

# Introductory Remarks on the Excavations

The Paithan excavation project has a slightly complex history. It was begun under the directorship of P. N. Kamble and J. Howell, who directed the project during its 1996 and 1997 seasons. In 1998, it was handed over to J. V. P. Rao and D. Kennet, who formulated a new set of research questions and aims (see Chapter 1) and directed the 1998 and 1999 seasons.

Some limited survey of the site and its environs was undertaken during the 1996 and 1997 seasons, and pottery and other minor antiquities were found at a number of localities. During this work it was noted that the low plain to the east of the main mound within the area enclosed by the bend in the river yielded a notable amount of scattered occupational material, suggesting that this area may have been quite densely occupied at some periods of the site's history. In addition to this, it was noted that there are several smaller mounds around the main mound, which have ancient archaeological material associated with them. There was speculation that these sites might be early monastic or religious centres but they have never been explored archaeologically and they may also result from other types of structures on the site's margins. The most significant of them is a mound on the bank of the river to the north of the Ek Nath temple, which has now been partially levelled to create a sports field, and a second mound, also on the river bank but to the east of the town, upon which there now stands the Maulana Sahib Durga temple (Fig. 1.4).

In the first (1996) season, an excavation trench was positioned on the edge of the occupation mound at the southern end of the ASI archaeological area. This area was chosen because it appeared to be free from the later Medieval layers that cover the higher areas of the protected area to the north. The depression in which the excavation was positioned appeared to be enclosed within some form of wall or rampart which could be seen in section at the edge of the mound. Some brick structures that were eroding out of the side of the mound were also exposed.

After the end of the 1996 season, the Institute of Archaeology in New Delhi undertook a training excavation at the site, opening a trench, 35 × 5 m, close to the area where excavation had already been started (Trench C). The results of this work are not included in the present report, but after further work in the 1997 season, a rough occupation sequence was elucidated and is described under Trench C in Chapter 5.

In the second (1997) season, one of the excavation trenches dug by Yusuf in 1937 was cleared to allow further investigation of the two brick structures uncovered by him. The southern section of Yusuf's trench was cut back in an attempt to link the stratigraphic position of the buildings with later material, and a test pit was excavated to establish the dating of earlier occupation in this area (Trench A).

During this season, the Institute of Archaeology trench at the southern end of the site (Trench C) was cleaned and excavated down to natural across a 2-m-wide section in each of the seven sectors; the baulks were also cut back to provide a rough sequence which is reported in Chapter 5. The fortification that surrounds the southern end of the site was also examined in this season. The fortification wall stands as a large mound at least 4 m above the surrounding area and is capped with a post-Medieval wall.

The main focus of work during the third (1998) and fourth (1999) seasons was Trench A focussing on the brick structures revealed by Yusuf that had by this time been identified as Early Hindu temples. Trenches B, D, E and F were also excavated at various locations around the site to gain insights into the occupation history of the site (Chapters 4 and 5).