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Ancient city discovered in India
By Sandeep Sahu
Bhubaneswar

The remains have been discovered at Sisupalgarh near Bhubaneswar, capital of the eastern state of Orissa.

Researchers say the items found during the excavation point to a highly developed urban settlement.

The population of the city could have been in the region of 20,000 to 25,000, the archaeologists claim.

The excavations include 18 stone pillars, pottery, terracotta ornaments and bangles, finger rings, ear spools and pendants made of clay.

But some historians and archaeologists in Orissa have expressed reservations about the claim of the researchers – they say it is too early to say anything about the population or periodicity of the area.

'Significance'

RK Mohanty of the department of archaeology, Deccan College, Pune, who is one of the two researchers involved in the excavations.

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"The significance of this ancient city becomes clear when one bears in mind the fact that the population of classical Athens was barely 10,000," he said.

Mr Mohanty, along with Monica Smith of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, has been carrying out limited excavations at the site every year since 2005 with the permission of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

The latest round of excavations ended last Monday and the new discoveries have been covered with special plastic material and earth to preserve them before further digging is taken up in subsequent years.

The first excavations at the site were carried out by Prof BB Lal as far back as in 1948.

On the basis of the architectural pattern and artefacts discovered during the early excavations, Prof Lal concluded that this fort city flourished between 3rd century BC and 4th century AD.

On the basis of the new findings, Ms Smith and Mr Mohanty claim that the fortified city flourished from around 5th century BC and probably lasted well after the 4th century.

"We have employed geophysical survey, systematic surface collections and selected excavations in the 4.8km perimeter of the fortified area and studied individual houses and civic as well as domestic architecture to arrive at the figure

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