

Sakya Token From Tilaurakot

—*Babu Krishna Rijal*

Tilaurakot, identified as the royal-precinct of Kapilavastu since the end of the last century, is situated in the western Terai of Nepal. It is located on the bank of the river Banganga which in ancient Buddhist text is mentioned as the river Bhagirathi. It is a fortified city forming a rough pentagon on plan. Its area measures 1700 ft. north-south and 1300 ft. east-west. It is encircled by a moat which is roughly 22ft wide. It has gates and bastions on four sides. The land contour within the fortified area form eight humps. A large number of important edifices could be seen scattered on the surface.

The chronology of the habitation, as excavated by the writer in 1975, encountered thirteen layers of human depositions. It is grouped into five periods dating from P. G. ware time to the age of the Kushanas viz. Circa 8th-11th century B.C. to 2nd-3rd century A.D.

The Department of Archaeology HMG/Nepal, conducted various archaeological activities in Tilaurakot during 1962-79. The earliest excavator of the site (Mrs. Mitra) tried to minimise the cause of Tilaurakot to be the royal precinct of

Kapilvastu in favour of Piprahawa of the Basti District in India. The quixotic inductions and dilemma created by the said excavator about Tilaurakot (of not being Kapilavastu) was timely jeopardised by the works of Nepalese and Japanese archaeologists since 1965.

The archaeologists of the Risho University, Japan exposed the part of the ancient complex in the mound No VII in Tilaurakot. The remarkable findings in Tilaurakot by the Nepalese and Japanese archaeologists since 1965 have thrown sufficient light and new light on the prosperous metropolitan and the great cultural achievements of the Sakyas who were residing over the site up to the end of second or third century A.D. The catalogue volume of the research report of Risho University, Japan was published in 1978.

The writer, in this short article, would like to illustrate one terracotta token which contains the legend **Sa-Ka-Na-Sya** meaning "the token belonged to the Sakyas." The legend is written in the character of the late Asokan Brahmi script, dated to circa second century B.C.

The terracotta token is buffish colour,



SAKYA TOKEN from Tilaurakot

circular in area with plain border. Its size is roughly 2cm in diameter. The token was discovered by the Archaeological team of Rissho University, Japan, during the cleaning of the mound VII for photography and drawing purpose in 1978.

The writer came across to this token in 1979 while prof. J. Nakamura and Mr. S. Ueseka casually opened the antiquity box handed over to the Department of Archaeology HMG/Nepal in 1978. The writer, on this token, could easily read the script as Sa-ka-na-sya. The writer then asked the permission for publication and got it photographed.

The discovery of the terracotta token from the mound VII in Tilaurakot with

the legend Sa-ka-na-sya clearly proves the occupation of the site by the Sakyas as late as second or first century B.C.

The publication of the Sakya token from Tilaurakot (Kapilavastu) may satisfy Mr. Krishan Murari Srivastava who is always of the opinion that "the excavations at Tilaurakot have not yielded a single tangible evidence, so far, to establish the identity of Tilaurakot with Kapilavastu."

Moreover, his desire (expressed in Ans No 8 of his note, Kapilavastu in Basti District U.P/ Nagpur. 1978) that "similar chances entrenchment at Tilaurakot to yield archaeological objects of such mobile character as terracotta seals which could help in establishing the claim of Tilaurakot to be Kapilavastu" is now fulfilled.