

Preface

This volume reports on the excavations carried out at the Early Historic and Medieval site of Paithan in Maharashtra between 1996 and 1999 as part of a collaborative project between the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Society for South Asian Studies (SSAS) of the British Academy (now the British Association for South Asian Studies or BASAS).

The town of Paithan is known to have been an important Satavahana centre and must also have had something of an international reputation in the Early Historic period as it is one of the few inland sites in India mentioned in the mid 1st-century AD Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. It is also known to have been an important centre in the Medieval period. This is reflected in the fact that it remains a centre of religious pilgrimage to the present day, attracting pilgrims from across Maharashtra and beyond to its annual festival.

Some limited archaeological excavation had been conducted at the site in 1937 and later in 1965, resulting in three very brief published reports, but there has been no further work published and no systematic attempts have been made at investigating the site's archaeology. The importance of the site and the opportunity it provides to investigate a number of key questions relating to the archaeology of the Early Historic and Early Medieval periods in India led, in 1996, to the conception of a joint Indian-British excavation project. At the broadest level, the project was aimed at providing more information on the nature, chronology and development of an Early Historic and Early Medieval town in central India, an issue that is key to our understanding of these periods but about which, up to now, there is a real paucity of concrete archaeological evidence.

The project for the excavation of Paithan was therefore initiated by a formal agreement between the Archaeological Survey of India and the Society for South Asian Studies of the British Academy, which was implemented on 15 February 1996. The project is one of a series of collaborations between these two organizations, others include the excavations of the Buddhist stupa at Sanathi in Gulbarga District, Karnataka, from 1986 to 1989 (Howell 1995) and the excavations at Sopara in Thane District, Maharashtra, carried out in 1992. The Paithan agreement outlined a five-year excavation project, to be carried out under the co-directorship of the Superintending Archaeologist of the Aurangabad Circle, the Archaeological Survey of India, and the Research Fellow of the Society for South Asian Studies. In the event, four

seasons of yearly excavation took place from 1996 until 1999.

Related Publications

In the course of the Paithan project, two lengthy unpublished interim reports were produced and circulated to relevant parties (Rao *et al.* 1998; Rao and Kennet 1999). These incorporate the field reports written by the trench supervisors at the end of each field season. Copies of these reports are lodged with the ASI in Delhi and also at the Goa Circle of the ASI, and are also lodged in Durham University library in the UK. They provide the basis of much of Part I of the present monograph which describes the site and the excavations. After the end of the project a short paper was published by Kennet and Rao (2003) in *South Asian Studies* summarizing the development of the two Early Hindu brick temples at the site. In addition, a number of spin-off publications has been produced related to the problems of investigating the nature of Medieval urbanism in India, for example Kennet 2004b and Kennet 2013.

Report Structure and Format

This volume is made up of fifteen chapters divided into five parts. Part I includes an introduction to the project's research aims and their background along with a description of the site's geographical location and context (Chapter 1). This is followed by a discussion of some key historical texts related to Paithan (Chapter 2) and a summary of previous archaeological work at the site (Chapter 3). Part II covers the 1996–1998 excavations, beginning with Trench A, the largest and most significant trench (Chapter 4), followed by the smaller trenches that were excavated at various locations across the site (Chapter 5). Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the site's phasing and chronology. Part III covers the finds from the excavations, including pottery (Chapter 7), small finds and glass (Chapter 8), coins (Chapter 9) and a summary of the key finds from the first two seasons of excavations (Chapter 10). In addition Chapter 11 describes significant finds from the Balasaheb Patil Government Museum at Paithan, many of which come from the site and the immediately surrounding region. Part IV presents the environmental evidence, including a report on the large

archaeobotanical assemblage (Chapter 12), and a report on the faunal remains (Chapter 13). Part V contains the conclusions which bring together and contextualise the key themes and results of the project. A single appendix lists the excavated contexts described by the project. Further stratigraphical detail whose incorporation into a printed volume such as this would be impractical, for example data tables and Harris matrices, are deposited with the Archaeological Data Service and are available online (<http://dx.doi.org/10.5284/1017460>).

Authorship

A number of specialists and collaborators has been involved in the present project in various ways. Authorship is indicated on each of the chapters throughout the volume. The role of J. Varaprasada Rao in the project and its final publication needs to be explained. He was the joint director of the project, along with D. Kennet, during the 1998 and 1999 seasons and took an equal part in key decisions about strategy, priorities, and research questions related to the excavations. He also played a major role in the study season of February 2000 and traveled to Durham University, together with M. Kasturi Bai, for three weeks during September 2002 in order to advance work on the final publication. It was during this time that the final format of the publication and many of the key themes were agreed. He was also closely involved in the study of the small finds, coins, and the Balasaheb Patil Collection. Due to his tragic death in a car accident on 12 June 2006 the final writing up of the project – much of which took place in Dharwad, Karnataka, between October and December 2006 – very sadly took place without his wisdom, knowledge, and huge experience. It is for this reason that none of the final chapters are credited to his authorship, although he made a major intellectual and practical contribution to every one of them as well as to the fieldwork and research that underlies them. His contribution to the final production of this volume was much missed.

Parts of Chapters 4 and 5 of this report have been compiled from edited versions of original field reports written by the excavators: E. Eastaugh, G. Halder, M. Kasturi Bai, D. Kennet, L. Lloyd-Smith, J. Martin, J. Varaprasada Rao, M. Saxena and N. Wells.

Conventions

Transliteration: aside from Chapter 2, diacritical marks have not been used in the transliteration of words from Sanskrit or other languages. This includes architectural terms as well as other terms and the names of people, places, dynasties, and texts. Although some readers may find this unscholarly, it was decided that the inclusion of diacriticals, whilst presenting certain technical difficulties, would have added nothing to the clarity or content of the text and that their absence did not risk creating any confusion or obfuscation of meaning at any point.

Terminology: for the purposes of the present volume, the terms ‘Early Historic’ and ‘Early Medieval’ will be used to refer to the following periods:

- Early Historic: 5th century BC to 5th century AD,
- Early Medieval: 6th century AD to 9th century AD.

These dates are not precise, however, and acknowledge a degree of overlap between the two periods. The authors see no value in entering into a detailed discussion of the definition of these historical periods at this point. On the use and meaning of these terms in Indian history, see Chattopadhyaya 1994.

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