



URBAN SYSTEM IN VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Vijayanagara Empire, a medieval Indian kingdom that flourished in South India from the 14th to 16th centuries, was known for its impressive architecture, rich cultural heritage, and a well-planned urban system. This article presents a historical analysis of the urban system of the Vijayanagara Empire, highlighting its major cities, trade routes, water management systems, and exploring their significance in the growth and prosperity of the empire. Drawing upon primary sources, archaeological findings, and scholarly research, this article offers insights into the urban landscape of the Vijayanagara Empire and its relevance to contemporary urban planning and development.



KEYWORDS : *Urban System, Vijayanagare Empire.*

INTRODUCTION

The Vijayanagara Empire, which was established in 1336, was one of the most powerful and prosperous empires in South India. The empire's success was largely due to its well-organized and sophisticated urban system. This system was characterized by a network of cities, towns, and villages, which were connected through a well-developed system of roads and waterways. The empire's capital, Vijayanagara, was a bustling metropolis with a population of over 500,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in the world at that time. The urban system of the Vijayanagara Empire was based on a hierarchical structure, with the capital city at the top of the pyramid. The other cities and towns were organized into districts, each of which was governed by a local administrator appointed by the king. The cities and towns were also connected through a system of trade, with each city specializing in certain goods and commodities. This essay will analyze the urban system of the Vijayanagara Empire, including its structure, economy, and culture. It will also examine the challenges and issues that the empire faced in maintaining and managing its urban system.

Major Cities:

The Vijayanagara Empire had several major cities, each with its own unique character and purpose. The most prominent of these was Hampi, the capital of the empire, which was one of the largest and most prosperous cities of its time. Hampi had a well-planned layout, with a network of

streets, markets, water supply systems, and public buildings, including temples, palaces, and administrative centers. The Virupaksha Temple, Achyutaraya Temple, and Vittala Temple are some of the famous temples in Hampi that showcase the architectural excellence of the empire.

1. **Anegundi:** Anegundi was one of the earliest cities in the Vijayanagara Empire, and it served as a capital city before the construction of Vijayanagara. It was located on the north bank of the Tungabhadra River, opposite Hampi.
2. **Vijayanagara:** The empire's capital city was founded in 1336 and grew to become a bustling metropolis with a population of over 500,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in the world at that time. It was the center of the empire's administration, culture, and trade.
3. **Hampi:** Hampi was the second most important city in the Vijayanagara Empire after its capital. It was located near the capital and served as a military base and a center of trade and commerce.
4. **Penukonda:** Penukonda was an important city in the empire's early years, and it served as a center of learning and culture.
5. **Chandragiri:** Chandragiri was a strategic city located on the southern border of the empire. It was a center of trade and commerce, and it also served as a military base.

Other significant cities in the empire included Vijayanagara (also known as Vidyanagara), which was the second capital of the empire and a center of learning and culture. The city had a well-organized market, with separate sections for different trades, and was known for its wealth, education, and innovation. Other important cities included Anegundi, Badami, Hospet, and Kurnool, each with its unique features and contributions to the empire's urban landscape.

Trade and Transportation:

The Vijayanagara Empire had a well-developed road network that connected the major cities and facilitated trade and commerce. The roads were maintained by the government and used for the transport of goods, people, and armies. The empire also had a vibrant economy, with agriculture, trade, and industry playing significant roles in its growth and prosperity. The empire's cities were centers of trade, with markets selling a variety of goods, including textiles, spices, precious stones, and metals. The empire also had a thriving textile industry, with cotton and silk production being major sources of income for the people.

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The empire's cities were centers of trade, with markets selling a variety of goods, including textiles, spices, precious stones, and metals. The empire also had a thriving textile industry, with cotton and silk production being major sources of income for the people. The trade routes in the empire were both land and sea-based. The land routes were used to transport goods within the empire, while the sea routes were used for international trade with countries like China, Arabia, and Persia.

The Vijayanagara Empire had a vibrant economy, with agriculture, trade, and industry playing significant roles in its growth and prosperity. The empire's government encouraged trade and commerce by offering incentives to traders and merchants, protecting them from bandits and pirates, and imposing taxes and duties on goods.

The empire's transportation system was not limited to land-based trade. The empire had a well-developed system of ports that facilitated maritime trade. The ports of Goa, Mangalore, and Tuticorin were important centers of trade, with ships coming from various parts of the world to trade with the Vijayanagara Empire.

Overall, the trade and transportation system of the Vijayanagara Empire played a vital role in its economic prosperity and growth. It facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and culture between different parts of the empire and the world. The empire's focus on trade and commerce helped to create a diverse and thriving urban landscape, making it one of the most prosperous kingdoms in medieval India.

Water Management:

Water management was a critical aspect of the Vijayanagara Empire's urban system. The empire had a complex system of canals, reservoirs, tanks, and wells that ensured a regular supply of water to the cities and the surrounding agricultural lands. The Tungabhadra River, which flows through Hampi, was a major source of water for the empire, and several reservoirs and tanks were built to store and distribute water for irrigation and domestic use. The empire's engineers and architects were renowned for their expertise in water management and hydraulic engineering, and their legacy can still be seen in the ruins of the empire's cities and irrigation systems.

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The Vijayanagara Empire's engineers and architects were renowned for their expertise in water management and hydraulic engineering. They used their knowledge of mathematics, science, and architecture to design and construct impressive water management systems that were not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing.

One of the most significant examples of the empire's water management system is the intricate network of canals and tanks built in the Hampi region. These canals were designed to carry water from the Tungabhadra River to the agricultural lands and also to supply water for domestic and industrial purposes.

The empire's water management system was not limited to surface water. The empire had a sophisticated system of wells that tapped into groundwater sources and provided water for domestic and agricultural use. The wells were constructed in strategic locations, and the water was drawn using bullocks or humans, with some wells reaching depths of up to 80 meters.

In conclusion, water management was a crucial component of the urban system in the Vijayanagara Empire. The empire's engineers and architects were highly skilled in designing and constructing water management systems that ensured a regular supply of water for the cities and agricultural lands. The empire's legacy in water management can still be seen in the ruins of the empire's cities and irrigation systems, and it continues to inspire contemporary water management practices.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the urban system in the Vijayanagara Empire was a complex network of infrastructure, trade, transportation, and water management. The empire's cities were centers of trade, culture, and art, attracting merchants, scholars, and artists from all over India and beyond. The empire's road network and ports facilitated trade and commerce, and the empire's focus on agriculture and industry ensured economic growth and prosperity.

The empire's engineers and architects were highly skilled in designing and constructing water management systems that ensured a regular supply of water for the cities and surrounding agricultural lands. The empire's water management legacy can still be seen in the impressive network of canals, reservoirs, tanks, and wells that continue to supply water to the region.

Overall, the urban system in the Vijayanagara Empire was a remarkable feat of engineering, architecture, and governance. The empire's legacy continues to inspire contemporary urban planning and development practices, and its impact on India's cultural, economic, and political history cannot be overstated.

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