

Excavation and other archaeological activities in Tilaurakot (Ancient Kapilavastu): 1973-1974

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General

As per the annual budget of the Department of Archaeology the works of excavation and conservation were carried out in Tilaurakot during the season 1973-1974 by a team consisting of the writer as in-charge, assisted by Senior Surveyor Mr. Hari Man Amatya, Field Photographer Mr. Sanu Raj Sakya, Administrative Assistants Messers Shanker Prasad Shrestha and Iswar Man Shrestha and Field Assistant Mr. Arjun Kumar Shrestha. Works of Conservation were mainly carried out by a team consisting of Messers Hari Man Amatya, Iswar Man Shrestha, Tej Ratna Tamrakar and Vishnu Prasad Ranjitkar.

Their Majesties the King and Queen also graced the site by their August visit and inspected the works in progress with keen interest. (Pl. I).

The total area exposed during this year was 3100 sq. ft. The main area tapped lay on Mound V of Tilaurakot practically in the heart of the site. The excavation being also exploratory in nature the diggings were extended to the peripheral mounds outside Tilaurakot. The cultural sequence outside Tilaurakot seems to be confined to the Sunga and Kushana periods.

The works of conservation were carried out

in 1200 sq. ft. area by fixing loose bricks in the palace complex (p) on Mound VII (Pl. IX) which was exposed by the Department jointly with the team of Rissho University, Japan, in previous years. Barbed wire fencing was also provided in an area covering 29096 sq. ft. to protect this excavated site from encroachment. Further, a programme was launched during this year to enclose the entire fortified site of Tilaurakot by barbed wire fencing and alignments were drawn for 1675 feet towards the west and north. More than half of the western side was enclosed by putting up 126 brick-posts of 8' 3" x 15" size. The length and breadth of Tilaurakot being 1600 x 1300 feet, the remaining work of fencing has been postponed for the next year. The writer as excavation in-charge is deeply obliged to Sri Krishna Deva, the Archaeological Adviser from India to H. M. G. Nepal, for his experienced guidance in excavation, conservation and publication of this report. The writer would also like to acknowledge the help rendered by Mr. P. M. Chitrakar, Mrs. Riddhi Baba Pradhan and Mrs. Shobha Shrestha in selecting and classifying the antiquities and Mr. Chiniya Ratna Tamrakar for preparing the photographs for publication.

Excavation (Fig. 1)

An area of 2700 sq. feet was exposed in Mound V of Tilaurakot (Pl. II A) where the

structures ranging from the Mauryan to the Kushana period were encountered in a horizontal excavation without reaching the natural soil. The trenches were laid out from the centre of the mound with a view to exploring the connection of the structures of this mound with the already exposed palace complex (?) of Mound VII in Tilaurakot.

Towards the eastern side of the centre the remains of mud structures comprising a wall and two circular platforms, assignable to the Mauryan period, were met with at a depth of 11 feet from the present ground level.

At the north edge of the mound two adjacent chambers with a circular brick-well (Pl. III B), datable to the Sunga period, were found not far from the remains of a paved bath-room connected with a drain. These Sunga structures using invariably complete bricks of $13\frac{1}{2}''$ to $14'' \times 9'' \times 2\frac{1}{4}''$ size were exposed at a depth of between 3 and 4 feet below the surface. Remains of another Sunga building, overlaid by Kushana structures, was cleared on the western side of the same mound. This Sunga structure shows profuse use of post-holes which characterise the Sunga remains at Tilaurakot (Pl. III A).

The Kushana structures employing both bricks and brick-bats, quarried from earlier structures, show two building phases which are laid out in parallel blocks, divided by lanes and alleys. These structures are distinguished by extensive brick-paved floors (Pl. II B), some of which are discernible even on the surface.

A few more trenches were dug outside the fortified area of Tilaurakot towards west, south and southwest to check the extension of the ancient habitational deposits. These operations confirmed the results published in the excavation report of 1972-73 (Ancient Nepal, No. 22, pp. 60-69) regarding the cultural horizon of the

peripheral mounds.

Antiquities

Nearly three hundred antiquities representing mostly Sunga and Kushana periods were collected during the excavation of this year. The finds include terracotta human and animal figurines; toy-cart wheels, seals and sealings of terracotta; copper coins and miscellaneous metal objects including iron nails and copper antimony rod; besides beads and bangles of varied materials like pottery, glass, conch-shell and semiprecious stones. Better specimens of each class are briefly noticed below.

Terracotta human figurines (Pl. IV)

1. Moulded figure of Mother-goddess, standing facing, preserved up to the bust. The face is oval with handsome features and a bicornate head-dress. She wears a bejewelled *avaguntama* (*odhni*) over the head, flanked by a pair of streamers seemingly of padded cloth, the upper ones curved and the lower ones hanging down obliquely, forming a sort of frame for the head which is crowned by a large disc with circular decoration in relief. Of the bicornate head-dress, seemingly made of rolled jewelled garlands, only the proper right mass is preserved, the left one being broken off. She wears a pearl-string fringing the forehead, a broad collar and a pair of large *tatankas* (ear ornaments) of which the right one, which looks spiral, is seen in profile and the left one viewed frontally is a smaller disc bearing the same decoration as the disc crowning the head. Though the figure is cast from a mould and has a flat back, the facial and anatomical features and the details of ornaments and the head-dress have been picked out and carefully finished, projecting them in sharp relief. Early Sunga type. Well-baked red fabric with orange red slip. TLK Mound V, layer (6), depth 10'.

2. Bust of cast female figurine, probably Mother-goddess, standing facing. The figure dons a bi-ornate head-dress of which the proper right mass is practically mutilated. She also wears a torque and elaborate pendant ear-ornaments, viz, a mutilated *tatanka* in the right ear and a floral stud in the upper part of the left ear with indications of a bell-shaped ornament below. The face is plump and oval, the eye-balls being indicated by pin-holes. Mutilated and poorly preserved. The figure is cast flat at the back showing parallel reed-marks at the top, while the sides have scraped edges. Sungan type. Well-baked red fabric with red slip. TLK Mound V, layer (5), depth 6' 10".

3. Hand-made hollow head representing a smiling face with well-modelled features including pinched eyebrows, nose and lips. Teeth exposed and picked up by minute pricks. Eyes indicated by applique and eye-balls by perforated discoid strips. Ears crudely pinched with pricked ear-holes and lobes. The head was adorned by applied head-dress which has peeled off. Light red fabric with traces of bright slip burning partly grey and partly red. Kushana type. TLK Mound V, Layer (2), depth 1'3".

4. Hand-made seated homo figurine with stump-like arms and legs terminating in spoon-shaped hands and feet. Head broken off. Wears applique torque and carries in the left hand a musical instrument with seven holes supported on the left shoulder. Red fabric with traces of black slip. Kushana type. TLK Mound V, Layer (2), depth 3'2".

5. Hand-made unshapely head perhaps of an old man with open (toothless?) mouth, mutilated nose, disproportionately large incised eyes and distorted heavy chin. The portion above eyebrows, indicated by large oblique incisions, is broken off. Kushana type. Light red fabric. TLK Mound V, Layer (2), depth 2'3".

6. Hand-made elongated smiling head with prominent cheeks and pointed chin, with incised bulging eyes having pricked eye-balls, pinched thick nose with pin-hole nostrils and bluntly slit mouth between lips modelled in low relief. Wears fan-shaped head-dress. Modelled flat at the back. Buff fabric with greyish core, traces of red slip. Kushana type. TLK Mound V, Layer (2), depth 2'.

7. Hand-made crude miniature head crowned by a crest-like projection. Nose indicated by light pinching with nostrils shown by pin-holes, mouth by a slit and eyes by discoid perforated strips. Ears roughly pinched. Braided hair shown by applied strip, now mutilated. Light red fabric with traces of red slip. Kushana type. TLK Mound V, Layer (3), depth 3'5".

8. Hollow roughly modelled head built in applique round a wheel-turned cup as core. It has sharp pinched nose, pinched lips with slit mouth, applied eyebrows and ears and incised eyes with pricked eye-balls. The face is squat and flat with a short chin and very narrow forehead which is decorated with a crudely executed jewelled band with *chatula-mani* joined to the hair, done up in pendant double braid with a terminal loop, all shown in applique. Kushana type of head, noteworthy for its technique of execution on a core of wheel-turned pot. Buff fabric. TLK Mound V, Layer (1) depth 1'7".

Terracotta animal figurines

1. Humped bull figurine with the hind part and the muzzle and the right ear of the head broken and the horns and legs mutilated. Upper body stamped with five circular punches showing criss-cross pattern. Red fabric with bright red slip, Sunga type. TLK Mound V, Layer (6), depth 7'6".

2. Hand-made duck-shaped hollow toy with bulging belly. Transverse holes across the lower part of the belly for wheel-axle and a pair of holes for tying string for pulling it. Thin light red fabric. A similar type from Tilaurakot is already published (D. Mitra, Excavations at Tilaurakot and Kodan, pl XXXIX, A, 35). TLK Mound V, layer (5) depth 5'5".

3. Head of elephant figurine with mutilated trunk and ears. Eyes indicated by punched and perforated diamond and eye-brows by pin-holes. Rough texture of the crown and the surviving bit of trunk indicated by parallel strips of punched pimples. Decorated with an applied band below the crown. Light red fabric with bright red slip. TLK Mound V, Layer (3) depth. 3'.

Toy cart-wheels of both plain and decorated varieties have been found, the latter with a raised central hub and spokes joined to the outer peripheral rim often exhibiting dotted nail marks. The decorated ones are of the Sunga type and bear a bright red slip where as the plain one is in buff fabric and seems to belong to the Kushana period.

Objects used as personal ornaments like beads, bangles and antimony rod were also found in the excavation. The terracotta beads are of various shapes, some emulating the forms of ghata, arecanut and barrel, while the remaining beads are made both of glass and semi-precious stones, exhibiting a variety of shapes. Of the latter, a spacer of banded agate and a square cylindrical bead of crystal are noteworthy. Bangles made both of glass and terracotta have been found and most of them are plain. There is only one decorated terracotta bangle showing two bands of pimples.

Appendix

The antiquities found in the previous exca-

vations in Tilaurakot which were brought to the premises of the Department in the Singha Durbar, suffered serious damage in the disastrous fire of the month of July 1973. Though some of the salvaged antiquities also were partly damaged, burnt or discoloured, they still retain their value. A representative collection from these bearing special features, are briefly noticed below:

Hoard of copper Coins. (Pls. VI B-C, VII and VIII)

A hoard of copper coins numbering over twenty-two hundred, dating from the first century B. C. to second century A. D. was found in Tilaurakot Mound VII in the year 1970-71 by the archaeological team of the Rishso University, Japan. Of this hoard, 2187 coins were salvaged from the fire of the Singha Durbar and are grouped as follows.

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| 1. Indo-Bactrian coins of Apollodotos | - 2 |
| 2. Panchala type coins of Agnimitra | - 2 |
| 3. Ayodhya coins of Cock-and-Bull type | - 379 |
| 4. Kushana coins of Wima Kadphises | - 428 |
| 5. Coins of Kanishka | - 1224 |
| 6. Coins of Huvishka | - 152 |

On the Ayodhya type coins, names of Ayumitra and Satyamitra are written on the obverse. Out of 1224 coins of the Kushana emperor Kanishka, two hundred seventy-six are of the Vato type, one hundred six of Siva type, seventeen of Mithra type, ten of Nanaiya type, eleven of Athsho type, five of Mao type, three of Buddha type, nine of Helios type (small size), five of Nana type (small size), and seven hundred eighty-two of mixed types.

Coins of the Kushana king Huvishka number one hundred and fifty-two, of which seventy-four are of King-on-elephant type, fifty of King-on-couch type and twenty-eight of King-on-lotus type.

The published photographs here include specimens of each representative type from the hoard after they were chemically treated in H.M.G.'s Central Conservation Laboratory, Kathmandu.

Terracotta Figurines

1. Well-preserved cast pyramidal plaque, representing goddess Padma-Sri, standing in elegant tribhanga on a large lotus springing from the Padma-vana, enclosed by a railing at the base. The entire back-ground is stippled. The plaque is perforated towards the top with two holes for suspension. The figure of the goddess is delicately depicted and is typical of the Sunga Mother-goddess figurines. The goddess has a flat round face, wearing a heavy bicornate headdress flanked on both sides by weapons with details obliterated. She has a petite frame with heavy bust and ample hips emphasizing her maternal aspect and carries an indistinct object in the upraised right hand while her left hand is akimbo, holding a winding lotus-stalk. Well-baked red fabric, 4.7" height. (Pl V). Such figures have also been found from kausambi. 1

2. Moulded male figure standing holding fruit in the right hand and the left hand akimbo with a parrot perched on the left fore-arm. Delicately modelled figure originally with a handsome oval face wearing a prominent turban of two tiers with upper one globular decorated with circles. He is heavily bedecked with ornaments comprising heavy Kundalas, a torque showing a barrel bead flanked by two taurines, a necklace of three beaded strings, a pair of heavy bracelets in each hand and waist-band of three strands of large pearls. He is draped in a stitched upper garment with sleeves and a diaphanous lower garment

showing the nudity. The figure may represent Manmatha. Torso excellently preserved, head and feet lost. Buff fabric, red slip. Sunga type.

3. Moulded plaque showing a female figurine probably Mother-goddess, standing in Samabhanga pose with the left hand akimbo and right hand upraised and touching the right Karnakundala. Well-modelled figure with a round face wearing braided curls in three circular rolls. She is heavily bedecked with ornaments comprising circular Karnakundalas, a torque, bracelets and bunch of bangles and a Mekhala of three strands of pearls. Of the undergarment only the central fold, with its heavy upper part coming through and falling over the mekhala is seen. Red fabric with dark red slip. 3.2" height, Sunga type.

4. Moulded female figurine standing feeding parrot with the right hand. Delicately modelled figurine with round face and handsome features with hair dressed in two heavy side-rolls. The left roll is decorated with four jewelled bands and the right roll with one band. Three pearl bands fringe the forehead. Heavily bedecked with ornaments, comprising discoid ear-ornaments, the right one seen in profile, a broad collar or torque, three strings of beaded necklace, a pair of heavy bangles in the fore-arms and a Mekhala of three strands of large pearls. Six tassels, suspended from the Mekhala are seen in front. She is draped in a Sari, indicated by parallel-incised folds on the thighs and legs. Her left hand is held over the Mekhala, while she carries in her right hand a large fruit being pecked at by a parrot resting on her fore-arm. Well-preserved except for the feet which are broken off. Well-baked red fabric with traces of red slip, 6.5" height. Sunga type. (Pl VI. A).

1. S. C. Kala, *Terracotta Figurines from Kausambi* (Allahabad, 1950) pl. XXI.