

Cities and states developed in South Asia between c. BC 800 and AD 250, as Hinduism and Buddhism arose and spread. Drawing on archaeological studies and also on texts and inscriptions, this book explores the character of the early Indian cities, paying particular attention to their art and architecture and analysing the political ideas that shaped the state systems. The authors chart the development of the settlement pattern in the Ganges valley through the rise of cities and the formation of the Mauryan empire and its successor states. They also trace the spread of cities and states throughout South Asia to the opening centuries of the Christian era, offering an Indian perspective on the contacts with the Greek and Roman worlds that followed the invasion of Alexander the Great.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY
HISTORIC SOUTH ASIA
THE EMERGENCE OF CITIES AND STATES

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PREFACE

The emergence of cities and their distinctive culture in early historic South Asia offers a subject of peculiar interest for the archaeologist. This is not least because it presents us with a view of the antecedents of a living civilization which still confronts us. A vague but distinct awareness of this struck me on my first visit to India fifty years ago, and gradually took root as familiarity grew and knowledge developed. In due course the idea of this book arose as a natural consequence. As time went by I became increasingly conscious of the difficulty and complexity of the task, partly because of the unevenness of so much of the available evidence, and partly because of the diversity of the source materials.

The first concrete plan for the book was drawn up in the mid-eighties. Around that time several of my research students had taken up topics relating to early historic urbanism; and several younger colleagues visited Cambridge, some of whom were to become involved in the work. Among them was Dr George Erdosy whose PhD research from 1982–86 was on the early cities of the Ganges valley; in 1986 Dr Makkhan Lal, whose monograph on the settlement history and rise of civilization in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab had been published in 1984, visited Cambridge as an Ancient India and Iran Trust–Wallace India Trust Visiting Fellow; so too in the following year did Dr Dilip Chakrabarti. Research interests in Sri Lanka during the late eighties provided a further stimulus, and led to my offering a paper on the rise of cities in South Asia for a Cultural Triangle conference at Habarana in 1988.

A firm proposal for the book was put before the Cambridge University Press in 1986. As by then only three years remained before my retirement, I thought it sensible to speed the work by involving several younger people. Sadly, good schemes are apt to go awry, and what was conceived as a means of speeding the work turned out to be a cause of protracted delay! In the end I found myself writing twice as many chapters as I had originally intended and bringing in a further contributor. The manuscript was completed by the end of 1993.

Certain features may be noted. The book is primarily intended as a synthesis: as such its focus shifts between significant early observations, sometimes from very early reports, for example by Colin Mackenzie or Cunningham, and

research which is still very much in progress. We have tried to integrate narrowly archaeological data with the wider aspects of historical archaeology, including textual, epigraphic, numismatic and art-historical evidence. In our view all these subjects are components of an early historic civilization; and their associated techniques have been regarded in Indian archaeology as elements of the methodology of early historic archaeology; just as they have in Greek or Roman archaeology. How far we have succeeded is for the reader to judge.

Multiple authorship

The resulting book is a composite work, in which rather more than two thirds are my own and the remaining third is the work of four other authors. The main task of editing has been to try and make an integrated volume. One aspect of composite authorship is that individuals remain just that! It has been my aim to allow as much freedom as possible to the other authors. At times this results in different views on a subject being expressed in different places, for example, by myself and Erdosy in chapters 3 and 4 on the one hand, and 6 on the other. Such differences are most often of interpretation rather than of substance. As such they constitute a necessary and useful part of the dialectic of archaeological interpretation; and serve a constructive role in giving perspective to the ongoing debate. For instance, it seems perfectly reasonable that there should be different views on the way in which the Indo-Aryan languages gained dominance and spread throughout so large a part of South Asia, or on the use of the term ethnicity. In any event, such differences seem small by comparison with the broad agreement which attends the main thrust of our book. Another aspect of composite authorship is that inevitably there are some overlaps between chapters. These arise for a number of reasons: the imprecision of the dating of some of the archaeological and even more of the historical sources; because the same topics may be used or approached by different authors from different points of view, and so on.

A quite unforeseen consequence of multiple authorship was that, while the manuscript was actually in press, Dr George Erdosy requested us to adopt his recently changed name (Dr Muhammad Usman Erdosy). After much thought and consultation we decided that we should retain his original name throughout this book, believing that what was begun under one name should be finished under it, and that this would be helpful to readers wishing to consult his other writings.

Transliteration

Our aim throughout has been, as far as possible, to standardize the transliteration of Indian words, names and terms. The principle I have used is to follow the accepted transliteration, as agreed by the International Congress of

Orientalists at Athens in 1912, but wherever possible to exclude all diacritical marks: thus we generally write the Sanskrit and Prakrit *rājā* as *raja* or *raja*, *Pāṇini* as *Panini*, and *Aṣṭādhyāyī* as *Astadhyayi*. Such words are given in the index with their proper transliteration and full diacritical marks. Some sections are exceptions to this convention. In parts of chapters 6 and 7 involving the discussion of matters relating to the Late Vedic literature we have retained the diacritical marks.

A special note is called for concerning the spelling of the word Kharosthi (*Kharoṣṭhī*), in view of there being no consensus on its usage. In early sources *Kharostī*, *Kharoṣṭī*, *Kharoṣṭhī* and *Kharostrī* are found, but it is not clearly established which form is the earliest or historically the best. Recently Professor B. N. Mukherjee has argued in favor of *Kharoṣṭī*, against the more general acceptance (*Kharoṣṭī* and *Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī Inscriptions in West Bengal*, India Museum: Calcutta, 1990). For guidance I sought the views of Professor Sir Harold Bailey, who drew my attention to a short discussion in his *Indo-Scythian Studies*, vol. VII, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 46–49). Although I do not follow the form he suggests (*Kharoṣṭrī*), the upshot of the discussion seems to be that the choice remains an arbitrary one, and thus I decided to follow what appears to be the more commonly used form.

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The following have been kind enough to permit the use of copyright illustrative materials, as acknowledged in the figure captions: Mr L. N. Rangarajan for a number of the illustrations from his translation of the Arthashastra; Dr George Michell; Dr Javed Husain; the Archaeological Survey of India; the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge for permission to use materials from the Wheeler Archive; the Curator of the Patna Museum; the Curator of the Mathura Museum; Prithivi Prakashan, Varanasi; the Director of the National Museum, New Delhi; the Trustees of the British Museum; the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum; the Director of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

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