

Archaeological Remains of Lumbini:
The Birth-place of Lord Buddha

R.N. Pandey
Tribhuvan University

Historical Precude

Lumbini, the birth-place of Lord Buddha, has the distinction of being the foremost site of religious pilgrimage of the Buddhists of the whole world. Lord Buddha took his birth at this place under the Sala Tree from the right arm-pit of Queen Mayadevi, the wife of King Suddhodhana of the Shakya Republic of Kapilvastu, on the day of the full-moon of the month of Vaisakha (April-May) in 563 B.C. (Pradhan n.d.: 98-100). A pond, where the queen bathed before giving birth to the Lord, existed there since a long time and two fountains of cold and hot water and a river of oil also flowed there at the time of his birth for providing cold and hot water bath and oil bath to him (Fuhrer 1972: pp. 26-29). The Mahaparinivana Sutta reveals that at the time of Mahaparinivana of the Tathagata when Ananda asked him about the future of his religion and followers, he eloquently spoke about the purity and contemplative virtue of the Lumbini Garden and advised his faithful followers and ordinary devotees to visit Lumbini along with the holy sites of Bodhagaya, Saranath and Kushinagar (Rijal 1979: 30-32). Thus after the Mahaparinivana of the Buddha, the Buddhist pilgrims began to come and pay their homage to the holy spot of nativity for acquiring virtues. After the beginning of the tradition of making stupas, a few stupas were built by the adherents of Lord Buddha at Lumbini also.

Authentic history of the Lumbini Garden begins with the erection of the Chunar sandstone inscription by King Asoka when he visited the site on the direction of Mahasthavira Upagupta in 250 B.C. At the time of this visit, Asoka presented one thousand gold coins (suvarnas) to the people of the country, raised (or enlarged) a stupa at the spot of nativity of the Lord and erected the pillar which contains the words "Here the worshipful was born", which were uttered to him by Mahasthavira Upagupta, his teacher (Pradhan n.d.: 30-32). A brick railing was also erected at a distance of 1'-6" from the base of the pillar for its protection, and it had dentils also (Mukherji 1969: 35). As the monks had begun to come to Lumbini, monasteries must have been built there by the patrons of Buddhism for providing accommodation to the monks who lived there and the pilgrims who visited the site. A large number of Mauryan and Shunga-Kushana terracottas and stone heads of the Mathura School discovered here reveal that after the visit of Asoka pilgrims from Northern India frequently began to visit the site, offer prayers to the nativity spot of the Tathagata and dedicate the images which they brought with them as tributes (Mitra 1972: 196-205, pls. CXVII-CXXX).

Fa-hien and Huien Tsaing were two noted Chinese pilgrims who visited the Lumbini Garden respectively in 403 and 636 A.D. Fa-hien could see nothing at Lumbini except the holy tree under which the Buddha took his birth, the Shakya Tank where Queen Mayadevi bathed before giving birth to the prince and a well from which people fetched water for drinking (Pradhan n.d. 19-26). However, Huien Tsaing records that he saw the Sacred Tank, a stupa about twenty-four paces to the south of the spot of nativity where Indra had received the baby in his arms, four stupas in its vicinity, where the four heavenly kings had taken charge of the baby and the stone pillar with the figure of a horse on its top which was installed there by King Asoka besides the Tilar Nadi—the river of oil, which gushed there at the time of the birth of the Buddha for his oil-bath (Pradhan n.d.: 19-26). The remains of a few monasteries and the extent ceramic and art-remains of the site show that from the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. till the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries A.D., Lumbini was a prominent centre of Buddhist pilgrimage. The kings and dynasties which ruled this region also seemed to have provided their moral and material support for the effulgence of the site. In 1314 A.D. Ripumalla, a king of the Solar Dynasty (Adityavamsa) of Western Nepal, also visited this site (Pradhan n.d.: 29). As he happened to be a Buddhist, he must have worshipped the holy spot of nativity and facilitated the monks who lived there in the adoration of its sacred stupas and idols.

Bhuvan Lal Pradhan has written that Sikandar Lodi (1484-1517 A.D.) was religiously bigoted and from the beginning of his rule he destroyed the religious sites of Northern India. Lumbini, the sacred site of the birth-place of Lord Buddha, had a great set-back after the beginning of the rule of the Muslims and finally it got lost in obscurity till the first-half of the nineteenth century A.D. The policies of the Later Mughals such as Aurangzeb and the local Rajput kings of the region also contributed some laurels in the decay and extinction of the Lumbini Garden (pp. 30-32).

Discovery of the Lumbini Garden

After the beginning of the rule of the British over India, scholars such as James Princep and Alexander Cunningham greatly contributed to the efflorescence of the Indian history and culture by deciphering the Asokan Brahmi script and publication of the book called The Ancient Geography of India. The study of the early Buddhist works by the scholars revealed that Kapilvastu and Lumbini were located at the foot-hills of the Himalayas. Thus in 1896 Dr. Fuhrer was sent to explore the archaeological potentialities of the Tarai of Nepal lying parallel to the northern boundary of the Basti district of the United Province. The same year he discovered Lumbini with the help of General Khadga Shamsher Rana of Nepal. In his exploration report Fuhrer says that he found the Asokan pillar containing the inscription describing the birth of the Buddha at the site and the sculpture of Mayadevi which was discovered in the ruins of the stupa built in the neighbourhood of the pillar. He has written that he saw four ruined stupas close to the edict-pillar besides the remains of four other stupas, mentioned by Huien Tsiang in his accounts.

Fuhrer has given the accounts of the Shakya Tank and two fountains which have been so eloquently described by the Chinese pilgrims in their travel-accounts (Fuhrer 1972: 26-29):

The discovery of Fuhrer was quite fascinating and therefore in 1899 Babu P.C. Kukharji was sent to the Tarai of Nepal with a special note from Vincent A. Smith, on behalf of the Government of India, to explore and excavate the archaeological remains of the Lumbini Garden and Kapilavastu. Accordingly, Mukherji excavated several monuments in the region and identified the ruins of Tilaurakot in the suburb of Taulihawa Bazar with Kapilavastu, the capital city of the Shakyas. (Mukherji 1969: 18-25, 48-57). The main discoveries of his archaeological activities at Lumbini are the details of the plinth of the Mayadevi temple on which lies the nativity sculpture of Lord Buddha, the remains of the brick-railing around the Asokan pillar, the bathing ghata (Shakya Tank) and the remains of five stupas along with the remains of a few structures belonging to the monasteries which graced that site during its hey-days (Mukherji 1969: 34-39). During 1933-39 Keshar Shamsher J.B.R. extensively excavated the ruins of the Lumbini Garden. However, he did not publish any report of his discoveries made at this site. Keshar Shamsher is credited for having provided a high platform around the Mayadevi temple, enlarging the Shakya Tank with successive terraces and brick veneer and building some rest-houses for the stay-facilities to the pilgrims (Rijal 1979: 15-16). In 1960 Mrs. D. Mitra of the Archaeological Survey of India excavated a small trench at the base of the Asokan pillar on the western side in order to ascertain the nature of the brick-enclosure described by Babu P.C. Mukherji and to know the details of the base of the pillar. She has given an exhaustive account of the sculptures and other kinds of remains which were discovered from the site in the past (1972: 196-205, Pls. CXVII-CXXX).

Recent Archaeological Activities

Scientific excavation started at Lumbini under the aegis of the Department of Archaeology, HMG, since the winter of 1970-71 alone. Main aim of this excavation was to locate the village of Lumbini mentioned in the pillar of Asoka. The cuttings around the old guest-house, located on the southern side of the Mayadevi temple complex revealed the structures of a few monasteries of four cultural period and ten successive layers of human occupation beginning from the sixth century B.C. Traces of a mud-wall, a terracotta ring, a circular burial containing the portion of the human skull, one iron sickle, bones of the birds and animals kept in a large number of pots and a terracotta plaque mould of Lord Buddha in the earth-touching posture belonging to the Gupta period were some important discoveries besides the huge amount of sherds of the Northern Black Polished Ware in the lower levels and red ware sherds in the upper stratum (Rijal 1975-77: 28-37, Pls. 1-6).

Following the call made by U Thant in 1970 for the development of the Lumbini Garden and preparation of the architectural master-plan of the site by Professor Kenzo Tange in 1972, the task of developing Lumbini Garden has been entrusted since 1975 to the Lumbini Development Committee

(HMG Lumbini Development Committee 1978: 5-19). From 1975 to 1980 every year Mr. B.K. Rijal of the Department of Archaeology excavated the site under the aegis of this committee. His excavations have brought to light the cultural sequence of the site beginning from the N.B.P. period in the vicinity of the Mayadevi temple including the remains of a brick structure of 15'4" X 12'-5" size of the pre-Mauryan period on the north of the Asokan pillar. The votive stupa which gave the lid of the gold-casket is an important discovery of Mr. Rijal. The other important discoveries of Mr. Rijal are the fragments of the Chunar sandstone horse-capital which Huien Tsiang saw and reported in the seventh century A.D. and the terracotta plaque with the Dharmachakra as well as a few terracotta human heads of the Gupta period. The terracotta sculpture of the Bodhisttva, which is also of the Gupta period, is another important discovery of the site besides a large number of spouted jars deposited at the bottom of a well (n.d.: 7-16). The excavations revealed a large number of N.B.P. sherds belonging to the types discovered at Tilaurakot in Period I and Hastinapur in the periods IInd and IVth. They are mostly wheel-turned and are the fragments of bowls, small basins, vases, handis, lids, tumber-like pots and ghatas (Mitra 1972: 204-205). Mr. Rijal excavated a few monasteries also on the south and south-east of the Mayadevi temple which belong to the Shunga-Kushana and Gupta periods (Rijal 1975-77: 32).

The archaeological remains of the site have been studied here under the captions of architectural remains, sculptures and miscellaneous objects of the site for convenience.

Architectural Remains

Building activities started at Lumbini soon after the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha in the fifth century B.C. The earliest structure of the site so far discovered is one which was exposed on the north-western corner of the Mayadevi temple by Mr. B.K. Rijal. Located about 300 feet on the north of the Asokan pillar, it is 15'-4" X 12'-5" on plan, discovered 2 feet below the courses of burnt bricks of 17" X 8" X 5" size. The texture of the bricks is rough and in their preparation much husk and straw have been used. The structure is sealed by the Mauryan brick-bats which were properly rammed up to make the floor. The N.B.P. ware and degenerate grey ware sherds discovered associated with the structure show that it is a pre-Mauryan structure and most probably belongs to the fifth century B.C. (Rijal 1975-77: 32).

Because the Buddha had forbidden his followers to adore his image, after his death stupas came to be built to denote his existence at the places of his activities during his life-time, or at the places of his worship. This concept led his followers living at the Lumbini Garden to make a stupa at the spot of nativity in the fifth century B.C. which was later on enlarged by Asoka at the time he visited the site in 250 B.C. This nativity stupa is nowadays buried under the exquisite plinth of the brick temple which was built there long before the visit of the site by the Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsiang in the seventh century A.D. and excavated by P.C. Mukherji in 1899. Mukherji's report reveals that the temple was of curvilinear style and sapta-ratha design on plan. It was

a beautiful temple, with a 12 x 10 feet sanctum at the rear back showing six flights of steps provided from the east, beginning from the gate, a vestibule and a mahamandapa on the east opened by gates from the sides of north and east. The total length and width of the temple was 48 x 30 feet respectively. On the west in the sanctum a raised plinth of 3 x 1 feet contained the nativity sculpture which is even today worshipped by the pilgrims of the site. Four successive phases of constructions were noticed by Mukherji in course of his excavation. The wall in the lowest portion was plain, four bricks high, on which two courses receded by about an inch, which again went by a bent in vertical line. Then a neck appeared in a single course and on it a band of ornaments in two courses of bricks, carved in circular designs were put by the architects. Above this was the floriated cyma (padma) standing on a fillet in single course. There was another neck and on it which supported a course which was decorated with the design of heads. On this was the course of big cyma which occupied the middle of the plinth-wall. This cyma was surmounted with a course of beads and on that was placed the third neck (gala). Then a big band projected about 2 inches; it was carved out with wavy floriation and other decorations and finally crowned with a cyma, carved with the design of the lotus-petals. Lastly the fourth gala (neck) makes its appearance in a hollow line, on which was placed an ornamental dasa and a kumbha, the torus of the Greek architecture, done in two courses. Then again a cyma was ornamented with the lotus petals. The plinth, about 5 feet high, was finally finished up with a course of bricks carved with the lines of squares and little holes (Mukherji 1969: 36-37, Pandey 1968: 65-66). Mukherji suspected the remains of the older shrine below this plinth. The present author feels that the remains of the stupa which Asoka built or enlarged there in 250 B.C. are buried below this plinth, 'considerably down', as Mukherji calculated it. The general details of the plinth indicate that last time the temple was built in the fifth century A.D. after the visit of Fa-hien and before the visit of the site by Huien Tsiang in the seventh century A.D., and at that time the nativity sculpture, which existed there since a longtime, was installed in the sanctum on the raised platform for the worship by the devotees. Attached to the temple of Mayadevi was the ante-chamber which housed the sculpture of so-called Vajravahini (Pandey 1980: 17). Rijal also exposed this plinth on the eastern side, however he has not given any detail of the exposed wall in his report. The author of this paper also visited the site at the time this plinth was exposed by him and noted the same features which Mukherji has furnished in his report. Mukherji found that the temple of Mayadevi was linked up with the Shakya Tank by a causeway having flight of steps of baked bricks (Mukherji 1969:34-39). The people who wanted to worship the nativity sculpture inside the temple, first took bath in this tank and then went to the temple for their prayers and offerings.

Several stupas were built by the adherents in the periphery of this temple. One of them was located 16 feet on the north of the Mayadevi temple. In the vicinity of the ruined foundation of this stupa Mukherji found several sculptures of ancient and early-medieval periods. On the west of this stupa was another stupa. It was small in size and its foundation on the north-west was much broken. Its basement was square, "having rectangular projections in the middle of the sides and rising in regular

gradations of courses in rather plain mouldings" (Mukherji 1969: 34-39). Mukherji has given description of some more stupas which he excavated there, and a few of them were of round form. In the vicinity of the tank Mukherji excavated five stupas. The southern wall of the basement of these stupas showed batter (1969: 34-39). Five feet to the north of the Mayadevi temple Rijal excavated a square-based stupa of the Mauryan period. He is of the opinion that this stupa was "cut from the top upto the depth of 3'-0" x 2'-8" possibly during the operation of 1933-39 A.D." by Keshar Shamsher J.B. Rana. On excavation the floor of this stupa provided the lid-portion of a gold casket of cylindrical type in association with some charred human bones and other ritual offerings (Rijal 1975-77: 32 Pl. 4 'B'). The container part of the relic-casket seems to have been broken into pieces and removed by Keshar Shamsher Rana himself. This was the reason why the relics or the casket scattered on the floor. When the upper portion of the stupa fell down, it was incased during the Kushana period by the builders. In all 33 courses of bricks of this stupa are available today (Rijal 1975-77: 37). There are two more votive stupas on the north of the Mayadevi temple and they also belong to the Maurya and Shunga-Kushana periods (Rijal 1975-77:35). On the north-east of the Mayadevi temple 16 stupas have been found built on a platform. They are attributed to 16 Arhats (Rijal 1975-77: 35, Pl. II). All these stupas have been beautifully conserved now.

A few monasteries were also built at Lumbini. One of them, located on the south-east of the Shakyas Tank, was of quadrangular shape and had cells on four sides of the courtyard. The partition walls of the cells are reduced to a few courses only. At places the floors of the cells are visible and at other places they have been removed by the builders of the later phase (Rijal 1975-77: 32, Fig. 2). The large bricks (35.5 x 20.3 cm) of the monastery reveal that it was initially built during the Mauryan period, perhaps at the time of the visit of the site by King Asoka. On the ruins of this monastery are the scanty traces of a structure representing possibly a latter monastery. A well was also excavated here. It was used by the monks living in the monastery for the purpose of drinking water. There are the ruins of some more monasteries on the northern side of these monasteries. However, they are in complete ruins and it is difficult to ascertain their features and dates of their constructions today. However, they seem to be the structures of the Shunga-Kushana and Gupta or Vardhana periods.

Mukherji excavated a brick-railing around the Asokan pillar which showed three phases of constructions; the earliest (5'-6" high) exhibiting very large bricks, most ancient in style. The middle portion of the wall was 2'-8" high and it belonged to the subsequent period. Mukherji noticed dentils also in between the constructions of the first and second periods (Mukherji 1969: 35). In 1960 Mrs. D. Mitra excavated a narrow trench on the north side of the Asokan pillar to check the nature of the enclosure-wall described by Babu P.C. Mukherji. She is of the opinion that owing to the disturbances caused by the excavations of Keshar Shamsher the brick-railing no longer exists on the western side of the pillar (1972: 197-98). Mitra has written that on the immediate north-east and south-west of the

pillar there were small brick stupas with a square base while its south-western portion was marked with a triratha brick-plinth. Mitra provides much later date to these structures (1972: 197-98). The revised plan of structures around the Mayadevi temple shows that there were several stupas and monasteries at Lumbini and they were under use till the beginning of the rule of the Mohemmadans in the sub-continent (Rijal 1975-77: 35, Fig. 2).

The Shakya Tank, located on the south of the Mayadevi temple, was originally oval in shape. Keshar Shamsheer cleaned it fully at the time of his archaeological activities at Lumbini and made it pakka with the help of the kiln-burnt bricks. The tank is 50 feet square, shows six terraces and a flight of steps for descending to the level of the water (ghata). The bricks used in the repair of the tank bear the date of 1939 A.D. in their central cavities. In the summer when the water is dry, the oval shape of the tank is visible even today (HMG Lumbini Development Committee 1978:11, Pl. 5).

Sculptures of the Site

Because Lumbini was under habitation for 2000 years till thirteenth-forteenth centuries A.D., a large number of terracottas, stone sculptures and metallic statues have been found there in the course of various archaeological explorations and excavations. The most interesting piece of antiquity of the Lumbini Garden is the inscribed stone column which was installed there by King Asoka in the middle of the third century B.C. This 21 feet high pillar shows its lower girth 7'-9" and its diameter is 2'-7½ in size. Made of Chunar sandstone with tiny blackish specks, it bears the characteristic Mauryan polish. The pillar has a vertical fissure down to the pillar and its top is broken off probably by lightning, as noted by Huien Tsiang. The capital of the pillar was of bell-shape. Its base, broken into two halves still exists in the compound of the Mayadevi temple. The fragments of the horse capital, which was surmounted on the top has been discovered now. It shows that the pillar was complete in the beginning. The capital shows the usual festoons in the face of the big cyma under which there was a one foot deep hole of 5 inches diameter in which was filled the copper mortice that was fixed above the shaft (Mitra 1972: 197, Mukherji 1969: 34-35, Pandey 1980: 16, Fuhrer 1972: 26-34). The pillar contains an inscription in the Pali language and Brahmi script of the third century B.C. which reads as follows:

"King Piyadasi, beloved of gods, having been anointed twenty years, came himself and worshipped (this spot) saying: "Here Buddha Sakyamuni was born." And he caused to be made a stone (capital) bearing a horse; and he caused (this) stone pillar to be erected. Because here the Worshipful one was born, the village of Lumbini has been made free of taxes and a receiptant of wealth (Fuhrer:1972:33, HMG Lumbini Development Committee 1978: 4)."

The other engravings of the pillar are of the time of Ripumalla and Samgramamalla only. The column is more a piece of art than an object of architecture. Its beautiful tapering towards the top, mirror-like Mauryan shining polish and sophisticated chiselling indicate that art under the skillful Mauryan masons had reached an admirable standard (Pandey, 1980: 16).

The sculpture of nativity of Lord Buddha (size: 5½ x 3½ feet) is the most splendid relief of the Lumbini Garden. In the panel Mayadevi has been represented lifesized in high relief under the Sala tree grasping its branch with her right hand, and her left hand is resting on the hip (Pandey 1980: 16-17). The Nidanakatha contains that when the queen came to this most beautiful and stately tree, its branches curiously bent down to ease her reach like a stemmed reed. Stretching out her hand, she caught hold of the branches and the pains came. Standing thus and holding the branch, she gave birth to Lord Buddha. This legend the artist has successfully carved out in the relief, and this is the earliest and best of all the nativity reliefs so far discovered from the sub-continent. Since, the queen has been depicted in maternity, her waist is held by Prajapati from the right side. The extreme right of the panel is executed with the figure of Brahma and Indra who wear basket-like crowns and stand in devotion before the queen to receive the divine child, as narrated in the Buddhist literature. Below, between Indra and Mayadevi, is defaced figure of standing Gautama with a halo round his head (Pandey 1980: 16-17; Mitra 1972: 197-98). The sculpture has suffered a vertical abrasion and is broken into three parts. Mukherji is of the opinion that this sculpture was executed "under the orders of Asoka" because it is similar in material and workmanship to the Yaksha door-keepers of Pataliputra of the Mauryan period (Mukherji 1969: 37, Pl. XXIV a, Fig. 2). However, scholars such as V.S. Agrawal think that it is a replice of the figure set by Asoka during the Kushana period (1965: 162-63). Mitra has written that stylistically the sculpture is "ascribable to the Gupta period only" (1972: 197-98). However, as mentioned in the inscription, the word silavigadabhicha is said to mean, among other things, a figure (here of Mayadevi). This would mean, as Mukherji also wrote in the late-nineteenth century, that the sculpture is one which was installed there by Asoka in the third century B.C. at the time he built or enlarged (this fact is yet to be verified by fresh excavations at the site) the holy shrine at the spot of the nativity of the Lord (1969: 34-37).

The sculpture of so-called Vajravaraḥi (size: 4'-0" x 2'-1") seems to be a sculpture of the Gupta period on stylistic grounds. Slender body of the goddess is particularly notable at this place. It is spilt in two halves across the breast and as coated thickly with oil and vermilion, its icono-plastic details are not very much clear in the relief (Pandey 1980: 17).

Keshar Shamsheer Rana collected a large number of sculptures of Lumbini during 1933-39 A.D. and kept them in a monastery of the site under the protection of the Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee for a long time. Today they have been acquisitioned by the Department of Archaeology of

FIG. Among them one head of the Buddha of molded red sandstone which came from the atelier of Mathura is beautifully marked "with a plain bump-like Usnisa" and circular mark of urna on the forehead and shows smiling face and open eyes. Stylistically this head is ascribable to the Kushana period (Mitra 1972: 199, Pl. CXIXA). The image of Buddha on chlorite in bhumisparsa-mudra, rigidly seated in the vajraparyankasana on a visvapadma below the Bodhi tree, is also a beautiful relief of the Lumbini Garden (Mitra 1972: 199, Pl. CXIX B, 2). The fragments of slabs representing the Miracle of Sravasti and Eight Great Miracles are two quite notable sculptures of the site. In the latter slab the Buddha is executed sitting in vajraparyankasana on a double-petalled lotus and his damaged right hand shows bhumisparsa-mudra. He is clad in dhoti and scarf, the latter, with ends tucked on the left shoulder, has left the right chest and shoulder bare. Around the Buddha are represented the seven other great accidents of his life of which the birth and the first sermon are alone preserved on the dexter and the offering of honey on the sinister (Mitra 1972: 199-200, Pl. CXX B. 1). The other sculptures of the site include one crudely executed figure of Maitreya on greyish sandstone, a basalt sculpture of a Bodhisattva, a two-armed seated image of Bodhisattva in lalitasana, two images of Ganesa and some fragmentary figures and plaques of males and females crudely executed by the artist (Mitra 1972: 200-201). In these two figures have got clear-cut Pala influence, denoting that they were executed in the Pala period (750-1160 A.D.). The two images of the site, one belonging to a Bodhisattva and the other to a devotee, although of the Kushana period, are very crude in workmanship (Mitra 1972: 200-201).

Of the several terracotta figures of the Lumbini Garden, one Buddha head, set within an architectural frame, is quite beautiful. The open eyes with prominently arched eye-brows and stylised daksinavarta curls, covering the head and the usnisa of the head point that this terracotta is a work of the seventh century A.D. itself (Mitra 1972: 201). The other important terracotta is the head of an old man with a prominent nose. The head is very individualistic and speaks the hands of a skilled artist in its making (Mitra 1972: 201). The third head with spiral curls and open mouth displaying the upper row of teeth is ascribable to the Gupta period on the basis of the plastic qualities (Mitra 1972: 201). Another terracotta of the Gupta period is a fine head with half-closed meditative eyes; a crown is also given to it by the modeller (Mitra 1972: 201). Among the other terracottas, the defaced head of a woman showing fairly good workmanship, the laughing face with open eyes and a mark in the form of a circlet on the forehead, the bust of the female with a necklace in the form of a row of impressed roundels, the lower part of a figure wearing a frilled skirt (antaravasaka) and scarf and the leaf-shaped plaque impressed with the figure of Manjusri Bodhisattva on a double-petalled lotus in the maharaja-lilasana inscribed with the characters of late ninth century A.D. "in the three lines on the dexter and one line on the sinister" are quite notable specimens at this place (Mitra 1972: 201-202). Last decade Mr. B.K. Rijal excavated three terracotta human heads and the upper-half of a figure of a Bodhisattva of the Gupta period (1975-77: Pl. 5 'B'). Among the three heads, one illustrated

on the top of the plate, is crudely moulded and datable to the Kushana period. It is 3½" in size and badly damaged on the left side of the face. The other two heads belong to the Gupta period. The hair-dressing of one of them is in the style of deep curls called Dhupika Kuntala. "Its thick lips without any bold depression at the two corners of the lips and in the middle of the chin can be seen as evidence of the transitional phase." Although the facial details of the other figure is worn out, its "turban-like hair-dressing is noticeable" (Rijal 1975: 32, Pl. 5 'B'). The terracotta sculpture of the Bodhisattva is "endowed with real grace and elegance of the Gupta period." Only the bust of the sculpture is available. Rijal has written that the figure is slim, dressed transparent, the right hand is raised in protection pose. The facial expression reveals spiritual contentment and celestial happiness. The face is elongated with straight nose, smooth cheeks and thick lips, with depression at the corners. The two sides of the chin are separated in the middle. The eye-brows take a sharp curve. The forehead is bright and prominent, and the crown with one crest is decorated with dotted design in a technique of oblique. Thus it is a beautiful terracotta figure of the site (1975-77: 32-33, Pl. 6-A). The terracotta Dharmachakra with 32 spokes was found in the excavation on the eastern side of the Mayadevi temple. The piece seems to be the part of a big panel of Dharmachakra sculpture which was worshipped there by the devotees in the past. Among the other associates of this panel are the two animals, possibly representing a bull and a deer (Rijal 1975-77: 33, Pl. 6-B).

The most important discovery of Mr. Rijal at Lumbini are the fragments of the horse-capital mentioned earlier in this paper. A short report which he published from the Lumbini Development Project contains illustrations of 41 chips of this horse-capital. One of them is quite big and bears distinctive Mauryan polish (HMG Lumbini Development Committee 1978:16, Pl. 6).

Miscellaneous Remains

Lumbini has provided us with many other assets in its various explorations and excavations by the archaeologists. The most notable among them is a Kushana coin of copper, published by Mrs. D. Mitra in her report. The overse of the coin depicts the king facing on the left side and bears a long coat. With his raised left hand he is offering something on the alter. The deity standing on the obverse is too defaced to be identified correctly. "The diametre of the coin is 2.5 cm, the thickness being 6.3 cm. (1972: 203, Pl. CXXIX A, 7). Two copper coins of Lumbini are preserved in the personal collection of Mr. Surendra Singh, a pleader of Kapilavastu (Mitra, 1972: 203, Footnote 1). Although several kind of objects have been found in the excavations of Lumbini after 1970, nothing is mentioned in the report which came out from the Department of Archaeology and Lumbini Development Project. Only Mrs. D. Mitra has given details and illustrations of a few such antiquities from the site. Of the five beads referred to by Mrs. Mitra, one, long and barral-shaped, is of semi-precious stone, while the rest of terracotta "stimulating the shape of areca-nut" (1972: Pl. CXXIX 2, 5). One cylindrical ear-stud of jasper was also found at Lumbini (Mitra 1972: 204).

A large number of decorated bricks and tiles have been found in the excavations of Lumbini. Designs of lotus-petals, chaitya-windows, grids, floral and plant motifs and stepped patterns, as on the bricks of Kudan, are very commonly seen impressed on them (Mitra 1972: 204-205).

The monuments and antiquities reveal that Lumbini was under continuous habitation till the fourteenth century since the sixth century B.C. This fact is elucidated by the sherds of the degenerate Grey Ware, N.B.P. Ware and several varieties of red wares also. The pottery of Lumbini, as the author said earlier, is comparable to the pottery-types of Tilaurakot (Kapilavastu) and Kudan in Nepal and periods III and IV of Hastinapur in India (Mitra 1972: 204-205). Recently a large number of spouted vessels have been found deposited in a well; their ceremonial use is clear from their shapes. The surface finds of the site include some beads of terracotta and semi-precious stones, mullers, flesh-rubbers, fragments of iron nails and small bits of bronze objects (Mitra 1972: 206). A large portion of Lumbini remains unexcavated. Yet the author of this paper is sure that on excavation many important and interesting antiquities will be discovered and they will be of great help in revealing the ancient history and grandeur of the site.

Lumbini Development Project

Since early 1968 various phases of development work have been carried out both by the Government of Nepal and the United Nations Organizations according to the master plan of the Lumbini Development Project. The master plan comprizes three main elements, namely--the Lumbini Village, the Monastic Enclave and the Sacred Garden. Emphasis has been given under the master plan to create an atmosphere of tranquility, universality and clarity in consistent with the idea of serene environment of the time of the birth of Lord Buddha.

Note: This paper does not contain the details of the archaeological discoveries made by the archaeologists of the Lumbini Development Committee after the winter of 1982.

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