

Aspects of structural remains in Patliputra

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ABSTARCT

The ancient city of Pataliputra occupies an honoured place in the history of India and also in the history of Magadha. Being a city of the seat of power of the imperial Mauryans, not only it basked in the glory for centuries, but also became a mute witness to the rise and fall of many dynasties to follow.

According to different sources, the origin of the city goes back to the 6th century BC. The earliest references regarding Pataliputra are found in Buddhist text where it has been mentioned as Patali. Jain tradition describes that it was Udayi, the successor of Ajatsatru, who transferred the capital to the new city of Pataliputra which was first founded by Ajatsatru as a fort only, due to the anxiety of the kingdom of Magadha to defend itself against warlike Lichehchavis of Vaisali. This was perhaps the main concern why the Magadhan king decided to fortify it. Foreign travelers; Magasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya give an elaborate description of the city from his account of the city, it appears, it was protected by a massive timber palisade, pierced by 64 gates and crowned by 570 towers and further defended by a broad and deep moat which served also as a city sewer. He mentions that the royal palace of Chandragupta in the city was built of timber with pillars gilded and adorned in silver and gold.

The city ramparts were also made of wood. Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien and Hien-Tsang has seen the remains of several stone structures built at Pataliputra. Fa-Hien speaks highly of the city, its walls, gates, palaces and buildings constructed in a way which no human hands could accomplish, but in the time of Hiuen Tsiang who visited Pataliputra in about 635 A.D. found it long deserted. Only two or three structures were in good condition. All others were in ruins. The monastic complex, Ashok's palace and the stupas being in a state of utter ruin.

Wooden structure, brick and stone structure were discovered from different sites of Pataliputra. Ashok replaced wood with stones and built splendid structures. Pillars were also discovered from sites of Pataliputra which are presently preserved in different museums. These structures speak highly about the glory of Pataliputra and also about its decline. The architectural history of these structures throws new light on the history of Pataliputra which possess different materials, different style of different dynasties.

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