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Breaking Story

- **Orissa finds pillars of Buddha** - *By Satyasundar Barik*

Orissa finds pillars of Buddha

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Bhubaneswar: Where did Emperor Ashoka fight the decisive battle of Kalinga? What was then the capital of Kalinga state? What was the location of the 10 stupas, where Buddha had preached, as described by Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang?

To get these questions answered, one might not have to take recourse to books on ancient history for long. Excavations by the researchers of the Orissan Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies (OIMSEAS) have yielded "amazing" discoveries in the fields of ancient history and Buddhist heritage.

Archaeologists have stumbled upon four of the 10 stupas where Lord Buddha had preached and spotted the "actual capital" of the ancient Kalinga state at Radhanagar, all in Jajpur district of Orissa.

In the midst of the Monsoon Session of the Orissa Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, state culture minister Damador Rout suddenly called a press conference in another chamber and shared the unearthed historical findings with the media.

"The findings could solve many historical and archaeological problems of Indian history in general and Orissa in particular and may add new chapters in the annals of Indian history," he said.

The OIMSEAS had taken up excavation at Tarapur, Deuli, Kayama and Radhanagar in Jajpur district during the current field season 2004-05 after obtaining a licence from the Archaeological Survey of India. The excavation at Kayama has resulted in a series of discoveries.

Director of the special excavation programme, Debaraj Pradhan, claimed, "The results of the excavation are more than just a success as the remains of three Asokan stupas at Tarapur, Kayama and Deuli have been unearthed." Kayama Hill is situated on the right bank of the river Keula, towards the north of the Great Fort of Radhanagar (now identified as Toisalinagar of Ashokan period). Radhanagar appears in records of 1929 as "Rajanagar", or the "royal city".

"It means the present village of Radhanagar, under Dharmasala police station of Jajpur district, was the old royal city," Pradhan said.

The present excavation at Radhanagar, with the discovery of several inscriptions and other corroborative evidences, has clearly proven that Radhanagar was the capital city of the erstwhile Kalinga kingdom, said the director of the excavation.

Several black-slipped inscribed pot shreds discovered from the spot have been deciphered by Jaya Prakash, deputy superintending epigraphist at the ASI.

The inscriptions have been decoded as Tosali Nagara and these inscriptions were datable to 3rd century and 2nd century BC, said Pradhan, adding that the evidence of Kanakamuni in the inscription was also very significant as it indicated that Buddha had visited Tosali Nagara during his lifetime.

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So far, historians had not been able to name and locate the capital of Kalinga kingdom. With the discovery of a new capital of the erstwhile Kalinga kingdom, the historians will soon have to embark upon another research to substantiate the Kalinga war. The war was said to have been fought on the banks of the river Daya which is just seven km away from Bhubaneswar.

In the course of the excavation, the team unearthed square stupas made of laterite blocks, burnt bricks, railing pillars, cross-bars and other architectural members of the Ashoka stupa. Besides, pottery and terracotta remains of Ashokan period were also discovered at these hills. The brick sizes are of Mauryan period and comparable to Kausambi bricks. Pradhan said that no images or icons were found in these hills which implied that these stupas were constructed in the early phase of Hinayana (Theravada) — Buddhism during the time of Ashoka. During the excavation at Radhanagar, the researchers discovered a royal pendant made of semi-precious stone.



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