	1	3	2	1	1		7		1		3		
Liaoning	12		1	1					7		11		3		
Jilin	5	2		3	1				3		13		3		
Heilongjiang	5	3		1	1		3			5		14		2	
Shanghai	1														
Jiangsu	10	2		1					2		22		9	2	
Zhejiang	9	2		4					8		19		5		
Anhui	13	3	8	1	1		2		5		5		2	1	
Fujian	2	3		1					4		10		3		
Jiangxi	6	2	1	1	1		1		4		6		3		
Shandong	13	1	5	1	1				10		24		5		
Henan	12	4	1	3			1		4		13		7		
Hubei	3	2						1		8		17		4	1
Hunan	2	7		2			2		11		8		2	1	
Guangdong	7	2	1	3	1				7		23		16		
Guangxi	4	2							5		3		4	1	
Hainan	1										3		3		
Sichuan	3	7		1	1		2		8		12		6	2	
Guizhou	1	1						2		2		5		2	
Yunnan	1	2		1					7		3		3		
Shaanxi	4	1	1	1	1		1		3		4		0	2	
Gansu	1	4		1	1		1		8		1		1		
Ningxia	1	1		1	1				2				1		
Qinghai	1								1		1				
Xinjiang	1	2		1				2		9		2		2	
Xizang				1							1				
Total	136	63	23	22	29		21			136		246		98	

Note: OC means original cities; NC means new designated cities; WC means withdrew cities; EC means escalated cities.

Some cities in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau excluded; administrative units at province level were listed by current names.

during the period of 1958– 1965, 54 new cities were designated in all. Among them, 32 cities were withdrawn in succession, which were Xuanhua in Hebei, Houma in Shanxi, Bayan Gol in Inner Mongolia, Chaoyang in Liaoning, Bei'an in Heilongjiang, Xinyu in Jiangxi, Tai'an, Liaocheng, Linyi, Heze and

Xinwen in Shandong, Echeng, Shayang in Hubei, Yueyang, Lengshuitan, Dongjiang, Loudi, Lengjiang, Anjiang and Binzhou in Hunan, Anshun, Duyun and Liuzhi in Guizhou, Baiyin, Jiuquan, Zhangye and Dewulu in Gansu, Qingtongxia in Ningxia, Lenghu, Golmud and Muchaidan in Qinghai,

① Ministry of Civil Affairs. 1984. Changes of Administrative Units over County Level in China (1949– 1983), Beijing: Maps Press. (in Chinese); Shi, Weile (ed.). Changes of China's Administrative Units (1949– 1979), Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press. (in Chinese)

② Ministry of Civil Affairs. 1984. Changes of Administrative Units over County Level in China (1949– 1983), Beijing: Maps Press. (in Chinese)

③ Ministry of Civil Affairs. 1984. Changes of Administrative Units over County Level in China (1949– 1983), Beijing: Maps Press. (in Chinese); Administrative Units in China (1986). (in Chinese)

④ Changes of Administrative Units in China (1987– 1993). (in Chinese)

⑤ Changes of Administrative Units in China (1995– 1996). (in Chinese)

and Hami in Xinjiang. At the same time, 29 cities among the 176 cities also were withdrawn one after another in 1957. Up to the end of 1965, the proportion of urban population to the total population of the country gradually decreased to 14%. The total number of cities also dropped to 169 in 1965, being 7 cities less than those in 1957. The number of cities in the urban system increased negatively with one city being withdrawn each year (Table 1).

3.4 The Designation of New Cities during the Period of the Great Cultural Revolution

In 1966–1976, China was in great upheaval from “the Great Cultural Revolution”, and the social economy was unsteady. On the one hand, a lot of urban inhabitants, cadres and school leavers were transferred to do labour in the countryside; on the other hand, the government focused on the Three Lines Construction, putting into a lot of money, with a policy of “near to mountain, scatter and move into caves.”, which made few cities constructed, and the old cities feel weak to develop. The urban system was in a state of long-term stagnation. The statistics showed that the urban population increased very slowly in those 11 years, only climbing up from 99.65 million in 1966 to 113.42 million in 1976. The annual increase rate was 1.3%, less than the population natural increase rate of 1.75% in the same period. During that period, very few new cities were designated. Among of them, only 21 cities were newly set up. One city was canceled and one was formed through merging. The average yearly increase was 1.7 cities. By the end of 1976, China had 188 designated cities in all.

3.5 The Designation of New Cities in the Period of Economic Reform and Resuscitation

Since 1977, especially after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the C. P. C., the reform and open policy had taken a great effect on China’s political and economic conditions.

Along with the implement of a series of reform and open measures, rural economy made a relatively rapid development, and the role of urban economic center was also strengthened. A new urban-rural economic system in which county was governed by city was formed. Urban construction and planning stepped into a scientific course gradually, and China’s city designation began to get into a state of recovery. According to statistics, in that period (1977–1985), 139 new cities were designated. Most of them were designated in Hunan, Shandong, Xinjiang, Zhejiang, Hubei, Sichuan and Gansu, etc.. Only Tiefsa in Liaoning, Xinwen in Shandong and Lengshuijiang in Hunan were withdrawn one after another. Designated cities increased 136, with annual increase of 15.1 cities. Up to the end of 1985, China had 324 cities, and 118.25 million non-agricultural population (Table 1).

3.6 The Designation of New Cities in the Period of Vigorous Economy Development Phase

In 1986, the Seventh Five-Year Plan was passed by the Fourth Session of the Sixth National People’s Congress (NPC), which pointed out preventing the excessive expansion of the population of big cities feasibly and centring on developing a series of medium-sized cities and small cities. In the same year, the State Council ratified trying out new standard of city designation. The contents of this new standard included: (1) lowering the population limit of city designation from 100 000 to 60 000 (non-agricultural population); (2) putting forward the GDP (Gross Domestic Production) standard of city designation which reflected the characteristic of taking economic construction as center; (3) trying to break down the deep-rooted identity limits of population by adopting some steps such as permitting peasants to go in for tertiary industry with keeping alive by themselves; (4) advancing the standard of changing county into city. In this period (1986–1993), the economy and village and township enterprises in east coastal region developed sustainably at high speed. Especially the trans-

formation of national economic system from the planned economy to the socialism market economy in 1992 made the essential factors of production (e.g. funds, land, labour force and technology) to play a more and more important role. Meanwhile, a lot of the surplus labour forces in countryside were transferred to non-agricultural field. The new standard of the designated city enlarged the range of non-agricultural population and lowered the conditions properly. The models of setting up new cities were changed (original mainly from towns and now mainly from counties). These changes both met the need of the rural urbanization development, and enhanced greatly the development of China's designated cities. According to statistics, in the eight years of 1986–1993, 246 new cities were set up in the whole country with annually increasing of 30.1 cities. Among them, the coastal provinces such as Guangdong, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hebei and so on had the most designated cities. (Table 1)

3.7 The Designation of New Cities in the Period of High-Speed Economic Growth Phase

After transferring the planned economy system into the socialist market system, the Chinese national economy developed with a highest speed in the world. The average annual growth of GDP was 11.2%, which was the highest in the world. The relationship between Chinese economic system and the global economic system were becoming closer. The transformation of economic system, the rapid growth of economy and the readjustment of the economic structure, had a strong effect on the development of the cities in China. The Chinese urban system was becoming an important part of the global urban system. In 1993, a new standard of designated new city took effect promulgated by the State Council. Compared with the old one, the main contents of the readjustment of the new standard included: (1) emphasizing the regional difference and the regions with different population densities having different standards of city designa-

tion, which reflected the requirement and tendency of structure adjustment of national economy; (2) advancing a standard of designating prefecture-level cities. In 1994, 53 new cities were established, which is the biggest number of annual new designated cities after 1949. According to statistics, in 1994–1996, China established 98 cities in all, with almost 33 cities of an average of every year. The developmental speed of city at this time was the fastest since 1949. Among them Guangdong and Jiangsu developed quickly. In the 3 years, these two provinces designated 25 cities in all, which was one fourth of the total number. In this phase, it was obvious that new cities in hinterland region developed very quickly, 46 new cities, near half of total of them, were located in central region and western region (Table 1). By the year 1996, the total number of cities amounted to 666 and the total non-agriculture population was 276.18 million.

The distribution of new designated cities in 1950–1996 is shown in Fig. 2.

4 GROWTH OF NEW DESIGNATED CITIES

In general, during the past 47 years from 1949 to 1996 the total number of new designated cities reached 569 cities. At the same time, 39 cities were withdrawn or combined. Among them Xuanhua and Zhangjiakou, Shanhaiguan and Qinhuangdao, Fengfeng and Handan, Lüshun and Dalian, Beipei and Chongqing, Wutongqiao and Zigong, Tunxi and Huangshan, Huangyan and Jiaojiang were combined. Bayan Hot in Inner Mongolia, Jinzhou in Liaoning, Sanhe, Dangtu and Datong in Anhui, Yangkou and Shidao in Shandong, Zhuji in Henan, etc., were degraded to towns. Bayan Gol in Inner Mongolia, Huludao in Liaoning, Runan in Henan, Hekou and Malipo in Yunnan, Shayang in Hubei, Dongjiang and Anjiang in Hunan, Dewulu in Gansu, Lenghu and Da Qaidam in Qinghai, etc., were withdrawn. In addition, Botou in Hebei, Yuci and Houma in Shanxi, Chifeng and Ulan Hot in Inner Mongolia, Chaoyang,

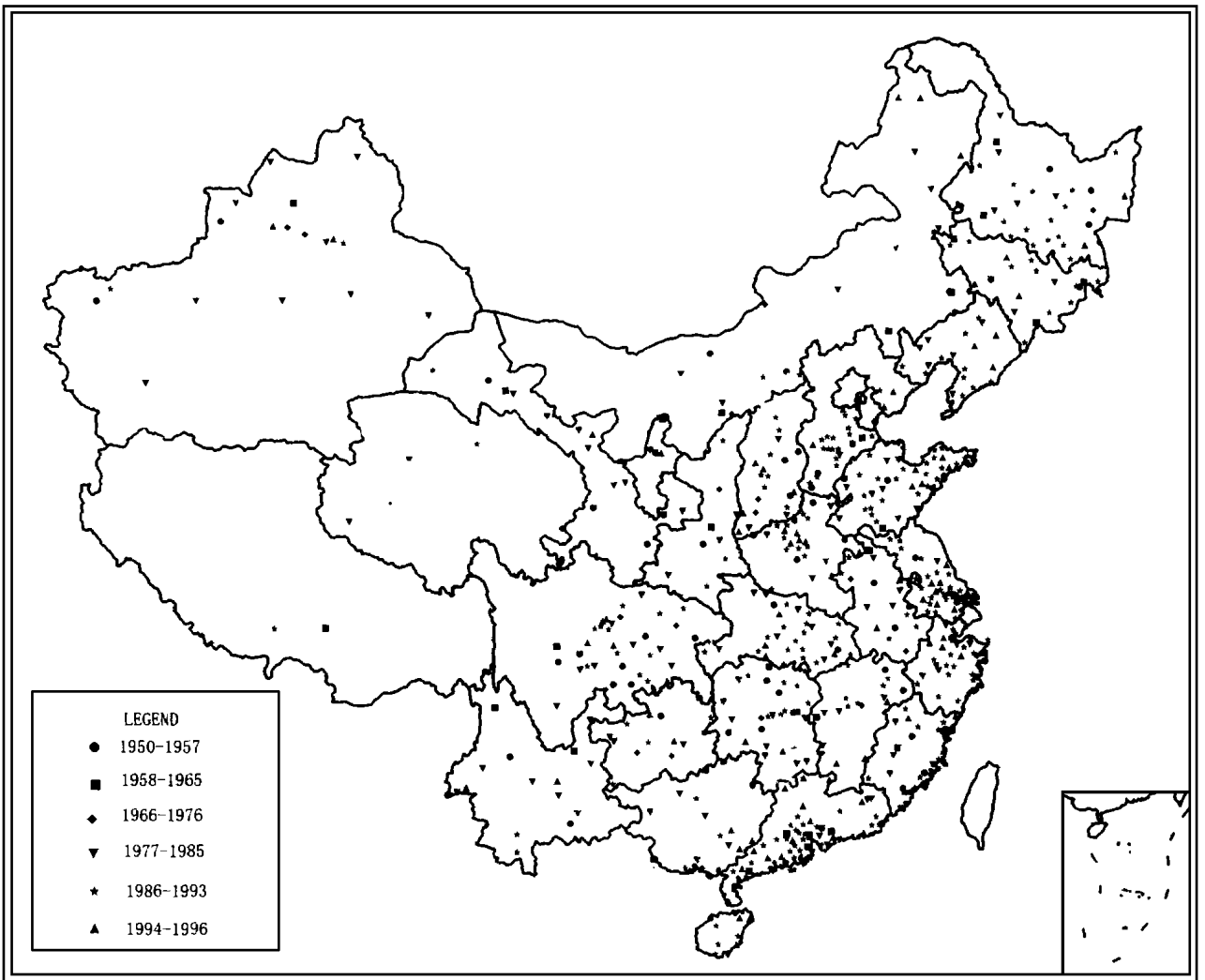


Fig. 2 New designated cities in China from 1950 to 1996

Tiefa and Gongzhuling in Jilin, Yichun and Bei'an in Heilongjiang, Changshu in Jiangsu, Lanxi, Jiaying, Huzhou, Shaoxing, Jinhua and Quzhou in Zhejiang, Tongling, Tunxi, Liu'an, Fuyang, Suzhou, Jieshou, Bozhou and Xuanzhou in Anhui, Fuzhou and Xinyu in Jiangxi, Tai'an, Liaocheng, Linyi, Heze, Xinwen, Linqing and Longkou in Shandong, Pingdingshan, Zhoukoudian and Zhumadian in Henan, Laohekou and Echeng in Hubei, Binzhou, Hongjiang, Jinshi, Yueyang, Lengshuitan, Loudi and Lengshuijiang in Hunan, Chaozhou in Guangdong, Hechuan in Sichuan, Anshun, Duyun and Lipanshui in Guizhou, Hanzhong and Yulin in Shaanxi, Linxia, Pingliang, Baiyin, Jiuquan and Zhangye in Gansu, Qingtongxia and Wuzhong in Ningxia, Gol-

mud in Qinghai, Hami in Xinjiang and so on, had gone through the process of designation, withdrawal and re-designation.

Since 1949, the Chinese urban system structure has been undergoing a fundamental change. Cities became regional centres for economic development, and the urban economic function transformed from consumption into production and from the centers for exploiting the countryside into the center to support agriculture modernization.

Historically, Chinese urban areas were always the seats of the administrative center, but not the centers for economy. This character was not changed since 1949. In contrast, the rapid growth of economic development made it become stronger. The capital

of province showed a rapid growth due to the establishment of steel, machinery, farm machinery, chemistry and industry around its peripheral area. In addition, the prefecture-level cities attracted and invested many construction projects to settle in its peripheral area by its administrative advantage. This kind of cities gradually developed into the synthetic center of regional politics, economy and culture. County-level cities also exhibited a higher developmental rate due to its political and cultural advantages in county area and its five kinds of small industries.

Since 1949, China's economic development was based on energy and raw material industry all along. In the 47 years from 1949 to 1996, a lot of mining and manufacturing cities appeared and became the important component of Chinese urban system. According to statistics, among 569 new designated cities, mining and manufacturing cities won an obvious advantage. And there were 44 coal and electricity cities, 24 iron-mineral and colored metal mining and manufacturing cities, 14 crude oil mining and refining cities, 8 forest cities and 4 hydroelectric cities. Almost all of them were established on the countryside where there were no village or residential settlements. Then, Jixi, Daqing and Yichun developed gradually into big cities. Wuhai, Shuangyashan, Huaibei, Zaozhuang, Pingdingshan, Heshan, Liupanshui, Tongchuan, Ma'anshan, Dukou, Yakeshi, Hunjiang, Shiyan and so on also developed into medium-sized cities. Because of the construction of large backbone projects, a series of manufacturing cities surged quickly, such as Handan, Zibo, Qiqihar, Luoyang, Shiyan, Xianyang, Wuxi, Suzhou, Changzhou, Nantong, Jingdezhen, Huangshi, Jishua, Xiangtan, Luzhou, etc. Now, most of them have developed into large or medium-sized cities.

After more than 40 years of construction, China has preliminarily established a complete synthesized national transportation system, which is mainly composed of railway, road, air, sail, and pipeline. At the same time, a series of new transportation hub cities was constructed too. In terms of the railway, there are Shenyang, Harbin in northeast China; Beijing,

Tianjin, Shijiazhuang in north China; Nanjing, Xuzhou, Shanghai in east China; Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Zhuzhou, Huaihua, Xiangfan in central of China; Guangzhou, Liuzhou in south China; Chengdu, Chongqing, Guiyang, Kunming in southwest China. In terms of the roads, there are Lhasa, Golmud, Ya'an, Linzhi, Xigazê, Kashi and Korla in Xizang and Xinjiang autonomous regions. Along the east and south coast, there are many big or medium-sized harbor cities with deep-water berthages such as Dalian, Qinhuangdao, Tianjin, Lianyungang, Shanghai, Ningbo, Xiamen, Shantou, Zhanjiang, Guangzhou, Haikou and so on. In addition, along the boundary area, there are a lot of cities which were constructed quickly one after another because of the boundary trade, such as the Erenhot, Tumen, Suifenhe, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Pingxiang and Wandong.

The number of cities in hinterland increased stably, however, their densities of urban networks increased quickly. Over the past 40 years, China carried on a large scale of industrial and urban construction in hinterland, which greatly changed the uneven state of cities gathered in coastal areas in old China. But the east region is still the central area of urban development. Due to the obvious growth in city number, there had formed four urban clusters in east and south of China: South of Liaoning Province, Beijing-Tianjin-Tangshan Region, the Changjiang (Yangtze) River Delta Region and the Zhujiang (Pearl) River Delta Region.

5 CONCLUSION

In the past 47 years from 1949 to 1996, the number of cities increased very rapidly. By the end of 1996, there were 666 cities in China, including 569 new designated cities. It is easy to find that metropolitan cities developed with a relatively high rate compared with smaller one, but the ratio of number and population to whole country cities remained stable. The big cities' ratio in number and their population increased initially, but decreased afterwards.

The number of medium-sized and small cities and their population began to appear a tendency of rapid development recently. China's urban hierarchical system started to step into a phase of developing small cities.

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