City and Countryside in Ancient India: Excavations in Sisupalgarh and Talapada

The study of urbanism focuses not only on the compressed neighborhoods of the biggest cities but also on the relationships of urban centers to their surrounding hinterlands. In the Indian subcontinent during the Early Historic period (c. 3rd century BC to 4th century AD), dozens of cities came into existence and were linked together by Buddhist religious traditions, strong trade networks, and local chiefs seeking to create larger political domains. A ten-year joint project has brought together scholars from UCLA and from India’s Deccan College to investigate the walled city of Sisupalgarh, one of the best-preserved ancient cities of the Early Historic era. Recently, our project has expanded to include the investigation of Talapada, a small regional town site on the same physical model as its larger urban neighbor but with a surprisingly selective emulation of Sisupalgarh’s architectural and economic patterns.