



SIRA -GROUND FORT

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ABSTRACT

The forts were built as a defense mechanism to keep the enemy away. These forts were standing as proof of a glorious past and excellent craftsmanship. Tumkur is a home to numerous hill forts and land forts (Mahidurga). Some of the most notable forts of Tumkur district are Madhugiri fort, Nidugallu Fort, Midigeshi fort, Chennarayanadurga fort, Koratagere fort (Hill forts) and Hagalawadi fort, kodagadala fort and Sira fort (Ground forts/ Neladurga). In the History of Tumkur district, Sira fort holds a proud place and is one of those few forts are not built on a hill top.

KEYWORDS: Hill top, Kingship, Cannons, Bastions, Battlements, Watchtowers, guardrail, garrison.

INTRODUCTION :

When building forts, location selection was given more importance. Forts that were not early won by the forces were built on steep hills, on the banks of the river, in the middle of the forest. It is impossible to imagine a princely state without a fort. All the forts built in the hills, rivers and forests are impenetrable fortifications. The mountain range, the summit of the peaks, the deep valley, the hills, the enemy's invincibility. History testifies to the defense of the course. But state and kingship were not confined to these impoverished areas. If you look at it, the **hilltops** also include a castle. It is the duty of every leader/ruler of the state to protect his subjects. So the kings who responded to the people's woes began to build barriers to the defense system and not just the states. These high barriers, which began to be protected from thieves, enemies and wild animals, were built to suit the changing political needs and circumstances. By the beginning of the middle ages, the changes in war technology had replaced the sword and shield cannons. They began to build fortresses that could withstand the blow of these cannons and defend the state of resistance. In the Tumkur district, the ridges of the hills, beginning from Nidugal in the north to Hulyurudurga in the south, are ideal for building forts. So a lot of hillocks were built in the district not only the Neladurga's but also Giridurgas {Hill forts} have witnessed the historical events of the district. Although there is no intrinsic defense system, proper location of guard wall, bastions, battlements, trench, wall height, thickness, guardrail, pavilion, watchtowers, gun-slits, granary, water supply, the Neladurga's, which relied on a military garrison to fight countless enemy forces, have historical significance. Chikkanayakana halli fort, sira fort, kandikere, kodagadala, turuvekere and hagalawadi fort are the major ground forts built in the district.

OBJECTIVES:

- To raise awareness about preserving historical monuments
- Forts are the reflection of culture of our country and are being destroyed. so we are in urgent need of take up the responsibility to protest them

- At the same time there is a need to educate the people to understand the purpose behind the construction of forts
- These forts contribute to tourism and economic development of the region.

METHODS:

A description was made on the basis of these studies,

- The entire study is mainly based on Field work
- With reference to the present topic primary and secondary data have been collected and studied analytically.
- For collecting further information related to the topic, field visit and photographs have been taken.

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Discussion:

Sira is a major taluk hub of the Tumkur district, which lies on the national highway 4, way to Bangalore- pune 50kms from the district centers is a plain area. The city and fortress of Sira is the most important warfare city of south India, was founded by kasturi Rangappanayaka, a descendant of Harathi Thippannayakas, vassals of the Vijayanagara Empire.

The History of Sira, dates back to the middle ages, was ruled by Gangas, Rastrakutas, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Nolambas, Pallavas, Cholas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar rulers, Adilshahis, Sultans of Bijapur, Mughals, Maratas and Mysore rulers. The province of Sira was under the command of Rangappanayaka, who was a patron of Ratnagiri. When the Ratnagiri Rangappanayaka came to hunt for the Sira Forest belonged to him, he stayed there to refresh himself. Rejoicing in nature, he began to build a fort¹. The fort is still known as the Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka fort. Meanwhile, the construction of the fort was hampered by the attacks of Adilshahi's of Bijapur. Adilshah, who won the Sira, made Mallik Rihan the subordinate of Sira. In his time, the town of Sira was very splendid and then Bijapur and its suburbs fell under the occupation of the Mughals and fell to the Mughals that included the Sira area. Qasim khan was appointed as subedhar. The Sira fort which was incomplete during the reign of Rangappa Nayaka, was completed by Qasim khan. Later on Haider, Tippu, the Maratas, the British captured the Sira fort. Sira finally fell into the hands of the Mysore Wodeyar Kingdom.

Features of Sira Fort:

The hill towers built in Tumkur district are fairly dilapidated and defenseless. Similarly, the land dungeons are a complete waste to the non-existent. But the fort in Sira is very strong and well kept.

The Sira fort is a tall, square tiled floor in a plain. The imposing fortifications are built on top of huge lakes, between the Two lakes to form a huge rock in nature. It is difficult to say for sure when the Sira fort was fully constructed. In the field work it was found that the fort has been rejuvenated time to time, with basic structure. This can be seen, especially at the manual wall level. While the south and southeastern parts of the fort are covered by a large lake, the northern and northwestern part of the fort is covered by the lakes. The town has grown to the west and southwest. The castle, which include the city, is surrounded by three quarters of the lakes water, which looks like a complex of water fort and Ground fort (combination of Neladurga and Jaladurga).

As noted in mackenzie's record², the Sira fort has a double walled wall but today the wall of the mud fort that was built around the town is completely destroyed and its ruins are nowhere to be seen. It is said that this mud fort was built by mallik rihan in the mid of 17th Century³. according to the mackenzie document, there are four entrances to the city, two to the west and one to the and one to the north and south⁴. But today all these gates have been destroyed. Inside the mud fort is the stone fortress of Rangappanayaka which is very strong. The fort is built using massive stones in the center of the mud fort that surrounds the town. The fort is square, 1008 feet in the east, south and 1094 feet in the north. It is 1240 feet long in the north, south, east and west. There is a 40 feet deep ditch around the stone castle. The stone castle is built on a vast plain of 26 acres, including a moat. The depth and area of the canon are increased in front of the entrance and the trench is built of stone and mortar.

In the west, the natural rock is drilled and ditched a stone wall has been built on both sides to prevent the deep trench from collapsing. A tunnel is built on the southeast side of the lake to drain the water from the large lake next to the fort. The water flowing through the canal from a large lake filled the deep canyon and more water was flowing in to the northern lake. This is a testament to the unique technicality and foresight of the rulers. Numerous trees around the canyon, rows of tomatoes adjacent to the moat had grown to produce thorny vine and succulents. These grew and spread in to the canyons⁵. It was impossible for the enemy to easily reach the fortress wall, because such vines and thorny plants were planted between the main wall and the moat.

The fort wall is built using small and medium sized stones. The stones are rectangular in shape and the outline of the stone is polished. The stucco is used for the wall stone. The wall of the fort is about 20 feet height and 7 feet thick. Another interesting feature of the fort is that the wall of the mansion is built using brick and mortar. This is because of the sloping wall prevents the enemy from firing canon or sharp weapons into the fort.

The entrance to the fort is to the north. The castle enclosure must be accessed through three gates. These gates are in the “Z” design. The first entrance is in completely ruined today. According to a map prepared by mackenzie, the first entrance to the north was built from the moat inside. At the time of the hijacking, the bridge over which the trench had been crossed was smashed and the gate was closed. The second entrance was called the “Diddibagilu”. Even this door is in complete ruin today. The third door is well maintained and the main door is 12 feet height, 8 feet wide and the left door is 8 feet height and 4 feet wide. There is a spiral ornamental shaped carving on the stone doorway. The rectangular space on the left and right sides of the door is built on a stone base. The plinth is comprised of pillars. The structure is 6 feet high and carved in the upper part of the sculptures of Anjaneya, Ganapathi, Vrishabha, Garuda and yali. The base of these pillars is huge and as simple faculties built in front of gates, the entrance to the fort is arranged for enemies not to see three of the entrance are built to the north, with a defensive system to control the enemy. In addition to these gates, there is another gate in the center of the south wall, which is still standing 5 feet high and 3 feet wide, the gateway provides access to spacious outer courtyard of 120 feet long, 368 feet between the castle wall and the moat.

The protruding towers around the fort created a defensive wall and a central path to the moat. Inside the canyon, there is a modest high stone wall built near the entrance which is 20 feet high. In the four corners of the fort’s canyons are small circular bastions. A doorway is built in the southeast and southwest bastions. These doors may have been built covertly to prevent enemy attacks or escape. The square is surrounded by recessed rectangular bastions in the fort, which are wider than the other bastions in the southeast, northeast and southwest corner. On the east and west side of the castle is a small guarded spot. These bastions have grenade’s. the groves are small on the inside and wide on the outside. The four corners of the fort have seven gorges each, while the other 14 bastions have 3 gorges. The bastions are 50 feet long and 22 feet wide. The bastions in the corner are better than the rest of all bastions.

The bastions in the corner are taller than the rest of the bastions and they have stairs. The two bastions on either side of the door tended to block enemy troops entering through the door. The top of these bastions, which play a great role in preserving the fort, were built using brick and mortar. A large number of soldiers were stationed on the bastions, which facilitated the preservation of the fort, with the sloping path leading up to the fort’s Wall on both sides of north entrance soldier’s carry the ammunition. The top of the fort is about 10 feet wide, allowing the soldiers to guard around the fort. This route is connected to each of the bastions. A 5 feet high manual wall is built on top of the castle wall. It was built using brick and mortar and does not look like other forts. These have gun slits. The castle is made up of wide canopies, daggers and some parts. When the enemy’s bullet hits the slopes of the bastions, the fort is built to slip back into the bullet. Since this technique is mostly used by Haider and Tippu, these may have been built during his time.

The buildings inside the fortress have been destroyed, unrecognizable. Buildings were destroyed, buried in mud and mounds were created. The foundations of some buildings are visible.

Excavations at this site will give you full information. entering the castle enclosure from the north entrance leads to the palace. It is known that the palace was made up of only two walls of stone and mud. To the south and west of the palace are the officer's lodgings, the circular granaries in the south and the palace houses to the west as the castle wall. mackenzie records that they were all destroyed by 1801. The rest of the castle is built using brick and mortar and on the south side of the fort are the tombs of two European officers.

There is a two round fortress in Sira and a mud fort is built around an area of 196 acres. The stone fort dates back to Rangappanayaka and covers an area of 26 acres. While stone walls, gateways, bastions and trenches are the artifacts of the patriarchs, the structure on the fortified wall bastions have involved and changed over time, depending on military operations. The two bastions at the north entrance are taller than the rest. There is a large number of gun holes, sloping paths and wide gaping holes in castle's manual walls. So it is understood that the northern part was strategic in terms of protection in the entire fort.

The Sira fort was an important region of south India, both politically and militarily with its historical background with its magnificent stone structure. But it is only regrettable that the ground has reached a dilapidated condition today. The revival of the fort has begun with the era of the preservation of heritage. When I was in the field work, most of the fort was being repaired.

FOOT NOTES:

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