

Sisupalgarh/Bhubaneswar, A Nationally Protected Monument

The early historic fortress Sisupalgarh is the largest such structure of its time in India. This over 2000 year old quadratic defensive wall measures 1200m x 1160m and is preserved to a maximum of 12m in height. It lies just some 5km south of the train station. Officially, for many years this Mauryan Period site has stood under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which in 1947 conducted excavation in order to determine its history and character. If you look for a sign with which to inform yourself about the site, you will find none, since it was removed in 2004. In other words, knowledge about the nature of the site is available only by word of mouth or by inquiry at the authorities. Sisupalgarh is full of interesting sites which are only beginning to become known. One observes the waxing of building activities in and around this monument and is at a loss to stop it. Greedy developers argue, "Is this country for living or dead people?" Commercial gain hides behind a false populism. The value of India's historic monuments is clear and obvious for the entire population and not just a few well-healed builders who profit opportunistically from encroaching on public land. Is it desirable that the country's cultural resources are all converted into sleeping facilities?

The satellite images (Fig. 1 and 2) show the growth of the building boom. The resolution of the satellite images improved over the years. The different colours are colour-coded to the buildings determined in each of the years which I researched: 2002, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2014. But often it is difficult to distinguish a start from a finished house. Up to 2002 the growth was relaxed. This changed in 2005 particularly in the north-western corner of the fortress several villas were begun along the village road. Foundation walls stand from one to several courses high, awaiting completion. In 2005, developers sold or began some 20 houses like hot cakes here in "Raghunath Nagar" (Fig. 3). The houses encroach on the city defences and the column context (Fig. 4). The columns are located in the very centre of the fort. New housing on the southern and western sides of the fortification, not to omit its interior have badly encroached the site (with its office in Bhubaneswar) and the Orissa State Archaeology. It is easy to image the damage, emasculation or removal of the defences and columns.

In recent years, with the drying up of the Gangua nala, the house building increased particularly just outside the south-western corner of the fort. Many houses have been expanded in the past decade. The Jagannath Sadak 203 motorway now lies a scant 124 m from the south-western corner of the fort and the 203 bypass lies 100 to the east of its north-eastern corner. These accelerated the encroachment. One wonders which government agency issued the developers permission to build here. The construction growth is exponential and in 2012 the dramatic surge evinces no semblance of law enforcement to protect this national monument.

The matter of protecting India's heritage is a weighty and important responsibility. Is the Archaeological Survey aware of the degrading of the site, but why is it unable to protect it? It is a shame to see Sisupalgarh go the same way as the neighbouring contemporary Ashokan fortress Jaugada in the Ganjam District, 130 km to the south-east, which from c. 1950 to the present day is only recognisable as a fortress to a few experts, having been totally emasculated. This site also stands under the protection of the ASI. Nearer to Sisupalgarh, 500m to the north-west at Mohabhoi Sasan, an ancient mud fort, is another victim of a land-grab and has been completely turned into a housing project.

The purpose of the appended photos and plan is to attract public attention to the fate of Sisupalgarh, a unique monument, which is being exploited illegally by developers, evidently conscious only of turning a fast profit at the cost of the public good. Since building attempts have been going on for years now, why are the authorities doing nothing

to stop it? There can be no question that housing is important, but large monuments such as Sisupalgarh contribute to the quality of life. India and the world have only one Sisupalgarh.

The antiquities officials should earn their money and face up to the challenge of defending India's cultural heritage. The fate of the nationally protected Sisupalgarh seems an open question.

Figures:

1 Plan of Sisupalgarh shows the defences, the excavations of 1947, prospection of 2005 and recent building development (P. Yule, C. Borchert).

2 These five drawings from Google Earth are of images from 04.07.2002, 14.12.2005, 31.01.2010, 09.12.2012 and 14.03.2014. They show the building encroachment (P. Yule, C. Borchert).

3 View a villa finished in Sisupalgarh in 2005 (P. Yule).

4 Encroachment of newly built houses on the column context, 'Area D' (H. Kulke).

5 Google Earth view from 14.03.2014 of Sisupalgarh shows the extent of the encroachment.

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30.09.2014

Sources:

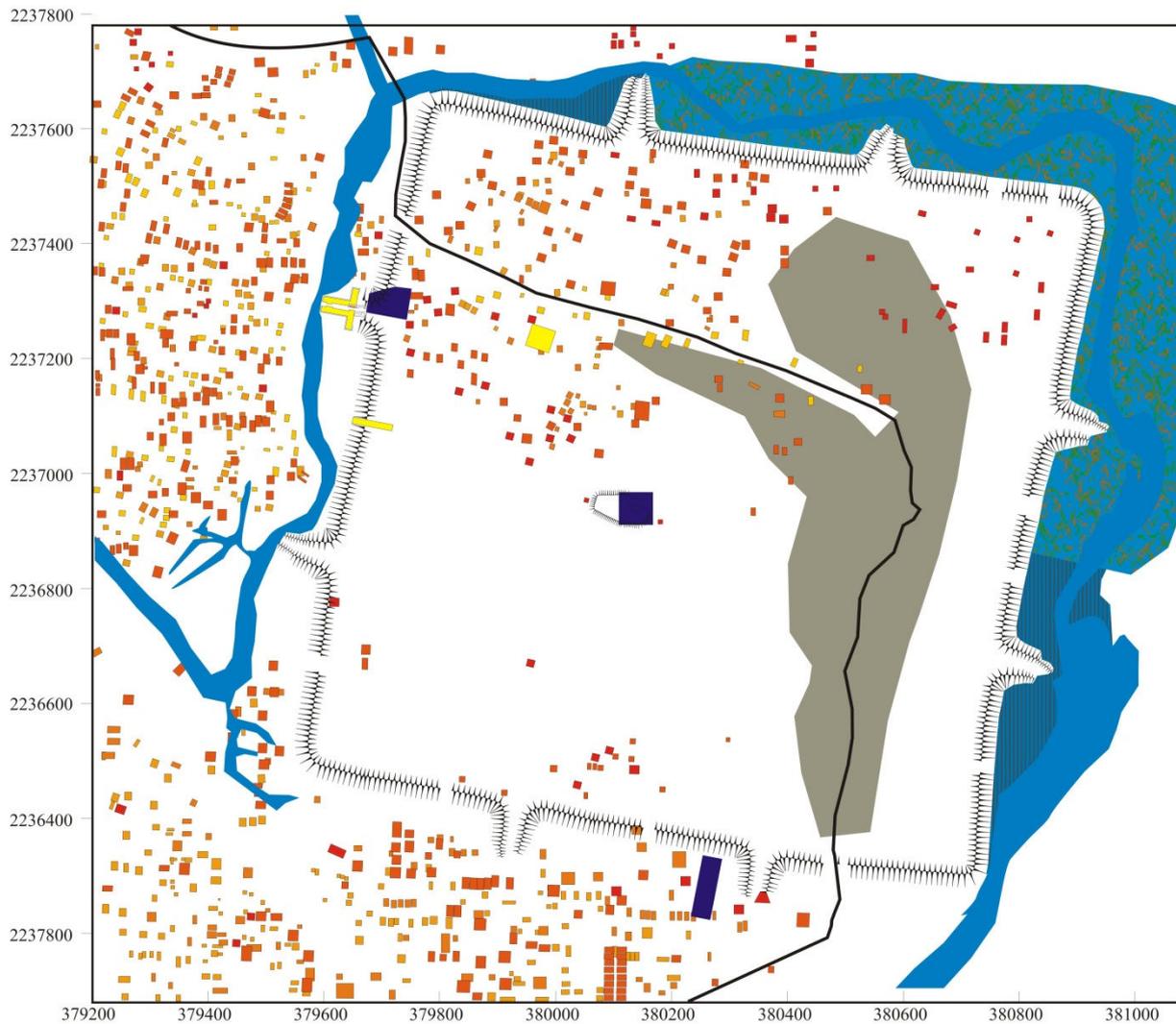
P. Yule–C. Borchert, *Sisupalgarh/Orissa: Illegal building operations in the North-West Area*, privately distributed, 2005.

URL: <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/savifadok/volltexte/2008/146/>

P. Yule, *Early Historic Sites in Orissa*, Delhi, 2006, ISBN 81-89645-44-7.

URL: <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/savifadok/volltexte/2008/147/>

URL: http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/savifadok/frontdoor.php?source_opus=147&la=de



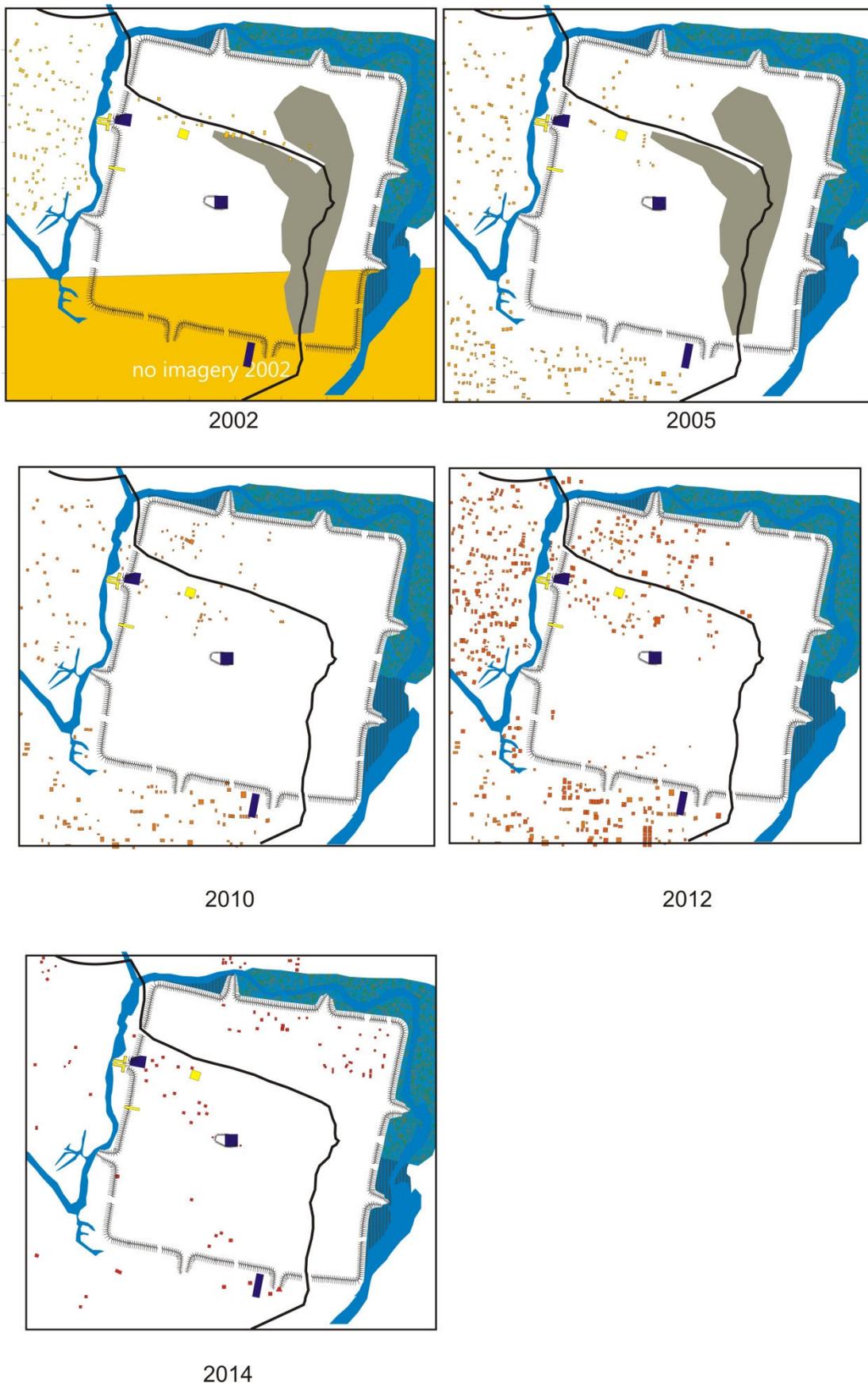
**Early Historic Ruined Fortress
Sisupalgarh, Dist. Khurda
Bhubaneshwar, Odisha**

centre: UTM 45Q 380251m e, 2236983m n
after Yule - Borchert 2005

- houses & building starts 2002
- houses & building starts 2005
- houses & building starts 2010
- houses & building starts 2012
- houses & building starts 2014
- old village
- proven glacis
- open stream (nullah)
- rice paddys
- swamp
- GPR prospection
- excavation 1947



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