

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT SHAKYA KINGDOM, NEPAL
(PROPOSED WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY)



Photo: Cimena Satrang



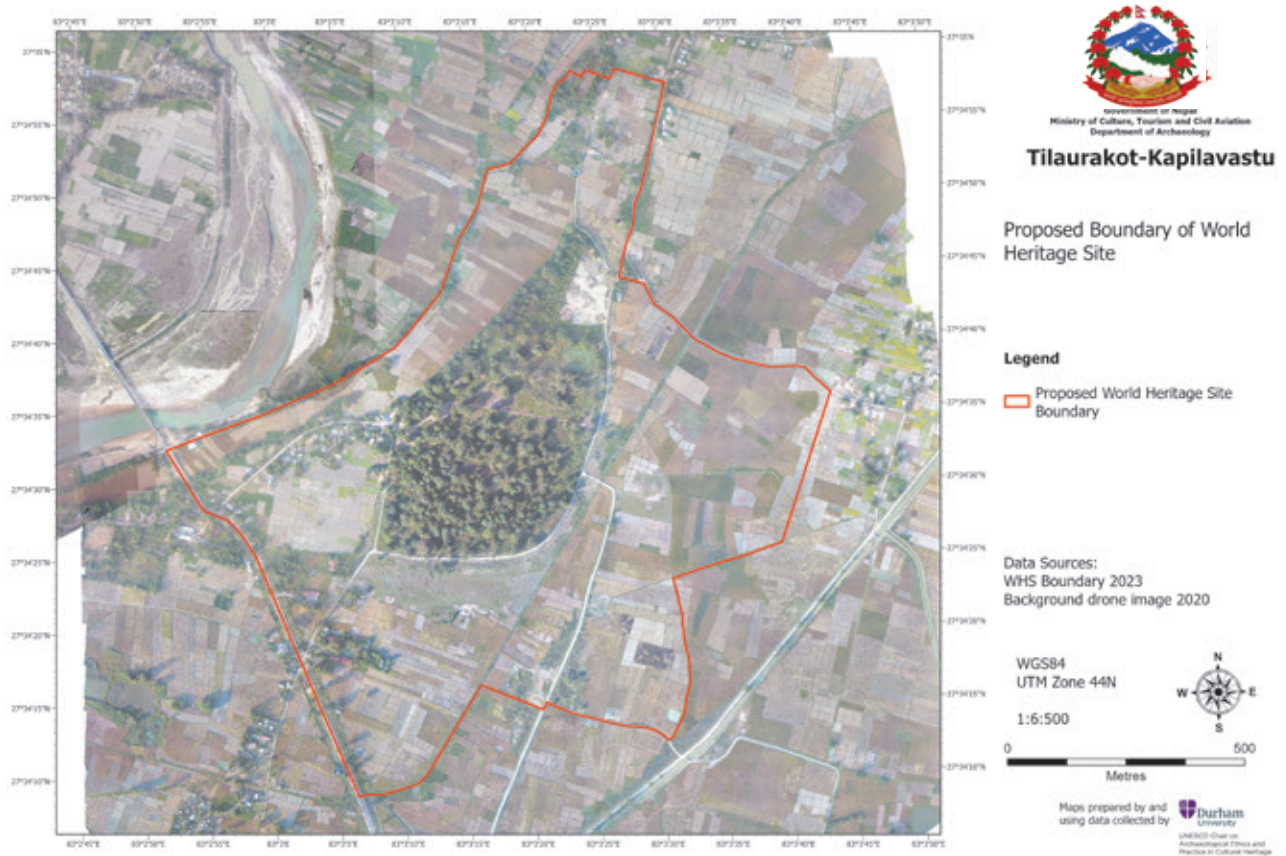
UNESCO Chair on
Archaeological Ethics and
Practice in Cultural Heritage



Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT SHAKYA KINGDOM, NEPAL
(PROPOSED WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY)



Map showing the proposed nominated property of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Illustration: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is the archaeological site of an ancient fortified city in the western Terai of Nepal, sited adjacent to the Banganga River in a generally flat agricultural landscape.

The property is focused on the fortified city area which is encircled by a modern fence and retains a substantial tree cover compared to the surrounding area. While the ancient remains are sub-surface, some structures have been interpreted by modern low brick walls on top of the remains which replicate the original structures. Ancient roadways are interpreted by elevated timber walkways.

Surrounding the fortified city area are open agricultural areas with a few surface remains but mostly sub-surface archaeological remains. The visible remains include the Eastern Stupa and Twin Stupas to the north.

Research has revealed a rich legacy of extensive archaeological remains, with many of the

structures constructed in brick. The evidence of first settlement dates from the eighth century BCE, and city development from the sixth century BCE with cardinally-oriented planning. This development continues through until the first century CE with defensive structures, earthen platforms, iron working, a Central Walled Complex, brick-lined ponds, the Eastern Monastery, shops, shrines, walls and paving.

While there is evidence of decline or at least the abandonment of some features from the first century CE, a new major complex is constructed in the fifth century CE. By the seventh century CE large parts of the city and its hinterland were abandoned, including the Eastern Monastery structures. Another major temple complex is abandoned in the tenth century CE. The later history of the property is not well understood, but it is thought the city was largely abandoned. The ancient city was re-discovered in the 1890s CE. It was identified at this time as Kapilavastu, leading to its veneration by those believing it to be the capital of the Shakya Kingdom associated with the life journey of the Lord Buddha.

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is the best preserved Early Historic city and hinterland in South Asia and is widely believed to be closely associated with the early and secular life, and subsequent renunciation of that life, by the Lord Buddha.

The property is an outstanding example of buildings and structures within the extended site of an ancient city, including religious and industrial ensembles, and it displays the earliest known example of a grid iron plan based on Indic knowledge system planning models.

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is an important place of historical and contemporary pilgrimage in Buddhism, a major world religion, because it is believed to be the city where the Buddha grew up as a prince and lived a secular and privileged life. Crucially, it is also believed to be where he renounced that life and departed on his journey seeking spiritual enlightenment. The property is directly and tangibly associated with the foundations of Buddhism's history and teachings.

The main attributes of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu consist of the archaeological remains of the central fortified city with preserved remains of suburban enclaves to the north and southwest, and an industrial area to the south. These include:

- **Intermural Planning** – including an exceptionally well preserved urban cardinal grid plan with roads, lanes and structures, anticipating later planning treatises like the Arthashastra, a Central Walled Complex, and Early Historic civic infrastructure, such as a public pond;
- **Defensive Architecture** – including an exceptionally well preserved Early Historic sequence of defensive architecture with several phases of timber palisades, followed by a clay rampart and then a brick wall, an exceptionally well preserved moat system and rampart, wall and tower system, and an Early Historic entrance tower to the Central Walled Complex;

- **Extramural Planning** – including Early Historic residential environs or suburbs, stupa and monastic establishments, including to the east, and early advanced civic planning with the location of polluting and hazardous industrial activities outside the city walls; and

- **Architectural Ensemble** – including a distinctive style of vernacular domestic architecture, Buddhist stupas, Hindu temples and palatial compound, as well as distinctive walled ponds.



Ancient postholes marking the line of the city's fortification palisade, which was erected in the 6th century BCE

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



*Aerial view from the eastern side of the property of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu
with the Banganga river flowing along the north western boundary*

Photo: Chandra Pathak

JUSTIFICATION FOR CRITERIA

Criterion (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is the best preserved Early Historic city and hinterland in South Asia. It is the earliest known example of a grid iron plan based on Indic knowledge system planning models.

The property is an outstanding example of buildings and structures within the extended site of an ancient city, including religious and industrial ensembles, from the Early Historic period, with settlement from the eighth century BCE, and city development from the sixth century BCE until the fifth century CE.

Criterion (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)

Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is widely believed to be, with some archaeological evidence to support this being the ancient capital of Kapilavastu, closely associated with the early and secular life, and subsequent renunciation of that life, by the Lord Buddha.

The property is accordingly a place of historical and contemporary pilgrimage, linked to other sites in the region closely associated with the life of the Buddha, especially Lumbini and Ramagrama. Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is an important pilgrimage site because it is believed to be the city where the Buddha grew up as a prince and lived a secular and privileged life. Crucially, it is also believed to be where he renounced that life and departed on his journey seeking spiritual enlightenment.

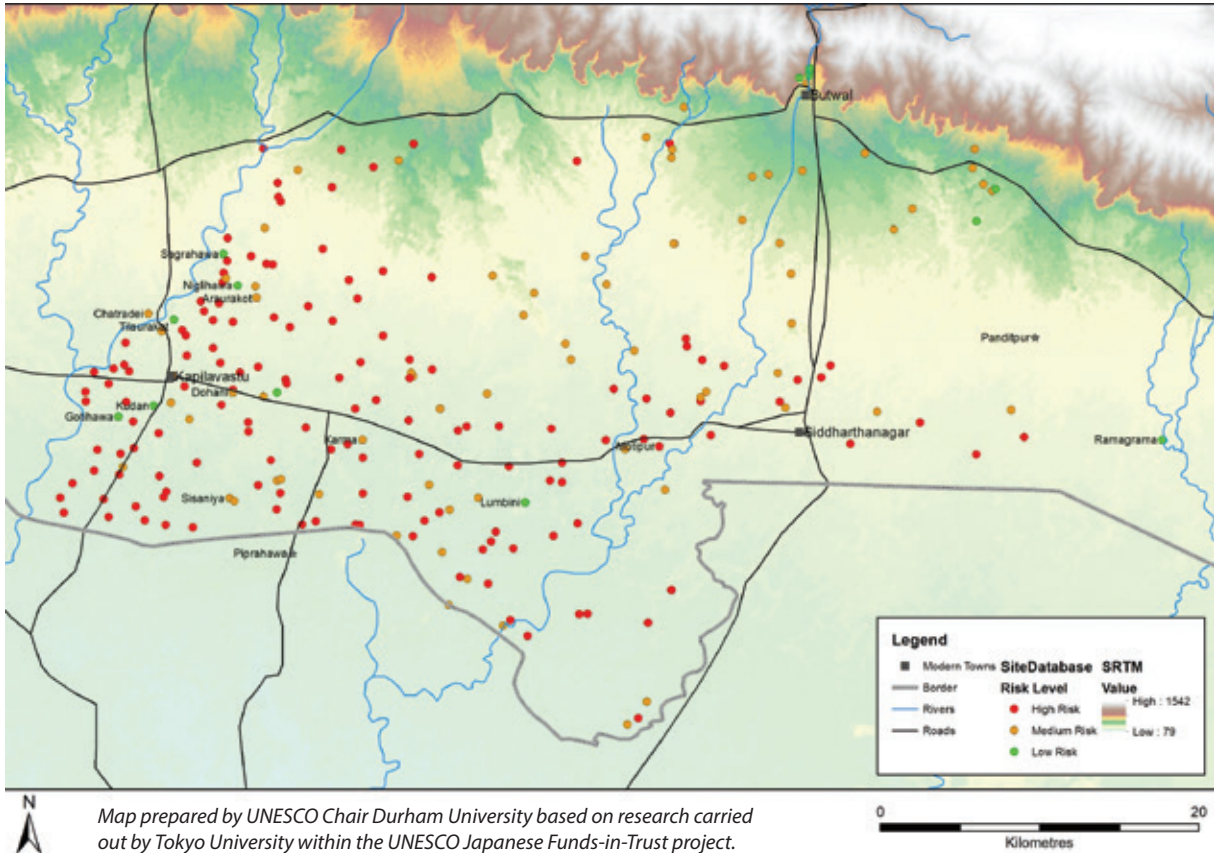
Buddhism is a major world religion, and the life journey of the Lord Buddha is deeply entwined in its history and teachings. Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is directly and tangibly associated with the foundations of that history and Buddhism's teachings.

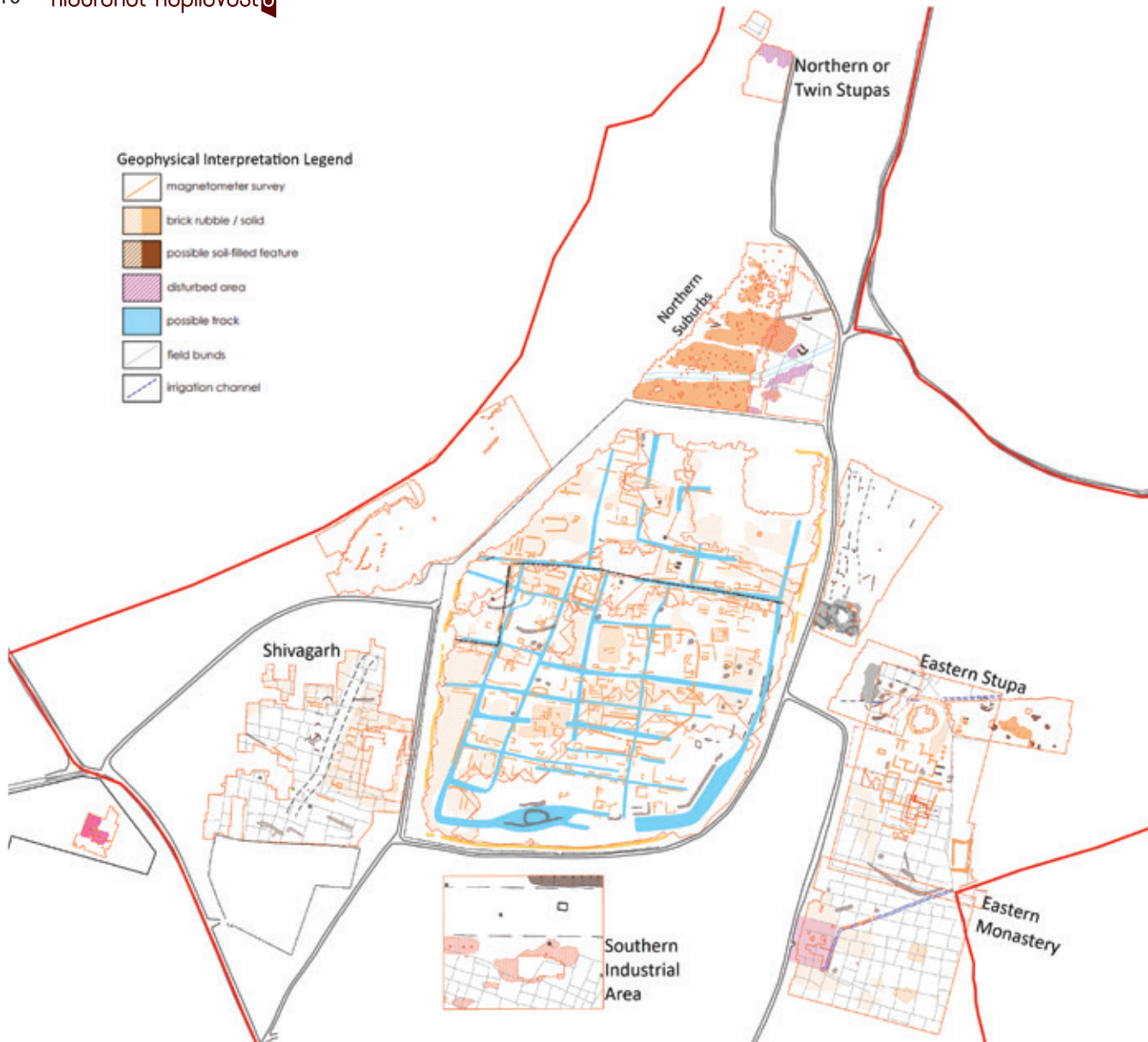
BACKGROUND

‘Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu, the Archaeological Remains of the Ancient Shakya Kingdom’ was included in the Tentative List of World Heritage in 1996 and, since then, further research activities have been carried out to prepare a better understanding of the archaeological site, with the assistance from the Japanese-Funds-in-Trust-for-UNESCO. The Government of Nepal has identified the World Heritage nomination of this site as a national priority and is preparing the nomination dossier for the inscription of this exceptional archaeological site in the World Heritage List under criteria (iv) and (vi).

Today, with increasing interest in Buddha’s hometown and his birthplace at Lumbini, archaeological interventions under the Japanese-Funds-in-Trust-for-UNESCO project have taken new momentum and the project team has confirmed the presence of 136 significant archaeological sites within the modern district of Kapilavastu as well as a further 99 in Rupandehi and 40 in Nawalparasi Districts. These include two Asokan stone pillars associated with the lives of previous Buddhas at Niglihawa and Gotihawa as well as evidence of an ancient pilgrim and trade route directly linking Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu with Lumbini. These sites are not part of the World Heritage nomination but expand the contextual understanding of the region.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN GREATER LUMBINI AREA





Overview of archaeological interpretation at Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Illustration: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



View of the Central Walled Complex after conservation

Photo: Montri Chinklang



View of trench showing the gateway and compound wall of the Central Walled Complex

Photo: Gyanin Rai

The most substantial remains of the archaeological site of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu are associated with the ancient walled city. Multiple phases of fortifications, surrounded by a moat, have been found, beginning with cardinally-aligned timber palisades from the sixth century BCE, which were later replaced by clay ramparts and then topped with brick walls and towers. The fortifications have multiple gates with

a clear network of cardinally oriented road networks within and a square inner fortified precinct (Central Walled Complex) at the centre of the city. The evidence of civic infrastructure, such as brick-lined tanks constructed in the Mauryan period and monastic structures dating back to the Kushan period, provides evidence of a very well-organized society.

Beyond the fortified core, the settlement includes suburban enclaves, industrial areas, as well as monastic complexes, and several stupas. Traces of residential areas from the earliest period of occupation are found to the west and north of the walled city. Remains of industrial-scale metal-working and furnace debris to the south indicate that the heavily polluting and potentially hazardous industrial activities were located outside the city from as early as 400

BCE. There are three Buddhist stupas found around the walled city. The Eastern Stupa is located 150 meters east of the city while two additional conserved stupas, known as the 'Twin Stupas', are present to the north of the site. There is a very large monastic complex with brick-lined tanks associated with the Eastern Stupa, which was established in the Mauryan Period around the beginning of the second century BCE.



The later monastic complex (light shading) built over the earlier Central Walled Complex Compound Wall (dark shading) at the centre of the city.

Illustration: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



Group of Buddhist pilgrims at
Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Photo: Gyanin Rai





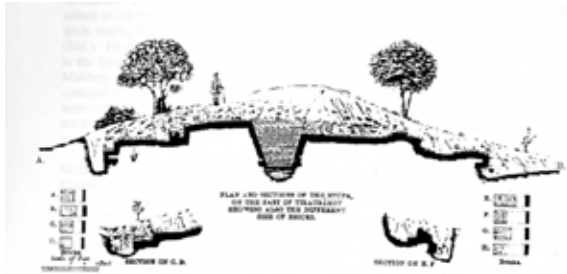
*Excavating a votive stupa in a courtyard of
Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu's Eastern Monastic Complex*

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



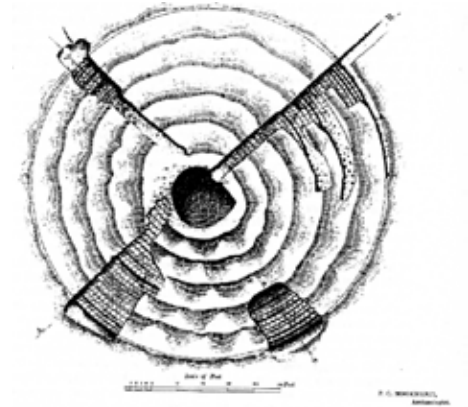
The remains of the apsidal structure looking north-east in the Central Walled Complex at the centre of the Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu city

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



Section and plan of the Eastern Stupa as recorded during the excavation by P.C. Mukherji in 1899

Source: P.C. Mukherji (1901: Plate IV)



Excavation of the south-west quadrant of the Eastern Stupa outside the fortified city of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT

INTEGRITY

The boundaries of the property include all of the surviving attributes of the ancient city, in particular, the boundary wall and moat of the city, and the property is of adequate size to portray the whole of the city. In the historical period, a large area of the northwest corner of the city was eroded by the nearby Banganga River.

The property is not subject to any development pressures, and it is actively conserved as an archaeological site. The property includes a small and historically more recent Samai Mai temple which is still in active use by the community.



A coin hoard held within a ceramic vessel was discovered at the eastern monastic complex area that contained 497 punch-marked coins

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



A Pinnacle was discovered at the eastern monastic complex area

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



A selection of artefacts found during the excavations
at Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT



*Twin Stupas on the northern area of the property outside
the fortified city of Tilaurakot-Kapilvastu*

Photo: Gyanin Rai



Structure of archeological remains found during the excavation at Tilaurakot -Kapilavastu

Photo: UNESCO Chair, Durham | JFIT

AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu is directly linked to the archaeological remains of the property. The truthful and credible expression of its value has been determined by multi-disciplinary archaeological research, interpretation, and presentation of these attributes.

In order to protect and present key examples of Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu's defining archaeological

remains, additional brick layers have been added to some features that resemble the uppermost layer of the original structures. This protective and interpretive approach is explained on-site and does not distort the overall understanding of the property. The site is augmented by a museum displaying archaeological and ethnographic material from the site and its hinterland.



UNESCO Chair Prof. Robin Coningham excavating ancient postholes inside the fortified city

Photo: Gyanin Rai



*Aerial view of the archaeological remains
inside the fortified city*

Photo: Montri Chonkling



Samai Mai shrine located within the fortified city of the site was built in the 19th Century CE and remains a place of active worship for the community

Photo: Gyanin Rai



High level Government officials being briefed by experts

Photo: Binod Pariyar

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The property is a Protected Monument Zone under national legislation declared by the Government of Nepal. This provides complete protection from activities that might damage its Outstanding Universal Value. This protection is overseen by the Department of Archaeology, Nepal. The property

is managed, conserved, and presented as an archaeological site. There is a management plan and other strategic documents to guide aspects of site management, all of which are undertaken by the Lumbini Development Trust.



On site briefing by UNESCO Chair Prof. Robin Coningham to the participants of the International Scientific Committee

Photo: Gyanin Rai



UNESCO Chair Prof. Robin Coningham presenting the conservation measures for the archaeological remains of the brick structures

Photo: Anie Joshi

Buddhist pilgrims
at Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Photo: Gyanin Rai



Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu

Published by:

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

LUMBINI DEVELOPMENT TRUST

wh.info@lumbinidevtrust.gov.np

www.lumbinidevtrust.gov.np

