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P. A. Eltsov

## The Ancient Indian City and the Thought Expressed in it

### INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I examine the ancient Indian city as an idea and a historical phenomenon from the viewpoint of ancient Indian literature and the archaeological record of the Gangetic civilization. By so doing, I pursue three goals: to redirect attention from positivist and economically deterministic models of the study of ancient urbanism to humanistic, subjectivist and text-oriented approaches; to propose a method for the joint use of texts and material culture in the study of ancient Indian cities; and to work out a theoretical model that would be useful for the study of the city in the Gangetic and the Harappan civilizations.

That the idea of the city is incredibly broad is clear from the scope of theory it has produced in several fields of knowledge. Architects, geographers, sociologists, economists, historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, philosophers and theologians have tackled the idea of the city for many centuries. On one hand, thinkers like Spengler (1919), Weber (1922), Mumford (1961), and Doxiades (1968) have brought about generic definitions highlighting morphological or functional traits that are allegedly shared by all cities. On the other hand, anthropologists, historians and ethnographers have produced a myriad of case studies pointing to the uniqueness of each individual city<sup>1</sup>.

To reconcile generic definitions with case studies is difficult and unnecessary. The city both as an idea and a historical phenomenon is so multifarious that it can accommodate almost any approach, whether it is the Central Place Theory, Ekistics or a murky historical poeticism in the style of Oswald Spengler. The method that I propose for this essay rests on three assumptions:

1. There is no universal and comprehensive definition of the city. Generic concepts, whether scientific or humanistic, highlight the traits, which never reflect the specificity and uniqueness of concrete historical cases. As Paul Wheatley (1972, 601) has justly argued, "ancient and modern cities share only traits of so general a character that they are virtually useless for

classificatory or analytical purposes". The city as a complex socio-political and cultural phenomenon can be studied and conceptualised in a multitude of ways from the viewpoint of several academic disciplines. Most of these approaches are supplementary to each other, rather than mutually exclusive.

2. Scientific models, such as the Central Place Theory, are not able to reflect the uniqueness of historical cases placed in concrete temporal and spatial contexts. Focused on one or two economic or geographic functions, such models totally ignore the humanistic side of the phenomenon of the city<sup>2</sup>.
3. Most classical urban theories are Euro-centric and, by definition, cannot reflect the specificity of cases outside of the Western world. For example, Weber (1922) believed that the city existed only in the Occident or Mumford (1961, 91) thought that the idea of the city was diffused from the Old World to the New World. It is needless to explain that to apply such views to non-western cases would be simply absurd.

Based on these assumptions, what I propose follows the ideas of the British historian R. G. Collingwood (1946, 214), for whom the object of an historical study was "not the mere event, but the thought expressed in it". Projecting Collingwood's view of history on the study of the ancient city I believe the thought expressed within the idea of the city, i. e. the perception of the city by

<sup>1</sup> A good example of such a case-study is an ethnography of Bhaktapur, by the anthropologist Robert Levy (1984). Levy portrays this Nepalese city as a self-sufficient world and a thing in itself.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, the author of the Central Place Theory, Walter Christaller (1933, 23-26, 138), made it absolutely clear that neither was it his intention to introduce a new meaning of the word "city", nor was the key concept of his theory, the idea of a central place, equivalent to the idea of the city. Christaller (1933, 23-24) even clarified that there were central places which were not cities, and there were cities which were not central places.

historical agents, or as the contemporary anthropologist would put it, the reflectivity of the idea of the city, is not less meaningful than any model invented by a contemporary scholar. In the case of the ancient Indian city, this means that the views of the city found in ancient Sanskrit and Pāli texts are a legitimate source for theoretical consideration. Regardless of the nature of the relationship between these views and the actual phenomenon of the city, the city is not a thing in itself, for it exists in the minds of historical agents to no lesser a degree than it exists in historical reality. In other words, I agree with those social thinkers who believe that the phenomena of the past cannot be independent from the thoughts expressed in them.

#### THE IDEA OF THE CITY IN SANSKRIT AND PĀLI LITERATURE

Cities are described in many Sanskrit and Pāli texts of the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD<sup>3</sup>. The Buddhist canon, *śāstras*, *sūtras*, the epics, the *purāṇas* as well as other genres of Sanskrit and Pāli literature contain descriptions of historical, divine and ideal cities. One could distinguish three main types of these descriptions:

1. Definitions of the city as an abstract socio-political concept<sup>4</sup>.
2. Conventional manuals on the layout of cities<sup>5</sup>.
3. Panegyrics on divine, mythical or historical cities<sup>6</sup>.

By style and context, all of these descriptions are repetitive, standardized and hyperbolic. Consequently, scholars have argued that they are of no use for historical studies. Yet the subject of my enquiry is the idea of the city, not the description of real historical places. Therefore, I believe that beyond the myriads of unreal and repetitive details these descriptions contain abstract visions of the city as a socio-political phenomenon. These visions are expressed in the attributes and features of the ideal cities. The hyperbole and repetition in this case are advantageous. For example, if every single panegyric or conventional manual depicts the city as having attributes 'x', 'y' and 'z', this simply means that in the view of these texts, the city was defined by having attributes 'x', 'y' and 'z'.

To extract and consider such definitions is essential as they reflect the initial conceptualisation of the idea of the city in ancient India. The conceptualisation of the idea of the city in turn did not take place in an historical vacuum. The *śāstras*, epics, and the earliest *purāṇas* were compiled at the time when Atranjikhera, Sravasti, Bhita and many other early historical centres still flourished. In other words, regardless of whether ideas shaped and directed history or history shaped and directed ideas in ancient India, there must have been a link between the historical phenomenon of

the ancient Indian city and the concepts of the city in Sanskrit and Pāli literature.

One of the only abstract and possibly the earliest manifestation of the idea of the city in Indian literature is the description of the frontier city (*paccantima nagara*) found in one of the *suttas* of the *Āṅguttara-Nikāya*. The frontier city in this *sutta* is defined as having seven characteristics (*nagaraparikkhārehi*): the deep-seated, well dug in, immovable and unshakable pillar (*esikā*); the deep and wide moat (*parikhā*); the encircling road (*anupariyāyapatho*); the great armory of spear and sword (*bahuṃ āvudhaṃ sannicitam*); the large quantity of troops (*bahu balakāyo*); a clever, intelligent and wise gate keeper (*dovāriko*); and the high, wide and plastered rampart (*pākāro*) (AN VII, 63. 1–8).

That these seven characteristics are not accidental but rather an outcome of thinking about the meaning of the word city is clear from an interesting analogy that concludes the *sutta*. According to this analogy, the seven city characteristics are matched with the seven auspicious qualities of the Aryan disciple. These qualities are faith (*saddho*), consciousness (*hirimā*), fear of blame (*ottapi*), learning (*bahussuto*), heroism (*viriya*), concentration (*sati*), and wisdom (*paññavā*) (AN VII, 63. 13–23).

In contrast to abstract definitions, the next type of city descriptions, i. e. the conventional manuals on city layout and architecture, is found in many texts. The most famous among these texts is the *Arthaśāstra*. Two chapters of the *Arthaśāstra* deal solely with the construction and layout of the ideal fortified settlements (*durgas*).

<sup>3</sup> There are many Sanskrit and Pāli terms that designate units of settlement. The most frequent ones are *kuṭi*, *gāma*, *nigama*, *durga*, *pura*, *pattana*, *putabhedana* and *nagara*. The *Arthaśāstra* has its own settlement terminology that differentiates between *droṇamukha*, *sthānīya*, *karvatika*, and *sangrahana*. To me, it seems erroneous to assume that each of these terms must necessarily have an inflexible and static meaning that correlates with the size and function of settlement. For example, it is still debated whether the word *nigama* designates an urban or rural settlement. Given the subject of my inquiry, I focus here on the texts and passages that utilize the least ambiguous terms. *Durga*, *pura* and *nagara* seem to fit this purpose the best.

<sup>4</sup> So far, I have detected only one abstract definition of the city, which is in the Buddhist treatise of *Sutta-Piṭaka* (AN VII, 63).

<sup>5</sup> These descriptions are quite abundant and found primarily in the *śāstras* and the *purāṇas*.

<sup>6</sup> Panegyrics are found in a large variety of texts: in the Buddhist canon, *śāstras*, *purāṇas*, the epics, *bhakti* literature, and so on.

In the first chapter, we are introduced to the basic principles of the construction of fortified settlements. We are told that the fortified settlements must be built in the four corners on the borderlands of the country (*janapada*). *Sthānīyas*, the centres for tax-collection, must be built in the centre of the country. Three moats must be dug around the fortified settlement. An earth rampart must be built next to the moat. On the rampart, a brick pavement must be erected for the movement of chariots. Towers, covered roads with hidden traps, gateways and stores for weapons must be built in various parts of the fortified settlement (KA 4.3.1–35). In the second chapter, we are given details on the internal layout of the fortified settlement. We are told of the various types of roads, of the royal residence, of storage facilities, of the layout in accordance with the system of *varṇas* and *āśramas* and so on (KA 2.4.1–31).

Scholars have previously discussed and analysed information provided in these two chapters. Recently, Rangarajan (1992) has given good graphic and descriptive abridgements of all the data from the *Arthaśāstra*. Yet, no one seems to have looked at the description of the *durga* as an abstract definition of the city. If treated this way, the city in the view of the *Arthaśāstra* has the following attributes: a royal residence; a construction plan; the alignment of streets and houses according to the cardinal directions; a network of roads; an elaborate defence system; the segregation of residential areas in accordance with occupation, origin and the *varṇāśrama* affiliation of residents; ritual places; storehouses; stables for animals; temples; cremation grounds; an army; boundaries between households; and agricultural fields<sup>7</sup>.

Various versions of this definition are found in many Sanskrit *purāṇas*. In the *Vāyu-purāṇa*, for example, the layout of *durgas* is discussed in the context of the innovations of the *Tretā Yuga*, the third stage in the sequence of cosmic ages. The *Vāyu-purāṇa* describes *durgas* very briefly. One feels that the *Paurāṇikas* who compiled the *Vāyu* had a text of reference in mind. Possibly, such text was the *Arthaśāstra*. In the view of the *Vāyu-purāṇa*, fortified cities must have huge mansions, ramparts, gates and a moat (VP 1.8.103–105). The difference between the city and the village is purely a matter of scale. We are told that a hamlet must be two times smaller in diameter than a city, whereas a village is bigger than a hamlet (VP 1.8.111(2)).

Like the conventional manuals, panegyrics are numerous and can be found in a large variety of Sanskrit and Pāli texts. The description of Hastinapura, Ayodhyā, Sāgala, and the divine abode of *Lalitā* provide good examples of this type of city descriptions.

The description of Hastinapura in the *Mahābhārata* is extremely conventional. In one of

the episodes of the *Sabhāparva*, we are told that Hastinapura was adorned with ponds and trees and its buildings were like the *Kailāsa* peaks all beautiful, attractive and perfectly furnished. It had gold lattices, the floors were laid with jewels, the stairs rose smoothly and so on (MBH II.31.20–25). In the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, the description of Ayodhyā is not much more informative, though more reminiscent of the one in the *Arthaśāstra*. In the second book of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bālākanda*, Ayodhyā is characterized as a majestic city, twelve leagues in length and three in width, with regular streets, decorated with a king's highway, provided with gates, fortifications and a moat, unassailable by its enemies, filled with horses, elephants, cows, camels, and donkeys, having all kinds of jewels, adorned with beautiful buildings and so on (RM II.5).

Compared to Hastinapura and Ayodhyā, the description of Sāgala from the *Milindapañha* is a bit more informative. The city of Sāgala, according to the *Milindapañha*, has many attributes that can be assembled in seven groups. Group 1 includes parks, gardens, groves, lakes, and tanks. Group 2 is comprised of rivers, mountains, and woods. Group 3 is represented by various types of fortifications: towers, ramparts, gates, entrance archways, and moats. Group 4 is commercial: it consists of shops, merchandise and money. Group 5 includes architectural features, such as residential houses and the royal palace. Group 6 has different types of storage, i. e. a variety of warehouses full of goods and food. Group 7 includes a large variety of animals (MiP I.2).

Finally, the description of the divine city found in the *Lalitāmāhātmya*, a devotional attachment to the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*, follows a similar pattern. In the *Lalitāmāhātmya*, we are told that the city of the goddess *Lalitā* has towers, city walls, and gates, as well as numerous stables for elephants, horses and chariots. "It looks magnificent due to its royal roads and has beautiful houses for *sāmantas*, ministers, soldiers, the twice-born, *vetālas*, and the female and male *sūdras*. In its centre stands a divine royal residence decorated with doors and gates. This residence has numerous halls . . . There is a luminous and beautiful throne hall, decorated with nine precious stones. A divine throne, made of *Cintāmani*, stands in the centre of it: self-shining, matchless, reminiscent of the rising sun . . ." (LM 14.9–13).

<sup>7</sup> The last attribute is controversial and depends on the translation of the sentence *karmāntakṣetravaśena kuṭumbinām sīmānam sthāpayet* (KA 2.4.24). I believe the sentence should be translated as follows: "[He the king] should draw boundaries for householders in accordance with their cultivated fields". Yet there are different interpretations (Kalianov 1959, 61; Kangle 1963, 81; Rangarajan 1963, 81).

	KA	AN	MBHRM	MiP	VaP	LM
Authority	+	-	+	+	-	+
Fortifications	+	+	+	+	+	+
Network of roads	+	-	-	+	-	+
Cardinal directions	+	-	-	-	-	+
Storehouses	+	+	+	+	+	+
Animals	+	-	-	+	+	+
Agricultural fields	+	-	-	-	-	-
Temples	+	-	-	-	-	-
Cremation grounds	+	-	-	-	-	-
Construction plan	+	-	-	+	+	-
Army	+	+	-	+	-	-
Household boundaries	+	-	-	-	-	-
Trade and money	-	-	-	+	+	-
<i>Varnas</i> and <i>asramas</i>	+	-	-	+	+	-

Fig. 1. City traits in Sanskrit and Pali Texts (see abbreviations below).

Taken as a whole, the quoted excerpts reveal an interesting picture (see fig. 1). The city in these excerpts is defined by the presence of different morphological traits. Put together, these traits include authority, fortifications, roads, planning in accordance with cardinal directions, warehouses, animals, agricultural fields, temples, cremation grounds, the existence of a construction plan, an army, boundaries between households, trade and the *varṇāśrama* system. Most of these traits are not uniquely urban and could be equally characteristic of urban and rural settlements<sup>8</sup>. The only two traits which feature prominently in most of the quoted excerpts and which could be seen as typically urban are fortifications and authority.

Whether the presence of these two traits defines a quintessential view of the city held by certain social and religious groups is a debatable question. I believe it is not unreasonable to assume that such a view existed. In a similar way, one can find a quintessential view beyond most Western perceptions of the city: one archaeologist has recently shown how the philosophy of treating the city has, in many respects, stayed unchanged from the theology of early Judeo-Christian thinkers all the way up to the writings of recent academic professionals (McIntosh 1991). Moreover, the texts selected here for analysis cover over a thousand years of history and speak for several ideological and religious traditions.

At this point, I propose to follow the terms of R. G. Collingwood (1946, 214) and treat the idea of fortification and authority as the "thought expressed within" the phenomenon of the early historical city; for one thing is clear, at the time when the view of the city found in the cited texts was shaped, the actual early historical cities, such as Bhita, Atranjikhhera, Kausambi and others, were flourishing. Furthermore, whether this view truly reflects the phenomenon of the early historical city can be easily determined through the analysis of archaeological data.

#### THE CITY IN THE GANGETIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Whether and how the emergence of authority and the construction of fortifications are interrelated, and what role these two processes play in the formation of ancient cities are legitimate archaeological questions. Indian archaeology provides enough data to address these questions in the context of the Gangetic civilization.

Fortifications are an innate feature of the archaeological landscape of the Gangetic civilization. The number and magnitude of ramparts, moats, walls, gates, and bastions on early historical sites in the Gangetic Doab are striking. Moreover, fortifications are one of the few morphological elements of the early historical settlement that have been relatively well excavated. Compared to the data available on settlement patterns, domestic architecture and other aspects of Gangetic settlements, the data on fortifications are quite abundant and representative. Scholars have previously analysed some of these data, yet most of these analyses are descriptive and typological (Mate 1969–1970; Roy, T. N. 1986; Roy, U. N. 1954; Erdosy 1987).

In contrast to fortifications, however, authority is difficult to trace in archaeological record. Unlike fortifications that are either present or absent in the excavation trench or on the surface, authority is a concept that needs to be shown theoretically through a combination of archaeological traits. On most Gangetic sites, the presence of authority can be detected through the study of settlement expansion, layout, structural history, sphragistics, numismatics, figurines, pottery, weapons, iron tools and the like. In order to demonstrate the emergence of authority on a site, one needs to establish a simultaneous drastic change in several of these traits. The nature of specific changes and the number of traits of course vary from site to site and are contingent on the quality, availability and credibility of archaeological data. For example, data on settlement size, layout and expansion are available only in a few cases. Data on structural history, figurines, weapons, coins and seals are available in many more cases.

Keeping all of this in mind, I shall herein proceed with a brief review of data from the thirteen well-known Gangetic sites<sup>9</sup>.

Ahicchatra: Fortifications consist of a high rampart, revetted on the interior and topped by a brick wall, and a long partition wall running north south

<sup>8</sup> The distinction between the city and the village is murky in many ancient Indian texts. In the *Arthaśāstra*, for example, the titles of administrators, such as *nāgarika*, *samāhartṛ*, *gopa*, and *sthānika*, are present both in urban and rural contexts (KA 2.35.1–2, 6; 2.36.1–4).

<sup>9</sup> The choice of sites depended on the quality of excavations, availability of sources, geographic representations, and my own familiarity with archaeological data.

and dividing the site into eastern and western sectors. Judging from the results of the two excavation projects conducted in Ahicchatra, the construction of the initial rampart dates to c. 100 BC, i.e. to the advent of Pancala rulers (Ghosh/Panigrahi 1946, 38). Banerjee, the director of the second project, has distinguished five structural phases all dated to the time of the Kushanas and Guptas (see fig. 2). During the first stage, the rampart seems to have been too vulnerable to carry a defensive function (IAR 63-64, 44). The function of the partition wall is also unlikely to be defensive. Since the western sector is smaller and contains evidence for earlier occupation, it would be tempting to think that the partition wall marks the perimeter of an earlier site.

As far as authority is concerned, the available data from Ahicchatra are very scarce. Strata VI/V in Dikshit's chronology and Period IV in Banerjee's chronology mark the time of several important changes in the socio-political life of Ahicchatra. Besides the construction of a defence system itself, archaeological traits indicating the emergence of authority include burnt brick architecture, coins, and houses aligned according to cardinal directions (Ghosh/Panigrahi 1946, 38-39; IAR 63-64, 44).

Atranjikhhera: The construction of fortifications begins during Period IVB of Gaur's chronology, i.e. c. 500-350 BC, and consists of the four constructional sub-phases (Gaur 1983, 254-256). The earliest mud bund built around 500-350 BC seems to have been too small to maintain a defensive function. If Gaur's conclusions about the flood at the end of periods IVA and IVB are correct, then it is very likely that the function of the initial fortification was to defend the city from floods.

The emergence of authority in Atranjikhhera must have taken place during Period IV (NBPW) as the beginning of Period IV brings a number of significant changes in the life of Atranjikhhera: the settlement expands in size (IAR 67-68, 45-46; IAR 68-69, 37-38); architecture becomes much more complex, i.e. wattle-and-daub structures give way to the structures made of mud and burnt brick (Gaur 1983, 245-257); and the amount of discovered weapons significantly increases (Gaur 1983, 412-417, 422-427). Also, for the first time, coins, seals and sealings (Gaur 1983, 447-452), agricultural tools made of iron (Gaur 1983, 427-431), and human terracotta figurines (Gaur 1983, 362-363) appear. In sum, it is quite obvious that Phases IVB and IVC witness changes that would have been impossible without the emergence of strong authority on the site.

Bhita: The excavated fortifications consist of an earthen rampart topped by a brick wall and a large quadrangular bastion. Marshall (1915, 40) thinks that the wall was built in the early Mauryan or

SITES	STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS
Ahicchatra	Earthen rampart Parapet wall with gaps Wall plastered with mud Gaps strengthened by packing Walls inside the gaps
Atranjikhhera	Earthen rampart on one side Rampart extended to encircle the site Rampart strengthened and raised Rampart raised; flank wall on the northern side Parapet wall with gaps
Bhita	Earthen rampart Parapet wall with gaps
Kausambi	Earthen rampart Revetment of the rampart Guardrooms, towers and flank walls
Mathura	Earthen rampart Renovations Internal fortifications
Pataliputra	Wooden palisades
Rajghat	Wooden platform Embankment and a channel
Rajgir	Earthen rampart Parapet wall with gaps Renovations
Sravasti	Earthen rampart Used as dumping area Parapet wall Rampart raised New parapet wall
Vaisali	Brick wall Rampart and moat Parapet wall

Fig. 2. Main structural modifications of defences.

pre-Mauryan periods. Recent excavations at Bhita by the Archaeological Survey of India have shown that the earliest occupation on this site has black-slipped ware which precedes the NBPW (IAR 95-96, 74-75). Structural activities and the expansion of the settlement seem to have begun with the NBPW period. Given this as well as Marshall's description of fortifications, it is reasonable to suggest that the initial rampart was built in Bhita at the beginning of the NBPW period and underwent at least three structural phases, similar to those of Ahicchatra, Atranjikhhera and several other sites of the Gangetic civilization (see fig. 2).

As far as authority is concerned, Bhita provides a wealth of information yet most of it is poorly dated. Near the city gate in the southeastern part of Bhita, Marshall unearthed the whole district with several streets and houses. The earliest complete structures belong to the Mauryan period. Some of these structures, for example the House of the Guild, present whole residential units with courtyards, guardrooms and shops (Marshall 1915, 30-31). Many seals and sealings are quite inform-

ative and directly indicate the presence of authority (Marshall 1915, 44–61). In other words, it is clear that by the Mauryan Period, Bhita was an important centre of authority. Unfortunately, owing to the lack of dating and excavation techniques at the time of the excavations, it is difficult to say anything affirmative about the earlier periods.

**Hastinapura:** Despite the glorious role assigned to Hastinapura in the Mahābhārata, there are no fortifications at Hastinapura and the evidence for authority is very scarce. The chance that Lal missed fortifications is minute. Out of the four trenches that he excavated, HST 1 was the largest and most informative. Its total length was 590 feet and its width varied from 44 to 21 feet. This trench stretched all the way from east to west across the main mound (Lal 1954–55, 25–28). If a wall or a rampart had surrounded the mound, the excavator would have surely hit it.

As far as authority is concerned, Hastinapura appears to have been a small and relatively insignificant settlement all the way through the PGW, NBPW and possibly even during the Sunga-Kushana period. The Sunga-Kushana Period marks the first changes in material culture that could possibly indicate the emergence of authority. These changes include the intensification of structural activities (Lal 1954–55, 25–30), the introduction of mass-produced, unpainted and wheel-made pottery (Lal 1954–55, 63–71), and the diversification of figurines (Lal 1954–55, 83–87). Most coins are also associated with the deposits of Period IV (Lal 1954–55, 101–105). Seals and sealings, weaponry and inscribed objects are absent during all of the four first Periods. Most importantly, however, the size of Hastinapura seems not to have exceeded two hectares until the beginning of Period V around AD 1100 (Lal 1954–55, 25–30)<sup>10</sup>!

**Kausambi:** The grandiose and elaborate system of defences is the most distinctive characteristic of this site. Unfortunately, much confusion has been caused by the chronology formulated by Sharma, the main excavator of Kausambi. Sharma's (1960, 21–22) date of 1175 BC for the initial construction of the mud-rampart is clearly erroneous. Judging from coins and other artifacts found in association with early structural levels, it is most likely that the initial rampart, revetment and moat were constructed around the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Out of the twenty-five structural periods defined for Kausambi, at least two are important (Sharma 1960, 26–38) (see fig. 2). The function of the earliest rampart is unclear, yet judging from the traces of destruction in sub-periods III.14, III.16, IV.19 and IV.24 (Sharma 1960, 34–37), as well as from numerous arrowheads and spears found in association with the defences (Sharma 1960, 45–56), warfare played an important role in the history of Kausambi.

Evidence for authority in Kausambi is abundant. As far as architecture is concerned, large horizontal exposures in the areas of defences, of the Ghoshitarama monastery, of the palace and near the Asokan pillar show that by the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC structural activities were underway (Sharma 1960; 1969). Sharma's dating of the so-called palace complex to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC is clearly too early (IAR 60–61, 33–34; IAR 61–62, 51–52). Yet the connections he drew between the structural phases of the palace with the structural phases of fortifications are convincing. Considering the distances between the Ghoshitarama monastery, the area of defences and the area near the Asokan pillar, the size of the settlement must have been quite significant already by the 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The first uninscribed coins (Sharma 1960, 80–81; Sharma 1969, 82–83) and the earliest hand-made figurines appear around the same time (Sharma 1960, 74; Sharma 1969, 47).

**Mathura:** A massive crescent-shaped mud wall, called Dhulkot, surrounds Mathura from the west, north and south. The Yamuna River protects the eastern side of the settlements. The construction of the initial mud-bund seems to have taken place in Period II around the 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC (Period II) and to have undergone at least three main structural phases (Joshi 1989; IAR 75–76, 53–55) (see fig. 1). Given the nature of structural changes from phase to phase, the function of fortifications is likely to have changed as well.

Evidence for authority in Mathura appears during Period II. The settlement significantly expands in size: during Period I, the settlement is limited to the area around Ambarish Tila (MTR-8); during Period II it covers the entirety of the fortified area. Structural activities intensify: the only remaining traces of structural activity from Period I are mud floors and post-holes; in Period II, houses built on mud platforms, ring wells, U-shaped ovens, and drains appear. The square punch-marked coins and human figurines make their first appearance also during Period II. Joshi even argues that Period II marks the manufacture of figurines on a commercial scale (Joshi 1989, 168).

**Pataliputra:** Excavations by Spooner, Page, Waddell and Mukherji in different parts of Patna provide evidence for the existence of wooden palisades that according to Megasthenes surround Pataliputra from all the sides. This evidence comes from Bulandibagh, Ghosain Khanda and Lohanipur, the areas in the western part of modern Patna (Patil 1963, 394–396. 398–400).

<sup>10</sup> The deposits of Periods 1–4 were traced only in trenches 1 and 2, both located on the main mound. The size of this mound is about two hectares.

Unfortunately, there is not enough archaeological evidence to trace the emergence of authority in Pataliputra. Excavation at Mahabhirgat, the Government Press Play Ground and Begum ki Haveli revealed pre-Mauryan deposits of the 6<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, yet did not provide enough data for tracing changes in architecture, coins, seals or any other objects of material culture that could elucidate temporal aspects of the emergence of authority (Sinha/Narain 1970, 15–19. 41. 48. 55).

**Rajghat:** First, Rajghat had a wooden platform. Later, a massive embankment was built between the settlement and the river. If the chronology proposed by the excavators is correct, the construction of a wooden platform took place as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The embankment was built around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Narain/Roy 1976, 22–24). Given the proximity of the Ganges river, the function of the platform and the embankment is clear: both were built to protect the settlement from floods. The function of the channel (or moat?) on the northern side of the settlement is unclear.

Evidence for authority in Rajghat comes from the deposits of Period II, which begins around the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. During this period, burnt brick replaces mud and mud-brick in construction. Structural remains are characterized by high standing burnt brick walls, complete rooms, houses, foundations made of brickbats and mud, sanitary soakage jars with perforated bottoms, drains and bathing platforms. Houses are arguably aligned according to cardinal directions. A large variety of terracotta figurines, coins, arrowheads, points, beads and other artefacts also characterize this period. Finally, the excavators argue that Period II witnesses a significant population growth and settlement expansion (Narain/Roy 1976, 26–28).

**Rajgir:** Rajgir is surrounded by a truly grandiose network of inner and outer fortifications. Unfortunately, very little is known about their date and function. The outer walls made of massive stones and pierced by several rectangular bastions run for about forty km over the hills that surround Rajgir. Arguably, these walls date to the Mauryan period, yet there is a chance that some of them were built under the Moslem ruler, Sher Shar (Patil 1963, 435).

Fortifications around New Rajgir are known better. They consist of a mud rampart topped by a brick wall. Based on the excavation of this rampart, three structural periods were defined. The construction of the rampart underwent two major stages (see fig. 2) (IAR 1961–62, 6–8). As far as the dates are concerned, the excavator placed the construction of the initial mud bund in Period II around the 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (IAR 1961–62, 8). Yet, a <sup>14</sup>C sample from the pre-defence Period I showed the date of 245±105 BC (IAR 1962–1963, 5).

With regard to authority, the archaeology of Rajgir is mute. Neither of the two excavation projects conducted here by the Archaeological Survey of India provided sufficient data to prove or disprove the important role Rajgir played in early Indian history according to literary sources.

**Sonkh:** The excavation at Sonkh by the Berlin Museum of Indian Art revealed remains of a ditch system and possibly a rampart in association with Period I, dated to c. 800–400 BC. According to the excavator, these remains constituted “part of an enclosure . . . anticipating the elements of later defensive works,” yet were not sufficient for assuming “a fortification like that of the early historical time with its parapets and ditches of bigger extent” (Härtel 1993, 25). Interestingly enough, none of the later periods until the very last one revealed any traces of fortifications.

Evidence for authority appears in Layer 27 associated with the reign of Suryamitra of Mathura around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The innovations that indicate the emergence of authority include the use of baked brick, the regular planning of residential units, the inscribed copper coins and seals, the new types of weapons and iron tools, terracotta plaques and votive tanks, and the use of tiles and pinnacles in the construction of gable roofs (Härtel 1993, 35–40).

**Sonpur:** Sonpur has no fortifications and its evidence for authority is minimal. Period III dated to c. 200 BC – AD 200 witnesses some changes in material culture (Sinha/Verma 1977, 10–11). Yet one senses a general shortage of indicators of any significant changes in complexity: structural activities are minimal during all the cultural periods; there is no evidence for the expansion of the site; seals and inscribed coins, often the most important indicators of authority, are completely absent.

**Maheth/Sravasti:** A massive earthen rampart topped by a brick wall fully encircles the site of Maheth. Judging from the results of several excavations conducted at Maheth, the initial rampart was built around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and later underwent several structural modifications (see fig. 2). During the first phase, the rampart was low and had a gradual slope; hence it is unlikely that it carried a defensive function. If Sinha is right in his interpretation of pottery dumps (Sinha 1967, 18), during the second phase the rampart did not carry a defensive function either.

Evidence for authority appears in the deposits that belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, i. e. Period II in Sinha’s chronology or Period III in the chronology of Aboshi/Sonoda (1999). The innovations of this period include burnt brick architecture, mass-produced utilitarian red ware, human figurines, inscribed seals and coins (Sinha 1967; Aboshi/Sonoda 1999). The workshops of an ironmaker,



glassmaker and stone beadmaker are also associated with the deposits of this period (Aboshi/Sonoda 1999, 138).

Vaisali: Vaisali comprises several localities, the most known and well excavated of which is Rajavisal-ka-Garh. As established by the two excavation projects, this small mound was fortified in the beginning of the Sunga period around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Later fortifications underwent several modifications. The structural history is confusing as according to the results of one project, the initial phase was characterized by the construction of a mud rampart (Deva/Mishra 1961, 13–14). The excavators of the next project, however, argued that a wall of baked bricks preceded the construction of the rampart (IAR 58–59, 12; Sinha/Roy 1969, 25–26).

Evidence for authority appears in the deposits of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, i. e. Period II in the sequence defined by Deva/Mishra (1961, 6), and Period III in the sequence defined by Sinha/Roy (1969, 5–7). The innovations of this period include burnt-brick architecture, mass-produced and standardized red and buff wares, human figurines, coins, and seals. The rich collection of seals is particularly interesting. Some of these seals – for example, seals 7, 10, 11, and 19 in the classification of Sinha and Roy – are directly indicative of authority (Sinha/Roy 1969, 110–131).

Thus, ten out of the thirteen reviewed sites are fortified and reveal evidence for authority. On nine of the ten fortified sites, the construction of fortifications appears to have been roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of authority. In Ahicchatra, Atranjikhhera, Kausambi, Mathura, Vaisali and Sravasti, these two processes were basically simultaneous. In Bhita, Pataliputra and Rajgir, the situation was likely to be similar. Rajghat followed a slightly different pattern: a wooden platform and massive embankment were built there long before the emergence of authority. The question, however, is whether one should consider this embankment a defence system comparable to those of Kausambi, Vaisali or Ahicchatra.

In addition, several sites provide evidence for direct correlations between the phases in the construction of fortifications and the emergence of archaeological traits that signify authority. For example, in Kausambi, the structural phases of the palace complex can be incorporated in the structural phases of the defence complex. In Atranjikhhera, the construction of a mud-bund during Period IVB coincides with the expansion of the site and directly precedes the emergence of authority. Similar correlations can be found in the archaeological record of Vaisali, Sravasti and Mathura.

As far as the function of fortifications is concerned, the initial construction of fortifications on most of the reviewed sites seems to have been

conditioned by factors other than warfare. In Ahicchatra and Sravasti, the earliest rampart was too vulnerable for military defence. In Atranjikhhera, Gaur uncovered evidence of a massive flood at the end of the period that immediately preceded the construction of the first mud bund. In Rajghat, the wooden platform and the embankment were built in order to protect the settlement against floods. In Mathura, the internal network of fortifications possibly carried a function of some social or political segregation.

Finally, with regard to the emergence of authority, one must say that in many cases the construction of fortifications alone indicates the emergence of authority: the massive ramparts of Ahicchatra, Kausambi or Sravasti would have never been built without the presence of strong authority on each of these sites.

#### THE THOUGHT EXPRESSED IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN CITY

It has not been my goal to introduce another definition of the term 'city'. In my treatment of the city both as an idea and an historical phenomenon, I have found it more meaningful to follow the subjectivist and reflective historicism of R. G. Collingwood and to look at the phenomena of the past through the thoughts expressed in them.

The analysis of several Sanskrit and Pāli texts has revealed the thought expressed in the phenomenon of the Gangetic city. The ensuing review of archaeological data has shown that this thought is very helpful for the conceptualisation of the Gangetic archaeological record.

Fortifications and authority epitomize the city in the quoted Sanskrit and Pāli texts for good reasons; being contemporaneous and co-dependent, the construction of fortifications and the emergence of authority played a very important role in the emergence of Gangetic cities. Ahicchatra, Atranjikhhera, Bhita, Kausambi, Mathura, Pataliputra, Rajghat, Rajgir, Sravasti, and Vaisali perfectly match the definition of the city found in the cited Sanskrit and Pāli texts<sup>11</sup>. These sites entered the urban phase in different times and were surely different from each other in many respects. Nonetheless, the contemporaries, i. e. the compilers of the cited Sanskrit and Pāli texts, conceptualised the urban nature of these sites in simple terms: through their grandiose fortifications and the explicit expressions of authority. I do not see the reason why we should not follow the same pattern in our own interpretations.

<sup>11</sup> With regard to authority in Rajgir, I rely, at this point, on the literary data. The three remaining sites, Hastinapura, Sonkh and Sonpur, should in my view be considered as villages.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that one of the initial goals claimed at the beginning of this essay has been to initiate a new approach to the ancient Indian city through a conjunctive study of archaeology and texts. This means that the next step will be to find out whether the model elaborated in this essay could be helpful for interpreting the archaeology of the Indus Civilization. My further research will address this issue.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Āṅguttara-Nikāya
IAR	Indian archaeology. A Review
KA	Kauṭaliya Arthaśāstra
LM	Lalitāmāhātmya
MBH	Mahābhārata
MiP	Milindapañha
NBPW	Northern Black Polished Ware
PGW	Painted Grey Ware
RM	Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa
VP	Vāyu-purāṇa

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