Manhattan Mapping: The Story of an Island Told Through Maps
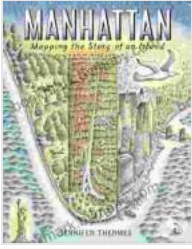

Manhattan: Mapping the Story of an Island

by Jennifer Thermes
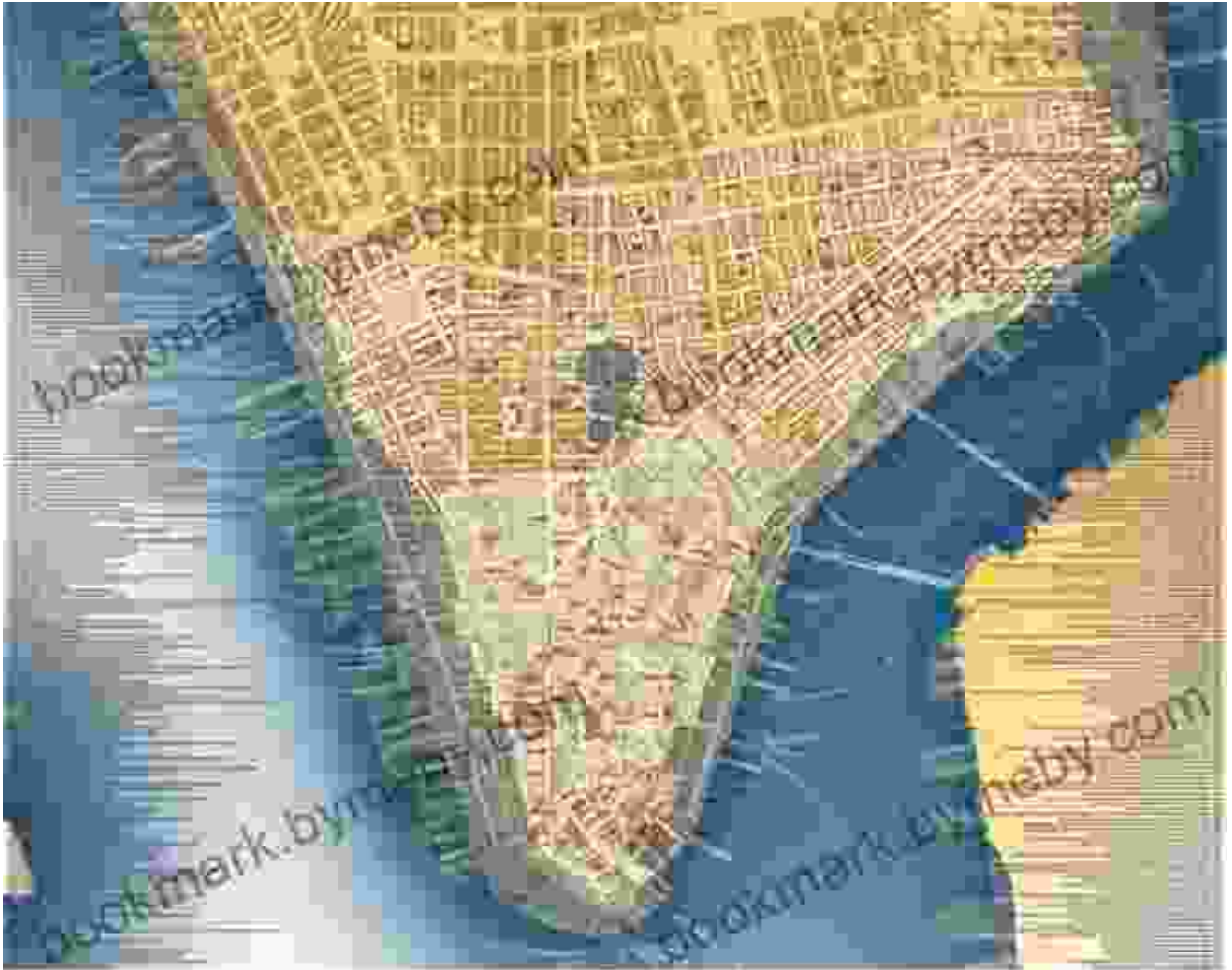
★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

Manhattan, a pulsating metropolis and an iconic symbol of modern civilization, is an island with a rich and layered history. From its humble beginnings as a Native American settlement to its transformation into a global hub of commerce and culture, Manhattan's story has been intricately intertwined with the creation of maps.

Manhattan Mapping: The Story of an Island, authored by noted cartographer John Tauranac, is a captivating exploration of this connection. Through a collection of rare and fascinating maps, Tauranac paints a vivid portrait of Manhattan's evolution, shedding light on its development, its people, and its enduring legacy.

The Earliest Maps

The earliest maps of Manhattan date back to the 16th century, when European explorers first arrived on the shores of the island. These early maps, often drawn by hand, provided a rudimentary glimpse of the island's geography. They depicted the coastline, rivers, and other prominent features, offering a tantalizing glimpse into the world that existed before Manhattan's transformation.
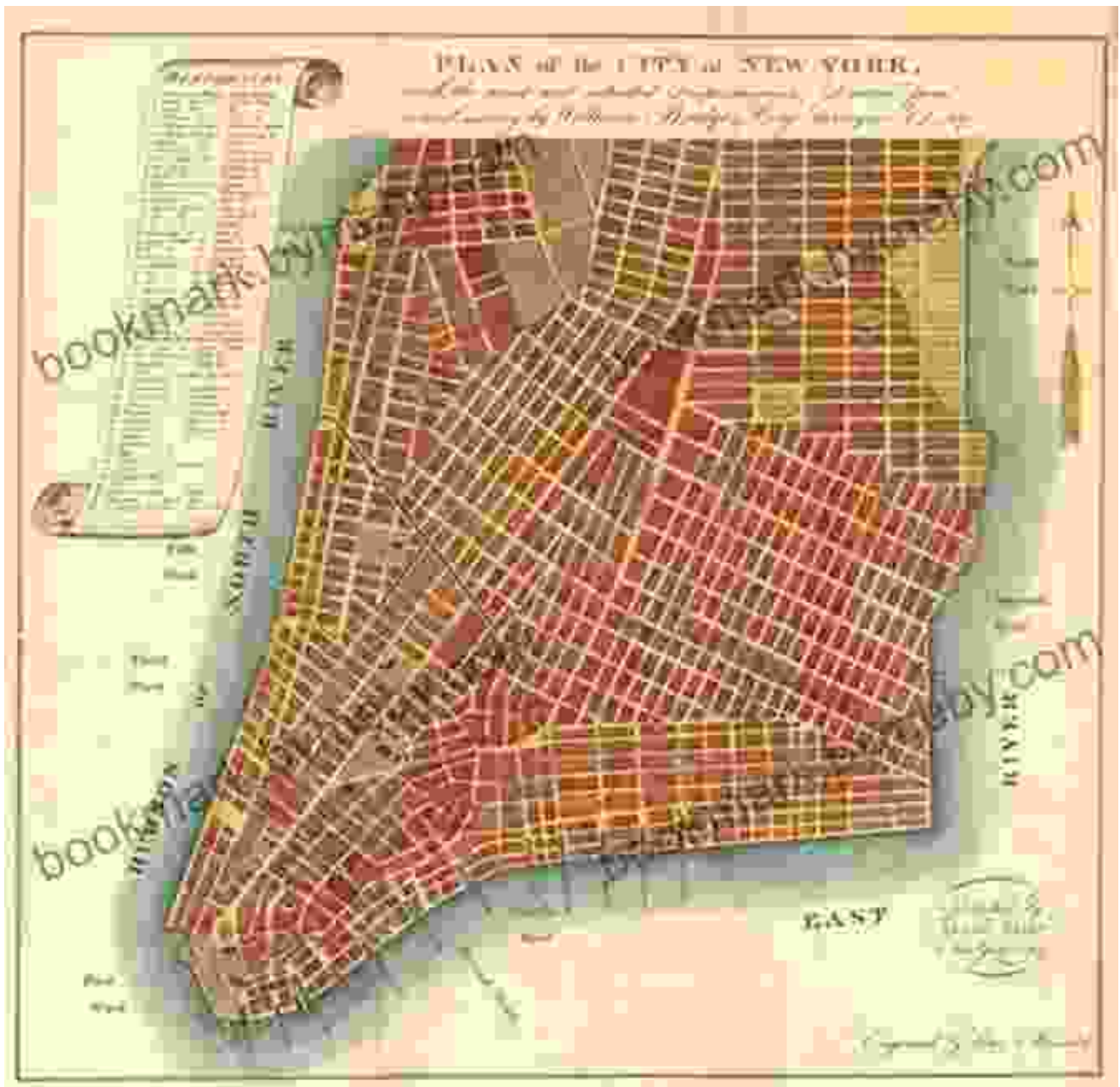
As European settlement grew, so too did the need for more detailed maps. In the 17th century, Dutch cartographers created intricate maps that reflected the island's growing urbanization. These maps showed the layout of streets, buildings, and fortifications, providing a valuable record of the city's early development.

The Grid System

One of the most significant developments in Manhattan's history was the creation of the grid system in the 19th century. This system, conceived by engineer John Randel Jr., imposed a regular pattern of streets and

avenues on the island, providing a structure that would shape Manhattan's future growth.
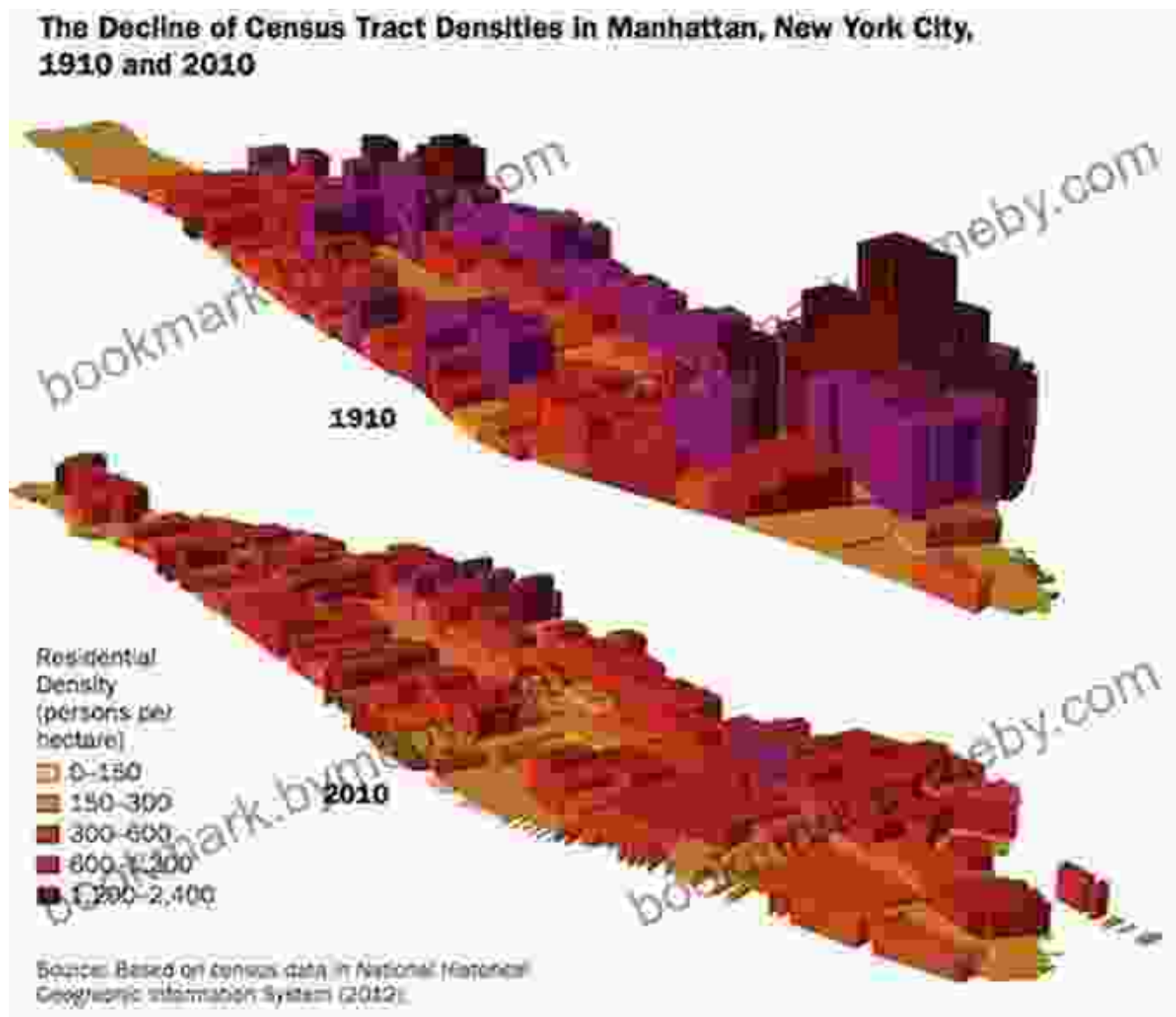

The grid system not only facilitated transportation and navigation but also played a vital role in the city's economic development. It created uniform blocks that could be easily subdivided and sold, allowing Manhattan to expand rapidly and become the commercial powerhouse it is today.

Thematic Maps

In addition to detailed maps of Manhattan's geography, cartographers also created thematic maps that revealed different aspects of the island's life and culture. These maps depicted everything from population density to transportation networks to the distribution of wealth.

The Decline of Census Tract Densities in Manhattan, New York City, 1910 and 2010

1910

2010

Residential Density (persons per hectare)

- 0-150
- 150-300
- 300-600
- 600-1,200
- 1,200-2,400

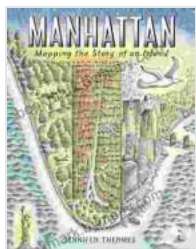Source: Based on census data in National National Geographic Information System (2012).

Thematic maps provided valuable insights into the social and economic conditions of Manhattan. They helped planners identify areas of

overcrowding, assess the need for services, and understand the changing demographics of the city.

Manhattan Mapping: The Story of an Island is a masterful exploration of how maps have shaped our understanding of Manhattan. Through its collection of rare and illuminating maps, the book provides a unique perspective on the island's history, its development, and its enduring legacy.

For anyone interested in the history of cartography, urban planning, or simply the captivating story of Manhattan, *Manhattan Mapping* is a must-read. It is a testament to the power of maps to tell stories, preserve memories, and shape the future of our cities.

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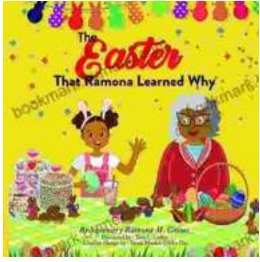File size   : 52380 KB
Screen Reader : Supported
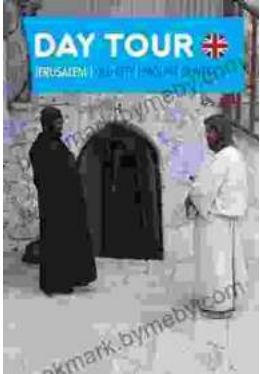Print length   : 64 pages
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