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Coherence of Local Myth and Archaeology: Discovering the Indra Raja's Chronicles

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Abstract
Present paper analyzes the relationship between local myth and archaeological evidence at the location of *Indra tila* (22°42'27.33"N, 91°37'36.81"E) in the Sitakunda hill tract of southeastern Bangladesh. For centuries, the region has been related with the mythical ruler *Indra*, submerged structures, sacrosanct lakes (*Komoldoh Dighi*-next to the aforesaid tila) and stories of rich cultural heritage of a long-lost settlement. Paucity of appropriate archaeological

material and scientific evidences, those age-old folkloristic traditions doesn't stand on a proper academic ground. Until recently archeological exploration at Wahedpur–Mirer sarai area revealed structural bricks, column bases, burnt clay objects and wall arrangements. Most interestingly, two brick samples from the main mound have revealed the thermoluminescence (TL) dating. The TL examination shows a firing age of roughly 2300 years BP (± 400 years) and 2500 years BP (± 500 years) respectively, or Early Historic Period, more specifically which falls into the dynastic time frame of Mauryan in Indian Subcontinent. in this regard, it's worth mentioning that, only two archaeological sites been categorically associated with the time frame based on TL dating scientifically. Hence, *Indra tila* and archaeological sites within immediate vicinity poses a significant question to the history and archaeological researchers of the ancient Bengal, especially in present Bangladesh. In scholarly sphere, this scientific TL dating raises more question than it answered and open a new vista of research in the correlation between regional history and local mythological traditions. In the present study, these recent laboratory data of TL is examined along with the landscape features and most interestingly with previously known archaeological understanding with the region to sketch a clear picture of the region as well as history of the ancient Bengal.

Key Words: Local Myth, Archaeology, Indra Raja, Chronicles

Introduction

Across South Asia, almost all archaeological sites in the landscapes are associated with mythological stories of any format. Myths, legends and sacred geographies frequently preserve fragmented recollections of past political arrangements, environmental shifts and custom practices (Morrison, 2015). In southeastern Bangladesh, particularly within the Sitakunda–Mirer sarai hill region, *Indra tila* stands as a compelling illustration of such merging. Agreeing to Khan Bahadur (2013, p.16), interpretations determined from ancient traditions and archaeological remains recommend that the early Hindu occupants of the region were believed to have originated from Kailash and Vaikuntha.

Local stories depict the location as the palace complex of "King Indra," in some cases recognized with the Vedic divinity Indra and at other times envisioned as a chronicled or even trans-Himalayan ruler. Oral accounts refer to a brick-built palace on the hilltop, a maritime landing or water access at its base and related lakes named after the king's daughters named – Choto Komola and Boro Komola. Extra conventions describe a submerged golden vessel inside Komoldoh Dighi and marvelous ritual objects that once surfaced from its waters. Claims of extraordinary antiquity, extending to 10,000 years to have encourage opened up the site's legendary status (Gani,2021).

Until recently, these accounts lacked material authentication. The present investigation was attempted to assess the archaeological potential of the Wahedpur–Indra tila complex and to evaluate whether material evidence may contextualize the mythic story within a logically established chronology.

Site and Context

Geographic Setting

Indra tila is situated within the Sitakunda hill range, ignoring the coastal plains of southeastern Bangladesh. The region holds a transitional environmental zone between hill frameworks and

alluvial swamps, generally favorable for settlement due to strategic height, water accessibility and get to trade routes (Hassan & Nazem, 2015) (Brammer, 2014). According to Chowdhury (1980, p.11), the name "Chattogram" did not exist earlier to the tenth century CE, recommending that the region had not yet been formally assigned by this appellation. The broader Mirsarai–Sitakunda passage lies close ancient coastal networks that associated the Bengal delta with the Bay of Bengal maritime sphere. Changes in paleo-shorelines and sedimentation designs recommend that water bodies once amplified closer to the hill base, lending fractional natural credibility to oral traditions depicting a "naval ghat -marine jetty" (Gani & Alam, 2003).

Archaeological Remains

Systematic exploration at Wahedpur, associated with the *Indra tila* narrative, identified the following structural and cultural materials:

- **Brick-built structural remains:** Rectangular fired bricks forming aligned courses suggestive of wall foundations.
- **Wall structures:** Linear alignments indicating planned architectural activity rather than random debris scatter (*fig-1*).
- **Pillar bases or column fragments:** Evidence of vertical structural components, possibly part of a larger architectural complex*(fig-2)*
- **Burnt mud objects:** Fired clay fragments and possibly kiln-related materials, indicating controlled heating technologies.
- **Associated cultural debris:** Brick fragments and compact occupational layers suggest sustained habitation or institutional activity.

The brick typology shows standardized firing and uniform dimensions, consistent with early historic brick architecture across eastern South Asia.

Fig-1

Fig-2

Collecting Sample and Thermoluminescence Dating

A representative fired brick sample was collected beneath controlled conditions for thermoluminescence (TL) dating. TL dating measures the amassed radiation measurements in crystalline minerals since their last terminating. Upon laboratory heating, the transmitted light escalated gives an assess of the passed time since firing (Roberts, 1997).

In archaeological research, we determine the time period of the past using two types of dating. First is determining absolute time, which we call absolute dating, and second is determining relative time, which we call relative dating. The first systematic observation to survey the site was held by the second author of our article who made necessary arrangements for conducting TL dating to determine the relative age of two different structures found in the mound of Wahedpur Union in the Mirsarai area. The first brick from the first structure was tested on August 20, 2021, at Artemis Testing Lab in the USA. The date obtained was 2,300 years old +/- 400 years (TL report for-167087, Artemis Testing Lab)). Later, bricks from another structure in a different part of the same mound were tested on December 15, 2023, at the same lab. The time period obtained was 2,500 years old +/- 500 years (TL report for-183210, Artemis Testing Lab), which corresponds to the contemporary periods of Mahasthangarh, Wari Boteshwar, and Rohanpur found in Bangladesh. With permission from the Bangladesh Forest Department, excavations here in the near future could potentially yield artifacts for determining relative chronology.

Results

The thermoluminescence dating gives the first logical chronological anchor for the *Indra tila*–Wahedpur location. The foremost discoveries are the Chronological Identification. The brick was last fired around 2300 years ago (±400 years), showing early notable occupation. The existence of structural walls and column elements confirms thinking of development or maybe than ephemeral habitation. Uniformly fired bricks and burnt clay materials illustrate information of progressed ceramic and structural techniques. The results thrust affirmed human movement in Mirsarai essentially into the early historic era. The combined evidence sets up the location as a structured settlement or organization complex or maybe than a simply mythological construct.

Discussion

Myth and Local history in the verbal format

The dating results do not approve the literal presence of a divine or legendary Ruler Indra. In any case, they uncover that the location was undoubtedly possessed during a verifiably dynamic stage of South Asian advancement stamped by urbanization, trade extension and state formation. Agreeing to Khan Bahadur (2013, p. 29), the location where Sita was supposedly held captive by Ravana, distinguished in Hindu mythology as Panchavati and that may be related with the Nizampur hills of Sitakunda. Oral conventions may encode remaining memory of an early historic polity, ritual center or first-class residence. Over South Asia, sacrosanct hills and water bodies habitually preserve mythologized forms of former political or religious centers. The affiliation with Indra, a divinity connected to majesty and control, may reflect typical rise of a historical ruler into mythic account.

Komoldoh Dighi and Environmental Context

Legends of submerged structures and naval access may correlate with paleo-environmental conditions (Gani,2021). Fluctuating sea levels and deltaic sedimentation could have brought water channels closer to the hill base in antiquity. While no material evidence yet confirms a "golden ship," geomorphological shifts may explain enduring narratives of submerged objects (Gani,2021).

Evaluating Claims of Extreme Antiquity

Claiming of Gani,10,000-year antiquity is not supported by current material evidence. The TL date places the brick firmly within the early historic horizon. However, absence of earlier evidence does not preclude deeper occupation layers. Future stratified excavation and multi-sample dating may clarify whether earlier phases exist beneath the exposed structural remains.

Territorial Significance

The early historic period in eastern South Asia saw the extension of trade networks, braced settlements and religious foundations. The Mirer sarai–Sitakunda passage, given its key topography, might have worked as: A ridge authoritative or defensive structure or A ritual or pilgrimage center, as it has been noted earlier that the region has ancient alignment with religion or it could be a hub in coastal–inland trade exchange. The integration of archaeological information, scholarly references and verbal traditions positions *Indra tila* as portion of a broader archaeological landscape in southeastern Bengal (Ray, 2006) (Sen, 2015).

Conclusion

The *Indratila*–Wahedpur site illustrates a compelling case of merging between local myth and archaeological science. Whereas legendary stories of Ruler Indra, submerged treasures, and marvelous occasions stay within the domain of folklore, thermoluminescence dating affirms that substantial brick architecture existed at the location roughly 2300 years prior (±400 years).This finding transforms *Indra tila* from an absolutely mythic hill into a verifiably grounded early noteworthy settlement. The study illustrates that local verbal traditions, when fundamentally inspected alongside scientific dating methods, can direct productive archaeological inquiry. Or maybe than contradicting myth and archaeology, the prove recommends a continuum in which folklore preserves refracted memories of genuine chronicled landscapes. Future excavations, stratigraphic control, multi-sample TL/OSL dating, ceramic typology examination, and paleoenvironmental recreation will be basic for refining the chronology and understanding the socio-political character of the Indra Raja complex. Indratila hence develops not only as a territorial heritage site but as a methodological model for exploring the coherence between mythic creative ability and material history in South Asia.

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