(Attoe, 1981). This intrusion of skyscrapers at the meeting of sky and land necessitated a broadening of the meaning of skyline. 'Horizon' being linear, horizontal and passive in form could not characterize the aggressive, vertical and thrusting form of man's latest additions to the landscape. Hence 'skyline' assumed this role and was redefined to include buildings seen against the sky. 'Roofline' for the purpose of this book refers to more local conditions: the outline of the roof or a group of roofs seen against the sky. 'Roofscape', a term which became popular in the 1950s and 1960s, denotes the landscape of the roofs seen from above in a panoramic view.

SKYLINE, ROOFSCAPE AND TOPOGRAPHY

For the purpose of skyline analysis two contrasting landscape conditions will be studied: the flat site and the hilly or undulating site. Clearly there are many sites which do not fall neatly into the extreme conditions. It is however these extreme conditions which will form the basis of the discussion to follow. There are also other landscape conditions, such as the extent of tree cover or the position, size, form and quality of waterways which are as important as topography for the consideration of city form and its decoration. While each unique and individual site will have its effect upon the skyline, the relationship of skyline and topography is nevertheless both direct and easily recognizable. The relationship of skyline and ground form is most easily established when studying the settlements built on flat or steeply sloping sites. Analysing these two contrasting conditions enables a discussion of skylines in settlements in areas of less well-defined landscape forms.

As a general rule formal or regular layouts are usually associated with a level site and informal or irregular layouts are a feature of a sloping site. The 'natural' way to group rectangular buildings is usually at right angles to each other unless there is some overriding reason for doing otherwise. The result of this rational process is a regular layout on the level site. On a steeply sloping site groupings of buildings tend to become informal particularly if the contours are respected. In traditional hilltop settlements the effect of contours on built form is often very apparent: the roads and the accompanying building frontages curve following the contours assiduously, the whole town plan often spreading out with layers of development swelling outwards and downwards from the hilltop core like ripples on a pond. These general principles for normal or usual development on flat or sloping sites, however, require some qualification. Many towns or parts of towns that have developed on flat sites often exhibit irregularities in layout due to organic road design, ancient land ownership patterns and respect for existing features in the landscape. Conversely even in the most informal and irregular of hill top towns there often appears a regular structure underlying the patterns which have evolved. In the case of Priene, dating from the fourth century BC, a complete grid pattern has been implanted on the contours.

The most critical problem with sloping sites, particularly the isolated or visually independent hilltop, is the treatment of the summit and profile. A flat site, of itself, has no significance as a natural form, any visual interest depends upon the objects placed upon it. The hillside, in contrast, has a curved shape silhouetted against the sky: this curve of the hill, because of its form, is interesting. Contrast the pleasures of the drumlin country of County Down or the rolling landscape of the Derbyshire Dales with the uninterrupted boredom of some parts of Lincolnshire. An object placed on the ridge of the hill stands out in silhouette adjusting the natural profile of the landscape. Placing objects on the crown or ridge of the hill may turn an otherwise lovely shape into a jagged or serrated skyline.

There seem to be two main ways in which hillside development can be successfully treated. The development can be placed at the base of the

hill or on its lower slopes. In this case the built form strengthens the base of the hill which rises above in an unbroken natural silhouette. When Maddocks, a nineteenth-century engineer and entrepreneur was siting a settlement on his reclaimed land at Traeth Mawr, north-west Wales, he placed Tremadoc, a small planned town, at the edge of the reclaimed land. It was in the shadow of the steep cliff-like edge to the flat reclaimed valley floor. In this case the hillside forms a magnificent unspoilt backcloth for the town nestling at its foot. The town's decorative skyline is the natural profile of the hillside while the outline of the buildings takes on the lesser significance of a roofline seen from vantage points within the town. More dramatic developments following this design principle are to be found at the great temples associated with the Pharaohs' tombs at Dier-el-Bahari in Egypt.

The second method of successfully dealing with a hilltop is to reinforce or strengthen the skyline by siting closely spaced buildings along the ridge following the original shape of the silhouette. The unusual relationship between built form rising sheer from vegetation below lends drama to the composition. The roofline in this case is a simple uninterrupted profile with few breaks; the roofline mirrors the landform from which it rises. When breaks do occur in this roofline they must be dramatic, such as a single spire or the grouped towers of San Gimignano (Figure 4.1).

When the hillside is covered without interruption by closely spaced buildings from base to summit then the original shape of the landscape is retained. If the whole composition is dominated by one great building, the landscape takes on a new dimension. Mont St Michel is a fine example of a landscape form developed to an extent where the original natural feature has been dwarfed and overpowered by the development. Such cases are examples of the 'grand gesture'. In the case of Mont St Michel, it is a gesture to the greater glory of God. The skyline with its ascending turrets and pinnacles is capped by a delicate spire, a formidable model for those

4.1

4.2

Figure 4.1 Towers of San Gimignano
Figure 4.2 Hillside town, southern France