

Water is essential to human life, as mythology, religion, and history alike have recognized. Its availability has been a key determinant in patterns of settlement and agriculture, but its crucial role in shaping the layout and economic development of cities has not always been recognized. This structuralist history, first published in French in 1983, traces sixteen centuries of hydrographic technological change and urban development in eighteen cities of northern France. Andre E. Guillerme's focus on the uses of water clearly illustrates the interaction of military, economic, technological, political, intellectual, and symbolic factors in urbanization. He skillfully utilizes data from urban demography and draws extensively on scholarship in a wide range of fields to sketch the history of urban planning and technology and their effect on the environment. From his incisive analysis, a complex picture emerges of demographic and socioeconomic evolution. "Guillerme's work provides us with a fascinating insight into western history through a survey of the town-water relationship in all its multifarious implications over a wide period." Journal of European Economic History  
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