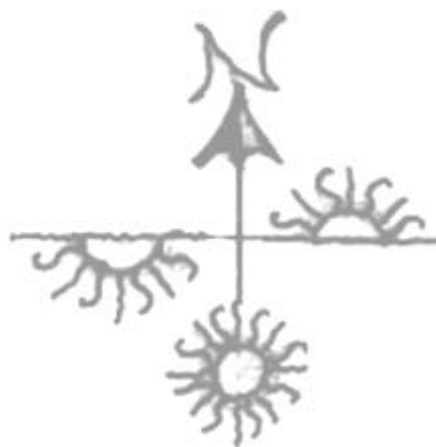




1 Conceptual Cities



IN pre-colonial India, ideas about kingship and about cities were never static; indeed, their development over time could in itself provide an interesting area of enquiry. But as a preliminary to our case study we have here chosen to focus on a few salient elements that were consistently present in definitions of kingship and of cities up until the eighteenth century. We have drawn chiefly on two related genres of literature. The first is *niti shastra*, or treatises on politics and statecraft. Here we have used in particular the ancient classic of the genre, the *Arthashastra*, composed during the Mauryan period (fourth to third centuries BC) and well known ever since, and – to give a more contemporary perspective – the late derivative work the *Sukraniti*. The second genre is *vastu shastra*, treatises that deal with architecture, planning and all other aspects of design. Here again our sources include two early classics, the *Manasara* and the *Mayamata*, and also two later works – the *Samrangana Sutradhara*, written in the eleventh century for Raja Bhoja of Dhar, and Mandan's *Rajavallabha*, written in the fifteenth century for Rana Kumbha of Mewar – whose northern provenance and Rajput patronage put them closer to our case study of Jaipur. The question of the relationship between the ideas contained in such texts and actual historical practice is touched on here but is considered more fully in later chapters.

The Shastric King

Time is divided into seasons, says the author of the *Sukraniti*, because of changes in the atmospheric conditions which cause rains, cold and heat to succeed one another, and because of changes in the astronomical conditions, according to the movement, shape and nature of the planets. But time is equally divided, he continues, by the deeds of men, whether beneficial or harmful, great or small. Conduct is the cause of time. This must be so, for if it were the other way round, and the time or epoch were the cause of men's actions, how could we attribute virtue to those actions? Now, since it is the king who makes the rules and establishes customs, both by imposing them on his subjects and by following them himself, it is the king who is responsible for guiding men's conduct. The king is therefore the cause or maker of time.¹

Following the customary preamble and insistence on the importance of his theme, this is the first point of substance made by the author of the *Sukraniti*, a Sanskrit treatise on polity, of uncertain date.² In linking the king to the cosmic order, and attributing to him a power comparable to that of the planets, the author is assuming familiarity with the more general idea of the king as a representative, even an embodiment, of god.³ A little later he lists the eight functions of the king as punishing the wicked, dispensing charity, protecting his subjects,

performing rites and sacrifices, acquiring revenue, converting independent princes into tributary chiefs, conquering enemies and generating wealth from the land.⁴ The king must keep himself informed on the well-being of his subjects, as dispraise can do him much harm – after all, it was the criticism of a mere washerman that led Rama to forsake Sita.⁵

The king who is most praised is one who is educated in the arts and sciences, because if he is trained in all branches of learning he will not incline to wrong deeds and will earn the respect of the good. The logic of this idea implies a contract: the identification of the king as a god confers upon him not only privileges but also duties to behave in certain ways and to acquire certain qualities. Each and every one of his actions – including his engagement in *puja* (prayer and ritual) and his patronage of learning – is measured against what is expected of a king. Therefore the king should revere his *guru* (or personal preceptor) and through association with him acquire knowledge of the *shastras* (the canonical treatises). More than this, he should take steps to advance the arts and sciences amongst his people, by regularly honouring those who are well versed in all sacred texts such as *vedas* and *puranas*, and those who understand astrology, medicine and sacred rites, including *tantra*.⁶

Respect for the *guru* is a point equally stressed by the author of the *Manasara*, a treatise not on *niti* (statecraft) but on *vastu shastra* (architecture and design).⁷ The *Manasara* goes on to define nine ranks of kings, from the most powerful Chakravartin, ruler of a kingdom which extends to the four oceans, through a Maharaja, king of seven kingdoms, and the Narendra who is king of three, all the way down to the Astragrahin, the lord of a single fort. The nine ranks are distinguished not only by the size of their domains but also by their

personal qualities and by the proportion of the kingdom's revenue they receive.⁸ The distinctive qualities of the Maharaja, for example, are that he is born of the solar or lunar race, that he is well versed in politics and ethics, and that he holds 'three-fold royal powers . . . is aware of the six royal policies, [and] possesses six kingly strengths'. That the author does not pause to itemize these powers, policies and strengths is a clear indication that he regarded his text as a contribution to a wider body of knowledge: he can omit to specify what these phrases mean, by assuming that his readers would already be familiar with them from other sources. And the assumption would be fair. The most famous Indian work on statecraft, the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, for example, defines royal power as three-fold, comprising the power of knowledge through counsel (*mantra*), the power of majesty through the treasury and the army (*prabhava*) and the power of energy through valour (*utsaha*).⁹ The same source and the equally famous *Manusmriti* both tell us that the six tactics of foreign policy are making alliances, waging war, marching, camping, taking shelter and being duplicitous.¹⁰ And both texts define the strength of the state as depending on seven constituent elements, including the king and his six supports: his minister, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and the ally.¹¹

Some other major *vastu shastra* texts, including the *Aparajita Priccha* and the *Rajavallabha*, have their own rankings of kings, comparable to that of the *Manasara*, though with some variation in their number and names.¹² We might reasonably wonder what purpose all this classification serves. The texts do not agree with each other, and none corresponds to an actual hierarchy known to have existed at any particular historical moment. So the lists are most certainly not schedules of protocol. Rather, their

purpose appears to be to insist that distinctions between kings of different levels can be made on the basis of their kingdoms and their qualities, and that the lesser kings must not usurp the functions and attributes of superior ones; and they do this not by describing any given actual hierarchy but by defining an ideal or conceptual one, against which real hierarchies can be measured. The point of this device is to place the orders made by men within the larger context of superhuman ones, for the scale ends with the Chakravartin, whose domain extends to the four mythical oceans at the ends of the world – a kingdom that has never yet been achieved. The list of qualities that define a Maharaja is not an empirical description of the attributes of any individuals, but a definition of the quality of power to which it is proper for a Maharaja – and only a Maharaja – to aspire. If the texts do not describe kingship in the world, neither do they prescribe what it might realistically become. Instead, they illustrate the principles of real kingship by offering ideal images of their perfect fulfilment. And they adopt, as we shall see, precisely the same approach to their principal topic: planning.

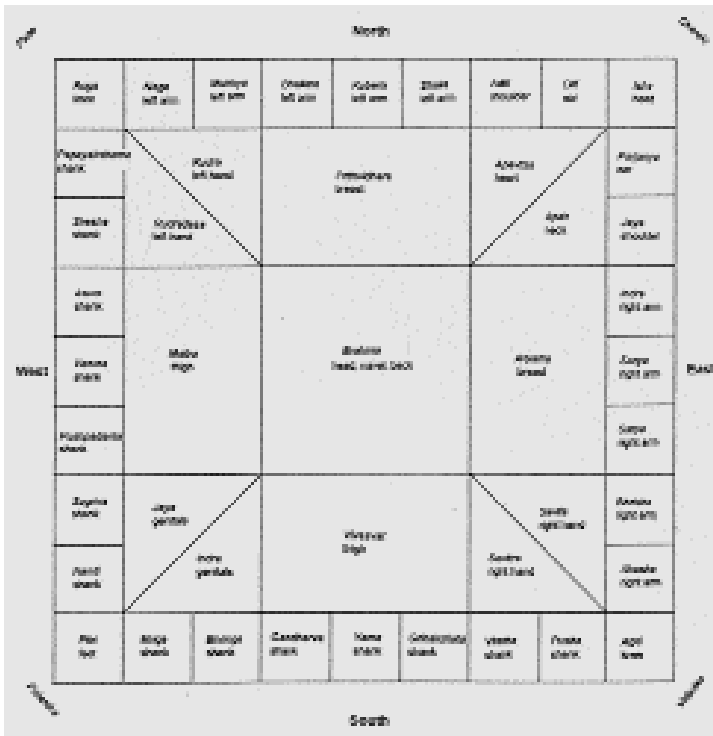
The Shastric City

No fewer than eight distinct types of city and town (and a further eight types of fort) are defined by the *Manasara* and another major *vastu shastra* text, the *Mayamata*. In this instance we are confronted not with a hierarchy but with specialisms, and the first on the list, far from being way off any realizable register, is in fact a basic or standard type whose very name, *kevala nagara*, means ‘only’ or ‘ordinary’. A densely populated mercantile town, the *kevala nagara* is protected by a wall with a gate at each of the four cardinal points. It is the second on the list that is the *rajadhani* or *rajadhaniya*

nagara, the royal capital. This is defined as a city, impregnable on the north and east sides, with the royal palace near the centre and a guard facing towards the east and the south, and around the palace the houses of people of all classes, including the most wealthy and meritorious citizens of the state. A *pura*, by contrast, lacks the palace and the emphasis is on trade. A *kheta* is a town situated close to a river or a mountain, and is exclusively inhabited by members of the Shudra caste; a *khavata* is a town within the hills; and a *kubjaka* is an unprotected town located between a *kheta* and a *khavata*. A *pattana* is a trading town situated by the coast or a waterway, and a *shibira* is a fortified town, protecting the kingdom’s border. The eight forts have similarly specialist functions and are distinguished by location, population and the presence or absence of the king.¹³

The location of some of these forts and cities is already implied in their definitions, but beyond this is the idea that the best site is one to which can be attributed some sacred association – a site that may be identified with a legend, or as the scene of some action of a god. All associations of the site will be borne by the city and will influence its fortunes. Before building can commence, offerings must be made to propitiate the gods and demons.¹⁴

Once the site is selected and purified, the laying out of the plan involves referring to a set of diagrams. The chapters on planning in the *vastu shastras* describe a sequence of 32 *mandalas*, a set of grids of increasing complexity. The first and simplest is a single square – notionally a 1 x 1 grid. The second is a square subdivided into four equal parts – a 2 x 2 grid. The third has nine parts, the fourth sixteen, and so on, until the last, 32 x 32, or 1024-square grid. These are the *vastu purusha mandalas*, the elementary principles for any division of space (illus. 2).¹⁵ All of the subsequent chapters



2 The *paramashayika*, or 8 x 8 square *vastu purusha mandala*, drawn according to the definition of the *Rajavallabha*.

on specific constructions – whether single houses or temples, palaces, villages or towns – refer back to the types thus defined. No fixed dimension is attached to any *mandala*, and we should not suppose that the more complex versions are necessarily intended for larger works. They are primary planning forms that can be used in any context.

The *Mayamata* says that for any town it is appropriate to use the four-square *mandala* (called *pechaka*) or the 100-square *mandala* (called *asana*) or any of those in between; that is to say, anything from a 2 x 2 to a 10 x 10 grid, thus excluding the first in the sequence as too simple, and all of the more complex forms.¹⁶ The *Manasara* roughly agrees: identifying the lines of the grid with the city's main streets, it says that the number of streets running from west to east and from north to south

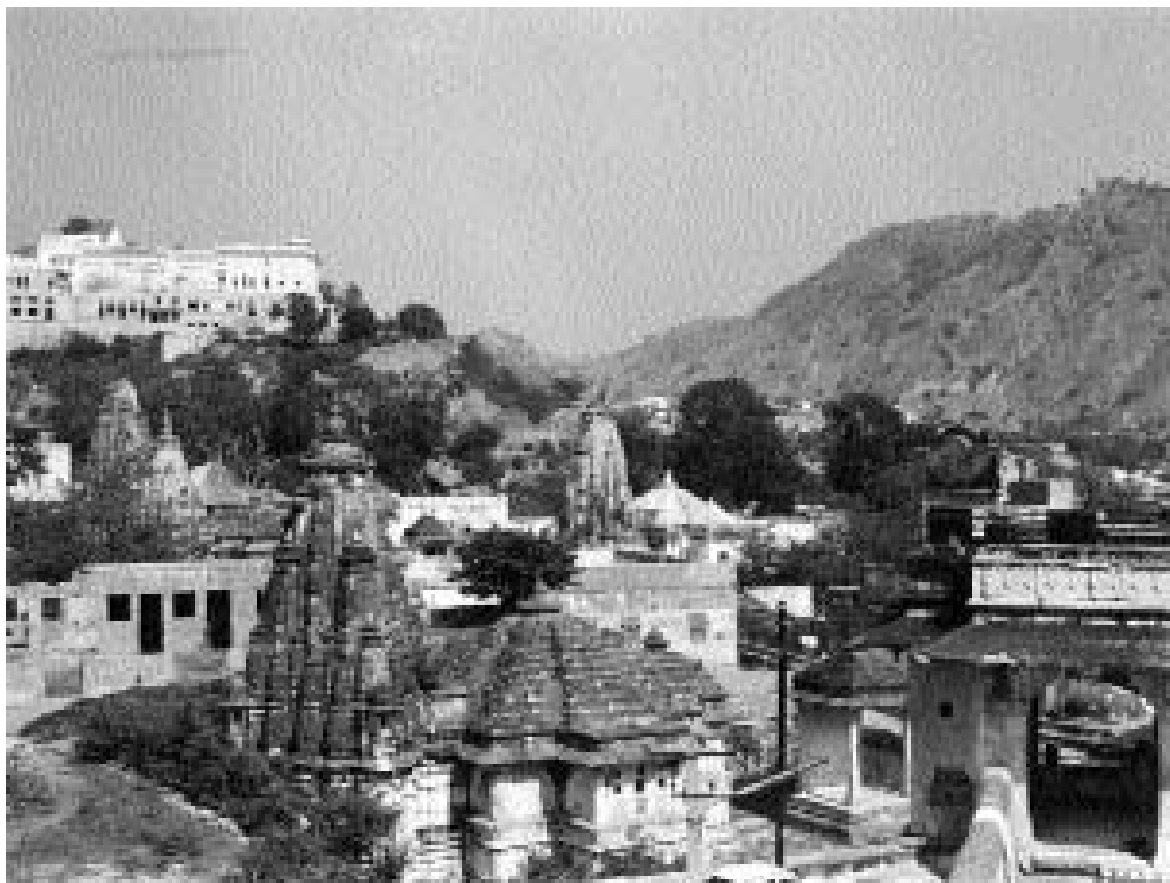
may be anything between one and twelve.¹⁷ Two later *vastu shastra* texts are much more specific. The *Samrangana Sutradhara* says that the 64-square *mandala* (called *chandita*) is appropriate for all towns; and the *Rajavallabha* recommends the same model for use in cities, palaces and villages.¹⁸

The widths of the streets within a town, and of one town compared with another, vary according to a strict hierarchy. It is not appropriate for a small town to have streets of the greatest width. An ordinary town, according to the *Mayamata*, can have as many as 13 separate street widths, increasing in increments of half a *danda*, from 1 to 7 *danda*.¹⁹ Almost all the texts speak of a principal street or group of streets called *rajmarg* (or royal highway), which runs through the centre of the town and connects with the palace. Although for general use, these are also intended for the

movement of troops and must be *pucca* (paved).²⁰ As might be expected, the political treatises such as the *Arthashastra* and the *Sukraniti* also have much to say about the *rajmargs*, and are especially emphatic about their proper maintenance. For throwing dirt on a road, says the *Arthashastra*, the fine is one eighth of a *pana*, for blocking it with muddy water, a quarter of a *pana*, but on a *rajmarg* these fines are doubled. For excreting faeces by a royal property, the fine is as much as four *pana*, twice the amount due if the offence is committed by a public well; but the fines are halved if only urine is passed, and waived altogether if the offence is due to sickness or

fear.²¹ The author of the *Sukraniti* advises the king to pass a law prohibiting the obstruction of all roads, temples, wells, parks and boundaries, and to permit the free movement of the poor, the blind and the crippled.²²

The construction of temples within the town is also a responsibility of the king (illus. 3). Whatever his own personal affiliation, he must build and maintain temples to all of the gods and join with the people in the celebration of their festivals.²³ The *Manasara* goes so far as to specify particular districts within the town for each of the principal deities; but it is consistent with the other *vastu shastras* in



3 A general view of Amber showing royal temples.

insisting that a royal capital must have a Vishnu temple at its centre.²⁴ All the temples face east or west, or towards the town centre, and a temple outside the town must not have its back towards it.²⁵

In a town or city intended for a general population including all four castes, the distribution of the people is systematic. The district where each citizen resides and works is determined by his caste and occupation. The standard pattern is the one described in the *Samrangana Sutradhara*, which places Brahmins in the north, Kshatriyas in the east, Vaishyas in the south and Shudras in the west.²⁶ Detail is added to this broad distribution by reference to the associations of the deities who govern each of the subdivisions of the *mandala*. For example, the south-eastern corner of the *mandala* is attributed to Agni, the god of fire; and accordingly the south-eastern corner of the city is reserved for those who work with fire, such as blacksmiths and cooks. The north-western corner, by contrast, is assigned to Vayu, the god of wind; and this direction is accordingly preferred for trades which involve movement, such as keeping carriages or being a shepherd.²⁷ Each of the bazaars is allocated to a particular plot of the *mandala* according to the type of produce sold.²⁸ The system is elegant but not so rigidly drawn as to defy utility, and the texts are equally insistent that all costly goods such as gems, gold and fine textiles should be sold on the central streets leading to the palace, and that flowers and incense should be sold in shops located outside the temples.²⁹

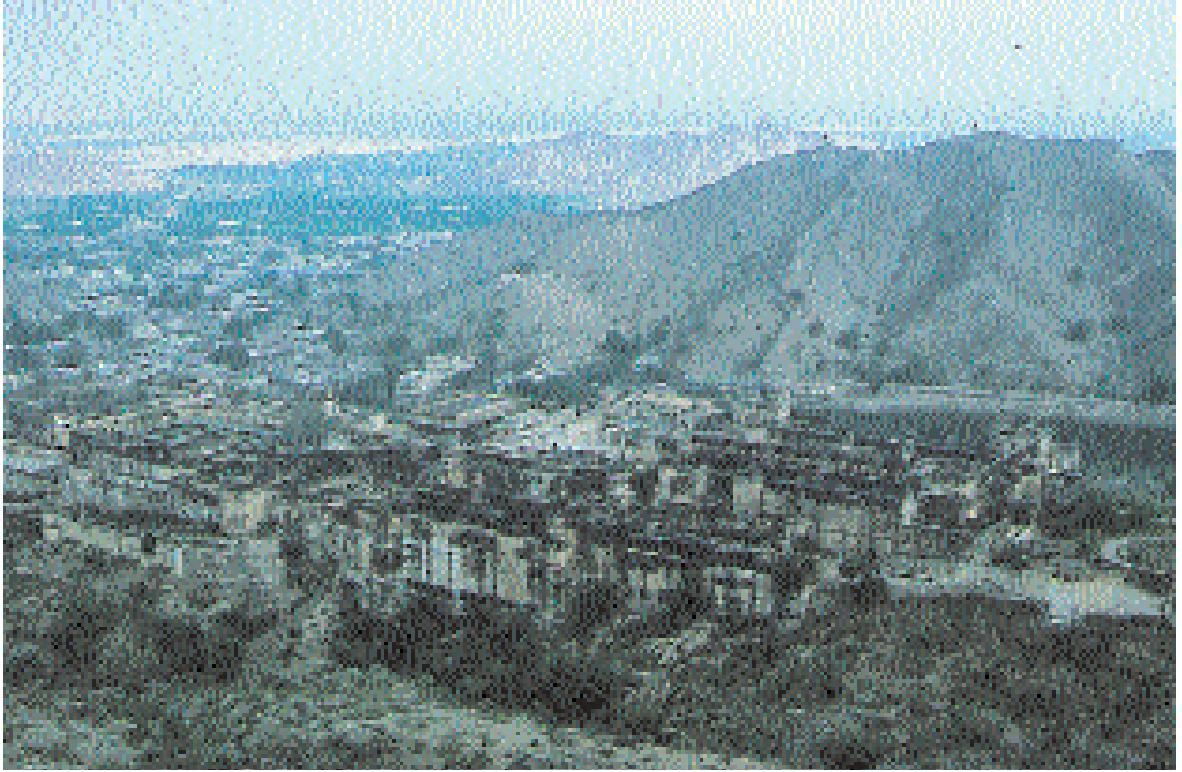
The Shastric Palace

The centre of the *mandala* is the *brahmasthana*, its most sacred zone, presided over by Brahma himself. When the *mandala* is employed in the construction of a temple, the *brahmasthana* corresponds to the

garbha griha, the image chamber at the temple's core (illus. 17). In city planning, as we have seen, it is the ideal location for a Vishnu temple. The palace of the king is normally located to the west, but some texts allow that the centre may also be used for the palace, and the *Mayamata* even suggests that this is a prerogative of the highest class of king.³⁰

The shastric conception of a palace is of a series of concentric enclosures or courts. Their number depends on the rank of the king. The most elaborate palace, with seven enclosures, is reserved for the Chakravartin, while a Maharaja may have up to six, a Narendra up to five and, at the bottom of the scale, the Astragrahin will have to be content with a maximum of two. The relative proportions of the courtyards are also determined. If the central court is considered as a square with a side of one unit, then the second, which encloses it, will be three units across; the third will be seven units; the fourth, thirteen units; the fifth, 21 units; the sixth, 31 units; and the seventh, 34 or 40 units (illus. 18).³¹

The outer courtyards are intended for storage, for the stabling of animals and for the more public functions of the king, while the inner courtyards are reserved for his private residence and the apartments of his queens. Beyond this, each of the courts is considered as a *mandala*, following on a smaller scale precisely the same model that structures the city as a whole. Thus each courtyard is conceptually divided into directions and zones, with each division being assigned to the appropriate deity, and assigned a function accordingly. In a palace of three enclosures, according to the *Manasara* for example, the north-eastern corner of the inner enclosure houses the king's dining hall, while the same corner of the second enclosure has a temple (reflecting the special association of this direction with *puja* and contemplation), and the north-east section of the third enclosure accommodates the cowsheds, with



4 The palace of Amber, from above.



5 Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.

6 Shri Govind, with Radha, installed in the Govind Deo temple at Jaipur.

7 Painted map of Jaipur; 18th century.

