

Role of Fortification in Medieval Andhradesa – A Case Study of Selected Forts

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I. Introduction:

Fortification is an act of building military defenses to protect a place against attack. In other words a Structure, such as a wall or tower that is built to protect a place is called fortification. In the Medieval Time many European cities were entirely enclosed by sturdy walls¹, with walkways along the top and towers at intervals, designed to make an invasion impossible. A water-filled ditch, or moat, might run alongside the wall for added defense. Such defenses turned the entire city into a fort, or fortress. Over the centuries, fortifications changed steadily with the development of new weaponry. In World War II, the German fortification of the French coast included antitank barriers, bunkers, minefields, and underwater obstacles, but it wasn't enough to turn back the immense force of the allied invasion on D-day.

Medieval fortification refers to medieval military methods that cover the development of fortification construction and use in Europe, roughly from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the Renaissance. During this millennium, fortifications changed warfare, and in turn were modified to suit new tactics, weapons and siege techniques.

Forts in ancient India:

Three major methods were used for the construction of ancient Indian forts. The first consisted of earthen ramparts. Often they were constructed of the sand which was dug out of the ditch surrounding the fort. The second type constructed of rubble with earth on the outside which was sturdier. The third type of construction was with stone and masonry work. The last was the strongest. Often materials from demolished forts were reused in the building of new forts.²

By 4 BCE, fortified cities were common in India. The largest ones were between the city of Mathura (on the Yamuna River) and Magadha (on the Ganges). Another series of forts in the south, was on the Ujjain (on the Narmada) leading into the Deccan. These are inferred by the remains of fort walls and bastions seen on excavation at Rajagriha and at several sites in the Gangetic plain notably Kaushambi. At the latter site huge walls of burnt brick, which look like they have been battered. There does not seem to be any formal planning of these forts.³

There are few descriptions of these ancient structures. The most noted is the one by Megasthenes, an ambassador of Seleucus 1 Nicator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He describes Pataliputra as being guarded by a ditch with wooden walls. The fort had 570 towers and 54 gates with colonnaded halls decorated with gold and silver. One such hall has been excavated and is one of the oldest stone structures in India.⁴

Concept of fortification in ancient India:

Right from the dawn of civilization the human beings had a feeling of protection for their survival from the natural calamities, wild animals and other rival human agencies (Singh A.P. 1993)⁵. Obviously this feeling entitled the need of shelters by raising barriers and constructing ramparts, fortification around the residence. According to N. S. Ramachandra Murthi 'Factors that promoted the birth and rise of fortification, it may be

noted that growth efforts as a defensive structure, depended to a large extent, upon the contemporary trends of warfare, the methods of attacks and defence, the weapons used and the military organization of the various Kingdoms, during different periods⁶. While the underlying concept of a fort is defence, which remained constant throughout the fort as a structure went on undergoing changes from time to time, varying in its shape, size, plan and the materials used in construction, in order to keep tune with the changing techniques of warfare and the exigencies of military and political requirements (Ramachandra Murthy, 1996).

According to A.P. Singh and N. S. Ramachandra Murthi, the factors for the birth and rise of fortification and growth of forts are more or less as defensive structures, from earliest time onwards till present. But, not only as a defensive structure, have forts changed over period of time in structure, material plan and also in usage with the rise of many administrative and residential forts. Forts were not only used for defence but also as symbols of royalty and strength of state in medieval period.

Role of fortification:

Fortifications are military constructions and buildings designed for defense in warfare and military bases. Humans have constructed defensive works for many thousands of years, in a variety of increasingly complex designs. Many military installations are known as forts, although they are not always fortified. Larger forts may class as fortresses; smaller ones formerly often bore the name of fortalices. The word fortification can also refer to the practice of improving an area's defense with defensive works. City walls are fortifications but not necessarily called fortresses. A defensive wall is a fortification used to protect a dynasty or empire from potential aggressors. In ancient times, they were used to enclose settlements. Generally, these are referred to as city walls or town walls, although there were also walls, such as the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, and the metaphorical Atlantic Wall, which extended far beyond the borders of a city and were used to enclose regions or mark territorial boundaries, Beyond their defensive utility, many walls also had important symbolic functions - representing the status and independence of the communities they embraced.

Fortes are strongholds that originated in Europe during the Medieval Time as residences for nobility as well as kings. Fortes were built for multiple reasons including social, political, and economical. During the medieval period, the political and social system in place was Feudalism. Under this system the King granted fiefs which were parcels of land to his high ranking Lords, who swore to support their king in return. They in turn, parceled out control of the land to lesser nobleman, who were sworn to provide knights to their overlord. This pattern repeated, forming a hierarchy that ended with the peasants who worked the land. In exchange for the loyalty of his subjects, lords provided protection and fortes were a primary means of ensuring their protection.

Large fortes could be made up of thousands of individuals. This included the kings and his family but also included the servants who worked within the fort, the soldiers who provided protection, and the peasants under the noble's protection who typically lived in a small village near the fort. Fortes with strong walls and other defenses with adequate supplies of food and water could ensure survival for weeks during a siege.

Fort protection was not just needed against foreign enemies though. Kings had a great deal of power to govern their land and those who lived on it. Fortes often included dungeons to house prisoners and served to protect the lord and those he governed from attacks caused by disagreements with neighbors or from marauders. Kings also used their fortes to reflect their power and position. More elaborate and larger fortes were built by richer lords.

Fortifications during Medieval Times:

Fortifications did exist prior Medieval Times, but these structures are not thought of as fortes. Pre-Medieval fortifications were usually towers, which provided a strategic lookout of the area or were fortified military bases. The earliest Medieval fortes were made by the Normans when invading England in the 11th century. These early fortes were often made of wood and built on hills for protection. The use of these materials meant early fortes were subject to rotting and could not withstand fire. Technological advances throughout the period lead to more complex fort designs including stone fortes. Lines of defense including moats, drawbridges, keeps and gatehouses became fairly common fort structures. Fortes creation began to taper out around the 1500s. Thousands of fortes would be built before his happened, however.

The importance of forts and fortifications was more realized by the rulers of the medieval India and many of the forts were raised around the important cities and the capital under the special patronage of the contemporary kings. The science of raising forts and fortifications was given more importance during the medieval period of Indian history. Most of the important forts were occupied by these rulers and it was extended with certain essential addition by them was necessitated for strategic and defensive purposes⁷.

During the medieval period large number of forts increased and spread throughout the different parts of Andhra⁸. To this period, belong the forts of several dynasties that exercised political authority over different parts of Andhra, like western Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Kakatiyas, Reddis, Velamas, Vijayanagara, Bahamanis and finally the Qutubshahis. During this period the importance of forts as a politico-military institution came to be realized on a wide scale, Yadavas of Devagiri, Kakatiyas of Warangal and Dharani Kota were reckoned as the best examples of the land fort *sthaladurga* during the periods. Hanumakonda, Raichur and Gandikota were hill forts *Giri Durga*, Kandur and Narayanvanam were the foremost among forest fortress or *Vanadurga*, Divi and Kolanu were island forts *Jala Durga*⁹. Hoysala capital Davarsamudra, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Yadavas of Devagiri and Kakatiyas of Warangal were important fortified capitals during this period¹⁰. Hence the large number of forts, almost every village or town of some political or military importance came to be fortified, depending of course, upon their strategic situation and invulnerability from outside attacks. This increase in the number of forts is mainly due to the increase in warfare, which came to be fought on a large scale, with improved methods of attacks and defence and advanced equipment and machinery.

Forts which remained sublime in the ancient period, built of perishable material like brick and mud, began to occupy a place of prime importance in the medieval period in the field of warfare and were the chief targets of attacks for the capture of a fort meant during this period, the virtual occupation of the entire land under its command by the victorious king. Hence grew forts, as a matter of military expediency, large in size and complex and equipped with up to date materials, machinery and arsenal. Added to this were the natural potentialities offered by the steep rocks and the availability of strong building material like granite, beside plain level grounds¹¹.

II. Methodology:

The main intention of this research is to study the role of fortification in medieval Andhradesa with reference to selected forts. The methodology used in the research includes the collection of historical information regarding materials found inside forts in Andhradesa, and architecture along with the structural details through field studies. The methodology also includes collection and tabulation of the data regarding the forts in the study area. Personal field studies verifying the data collected from various historical libraries. Similarly, comparative studies of the various forts located in other areas of the country.

The work consists of six chapters. Chapter-I is Introduction, brief note on the sources and thematic nature are discussed. In the primary sources, literary sources, epigraphically sources, numismatics and non-literary sources are discussed, whereas in secondary sources over view languages and audience of Telugu, English and Urdu are the main in medieval period, and also early writings on Andhra Desa. In this chapter historical development of fortification also discussed. Chapter two deals with settings of the fortification like physiography, geology, locations, rivers and backwaters and historical background of the various forts. Chapter-III deals with the defensive mechanism of the fortresses, Chapter Four deals with Residential and Service sectors of the fortresses, Chapter Five describes the Maritime trade and the fortresses, Chapter six speaks about the present condition of the fortresses and its impact on social, political, economical and religious changes, and finally Chapter Seven summarises the similarity and dissimilarity and the merits and demerits on the architectural features, and their international contact during the heyday of the fortresses.

Important forts in Andhradesa:

The land of Andhradesa has been embellished with some of the most majestic forts in the country. Reflecting a rich culture, history and a good taste in architecture, these massive forts take one back in the glorious time of Maharajas and Emperors, where each bastion, window, porch, courtyard and even the outer wall recount historic tales. Done up in a such way with fine mosaic, frescoes, latticework, one cannot help but

fall in love with these stunning pieces of architecture that Andhradesa is so proud of. Here are some of the largest and most popular forts in Andhradesa.

Chandragiri Fort:



Chandragiri was under the rule of Yadava Naidus for about three centuries and came into control of Vijayanagar rulers in 1367. It came into prominence during Saluva Narasimha Rayalu. Later, the most famous Vijayanagara emperor Srikrishna Devaraya, was kept restricted in this fort as a prince, till his coronation at Penukonda. The Chandragiri fort was constructed using stone, brick, lime mortar and devoid of timber¹².

Kondapalli Fort:



Kondapalli Fort, also locally known as **Kondapalli Kota**, is located in the Krishna district, close to Vijayawada, the second largest city of Andhra Pradesh, India. The historic fort on the hill (Eastern Ghats) located to the west of the Kondapalli village was built by Prolaya Vema Reddy of Kondaveedu during the 14th century, initially as a pleasure place and a business centre, along with the Kondaveedu Fort in Guntur district. In later years, it was used as a military fortification and the British placed a strong garrison here¹³.

Kondaveedu Fort:



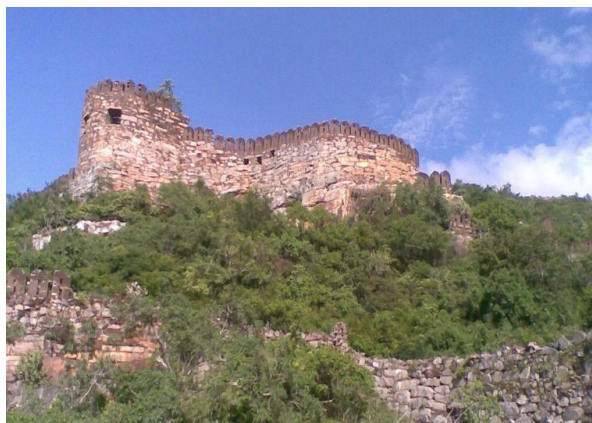
Kondaveedu Fort is located in Kondaveedu Village in the Chilakaluripet Constituency of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, India. It is a hill fortress located 1,700 feet (520 m) above m.s.l. Apart from this main fort, there are two other forts (names not known) nearby. All three forts are now in ruins. This Fort was constructed by Prolaya Vema Reddy. Later it was ruled by the Reddy dynasty between 1328 and 1428 and then taken over by Gajpathis of Orissa later ravaged by the Muslim rulers of the Bahmani kingdom (1458). The Vijayanagara emperor Krishnadevaraya captured it in 1516. The Golconda Sultans fought for the fort in 1531, 1536 and 1579, and Sultan Quli Qutb Shah finally captured it in 1579, renaming it *Murtuzanagar*.

Gandikota Fort:



Gandikota Fort was made more impregnable by Pemmasani Timma Naidu. The fort was under the control of Pemmasani Naidus for over 280 years. The fort of Gandikota and Gandikota regions and used pay an annual tribute of nine lakhs of rupees to the Vijayanagar king. He developed Gandikota as an impregnable fort.

Udayagiri Fort:



Udayagiri fort, constructed by Langula Gajapati was inaccessible on most sides. It could be only penetrated only by a jungle track in the east side and a pathway on the west side. The siege by Krishna Deva Raya lasted for 18 months and resulted in defeat for Prataparudra of the Gajapatis.

During the reign of Gajapatis and the Vijayanagara Empire, the fort was extended. The entire city and the surrounding hill of 1000 feet height were encircled with walls. The fort consisted of thirteen buildings, with eight of them on the hill and five below, It also consisted of several beautiful temples and gardens.

Bhongiri Fort:



Vizianagaram Fort:



Vizianagaram Fort is an early 18th Century fort in the city of **Vizianagaram** in northeastern Andhra Pradesh, South India. It was built by Vijaya Rama Raju.

Bobbili Fort:



The **Bobbili Fort**, located in the Vizianagaram district of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, was built during the middle of the 19th century in Bobbili. It has a historical link to the nearby mud fort of the same name which was destroyed during the Bobbili war in 1757 in a feud between the Rajas of Bobbili and the neighbouring landlord of Vizianagaram.

Chinna Ranga Rao, who survived the Battle of Bobbili as a child was, at a later date, installed as the Raja of Bobbili. The successors of his lineage constructed the present Bobbili Fort following their improved economic conditions in the middle of the 19th century.

Golkonda Fort:



Today, many medieval forts have disappeared due to being constructed from wood, neglect, or destroyed. A significant number remain, however, showing the care that went into their construction. Some of these forts have been expanded and rebuilt over the centuries while others are only partially preserved or in ruins. Whatever their condition, all remaining forts are still worth seeing and learning about far understanding fort history, construction, and architecture. In this guide, we explore the definition and terminology used to describe forts, history and construction of forts, features and sections of forts, and noteworthy forts worth exploring today.

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