
Identification of Ancient Places and Towns in and around Mathura (Based on Corelation of Archaeological Findings with the Places Mentioned in Ancient Literature and Epigraphs)

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Received: 04 July 2020; Revised: 23 September 2020; Accepted: 06 November 2020

Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 8.2 (2020): 324-337

Abstract: Mathura is one of the most important ancient cities of India. There are many places and towns which were flourishing within the territory of Mathura as well as in the nearby areas. The sources for few of these place names are literary references in Jaina, Buddhist and Brahmanical literature as well as various epigraphs which have been obtained from Mathura. This paper looks into such place names and tries to identify them with modern place names on the basis of archaeological explorations in the area surrounding Mathura.

Keywords: Mathura, Sakha, Uchchena, Gundavana, Otala, Bhadrasha, Thuna

Introduction

One of the most interesting aspects of studies in archaeology and history is to identify the ancient places mentioned in literature with modern places. Mathura is one of the most important and popular cities of ancient India and has played a pivotal role in the development of Indian culture. There were many important cities and places in the vicinity of metropolis of Mathura which find mention in ancient literature and are yet to be identified. This paper makes a sincere attempt to identify many of such places.

Jaina Context

A number of Jaina dedicatory inscriptions have been found from Mathura, particularly from the site of Kankali Tila, which provide important information about various aspects including the ancient geography. The *Kalpasutra* authored by Jaina acharya Bhadrabahu (Jacobi 1884) states that the Jaina monastic order was divided and subdivided into several *ganas*, *kulas* and *sakhas*. It gives the number of *ganas* as nine. According to Jacobi (1884: 288 fn) *Gana* designates the school which is derived from one teacher; *Kula* the succession of teachers in one line; *Sakha* the lines which branch off from each other. In fact, the nomenclature of these divisions and subdivisions is

derived from various sources like the name of persons, *gotras*, abstract nouns as well as place names. In the list of disciple *sthavirs* of Mahavira, Arya Sambhutavijaya was of Mathara *gotra* (Jacobi 1884: 287); a *gotra* name which derives nomenclature from Mathura. *Kalpasutra* further informs that Arya Santisenika of Mathara *gotra* was the founder of Uchchanagari *sakha* (Jacobi 1884: 293).

In the Mathura inscriptions, Kottiya/ Koliya, Varana and Odehikiya *ganas* find mention (Bajpayee 1980: 111). Out of these, Kottiya/ Koliya *gana* has been mentioned on maximum occasions (Luders' {1909-10} List Nos.¹ 17-20, 22, 23a, 25, 27-29, 32, 36, 39, 45a, 47, 53-54, 56, 73, 77, 84, 89c, 107f, 121-122, 124; *EI*, Vol. II: 210). The *kulas* mentioned as belonging to Kottiya *gana* are: Brahmadasika (Luders' List Nos. 18-20, 23a, 29, 32, 45a, 46, 121-122), Sthaniya or Sthanikiya (Luders' List Nos. 22, 27-28, 36, 39, 53, 56, 75, 110, 115; *EI*, Vol. X: 110; JUPHS, Vol. XII: 26), Vatsaliya (Luders' List Nos. 25, 107f) and Prasnavahanaka (Luders' List No. 73). Various *sakhas* related to Kottiya *gana* include Uchchenagari (Luders' List Nos. 18-20, 23a, 29, 3, 45a, 46, 71, 77, 119, 121-22), Aryaveri (Luders' List Nos. 27, 36, 56), Veri (Luders' List Nos. 28, 53), Vairi or Vaira (Luders' List Nos. 22, 39, 47, 54, 75, 89c; *EI*, Vol. X: 110; JUPHS, Vols. XXIV-V: 219), Majhma (Luders' List No. 73) and Vidyadhari (*EI*, Vol. II: 210). The *Sambhogas* of Kottiya *gana* as mentioned in the epigraphs are Srigriha (Luders' List Nos. 19, 27, 29, 53-54, 122) and Srika (Luders' List Nos. 28, 39, 121). Based on this information and the archaeological explorations, following are the ancient towns with a possible identification.

Uchchenagara or Uchchena

The frequently mentioned Uchchenagari *sakha* (Luders' List Nos. 18-20, 23a, 29, 3, 45a, 46, 71, 77, 119, 121-22) is derived from a place named Uchchenagara or Uchchena. The place is identifiable with a town of same name lying about 20 km south-west of Bharatpur city on the road to other ancient cities Bayana in District Bharatpur and Bari in District Dholpur. During explorations, Uchchena was found to be an ancient town presently spelt as Uchchain and dating back to the Painted Grey Ware Culture period that continued during the historical period. The size of the site is considerable and it consists of an old traditional market with splendid houses of business community. A good number of Jaina community members live in this town as well other areas of Bharatpur. Buhler (*EI*, Vol. I: 378f) had proposed that Uchchenagari *sakha* was named after the fort of Unchanagara, i.e. modern Bulandshahr which seems to be wrong.

The distance of Uchchain from Mathura is about 50 km and it is interesting to note that around two thousand years back there was a flourishing Jaina community at Uchchain as a *sakha* was known by the name of this town. The town must have been an important center of trade and commerce since it was quite famous at that time. Mathura in spite of being the biggest metropolis of the Kushan period was surrounded by important towns like Uchchain. Moreover, the theory that the Kushan rule was responsible for the development of Mathura and other cities during that period gets challenged as other significant towns existed near Mathura before the Kushan period.

Vera or Vaira

This is another popular *sakha* of Kottiya *gana* as mentioned in the Mathura inscriptions (Luders' List Nos. 22, 27, 28, 36, 39, 47, 53, 54, 56, 75, 89c; *EI*, Vol. X: 110; *JUPHS*, Vols. XXIV-V: 219). This *sakha* like the Uchchena *sakha* also derives its name from the name of an ancient town Vaira. Surprisingly, this ancient town Vaira is again identifiable with a town of same name in Bharatpur district with a variant spelling Wer/Weir. Wer is situated about 35 km south-west of Bharatpur and possibly lie on the route linking Rewari/Kaman and Bayana. Weir has an ancient mound which is disturbed by an eighteenth century fort. The disturbed mound dates back to the Painted Grey Ware period with continuity during the historical period. The nature of Wer site is quite similar to Dig and Kaman sites which also come under Bharatpur district. The nearby town of Bhusawar still houses a famous Jaina temple confirming the strong Jaina association of the area. Both Uchchena and Vera indicate that there has not been much change in the name of certain ancient towns in the area and also confirm the strong Jaina presence in the area before and during the Kushan period.

Deha or Uddeha

The *Kalpasutra* (Jacobi 1884: 290) mentions a *gana* called Uddeha. Copper coins of Suryamitra associated with Mathura region also mention Udehiki (Gupta 1989: 129). The name Udehika may well be identified with Uddehika, Adehika or Auddehika, mentioned by Varahamihira (*Brihat-samhita*, XIV.3 as cited by Gupta, *op.cit.*) and located in Madhyadesa. The *gana* as Arya odehikiya is mentioned with its divisions and sub-divisions in the two Kushan records (Luders' List Nos. 21 and 76, Luders also suggests its name as Arya Dehikiya), dated in the years 7 and 98 respectively. I am inclined to identify this Uddeha or Deha town with Dig (or Deeg) situated about 40 km west of Mathura in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. Dig with evidence of an extensive mound is an important ancient city or town dating back in antiquity to the Painted Grey Ware period. Dig in all probability is the corrupt form of Dehika. The finding of copper coins of Udeha from Mathura further confirms the presence of this town in the vicinity of Mathura.

Varana

Varana *gana* has been mentioned in few inscriptions from Mathura (Luders' list Nos. 16, 31, 34, 37, 42, 45, 48, 50, 58, 59a, 113, 116 and 117). *Kalpasutra* (Jacobi 1884: 291-292) mentions a *gana* named Carana but this may be different from Varana. Varana is for sure the name of a place and this can easily be identified with ancient Varana or the modern Bulandshahr, about 90 km north of Mathura.

Sthana and Vatsa

Mathura epigraphs mention different *kulas* as belonging to Kottiya *gana* that are Brahmadasika, Sthaniya or Sthanikaya, Vatsaliya and Prasnavahanaka. Among these, Sthana or Sthanika (Luders' List Nos. 22, 27-28, 36, 39, 53, 56, 75, 110, 115; *EI*, Vol. X: 110; *JUPHS*, Vol. XII: 26), in all probability is the city of Sthanesvara, the modern

Thanesar near Kurukshetra about 250 km north of Mathura, if it was not situated in close vicinity of Mathura. Thanesar is a site which dates back to the Painted Grey Ware times and continued to exist as a town during historical period. Similarly, Vatsa may be identified with Vatsagrama (Bachhgaon) situated very close to Sonkh and 25 km south of Mathura. Bachhgaon is an extensive site just like Sonkh and in chronological terms belongs to the Painted Grey Ware and historical periods. There is also a slim possibility that Vatsa stands for Kausambi (Vatsa janapada).

Hattikiya or Hattiya

A *kula* of Varana *gana* as mentioned in Mathura inscriptions is Arya Hattakiya (Luders' list Nos. 16 and 48) or Arya Hattiya (Luders' List No. 116). This *kula* seems to be derived from a place name Hattiya which in present times is known as Hathiya. Hathiya is an extensive ancient site about 38 km west of Mathura near Barsana and dates back to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times.

Nadi

Nadika is mentioned as another *kula* of Varana *gana* in a Mathura inscription (Luders' List No. 117). This may be considered to have been derived from a town called Nadi. Ancient Nadi may be identified with Nari, an ancient town situated about 25 km north of Mathura near the National Highway No. 2. Nari, an extensive mound dates back to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times.

Petivama

Petivamika as a *kula* of Varana *gana* is also mentioned in few Mathura inscriptions (Luders' List Nos. 31, 45 and 107d) and this may also be linked to the name of a place. This place Petivama may be identified with another extensive site Paintha situated about 28 km south-west of Mathura between Sonkh and Govardhan. Paintha is one of the loftiest mounds in the region and dates back to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times.

Vaja/ Vajanagara

According to Mathura inscriptions, Vajanagari (Luders' List Nos. 16, 48, 59a, 107d, 116), Haritamalakadhi (Luders' List No. 42) and Samkasiya (Luders' List No. 50) are the *sakhas* of Varana *gana*. Samkasiya *sakha* clearly indicates its origin from Samkasya city. Vaja or Vajanagara can be identified with ancient town Bahaj situated about 30 km to the west of Mathura on route to Alwar. Bahaj is an extensive and lofty mound dating back to the Painted Grey Ware period and historical times. Bahaj seems to be same as Vaja with slight change in pronunciation over a period of time. Buhler (*EI*, Vol. I: 373f) tried to identify Vajanagara with Vriji country which seems wrong.

Haritamalakadha

Haritamalakadhi *sakha* (Luders' List No. 42) of Varana *gana* seems to have been derived from a town named Haritamalakadha. Aligarh, a major city of ancient times situated 65

km east of Mathura seems to be Haritamalakadha and in antiquity dates back to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times. This assumption is further supported by view of Aligarh people that their city's pre-Islamic name was Harigarh.

Srika/Sriya and Srigriha

Mathura inscriptions mention Arya Srikiya (Luders' List No. 116), Aryasrika (Luders' List No. 59a), Sriya (Luders' List No. 48) and Srigriha (Luders' List No. 50) as *sambhogas* of Varana *gana*. Srika or Sriya can be identified with Seeh village situated about 32 km west of Mathura city. Seeh is one of the extensive ancient sites out of twin towns Seeh and Palson situated opposite each other. Seeh and Palson date back to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times. Srigriha, if it is a town and not just a shrine may also be identical with Sriya and if so, can be identified with Seeh.

Antaranji and Kamariddhika

Two Mathura inscriptions (Luders' List Nos. 24 and 70) refer to one *kula* entitled Mehika (Maighika) which according to the *Kalpasastra* (Jacobi 1884: 291), belongs to the Vesvadika *gana*. Thus the reference to the Mehika *kula* in the inscriptions points to the existence of the Vesavadika *gana* in or near Mathura. Vesavadika *gana* was divided into four *kulas* namely Ganika, Maighika, Kamariddhika, Indrapuraka and four *sakhas* Sravastika, Rajyapalika, Antaranjika, Kshemaliptika. Out of these *kulas* and *sakhas*, Sravasti, a great ancient city of eastern Uttar Pradesh is clearly identifiable. Kamariddhi seems to be either the important ancient town Kaman in Bharatpur district or Kamar near Kosi in Mathura district. Both sites are located on extensive mounds datable to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historic times. Kaman is a more likely choice as it was an ancient city and has provided evidence of continued Jaina presence.

The identification of Antaranji is very significant as it will put to rest a number of speculations about the ancient name of the city of Atranjikhhera as scholars wrongly suggesting it to be Veranja (Upadhyay 1961: 426). It is interesting to note that the ancient name of city of Antaranji is still continuing in the name of deserted mound Atranjikhhera, an extensive excavated mound.

Buddhist Context

The name of places in the region of Braj, which find mention in the ancient Buddhist literature are Gundavana, Bhadrāsava, Oṭalā, Verañjā, Vairambhā, Akkosa, Nalerunimba and Thūṇa Grāma. Taranatha (1970: 34) mentions a Buddhist teacher Gunnaprabha of Mathura who resided at Agrapuri in Mathura. This place Agrapuri may be identified with Agra city, about 56 km distant from Mathura. Interestingly, Taranatha has mentioned it as being situated in Mathura. It indicates towards the nature of ancient writers mentioning far off areas of Mathura region as being situated at Mathura with no clear mention of either the distance or the nature of the site. It lends support to the argument of identifying various sites which have been mentioned at Mathura with distant places from this city. *Anguttaranikaya* (1960: 494) mentions Mathura in its chapter *Akkosakavagga*, which includes some incidents that occurred

during the visit of the Buddha. Here Akkosa can be identified as a place name. The analysis of all such places which find mention in the Buddhist literature is as follows:

Otalā

Otalā (or Otala) finds mention in Mulasarvastivadin *Vinayavastu* (Dutt 1984 I: 17-25) which informs that Otala and Bhadrāsava are the two centres in the Surasena region between which Mathura is situated. It also adds that the Buddha after visiting Mathura had moved to Otala and from there to Vairambha. Otala might be identified with the modern town of Hodal, situated on the National Highway No. 2, 54 km distant from Mathura in northern direction in the recently created district of Palwal in Haryana. The points in favour of this identification are: the local legend says that the original inhabitants of this place were known as Ota and were moved away from there by the Jats; it is situated on the ancient highway linking Takshasila with Mathura; the name Hodal does not make sense as such in any language except for it being a corrupt form of word Otala. Hodal is an extensive mound on which a portion of the modern town inhabits. The site dates back to Painted Grey Ware period and continues in the succeeding periods of Northern Black Polished Ware, Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, and medieval periods.

Bhadrāsava

The other place Bhadrāsava as mentioned in Mulasarvastivadin *Vinayavastu* (Dutt 1984 I: 3) might be identified with a site by the name of Bhadas situated on the Nuh-Firozpur Jhirka Road (a stretch on Delhi-Alwar Road) in Mewat district of Haryana from where few railing pillars of pre-Kushan date have been reported. This site is an extensive town/ city settlement of ancient period and dates back to Painted Grey Ware and onward culutural periods (personal communication with Dr B.R. Mani who excavated in that area). A number of ancient trade alignments of western part of Braj region from important sites like Kaman, Nandgaon, Kosi and Hodal are leading to this site Bhadas. This site was undoubtedly an important Buddhist centre in the region and was an essential part of Braj before the population of the region converted to Islam (now known as Meos) and lost some of its importance as a part of greater Braj region as well as culture. Earlier I had tried to identify Bhadrāsava also with Bhadar, an ancient site situated just 12 km north of Mathura (Gupta 2013: 125) but now I would suggest that Bhadas is the best option for identifying Bhadrāsava.

Gundāvana or Gundavana

According to *Majjhimanikaya* (1933: 343), Mahakatyayana resided at Gundavana where king Avantiputra of Mathura had gone to meet the monk. It makes clear that there was some relation between the royal families of Ujjain and Mathura. The place Gundavana also finds mention in *Annguttarnikaya* (1958: 69). Scholars have tried to locate this Gundavana inside the city of Mathura and have neglected the fact that archaeologically, the whole area surrounding Mathura is equally important. From Xuan Xang's description of Upagupta's monastery (Beal 1906: 179-183), situated in a

cave outside the city on Urumunda hill (blue in appearance), it is clear that he was not talking about the city of Mathura. Gundavana can be identified with Gindoh situated about 40 km north-west of Mathura, not very far from the last remnants of Aravalli hills in the Braj region. It is a known fact that most of the Braj region was special because of the presence of various groves, known as *vanas*. Many of these *vanas* are the names of ancient sites with the same name or a modified name e.g. Bhadravana, Lohavana (Lohban), Talavana (Tarsi), Madhuvana (Maholi), Bahulavana (Bati) etc. In the same way, Gindoh or Gundoh in District Mathura should be the site of ancient Gundavana. The nearby drain is also called as Gunda *nala*, confirming to the ancient term Gunda. Gindoh is one of the larger ancient mounds. The site is situated on the ancient route going from Otdala to possibly Veranja, situated somewhere to the west of Govardhan and Barsana hills. The cultural sequence of the site begins with the Painted Grey Ware culture and continues in the historical period. *Divyavadana's* (1959: 217) and *Vinayavastu's* (Dutt 1984 I: 26) reference to the Buddha's visit in the city of Mathura on his way to Vairambha, somehow appears to be a reference to this place Gindoh.

From Gindoh, the Nandgaon hills are situated at a distance of about 2 km in the south-east direction. So, the reference to the Urumunda hill where the Buddha had prophesized about Natabhata vihara and the future of Upagupta, who was destined to become a great Buddhist monk, appears to be a clear reference to the hills of Nandgaon. Whether there existed such a cave, or not, can't be confirmed now because of the changed status of the site as an important Krishna pilgrimage centre and also because of unprecedented human activity in the region. The name Natabhata vihara based on the two merchant brothers also has some kind of similarity with Nandagrama, as its chief Nandaraya is also said to be a Vaisya in many Brahmanical texts of medieval period. A nearby village Dhamsingha situated about 4 km distant from Gindoh is an ancient site dating back to Mauryan and onward periods and is in all probability related to some Buddhist tradition. As the Pali impact is clear in the name Dhamsingha (Dham for *Dharma* and Singha for *Simha*). From a Brahmana of Palwal region named Shri Haridatta (retired from ASI), who had a relative in Gindoh, I came to know that an elderly person of Gindoh had informed him some 50 years back that the name of the village was derived from Gundavana and he rued the fact that all the sacred groves had vanished by then. During my explorations I realized that the famous spot of Kokilavana, which is about 1.5 km east of Gindoh might actually be the spot of Gundavana where Mahakatyayana resided. It might be reason that famous saint Vallabhacharya had a seat there, after which the place became so important for Hindus and now-a-days, the famous Sani Temple is situated there. The ancient mound of Gindoh might have been the main habitation settlement near the ancient grove.

This identification of Gundavana is further supported by the finding of a village Gundagaon about 5 km north of Kaman on the road to Bhadas. This Gundagaon is about 10 km west of Gindoh and is an almost contemporary site. Because of the changed profile of the population of village (Meos) not much could be analyzed in the village, especially any ancient tradition relating it to Gundavana. Now-a-days, there is

no sacred grove in the vicinity of this site. The name of the village is for sure an ancient one. There is a possibility that some of the people from original Gundavana (Gindoh) would have come to this site in the past and settled there naming it as Gundagrama based on the name of their ancestral village.

Nalerunimba

A certain tree, called Nalerunimba, figures several times in the Pali canonical texts, particularly in *Anguttarnikaya* (IV: 198) on the highway joining Mathura with Veranja. There are two extensive village sites in Mathura, situated on ancient mounds, known by the name of Nimgaon or Nimbagrama. One is to the east of Yamuna, about 20 km from Mathura, on the very important ancient route linking Mathura with the sites towards Aligarh city and even further. Another route from this Nimgaon passed towards Gorai, Khair, Varana, Hastinapura etc. The second village by this name is situated 4 km north-west of Govardhan. Traditionally, it is said to be called so, because of Nimbarkacharya, an early saint of Braj. Both the extensive mounds presently occupied by the modern villages date back to the Painted Grey Ware culture period and the historical period. The reference to Nalerunimba can be for either of these sites, but, the second site which is near Govardhan seems to be more related to the path of the Buddha's visit. The locations of Veranja, Nimgaon, Nandgaon, Gindoh and Hodal are interdependent, as all these lie to the west of Yamuna in the Braj region.

Verañjā

As per *Anguttarnikaya* (II: 57) Verañja or Verañjā is well connected with the Buddha's first visit to Mathura region and has been identified with different places by various scholars. Motichandra (1953: 16) thought it to be situated somewhere near Bari tehsil in district Agra (*sic*), from where a route moved during the time of Al- biruni. Dr. Bharat Singh Upadhyay (1961: 426) considers it to be located somewhere to the east of Mathura near Sikandararao in District Aligarh (now Hathras). Prabhu Dayal Mittal (1966: 63) considered this identification right and opined Veranja to be identical with either Barhad or Atranjikhhera. Both the sites are situated on the all important *Uttarapatha* or near it, going from Takshasila to Tamralipti. Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt and Prof. K.D. Bajpai (1956: 13) suggested that Veranja was situated in the west, particularly to the west of Soreyya. E. Lamotte (1958: 10) writes quoting Pliny that Veranja lies on the highway between Takshasila and Mathura. He adds the route as follows: Veranja – Mathura – Soreyya²– Samkasya – Kanyakubja – Udumbara – Aggalapura – Sahajati – Prayag – Varanasi. Lamotte (1958: 23) again mentions Veranja (Sanskrit Vairānti) on the grand route between Takshasila and Mathura. After the identification of Ojala, Gundavana etc., there is no other option left than to consider Veranja to the west or to the north-west of Mathura.

From Ojala, moving via Gundavana, Urumunda hill, Nalerunimba, one could reach Veranja. This alignment definitely provides an important place to the region near Govardhan on the ancient trade routes. Veranja, in my opinion could have been situated anywhere to the south-west, west or north-west of Govardhan within a

distance of 150 km. There is every possibility that in near future, this place will also be identified. It appears that Veranja lied somewhere near Alwar and Vairata in Rajasthan. Although to me, Vairata appears either to be the site or near to the site of ancient Veranja (Sanskrit Vairānti), its situation between Takshasila and Mathura can not be justified substantially. There is every possibility that Veranja served as an important city from where many important routes got diverted like towards Bharukaccha in southward direction, Pakistani Sindh region (Roruka) in westward direction and Ganga-Yamuna doab in eastward direction. The route from Veranja to Takshasila would have passed via Alwar, Rewari, Rohtak, Hansi, Hissar, Agroha, Sirsa, Bhatinda, Ludhiana etc.

Vairambhā

The story in *Vinayavastu* (Dutt 1984 I: 26) of a caravan of traders who had arrived at Vairambha with 500 horses from *Uttarapatha* (northern route), indicates that this place was situated on or near *Uttarapatha*. Lamotte (1958: 363) writes quoting Mula-Sarvastivadins *Vinaya* text (*Man. De Gilgit*, III, 1: 3- 68) that the Buddha moved via Adirajya, Mathura, Ojala, Vairambha, Ayodhya, Kumaravardhana, Krauncha, Angadika, Manivati, Salabala, Salibala, Suvarnaprastha to Saketa. If this order of direction is correct then, we have no other option than to consider Veranja and Vairambha as two different cities.

According to Tibetan *Vinaya*, king Agnidatta ruled at Parantaka and the Buddha had passed his place on his way to Panchala via Ojala (Taranatha 1970: 85). There is some doubt in the mind of the writer of *Vinaya* because Parantaka definitely stands for Aparanta i.e. Western country and as Mathura has been considered as the north-west frontier of Madhyadesa, it is for sure that a site situated about 200 km west of Mathura would be called Aprantaka country. But how can it be explained that a western country like Matsya lied in between Mathura and Panchala? Whatever may be the case; if Veranja and Vairambha were two different cities then the site of Vairambha (lying between Ojala and Ayodhya) should be located somewhere near Jalesar or Etah in District Etah. But, more or less it appears that there is some confusion in the mind of the *Vinaya* writer and Vairambha is situated to the west of Mathura. Near Dig on the Mathura-Alwar road there is a village named Bedham which might be the corrupt form of ancient Vairambha.

Akkosa

Akkosavagga is the name of a chapter in the *Anguttarnikaya* (Kashyap 1960: 494) in which the incidents of Mathura during the visit of the Buddha are mentioned. As per Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (Malalasekera 1937: 4) and Buddhist scholars Akkosa means evil. But, there is a strong possibility that Akkosa is the name of a place just like Kimila of *Kimilavagga*, the chapter which precedes the *Akkosavagga*. In the trans-Yamuna region following the course of Yamuna via Gokul, Mahaban, and Baldev, one would reach at the ancient site named Akos. This much destroyed mound of Akos

would have been an extensive town dating back to Painted Grey Ware ware period and would have been a major point on the road linking Mathura and Sankisa.

Thūṇa

Thūṇa Grāma (a Brahmana Grama) has been mentioned as the western limit of Madhya Desa in the Pali *Vinaya Pitaka* on many occasions (Upadhyay 1961: 34, 73). A village named Thun lying to the west of Dig in Bharatpur District of Rajasthan might be identified with this village. This Thun village situated atop a sizeable mound dates back to the Painted Grey Ware and onward periods and in all probability lies on the route going towards Veranja from Mathura region. Although some scholars including S.N. Majumdar, B.C. Law, Rahul Sankrityayan and Bharat Singh Upadhyay (1961: 85-86) have identified ancient Thuna with Thanesar site in Haryana, I tend to believe that it cannot be the western limit of Madhya Desa and the above-mentioned Thun village fulfills that criterion. There is an extensive city settlement of ancient times by the name of Nagar about 3 km to the north of Thun. It is very interesting to note that both these sites Nagar and Thun are still dominated by Brahmana caste. It appears that Thunna Grama of Pali texts would have become a city site by the Mauryan period just like the Patali Grama of the time of the Buddha which had become the largest city of ancient world by the Mauryan times. In that case this Nagar should be identified as Thuna Grama which later on came to be known as a *Nagara*. Some Brahmana families from this Nagar town would have shifted to the modern Thun village giving it the nomenclature of their parent village Thuna. Thus the actual Thuna Grama became the modern Nagar town and a nearby small settlement came to be known as Thun. Some other ancient village named Thuna has also been mentioned in Pali texts as lying in Malla *Janapada* but it should be some other site in eastern Uttar Pradesh by that name as many ancient sites having similar names have been located in different regions (Upadhyay 1961: 86, 329).

Aritṭha/ Aritṭhapura, Sihapura, Janu and Jenta

In Buddhist literature town of Aritṭhapura has been mentioned on many occasions (Upadhyay 1961: 476). This town has been identified with different places locating it either in the Swat valley or western Punjab near Shorkot (Upadhyay 1961: 476). It is possible that there were more than one city named Artishtapur. One Arishtapura was a town about 18 km west of Mathura which is presently called Arring. The importance of the site of Arring cannot be ignored as it is situated on the very important Mathura-Vairata route near Govardhan and is an extensive mound, partly under protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. The site dates back to the Painted Grey Ware and historical periods and is traditionally considered the place of Arishtasura, a demon who is believed to have been killed by child Krishna. The ancient name of the town is believed to have been derived from this demon Arishta. There is a possibility that this might be the place mentioned in Buddhist literature as Aritthapura in Sibi janapada.

As per *Majjhima Nikaya*, a certain Janu sroni brahmana frequently used to visit Ichchhanangala in Kosala (Upadhyay 1961: 257). He possibly belonged to Sravasti. But

an important coincidence is the presence of an extensive ancient site near Govardhan in District Mathura which is named Janu. The site is one of the loftiest mounds in the region and belongs to the Painted Grey Ware period and the historical times. Either the ancestors of Janu sroni brahmana were from this village or there must have been some other ancient site by the name of Janu near Sravasti. Even if the latter was the case, there can be no denying that Janu village of District Mathura maintains a continuity of tradition at least in its nomenclature.

The *Chetiya Jataka* mentions Sihapura as one of the five cities founded by the five sons of the king of Chedi (Upadhyay 1961: 29). The city was situated to the west of Sotthivati city (Bundelkhand) and Upadhyay (1961: 487) puts it somewhere in Punjab. This Sihapura (Simhapura) might be identical with a place named Sihana on the road linking Mathura and Ojala which is datable to the Painted Grey Ware and onward periods. Possible Buddhist monasteries were also located by me on the outskirts of this village, one at the entrance and one at the exit. Even if Sihana was not the city as mentioned in the *Chetiya Jataka*, it indicates that more than one city of same name were present in the ancient times.

Jenta which has been mentioned as a rural site in Magadha in the Pali dictionary (Malalasekera 1937: 967) might be identified with a village of identical name Jaint lying on the road linking Mathura and Ojala, 5 km distant from Sihana. Jaint is an extensive ancient mound datable to the Painted Grey Ware and onward periods. Here again it is quite possible that identical names were given to different sites situated in different regions.

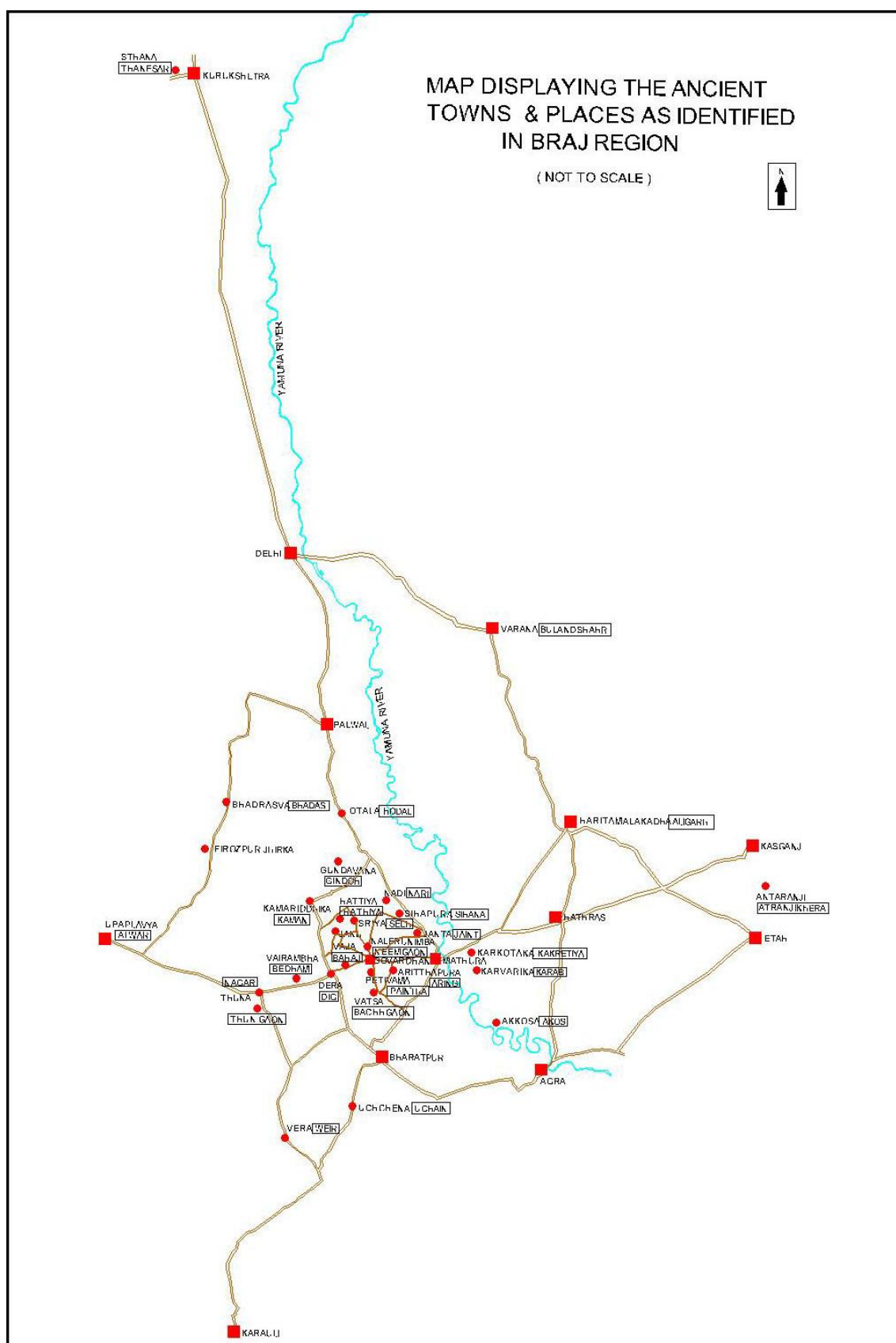
Brahmanical Context

Upaplavya

In the *Mahabharata's Udyoga Parva* (8, 25) and *Virata Parva* (72, 14), Upaplavya is mentioned as a city situated in the Matsya kingdom lying somewhere between Vairata and Hastinapura. On the basis of location, this city should lie somewhere near Alwar and based on the resemblance in the names of Upaplavya and Alwar, I would suggest that Alwar is the ancient Upaplavya. I am not sure about the exact antiquity of Alwar but on the basis of my explorations up to Bharatpur-Alwar border area, I can say that Alwar must be having archaeological mound/s datable to the Painted Grey Ware period.

Karkotaka

Karkotaka Naga is mentioned in the *sarpa sutra* of the *Mahabharata's Udyoga Parva* (V, 101). Since Mathura was one of the most important centers of the Naga cult, it is likely that there was an important shrine in Mathura for the worship of Naga Karkotaka too. This site is identified by me as being situated about 12 km distant from Mathura in the *trans*-Yamuna region. It is situated on the bank of Manth branch of Ganga canal (which seems to be an old channel), 4 km inside from Mathura-Hathras road.



A religious establishment outside the village in the agricultural fields was observed by me as being situated on a cart route linking the village Kakretiya with another ancient site Sihora. The area of the site is about 100 m x 120 m. The site was in existence during the Kushan period and possibility of its being pre-Kushan cannot be denied. The presence of a Buddhist monastery at the site was confirmed by the finding of a Buddha head, which was later on stolen by the smugglers. A broken Hārītī image was also observed in the village. The name of village Kakretiya seems to be a corrupt form of Karkotaka.

Karvarika Naga

In the same sutra of the *Mahabharata* (V.101.14), Karvarika Naga is also mentioned. An extensive archaeological site presently occupied by a large village named Karab seems to have been derived from a shrine of Karvarika Naga. Earlier I had suggested the possibility of the village deriving its name from a Mauryan administrative unit Karvatika, but now I believe that Karab possibly derives its name from Karvarika word. Karab is situated about 12 km to the east of Mathura and is a large village with a sizeable population of Saraswat Brahmins who might have been associated with Naga worship in ancient times. Karab and Kakretiya are located quite close to each other.

Conclusion

Overall analysis of site names of Mathura region confirms that the ancient names of those sites are still continuing with slight corruption. Figure 1 display all the above identified places in a map. The sites and names date back to the earliest period and in the present level of our information that period is datable to the Painted Grey Ware period. This further confirms that the urbanization of north India took place during the Painted Grey Ware culture period itself, the later periods particularly the Kushan period brought extension of these cities only.

Notes

¹ Hereinafter all the Luders' List Numbers are from Luders' 1909-10.

² Motichandra (1953: 16) has rightly identified Soreyya with Soron. He also mentions that this site had important trade links with Takṣaśilā.

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