

ART. XXIV.—*The Birthplace of Gautama Buddha.* By  
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Gorakhpur.

ALTHOUGH the Indian and English newspapers have already published slight notices of the recent discovery of Kapilavastu and the Lumbini Garden,<sup>1</sup> and the new Aśoka inscriptions will in due course be edited in the official publications of the Archaeological Survey, I think that the Society will be glad to see the actual words of the Lumbini Garden inscription, and some notes, based on local knowledge, concerning the most important archaeological discovery which has been made in India for many years.

It would be ungracious and useless to dwell upon the errors committed by Sir Alexander Cunningham and his assistants in their attempts to fix the site of Kapilavastu. The correction of Cunningham's fundamental errors in determining the routes of the Chinese pilgrims between Kanauj and Vaisāli is being gradually accomplished. Cunningham placed those routes much too far to the south, and he can be proved wrong in almost every one of his identifications of important sites within the limits above named. Hiuen Tsiang never visited Ayodhya.

The sites identified by Cunningham with Sāketam, Kauśāmbi, Śrāvastī, Kapilavastu, Kuśanagara, as well as many others, can be proved without doubt not to be the places they have been supposed to be. In a recent monograph I demonstrated by topographical arguments that Kasiā in the Gorakhpur District cannot possibly be Kuśanagara, the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bühler's notices are quoted later on.

scene of the death of Gautama.<sup>1</sup> The correctness of that demonstration has been fully confirmed by the discovery of Kapilavastu and the Lumbini Garden. We know now that Kuśanagara also must be looked for in Nepāl.<sup>2</sup>

I have no time at present to undertake the heavy task of working out the correct routes of the Chinese pilgrims between Kanauj and Vaisāli, and of clearing away the jungle of error with which the discussion is encumbered.

The above brief observations have been made merely with the purpose of drawing the reader's attention to the fact that all the hitherto current identifications of the famous sites referred to are wrong. The certain identification of the site of Kapilavastu involves the correct identification, at no distant date, of all the places which are important in the early history of Buddhism, and the satisfactory determination of the routes taken by the Chinese pilgrims.<sup>3</sup>

The identification of Kapilavastu was determined by the discovery in March, 1895, of the Aśoka pillar at Niglīva, and the associated *stūpa* of Konāgamana, or Kanaka Muni, Buddha. Niglīva is a small Nepalese village in the Tarāi, or lowlands below the hills, in Tahsil Taulehvā of Zilla Butwal, about thirty-eight miles north-west of the Uskā Bazar Station on the Bengal and North-Western Railway, and about twelve miles from the Chilliā Police Station in the Basti District.

“The new Aśoka edict reads:—‘When the god-beloved king Piyadasi had been anointed 14 years, he increased the *stūpa* of Buddha Konākamana for the second time; and when he had been anointed . . . . years, he

<sup>1</sup> “The Remains near Kasiā, in the Gorakhpur District, the reputed site of Kuśanagara or Kuçinārā, the scene of Buddha's Death.” By Vincent A. Smith, I.C.S., Fellow of the University of Allahabad. 4to, pp. 26. (Allahabad: Government Press, 1896.)

<sup>2</sup> I have a suspicion concerning the real site which I am unwilling to publish until an opportunity occurs to verify its validity.

<sup>3</sup> Lan-mo, or Rāmagrāma, will probably be found in the Nepalese Tarāi, a few miles west of the Gaudak River, near the village of Dharmauli, in longitude about 83° 53' East, north of the village of Bahuwār in the Gorakhpur District, where, according to information received by Dr. Hoey, another stone pillar exists. The locality is malarious and difficult of access.

himself came and worshipped it, (and) he caused it to obtain . . . . ’

“The chief point of interest which the inscription offers is the mention of the Buddha Konākamana, who, of course, is the same as the Konāgamana of the Ceylonese Buddhists. . . . A short distance from the western embankment of the lake on which the edict pillar stands are vast brick ruins, stretching far away for about half a mile in the direction of the snow-clad hills of Nepāl. Amongst the heaps of ruins, the *stūpa* of Konāgamana’s *nirvāṇa* is clearly discernible, the base of its hemispherical dome being about 101 feet in diameter, and its present height still 30 feet. The terrace, or procession path, is 9 feet wide, with a height of 14 feet from the ground. On all sides are ruined monasteries, fallen columns, and broken sculptures.”<sup>1</sup>

When Dr. Führer’s report, just quoted, was issued, Dr. Waddell, in a letter published in the *Englishman* newspaper of Calcutta, dated June 1, 1896, pointed out that Kapilavastu must, in accordance with the indications given by the pilgrims, lie within a few miles distance of Niglīva, and concludes his letter with the remark—“Altogether, we seem to be on the verge of one of the most important Indian archaeological finds of the century.”

In December, 1896, Dr. Führer returned to Niglīva in order to verify the site of Kapilavastu, and thence went eastward to see the Rumindeī pillar near Bhagwānpur, of which he had heard in the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

The Nepalese authorities were induced to excavate this pillar, of which only about nine feet were above ground. The excavation was carried about twelve feet further down,

<sup>1</sup> Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey Circle, North-West Provinces and Oudh, for the year ending June 30, 1895. By Dr. A. Führer, dated July 16, 1895. Printed at the Thomason College Press, Roorkee.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hoey, I.C.S., who has recently visited the spot, assures me that the local pronunciation of the name is Rumin (*or* Rummin) deī, not Romindeī. I knew of the existence of this pillar a dozen years ago, when I was Magistrate of Bastī. Mr. Duncan Ricketts, manager of the Dulhā Estate, on the border, whose residence is only about five miles from the pillar, then sent me rubbings of the mediæval scribblings on the exposed part of the pillar. I saw that those writings were of no interest, and thought no more of the matter.

and some three feet below the surface of the ground was found the inscription of Aśoka. Mr. Ricketts had the good fortune to be present while the inscription was being unearthed. Dr. Führer arrived a little later.

The pillar, which is of polished sandstone, is split vertically down the middle, probably by lightning, and the top is broken off. The inscription is not mentioned by Hiuen Tsiang, and was probably buried before his time. The pillar rests on a masonry foundation. The inscription is in four and a half lines of beautifully incised and well-preserved characters, averaging about thirty millimetres, or a little over an inch, in height. Dr. Führer has kindly supplied me, for publication, with a perfect facsimile, of which the following is a reproduction<sup>1</sup> :—

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Hofrath Dr. Bühler's transcription is as follows :—

1. *Devāna-piyena Piyadasina lājina-vīsativasābhisitēna*
2. *atana āgācha mahīyite hida-Budhe-jāte Sakyamunī-ti*
3. *silā-vigaḍabhi-cā kālāpita silāthabhe-ca usapāpite*
4. *hida-bhagavaṃ-jāte-ti Lumminigāme ubalike-kaṭe*
5. *aṭhabhāgiye ca[.]*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [As the letters are throughout unmistakable, it has been thought better not to delay this article till our next issue in order to have a plate made of Dr. Führer's facsimile.—Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> This transliteration is printed in Dr. Bühler's German paper published in the Transactions of the Vienna Academy for January, 1897. A brief account of the discovery in English was communicated by Dr. Bühler to the *Athenæum* (March 6, 1897), and reprinted in the April number of this Journal.

The main purport of the record is that King Piyadasi, beloved of the Devas, when anointed twenty years (i.e. in the twenty-first year of his reign) came to this spot, and worshipped, saying: "Here was Buddha Sākya-muni born," and caused a stone pillar to be erected testifying: "Here in the Lummini village was the Honourable One born."<sup>1</sup>

Thus have been set at rest all doubts as to the exact site of the traditional birthplace of Gautama Buddha in "the Lumbini garden." The ruins of the four *stūpas* seen by Hiuen Tsiang are still visible.

Dr. W. Hoey, I.C.S., Magistrate of Gorakhpur, and Mr. Walter Lupton, I.C.S., Joint-Magistrate, paid a hasty visit to Rummindēi in May, 1897, and had the good fortune to discover that the small shrine close to the pillar contains a statue of Māyā giving birth to the Buddha. The Brahman in charge was very unwilling to permit the image to be seen, but some persuasion and rupees overcame his scruples. The image is of nearly life-size, and the infant is represented, according to the legend, as emerging from the right side of his mother, and being received by attendants. Dr. Hoey was not able to see whether or not the image was inscribed. Several examples of sculptured representations of the birth of Gautama are known in collections from Gāndhāra, but I do not know of any example in India proper.

When Dr. Führer wished to excavate some of the ruins at and near Kapilavastu, he was put off by the local Nepalese authorities with the excuse that owing to the scarcity of food this year it would not be prudent to assemble large bodies of workmen. I have since learned that as soon as Dr. Führer's back was turned, the Nepalese Governor caused considerable excavations to be made round the Niglīva pillar in the hope of discovering treasure. A building in the neighbourhood, containing many rooms, was unearthed, which may be a monastery.

<sup>1</sup> [Perhaps after "worshipped" one should go on—"and put up there a stone pillar with a stone horse on it (to celebrate the fact) that the Buddha, the Sakya Sage, was born there, and reduced the land-tax on the Lummini village to a one-eighth share (on the ground) that the Honourable One was born there." See M. Barth's paper in the *Journal des Savants*, 1897.—Ed.]

Nothing will persuade the Nepalese that Englishmen, digging among old ruins, can really want anything but treasure. All our protestations of interest in ancient history, and so forth, though they may be listened to with politeness, are regarded as mere lies to cover the real object of the explorers. The intense jealousy with which the Nepalese Government has always guarded its territory against explorations by Europeans is well known. This jealousy, based on political considerations, is alone enough to cause the greatest difficulty in procuring genuine assistance from the Nepalese Darbār in unearthing the buried secrets of Kapilavastu. If Dr. Führer returns to Nigliva next year he will probably be met with some fresh and ingenious excuse, and will be prevented from doing anything of importance, unless he is armed with very strong credentials. It is most unfortunate that Kapilavastu, Kuśanagara, and all the intermediate sites so important for the history of Buddhism, should be in the territory of so jealous a government as that of Nepāl. But the fact is so, and the difficulty must be faced. If any serious scientific examination of the vast ruins of Kapilavastu is to be accomplished, a very determined effort must be made through the Government of India to move the Nepalese Government.

I warn all who are interested in the great discovery of Buddha's birthplace that every obstacle to exploration may very likely be raised, both by the Darbār at Kaṭhmāndū and by the local Nepalese officials. The Central Government of Nepal is quite capable of making itself obeyed by distant subordinates, and they will not venture on the slightest relaxation of the jealous exclusion of Europeans unless they receive very distinct and positive orders from headquarters.

My practical suggestion is, that the Asiatic Societies should at once combine in addressing urgent representations to the Government of India for application of the needful diplomatic pressure on the Government of Nepāl. The pressure necessary to induce the Government of India to move can probably be best applied through the Secretary

of State. The International Congress of Orientalists, in September, should help the Asiatic Societies in moving the Indian Government to take the desired action. It must be remembered that the Nepalese authorities do not care a fig for learned societies, and that the only chance of effective exploration of Kapilavastu lies in obtaining definite orders from the Central Government of Nepāl through the Government of India.