



MEDIEVAL FORTS IN ANDHRADESA – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FORTS OF VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

Human beings had a feeling of protecting themselves from the hazards of natural calamities and from the wild animal right from the dawn of civilization. The feeling of protection gave raise to the need of a shelter leading to the construction of ramparts around the residence barriers. Thus, during the early ages, defence from calamities wild animals and human enemies happened to be one of the prime considerations. Along with, the Civilization the habitations also progressed and prospered because of the protective fortifications of cities and towns and simultaneously raised armies to defend humans from the outside enemies. Even in the Ancient Indian literature, there are many works that described about forts and fortifications. They are, 'the Arthasasthra,' 'the Nitisara of Kamandaka', 'the Manusmriti, the Sukranitisara'. There are many works even on the vastu of the forts, 'the Manasara, the Mayamata, the Viswakarma vastu and silparatna. The Agni purana, the Mastya purana, the Devipurana, the Brahmandapurana and the Brahma Vaivarta purana' also mentioned about fortifications.

In Andhradesa, the earliest mention of fortification came in to light from 'Indica' by Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Rayavachakamu also gives us a list of forts flourished during the Vijayanagara period. Anantapuram is one of the districts in Rayalaseema region of Andhrapradesh. There are about 50 forts are found in medieval Anantapur out of which nearly 18 forts were constructed during the vijayanagara period in Anantapur region. The Rayas of Vijayanagara built and expanded giridurgas in Penugonda, Gutti, Rayadurgam and Madakasira of Anantapur district. All these forts have played a very important role during the reign of Vijayanagaras in this region.

Key Words - Fort, Bastion, Defence, Moat, Rampart, Rajya .

Human beings had a feeling of protection for survival from the natural calamities and from the wild animal right from the dawn of civilization. The feeling of protection made the mankind to invent the need of a shelter by constructing ramparts rising around the residences.¹ During the early ages, defence from calamities and human enemies happened to be one of the prime considerations of prehistoric dwellings. As civilization progressed, the habitations also progressed, and prospered because of the protective fortifications of cities and towns and simultaneously raised armies to defend from the enemies.²

In the Vedic texts the words 'Pura' and 'Durga' were frequently mentioned. The 'Pura' means a town or a city, enclosed with a rampart or stronghold and Durga is also another word, meaning hard to approach or in accessible.³ In the Rigveda Samhita there is a mention about the tribal living within the fortified walls known as pura, built with an earthen-work strengthened by a stone wall.⁴ In Ancient Indian literature, there are many works described about forts and fortifications. They are, the Arthasasthra, the Nitisara of kamandaka, the Manusmriti, the Sukranitisara. And on vastu of the forts are, the Manasara, the Mayamata, the Viswakarma vastu and silparatna. And the puranas, the Agni purana, the Mastya purana, the Devipurana, the Brahmanda purana and the Brahma vaivarta purana. Subsequently, the architecture of fortifications practice on a larger scale right from the days of Magadhan Empire. The



external invasions from the Greeks, the Sakas, the Bactrians, and the Pahlavas made the kings strongly fortify their territories and capital cities.⁵ During the medieval times with the advent of gunpowder by the Muslim invaders the structure of fortification was brought several changes in their design and construction.⁶

In Andhradesa, the earliest mention of fortification came in to light from the account of Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He mentioned in his historical account, 'Indica' that "the Andhras had thirty walled towns, numerous villages, with an army of 1, 00,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 1,000 elephants." The Satavahanas are the earliest rulers of the Andhradesa and they had a very strong political and military force along with strong fortification around their habitations.⁷ The edicts of Asoka Mourya at *Erragudi* in Anantapur district and *Rajulamandagiri* in Kurnool district reveal the extension of Mouryan rule up to Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. In south India, the institution of building of forts reached its zenith during the Vijayanagara Empire.⁸

According to 'Rayavachakam', a contemporary chronicle writing by Viswanatha nayani described forts. He mentioned that there are four kinds of forts and fortifications during the rule of Vijayanagara empire, they are, 'Giridurga' (hill fort), 'Sthaladurga' (land fort), 'Jaladurga' (water fort) and 'Vanadurga' (forest fort). All these forts are equipped with a strong garrison, men and material. The main parts of a fort are Parikha (moat), Prakara (rampart), Buruzu (Bastion) and Avara (gate way). Apart from other parts like towers, turrets, secret passages (tunnals) machicolations, barbicans, parapet walls, stable for treasury, civilian quarters and finally the palace or citadel. 'Rayavachakamu' further gives us a list of forts flourished during the Vijayanagara period. They are giridurga and Vana durgas. The giridurgas are at Penugonda, Gutti, Adavani, Ganditota, Chandragiri, Gurramkonda, Maddur, Somagiri, Tripurantakam, Kummattur and Cheyyeti durgamu, and vanadurgas (forest forts) are located at Nandyal, Srirangapattanam, Ummattur, Dalanayakula kota, Madura, Palayankota, Dandikal, Satyavidu, Kottikal , Dinkinikota, and Naraynavanam.

The Kautilya's "Arthashastra ,Kamandaka's Niti Sara , Manasallasais ,Mayamantram and Matsya, Agni and Vishnu puranas" mentions that all the forts were either square (chaturasra), circular (Vritta) and Rectangular (dirgha chaturasra) in their design or plan. All these accounts mention that there flourished all the four kinds of forts (viz) sthala (land) Giri (Hill) Jala (island or water) and Vana (forest) durgas. After examination of these forts reveals that the rulers built them according to their polity and by following Vasthu Sastra.⁹

Forts in Rayalaseema Region

There are several important forts in Rayalaseema region, they are at Penugonda, Chandragiri, Udayagiri, Gutti, Adoni. All these forts were raised to the level of provinces or rajyas during the Vijayanagara period. Apart from them, there are also smaller forts in Rayalaseema region who acted as the headquarters of the simas, they are, Gandikota, Siddhavatam, Kurnool, Gurramkonda, Rayadurgam, Madakasira. All these forts were important strongholds of the Vijayanagara Empire in Andhradesa particularly located in Rayalaseema region. All these forts played a very significant role in the warfare between Vijayanagara rulers and Reddis of Kondavidu, Gajapati's of Orissa in eastern province and the Sultanates of the Deccan in Krishna - Tungabhadra doab. In the light of the above, the present paper presents with the medieval forts in Andhradesa with special reference to the forts in Anantapur district during Vijayanagara Empire.



Forts in Anantapur Region

Anantapuram is one of the four districts in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. There were about 50 forts during the medieval and post medieval Anantapur district. Out of these forts, there were nearly 18 forts during the vijayanagara period in Anantapur region. The Rayas of Vijayanagara built and expanded giridurgas (hill forts) in Penugonda, Gutti, Rayadurgam and Madakasira.

1. Penugonda Fort

History of the fort: Penugonda is the headquarters of a taluk in Anantapur district in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. It is situated on the Guntakal - Bangalore section of Southern railway and is about 44 miles from Anantapur it is located on the National Highway 44 from Hyderabad to Bangalore. According to the kaifiyat of Penugonda, it derived its name Penugonda from a Big Hill, from the surrounding high hills situated around Penugonda town. It is also known as Ghanagiri or Ghanadri in Sanskrit. The earliest reference to the fort of Penugonda occurs during the first quarter of the 14 century AD. Penugonda fort stood as the south-eastern outpost of the Hoyasalas of Dwarasamudra.¹⁰ During the time of Ballala-III, Hoyasala generals governed from this place. Ballala-III (1320-1342 AD) appointed his son-in-law Macheya Dannanayaka as the governor of Penugonda. An inscription dated 1336 AD mentions a gift of land in Madhuvukunta Halli in Ramadinadu made by Mahapradana Aliya Macheya Dannanayaka.¹¹ After the death of Macheya Dannanayaka, Gangidevi Dannanayaka governed the Penugonda province in 1339 AD.¹² After the death of Ballala-III Penugonda region came under the control of Vijayanagara rulers.

Penugonda was one of the important provincial centers and occupied a strategic position during the period of Vijayanagara Empire. After the defeat of Vijayanagara in the battle of Tallikota, It was the headquarters of a sima called Penugonda sima,¹³ and it was one of the biggest territorial divisions under the Vijayanagara kingdom. It was divided into several sub-divisions like; sima, chavadi and sthala. Singagiri-sima, Rodda-nadu, Guyyaluri-sima, Vavilapatti-chavadi Cheluru-chavadi, Kumkapura-sthala, Mallelasthala, Gandikota-sima was included in the Penugonda rajya. In some of the inscriptions referred to this province also as Penugonda-marjavadi-sima.¹⁴ It spread over the whole of Anantapur District, southern part of Kurnool district, western parts of Kadapa district and northern part of Chittoor district.

Penugonda under Vijayanagara: The earliest reference to the Vijayanagara rule over Penugonda found in an inscription dated 1352 AD at Kadiri in Anantapur district. The inscription refers to the reign of Virabukkanavodayalu ruling from Dwarasamudra and Penugonda.¹⁵ During the reign of Bukkaraya-I Penugonda was entrusted to his son Virupanna under the guidance of his able minister Anantarasa Chikkavodayar, who was responsible for building the fort of Penugonda.¹⁶ It is evident from an inscription that the Penugonda was the headquarters of the province from the beginning of the Vijayanagara Empire. Virupanna held the govern ship of Penugonda for a long time up to the death of Bukka Raya-I. After the death of Bukkaraya-I, Harihara-II and Devaraya-II governed the province from Penugonda.¹⁷

During the reign of Devaraya-II, his younger brother Pratapadevaraya acquired the rule of the Kingdom of Ghanadri Penugonda sima from his elder brother in 1424 AD.¹⁸ During the reign of Mallikarjuna, the Gajapatis of Orissa invaded the south in 1454 AD under Kumara Hamvira, son of Kapileswara Gajapati. King Mallikarjuna deputed one of his valiant generals, Saluva Narasimha, from Chandragiri to Penugonda sima to protect the Vijayanagara empire from Orian invasion.¹⁹ Saluva Narasimha protected the kingdom till the end of the reign of Mallikarjunaraya in 1465 AD. After Mallikarjuna, his cousin Virupaksha-II succeeded to the throne but he proved as worthless to protect the kingdom from the



internal and external invasions and Saluva Narasimha dethroned Virupaksha-II and seized the throne of Vijayanagara in 1486 AD. King Saluva Narasimha had two sons and entrusted the care of his two sons to his military general Tuluva Narasanayaka. But Saluva Narasimha's elder son died within a year, and the other son, Immadi Narasimha was made governor and sent to Penugonda. The inscription dated 1499 AD states that, Tuluva Narasanayaka was in charge of the affairs of Immadi Narasanayaka, the ruler of Penugonda.²⁰ Tuluva Vira Narasimha son of Tuluva Narasanayaka, killed the king Immadi Narasimha and captured the throne of Vijayanagara in 1503 AD, and found Tuluva family rule over Vijayanagara Empire.

The inscriptions of Achyutaraya were found in the Penugonda rajya from 1531 A.D. onwards. An inscription dated 1534 A.D. found at Bukkapatnam during the reign of Achyutadevaraya mentions a piece of land at Hosekera in Penugonda rajya was gifted to the gods and Brahmanas by Kondappa, on the orders of treasury officer the Bana darada Timmarusu.²¹

An inscription at Budili dated 1551 AD mentions about the rule of Sadasivaraya in Penugonda from 1543 - 1567 AD and it also refers to the reign of Tirumalaraya in 1551AD to 1558 AD.²² Chennappanayaka who was a trusted general of Tirumalaraya continued to serve the latter's son Srirangaraya and kept in charge of Penugonda fort. He renovated the fort at the instance of Tirumalaraya and also built a smaller fort in 1558 AD.²³ Till the battle of Tallikota in 1565 AD, Penugonda didn't figure prominently in the history of the Vijayanagara Empire. The death of Ramaraya obviously created utter confusion in the empire. Tirumala, one of the brothers of Ramaraya, and also one of the commanders of the army fled along with the royal entourage to the safer Penugonda hill fort. He took his abode in Penugonda and began reviving the glory of Vijayanagara empire.²⁴

Forts and Fortifications

Penugonda acted as the second capital to the Vijayanagara kingdom. It was also called as "Ganagiri" or "Ghanadri". The valor of the fort shows the splendid sculptural beauty and skilled workmanship of the medieval times. In the fort there are 25 temples, 12 tanks, 3 tombs, 2 basadis, 2 courtly structures available in the fort apart from these there are 4 gateways, 3 watch towers, mandapas and other structures were built. In the fort, Penugonda rajya was a well-developed headquarters of the Vijayanagara kingdom and the town studded with secular, military and religious buildings.²⁵ The Penugonda fort is a hill fort and it is more of defence in nature. The fort was built with cyclopean style with a large block of stone piled up and tightly fitted, without binding material. The fort is very imposing with the addition of barbican peep-holes; the enlargement of gateways, walls, bastions, towers and turrets appears that the fort was built in cyclopean style.²⁶

The fort is consisting of a moat, seven rampart walls, four gateways and a number of bastions at regular intervals of distance, besides few side entrance ways, and a large number of tanks. This fort can be approached from the northern gateway called Erramanchi Uruvakili.²⁷ At the western part of the wall, there are 6 bastions at regular intervals of distance and all bastions are in uniform rectangular shape which is a typical Vijayanagara style of construction.²⁸ The first bastion is in rectangular shape at the base but tapering towards square at the top. The second bastion is also in similar shape and design, measuring 12 meters width at the base and 10 meters at the top, with a frontal projection of 15 meters on either side. The third bastion is at a distance of about 35feets. On the top of the fourth bastion, the famous watch tower called Rama-buruzu (bastion) can be seen and it was in octagonal structure, built in an Indo-Sarcenic style. From this, watch tower full uses of entire Penugonda tower vowed. In the eastern side of the wall there are six bastions which are close to each other. The eastern side bastions rise to a



higher level than the western side bastion built from the ground. The shape of these bastions is same as on the western side. The style of construction is in typical cyclopean masonry. Near the fifth bastion comes the eastern gateway called 'Gorantla uruvakili'.²⁹ After the fifth bastion, there is a famous watch tower called Lakshmana-buruju (bastion) standing on the top of sixth bastion. Besides, sixth bastion comes Firangi-dinna and south of this wall there are 3 bastions and besides a large tank called bhogasamudram, and at the end of this wall there is southern gateway called cheruvu- uruvakili. On the western side, there is a hill about 3000 feet high and there is no continuity of the lower fortification wall at its foot on this side. The lower fortification wall consists of 3 gateways and 15 bastions all in uniform shape with similar design.³⁰

At present, the entrance of the fort is from the northern gateway i.e., Erramanchi Uruvakili. On the outer side of the gateway, there are two semi circular 'u' shaped watch towers with roof top built on the right-side watch tower a carved Gaja-Lakshmi sculpture is visible. After passing through this entrance, there is first court-yard of the gateway. On the eastern side it connects to the second entrance. Towards south, and to take right- turn i.e., west to enter the second courtyard it again is flanked by two huge rectangular watch towers which are crude in shape and design with a parapet wall on the top and Passing through this narrow entrance.³¹ The description of the northern gateway reveals that the plan of the gateways of Penugonda consists of one outer and two inner entrances, with intermediary courtyards. The right-angled turns towards right and left are a very common feature of all the architecture of Vijayanagara gateways. The eastern gateway of the fort which is called Gorantla-Uruvakili, appears to have derived its name as it faces the village Gorantla. The southern side gateway called cheruvu-uruvakili.³² The western side gateway is called Anjaneya-Uruvakili which is also called as Roddam-Uruvakili. The entire Penugonda lives in between these gateways in the town. The citadel of the fort lies on the hill on the west and it is climbed by stone path with a half a mile of distance. There are two pillared mandapas on the hill enclosed with 7 ramparts at different levels. After the forth gate the fifth gate flanked with two watch towers with aligning walls beginning with the citadel portion. Inside this citadel there is a well called khilla-bavi.

After the fifth gate, there is sixth gate and after this there comes seventh gate with a flight of internal steps to climb up, on the right of the seventh gate in the south there is a circular watch tower this citadel towards south there is a hill called the Narasimhaswamy-gutta. Besides, there is a small cleft of water called antarganga. After passing this entrance there is a temple dedicated to Narasinathaswamy.³³

Monuments in the Fort

Gaganmahal: Gagan Mahal is a monumental structure, it is situated in the heart of Penugonda town and it served as the king's palace. This palace stands as the symbol of the majesty and aristocracy of the royal times. While the basement of the mahal is in Hindu style the ground floor is in Islamic traditions. It is a fine example of Indo-Sarcenic style of architecture. The mahal faces east and is a pretty little palace with an upper storey and contains a watch tower. The palace consists of a two-storied pavilion divided into number of bays. A multi-storied staircase adjoins the pavilion at the north-east corner. At the southeast corner, there is a small single-storied structure. The lower level of the pavilion has five bays in uneven dimensions. The larger bays are positioned on the central aisle, and smaller bays arranged on both sides and the three bays on the eastern front side are engaged into the walls. On the western side of the palace two rows of bays are enclosed with heavy walls with doorways and windows. On the quite Opposite of the Gagana-mahal, there is a small room called Mint house. The walls of the mint house are raised from the ground level and are crowned with stepped pyramidal arched tower. It is very similar to the tower of Gagana-Mahal and it might have been used for minting coins of the period.



Water sources: The fort of Penugonda is well provided with several water resources by means of tanks, wells etc., and both outside and inside of the fort. A tank called Bhoga-samudramu adjoining the south wall of the fort and to its west there is Tiruvengalanathuni-cheruvu. Within the fort, there are two big wells called Posalakkeri and Palakkeri. Apart from these two big wells, there are about twelve other wells like Peddanagula-bavi and Chinnanagula-bavi near the foot of the lower fort wall, Eguvanagula-bavi, Velupala-bavi outside the fort wall, Chakkera-bavi near the Babayyadargah and Bhairannakunta on the top of Narasimhaswamy gutta to structures in the fort.³⁴

Bhogasamudram: Bhogasamudram is a water tank built by Singaya Bhatta on the orders of Veerapratapa in 1388 AD. Singayabhatta was also called Dasavidyachakravarti Jalasutradari because he brought water from Penna river to Penugonda through a channel to settle water crisis in Penugonda. The tank is situated on the southern side of the fort, adjacent to the fort wall, which acted as water storage as well as protection to the fort. The water is supplied to the town through a channel, first to the Palvakkera well from there to the Pasuravakkera well and the excess water is fed to the agarta constructed on the northern side of the fort. This channel system was constructed under the supervision of Singayabhatta. The people of Penugonda believed that the water from the Bhogasamudram tank is more hygienic, as the water undergoes natural purification system. Besides Bhogasamudram tank there is a snanaghatta [a bathing ghat]. It is believed that the royal queens used to bath from this snanaghatta.³⁵

Apart from this, there are a good number of other monuments are in the fort. The **Ramaburuju** is one of the most interesting monuments. It is a watch tower constructed in the north-western side of the fort which faces towards Roddam. From this tower, Roddam, Kondapuram, Konapuram, and Erramanchi are clearly visible. It was built in Indo-saracenic style and it is about 16 feet height with two stories of which the lower one has five windows and the upper one has four windows. In the eastern side of the fort near the eastern gate there is one Lakshmana buruju; it was also an important tower built to watch the eastern side of the fort, it is raised to a height of around 30' feet. In the western side of the fort, there is another tower called Gummatalu adjacent to Ramaburuju. It is built at 30 feet height from the ground level. From these watch towers Roddam, Kogira and Turakalapatnam villages are clearly visible.

Gymnastic Hall: To the left of the eastern entrance there is one underground room. This room might have played with different Gymnasts of the capital to have had regular practice at this place during the period of Vijayanagara. Though there are no Gymnastic evidences, but the room with heap of shed, parallel bars and rods horizontal and vertical clearly show that this place was regularly used by Gymnasts for practice.³⁶

Kalchetti: Towards the western edge of the hill there is a small mound over which is a rectangular structure called as Kalchetti, a store place of Grains. It is said that it was constructed by a Murarirao in 18th century A.D. to store the grains given by the subordinates. The style of the structure is in Indo-Saracenic, the lower section of the structure consists of a plain wall with arched entrances on all the sides, over this, there is a rectangular slab supported by stone hooks at equal intervals, above there is a circular bowl structure, in which the grains were supposed to be poured.³⁷ Towards the south-eastern side of the Fort, there is a tower called Firangidinne the main purpose of it was to keep Firangi in protection. This is about 30 feet height.

Khilla: The Khilla is a tower with two storied building on the top of the hill acted both as watch tower and also as living place. The ground floor consists of five rooms and first floor has four rooms and on



the first floor there is a watch tower with five windows. Nearly one can see fifteen to twenty kms distance surrounding Penugonda area from this water tower. The tower has an underground passage connects Gagana-mahal situated in the town. But now underground passage is blocked by State Archaeological Department.³⁸

Babayya Darga: Babayya Darga is situated on the outskirts of Penugonda town. The darga was originally a Siva temple. Hindu in architecture surrounded by a number of other remains of Hindu shrines and mandapas. The sculptural motifs on pillars, depicting the story of Siva and other Hindu gods, the architectural style of the pillars, terraces, walls, the steps and the Gajalakshmi panel on the upper door testify the fact that the present darga was once a Siva temple. There was an inscription on Penugonda belonging to the reign of Venkata-II which records the restoration of certain villages originally granted by Veeranasimha to the darga of Muhammadan saint, Babanatha. The Darga was treated with great veneration for its astrological triumphs. The renewal of the grant was necessitated by the loss of the original documents when Penugonda seized by the chiefs of the Immadi family. There is an inscription dated 1538 AD which says that king Venkatadevaraya granted the villages for the maintenance of Darga. Even today, the darga enjoying the fruits of those nine villages.

The Babaiah darga was in a rectangular shape built in Indo-sarcenic style with fair Vijayanagara pillared mandapas, doorways etc., Saint Babayya's tomb is erected in a plain building surmounted with Saracenic screens. It consists of four parts; Jalkadarvaja, Nagarkana, Masjid and Tomb with four entrances north, south, east and west covered with a compound wall.³⁹

Jamia Masjid: Jamia Masjid is situated in the heart of Penugonda in between Siva temples. An inscription dated 1668 AD the central niche of the Jamia masjid was built by Abdul Hassan during the rule of Ali Adilshah for propagation of Islam faith in this region. The facade of the mosque was lavishly decorated with stucco work and it resembles the Bhukkarai Masjid and the Rangin masjid in Bijapur.

Sherkhan mosque is another mosque situated towards the east of Penugonda. An inscription described in Arabic in the hall of the mosque, records the construction of mosque by Sherkhan during the reign of Tippu Sultan.⁴⁰ There is an another inscription available on the slab built into the floor of the Sherkhan mosque, belonging to the time of Sadasivaraya in 1565 AD., refers to a grant given by Mahamandalesvara Ramarajayyadeva Maharaja, son of Tirumalaraju and grandson of Araviti Ramaraju to the god Somesvara, the protector of Penugonda fort and the goddess Kamakshi. The appearance of the structure is very much resembling Jamia Masjid.⁴¹ Divanikhana is situated to the west of Babayya darga; it was constructed by Mastanshah, a local soldier in the armies of Tippu sultan, but the pillars and dvajasthambas in front of the building look like a Hindu temple.

Divanikhana might have played a very important role as a religious court among the Muslim heads of South India. The head of the darga maintained peace and solidarity among the various Islamic groups such as Jalai, Banuna, Pahatabatrafayi. He had all the powers, if any of the religious beliefs had gone wrong in maintaining peace and disciplin in the community. The wrong doers were punished and sometimes were expelled from the Islamic organisation.⁴²

Octagonal Watch tower was built on the highest bastion in the North West of Penugonda. The tower consists of a central octagon containing a spiral staircase that leads to the top of the tower. The entrance is built on the southern side. The tower rises above the roof as a central circular with arched windows. On the top of the wall there are rafter-like projections carrying the continuous eave moulding.⁴³



2. Gutti Fort

History of the fort: Gutti fort is located in Gutti and it is the headquarters of a taluk in Anantapur district and lies on Madras –Mumbai railway line and situated about 50kms away from Anantapur town. The Gutti fort served the Vijayanagara Empire since 1336 AD and provided base for its expansion in the early years. It served as a nelevidu (camping place) for Harihara-I who ruled over Sindavadi with its capital at Adavani (present modern Adoni in Kurnool district). It is also described as “navel to the wheel of sovereignty”, and it guarded the western frontiers of Vijayanagara kingdom and prevented Hoyasala incursions. Bukka-I actually stayed at Gutti till his capture of Penugonda from the Hoyasalas in AD 1347.

During the regime of Srikrishnadevaraya, Gutti sima enjoyed the status of a province. Saluva Govindaraja, the brother of Saluva Timma, the prime minister of Srikrishnadevara was its governor. An inscription of Srikrishnaderaya dated 1513 AD found in Tadipatri states that Saluva Govindaraya granted a gift of land to one of his nayankaras, Ramadeva of Tadipatri, for conducting offerings.⁴⁴ Though it is not specifically stated in the record that he was the governor, the fact is indicated by the statement that he made certain grants of the villages in Gutti-sima. Earlier in the reign of Vira Narasimha, Saluva Timma himself stated to have received this rajya as nayankara from the king.

It again appears in a civil strike that took place in between the two factions led by the Salakaraju china Thirumala, brother-in-law of Achyutadevaraya who espoused the claim of his nephew Venkata-I the infant son of Achyuta. Aliya Ramaraya the son in law of SriKrishnadevaraya, championed the cause of Sadasivaraya to the throne of Vijayanagara Empire. After a brief struggle, Ramaraya succeeded in securing the release of Sadasivaraya from the captivity in the fort of Gutti and coronated him as the ruler, and he himself acted as defacto authority. During the time of Sadasivaraya, a certain Varadarajula Chinna Vengalayyadeva maharaja was holding the position of nayankara of Gutti fort by Koneti Rangaraju.

During Aravidu Dynasty, Gutti sima was targeted by the neighbouring Bahamani sultans, Adil shahis of Bijapur and the Qutb shahis of Golkonda General Amin Ul Mulk conquered the fort for the first time during Venkatapatiraya-II but, it was re captured by the Vijayanagara rulers. Again, Gutti fort was occupied by Mir jumla during the time of Sri Ranga. Mir jumla appointed mir Mohammad as in charge of Gutti fort and Gutti became a part of Qutb shahi of Golkonda till 1687 AD, but it was occupied by the Moghuls and was ruled by general Ghiyasuddin Khan, governor of Adoni. (Then came the authority of the Mughals for a short period, during which, the Marathas under the leadership of Morarirao, established themselves at Gutti in 1754 AD. During the time of Morarirao, Hyder Ali besieged Gutti and captured it. With the death of Tippu Sultan in 1799 AD, the territories of Gutti, passed into the hands of the Nizams of Hyderabad.⁴⁵ In 1754 AD Morari Rao Ghorpade was appointed as a ruler of Gutti sima and he conducted several repairs to strengthen the fort and he ruled for 20 years. In 1776 AD the Carnatac chief Hyder Ali captured the Gutti fort. Hyder Ali was followed by his son Tippu sultan who continued to rule Gutti rajya till the battle of Seringpatam in 1799 AD. The Col Bowser conquered Guttirajya and submitted it to the Nizam of Hyderabad and later on it was ceded to the British East India Company.

The fort of Gutti is situated on a high rough cluster of steep and bare rocky hills on the east, north and south, connecting by lower spurs. It measures 7 miles in circumference and rises to 1700 ft from the surrounding ground level. The fort is located at 680 meters high from the sea level and 300 meters high from the ground level. The hills are connected by a strong rampart wall, and interspersed with



more than 100 bastions at regular intervals of distance all along and 14 gate ways are one side to the other. There are also a number of watch towers flanking the gate way and sally ports called “diddi vakillu.” For the strong defence, Gutti fort comprises 7 rampart walls, one within the other, encircling the several peaks of the hill, thus giving the shape of a conch or spiral to the fort. Another important feature of Gutti fort with a wide walks inside the ramparts pierced with loop holes in different tiers and sloping down on the exterior. On the other hand, bastions are protected by hooded parapets with a downward slope. Inside the fort, there are many structures stables for horses, elephants, kitchen, jail, treasury, Ranigamahal, the citadel.

Gateways: Passing through the fort, one can notice the continuation of the hill on the left, and the wall on the right. Below the adjoining hill on the left, runs another wall with four bastions in it, near the first gateway there is a secret passage with 1.10 meters width and 1.45 meters high. All these bastions are built in cyclopean masonry, with no traces of lime mortar or lime pointing. On the way to the third gateway, in the hill on the left side is a small cleft called Gutti bilam, having perennial water sources to the fort. Facing it on the right is an octagonal bastion with eight openings and a number of arched merlons. Before the third gate which faces south there is a barbican. After this comes the third gateway, the facade of which is decorated with floral patterns in stucco; with a vaulted arch and pierced with loop holes. Passing through towards right i.e., south, comes the fourth gate. On the way to it are vault shaped sentry boxes five in number with one porthole in each. After this, the path turns leftwards i.e., north. The fourth gateway which faces south has on the right side the high rock, while on the left is the wall. Its front facade shows typical Islamic decorative treatment, in plaster, with low platforms inside with guard rooms. On entering this, which has no ceiling above, is seen the high rock on the right, i.e., east, in which is a small arched mandapa. Within it are two carved images of Ganesa and Mahisuramardani, engraved on the rock boulder.⁴⁶ The fifth gate, like second gateway is built in Hindu style. It is entered through a low gateway flanked by pilasters built into the door-jamb. Inside are two platforms with a covered ceiling above and four pillars in each, supporting the ceiling. The entrance door-jamb has the typical Vijayanagara motif of Ganga and Yamuna on either side. The pillars in the platform show two different varieties. Outside of this gateway, there is another sentry box. The sixth Gateway which again faces the south is also called a Kodiguddu bavi gate. Flanked by two aligning walls on either side, it is devoid of ceiling above. On the right side of it, there is a watch tower with a parapet of arches having architectural designs. Inside this gate, there is an eggshaped well called Kodiguddu bavi. The seventh gate has two watch towers on either side. There are two guard rooms inside of it with high platforms. After passing through it there is a wall on the left with four bastions. The second bastion is 8 meters high having a Light House. The third is enclosed all round. On the way there is a well called Peddabavi, about 150 meters in diameter; it is the largest of all the wells in the fort.⁴⁷ Few yards away from the seventh gate, there is eight gate, facing northern side flanked by watch towers. From here, the path turns towards right and leads to the ninth gate. There is a huge level space inside, with several Hindu pillars lying scattered. In this area on the south, is an oblong hall with a vaulted ceiling above called Ranigari Mahal. In the interior, it has fine paintings on the ceiling in several colors as black, orange, red and blue, having floral and foliage patterns. Among them, the lotus is most outstanding. The walls of either side have arched bays in each. Behind it on the south-east is a huge circular bastion with a floral design below. From this the wall runs towards east, leading to the tenth Gate which faces north in the level space of the eleventh gate, are seen traces of a ruined palace complex. It is divided into five compartments with bases of pillars seen on the floor. To its west is the magazine. On the left is a flight of steps leading to the twelfth gate. Then comes the fourteenth gate from where can be reached the summit of the fort. Here lies the famous seat of Morari Rao, a Maratha ruler of Gutti fort. It is a huge



circular pavilion, having a circumference of 25 meters and a height of 4.40 meters. It is ascended by a flight of steps on either side.

Water source: There are a number of reservoirs made by digging holes in the rocks on the hill fort to collect and store the rain water. There are nearly 108 wells dug inside the fort, including 101 fresh water wells.⁴⁸ Sufficient care is taken to provide water to the garrison of the fort by means of several springs with perennial supply of water. There are wells dug within the level space available at every gate for protection as well as assuring water supply available at every level of the fort. This is because of the irregular nature of the fort.

3. Rayadurgam Fort

History of the fort: Rayadurgam fort is a hill fort located 100 kms away from Anantapur town. This fort played an important role during the Vijayanagara Empire. It was a stronghold of palegars - who were very turbulent during the Vijayanagara rule. The Vijayanagara emperor appointed an officer to get rid of Palegars and he ruled the place himself and thus the hill was popularly called Bhupatirayakonda. After the defeat of Vijayanagara forces in the battle of Rakshasa Tangadi, once again the palegars captured Rayadurga fort. And again the fort was captured by Konetinayaka, a vijayanagara general. But this fort was fallen in the hands of Tippu Sultan and merged with his Gutty province.⁴⁹ The hill fort is said to have been built by Lunganayaka. The fort covers an area of about 2 acres, with a gateway are noticed in the northern outskirts of the village. Down below the hill, there are four caves with small stone doors with carvings of Siddhas. There are four bastions in the fort all are in dilapidated condition. There are two gateways at the two corner points of the fort with furnished Gopuras (towers) dotted over with guard houses on either side. There are many temples in the fort dedicated to Gods and Goddesses; Narasimhaswamy, Hanuman, Ellamma, Prasanna Venkateswara swami, Venugopalaswami, Jambukeswaraswami, Veerabhadraswami and Kanyakaparameswari. There formed beautifully carved Lord Ganesha with ten shoulders popularly known as Dasabhuja Ganapathi, in a monolithic stone reflecting the art of shilpakala of that period.

4. Madakasira Fort

History of fort: Madakasira fort is located on a hill, it is also called Simhagiri. There are caves around the fort and the caves have historic structure along with hill top like a lion face (Singemoothi). The fort has seven gates to reach the Simhagiri hill. The fort is in the lion face structure and it can only be seen at Madakasira of Vijayanagara Empire. The palegars of Madakasira supported Harihara Raya-I and Bukka Raya-I the founders of Vijayanagara Empire to defeat Malik Kapoor in 1336 AD. The fort is said to have been constructed five centuries ago and the structure of Rani Mahal, horse shed, gym and food storage can be seen. Lord Sri Ramalingeswara Swami temple is closer to the hill top with two water ponds.

All the structures of the fort are built with granite stones brought from the adjacent hills. In addition, the fort has lots of cave formation between rocks. Lord Venkateswaraswamy temple was closer to the south gate of the fort. Murari Rao had constructed attractive structures of Singe-Moothi and Hinduraya well and other temples on the fort.⁵⁰ On the conquest of the empire by the Bijapur Sultans, the families were deprived of their ancient possessions and given Ratnagiri and Madakasira in exchange. The grant was several times resumed and again restored by the Muhammadans. In 1741 AD Morari Rao reduced the place and made the palegar to pay tribute. His father, Siddoji Rao, often known by his title of Hindu Rao, is said to be buried in the tomb.⁵¹



The Nijam ulk gifted Gooty and Madaksira forts to Maratha ruler Hindu Rao for his co-operation in war with Moguls in 1743.⁵² In 1762 Murari Rao assisted the paelegar of Chikballapur against Haidar Ali and in revenge Hyder Ali captured Madakasira and other parts of the Maratha strongholds. The place became untenable and the commander failed to protect the fort and surrendered to Hyder with a promise that the lives of his men should be spared. In the first time,⁵³ Murari Rao and his solders succeeded to defeat Hyder alis.⁵⁴ In the second attempt, this palace fell into the hands of Haidar Ali, and remained under Mysore till the death of Tippu Sultan in 1799.⁵⁵

To sum up, the medieval Indian rulers realized the importance of forts and fortification. The rulers raised many forts around the important cities and the capital. It is evident that good number of forts were built and spread throughout the different parts of Andhra. The institution of fort during the period of Vijayanagara Empire attained its heyday. During this period, the importance of forts as a politico-military institution came to be realized on a wider scale. Hence, the large number of villages and towns in Rayalaseema region came to be fortified.

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