



## Politics of Geography: Kapilavastu's Capital Debate

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*Article History:* Submitted 20 August 2023; Reviewed 26 September 2023; Accepted 20 February 2024

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### Abstract

*The site of ancient Kapilavastu of Shakyas Kingdom has been a contentious space for one hundred and twenty-four years now. The issue has not been about the geography of the Kapilavastu, but the location of the Capital of Kapilavastu. In 1896, Dr. Anton Fuhrer discovered Tilaurakot, located in Southwest Tarai of Nepal, as an archaeological site and claimed it to be the capital of Sakya Kingdom. Two years later, in 1898, a British Colonial engineer William C. Peppe discovered a buried stupa in his estate at Piprahawa, India, some twenty kilometers south of Tilaurakot of Nepal. Following the discovery of a relic vase in the buried stupa, the British-Indian authority claimed the site to be the capital of ancient Kapilavastu. Since, the authorities of both Nepal and India have been claiming the site of the capital is located in their own respective territory which gave rise to the ongoing debate. This paper explores the reason for the controversy over the location of Kapilavastu's capital. On the surface, the contention on the location of the capital palace of the Shakyas Kingdom appears to have grown from the differing views on the archaeological evidences discovered so far. However, the research work, archaeological reports, and literature written on both, Piprahawa and Tilaurakot, Buddhist heritage sites share one common point – the political interference in the narrative of the geography of the site located. Moreover, a critical analysis of the literature and reports written on Kapilavastu reveals how archaeological reports have been influenced by the geopolitical interests. This paper concludes that the politics of geography has been sustaining the controversy, rather than helping to resolve it.*

**Keywords:** Sakyamuni, Kapilavastu, Tilaurakot, Piprahawa, Politics, archaeology

## **Contextualizing the Debate**

Kapilavastu was a small kingdom situated beneath the Siwalik (Churia) range in the foothill of the Himalayas. The Shakya territory was bordered on the north by the Himalayas, on the east by the river Rohini, and on the west and south by the river Rapti. According to Rhys Davids, the general position of Kapilavastu can be determined by the distance given from other places: “60 yojanas (450miles) from Rajgriha, 50 yojanas (375 miles) from Vaisali, 6/7 yojanas (50 or 60 miles) from Sravasti” (as quoted in Bidari, 2003, p. 11).

Shanker Lal Chaudhary (2016) affirms: “Today, it has been accepted that the Sakya’s kingdom Kapilavastu stretched from Tilaurakot of Kapilavastu in Nepal to Piprahawa of Siddharthanagar, Uttar Pradesh of India” (p.55). Moreover, “the present-day border between the two countries, Nepal and India, was drawn in 1815 at the treaty of Sugauli. In that treaty Nepal lost more than one third of territory” (McKinnon, 2017, 169).

Until 1896, the Western Tarai of Nepal, particularly the area covering Rupendehi and Kapilavastu, had been isolated. Khadga Shumsher Rana was banished to the region at the age of twenty-six by his brother Prime Minister Bir Shumsher, for the region was a backwater in every sense of the word (Allen, 2018, p.45). General Khadga Shumsher, the governor of Palpa, turned the banishment into an opportunity for adventurous explorer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1896, General Khadga Shumsher and Dr. Anton Alois Fuhrer, an archaeologist appointed by British-India government for the purpose of finding the Buddha’s Kapilavastu, discovered Ashoka Pillar in Lumbini with an inscription. The inscription inscribed in Brahmi script and Pali language reads:

King Piyadashi (Ashoka) beloved of the Gods, in the twentieth year of his reign, came himself and worshipped – saying ‘Here Buddha Sakyamuni was born’. He (Ashoka) caused this stone pillar to be erected. And, because the Worshipful One was born here, the tax for the village of Lumbini was reduced to one eighth parts. (McKinnon, 2017, p. 140)

For the first time in history, heretofore backwater Lumbini became the topic of the talks among archaeologists and historians. “The exciting discovery of Khadga Shumsher Rana and Dr. Anton Fuhrer drew attention of many archaeologists to the Nepalese Tarai, and in the same year they located one more Pillar, at Gotihawa of Kapilavastu” (Bidari, 2003, p. 160).

Following the discovery of the Lumbini pillar, the British-India government commissioned Babu P.C. Mukherjee to determine the exact location of Kapilavastu. He explored the entire zone and came to the conclusion that Tilaurakot was the only place in the whole region that could be claimed to be the exact site of Kapilavastu.

Since the discovery of the Asokan Pillar in Lumbini in December 1896, and Tilaurakot of Kapilavastu after a month, Buddhists from Burma, Tibet, and Ceylon had started coming to the sites from which one could calculate the economic and spiritual value of the pilgrimage site.

Similarly, “the speed with which news of the Buddha relics uncovered, on 18 January 1898, at Piprahawa, Uttar Pradesh India, spread by word of mouth can be judged by the fact that within a week a senior Siamese Buddhist monk arrived at Piprahawa demanding to speak to the estate owner who possessed the relics vase” (Allen, 2008, p. 201). William Claxton Peppe, an engineer by profession, a British official who had keen interest in archaeology, had discovered the relic vase with inscription in his own estate. After the Piprahwa archaeological excitement the search for the capital of Kapilavastu got clouded in the midst of decolonization of British colony in India.

After a long period of gap, Government of India and Nepal jointly commissioned Mrs. Debala Mitra to excavate in Tilaurakot and Kodan sites in 1962. She did not find enough archaeological evidences to establish the location of the capital of the Kapilavastu, for her excavation was halted owing to the bad weather, both political and natural (Mitra, 1972). The sudden departure of Mrs. Debala Mitra from the site had raised some eye brows claiming the political interference on the work of on the field archaeologist.

After Debala Mitra’s departure from Tilaurakot, Nepali archaeologist Tara Nanda Mishra continued the exploration in the 19060s and he exposed one of Tilaurakot’s Western gateways<sup>1</sup>.

In 1972 KM Srivastava resumed the excavation of the Piprahwa stupa which was started by William C. Peppe in 1898. Srivastava’s aim was to discover the capital of Kapilavastu. In his book he mentions that the team of scholars from Japan and Nepal visited him at the site in Piprahwa and ridiculed his aim of discovering the capital of Kapilavastu. Undeterred by the visitors’ comments, he continued the “complete excavation of the exterior of the Piprahwa stupa” (2018, pp. 32-33) from which he discovered the relic casket containing charred bones on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1972 (2018, p. 36).

Having discovered the casket with the relics, he was enthusiastic to meet his aim of locating the capital of Kapilavastu. Srivastava writes, “In the year 1976 excavations were resumed at Ganwaria to determine the planning of the ancient town of Kapilavastu. Extensive structural remains, corroborating once again the identification of ancient Kapilavastu were brought to light” (2018, p. 64). Srivastava emphatically claimed to have “solved” the

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1. See Figure 1 in the Appendix.

mystery of Kapilavastu capital by discovering the exact location in Ganwaria, the site near the Piprahwa stupa.

And yet the exploration did not stop with Srivastava's claim of discovering the capital of Kapilavastu at the press conferences. The exploration had been going on in the greater Lumbini area. Between 2014 and 2016 the team led by Professor Robin Conningham of Durham University, UK and Depart of Archaeology of Nepal Government conducted geophysical survey within the walls of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu<sup>2</sup>. The excavation conducted near Samai-mai temple in 2015 by the team discovered the archaeological artifacts that showed that the site was occupied as early as eighth century BCE<sup>3</sup>. The search for the capital of Kapilavastu continues to this date, so does the debate over the location of capital of Kapilavastu.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This paper explores the reasons for the debate between India and Nepal over the capital site of Shakya kingdom of Kapilavastu which has been going on for over a hundred and twenty-four years. The narrative of the location of the capital has been, geographically, shifting in and out of Nepal's border. This paper argues that the political interference on the archaeological works caused the shift. Therefore, the debate on the site has not been based, solely, on the authenticity of the archaeological evidences.

### **Research Questions**

This research paper aims to find the answers to the questions as follows:

- 1) How long the debate has been going on despite the archaeological evidences on both sides of the border?
- 2) What are the reasons for this debate?
- 3) Why has the debate not been solved to this day?

### **Review of Literature**

There is no single work that explores the politics of ongoing debate over whether Kapilavastu is located in Tilaurakot of Nepal's Kapilavastu district, or in Piprahava of India's Balrampur district. The Shakya Kingdom Kapilavastu is not a completely new subject matter to write or explore about. Much has been written on Kapilavastu as the Shakya Kingdom during the Buddha's lifetime. The name Kapilavastu as the Kingdom of the Shakya has been

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2. See Figure 2 in the Appendix

3. See Figure 3 in the Appendix

recorded in Buddhist scriptures and literatures. Some latter-day Buddhist literatures such as Ashovaghosa's *the Buddhacarita* (1972), Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh's *Old Path White Cloud* (1997) mention Kapilavastu as the Shakya Kingdom. Allen, C. (2010). *The Buddha and Dr. Führer: an archaeological scandal*. The book by Charles Allen, for the most part, is limited to Archaeologist Dr Anton Fuhrer's activities and his relation with the British officers. The author analyzes the subjective narrative of the historical figures present during the incident. The documents critically analyzed are diaries, hearsay reports and the letter written to the then Governor General. On the basis of his own analysis, the author discredits Fuhrer's identification of Shakya massacred site Sagarhawa and the Asokan column at the village of Gotihawa as bogus (Allen, 2010, p. 165). Although, Allen's book speaks not a word on the controversy between India and Nepal over the physical location of the capital of Shakya Kingdom Kapilavastu, it does shed light on the seeds of the controversy by presenting the William C. Pappé's discovery of the reliquary urns in his Piprahawa Estate in Northern India. Similarly, G.B. Bajracharya's work, *Lumbini- HidaBuddheJate Sakya-muniti* (2019) states that the Buddha was born in Lumbini. What follows, after the title of the book, is an exhaustive description beginning from the Buddha's family tree, his father's Kingdom, event of his birth, descriptive history of neighboring state, to the Siddhartha Gautam's attainment of Buddha hood and his return to his homeland after the Enlightenment. However, nowhere in the book does he mention the controversy of the archaeological sites of the Kapilavastu. Furthermore, Basanta Bidari's *Lumbini beckons* (2009) presents descriptive narrative of the Birth place of the Buddha in the Lumbini Beckons. The text is, simply, a descriptive guide book for the tourists and the people who are interested in the Buddha's life and the archaeological sites, objects and artifacts found in the sites. Senior archaeologist of Government of India, K.M. Srivastava's *Buddha's Relics from Kapilavastu* (2018) invests much of its ink and paper on presenting how Indian media reported the findings of Piprahawa and how he was quoted in national and international news.

## **Methodology**

This paper is based on a qualitative method. This paper critically analyzes issue in a political and historical context. The research relies on the primary sources, such as published archaeological reports and secondary sources such as historical texts, published archaeological reports on Tilaurakot archaeological sites of Nepal. Moreover, some texts and newspaper articles written on archaeological sites of Piprahawa and Ganwaria has been used for the analysis. The paper used some photographs of the information posts posted on the Tilaurakot archaeological, for reference.

## **Objective of the research**

The objective of the research is to explore the genealogy of the debate on the geographical location of the capital of Kapilavastu over the period time. The paper, also, aims to analyze the shifts in the narrative of the location of Capital in the political history of Nepal, British-India and Independent India. Finally, the paper aims to find the reason for the debate and suggest solution to the ongoing debate.

## **Delimitation of the Research**

The research paper is limited to the topic of the capital of Kapilavastu. Therefore, the paper made use of all the sources related to the ancient kingdom of Kapilavastu. Moreover, the paper has drawn insights from the analytical texts on the archaeological excavations and findings of Piprahawa and Ganwariain UP, India, and the findings of the archaeological sites of Tilaurakot in Lumbini province of Nepal. In what follows I shall explore the reasons and the nature of the controversy which has been going on ever since 1898 when the British-Indian landlord William C. Peppe discovered the relics Urns in his Piprahawa estate (Allen, 2010, p. 127). In doing so, the paper critically analyzes the historical texts on Kapilavastu, essays, articles, archaeological reports, and the news report published on Kapilavastu as the Shakya Kingdom.

## **Tilaurakot vs Piprahawa: Kapilavastu's Capital Debate**

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015, Hari Shrestha, former Professor of Archaeology at Tribhuvan University published an article on the archaeological site in Tilaurakot of Kapilavastu titled "Unearthing the past".<sup>4</sup> Hartel, a renowned archaeologist, who carried out intensive research on ancient Buddhist sites, rightly stated that "the majority of scholars all over the world tended to Tilaurakot." On 4<sup>th</sup> May 2015, *Times of India* reported a story, countering the Nepali archaeologist's article on Tilaurakot titled "UP's Piprahawa is Buddha's Kapilavastu?". The article quoted the on the field archaeologist BR Mani as saying "Their (Nepal's Tilaurakot) oldest antiquity belongs to the second century BC which means that it is not as old as Piprahawa".<sup>5</sup> The capital of Shakya Kingdom has always been a contentious issue between Nepal and India, long before India existed as an independent modern nation. It goes back to the Christmas day in 1899 when some relics urns were discovered in Piprahawa Estate of British-Indian Landlord William C. Peppe. I would like to begin with an example

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4. See, Shrestha, H. (2015, February 6). 'Unearthing the past'. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2015/02/06/unearthing-the-past>

5. See, Sharda, S. (2015, May 4). 'UP's Piprahawa is Buddha's Kapilavastu?'. *Times of India*. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/47143085.cms>

regarding how India and Nepal's politicians involved themselves into a controversy that was no longer a controversial issue. Both the countries recognized Lumbini as the Buddha's birthplace and it has already been listed in the UNESCO World heritage. And yet Indian and Nepali government officials, politicians, go on giving controversial statements in public speech and television programs. Not just over the politicians' statements, Nepalese protested over a television program that mentioned India as the birth place of Shakyamuni the Buddha.

In 2013 “around 300 cable operators in Nepal had blocked the broadcast of the *Zee TV* programme on Lord Buddha, following protests that it depicted the ancient sage as being born in India instead of the Himalayan nation”<sup>6</sup>. India's Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh had to release a statement stating that the Buddha was born in Lumbini, which lies in Nepal, so there is no controversy. The presented episodes are the few examples of un mindful controversial exchanges between India and Nepal's authorities regarding the ownership of the Gautama the Buddha, and not competing in owning up the Buddha's teaching. The root of the controversy goes back to the day when India had not been consolidated as a nation we see today, but a colony of the British Empire called British-India. In 1898, a British-Indian official named William C. Peppe, an engineer by profession and interested in archaeology, discovered a stupa buried in his Piprahawa estate, and after the excavation his treasure hunters team found relic vase buried underneath the stupa. It was since then the British-Indian officials claimed the Peppe's estate being the capital site of Shakya Kingdom of Kapilavastu. However, not long after the Peppe's discovery of the relic Vase, Purna Chandra Mukherjee claimed to have discovered the Sakya capital of Kapilavastu. He reported, “In concluding my report, I may give a summary of the results of my work in the Nepali Tarai. The first and most important is, of course, the discovery of Kapilavastu, the position of which claim to have more definitely determined than Dr. Fuhrer did” (Mukherjee, 1901/ 1969, p. 60). One hundred and seventeen years later, an American reporter reports from the exact sites of the Sakya palace site in Tilaurakot of Kapilavastu:

Standing at the edge of a six-foot trench, an archaeologist from Nepal's government peered down at a row of round holes — new evidence, he said, that below our feet lay a 2,500-year-old thatched-and-timber city where the Buddha lived until the age of twenty-nine”<sup>7</sup>

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6. See, ‘There is no controversy, Buddha was born in Nepal: India’. (2013, September 15). *The Economic Times*.  
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/there-is-no-controversy-buddha-was-born-in-nepal-india/articleshow/22603808.cms>
  7. See, Barry, E. (2016, June 1). India and Nepal in Not-Very-Enlightened Spat Over Buddha's Childhood Home. *The New York Time*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/02/world/asia/>

The archaeologist said he was thinking about the future, when thousands of pilgrims would be climbing down from rows of buses every year to see the ruins in the Nepalese town of Tilaurakot that they were trying to develop the site as the site of pilgrim tourism. Similar enthusiasm could be detected about 17 miles away on the Indian side of the border, Ganwaria Piprahawa, where India invites tourists to visit another site it claims are the ruins of the Buddha's childhood home. Asked about the Nepali site, an Indian archaeologist, said that "The question doesn't arise,"<sup>8</sup> about the authenticity of the capital site of the Kapilavastu Begun in the glorious days of the British Raj, this archaeological tug of war has remained unresolved for more than a century, of concern to virtually nobody. Across the border from Pirahawa, in Tilaurakot, a Nepali-British team supported by UNESCO has been working ahead with their own hypothesis that an Indian-organized expedition of Archaeologists Debala Mitra in February 1962 had simply stopped digging too early because of political pressure from the Indian government. Then, the leader of that Indian expedition, Debala Mitra, had uncovered traces of a sprawling brick city, but she said it could not have been Kapilavastu because it had been built hundreds of years after the Buddha's life (Bidari, 2003, p. 170). On the other side of the border KM Srivastava claimed to have established the capital of Kapilavastu by discovering the palace structure in Ganwaria in 1976 (2018, p. 64). And on the Nepal's side of Kapilavastu excavation resumed in 2015 the from site that Mrs. Debala Mitra had concluded the report of Tilaurakot and Kodan (1972). The UNESCO-backed team cut down through the brick structures Ms. Mitra had found and discovered a second fortification whose ramparts were made of clay. Then they dug even farther, slowing their work to a crawl. This time the team of Archaeologists reported that "Six feet below the earth's surface, they found them. The traces of hardened earth inside those holes, when analyzed in a laboratory, dated from the sixth century B.C., meaning they would have stood during the Buddha's lifetime."<sup>9</sup> Indian side was alarmed when in 1996, the government of Nepal selected seven additional places (including Tilaurakot) in the country as the potential UNESCO World Heritage sites. And yet, no work has been done to implement the proposal for a long time now.

In fact, Tilaurakot had been in the list when Lumbini was nominated for the World Heritage site. Although Lumbini was listed in the site by UNESCO within a year, Tilaurakot was omitted owing to the controversies and "lack of evidences". Then, Nepal government

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nepal-india-buddha-kapilavastu.html

8. Ibid.

9. Barry, E. (2016, June 1). India and Nepal in Not-Very-Enlightened Spat Over Buddha's Childhood Home. *The New York Time*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/02/world/asia/nepal-india-buddha-kapilavastu.html>.



started the nomination process again by collecting enough pieces of evidence, in addition to those collected in the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the relics Stupa site of Piprahwa is also not listed in the UNESCO World heritage sites. According to Ram Bahadur Kunwar, UNESCO accepts the nominations only after completing all the procedures including interaction with locals and the consent of the local governments. The Shakyas capital issue has been more political than the archaeological since 1898 that it might take longer to get it listed on the UNESCO list after consulting to the experts of the both sides. On Friday 28 January, Vincent Smith, a good friend of the land owner of the Relic Stupa made an “unannounced” visit to Dr. Anton Fuhrer’s excavation site in Kapilavastu of Nepal’s Tarai, accompanied by the land owner of Piprahwa stupa site, William C. Peppe (Allen, 2008, p. 107). It should be noted here that Vincent Smith is not just a friend of the Relic Stupa estate owner Mr. Peppe but also “a senior government official of the British administration and such persons only entered Nepal by permission of the Nepal Durbar” (Allen, 2008, p. 107). As if not enough with the intruders at the excavation sites from the other side of the border, the Nepali Captain was watching over the shoulder of the Archaeologist Dr. Fuhrer and interfering with the detail observation and study of the discovered artifacts. While at the site Mr. Vincent Smith observed that the artifacts “were instantly taken possession of by the Nepalese Captain, who stood over Dr. Fuhrer, and were opened by the captain who then laid them aside. I doubt greatly if Dr. Fuhrer was ever allowed to touch them again” (as quoted in Allen, 2008, p.110). With regard to Nepalese captain’s behavior, Dr. Fuhrer had complained to Mr. Smith that “he was hardly allowed to look at what he found, and was not permitted to remove even a brick” (Allen, 2008, p.110). There was Mr. Waddell, a senior archaeologist of the British government in India, who had problem with Bengali Babu P.C. Mukherji’s appointment as an archaeologist to discover the capital of Kapilavastu. PC Mukherji was appointed by Mr. Vincent Smith to work closely with Dr. Fuhrer. However, “No sooner had Mukherji been appointed than Dr. Waddell came forward to demand that the appointment be rescinded and that he himself conduct the Nepal excavation” (Allen, 2008, 184). In addition to this Babu PC Mukherji had faced obstructions from superior while working at the site of Taulihawa before he could even begin the task (Allen, 2008).

Moreover, P.C. Mukherji became a victim of two superior officers' ego and self-interests that he ended up being detained in Gorakhpur after being ordered to report to the office leaving the excavation site of Kapilavastu (Allen, 2008, pp. 184-188). What prompted government officer Vincent Smith to support PC Mukherji was that, on the one hand, he was pretty much convinced that the capital was somewhere near Tilaurakot, therefore he wanted

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10. Kayastha, V. P. (2021, January 12). When will Tilaurakot be included in the list of World Heritage Sites? *My Republica*. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/when-will-tilaurakot-be-included-in-the-list-of-world-heritage-sites/>

to know as much as possible about it; and on the other hand, he could not stop thinking that he is in the position to help establish the narrative of relic Stupa as the Kapilavastu's capital discovered at his friend's estate. What he needed was the information from the other side (Allen, 2008, pp. 144-148).

Another incident of political interference was while PC Mukherji's work was progressing at the Tilaurakot site, fellow archaeologist Dr. Waddell wrote a letter to the secretary to the British government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, urging that P.C. Mukherji be withdrawn from the site in Tilaurakot. He himself had withdrawn from digging and before abandoning his dig, Mr. Waddell had seen a brick stupa very similar in shape and construction to that at Piprahawa (Allen, 2008, 195).

Incident of this nature took place again in February 1962 when Debala Mitra, the then Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, visited Lumbini during excavation work being carried out at Kudan and Tilaurakot in Kapilavastu. The most important findings from Debala Mitra's excavations were three hundred eighty-one beads of various materials and sixty-one coins from a small trench. On the basis of these findings Mitra noted that there was systematized trading going on and beads being manufactured (Mitra, 1972, p. 84-123). However, Debala Mitra's excavation work was halted abruptly after Indian government ordered her to call off the project before the excavation could be completed. The report was published out of incomplete excavation of Mitra's excavation team<sup>11</sup>. Mrs. Mitra's withdrawing from the site before completing the task and publication of incomplete raised critics' eye-brows prompting speculations.

The Kapilavastu's capital has become much more politically charged geographical site over a hundred and twenty years. Had it remained an archaeological site only, the expert's analysis of the artifacts and the objects would have resolved the issue of location of the Shakyas capital of Kapilavastu long time back. Since it has become almost a political issue, the archaeological experts blow their own government's trumpets. There has not been much change over a century. The rule for the experts followed then and the rule they follow now is the same. The rule is: either blows the trumpet of archaeological narrative into the government's tune or get sacked and harassed just like Dr Fuhrer. Or, even get detained without knowing why, just like PC Mukherjee in 1899 January 25- 29 (Vashistha, 2077, p. 163). Kedar Vashistha's analysis has it that Fuhrer was forced to resign after he spread the information in public about the fact that Tilaurakot had been the palace of Kapilavastu. However, British-Indian landlords did not like the idea of Kapilavastu's capital outside their estates, Piprahawa (2077, p. 177).

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11. Vāśiṣṭha, K. (2077). *Nepalology: theory and applications*. Vidyārthī Pustaka Bhaṇḍāra. See page 163.

When it comes to the origin of the controversy, K.M. Srivastava (2018) opines that it was the PC Mukherjee's claim that got the dispute about the exact location of the capital started. He wrote that "the dispute over the of Kapilavastu 's capital dates back to the 1899 when a PWD Surveyor P.C. Mukherjee explored the region around Lumbini and fixed the location of Kapilavastu at Tilaurakot some sixteen miles from Lumbini (pp. 43-44).

## **Findings and Conclusion**

Western Tarai of Nepal became popular with the discovery of Asokan Pillar in Lumbini in 1896, Gotihawa Pillar and Tilaurakot site after a month of the same year, as the birthplace of the Buddha and the capital of the Sakyas' Kapilavastu. Similarly, on the other side of the border, the Piprahawa estate of British landlord became popular with the discovery of Buddha's Relics Stupa in 1898. And the speculations of the site being the capital city of the Sakya kingdom began to spread wider. Following the incidents, archaeologists started to search for the actual site of the Sakya capital where the Buddha grew up to be an adult. The race for search was so competitive that the value of the site grew higher and the location became very important issue. Then what followed was the news report of conflicting analysis of the archaeological evidences from both side of the sites, Tilurakot, Piprahawa, and Ganwaria.

Out of place political opinions are given higher priority in the mass media, for "negative is news". In the course of the reporting, the published reports of the sites and expert opinion of the archaeologists were ignored, for they were not saleable. Research shows that archaeologists such as KM Srivastava's fell prey to news hungry reporters by appearing on the press conference without a complete report. As Professor Tri Ratna Manandhar of Tribhuvan University stated, that "Srivastava's argument are not fair and satisfactory. His statements are not only inconsistent but also contradictory. He seemed to have wanted to amuse the world by his imaginary discoveries" (1976, p. 127).

The debate has not been on the issue of which side of the people follows the Buddha's teaching more. It has been over the site where Buddha grew up, for the world's Buddhist it could be the pilgrimage site. Therefore, the debate has been about having the site into one's own political territory which has economic and political importance for the local government's representatives. The research shows that, the economic benefit of having Shakya kingdom in its own territory, national and local level politicians, directly and indirectly, got involved in excavation projects and they began influencing the archaeologists on the sites. Having explored the genealogy of the capital debate, it can be said that political non-interference on and off the excavation sites could be the solution to the unresolved debate. Moreover, the experts working on the sites should not allow themselves to be bullied


or influenced by the politicians from either side. Likewise, archaeological evidences, their carbon dating, and historical analysis of those artifacts, alone, can establish the location of the capital. Thus, the Sakya capital can be marked by stopping the political interference based on the geography of the archaeological sites. Then Buddhist sites from both sides of the border could welcome Buddhist pilgrims without having to vilify the other side. They could exchange local Buddhist traditions and values, while promoting Buddha's teaching and the practice of the dharma as they did in the ancient Sakya kingdom of Kapilavastu.

## Appendix


### THE WESTERN GATE पश्चिमी द्वार

1


TILAKURAKOT




Western Gate after conservation in the 1960s and 1970s.  
सन् १९६० र ७० को दशकमा संरक्षण शुरू गरिएपछिको पश्चिमी द्वार



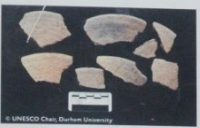
Excavation of one of the rubble foundations alongside the road.  
सडकसम्मै रहेका ईटाका टुक्रासहित बनेको एउटा जवला उपखनन




Dump of pottery alongside one of the ancient roads.  
प्राचीन सडकको छेउमा भौतिक बसोबास भौतिकीहरूको डम्प



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Artefacts, including terracotta figurines, metalworking residues and ceramic vessels from the western gate trench excavated in 2014.

सन् २०१४ मा पश्चिमी द्वारमा रहेको खडकामा उपखनन गर्दा खोलिएका माटोबाट भएका मुर्ति, लामुका अवशेष तथा माटोबाट बनेका भाँडाकुडाका अवशेष जस्ताकाहरू।

सन् १९६० को दशकमा नेपाली पुरातत्वविद् टी.एन. मिश्रले तिलौराकोटको एउटा पश्चिमीद्वार काबाँरेमा प्रकाश पारे जसमा काठका ठूला ढोकाहरू भएको ईटाका भन्ज्य संरचना रहेको थियो । द्वारको द्वैतर्फ ईटाबाट बनेका जगहरू रहेका थिए जुन शहरबाट ओगोरसोहोर गर्ने मानिसहरूको गतिविधिलाई नियन्त्रण गर्नका साथै शहरमाथि हुन सक्ने आक्रमण र बाढीको प्रतिरक्षा गर्न परवर्तारीका लागि बनाइएका टावरहरू हुन सक्छन् भन्ने बुझिन्छ ।

पश्चिमद्वार चित्र हालै गरिएको उत्खननबाट नगरको यसभागमा निर्मित सडक तथा भवनहरू तिलौराकोट भरि विछुराइएका पिइ-आइरन योजना (grid-iron layout) सँग मिल्ने तथ्य फेला परेको थियो । सँगै जोडिएको संरचनाको सतहभन्दा होचो तहमा जमिन बनेर सडकको संरचना निर्माण गरिएको थियो तर त्यहाँ हिँड्नका लागि ढुंगा वा ईटाहरू छापिएको थिएन जसले यी संरचनाहरू वर्षायामको पानी निकासका लागि नास्तीको रूपमा प्रयोगमा ल्याएको हुन सक्ने जनाउँदछन् । सडकसँगै फेला परेका टुटेफुटेका माटाका भाँडाकुडाका टुक्राटाकीहरूको डगुरले उक्त स्थल टुटेफुटेका वा अनावश्यक भाँडाकुडाहरू फाल्ने संभावित स्थल हुन सक्ने जनाउँदछन् ।

पश्चिमीद्वार नजिकैका भवनहरूको निर्माणस्तर नगरका अन्य भागको तुलनामा निकै कमसल भएको देखिन्छ । तिनीहरूको जगमा सल्लो भन्दा पनि टुटेफुटेका ईटाका टुक्राहरू वा मिट्टीहरू राखिएको थियो । तिनीहरूको पखौल केबाट बनाइएको थियो भन्नेबारेमा भने हामीसँग कुनै प्रमाण छैन । यसले नगरको यसभागका बासिन्दाहरू अरु भागमा बस्नेहरूभन्दा सामाजिक एव आर्थिक रूपमा निम्नस्तरका र गरीब थिए भन्ने देखाउँछ, अथवा यो बसोबासको क्षेत्र तमघर बजारसँग जोडिएको अस्थायी संरचना पनि हुन सक्छ ।




FIGURE - 1

LIVING IN THE CITY
16

शहरी जीवन

TILAKURAKOT



Excavations of Central Trench  
केन्द्रीय परिखाका उत्खनन



Excavation of houses within Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu and fragments of terracotta figurines recovered from within them.  
तिरौतार-कापिलवस्तु भित्र घरका पत्राको उत्खनन गर्दा, पत्राको टुक्रा बरफा सरोवार कोठा भुँडार टुक्राहरु



Conservation of the buildings uncovered  
उत्खननको क्रममा प्रकृतमा आएका संरचनाको संरक्षण



Posthole cut into the brick foundation  
ढाँटाको अगमो धनियाँको काठको बम्या गाड्ने प्याल



1 CM  
UNESCO Chair, Durham University



1 CM  
UNESCO Chair, Durham University

Between 2014 and 2016, an extensive geophysical survey was conducted within the walls of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu. This was the first time that such a survey was undertaken across an entire Early Historic city in South Asia, and has allowed us to understand the layout of the city and where the buildings, streets, ponds, and gateways are located. This has allowed us to choose which features to investigate further through excavation, while preserving others for future study.

This set of structures between the Western Gate and Central Walled Complex was identified as a residential unit and was selected to examine the way in which people lived in the city in the later phases of its occupation. After excavation, we were able to confirm that it was located at the corner of an east-west running street and comprised an L-shaped range of individual cells or rooms opening on to a veranda and facing into a private courtyard.

The houses were constructed from a combination of brick, timber and mud. The low brick walls had holes cut into them into which were placed timber posts to support the roof. The walls were then constructed from wattle and daub (sticks and mud), interwoven between the timber frame. The lack of roof tiles suggests that the rooves were made from thatch. The material recovered from the excavations within the rooms provides a snapshot of the day to day life of its inhabitants including terracotta animal figurines, copper coins, beads made from terracotta and semi-precious stone, and large amounts of broken ceramic vessels.

सन् २०१४ देखि २०१६ को बीचमा तिलौराकोट-कापिलवस्तु भित्र विस्तृत भूमीतिक समेक्षण सञ्चालन गरिएको थियो। दक्षिण एशियाको कुनै प्राचीन नगरमा सञ्चालन गरिएको यो नै यसप्रकारको पहिलो समेक्षण थियो जसले हामीहरूलाई यो नगरको ढाँचाका साथै भवन, सडक, पोखरी तथा प्रवेशद्वारहरू कहाँ-कहाँ अवस्थित थिए भनेर बुझ्न सक्षम बनाएको छ। यसले हामीहरूलाई उत्खननका माध्यमबाट कुन पक्षका बारेमा थप अनुसन्धान गर्दै अन्य पक्षहरूलाई थप अध्ययनका लागि संरक्षण गर्न भनेर छनोट गर्ने बाटो खोलेको छ।

पश्चिमी प्रवेशद्वार र पश्चिमतर्फ केन्द्रिय भवन परिसरका बीचमा रहेका संरचनाहरूलाई बसोबासका लागि प्रयोग गरिने क्षेत्र थियो भनेर पत्ता लगाइएको थियो र यो नगरमा बसोबासको अन्तिम चरणमा मानिसहरू कुसरी जीवन यापन गर्दै भनेर अध्ययन गर्न छनोट गरिएको थियो। उत्खनन पश्चात्, हामीहरू यो कुनै किटान गरेर भन्नु सक्षम भयो कि यो पूर्व-पश्चिम फैलिएको बाटोको एउटा कुनामा अवस्थित थियो र यहाँ अंग्रेजीको एल आकारका थुप्रै धाँकसत कोठाहरू थिए, ती कोठाहरू बरपेटा र मीज आगनलगायत फर्का थिए।

घरहरू ढाँटा, काठ र माटोबाट बनाइएको थियो। ढाँटाका होचो पश्चिमतर्फ प्याल बनाइ त्यसमा छानोलाई अड्याउनका लागि काठको थाम गाड्ने प्याल बनाइएको थियो। त्यसपछि काठका फ्रेमहरूको बीचमा वेतनास र माटोको पश्चिम संगाइन्थ्यो। यहाँ फिरेटी लगाइएको नभोटनुले घरका छानारू फूसको भएको हुन सक्ने बुझिन्छ। कोठाहरूमा गरिएको उत्खननका क्रममा फेला परेका माटोबाट बनाइएका जनावरका मूर्तिहरू, तामाका सिक्का, माटो र अर्ध बहुमूल्य भएका रत्नहरूबाट बनेका मालाहरू र थुप्रै मावामा रहेका टुक्राका माटोका भाँडाकाँडाहरू लगायतका वस्तुहरूले यहाँका बासिन्दाहरूको दैनिक जीवनको एक क्लक प्रदान गर्दछ।



FIGURE – 2

## EXCAVATIONS NEXT TO THE SAMAI MAI TEMPLE

### समई मन्दिरनेर गरिएको उत्खनन

5  
TILAKURAKOT



Excavations revealed a series of structures that pre-date the Samai Mai Temple.

उत्खननबाट बमबदलमा सडै सडै मन्दिर बा। मन्दिर पुरानो मन्दिरको सुरु मन्थारको फल देखाइ छ।



This large wall was excavated in 2018 and shows that a large rectangular platform or structure sits below the present-day temple.

सन् २०१८ मा उत्खनन गरिएको यो ठूलो प्लाटफर्म ठूलो अड्डाकार भवन वा संरचना अहिले बनेको मन्दिरभन्दा लम्वै रहेको देखाइन्छ।



Carved and moulded bricks in the walls below the Samai Mai Temple. These bricks are normally associated with the Gupta Period (fourth to seventh century AD).

सडै मन्दिर भन्नेको पछाडिमा वुट्टा कुरिमा नै मिलाएर बनाइ सडै मन्दिरको इतिहास। यो इट्टाहरू गुप्ता काल (चौथो देखि सातौं शताब्दी) सम्म सम्बन्धित छन्।



Carved brick reused from the early structure in the present-day Samai Mai Temple.

अहिलेको सडै सडै मन्दिरमा पुनः प्रयोगमा ल्याइएको वुट्टा कुरिमा इट्टाहरू।

PC. Mukherji mentions the present-day Samai Mai temple in his report from 1899. He excavated trenches to the west and east of the temple, and exposed several structures, including an octagonal and square building, dating to different periods of construction.

In 2015 a deep trench to the north of the temple was excavated. This trench revealed a long sequence of structures, with paving at the top, rammed brickbat floor levels in the middle and a clay platform with postholes at the base. Radiocarbon dates from the base suggests that this part of the site was occupied as early as the eighth century BCE. Within this trench the excavators also recovered a fragment of wall which contained carved brick sitting on a course of moulded bricks, similar to those from Kudan. This discovery extended the dates for the occupation of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu into the Gupta period (c. fourth to seventh centuries CE). Close examination of the modern temple confirmed that a number of these carved bricks had been reused in its walls.

In 2018, the trench was extended along the north side of the temple mound, unveiling the remains of a large wall and brick platform running underneath the Samai Mai temple. It is likely that this area was an important location during the life of the city, and continues to be a focal point for local communities in the present day as well.

पी सी मुखर्जीले सन् १८९९ को आफ्नो प्रतिवेदनमा हालको समई माई मन्दिरका बारेमा उल्लेख गरेका छन्। उनले मन्दिरको पश्चिम र पूर्वतर्फ रहेका बाईहेरूमा उत्खनन गरेका थिए र त्यहाँबाट विभिन्न मितिमा निर्माण भएका आठकुने र बर्गोकार भवन लगायत थुप्रै संरचनाहरू भएको तथ्य उजागर गरेका थिए।

सन् २०१५ मा मन्दिरको उत्तरमा उत्खनन गरिएको थियो। यो खाईबाट सबैभन्दा माथिल्लो भागमा पक्की सडक, मध्यभागमा इट्टाका टुक्राहरूलाई मिलाएर बनाइएको मुर्को पत्थर र पिच अथवा जगमा खम्बा गाड्ने खाइलहरूसँगै माटोबाट बनाइएको मञ्च रहेको लामो श्रृंखलाबाट संरचना पत्ता लागेको थियो। तिथि निर्धारण गर्दा यो स्थलको यो भागमा आठौं शताब्दी देखि बसोबास शुरु भएको देखाएको छ। यो खाई भित्रबाट उत्खननकर्ताहरूले कदानमा जस्तै इट्टाको पछाडिमा सजाएर राखिएको वुट्टा कुरिमा इट्टाका टुक्राहरूलाई पाएर सडै माई मन्दिरको इतिहास। यो इट्टाहरू गुप्ता काल (चौथो देखि सातौं शताब्दी) सम्म बसोबास भएको तथ्य स्पष्ट भएको छ। साथै एक मन्दिरको परिधानबाट वुट्टा कुरिमा इट्टाका टुक्राहरू उक्त मन्दिरका पछाडिहरूमा पुनः प्रयोग गरिएको यकिन भएको छ।

सन् २०१८ मा मन्दिरको हिस्सा भएको उत्तरतर्फ उत्खननका लागि खाई विस्तार गरिएको थियो जहाँबाट समई माई मन्दिरभन्दा ठूलो पछाडि र इट्टाको चौतारी (मञ्च) को अवशेषहरू फेला पारिएको छ। शहर जीवन रहँदा यो क्षेत्र महत्वपूर्ण ठाउँ रहेको हुनुसँगै संश्लेषण र अहिले पनि यो स्थानीय समुदायहरूका लागि सञ्ज बमर्क विन्दुका रूपमा रहिराखेको छ।



FIGURE - 3

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