



### **Telhara Excavation 2020 - 2022**

Telhara (Lat: 25° 13' 21" N; Long: 85° 10' 57" E), presently a modest village in Nalanda district, witnessed the growth of an impressive monastery with a rich scholastic tradition. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited the site sometime between 690 – 649 CE, and described the monastery in glowing terms. BHDS and the Directorate of archaeology undertook excavations at the site in the archaeological season 2020-21, and the work was further been resumed in the present archaeological season October 2021- September 2022. The dimensions of the trenches were 10m by 10m with 50 cm baulk along all four coordinates and 50 cm baulk in the center projecting two V s joint at the intersection. The distance from the main mound (well) to trench ZE1 is 20m towards east direction. (Co ordinates: 85° 10' 58" E 25° 13' 22" N.) provided evidences of continuous cultural occupation has been revealed starting with NBPW horizon which is directly placed on natural soil. Although NBPW deposit is not distinct, but it is marked by a thick deposit of black alluvium soil with NBPW associated ceramics void of any structural activity. Massive structural evidence from the Shunga- Kushana period, overlaid by a flimsy Gupta period deposit and an early medieval period structural deposit were exposed. Trench E1 was extended towards the south and an Early Medieval monastic level with a flimsy burnt layer with in situ votive stupa bases along with a hoard of sealings were found. Trench XA4 gave evidence of structural levels dated to the Gupta period, based on the inferences of an inscribed sealing below which we have a distinct NBPW level along with a ring well. Trench EA1 and EA2 were taken about 600 meters east of the mound. EA1 revealed a brick pathway probably pertaining to the Gupta period and a votive Stupa made in blackstone and exquisitely carved was found in situ.

Two trenches NA1 and NA3 were laid on the northern side of the mound but no evidence of stratified cultural deposit has been found and there is distinct evidence of a rainwater gully formation and deposition of washed out cultural remains in the secondary context. This clearly indicates that no cultural occupation was present from during the early medieval period till the early historic period, so probably the monastery had no immediate extension on the northern side. Scientific studies have also been undertaken such as radiocarbon dating, AMS dating, carbon analysis of the soils on the basis of samples collected from different layers of the trench. One of the dates received from the samples sent to Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP) is **575-646 BC.**



As many as 430 antiquities were recovered from a single session of diggings in 2020-21. The antiquities were categorized into five groups viz. Seals and Sealings, Beads, Terracotta Objects, Metallic Objects, Miscellaneous Objects

Seals and Sealings were found at Locality 1 area in Trenches ZE1 and XA4. The seals and sealings were both inscribed and uninscribed. The inscribed seals and sealings have two scripts i.e. Brahmi and Nagari; the Brahmi characters found in the excavated sealings belong to the Gupta period. The discovered nagari script materials belong to a chronological bracket ranging between 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Monastic sealings recording the name Prathamaśivapura Mahāvihāra has been found along with metallic, terracotta and stone artefacts. A bronze figurine has been recovered from trench XA4, which has tentatively been identified as a Buddhist female divinity, Bhrikuti









### Inscribed Sealings



### Beads





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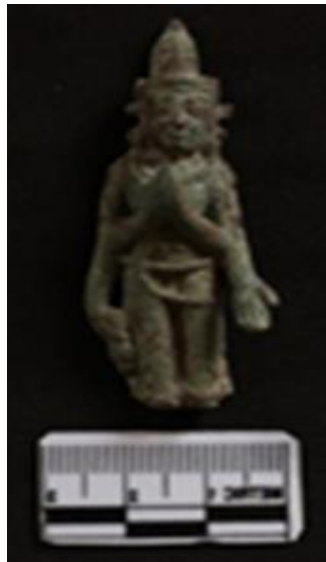
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**Terracotta Objects**

**Metallic Assemblage**



**Bhrikuti**



**Mrs Bandana Preyashi, Secretary, Art, Culture and Youth Department cum CEO  
BHDS visit at the site of Telhara**