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RAMAGRAM EXCAVATION

- Sukra Sagar Shrestha

Introduction:

The site of Ramagram is stretched north south after the river Jharahi was diverted from the east of the stupa in 1986/87. Now a days the running river Jharahi flows in the east and dried old course of the same river on all three remaining sides. But still a small strip of land on North is left as a land bridge. (1-b)

The cultivated land was stretched way far off to *Deogaon* in the east about three km away. In between the stupa and *Deogaon* lies another archaeological site of *Das Kattha*. There are no mounds and brickbats traced but only chunk of field is left as an unlucky field by the people since the historic time. If we see it in detail, a slight elevation can be noticed of about a meter high. No one dared to cultivate on that part of land. It may well be a site of pre-brick culture. It needs to be well demarcated and saved for future excavation and study will be a worth.

The relief of the stupa is not evenly raised. The south and eastern sides of the stupa is raised evenly to the centre forming the top where as north and west have more falls (Fig. VI). The contours of the west side falls are steeper than north side. They were sculpted out by the trees grown on those sides. Once the trees fell down their roots made holes and deeps.

There were many trees standing on the stupa till few years back. On south west side a biggest tree of Karma (*Albizia odoratissima*) is standing and a Bel tree in the east. In Northwest corner there were smaller trees of Bel standing and one more in NW corner little higher than the other two big trees. Besides, there were many thorny bushes grown everywhere except in the cultivated land (pl 2). An irrigation canal was running north south to the east of the stupa and a high (3ft) *Dimka* to the west of the stupa. To the south a large flat land was left fallow some part of which is now transplanted with the trees.

The last and tallest tree still survives on south western side of the stupa. That is known in Nepali as Karma (*Albizia odoratissima*). This tree also needs to be cut down at an earliest so that there will not be further destruction of the stupa by its roots.

The position of the stupa does not seem centrally located inside present barbed fence. It rather goes north from the fence in north and northwest corner. The fence is considered as the boundary of the stupa complex and beyond that is private land.

The whole area inside the island is cultivated except the area occupied by the stupa and south of it which is fenced with barbed wire. The new trees were transplanted by Lumbini Development Trust in collaboration with Bussi-No-Kai, Japan who also

donated a temple site in 1998/1999 to the south west of the stupa complex at a distance of nearly hundred fifty meters away.

The total height of the stupa at present from surrounding cultivated surface is 6.85 meter (Fig-VI)

Location:

The site is located in 83°x 41'x 05" East Longitude and 27°x 29'x 55" North Latitude at an altitude of 107 meters from mean sea level(I-b). It lies to the south east from the market headquarter of the district Nawalparasi at a distance of 5.3 kilometers. One can see the snowy peaks of Annapurna and Manaslu ranges at a distance from the stupa area. (Pl. 3a)

It is nearly 250 kilometers from Kathmandu and fifty kilometers east of Lumbini. From the border town of Thutibari the stupa is only nine kilometers away(Fig-I). Thutibari is a small town well linked with Gorakhpur-the railhead to all parts of India.

Nearest big market in Nepal are Butwal and Bhairahawa.

Pig Sacrifice in the mound

There was a tradition of sacrificing a pig every three years in the stupa on the name of Kotaidevi. The villagers regarded the mound as Kot (a female deity of fort). She was regarded as the protectress of domestic animals and farm products. Therefore the sacrifice of a pig was felt necessary in order to appease her.

Since when the tradition was started is not known but the practice was stopped after an old resident from the village of *Deurwa* made a pilgrimage to Jagannath and came back in 1960 AD. He stopped the tradition, then and there, convincing the people who were practicing the offering.

The expenditure for buying such a pig used to be collected from the villages of *Deurwa* and *Ujjaini*

surrounding the stupa complex (pers. Comm: Jamdar Tharu, *Deurwa*)

Origin of Kapilavastu and Devdaha

Kapilavastu

When writing down the history of the Republic of Koliens (Kolanagara or Devdaha or Ramagrama) and Kapilavastu, we must always relate one to other states because these two kingdoms were to come into existence at the onset of the formation of states in this region and is so much important since they were related to the life of Buddha and his families.

Legends and stories always play a part in history writing which can not be neglected because they are coming down from ages by telling, hearing and retelling from generation to generation. These include *Dhammapadas*, *Jatakas*, *Puranas* and *Tripitakas*, which give the legendary history of two important dynasties from which Lord Buddha and his wife Yasodhara and also their clan the Shakyas descended.

To start with, first, we go to Kapilavastu, the hometown of Siddhartha Gautama, the early name of Lord Buddha before his enlightenment in Bodhagaya. The entire Buddhist sources either Lalitvistara calligraphed in Kathmandu Valley or Mahavamsa written in Srilanka, and Kenjur and Tenjur carried from India and translated for Tibetans in Tibet give the same story centering on the names and families, only pronounced differently according to the local tongue and tunes.

According to these Buddhist sources king Okkaka of the kingdom of Koshala lost his wife Hasta leaving behind nine children-four sons and five daughters. After the death of Hasta – the first queen, the king appointed a young maiden named Amba as his principle queen. She gave birth to a son in his old age. The king named him Jayantu.

The name of the prince is pronounced differently in different ways in different countries.

In Srilanka – Jantu

In Nepal – Jayantu

In India – Jayant

Historically, it was always a victory for women to have a lustful husband, which made their position stronger and got the opportunity to rule over their spouse. In the same way the queen claimed the succession to the throne for his son – Jayantu.

Hearing the claim the poor king could not resist the demand and called his nine children from elder queen. With broken heart the king ordered them to leave the country and said –

My children! I have thoughtlessly given to another the kingdom that of right belongs to you. Jayantu your younger brother will take my succession. Therefore take whatever treasures, except the five regalia (golden sword, ornamented slippers, royal umbrella, golden frontlet and fly whisk) and as many people as will follow you and go to some other place that you may there take up your abode.

Poor children had no choice than to obey their father and leave the palace therefore went some other places because it was king's command.

On leaving Koshala, the nine children went northwards to their jungle abode promising to erect a kingdom for themselves in some unpeopled land and rule with righteous way. After long march they arrived on a forest where Rishi Kapila was meditating on the bank of a river. (Some say it was a lake). He was same Kapila, it is said, who was to become Gautama Buddha in future life.

On knowing about the children and foreseeing their future, the Rishi Kapila told them to live there and make a state of their own but requested them that the country be named as Kapila or Kapilapura

which later came to be known as Kapilavastu. (Srivastav: 4)

Once the kingdom was established then the princes thought – If we go to any of the inferior kings to ask their daughters in marriage, it will be a dishonor to the Okkaka race and if we give our sisters in marriage to their children it will be an equal dishonor. It will, therefore, be better to stain the purity of our relationship than that of our race. Thinking thus the eldest sister Priya was appointed as queen mother and each of the four brothers took one of the sisters as his wife. In course of the time each of the couple had eight sons and eight daughters totaling it to sixty-four in all.

When their father heard in Koshala in what manner the princes had acted he was excited with joy in preserving the purity of their clan and said:

“Sakka wata bho Rajkumara Param Sakka wata bho Rajkumaris.”

(The princes are skillful in preserving the purity of our race; the princesses are equally skillful in preserving the purity of our race).

After some years the queen mother Priya suffered from *Swetakustha* (The white leprosy) and it was so much infectious that only on seeing her people contacted with this dreadful disease. Therefore she was seated in a palanquin, pulled down the curtain and sent to another forest in the east to pass her remaining life. She was left in a cave surrounded by many trees including Kola trees.

In the same dynasty of her brothers, after long time during the historic period a king named Sinhahanu ruled over Kapilavastu who had five sons, the eldest being Suddhodana, the father of Siddhartha Gautama-the Buddha.

Devdaha

Similarly when we turn towards the legendary history of Devdaha it is written that once upon a time

the king Rama of *Benaras*, was also suffered from same type of disease -the white leprosy. The disease was so malignant in its type that neither the queen nor the concubines could approach him lest she should be defiled. As the king was thus put to shame, he abdicated himself and retired into the forest hoping to die peacefully in some lonely cave.

After walking for month and days he came to stay in a pleasant forest covered with Kola trees (*Nauclea cordifolia*). He was passing his life on eating young leaves, roots and fruits there. With eating the leaves of Kola tree it acted him medicinally and restored to his original state of health(Srivastav:1).

After recovery he thought to settle there permanently than to return to his native place for fear of his leper-history. Thus he made a *Machan* for himself. On nights he heard the fearful roaring of wild beasts around but his life was safe. Instead he was also supported by the afal left by those roaring beasts after they had eaten their kill. Thus he was passing his scavanging life.

One day a tiger that was prowling about for his food came near the place where the princess was living in the cave. Having smelled the human scent the tiger scrapped with his paws until the cave room was broken. On seeing the tiger approaching near the princess began to cry loudly.

As all creatures are afraid of human cry the tiger sunk away without doing any harm. The king Rama heard the cry as well. Then he went to see there. He found the white princess and held her fast although she was suffering from such a malignant disease. King Rama, by then, already knew that the disease was curable. Then the king asked her who she was and where she came from. She narrated her story, which was almost similar to the fate of Rama. The king also narrated his history and consoled her describing the disease is curable. The king started to administer the local herbs to the princess what he ate before. When the princess was restored to her original state of health they were attracted to each other and

were then married. They both decided to live there permanently.

In the mean time the ruling prince of Benaras heard from his intelligence about the miraculous recovery of his father in forest abode. Then he went with a large retinue to bring back his father. But Rama refused to return. Therefore the prince created a city for his father in that place with every necessary defense infrastructures. The newly erected city was called with different names and king Rama and queen Priya started to rule there. The names of the country in different ways:

- Kolliyanagara - Named from the Kola tree under which Rama took refuge and miraculously recovered from the disease.
- Byaghrapura - The trails of the tigers brought the name
- Ramagrama - The kingdom of Rama.
- Devdaha - The area is full of ponds where the Gods come to swim.

(Pradhan:86)

After the marriage, the couple (Rama and Priya) gave each time twin births of two sons and it went on and on for sixteen issues thus totaling thirty-two sons. Once those thirty-two princes were grown up to their adulthood, their mother queen Priya informed them that there are four kings who is her brothers and they have thirty two daughters. She said – go and ask their hands to marry.

Although there was disagreement on the subject of caste and creed before but they were successful later in lending hands with these maidens and got married. From this time on it became a custom for the Koliyans and Shakyas to extend matrimonial relationships by intermarrying with each other. The

custom continued well down to the historic period also.

After some generation Anjan and Jasodhara became the king and queen of Ramagrama. This couple gave birth to Supra Buddha from whom were born Devdatta and Yasodhara. Yasodhara was married to Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha later became Gautama Buddha.

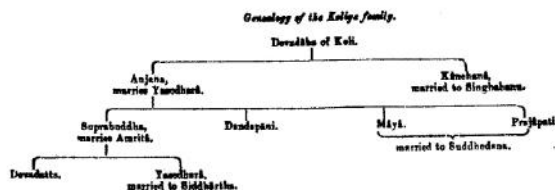
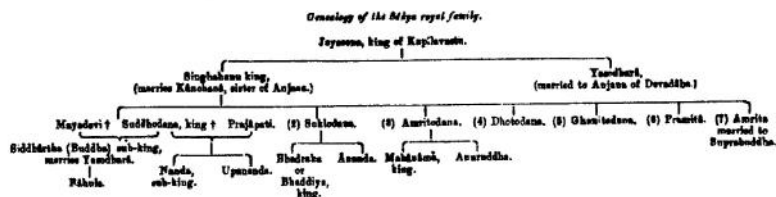
King Sinhahanu of Kapilvastu and king Anjana of Devdaha were two contemporary monarchs. Sinhahanu married Kanchana- the sister of Anjana and Anjana married Jasodhara- the sister of Sinhahanu.

In Kapilvastu Sinhahanu got five sons including Suddhodhana and Suddhodhana was married to two wives Mayadevi and Prajapati. Mayadevi and Prajapati were two daughters of Anjana. From Mayadevi Siddhartha Gautama was born and queen Prajapati brought up Siddhartha because Mayadevi died after seven days giving birth to Siddhartha.

On the other hand in Devdaha Anjana married Jasodhara who was the sister of Sinhahanu. They gave birth to Suprabuddha. Suprabuddha married Amrita. Amrita was the daughter of Sinhahanu and sister of Suddhodhana. Suprabuddha had two sons Dandapani and Devdatta and one daughter Yasodhara. Yasodhara was married to Siddhartha Gautama. Thus Devdatta was the wife's brother (Salo) of Gautama Buddha. Devdatta harassed Buddha very much and even tried to kill him three times. But Devadatta predeceased Buddha.

A short chronology of the dynastic rulers of Kapilvastu and Devdaha will not be out of context.

Thus it is reproduced here from the chronology given by V.A. Smith in prefatory note of "A report on a tour of Exploration of the Antiquities of Kapilvastu, Tarai of Nepal" submitted by, P. C. Mukherji in 1899.



It is now evident that two kingdoms of the Shakyas and their matrimonially related Koliyans lay, as their legends recount, on the lower slope of Himalaya. Their settlement in the Tarai and hill forests must have separated them from their brethren further south and west. Their isolation due to the presence of broad stretch of impenetrable forest infested by Malaria, no doubt forced them to develop entirely non- Aryan custom of endogamy as well as other habits not in accordance with those of their kindred (Fuhrer: 47)

Nestled in the fore plain of Siwalik, the kingdom of Koliyanagara was bounded by river Rohini in the west, Anoma (Presently River Narayani) in the east Mahabharat range on the north and unknown thread of borderline on the south. It was a moderately small Kingdom in size during the lifetime of Gautama Buddha. There were only six Janapadas namely Uttaraka, Karakpatha, Kundadhavana, Sajjana, Haliddavasana and Devdaha.

The area of land spread over in Koliyanagara was flat and leveled with abundant alluvial soil coverage on top. The land was very productive where the water of the rainy season and of inundation due to the monsoon remains long standing on the subsurface. The farmland was surrounded by good coverage of vegetation grown with different plants and populated by many varieties of wild lives, which made the productivity of land more rich and vivid.

The Koliya country was situated to the east of Shakya territory. They had their capital at Ramagrama. The introduction to the Kunal Jatak says that the Shakya and Koliya tribes had their river Rohini which flowed between Kapilavastu and Ramagram. Both the tribes had their river confined by a single dam and they cultivated their crops by means of water of this river (Law-.27). Haliddavasana, a village in Koliya country was visited by Buddha.

Mahaparinibbana Sutta of Digghanikaya mentions that Lord Buddha went into *Mahaparinibbana* at the age of eighty in Kushinagar. He was cremated there. Knowing the *Mahaparinirvan* of Lord at Kushinagara, different states and ethnic groups around Kushinagara arrived on the spot to claim the relics of Lord Buddha.

At first the Mallas of Kushinagar rejected the demand but at the end had to comply in distributing the relics when the demanding parties were ready to wage war if the relics were not distributed (Govt. of India: 115).

After the able counseling of Bhichhu Kasyapa the solution came to an amicable solution and Brahman Drona distributed the relics into eight parts and was taken away by them. They were.

1. King Ajatasatru of Magadh
2. Mallas of Pava
3. Lichhavis of Vaisali
4. Bullis of Alakappa

5. Shakyas of Kapilavastu
6. Brahmins of Bethdwipa
7. Mallas of Kushinagara and
8. Koliyas of Ramagrama

Morriyas of Pippalivana arrived late on the spot. So they collected embers and ashes from the crematorium and satisfied themselves with it. Drona received the vessel from which the relics was measured. Some say it was urn.

The scene of the distribution of relics is carved in a stone panel now in collection of Cambridge University museum as well as in a mono-scenic narrative panel of Amaravati coping stone now in collection of Madras Museum (159: Dahejia)

All eight parties who received the relics, and ones who collected the embers and took the urn, built the stupa containing their respective booty. Thus came ten important stupas in the world.

Since Ramagrama also received one part of relics, the old king, it is said, of that country built the stupa containing the relics of Lord. (Fah-sian) Ramagrama was the capital city of the Republic of Koliyans (Hanh: 53). After the erection of the stupas containing the relics of Buddha, these sites became the centre of pilgrimage and devotion.

When Asoka came into power, Buddhism got the support from national power and it was revamped. Asoka did pilgrimage to the thirty-two sites related to Buddha and his life. Besides the pilgrimage he thought open all the stupas containing the relics of Buddha and to redistribute them into 84000 parts and build a stupa on each of them in order to propagate and spread the Dharma. Thus he opened seven out of the eight original stupas. But when he arrived at last in Ramagrama to open the stupa he found the stupa being guarded by the serpent king. [The serpent king meant the Naga dynasty. Kings of that region who were ruling then in this part of the World were the descendents of that dynasty, the memory of which

was coming down to the time of Sena rulers of Palpa area down to 18/19th. Century even, who were eulogized as the dynasty coming down from Naga kings (Gurung: 21)]. On the persuasion of the King, Asoka was convinced with his arguments and did not dare to open the stupa and went back,

Divyavadana and Asokavadana narrate about the pilgrimage made by Asoka to thirty-two sites related to Buddha and his life. The pilgrimage he made to Ramagrama stupa is further narrated in a stone panel carved on the middle architrave of south gate stupa no 1. in Sanchi of first century B.C. Asoka is portrayed there with his retinue in Ramagrama. The architrave was donated by Balamitra, a pupil of Ayachuda one of the preceptor of Dharma.

Similarly Ramagrama stupa is portrayed in the stone slab carving in Amaravati and another one now in collection of Saranath museum as well. (Govt. of India: 127)

Later on the stupa was visited by both the Chinese Pilgrims Fah-sian around 399- 414 AD and Hieun Tsiang around 629-643 A.D.) who did leave some accounts on the stupa and surroundings. Then it went into oblivion for more than a millennium. The site remained a great mystery to the archaeologists since long time. Many scholars guessed many sites to be Ramagrama. A. Cunningham and A.C.L. Carrllyle tried much to fix the site but could not come nearer to the point.

The English scholars who did remarkable contributions in reviving longtime massacred Buddhism in her own homeland and tried much to locate the sites related to Buddha and his life. In this connection they followed the footprints of Chinese pilgrims Fah-sian and Hieun Tsiang and found many places. In this regard they also followed it in order to locate Ramagrama or Devdaha. Following the itinerary of Chinese travelers Coningham in 1861 A.D. thought Ramagrama to be in Deokali village in Basti district of India (Coningham:355) (pl-5) and A.C.L. Carrllyle thought Rampur Deoria as Ramagrama in 1875/76 (pl-5).

But after the discovery of Lumbini on 1st December 1896 a new key was found to open the long locked site of Ramagrama or Devdaha and started to be looked for in the border lines of Nepal and India stretching to the east of Lumbini. To this effect Thomas Watters, the specialist on Chinese pilgrim's travelogue and a scholar in Sanskrit and old Chinese literature suggested contemporary scholars and researchers in Eighteen Seventees with following words:

It is unnecessary now to notice the opinions of General Cuningham and Mr. Carrllyle as to the modern representative of Rama of our pilgrims. Further research in Nepal Tarai may lead to the discovery of some trustworthy indication as the site of old city (Watters- 1873:20)

Vincent Smith after his retirement while writing the prefatory note for P.C. Mukherji's A report on a Tour of Exploration of the Antiquities in the Tarai-Nepal, advised the contemporary archaeologists to look for Ramagrama along the northern boundary of Gorakhpur district on both sides of frontier and adds further that the site of Ramagrama will be found about NNE from Nichlaur in Nepalese territory near Dharmauli.

He further goes on to write that the Rohini river which falls into the Rapti river near Gorakhpur is mentioned in some of the Buddhist legends as flowing between Kapilavastu and other Shakya city variously named as Koli, Devdaha or Byaghrapura. The map shows the western branch of this river about fifteen miles east of Tilar and eastern branch also called the Baghela three miles further on. Dr. Hoey who visited this part of the frontier early in 1898 reports that the Tappa or sub division east of Baghela is known as Baghaura and with great probability connects these names with Byaghrapura. On the bank of river Jharahi about two miles south east of Parasi Bazar which is five or six miles north of frontier Dr. Hoey found a well preserved stupa. P.C Mukherji further writes that he thinks the town of Koli (Davdaha or Byaghrapura) may be located on the Baghela River

some seventeen or eighteen miles east of Rummidei.

He adds more on Ramagrama that the distance eastward from Lumbini garden to Ramagrama kingdom was forty miles. The capital will, I think, be found in Nepalese territory near the frontier north or little east of North from Nichlaul Police Station. A village named Dharmauli (Dharmapuri) is on the frontier and the name has a Buddhist look (Mukherji- 1969: 18, 19)

P.C. Mukherji, a renowned excavator in Nepal Tarai during the close of nineteenth century also gave the same conclusion. To quote him – *the investigation might be followed up in the eastern Tarai in effect being made specially to fix the site of Ramagrama, which is probably north of Gorakhpur district.*

Mukherji did not actually arrive in the site but wrote on Ramagrama merely from Lumbini Kapilvastu area. He was investigating that time especially to locate and identify the site of Kapilavastu in the west.

Dr. Hoey took the lead in first reconnaissance tour in this part of Buddhist world and came up to Parasi and surrounding. He noted the present stupa two miles south east of Parasi bazar and an Asokan pillar capital four miles north from the same place. But latter on his Ashokan pillar capital turned out to be the pinnacle part of a stone temple from Bardgoria flown down by the river when the writer of this chapter visited the object in 1999. The piece is now safe in the village of Bhataudi, a Kilometre south of the East-west highway.

Geophysical survey in Ramagram

When His Majesty's Government of Nepal applied to inscribe Lumbini, Kapilavastu (Tilaurakot) and Ramagram in World Heritage List, UNESCO immediately enlisted Lumbini in World Heritage List No. 666 and sent a scientific team to investigate further to obtain more evidence on Tilaurakot and Ramagram for which an archaeologist Robin Coningham and a

geophysicist Armin Schmidt along with an archaeology student Damian Threder was deputed. They came to conduct geophysical investigation in all three places during the whole month of September 1997. Total of four days survey was conducted in Ramagram from September 10 to 13. Methods used included earth resistance survey using an RM 15 with a 0.5 m twin probe array (Geoscan) and magnetometer survey using a FM 36 fluxgate gradiometer (Geoscan). All surveys were recorded on either 1x1 or 0.5x0.5 m. grids. Result was displayed on goe-plot software (Geoscan) using a laptop computer (Robin-1997:7)

The aim of the Geophysical survey was to locate the subsurface archaeological remains and interpret them for future excavation. This method of survey was non-destructive form of investigation. Total of four locations were surveyed. Out of them one in unlucky field gave interesting result. Initially it was predicted to be a Kushana Stupa Complex (II). Out of remaining three locations also; one south of stupa beyond the dried channel of river Jharahi gave positive result. According to the geophysicist:

As the area was under cultivation, no shallow features were expected. This is reflected by the lack of clear anomalies from the resistance survey. However the magnetometer result show strong positive anomalies which appear to be related to a rectangular structure of about ten meters in length. The outline of the anomalies is rather blurred, which indicates a greater depth of these features. It is possible that the anomaly is caused by buried brick structures related to the exposed walls (to the north of the grid)

(Cunningham:-1997: 57)

Local farmers also informed the group that while digging a burial trench for a dead *Sadhu* in the field immediately to the south of the dried river bed they had seen a substantial brick platform few feet below the cultivated surface in 1986. This is another area worthy of excavation for the evidence of Ramagram.

In another location where the present Bussi-no-Kai temple stands gave negative evidence. Therefore Department of Archaeology permitted the Japanese party to erect the present temple there.

Last one to the immediate south of the stupa gave the negative result. But the last season's excavation gave one wall in greater depth there below there wetters exact from the present surface. (pl-8b).

Additional survey was conducted in Ramagram in 1999 again. During second season of survey three locations were chosen but only one turned out to be contained with subsurface archaeological remain. That was in Modi's field about 100 meter North West of the main stupa. Other three locations brought negative result. No report of that season was submitted except one positive picture from Modi's field. (pl-3a)

Negative result in geophysical survey does not mean hundred percent negative evidence in the field. The wall could be deep buried and the rays could not penetrate that much deep because it can work hardly down to 1.5 meters only. We can take the example as mentioned in two paragraphs above. Actually, most part of the present island is filled with subsurface archaeological remains in the form of stupas, monasteries, paved yards and paths.

Fluxgate gradiometer picked up the subsurface walls more successfully and could produce nice pictures where as the earth resistance meter could not catch up any alignment. Though easy to handle and understand the operation, the result of earth resistance is proved to be of less value in this part of the world. Fluxgate gradiometer is excellent to work in Nepal despite its complexity to work and handling. Two excellent results were obtained in Ramagram (Fig-II)

Excavation in unlucky field could be well examined and anomaly features seen in the geophysical survey turned out to be the small monastery with a stupa in the middle of the courtyard.

However the structure guessed by the experts to be a stupa complex turned out into a monastic complex after the result of the excavation (Fig.-1a).

Similarly few trenches laid in Modi's field nearly 100 meter north west of the main stupa also gave positive result. Two distinctive phases of the monastic structure was exposed in one single season of digging. More work is still needed in other to fully expose and understand the complex in detail.

Proposed Land Acquisition

Once the place had been identified as an archaeological site of great importance, the stupa and land immediately adjacent to it was acquired and protected by Department of Archaeology and was later transferred to the Lumbini Development Trust for further management as all archaeological sites related to Buddha and his life came under their supervision with the notification in the Nepal Gazette dated 2050-7-4 B.S. As the exposed brick structure in the south bank of river Jharahi were threatened by river cutting, a plan was implemented to divert the river to the east of the stupa by means of a new channel. This has been done very successfully and old meander is now slowly drying up. But unfortunately in new channel also there was archaeological remain, which was cut and thrown away during the cutting activity in 1989 for the new channel of Jharahi (pl-4d). But this diversion safeguarded the exposed structure in the south and probable flooding threats to the main stupa.

For the planned development of Ramagram the process of acquiring land for the systematic development of Ramagrama had been initiated many times. The LDT was the one to initiate this process. But it always ended up in marking the field maps or drawing a line on the paper and nailing four corners with wooden or cement pegs. There were four corner nails in the ground still but due to the thin wallet of LDT/DOA, the process of acquiring land always remained a dream only. The last attempt however was initiated in the year 2059.BS. Krishna Bahadur K.C.

the archaeologist of Lumbini Development Trust headed the team. The team worked hard in the field, and made a nice report and presented them to LDT, which was forwarded to concerned organizations and Dept. of Archaeology for further action. But until the wallet is at hand such report goes always to the libraries as historic document only. However a brief note on K C's report will not be out of context here to reproduce for future reference.

The team of K.C was entrusted to demark the area necessary for the development of Ramagrama. The team in collaboration with local Municipality, Local District Development Committee, CDO and local farmers did an in-depth study of the area and keeping attention to long run future came to the conclusion to acquire the land for the developmental process (Fig.-VII). They have incorporated the following point:

- # All the subsurface archaeological remains are brought under the acquired land area.
- # Maximum of fallow land was incorporated with the view to exclude agricultural land.
- # Maximum number of local participation was invited in decision- making process.
- # The area for acquiring of land was made in presentable shape.
- # The total area of 38-07-035 *Bigha* of land is proposed to be acquired.

UNESCO team had also recommended acquiring the land for the future development of Ramagrama monumental Zone. (Coningham: 60)

The area to be acquired for the development as prescribed by UNESCO team, Lumbini Development Trust and the DOA is nearly with the same volume with difference of few pieces of the land patches. But after the detail scruntinization and present context of cultural heritage sites the area for the development could be well decreased and let the people decide themselves how they want to develop their site and environs. The area could be demarcated,

as prescribed by UNESCO, into core zone, supportive zone and buffer zone.

Core zone: The island area with main stupa and two monastic complexes.

Supportive zone: the area south of dried bed and bank portion in the east of new channel of the river Jharahi where subsurface archaeological remains are traced.

Buffer zone; Area covered by the land acquisition proposal in LDT's report.

Furthermore there should not be any sort of big industries permitted in the land area between Parasi-Mahespur road in the west, Deogaon village in the east, Parasi in North and the Gandak canal to the south. Only agricultural activities should be permitted. All industrial developments should be located out of this area in order to preserve the cultural sanctity and religious value of the monumental zone of Ramagram Stupa. The farmers (owners) of those lands should be facilitated by the Government in liu of their acceptance to remain in farming state to protect the sanctity of the monumental zone.

Procedure of Excavation

For scientific record and to correlate different structures and findings, the whole site is divided into different squares. Keeping in view the size of the main stupa, the first square is made accordingly and the stupa is encased into a fifty meters square (50x50m). The same size of the squares is extended in all directions. In relation to the shape and size of the land and distribution of the subsurface archaeological remains, the area is planned to be covered by 88 squares of fifty meters by fifty meters. They are eight in west east and eleven in north south directions. The squares are numbered from top left to down right. The main square encasing the stupa falls on the square number 44 and other archaeological remains fall on the squares 19, 27, 35, 36, 43, 44, and 67. The excavation site with the monastic complex in unlucky field falls on 35 and 43 and stupa and surrounding areas on the square number 44. Only known sites

are noted in the particular squares. There could be other monuments unnoticed underground. They can be marked easily once they are traced.

Each square of fifty meters are divided again into four quadrants of 25x25 m. and marked alphabetically into ABCD in clockwise direction from top left. These quadrants are further divided into twenty-five trenches of four meters by four meters leaving one-meter baulk in between. Thus each square of fifty meters block has hundred trenches. This made the digging manageable and scientific.

Twenty-five trenches of ABCD quadrants were marked alphabetically from top left in small letters a, b, c, d, to z except one letter 'o'. The letter 'o' was thought to be misleading with zero. Therefore was taken out.

All the findings and correlations are recorded in relation to the big grids, quadrants, trenches and layer numbers in the official report.

Thus first number represents the big square (50x50m) followed by a capital ABC or D for quadrants. After that comes the small alphabet for the particular trench. Therefore (for example) 35Bd means the trench d from quadrant B of the square number 35 (Fig.-Ib).

The trench plan printed in **Ancient Nepal-142** p.7 therefore is slightly changed. The writer regrets for the inconvenience caused to the readers.

Phases of Ramagram

After four season's digging inside the Stupa complex, a mere mound of the brickbats turned out to be nicely decorated stupa on multi tiered plinths of carved brick evolving through many phase which at last resulted to be devastated both by natural agents and human vandalism. North and south part of the stupa is found to be more destructed in lower level and in contrary upper levels are destructed more in East and West part. In some part of the north, the structure is almost rooted out to the last layer of

foundation leaving only two complete bricks and three brickbats in situ [Anc. Nep, Nr.157, p-9(Fig-III).Pl-2a]. The south extension (buttress) among four extensions of cardinal direction of the stupa is completely rooted out before the great flood occurred in the area. The whole area in south is completely covered with the thick flood deposit of Jharahi River.

All four corners of the square platform of main stupa are detected and SW and SE corner is found to be destructed. The circular structure of Mauryan phase is now detected in six trenches of 44Aq, 44Ba, 44 Ad, 44Bs, 44Bp and 44Dm. Among them one layer of bricks is seen in 44Bs, 44Bp and 44Bm that could be drawn in plan also. It provided the point to be reconstructed again with the help of three points formula. The formula is simple. Geometrically any circle could pass through three points if they are not in straight line. With the same formula a circle is drawn and thus detected the circular alignment as mentioned above. From the trenches of 44 Ba and 44 Ak the evidence of circular structures were traced and reconfirmed by cutting 23 and 27 cms horizontally from below the square foundation.

The structural parts described as of Mauryan period in the previous article of Ramagram Excavation II (Anc. Nep. Nr- 148, p-6) is to be little revised now looking at the size of the bricks compared with Mayadevi temple of Lumbini. It was surmised as of Mauryan period that time. But after the detail scrutiny of the bricks, they are found mixed with more of the bricks of latter period as well. The Mauryan bricks in this structure were found to be reused ones and majority of the bricks were of later date, the size of which measures only 5/6x24/26x34/35. The original one of Mauryan period is of the size of 6/7x26/27x39/40 cms. The lower structure below the square foundation is found to be of Mauryan period which has the brick size as described above. The square structure with extensions in all four sides rests on the circular structure. The two structures are distinctively different in plan and elevation. The Mauryan structure was in round plan on top of which

rests the square plan later formed into cruciform. From overall picture, the phasing of the stupa and plinths around it are to be found in following order of time.

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| First Phase | - | Circular brick stupa of Mauryan period. There should be mud stupa inside, but only could be conjectured now. |
| Second „ | - | Square plan with four extensions into cruciform structure. |
| Third „ | - | Erection of Praying Platform and lower monastic Complex in Modi's field. |
| Fourth „ | - | Building of plinths around and some renovations of the stupa. |
| Fifth „ | - | Erection of the Monastic Complex and building of Second plinth of the stupa with entrance in NW corner. |
| Sixth „ | - | Building the blockades around the stupa in order to save it from flood and some pavement in eastern foreground of the stupa complex and erection of round platforms for praying in the east. There were some votive stupas offered in and around in small scale as well. |

The periodization is done with the help of available C14 result. Three of the charcoal samples collected from the monastic complex gave the date of Gupta Period (3rd to 6th century). The bricks used during this period were of 4/5x18/19x26/27 cms. in size.

Similarly Praying platform was constructed

with the brick sizes of 4/5x26.5x34/35 cm and the cruciform structure of the stupa has two sizes of bricks similar to size in praying platform of west and circular structure of the stupa. The lowest structure of the circular stupa has the largest bricks of 6/7x26/27x39/40 cms. Therefore the sizes of the bricks, as accepted by majority of the scholars, are attributed to

Gupta – 4/5x18/19 x 26/27

(Relatively confirmed by C14 dating)

SungaKushana 5/6x26/27x34/35

Attributed to this period because of the intermediate size and section.

Mauryan 6/7x27/28x40/41

Well comparable to the size of Mayadevi Temple (15 chamber) structure of Lumbini.

Phase

Within the square base of the stupa structure also there are two distinctive phases seen one on top of other.

First phase was erected with brick soling made below 8 courses of bricks seen in east side and during second phase is another soling done below third and second courses both below the roundels of the square structure of main stupa. (Pl-10d)

Second phase seems parallel to the last phase construction of monastic complex in both places in unlucky field and Modi's place. The construction of protection blockade came later with bricks is contemporary to this phase (pls-9). In the south side the extension is completely rooted out leaving no trace of it. The decorative elements have remained in other three sides.

While comparing with the monastic walls also there are two different sizes of bricks seen. The lower bricks are similar in size with the SungaKushana phase and upper one to the Gupta phase.

Medi's field

The noteworthy find of the year 2002/03 is the two phase structures in a site to the far NW location of the stupa. The findings in the squares of 19 and 27 are remarkable, where the earlier phase of the settlement was discarded after a big earthquake. There are two distinctive wall structures superimposed, and late comer came and settled on top of the devastated wall structure where the Gupta phase were seen at the lowest most portion of the cruciform structure and raised upward. The stupa structure was also not spared by this earthquake. The NE part of the stupa structure also showed some sort of earthquake devastation. From the evidence of location 19 and 27 squares it shows that the earthquake occurred during or little after SungaKushan period. The same dating is shown by the stupa crack also. The stupa is given retaining wall after the earthquake and there is Gupta bricks used after that in this structure. The praying platform to the west of the stupa is also contemporary to the lower phase of this site.

Ramgram Main Stupa

Ramagrama, being a religious site, the structures from the excavation are also coming up with same nature. There are stupas, monasteries and the praying platform standing side by side connected with the streets and paved floors (pls-6). The Mouryans could have erected the stupa covering the mud structure in round shape with big bricks. We see them now below the cruciform structure. The protection walls were also found added in course of time. During the last phase, there were some round structures added in the east of the stupa. The purpose of them could not be understood well. They might be simply added for decorative purpose since they are coming connected together as an integral part of the wall structure running around, or the round structure on bricks might have been placed for praying purpose facing towards the main stupa. A terracotta votive stupa in small size is also found in the north. This should

be the offering of the people in the last phase. Another votive stupa inside the monastic courtyard is also to be noted (Anc. Nep.Nr-148).

Circular Brick structure

The stupa of Ramagrama is found to have gone through many stages of destruction and renovations. If the postulation of late Babukrishna Rijal is correct then there should be a mud structure at the center. For ancient people the stupa is essentially a heaped up mound of earth over the ashes of the cremation. The possibility of having such mud structure at the center is more probable because the lowest phase of the brick structure measures more than 36.5 meters in diameter. To build such a huge stupa with largest bricks of 7x26x 41 cms leads one to surmise a mud structure inside it. It is not illogical. Therefore we can surmise that the Mouryan people should have covered the mud structure at the center and erected the brick stupa veneering over that.

The bricks laid inside the circular alignment are also compact and goes into the centre of the stupa. But how far does it penetrates is not clear due to the super structure above which was not cut. In trench 44 Bs a small portion was cut deep and went down to 7 courses of bricks (Anc. Nep.Nr.157, p-17) then was not possible to go down, due to the narrow space. It was cut in line with the square structure foundation and found to be laid compactly with all big bricks.

It could well be surmised that such a big structure could not be made only for structural purpose. It could have been made outside covering some very important edifice which should nothing but be other than the mud stupa containing the relics of the Lord. We hope such a big stupa should have such important object. That is why the Mauryans encased the valuable edifice by such a protective structure. The Kushanas followed it and raised it to the decorative structure first in square form with extended buttress on which the steps are provided in west (III). Above this structure the square is brought into the octagonal shape and raised almost a meter on top of

which at last the dome structure of the stupa is raised. The height is raised to the level unknown but the remains in-situ paved bricks are traced to 1.70 cms below the present highest point of the mound (pl-7a). We do not know yet how deep below the Mauryan veneering level could be traced because we did not go down from here also in order not to destroy the in-situ bricks of the structure. A complete exposure of the mound will give a nice picture if we could clear the debris on top.

Mud structure

The mud structure, if any, could well be inside the area below the octagonal structure. Therefore the diameter of it, we can guess, is less than 20 meters. The Mouryans could have erected the brick veneering with big bricks (6/7x26/27x39/40) covering the mud structure in round shape. We see them now below the cruciform structure (pl-10d, Fig. III).

Cruciform Structure

The highest point of the structure should be less than six meters from the natural level because the base of the octagonal structure is measured nearly six meters from natural level. The builders of the octagonal architecture should have laid their base on top of the brick foundation which should not be other than the brick structure of cruciform build-up. The thickness of the cruciform wall should be very big, not less than three meters.

The stupa of Vaishali, which was supposed to be opened by Ashoka in third century B.C., measured only 7.8 meters in diameter by the excavator. Similarly the height was recorded as less than 3.3 meters. (Allchin:243)

Therefore the height of the mud structure in Ramagram also, if any, should be less than six meters high.

Most part of the cruciform structure extended out from circular brick structure is found tilted outwards and some parts even collapsed. Same

condition would have been occurred in the inner side of the octagonal structure if they did so. But it is found intact without any cracks and tilting inwards which show the structure to have been raised on top of the solid foundation.

Different phases of the evolution of the stupa is recorded from many trenches but well illustrated in the trench no 44Bs and 44 Ad and 44Al. The brick sizes of the lowermost structure are identical and comparable to the Mouryan-bricks of Mayadevi temple in Lumbini. Unlike in Gotihawa stupa, there are no trapezoidal or wedge-shaped bricks in Ramagrama. It measures 7x26x40 cms. in average. And all the bricks are molded in rectangular shape. The diameter of the circular structure measures to 36.5 meters. The brick courses below the foundation totals to fifteen layers laid not in even elevation. More it raises up the brick course goes out of plumb. One course of brick is left now in circular alignment over the foundation traced in three trenches 44Bs, 44Dp, and 44Ad quite confirmed.

When the next phase of the construction was raised on top of circular structure ten courses of the brick structure was raised then recessed in for 18 cms. in average. After that raised another eight courses of the bricks on top of which is given the first decorative element of roundel. The roundel is comprised of three layers of bricks of which top and bottom bricks are cut circumferentially with beveled pattern and middle one with normal brick without any decorative element. When joined together they are in the shape of a half hemisphere in section. On top of roundel is given an angular cut designed brick. Then again is given one more recessed brick. On top of that the structure is raised with fourteen courses of brick wall bringing the structure in complete form of the cruciform. This phase of structure is found once more renovated and the level raised.

So far the first phase structure is measured with the confirmation of three points in circumference and reconfirmed with fourth and fifth points as well

and thus found to be a circular structure with fifteen courses of brick totaling 115 cms in height.

If there is mud stupa at the center of the mound the diameter of it will not be more than the diameter of octagonal structure on top because the octagonal structure will not stand on top of the mud. Therefore it should be less than 20m. If the mud structure of Vaisali and Ramagrama stupa are compared and correlated each other then the mud stupa, if any, at the center, will be below the octagonal structure within the enclosure of its eight arms and the foundation should be at least one meter inside the present façade of Octagonal structure.

On top of the circular structure stands square structure of 24x 24 meters and later brought under cruciform pattern extending further seven meters with buttress on four direction of the square base. All extended parts of this structure are provided with the steps leading upwards to the main structure.

The structure is erected with the brick size of 5x24/25 x 33/34 cms. and along with brick bats of the earlier structure. The structure is coming up with decorative element as well. There are decorative pilasters in dorsal corner and ventral corner of the cruciform structure, followed by additional pilasters in between at a distance of two meters each.

They are made of decorative bricks which were not molded but cut and carved before firing. The combination of different cut bricks erected one above other brings the shape of a decorative pilaster form in both corners of the structure.

This phase of the structure is dated tentatively after Mourya and before Gupta period.

In totality, the cruciform architecture stands on the circular structure on top of which again an octagonal structure is erected and at last dome structure of the bricks on top.

The stupa seems renovated once more during the Sunga Kushana period. The old surface around

the cruciform structure was raised by covering the brickbats and some more courses of bricks are seen added to the stupa structure. The total of five courses of bricks were added on top of the previous level, then brought to the second working level. In the same time the level around the octagonal structure was also added with the brick ramming. The level there was also raised to some extent.

Since the diggings are done in trench patterns only, the structures are also understood in similar way seen through the grids. A complete exposure is necessary to understand fully which will give opportunity for the understanding of all the structures. It is essential. It will have to be done any way in the future.

Octagonal Structure

A structure in octagonal plan is erected on top of the cruciform architecture. The diameter of this structure is 24 meter and each arms measure 10.25 m in length. As in the structure below, each corner of the octagon is embellished with the carved pilasters with additional five pilasters in between them. The height of it is nearly a meter high.

The octagon is standing on top of the cruciform structure with five courses of bricks. Then a decorative motif of a roundel comprised of two round beveled bricks is given. On top of that a cut-in brick for further decoration and finally recessed to 8 cms and lastly the octagonal wall is raised about a meter high.

Each corner of the octagon is decorated with a carved bricks in the form of pilasters. There are two additional pilasters raised in between two corners dividing each arms into three equal parts. The carvings are not in similar design instead different pilaster has different design of cut and decorated bricks. Four middle courses of the bricks are differently carved and given varieties of look. But the base of all the pilasters is carved with similar designs, to bring it into symmetry.

There is an open passage in between the top edge of the cruciform structure and base of the octagonal structure. In first phase the passage was paved with the bricks and later on it was covered again with thick brick canker rammed. In between the base of octagonal structure and brick canker ramming a slit is cut and filled with some lime stuff which might have been used for rain water arrest to prevent the depression of structural wall due to rain water percolation.

Above the octagonal structure we can simply guess the presence of dome structure because the structure seen on top of the mound gives the probability of this. But shape and size can not be said precisely until whole of the structure is opened. Maximum of 1.70 cms of debris is seen collected on top of the mound over the structural remains at the center of mound forming the dome of the mound now. (pl-7ac) It is essential to clear them all and see if the circular alignment of the dome structure could be traced. A deep trench of treasure hunters goes down to 170 cms from the top of the mound.

From the cuttings done till now it has been noticed that the treasure hunters had done tremendous destructions to all forms of the structure of the mound from circular, cruciform to the octagonal and then to dome structures as well. There are many dug-holes encountered (pls-7). But no one seems to have gone through the center of the mound where the mud structure stands, if any.

Monastic Complex - I

To the north of the praying platform at a distance of nearly six meters away stands a monastic complex of moderate size. This along with the praying platform is two conspicuous structures in the vicinity of Ramagram Stupa.

The monastic complex measures 13.5x13.5 m. having 2.40m. wide rooms and the courtyard of 4.80m square. The size of the wall is 1.15 m to 1.25 m. thick and brick sizes are 6x19x30 cms and

6x23x36cms showing two phases of the construction (pl-6). Surprisingly no evidence of roof tiles are recovered showing the roofs to have been covered by organic materials most probably the thatch or leafy covering. This reminds the mention made by Hicun Tsiang in his record:

On this he (the Bhichhu separated from his group to vow for the stupa) constructed for himself a leafy pannasala (Pannasala is the Sinhalese word for leafy hut)

(29: Si-yu-ki bkII vol III)

Being a Sramanera monastery, the complex is comparatively a smaller one and it tallies with the description of Fah-sien and Hicun Tsiang, who saw there only few monks.

All the outer wall foundation of the monastery remains intact at least with some bits of brickbats robbing mostly in probable door locations. In southern façade of the monastery, there are as many as 32 courses of brick left and in eastern part there are 23-28 layers still remained in situ. But tops of them are uneven and also no door frames are encountered. The door members of the structure might have been robbed away or destroyed in course of time due to being organic material.

The depth of the foundation trench while laying the first bricks is also not in even level. In trench 35 Cp in East and 35 Ct in South the depths are 220 cms below the surface while in 35 Ch in North are 195 cms and 35Cm in West it is recorded 215 cms.

The inner room size of the compartment ranges from 205 cms to 240 cm. without any dividing walls. Probably the rooms were divided by organic materials, like reeds and bamboos (Fig.-1a).

The location of the doors is not found with any tangible objects like door jambs and doorframes. But a door hook is found from the trench. (Anc. Nep.-148 p.17) One door is in SW corner (tr.no. 35Cs) and another probably two in the east (Tr. no. 35Cu)

and 35Cp) where same type of wall destruction above the foundation level is noticed. In north may be two in trenches (tr. no. 35Cs and 35Ci) and in western part, since the foundation wall is not exposed fully can not be said precisely.

Unlike in outer walls, the inner walls of the monastic complex is nearly all robbed away leaving only seven courses of bricks in western side where as in north three layers of the bricks are left in sporadic condition (tr. 35 Cg) and in south only ghost wall remains in the form of door noticed in the section.

The eastern side where it is left with only ghost walls filled in with brickbats after the bricks from the wall were taken out. The remains of the ghost wall could easily be detected in sections. The exit to the courtyard is in southeast corner of the complex.

From the study of stratigraphy and the depth of foundation reached in different parts it can be surmised that the foundation was laid only after the deposition of sticky dark layer (*Matiara matti*) seen in trench 35Ch where the foundation rests on the soft ashy layer (i.e. 165 cms. below the present surface). From this we know that the foundation is cut down from the brownish dark layer of the trench 35Ct in which the fire places are nicely detected. So this phase of deposit predates the monastic complex.

The monastic occupation is now seems noted only in the eastern half of the trench 35Cs. The working level well marked with the laying of the bricks in floor touching the wall in slanting position is coming in trench 35Ct. This was the working level which is in average 140 cms below the present land surface.

If we presume the present monastic complex to be made during Gupta period then the layers below them certainly predates the Gupta phase which is also supported by the potsherds coming from that level (Pl-17).

The southern foundation of the monastery goes down further 30 cms than the northern wall of the

same structure. Below foundation is a pot buried in broken state. This pot brought nothing special. Therefore this could be only chance position. The pot is in inverted position and broken and lies 10 cms below the last course of the brick in northern wall of the southern bay of the monastic complex. (Anc. Nep. -148, p.14)

Further down from the last course of the foundation brick there came several layers of fire places which brought grey ware sherds mixed with cord marked sherds with some black and red wares as well (pl-17). This is interesting situation which could be the overlap of cord mark phase with grey wares. But no postholes could be detected which pushed us to think the fire places to be used temporarily and sporadically. The area gone down was only two meter squares. (Pl. b Anc Nep.-148, p.14)

Discard Of the Monastic Complex

The monastic complex seems collapsed and discarded well before the last flood occurred. This is shown by the brickbats concentration in almost all the trenches laid over the monastic complex.(pl-6) The brickbats concentration goes below and is well overlaid by yellow flood deposit. When did the flood occurred is unknown, but seems after fifth century because a charcoal sample collected from the top of brickbats concentration showed the date of 360+60 A.D.

The buried complex was noticed with the information gathered locally. The local informants informed as a piece of land to North west of the main stupa as Unlucky field because who so ever, tried to cultivate it, would suffer from deaths at home of either family members or cattle. So they never tried to cultivate it and therefore left it fallow.(pers. Comm. Jamadar Tharu, age-87)

On the information of that Department of Archaeology in collaboration with Bradford University Geophysical team on the financial support of UNESCO conducted a geophysical survey in the area

in 1997 September and found an anomalous feature of subsurface archaeological remains. The team interpreted the result as:

The features appear to represent two or three square enclosures containing an inner enclosure. The most complete example is some 12m. square with an inner enclosure of some 5 m. square. We have tentatively identified them as a votive Buddhist stupa within individual perimeter walls, perhaps mistakenly identified as diabolical residences by local farmers thus giving the field its unlucky reputation.

(Coningham and Schmidt-47:1997)

Department of Archaeology immediately conducted the archaeological excavation and found the result as a monastic complex against the interpretation as stupa complex understood by Bradford team.

Votive stupa at the courtyard of the monastery

There is a votive stupa erected at the centre of the courtyard. The central square structure seen in the magnetometer survey is the same and measures 115 cms by 115 cms with six layers of the bricks. The structure goes down from 40 cms below the present surface of the land with two one and three courses of the bricks (Shrestha-2005).

The placement of this stupa is little deviated towards southwest by 20 cms. The size of the courtyard is 4.80 m square, exactly double the breadth of the monastic room- size. The stupa does not seem contemporary to monastic complex because the last flood occurred after the abandonment of the monastery and this votive stupa is found constructed on top of that last flood layer. The placement of the stupa seems chance placement at the center of the monastic courtyard. The stupa is erected from the salvaged bricks collected from surrounding. (Anc. Nep.-148 p-19 and 24). All the bricks used in this structure are found to be in the size of 5x19x29 cms.

The aim of opening this structure is to understand about the purpose of this monument. Since it looks like a stupa and foreign deposit seen below it in western section, the excavator decided to cut down in order to check that deposit and fully understand about the structure. The structure is removed layer by layer with photographing and drawing each layer before it is removed. The drawing is done with superimposed central point fixed each time vertically in the same spot with the help of a thread marked red in central point (Ancient Nepal -148, p-24).

Surprisingly the deposit thought to be the foreign materials turned out to be the rain penetration which carried down the surface composition, and it was seen in western section and deposit is only partial in west. The whole structure is cut down to the bottom and found the surface below the structure merely a flood deposit. Half of the bricks at last layer are left in-situ after seeing all the structure. The result is late erection of the structure (Anc. Nep-148, p-19)

Monastic Complex II

Another monastic complex was traced by the Geophysical survey at a distance of hundred meters to the Northwest from the main stupa. It also measures almost to the size of the monastery number one.

The textual description of the Geophysical survey was never made available. But from the comparison and correlation with the same sort of picture from unlucky field, it can nothing but be a monastic complex with a brick structure of a stupa or an oven used for long period of time to the north of it.

It was opened partially in three trenches, only traces could be understood. However from short duration of digging in three trenches of 4x4 meters and one in 2x4 meters the following information could be gathered.

The first phase of the monastery was contemporary to the praying platform standing to the west of the main stupa. It was abandoned after an earthquake. The tiled wall of seven course brick on

top of eight course standing wall shows this situation. Same sort of the picture of earthquake is recorded in the Northeast corner of main stupa as well.

The working floor of this phase is at 2.20 m from present surface from where a nice Kushana incurred bowl is retrieved.

The second phase people came to the site and erected on top of the phase one structure (27 Ai). The brick sizes of those two phases are also quite identical with 5x 27/25 × 37/38 cm and 4x 19/20 x 32x 33 cms to first and second phase respectively

The alignment of the structure in super imposition also sheds the light on this. The second phase came at a gap of some period is also noticed with the deposit in between those two structural phases. But second phase people could not live there for long.

The site gives the nice picture of undisturbed layer of stratigraphy. Therefore it is thought to be a fruitful digging in the future to understand fully about the chronological history of Ramagrama complex with the stupa deposit.

Praying Platform

A rectangular structure measuring 8 x 17 meters is exposed to the west of the main stupa with a raised square platform (4x 4.5 m) at the center. The structure is presumed to be a praying platform (Fig.-VIIIa).

The structure is elongated north south. The central part of the structure is connected to the steps leading upwards in the main stupa by means of a paved street. Only a trace of paved bricks is left with an alignment in the edge.

The thickness of the wall in the structure measures from 80 to 85 cms and bricks used are of 4 5x 20 x 34/35 cms in size. Total of 12 courses of bricks are left in northern wall, 13-15 courses in the middle and no trace is done in the south wall because it was not opened down to the bottom. The southwest corner of the structure is seen collapsed due to the

flood of river Jharahi (Anc. Nep-148,p-12a). There are 18 courses of the bricks left in southern façade of the central square portion.

All the area inside the structure was paved with brickbats. The paving in the central square portion is found raised 20-25 cms above the surrounding level.

The level of the paved floors is 105 and 125 cms below the present surface in central platform and area below it respectively.

It is presumed that the lower level was used as praying platform for general monks and central platform for the high ranking teacher. Both type of devotees used to pray facing towards the stupa in the east thus the name praying platform.

Antiquities and small finds.

T.C. Heads

Three remarkable terracotta heads are retrieved from the excavation. Two of them were found from the trench 44 Ag and one from 36 Cv. All of them were collected from the disturbed layer of the stupa. No one of them is found from its original context and thus was not in situ. No part of the body is found. They all have been buried under the brickbats concentration of the stupa. This concentration was the phase after the stupa was discarded and devastated. Fortunately the face part of all the heads are saved from breakage due to its facedown position while digging. The heads are not broken intentionally. But their polish is gone due to the acidic content of the deposit context (pl-19).

The heads could be considered as the master pieces on the terracotta molding, found from Ramagram. No parallel to this style is traced from elsewhere. But from the sequences from which they were retrieved we can assume them to be the art creation of Guptas.

The relief of nose and depression on the two ends of the mouth and eyes are pronounced and the rotund faces are to be noticed specially (pl-19).

The lower lips are heavily protruding out and the hair style is remarkably curly and decorated in prominent style. The relief of the nose is noticeably high with flat top. The ears are pierced with big holes for heavy ornaments. Two of the figures are of female and one remaining belongs to male.

Carved stone pieces

Many pieces of carved stone have been retrieved from the eastern side of the stupa. They came from below the vandalized layer of big brick-bats. It is in average 200 cms. below surface on the mound east of the stupa. No artistic carving is met with. All the pieces have line carvings totaling different numbers and they seem to be as if cut by lathe-cutting type. From the detail look of the stone, it seems to be noticed that the stone, for what-ever purpose it may be, was cut with sharp chisel (pl-18a).

From initial look and study of the stone it is similar to the dark red sand stone more or less similar to the Asokan pillar of Gotihawa. Late Dr. Gudrun Korvinus, a renown geoarchaeologist of Erlangen University from Germany working in Nepal since two decades, is of the opinion that these stones are of siliceous rock material type and might have been imported from south of Ganga River (probably Vindhyan range) because such type of the rock is not found from the Nepal Himalayas (pers. Comm.).

But when given to test for the minerology and chemical examination to Department of Mines and Geology, the following result is made available by them (Letter head no. SB1S4-27/2062-23-716 dated 2062-10-11).

Colour: light browish red (internal face light grey to medium grey).

Hardness: 2.5

Feel; Soapy, Greasy

Specific Gravity; 2.77

Result: Soapstone

Sample Analysis

CaO - 0.49/ww

MgO - 1.21/w

Moisture - 0.13/ww

Col - 5.2/ww

SiO4 - 62.28/ww

Skeletal remains

Quite a number of human skeletons, two independent pieces with skull few pieces limb bones came out in different trenches. The complete skeletons are always found to be buried in north south direction and head towards the north. Exceptionally one skeleton was found buried head in north east and legs in south west direction (pls-16).

The trench 44 Dp turned out to be almost a graveyard from which three skeletons and only one piece of lower jaw portion was found. One skeleton showed the characteristics of a criminal death. The mouth of the skull was with wide opened and a brick bat nicely inserted into the mouth. Even the left leg was broken. (Anc. Nep.-148, p.-15) Among two other skeletons one was laid face up and is nicely rested where as other one again is laid in three bent position lower limbs, head and neck bent. Also the knee and groin are in bent position. The knee position is resting comparatively in the higher level and groins in deepest point. Thus this individual was also noticed with no natural death. It seems hurried burial and found dissected like this.

One piece of lower jaw and few bones were found in between those two skeletons in the same trench as well. The cause could not be fully understood. Anyway it shows the criminal tendency. No human bones would be buried and found dissected like this.

The bones were much decomposed due to the acedic nature of the surrounding and thus leading it very much difficult to lift the bone pieces. Almost all the extremities were gone with ribs and other soft bones.

Again in the trench no 44 Cc a nicely placed skeleton was found with one skull buried about a meter

away in up right position. It is very unusual finding. The head is not buried side ways or face- up but found in directly up right position. We do not know if the body is still below the head because we could not go down further due to the lack of time and the climatic condition as well (pl-16a).

Another skeleton was recorded one in the trench no. 44 Bi. and another in 44 Cl respectively. A skull only came out in the western section of 44 Bx and only one small piece of leg is traced in the same trench in north section jutting out of the section. In this also no second leg was found. Surprising. ! Rest of the parts may have remained in the baulk part of the excavation site (pl-17).

The dead were never accompanied with any sort of burial goods like ornaments, pot and arms showing as if too poor society, religions disbelief or bandit deaths. They were buried also in very shallow pits. All three skeletons in 44 Dp were found from 40 to 70 cms below the present surface. Only in the trench 44 Cl. the skeleton is found 125 cms. below the surface. This is the deepest burial in Ramagram.

From the study of the skeletal remains, we can infer that the site is found to be used by the people as a burial ground and by the brigands to hide their crimes.

The deads were buried in last brick bats layer therefore prior sign of the buried chamber could not be detected thus resulting in the smashing of skull in many times.

Grey wares and cord marked pottery

In Ramagrama few grey ware potsherds are

retrieved. Distinctive grey ware potsherds were collected from the first cultural layer at the depth of 290-305 cms in trench 35 Cm. They are unfortunately not in rims sherds but the bottoms of a bowl. The potsherds are seen mostly from utensils than of big vessels.

The grey ware potsherds are found from the level below the occupation layer of the monastic complex. The potsherds are noticed from the depth of 275 cms down to the natural layer. The bigger pieces were collected from the earliest phase of the occupation deposit almost at the top of the natural layer. Another variety of potsherds on grey ware was collected from the successive cultural layer at the depth of 235 to 265 cms. This variety is rather mixed with red dots showing the mixture of brick grits while lavigating the clay.

Chronologically this variety is found younger in age and inferior in quality of clay and the edge is beveled in and out of the rim (pl-17)

Besides those two finds, few other grey ware and PGW are retrieved from different contexts in Ramagrama. An example of PGW sherd is collected from 44 Ab at the depth of 95 cms. It is coming mixed with brickbats and the rest of the grey ware sherds came with the mortar while constructing the octagonal structure.

It shows that the grey ware sherds went to mix with the mortar while digging ground for the mortar, which was occupied by grey ware people.

The details of the grey ware sherds collected from different sequence are presented herewith.

<u>Trench No</u>	<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1. 35 Cm	240-305 (First layer) from BM point	Big pieces of the bottom of the pot.
2 44Cm	245-280cms from BM Point	Beveled and spotted.
3 44Cq	245 from the BMPT	Sporadic find
4 44 Df	185 cms, from the Dumpy	Found from first collapsed layer.
5 44Ab	95 cms from BM point	Painted around the rim.
6 44Ai	Collected from the mortar of octagonal structure.	May have been mixed while digging out the clay. (Also see pl-17) & Fig. VI

The Grey ware pots were produced from well levitated clay free from all impurities and were thrown in the fast wheel and fired in slow cooling process.

Although forms a small percentage of the total pottery in comparison to black ware, red ware, and black and red wares, the common shapes are found in bowls dishes and covers though other shapes are also not wanting. The size of the dishes is of 30 cms in average and height varies from 4 to 7 cms. Likewise the bowls are also in different sizes varying from 10-15 cms in diameter 8-10 cms in height). From the size and shapes of them, it could be easily surmised that they were used for dining purpose.

Grey ware culture was essentially a village culture with an agricultural cum pastoral base. People lived in house made of wattle and dab or mud or mud brick constructions. The settlement was moderate in size.

The occupational antiquity of Ramagrama area is further attested by the finding of some sherds with cord mark also. One sherd of distinctive cord mark is retrieved from 44 Ae at the depth of 320 cms below the BM point under the foundation of northern extension. This is so far the oldest pottery found from the area.

Second group of cord marked potsherds are collected from the trench no 35 Cm at the depth of 280 cms. The shreds are in a good quantity but

unfortunately do not refit together.

They are sherds from two pots as shown by the pattern of cord and thickness. Both of them are in red ware variety but more to the grayish brown in color. They are coming almost mixed with the grey wares.

The presence of those sherds pushes back the human activities in Ramagram area much older than thought previously. The cord marked potsherds in Gotihawa and Tilaurakot although not so old as in some of the Indian sites has been compared and correlated with them by Italian archaeologists. According to them, in Prahladpur it is dated by the excavator from 6th century B. C. to 3rd. century B.C. Likewise in Atranjikhera it has gone even up to 12th. to 6th. Century B.C (Apa & Di-castro: 734). In Banjarahi, near Lumbini, it is found associated with grey ware and NBP and S.B.Deo dated to 700 to 600 B.C. or little later. Now in Ramagrama it is coming with grey wares. Therefore it could tentatively be dated to at least from 5th. to 3rd. century B.C. at the most late period attributable.

Carbon Dating (C14 Dates)

Five Samples collected from different contexts were sent to Cologne, Germany for C14 Dating. The result of those samples showed interesting dates. The lab numbers and related layers and trench numbers are given with the result (dates). Appendix

<u>Lab No</u>	<u>Trench No</u>	<u>Related Context</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
KN 5441	35 Ci	working level of monastic complex	1670 ±35	
KN 5442	35 Bn	On top of the brickbats collection above the ghost wall (or after the abandonment of monastic complex and before the flood	1700±3	
KN 5443	43 Bb	From a pit sealed by layer III	1740±35	
KN 5444	35 cp	Flood layer below the foundation.	3514±40	The specimen could have been flown by the river after jungle fire due to unknown reason.
KN 5445	35 cm	Below the foundation on the Depth of 2.75 cms from flood deposit.	4240±440	" "

(All dates are Before Present plus minus as indicated.) (See Fig.-IX)

Out of these five samples, the sample no 5445 proved to be too old to the occupation in this part of Tarai region of Nepal and also doubted by the experts of the laboratory because of the amount of charcoal received for them to dating was too small. Another example of sample no 5444 is also found comparatively old. This was because of the content of the sample collection. The sample was collected from flood level expecting that it could give the flooding date. But in contrary it turned to be flown down by the river which could have been produced by the Jungle fire, due to some other unknown reasons.

Other three samples gave quite reasonable dating related to the historical sequence and archaeological structures of the site.

Coins

A copper coin is found from Northwest Corner of the monastery from the depth of 15 cms from top (trench 35 Ch). The coin is fairly preserved.

The size of the coin is 2.4 to 2.5 cms in diameter showing not in perfect circular shape. Similarly the thickness also varies from 2.4 mm to 4.2 mm. The weight is 13.010 grams.

The coin is of Kushana period. There is a figure of a king wearing long coat down to the knee, the posture seems in walking with the feet apart. The right hand holds a lantern (?) in bent posture as if raising little up and left hand is raised up to elbow holding arrow or some type of club. The head seems wearing a pointed cap.

There are four letters embossed to the right of the figure. The legend reads *va rdha na ya*. The letters are of Brahmi from the periodic phase of Sunga Kushana.

On the reverse of the coin, there is a figure standing at the center and few letters in unintelligible condition. This side is much rusted therefore could not be deciphered properly. Such coin type was also reported from Tilaurakot coin hoards excavated by Risso University. Late Babu Krishna Rijal has classified that under Buddha type copper coin of Kaniska. (Anc. Nep-26, p-44). Such coins were also reported from Dhamnihawa by him (Anc. Nep. No 22, Pl.- VI)

Besides the Kushana coin, some other coins are also retrieved from the shallow depth of the stupa. Among them four silver coins of one rupee each of 1918 AD, 1942 A.D and two of 1940 A.D issued by Kings George V King Emperor, George I King Emperor and George VI King Emperor, respectively. All the coins weigh 11.6 grams (one *Tola*) and are of 30.3 mm in diameter. The thickness of the coins is 2 mm.

Some additional coins from India and Nepal were also found inside the creeps of the bricks from the stupa surface. They were offered by the people in recent times only.

The coins are in following numbers and denominations:

One rupee coin	1	2049 B.S.	1
Fifty paise	1		
Twenty-five paise	2	2025,2026 B.S	
Five paise (copper)	1	2017 B.S.	
Five paise	2		
Five paise	3		

An Indian coin of one Pice with hole at the middle.

The Department of Archaeology has been kindly assisted by Dr. Angela Simons of Germany by extending her cooperative services in arrangement of conducting c14 laboratory test. It gave a very nice parameter of dates which totally fits to the date revealed by archaeological sequence and historical events. She has arranged for all free of cost. She was Director counterpart of Mustang cave excavation conducted during 1992 to 1996. The test has been done in the laboratory of Cologne University. Therefore the Department of Archaeology is grateful to them and thanks them all.

An Indian coin of two Pice, wavy in circular pattern

¼ Rupee coin of George VI King Emperor of 1943.

Pots and Potteries.

Eight complete pots of different uses are retrieved from the vandalized layer of the site. There were many crushed pots as well but due to the lack of manpower and skilled hand in the office no refitting could be done and presented herewith.

Typologically the pots do belonged to red ware variety and they are all utilitarian purpose of daily life (Shrestha 2005).

Among eight vessels, four were used for water and are of *Lota* and *Karuwa* type and four were of boiling water and cooking purpose., The carbonized bottom of the vessels give this picture.

Pot No. 1, 2 and 3

These three pots were for the water use and two, No 1 and 2, are of red and 3 in brown and black in color. Two of them have a small spout but broken now.

Pot No 4

This pot having no spout was used for a cooking purpose but seems for boiling water. Bottom portion of the pot is well carbonized but inside without any shoot. The height of the pot is 18.5 cms and the diameter of mouth is 11 cms. The pot is of red ware variety.

Pot No 5

This pot was purely used for cooking some food gruel or rice. Well carbonized on the bottom, wide mouthed pot is of special interest. The height is 8.5 cms and diameter on top is 15.5 Cms. The mouth is incurved and decorated with strip banded all round.

Pot No 6

This is also a cooking pot of red ware variety. It is well carbonized from inside and at the bottom of the pot. Probably it was used for cooking varieties of food frying or cooking. The height is 14.5Cms. and diameter is 13 Cms. The color is browner than red ware type.

Pot No 7A

Lota type of water pot with a small spout is in brownish color but burnished with red color in the neck part. The spout is only 2.5 Cms long. The height is 14 Cms and diameter of the mouth does not exceed 8 cms.

Pot No.8

Nice red ware variety of a *Lota* type could have been used for any purpose. The height is 13 cms and diameter of the mouth is 9.5 Cms. The presence of mica and sand is noticed in the surface. This is the only complete pot retrieved from the excavation.

Besides those complete pots there are many mouth pieces of water vessels also retrieved from the excavation but other complete vessels are wanting.

Animal figurines:

Many animal figurines were collected during the course of excavation. The animal thus molded is comprised of dogs, horses, camels and oxen. Some aquatic animals like frogs are also found. Very few intact animal figurines are retrieved. Most of the animal figurines have legs gone and head portion broken away.

The detail study of them is wanting. Only representative pieces are portrayed herewith. All the figures were molded by hand and fired thus look brownish red in color. The beasts are hand-modeled and solid throughout. Made of fine grained clay they usually are red and fairly well burnt.

The most favorite animals seem horses followed by camels. Other animals like dogs and bulls are represented but are much less in number. Only

one figure of a bull and a dog was found. The chief inspiration in those creations could be of interest in toys and probably votive offerings to the stupa (pls-18).

Most of the figurines were collected from vandalized layer and very few pieces are collected from early phase of the stupa complex.

Trial Trenches in Garden Area

UNESCO team who conducted the geophysical survey strongly recommended the trees on the south of the stupa to be cut down and clear the land in order to save the probable archaeological remains underneath. Those trees were already five years old when UNESCO team visited the site, and grown fully and has been the part of the landscape then. The trees were transplanted by LDT in collaboration with Bussi-no-Kai a Buddhist Organization of Japan who also made a garden and a monument across the river in three *Kattha* Land in 1998 A.D.

When talked about with the octogenarians, there is a rare chance of finding any archaeological remains underneath because the river has traveled many times to and forth in North South direction during their life time. The remains, if any, should have been washed away by the river and if left in pieces they will be well below the ground where a root action of a general tree can reach. Therefore it was decided to check the area anyway and cut some trenches in garden area in order to see the remains. The area was thoroughly checked and the trenches laid in different parts of the garden. Two trenches of one and half meter by ten meters in west, two one by ten meters and one two by five meters at the center were laid down. On the east of the garden again, one two by five meters and one, one by thirty meters trenches were cut down. The depth in all the trenches was achieved to two meters down. Nothing except the riverside silt is encountered. This part of the land is found to be sterile of the monuments underneath.

Therefore it is strongly recommended, now, not to clear away the trees from the area. There is very little chance of archaeological remains in this part of Ramagrama complex. The transplantation is well done and luckily well placed. And they have been now the integral part of the Ramagrama landscape.

Trenching In Riverbed on South

A long trench of one meter by twenty meters was laid down a meter away from the alignment exposed in the riverbed to the south of the main stupa. The trench runs from west to east starting from the exposed brick alignment. The trenches are cut in the size of one meter by four meters at the interval of one meter to the north where either bricks are exposed or alignments could be traced.

The trenches are cut in order to see if the structure seen in the river bed extends towards north under the dry river. The structure was believed by the former archaeologists to be the monastic complex described by the Chinese pilgrims Fah-sian and Hieun-Tsiang in fourth and seventh century respectively.

The geophysical survey conducted by Bradford University Group on the south of the brick alignment also guessed the brick structures deep below the cultivated surface. (Coningham-1997:57) The local people also talks about a big foundation wall and wide brick pavements few feet below the cultivated surface. They saw them while digging a grave for a Sadhu in 1985/86 (pers. comm.. Dayaram Dhobi Deurwa)

After going down for one and half meters, it was found only fallen bricks in two of the eastern trenches while in western trench a clear alignment of brick wall was traced. Therefore this trench was extended towards north again with the size of one and half by two meters. It falls due north of exposed wall in the river bed. The wall is found one meter sixty centimeters extended further north from the alignments which is below eighty centimeters from the

present river surface. At the depth of two meters and ten centimeters the water table came up and further digging was stopped.

From this cutting it is found that this part of the structure is found to be cut and buried by the river at least 2.5 meters. Since the river is already diverted now, there is no threat of further destruction any more.

Wall Exposed On the Left Bank of River Jharahi

A small piece of the wall is found exposed in the left bank of river Jharahi to the east of the stupa. The alignment of it runs nearly for two meters in north south direction. The structure was unnoticed or neglected during the diversion act of the river in 1986/87. Archaeological value was underestimated, then.

The site was thoroughly checked in 2002 and found that the alignment has six courses of the bricks left. To the right angle of it in south, a wall of 50 cm thickness runs towards west. This portion of the wall is found cut and thrown away during the diversion act of the river (pl-4d).

From the northern end of the alignment a single course of the brick runs further for more than 45 meters showing as if the street pavement or a courtyard complex.

The brick size in this site is 5x 19 x 28 cms which shows the site to be younger in age than Sunga Kushan period.

A further dig to the east of the same spot would be fruitful to reveal the full structure in order to understand more about the structure.

Sign of vandalism

The possibility of mass destruction or vandalism can not be ruled out in Ramagrama stupa and surrounding area (pls-14a, 15a, 6a,b). There are two distinctive layer or composition or better described as stratigraphy overlain on top of the remaining wall structures of the area.

- The structures are immediately covered with brickbats of bigger often half and even bigger in size mixed with yellow earth which were used as mortar while erecting the structure. The bricks are almost fresh with distinctive shape and free of any moss growth and decay of organic plants, without any content of eco-facts. No sign of friction and long exposure is noticed. This is the result of deposition within the short period of time. The findings of three T.C heads also show the probability of destruction. They were never vandalized by the idolatry people of faith on God.

- On top of that concentration is found smaller brickbats often eroded and not in shape. They are covered with moss growth thus blackening the surface and mixed with the clay profusely containing the organic decays showing long time to be collected and of deposition. The erosion factors of the bricks show rain, wind and mechanical effect of trampling and friction on the surface. The people played and replayed on the brickbats which turned them into small pieces and mixed with much eco-fact.

This phase of activities are noticed in Ramagrama with two distinctive compositions of layers.

After this phase also, there were lot of diggings perhaps, for treasure hunting and brick robbing. The brick rubbings were and never done by the local villagers. It was done most probably by robbers and other agents for some unknown purpose. Such pits are noted in many places in trench 44Ak, 44Ac (pls-7).

Stratification

The thickness of stratification in Ramagram is found to be in average 2.50 meter. On top of the natural soil of hard sticky-clayey earth mixed with canker nodules and yellowish in color, the first man came and left the cultural evidence. Thus the total

cultural deposit, we can say in average is 240 cms deep from the present surface level. The level of the present surface we can take almost our Bench Mark point plus minus five to ten centimeter only.

Bench mark point was fixed in the North West corner of the main grid encompassing the stupa of Ramagram which falls in our grid pattern on number 44. All the measurements are taken down from this point.

Since Ramagram was not a habitational site, there is less number of cultural deposits in superimposition. Anyway we can have number of stratification layers giving many clues for its occupation – flood, devastation due to natural and man-made causes and abandonment then followed finally by the digging of pits for the treasure hunting and even to bury the dead by the people in the last phase.

Due to its sporadic nature of occupation in and around the stupa, the detail drawing of stratigraphy in different places are drawn. Mainly the stratigraphy related to main stupa and monastic complex are drawn with the detail description of its composition as well (Fig.-III).

Most of the stratigraphy is supplemented by the photographs as well (pls-15).

Trench 35 cm and North South long stratigraphy

- I. Natural layer.
- II. Still water deposit layer, few pieces of black and red ware plus gray ware found from this layer.
- III. Occupation layer, black with profuse number of charcoal plus brick grits and ash contents. The central brick shown in the section is completely covered with black shoots, a sure sign of firework for longtime. (Occupation layer of monastic phase first).

- IV. Very soft and ashy texture but color is golden mixed (yellowish plus white) *Pancha* type (probably brought from outside for unknown purpose)
- V. *Matiara* layer also brought from outside for flooring purpose
- VI. Again *Matiayara* layer but darker in color (made for flooring purpose?)
- VII. A patch of firework with full of charcoal pieces brick grits and pot sherd pieces but yellowish in color.
- VIII. Yellow sandy type concentration, less number of brick grits and very few pieces of charcoal contained.
- IX. Another patch of *Matiara* clay again but mixed with potsherds and brick grits lighter in color.
- X. Mixture of *Gathicha* (*Matiara* in vernacular) yellowish in color. Full of brick grits and potsherds with some charcoal pieces.
- XI. Last flood layer, yellow in color.
- XII. Reddish clay with full of brickbats and brick grits. Layer of vandal act noticed when the bricks from foundation started to be robbed off.
- XIII. Cultivated layer (No humus recorded since it is cultivated)

P.S: In western portion from this trench in 35 Ct. many grey ware potsherds came out after 265 cms till to the top of the natural level. This trench was opened again in order to see further down and found the above result in North section. Therefore it is included here as piecemeal section.

Trench 43 Bp and East West long stratigraphy

This is one of the main stratigraphy crossing the praying platforms in west and touching the main

stupa in east, and the long stratigraphy drawn during the excavation. It has complex composition. Therefore it is cut in various depths in different places (Fig.-III).

- 1 Humus layer of 5-10 cms grass growing on top of trampling surface inside stupa complex and 10-30 cms cultivated layer to the west of the stupa complex.
- 2 In west it is the agricultural farm land and thus in between (in trench 43 Bp) this layer is mixed with the rolled down cultural materials of dust and eco-facts and very few bits of brickbats from the stupa mixed with the flood deposit of the west which has been cultivated now.
- 3 Rolled down brickbats from the stupa with profuse mixture of organic material thus turning darker in color.
- 4 Floor layer brownish yellow in color particularly with golden like shining particles softer in texture.
- 5 Yellowish floody layer again but more bluish in color and harder in texture.
- 6 Collapsed or destructed layer of the stupa with less concentration of matrix and bigger fresh brickbats even may complete bricks. The many number complete bricks without decayed organic effect show the intensive destruction of the structure. But who were the destroyers are not yet confirmed (pls-15a).
- 7 The brickbats and brick grits rammed layer on top of which rests the structure of steps leading up in the stupa. At the end of the structure in west again the brick grits are found rammed and the blockade structure was raised during the Gupta period.
- 8 Yellow flood layer (again) mixed with brick grits and brickbats rolled down from the stupa.

- 9 Layer of *Matiara matti* with profuse number of charcoals and potsherds. First layer in this part of the site.
- 10 Natural layer. Yellow in color with black canker nodules.
- 11 The layer starts at 210 cms from B.M. Point and water table started in 265 cms here.

Conclusion

Though six years excavations were not rewarded with any inscriptions and seals as tangible evidence, important sculptures, and architectural finds are very interesting.

The whole aim of excavation was envisaged not to harm any structure, cut and replace any part of it. Therefore the cutting operation was planned to remove only debris collected in due course of time. The maximum endeavor is put in collecting the information from the surrounding sub-surface archaeological remains.

However other archaeological data are adequately collected to rebuild the stupa and to understand its phasewise evolution and destruction. The earliest phase of the stupa, it is hoped, should be deep inside the lowest circular structure and the relics (if any) should be well below the present surface level at least by 3.00m. in depth.

The right description of Hieun Tsiang as brick stupa of 100 *chi* high is nicely uncovered.

The distal location and direction mentioned by the Chinese travelers totally fits to this stupa. There are no other prominent stupas in between Lumbini and river Narayani (Gandaka), Siwaliks in north and almost Kushinagar of India in south. Therefore claim for Ramagrama stupa befits only to this stupa. The Buddhist literatures also did narrate about the Devdaha situated near the lesser Himalayan range than the far off sites like Kushinagar, Vaishali and Koshal.

Merely a heap of bricks turned out to be nicely erected architectural edifice with decorated stupa with brick cuttings (pl-20). The special mention by Hieun Tsiang's description as brick stupa is noteworthy here. If we re-erect the stupa in-situ with the available evidence and relate it with the stupas of Saranath, Nalanda, Dharmarajika stupa of Pakistan, and the carvings of the Sanchi, Amaravati and Saranath museums he (the Chinese traveller) is quite nearer to the truth. His mention of 100 *Chi* could be hundred units of measurement from the tip of thumb to little finger while stretched fully. It was a practice to measure that way in ancient time. It is called *bitta* in Nepali, *Kula* in Newari and *Bita* in Bhojapuri. Same way Hieun Tsiang also could have mentioned in that unit as *Chi* in Chinese. If it was so:

This will be nearly 800" or 66.6 ft or approximately 20 meters in present context of measurement, which is nearer to the height mentioned by the travelers.

In the present context, it would measure nearly ten meters high. But if the dome is of truncated shape like in Kushinagar, then it will reach the height as described by Hieun Tsiang.

Since the stupa was spared by even emperor like Asoka some 2300 years ago, then why should we open this? It carries a great sentimental value by the Buddhist people of entire world? Therefore the excavator tried to gather the secondary source of evidence like in Kasia (for Kushinagar) and Sahet-Mahet (Sravasti of India). He opened the trenches around the stupa and some of the monastic complexes. But no epigraphical records could be retrieved. None the less we should not take it totally negative. There is every hope of finding them. There are lot more area to be excavated. Four distinctive sites of monastic complexes have been noticed around the stupa. They are waiting to be fully exposed. Some of them will hopefully produce the evidence on the appellation of Ramagrama stupa. Future archaeologist will be rewarded with this valuable piece of evidence. Let him/her be lucky whoever might he/she be. To

understand all the aspects of Ramagrama all we need is to keep the effort continued.

Previously there was controversy about the mound itself whether it is a stupa mound or a heap of bricks formed due to the collapse of some building. How old the structure inside the mound could be of? What are the structures on the banks of the river Jharahi and their period and how many structures are around the mound so on and so forth.

After the study of half a decade, some questions have been answered.

Research is a continual process. There are more questions added on the information of the site than the result it gave within the study period of six years. Few of the answers which are still wanting are:

Is there really a mud stupa at the core of the mound or not.

Cannot it give the tangible evidence of Ramagram stupa in the form of inscription? It is written in the accounts of Chinese pilgrims that the site was visited by Emperor Ashoka and left an inscription on the site. Cannot we retrieve that inscription one day?

Where was the city of Lanmo, that was visited by the pilgrims before they arrived on the stupa from west? Cannot that be Panditpur? For which we need more study and diggings in both the places.

Both the sites are furnishing very positive results. Panditpur seems to be the possible site of Devdaha with very huge habitation mound and secular site, while Ramagrama a religious site. If we compare and correlate both of them, it nicely corroborates the description given by both the Chinese pilgrims Fahsian and Hieun Tsiang. The Buddhist literatures also put the sites related to Devdaha or Ramagrama between the two rivers Rohini and Anoma which are accepted by majority of the scholars to be the present Rohini and Narayani respectively. The Buddhist literatures further throw the light on the site to be situated near to the hills than far off sites like

Kushinagar. Both the sites of Punditpur and Ramagrama do fit nicely to this description.

The stupa seems ravaged by the flood many times mostly in south and west part of it. It seems affected by the natural flood where a thick wall is seen erected with the compact earth packed in between (pl-9). This act of filling is noticed in the trenches 44Dh and 44Cb. The retaining wall is erected in average 200 cms away from main stupa wall and the sticky clay (*Matiaramatti*) is packed in between. This activity is noticed in three sides except in North. The western side is more elaborative than the rest ones.

A simply added decorative wall piece of the plinth is also noticed on north. That portion also could not be fully understood. The wall is well away from the octagonal portion of the stupa and is noticed only on northern side of the stupa. Stratigraphically that was added at the last phase of the stupa evolution in Ramagrama.

While refilling the trenches, the maximum care was taken in order to save the in-situ architectural remains. The retaining was left uncut and brick supports are given wherever the in-situ walls are found tilted and bricks hanging (pl-20a).

From few years experience of trenching and re-fillings it has been understood that the plastic coverings did more harm than to save the structure. Therefore the structures are not covered fully with tarpaulin sheets but only small pieces were spread on top of the wall structures just to let to know to the archaeologist for future re-excavation or restoration work.

All the bigger brickbats are arranged and buried. So that the future restorer could retrieve and reuse them for the restoration of the stupa which will save money and give the better look using its original bricks (pl-20a)

The center of the stupa is not opened down to the core. Only surroundings are cut unaffecting to the in-situ structures. From the study it has been seen that the SungaKushana phase of the stupa in the

mound is found not disturbed from top except few diggings here and there of treasure hunting type. Although small NW part of the stupa from this phase is almost rooted out to the bottom. The main body is found to be intact.

Maximum care has been taken to care for the trees and plants grown around the stupa complex during the excavation period. The grown up trees where the trenches have had to be laid has been sifted to the garden area. The structures also were spared from cutting them except when it is daringly necessary.

We have still many possibilities to get additional data on Ramagrama. There are at least four monastic complexes, which are waiting for excavation. Some indirect information on Ramagrama stupa can be expected to reveal from there. All we need is to continue the excavation in this area. This is the only site that befits to the description of Chinese travelers and accounts made in Buddhist texts.

At last no work can be accomplished with single handed. Helps and cooperation were received from all. During the course of excavation, many colleagues, friends and well-wishers did contribute in many ways.

Among the colleagues, Praveen Shrestha did contribute a lot in photograph and drawing works in the site. Despite his official duty of photography he did not mind to work more but enjoyed on it. Mahesh Sharma joined hand in hand with Praveen Shrestha. Both of them deserve my special thanks.

Narad Yadav, a local colleague from Nanai village working with Bussi-no-Kai contributed in unsurpassable dimension. His cooperative, untiring and unflinching efforts contributed in the successful field accomplishment of six long seasons. He remains a diligent prospect in this type of fieldwork in future also. I owe him a lot.

It is my duty not to miss to thank to all the labourers who equally contributed in many ways to accomplish the task during the long years of six seasons excavation in the field.

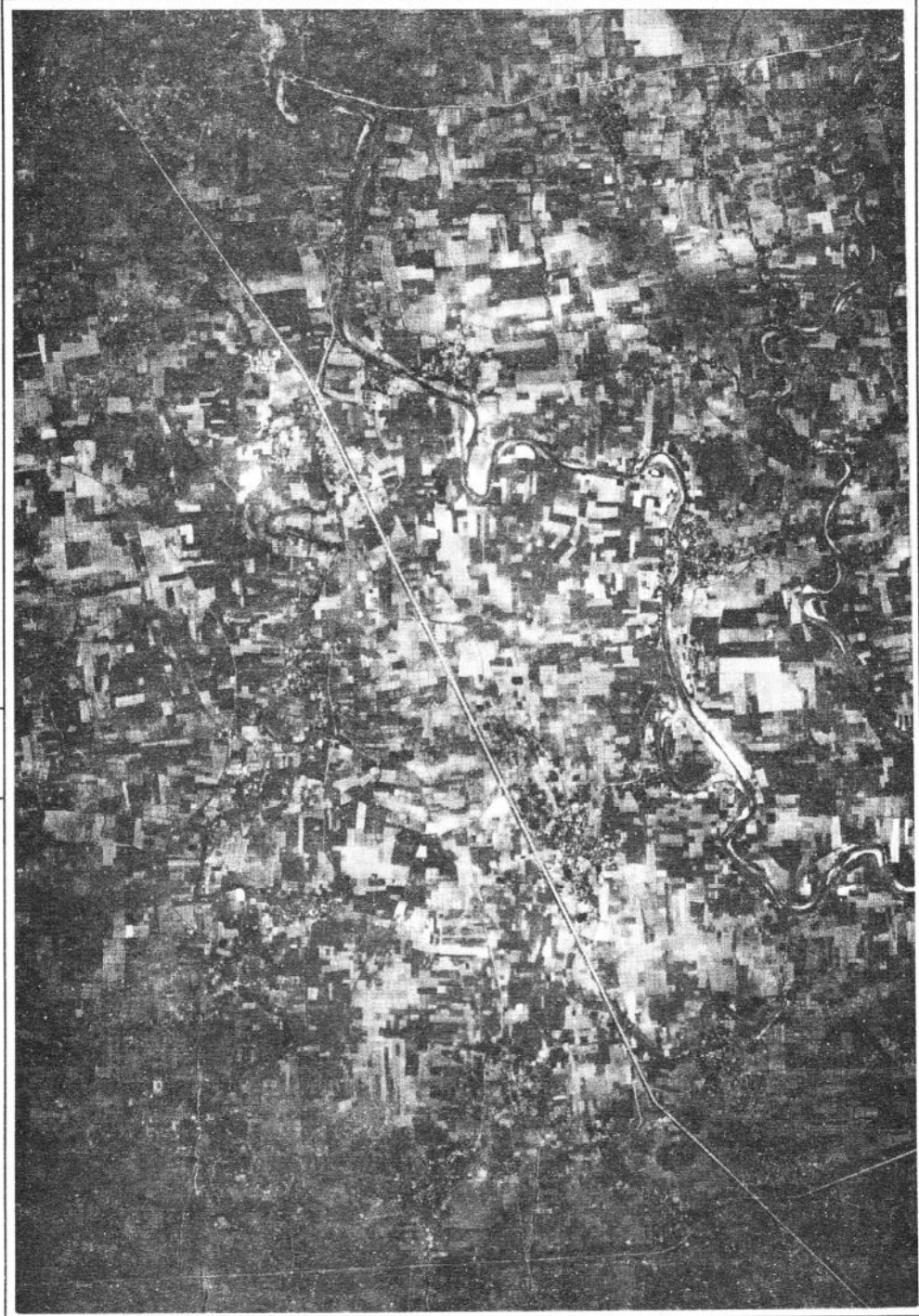
Glossary

<i>Bigha</i>	Measurement of land into volume practiced in Tarai 20 Kattha makes one Bigha
<i>Kattha</i>	1/20 of a Bigha, a unit of land
<i>Dinka</i>	Elevated landform in straight line
<i>Gathicha</i>	Newari version for sticky clay formed due to the stagnant water
<i>Karuwa</i>	Water pot with small spout
<i>Lota</i>	Water pot with wide mouth
<i>Mahaparinirvana</i>	Death of religious personality
<i>Matiara Matti</i>	Tarai version for Gathicha
<i>Panchamato</i>	Very fine water flown clay
<i>Salo</i>	Wife's brother
<i>Pancha (New)</i>	Very fine yellow colour clay flown down by the river.

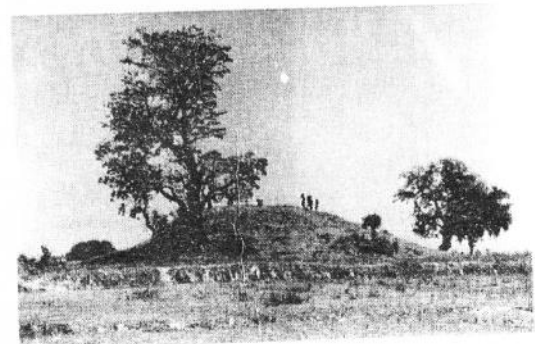
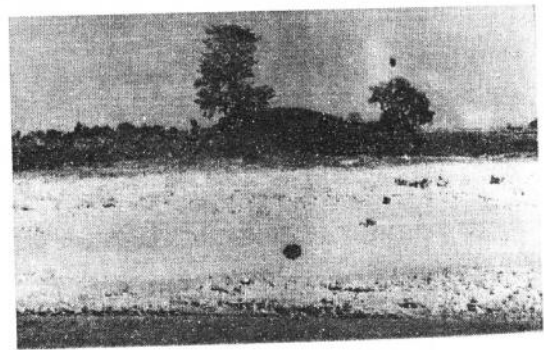
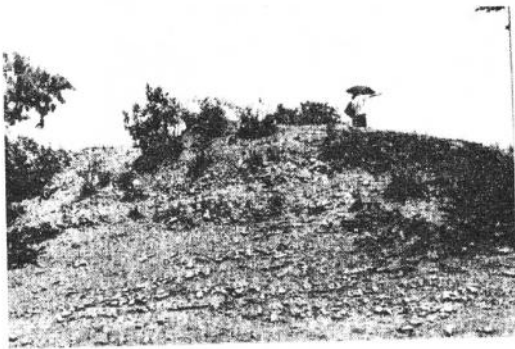
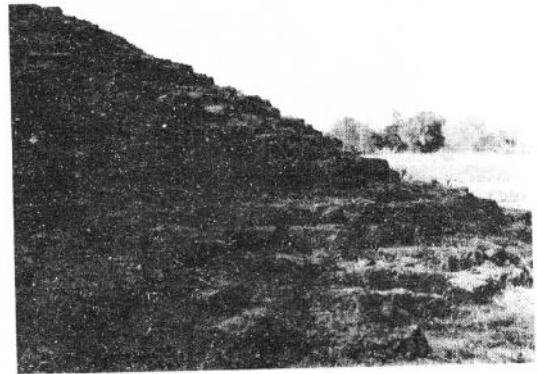
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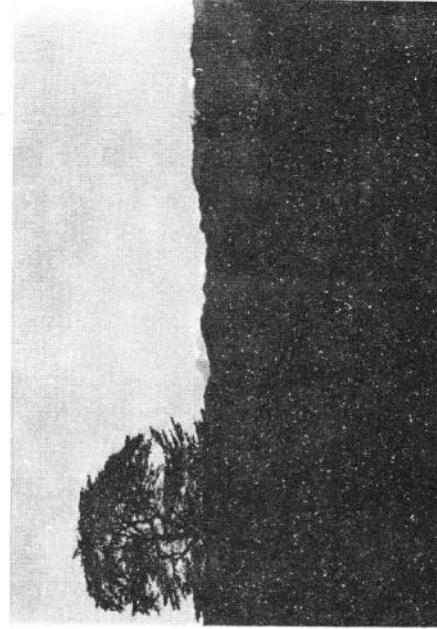
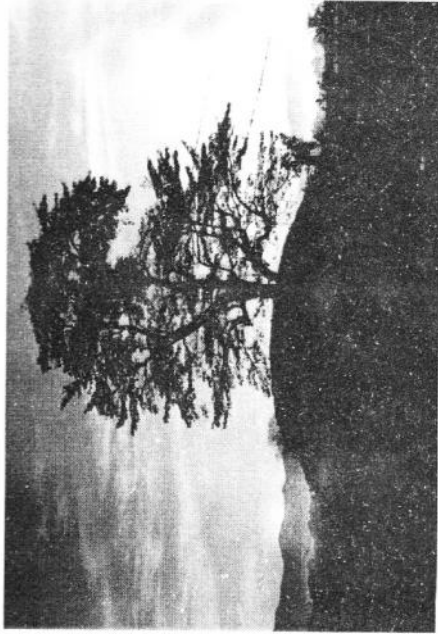
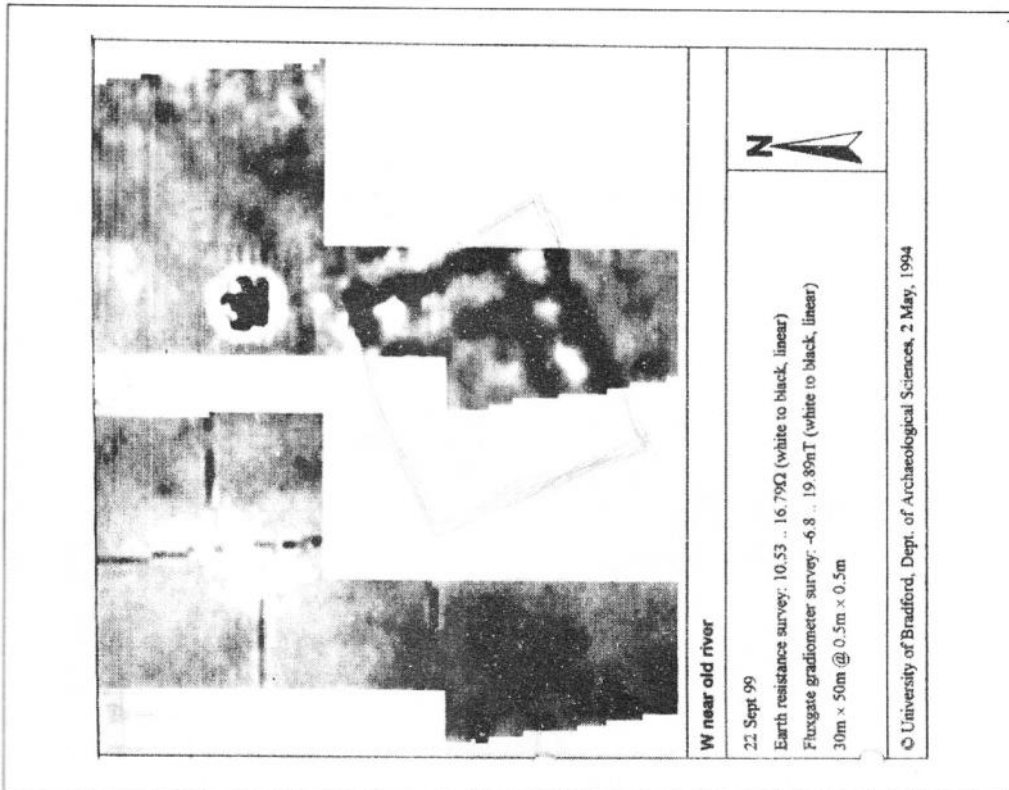
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1 Aerial view of Parasi and Ramagram stupa



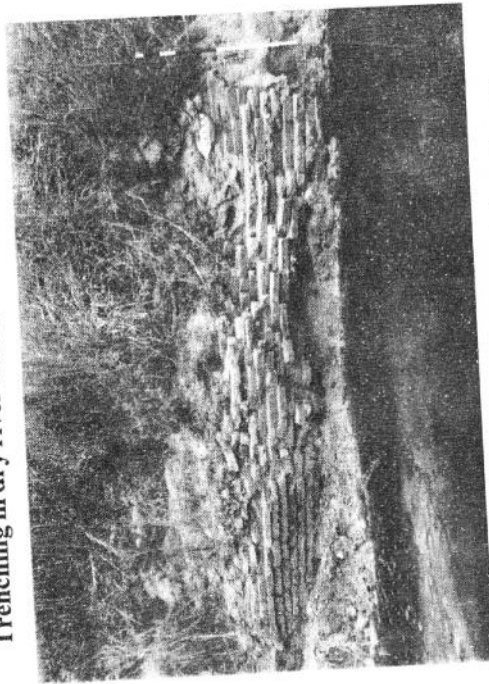
2 Archival pictures of Ramagram stupa



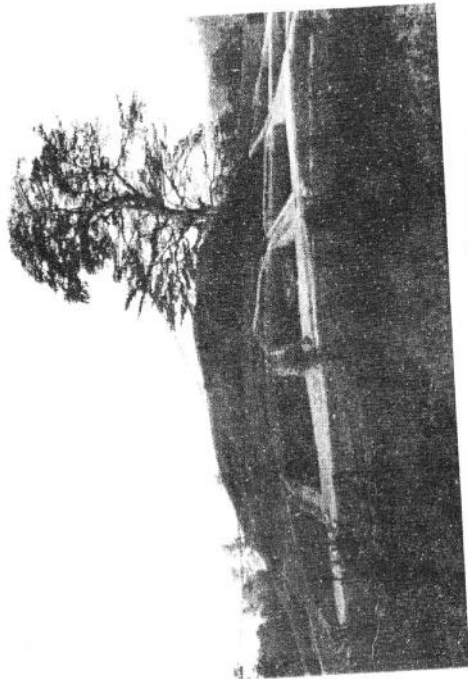
3 Ramgram stupa and Himalayan peaks seen at a distance



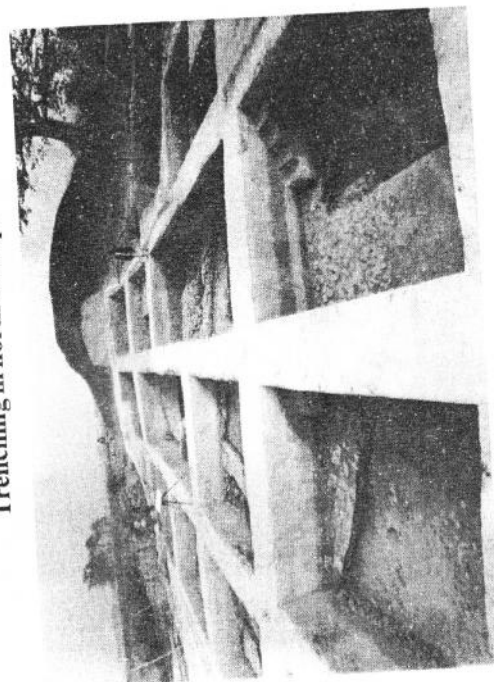
Trenching in dry river bed to the south of the stupa



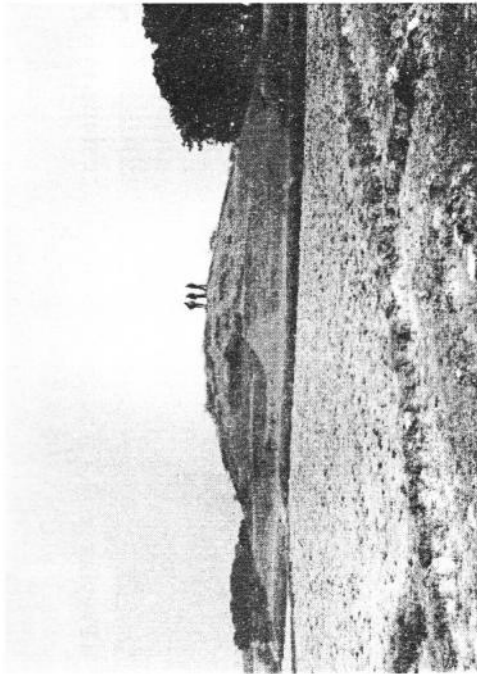
Wall exposure in the diversion of river jharahi



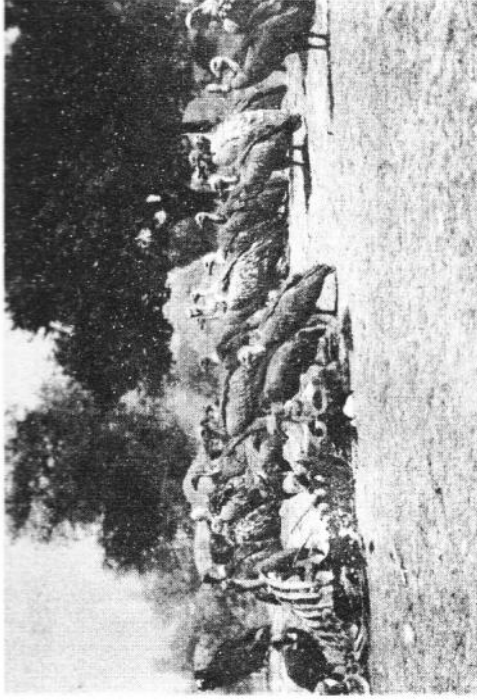
Trenching in north of stupa



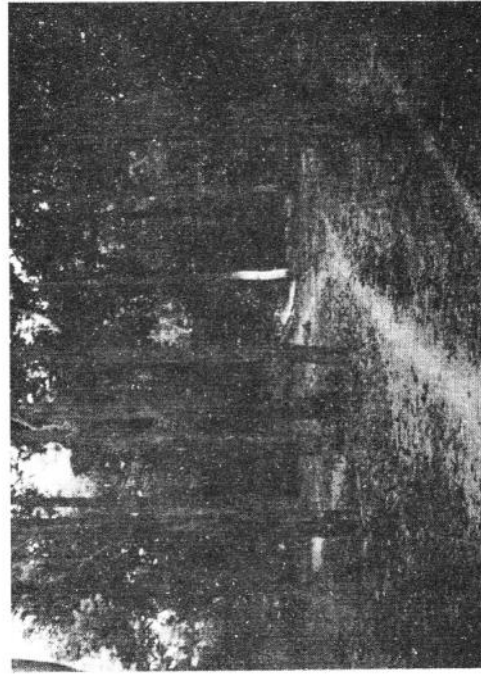
Trenching in west of stupa



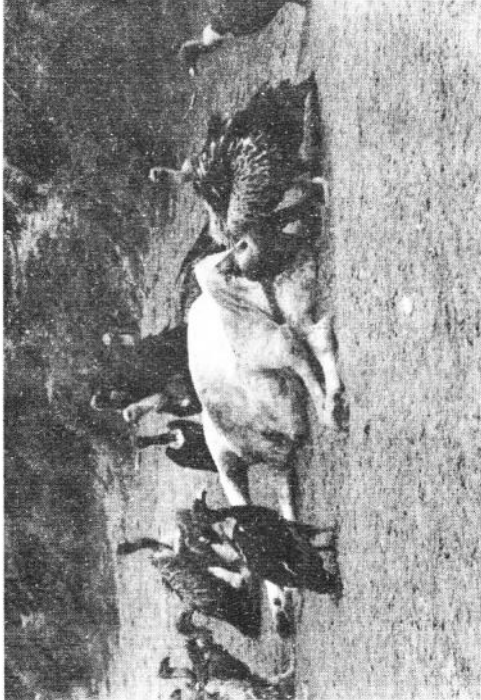
5 Banarsiha mound in Uttarpradesh, India.



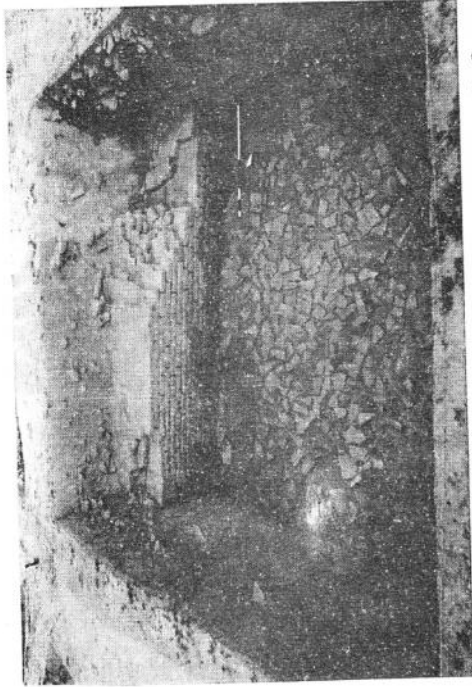
5 Winter visitors (vultures) from Siberia around Ramagram



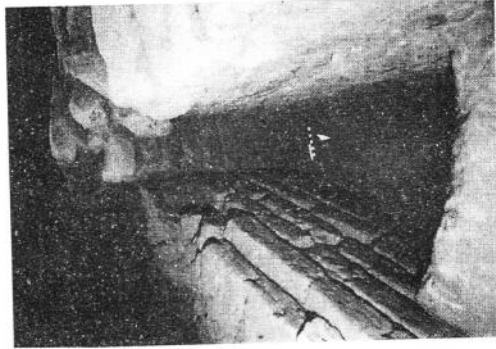
5 Mound at Kodhiyaki Jungle in Utterpradesh, India



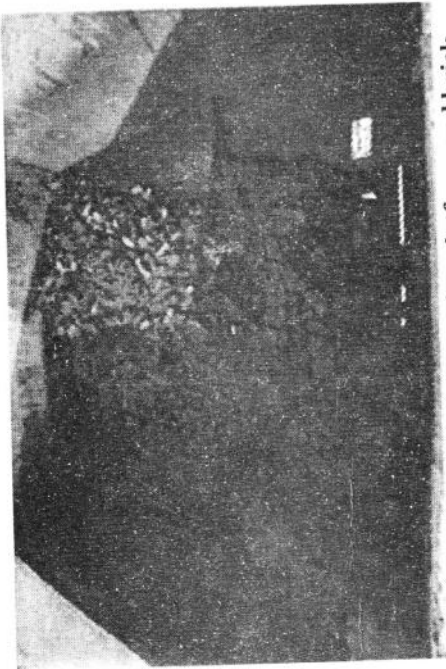
5 Winter visitors (vultures) from Siberia around Ramagram



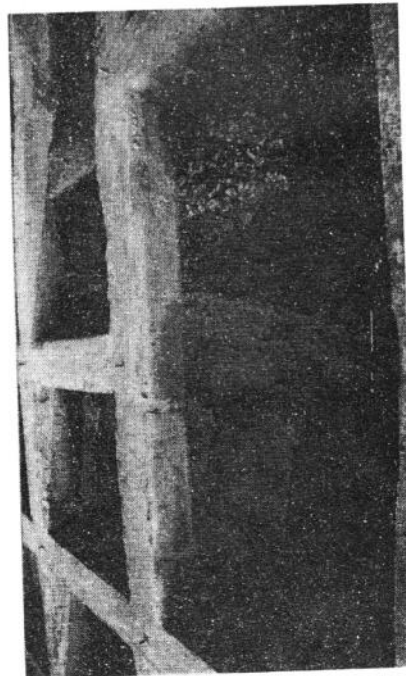
6 Brick pavement between the monastery and praying platform



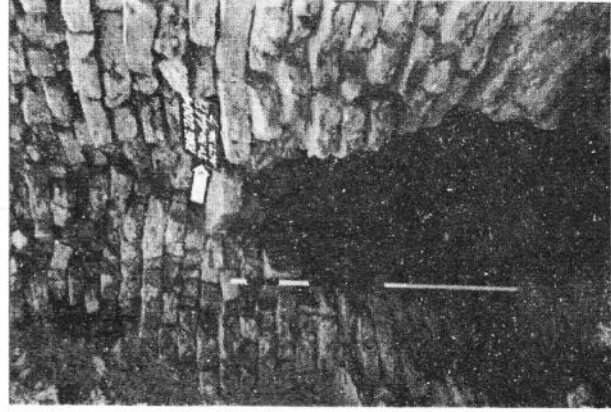
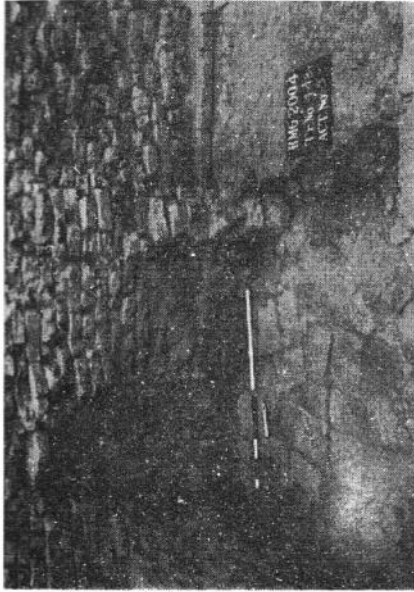
6 Northeast corner of the praying platform where the circular wall of the stupa comes and joins.



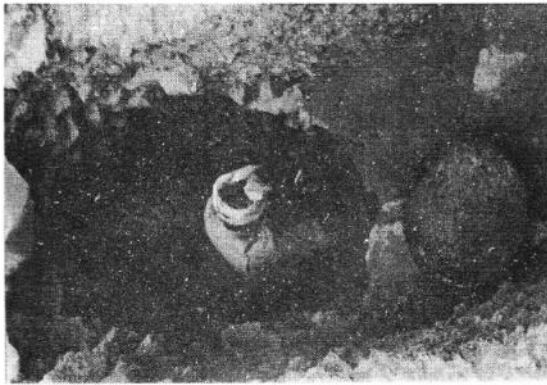
6 Traces of the wall of praying platform and brick alignment of the path



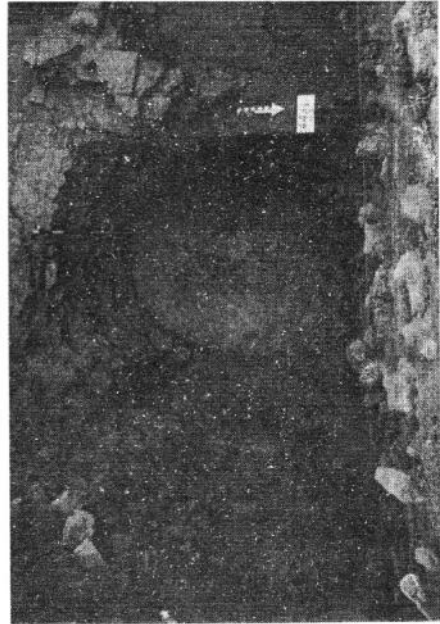
6 Praying platform and path leading to the stupa. (View from East and South)



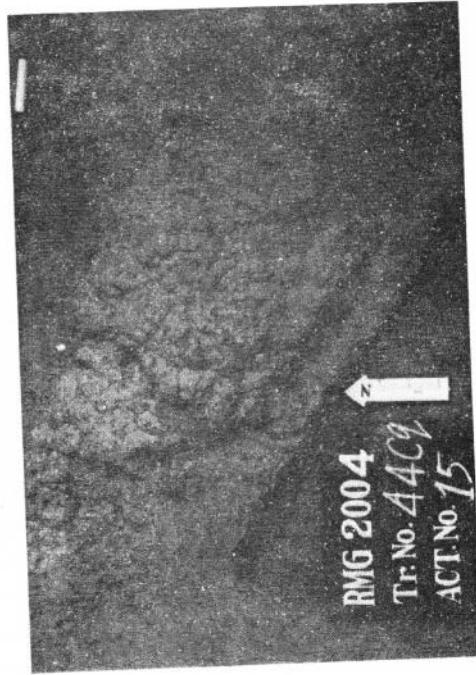
7. Treasure hunting in the stupa in East



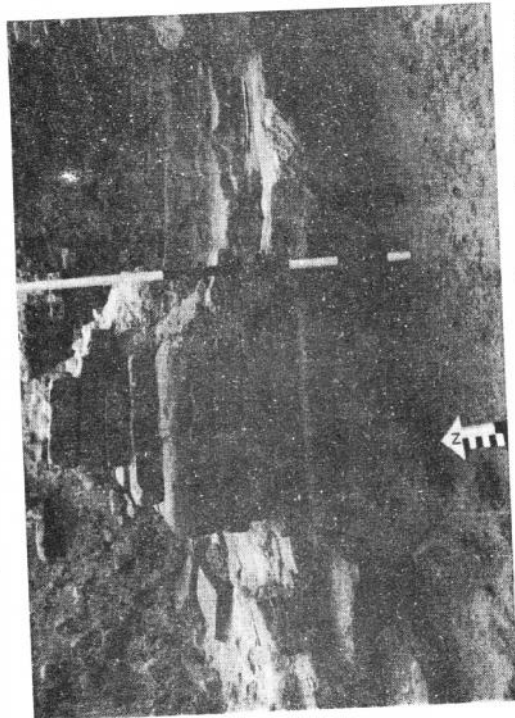
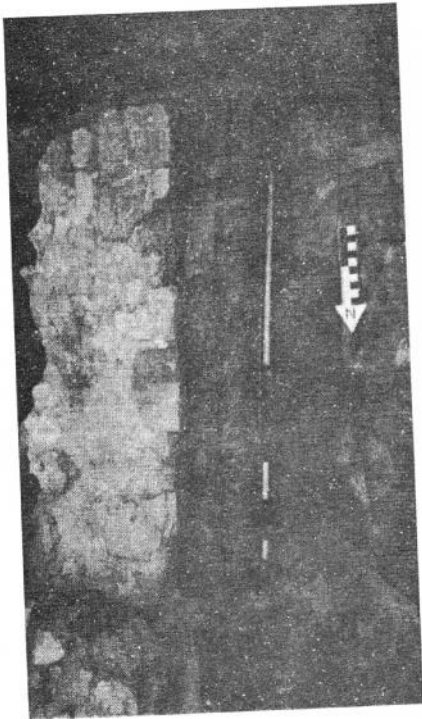
7. Vandal trench on top of the stupa



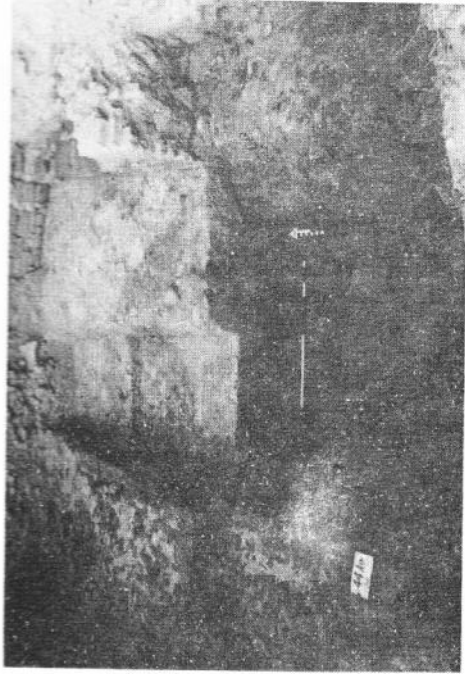
7. Treasure hunter's trenches in the stupa in west



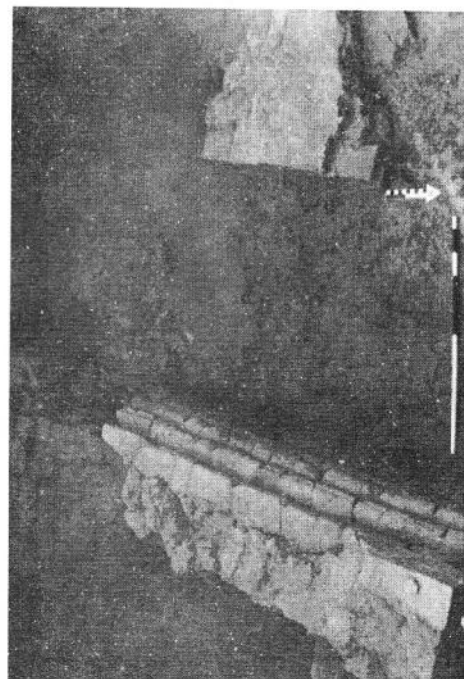
8. Remains of surrounding wall of the stupa (Probably prior to the lowest phase of circular structure in the stupa) a+b



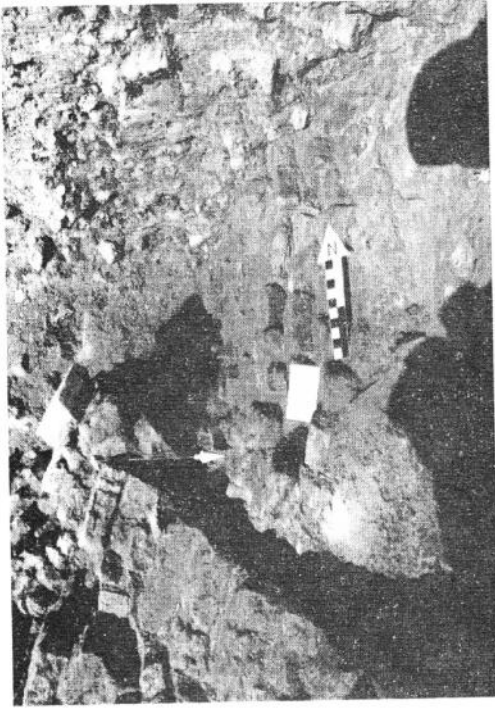
8. Gupta veneering construction to the cruciform structure in west a. view from top and b. view from south



9. Thickness of *Matiara matti* filled in between two structures.



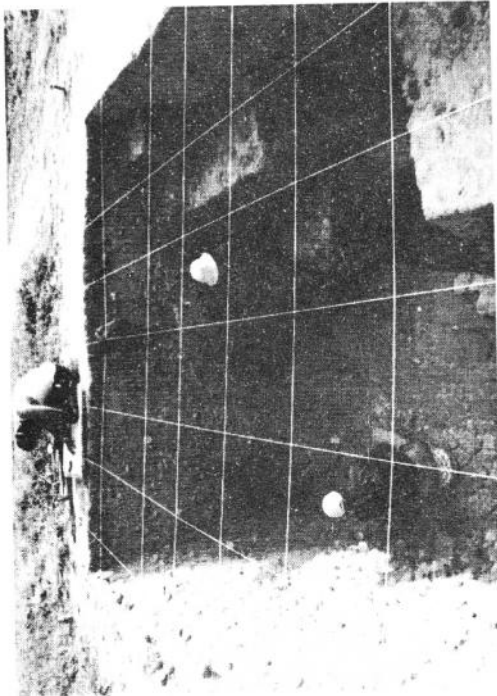
9. Cruciform structure and protective construction filled in with the *Mattara matti* in between.



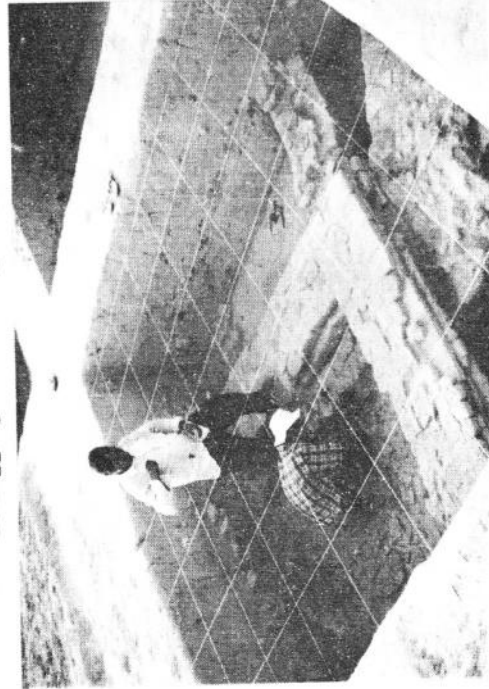
10 Tilting of the cruciform structure wall



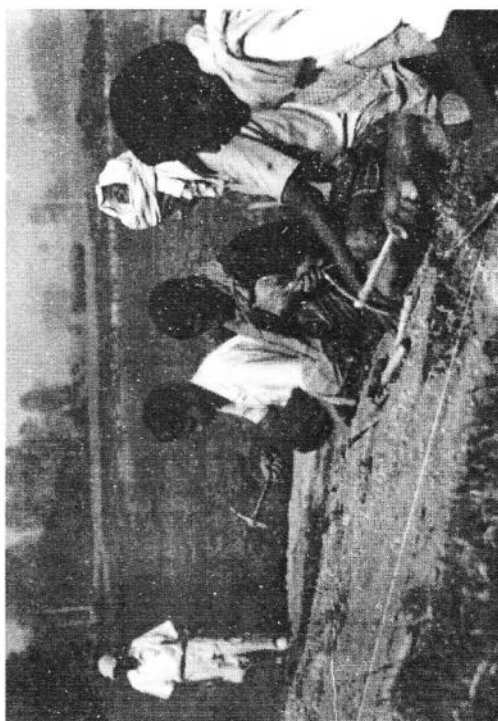
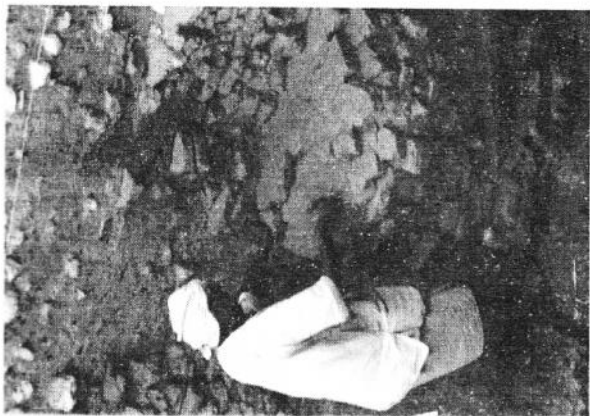
10 Cruciform structure and circular structure below



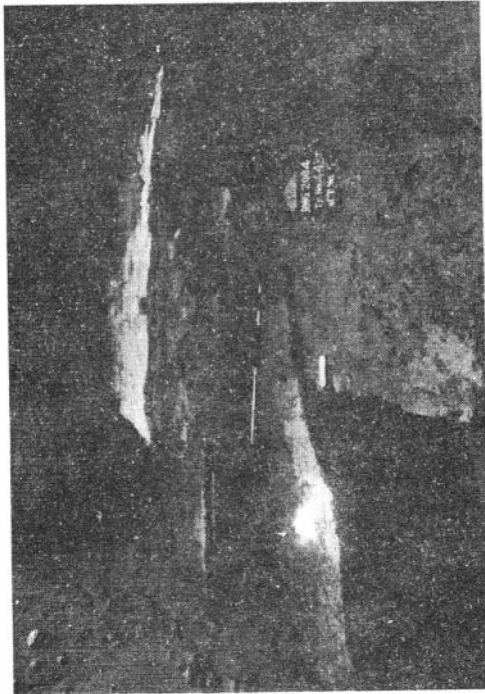
10 Digging and Drawing the plan



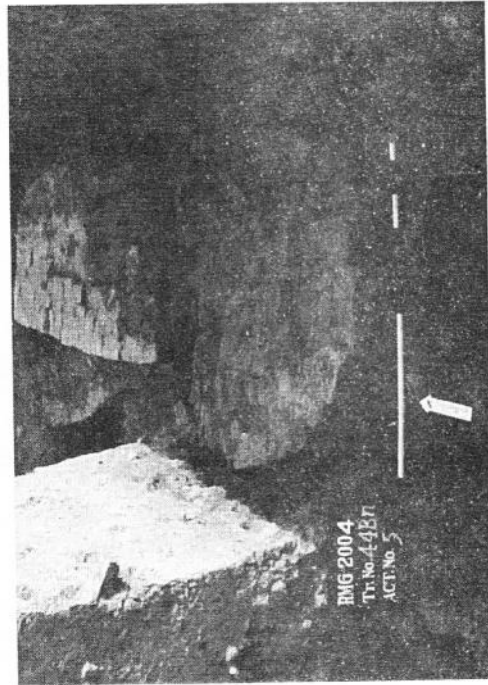
10 Drawing the plan



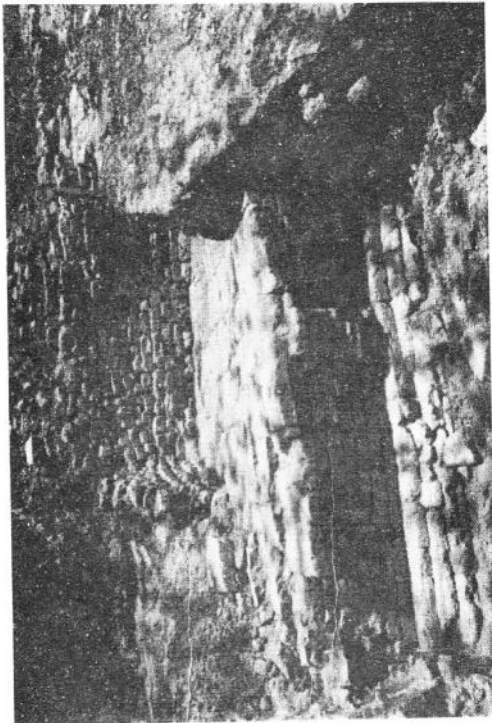
11 Workers at excavation work



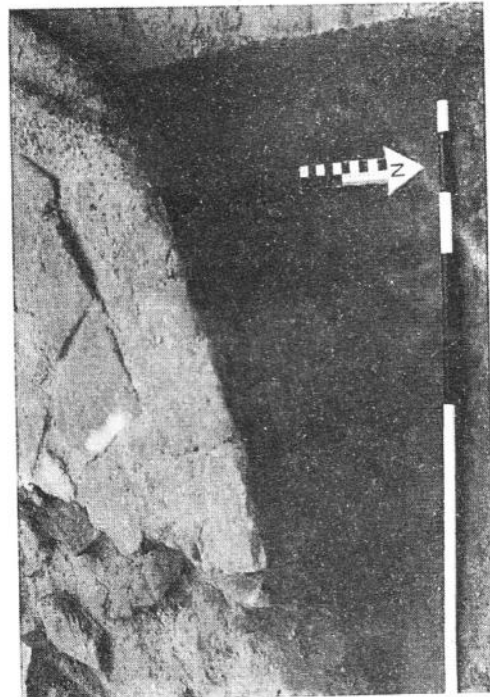
12 Three phase structure to the east of stupa



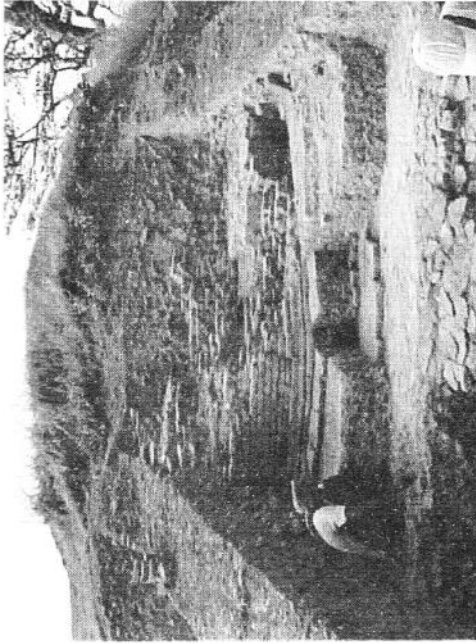
12 Second circular platform of the east of the stupa



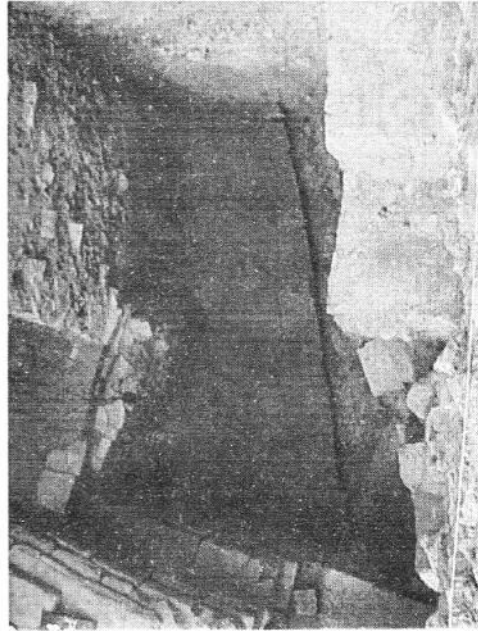
12 Octagonal structure in south



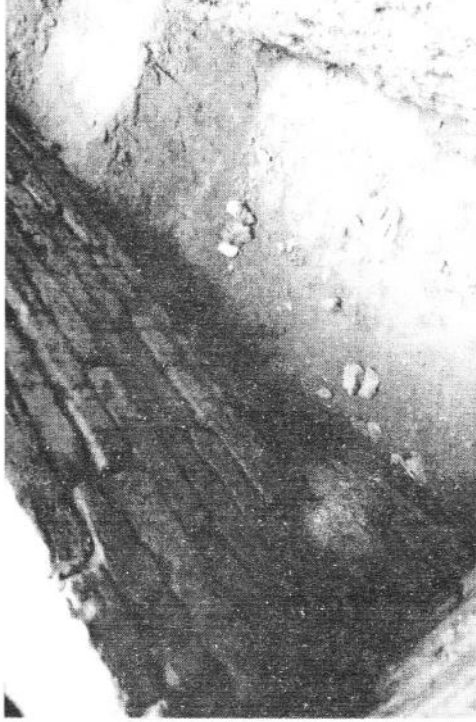
12 Circular platform of the east of stupa



13 Octagonal structure erected on top of cruciform structure



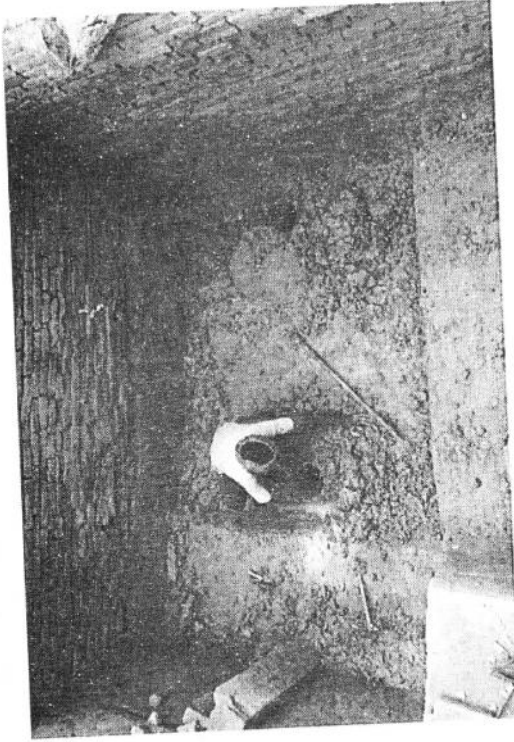
13 Detail of cruciform structure standing on top of circular structure



13 Two phase structures-cruciform on top and circular structure below



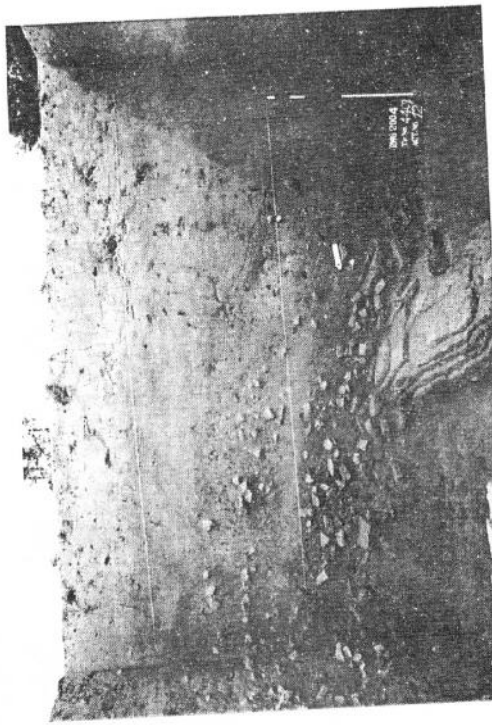
13 Two phase construction of the steps on west (Sungakushana+Gupta)



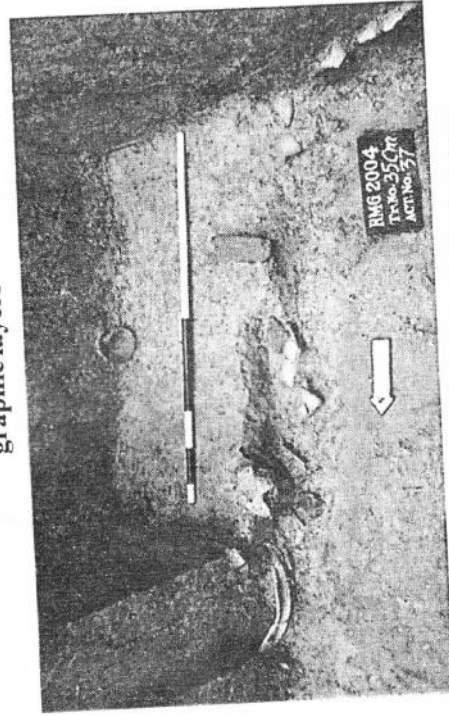
14 Test pits of natural layer



14 Test pits of natural layer



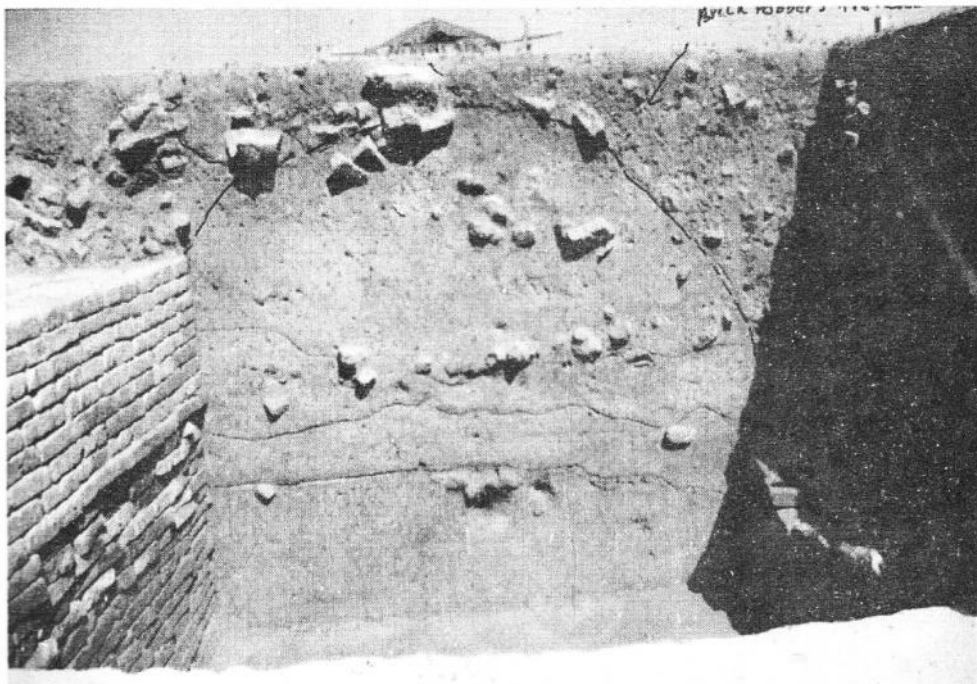
14 Surrounding wall of the stupa in southeast and stratigraphic layers



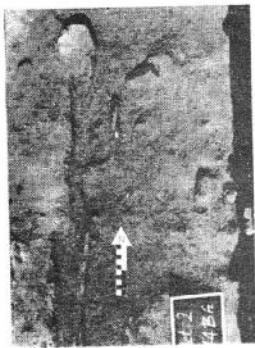
14 First occupation layer in Ramagram



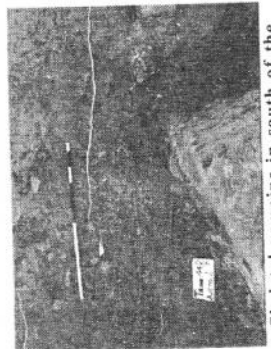
15 Western steps on the stupa and main stratigraphic section



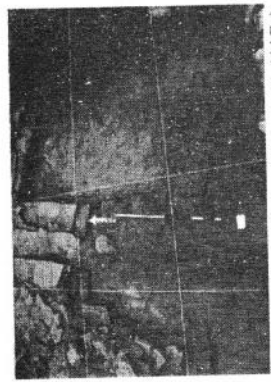
15 Stratigraphic layer inside the monastic room



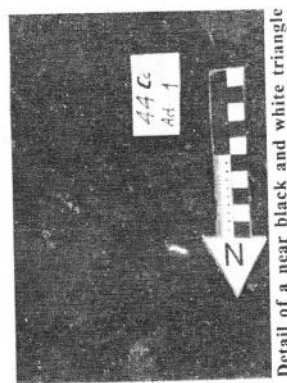
Skeletal remains in northeast corner of the stupa (44Bh)



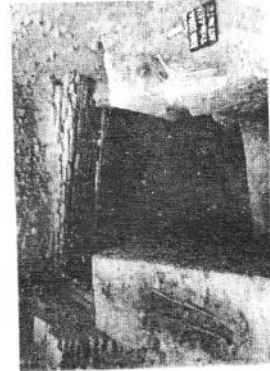
Skeletal remains in south of the stupa (44Dp)



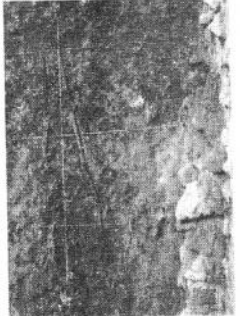
Dead burial in East of the stupa (44Ce)



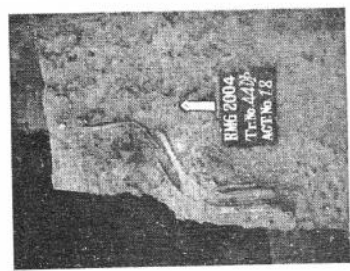
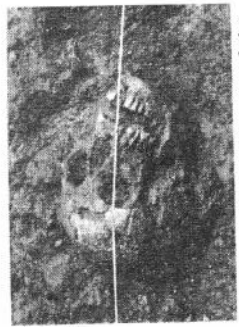
Detail of a near black and white triangle (44C) (the burial of the head only.)



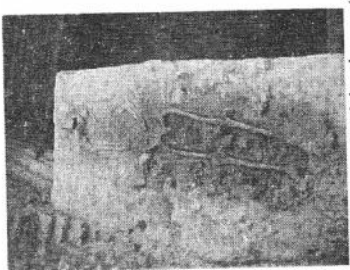
Dead burials in south of the stupa, view from Southeast



Dead burial in south east of the stupa (44 C1)

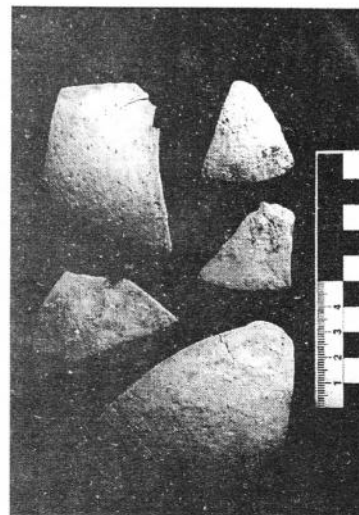
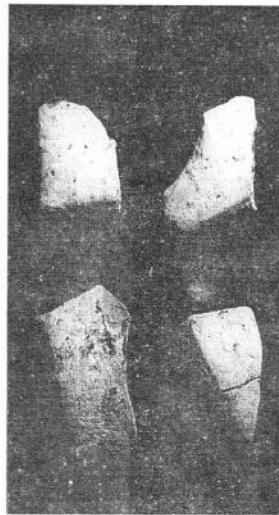


Details of the dead in the south of the stupa East



Details of the dead in the south of the stupa west

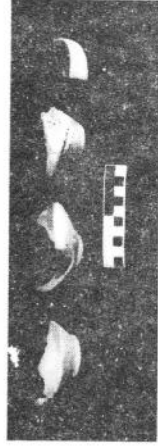
16 Skeletal remains in different trenches



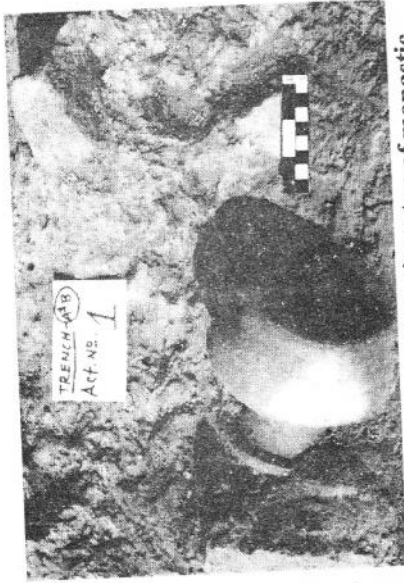
17 Grayware potsherds from Ramagram



17 Cord marked potsherds from Ramagram



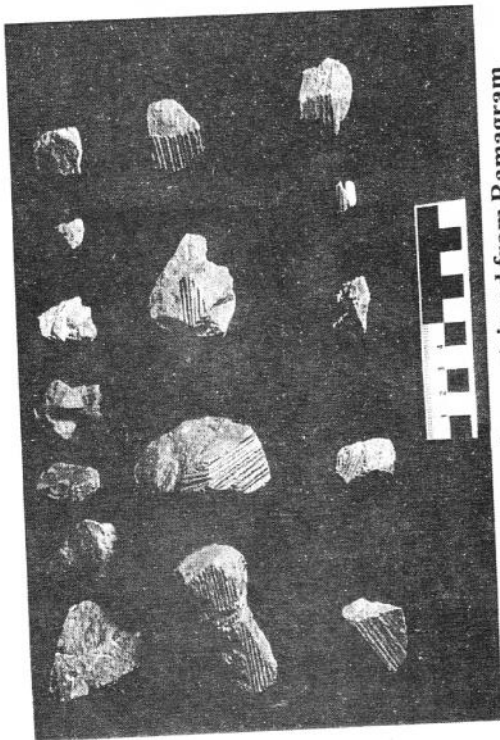
17 Few ancient bowls from Ramagram (Mouryan and Kushana period)



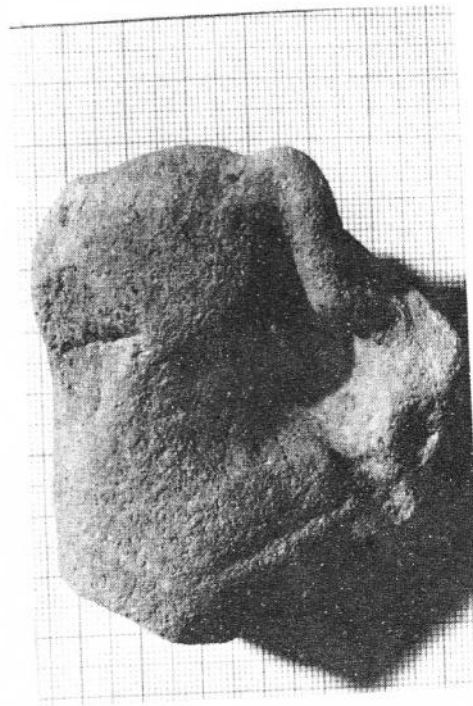
18 Last cultural deposit on top of monastic complex covered by flood



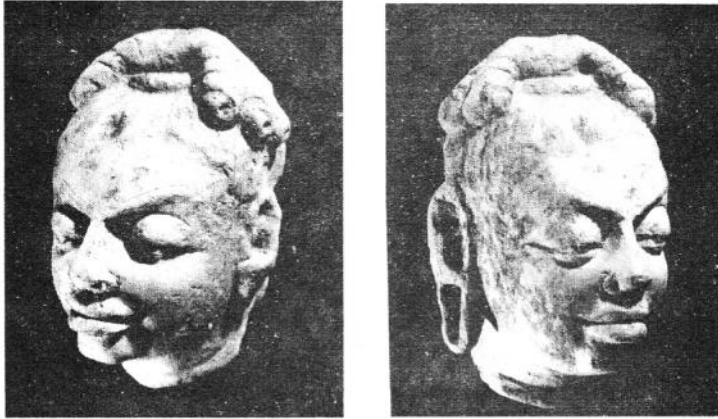
18 An animal figure of a dog in stupa complex



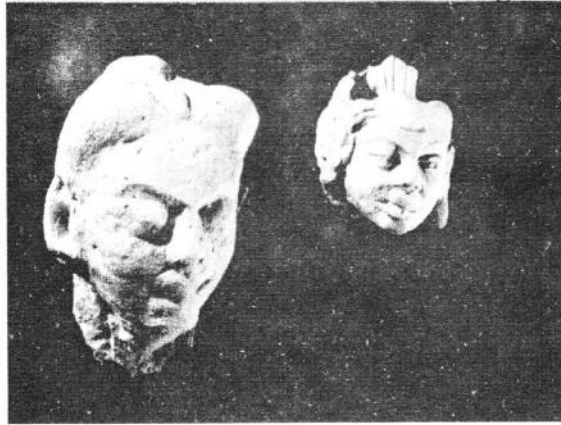
18 Carved stone pieces retrieved from Ramagram



18 T.C. animal figurine



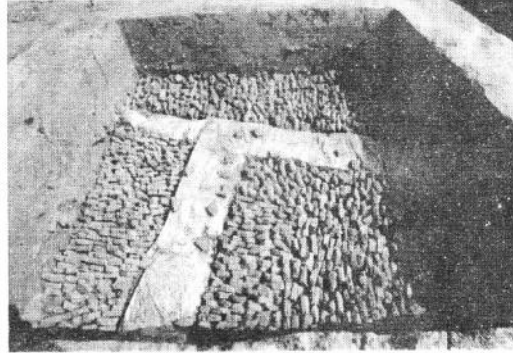
19 T.C. Bodhisatwa head retrieved from Ramagram stupa



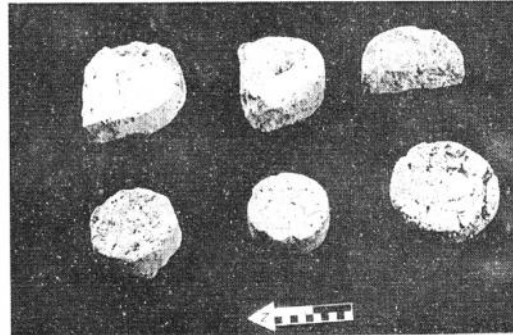
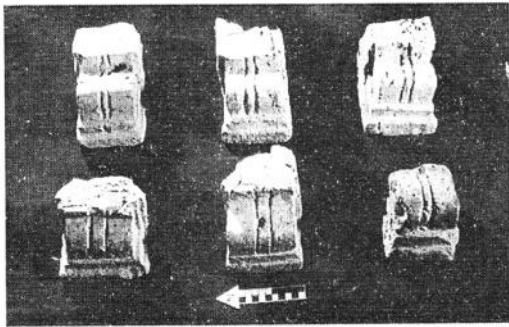
19 T.C. heads of male and female retrieved from stupa



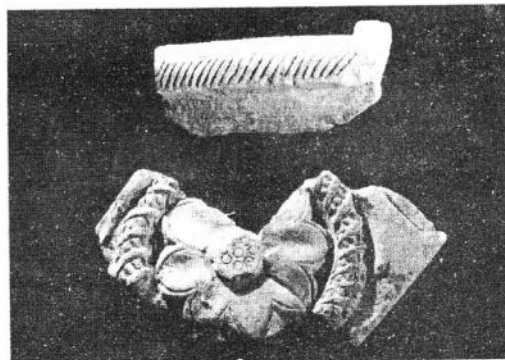
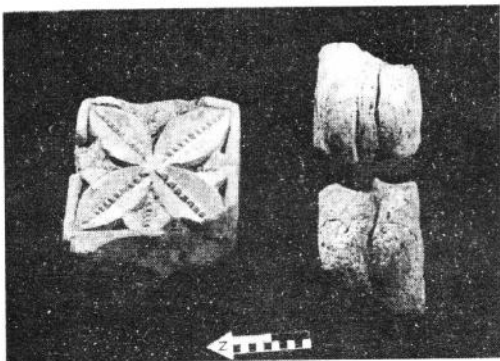
Scales in cm



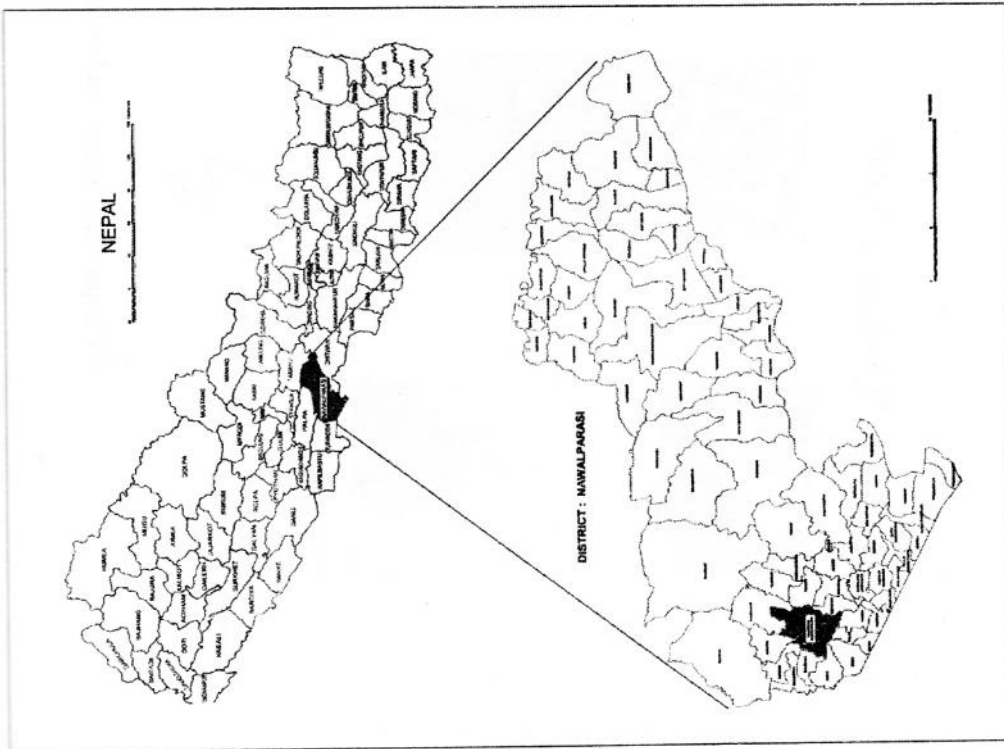
20 Reburial of the bricks and brickbats for future conservation in the trenches



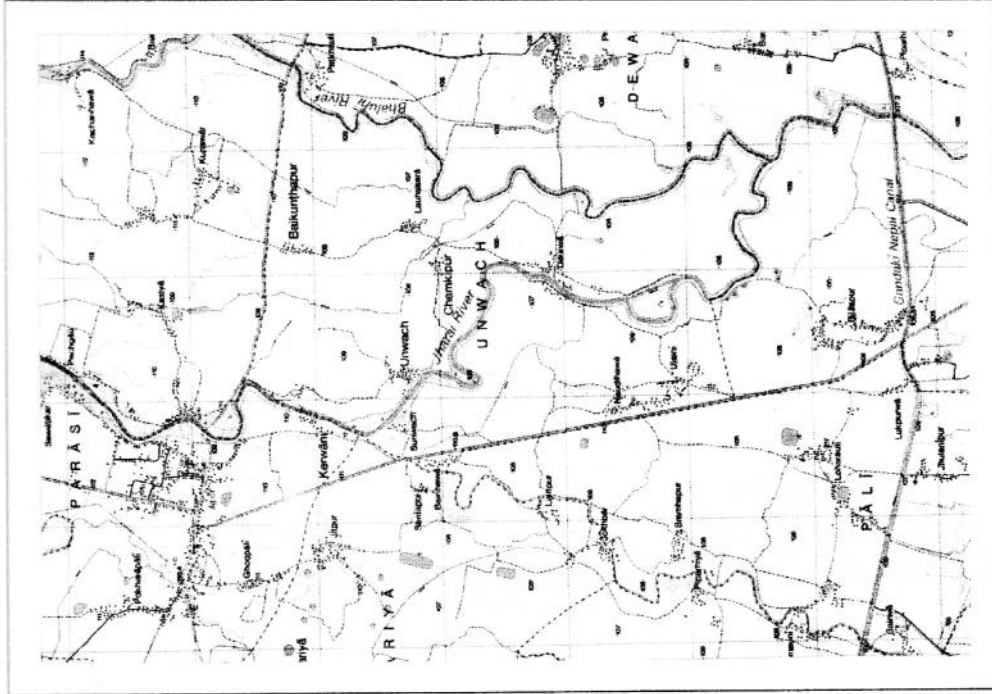
20 Decorated bricks used in the stupas (?)



20 Decorated bricks used in the stupas (?)

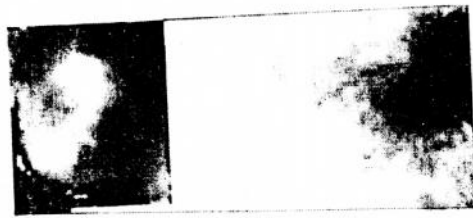


I Map of Nepal and Nawalparasi District



II Map of Parasi Headquarter and Ramagram

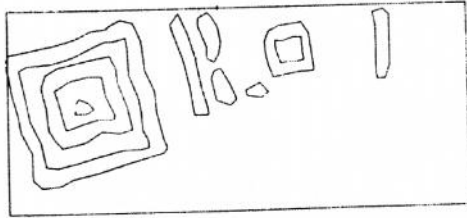
Ramagrama, "Unlucky Field"



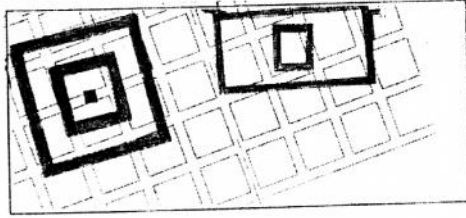
Earth Resistance (12 .. 25 Ohms)



Fluxgate Gradiometer (-9 .. 9 nT)



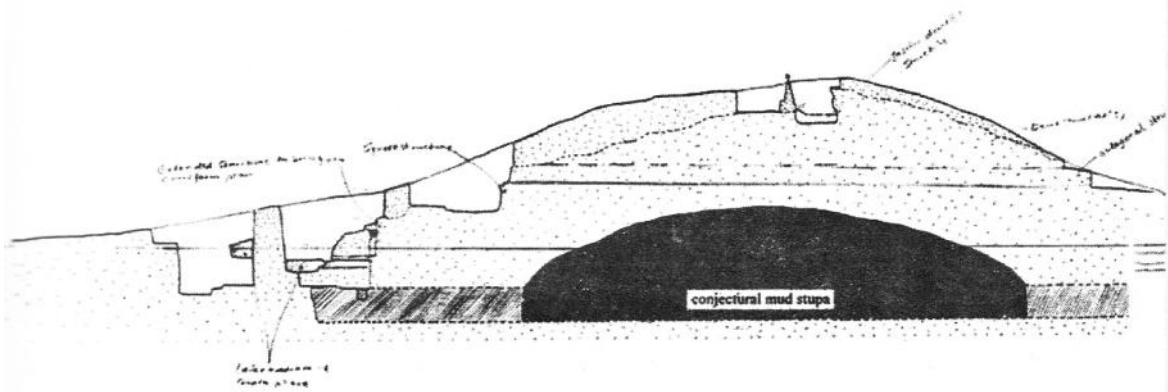
Geo-Physicist's interpretation



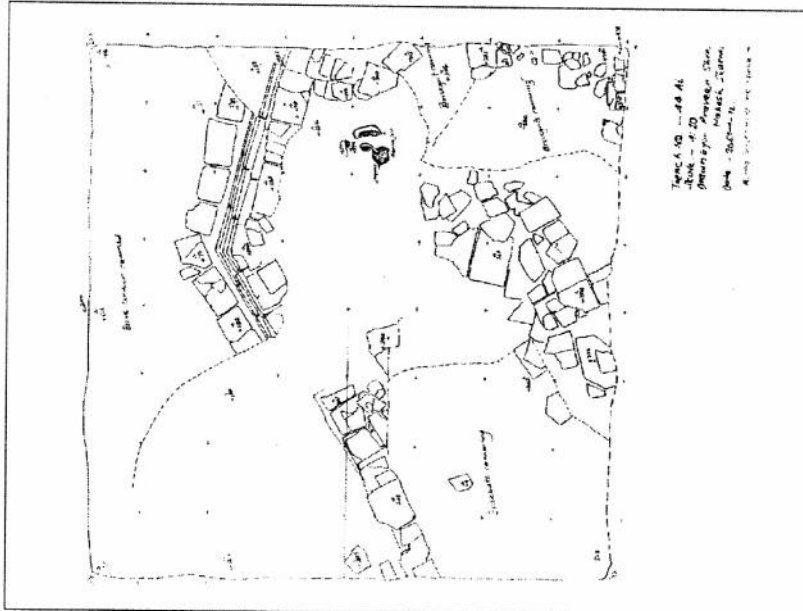
Result after the excavation



II Geophysical picture and result of excavation in Unlucky Field



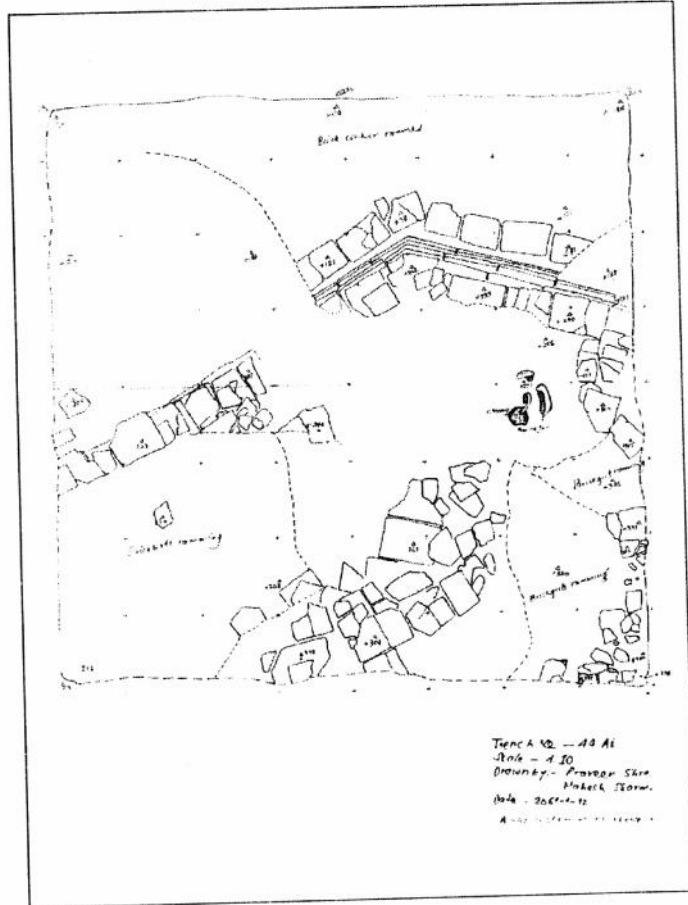
III East West cross section (stratigraphy) th



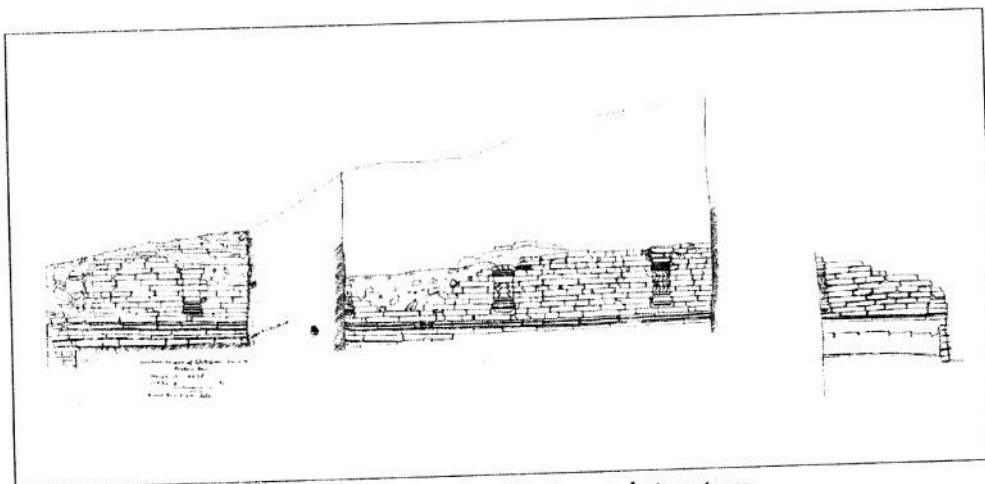
IV Octagonal structure plan in north (44Ai)



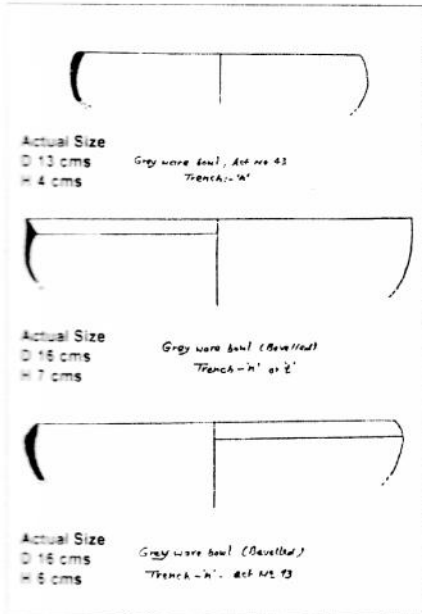
IV Circular brick structure in south (44Dt)



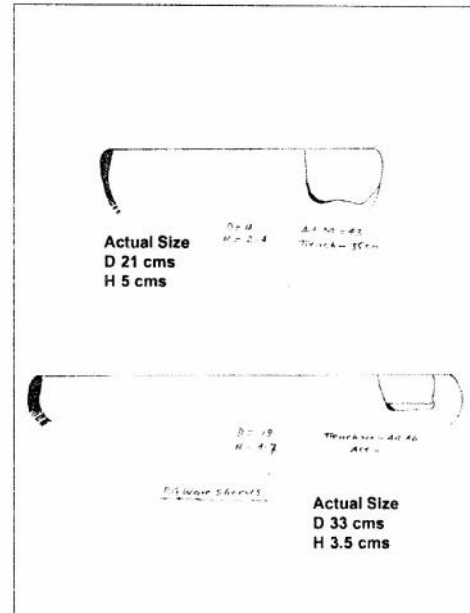
V One corner of Octagonal plan north (44Ai)



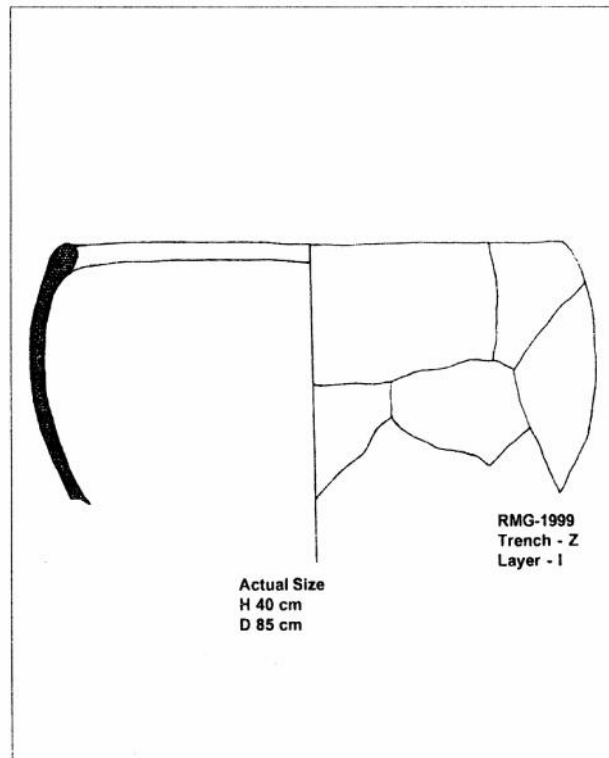
V North facade of Octagonal structure



VI Gray ware bowls in section



VI PGW dishes in section

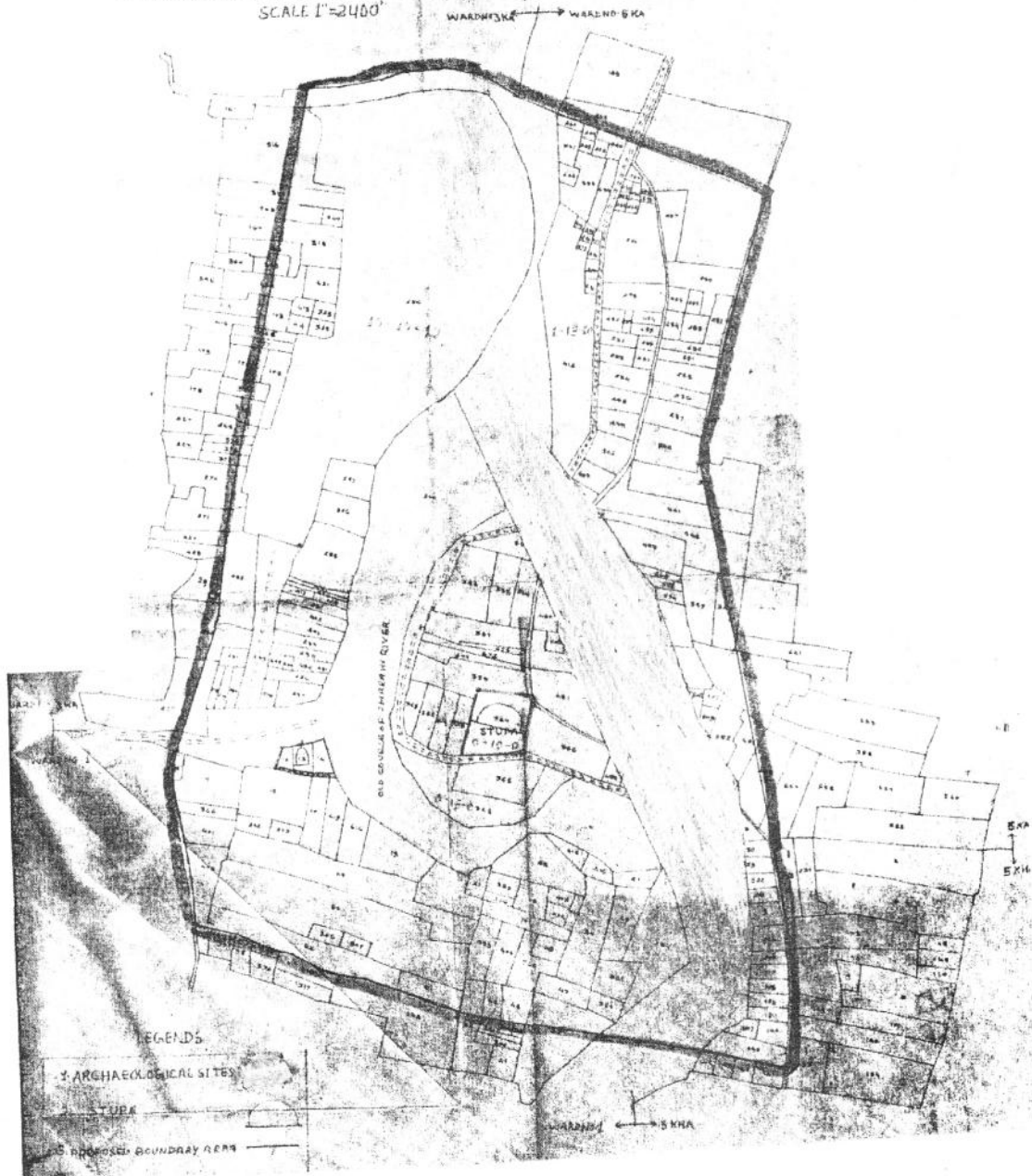


VI A big vessel in red ware

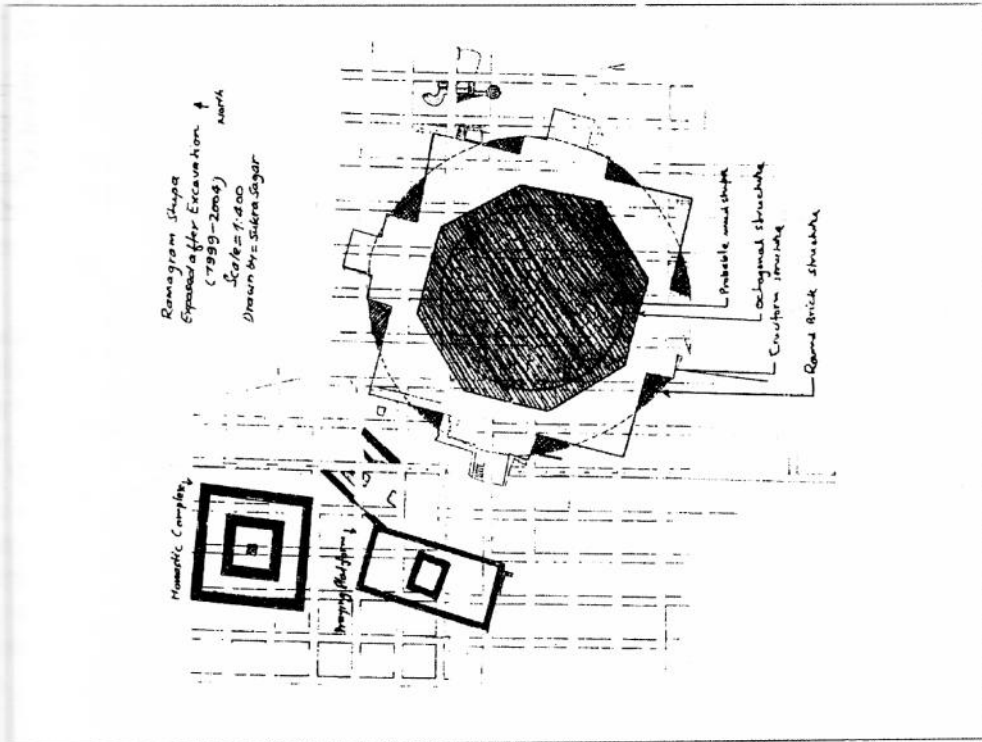
RAMGRAM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

UNAWACHH V D C WARD NO-3 K.A. EKA

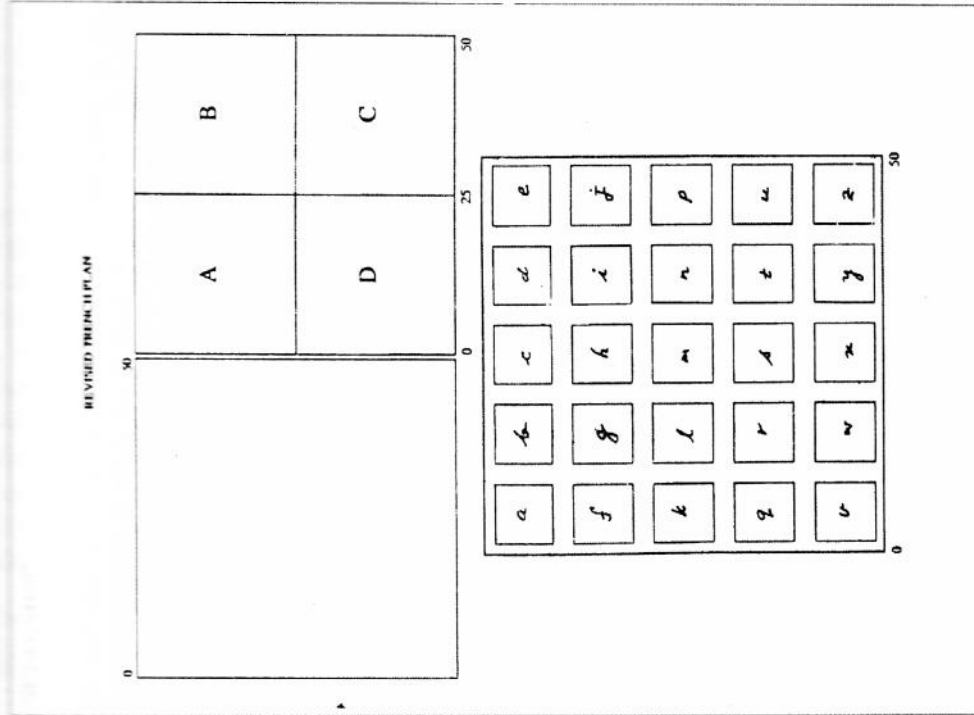
SCALE 1"=2400'



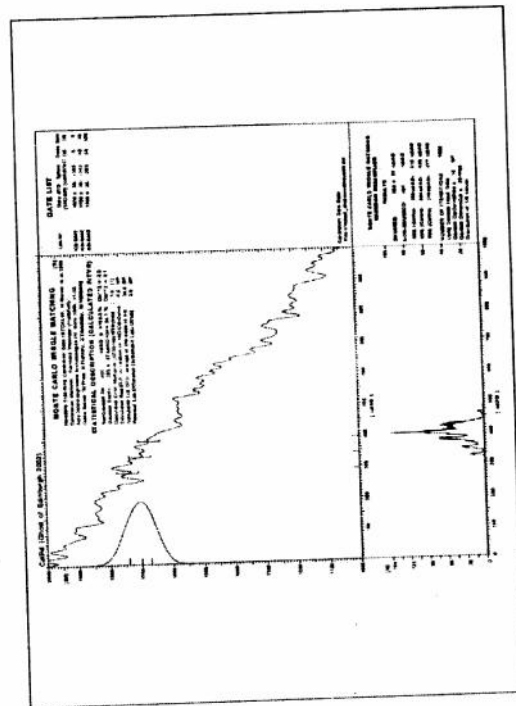
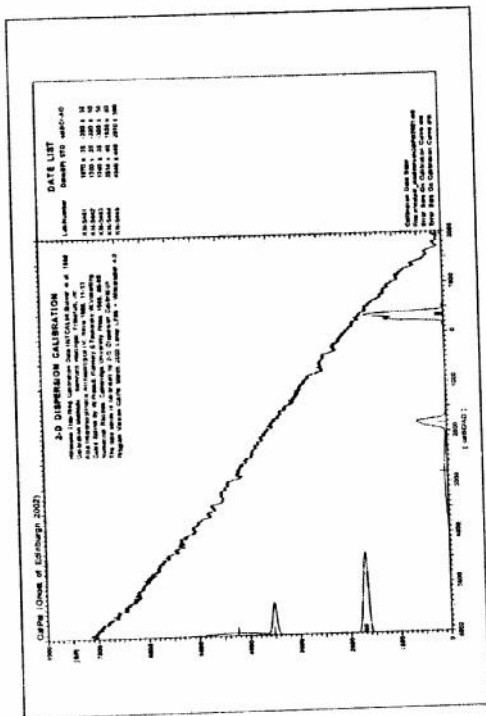
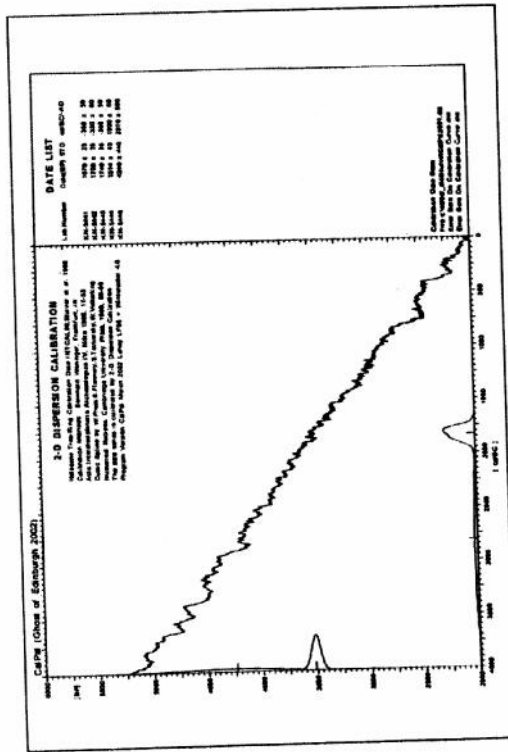
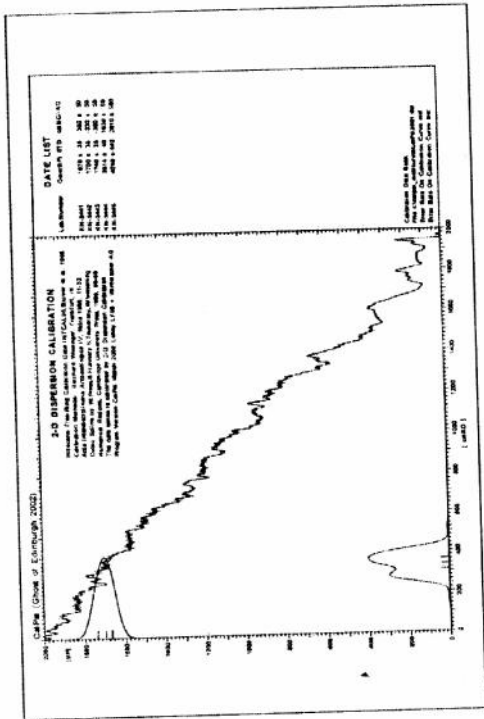
VII Proposed land acquisition plan



VIII Plan of Ramagram stupa with praying platform and monastic complex in unlucky field



VIII Plan of trenching-50 meter square, 25 m. quadrants and 4 m. trenches



IX Result of Carbon 14 dating

ADDENDUM

Due to some unforeseen circumstances, the first chapter of the publication has to be attached at last. The unconveniences caused by this is regreted.

(The Excavator)

Lord Buddha went into Nirvana (**The Great Final Deliverance**) at Kushinagara at the age of eighty. The scholars believe that the year of his Nirvana was 483 B.C. He was cremated there. His bodily relics were divided into eight parts and were distributed to eight principal claimant states of that time. After that each recipient built a stupa containing the relics of the Lord. One of the recipients was Koliyans of Ramagram. Thus the name of Ramagram came into existence with the stupa containing the relics of Buddha.

The eight recipients of the relics were:

Alakappa	Bethadwipa
Kushinagara	Vaishali
Pava	Kapilavastu
Magadha	Ramagram

Since Koliyans of Ramagram (also known Koliyanagara) received one part of the relics, the old king it is mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims, of that Nagara built the stupa containing the relics the Lord.

After building the stupas containing the relics of Buddha, these sites became the centre of pilgrimage and devotion. Emperor Ashoka visited those sites along with Ramagram stupa in third century before Christ. He was accompanied by his Guru Upagupta. Then Chinese pilgrims Fah-sian and Hieun-Tsiang made pilgrimage to the site in fourth and seventh century respectively. Ho-Che was the another Chinese pilgrim who made pilgrimage to those specially eight relics stupas and mentions that it was very difficult to make such a pilgrimage encompassing all eight of them.

After that there is no records of Ramagrama mentioned anywhere. The history and whereabouts of it went into oblivion.

More than eleven hundreds years after that Dr. Hoey traveled around the area in 1896 and noted there the nomenclature of Baghauratappa. Finding the similarity in linguistic nomenclature of Baghauratappa with Byaghrapura of the Buddhist texts, he guessed the area to be Byaghrapura of the literature and found that the same place used to be called with four names as Byaghrapur, Kolanagara, Devdaha and Ramagrama.

The site was again retraced for the first time by S. B. Deo in 1964 but did not write it as Ramagram. He simply recorded it as a mound worthy of excavation and reported it in the publication form. (Deo:1964-26)

It was claimed that Bhichhu Shakyanda was the first man to conjecture the mound to be of Ramagrama stupa. He even did place a signboard on the tree near by claiming the stupa to be Ramagrama stupa. It was in 1964/65. (Bhichhu Kaundanya: 26)

In 1972 an archaeologist Late Babu Krishna Rijal from Department of Archaeology along with the officials of LDT happened to visit the site and published for the first time in printed form as Ramagram Stupa. His postulation was based on the geographical bearings and Chinese pilgrim's account (Rijal: 1978-56).

The area was scientifically surveyed in 1997 and opened the door for further study. A team of Geophysicist from Bradford University of United Kingdom surveyed for the first time and found,

besides the stupa mound, some sub-surface archaeological remains around as well.

After the geophysical survey, it was decided to check the result of the survey with excavation. The work prolonged for six seasons extending from 2055 to 2060 B.S. (1999-2004 AD) with nearly 450 days of work in the field. This is the result of the work presented here in.

Total of 85 trenches measuring 4x4 meters was cut reaching different levels of depth as necessary. In twelve places the cutting was reached down to the natural level covering nearly fifteen square meters in area. The natural level was found in different depths from 2.4 meter to 3.3 meters from the relative surface of the present ground. It shows the area to be undulated then, not plain surface like today.

The excavation work was halted from 2061 B.S onwards in order to write the report. The excavator of this phase is of the opinion that further dig is necessary in future to fully understand the area. The result would be promising.

The site deserves more attention of the archaeologists for future work since this befits much to the possibility to be the Ramagrama stupa. All we

need is the continued effort of research and excavation. After all the research is a continual process and excavation is prerequisite for that.

A newly added finding of Punditpur archaeological site has supported more about the mound to be the **Dhatu Stupa** of Ramagram. Punditpur archaeological site is extensive, as big and as old, as Tilaurakot. Recently an old burial and ring well was exposed while digging for the road. An extensive measurement of the mound and contour mapping has been done. The site awaits for further excavation. The site is only nine kilometers North West of Ramagram stupa. It befits the description of Chinese pilgrims very well. Both pilgrims described the stupa to the southeast of Lanmo (their Ramagram) but did not mention the distance. Punditpur could be the Lanmo - (the Kolanagara or Ramagrama of Buddhist literature and) of Chinese pilgrims.

A new temple has been built to the southwest of the stupa. The temple complex was inaugurated on 15th. February 1998. The temple was donated by a Japanese organization Bussi-no-Kai and covers an area of three *Kattha* six *Dhur* and total cost to erect the temple complex amounted to Nepalese Rupees 1800,000.00.