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NEWSLETTER

KAKATIYA TOWNS, TEMPLES AND TANKS AS LANDSCAPES

A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Prof. G.S.V. Suryanarayana Murthy



Fig. 1 : Spread of the Kakatiya kingdom

(Source : *Kakatiya Heritage: A Medieval Kingdom of South India*, 2020, Dr. M. Pandu Ranga Rao (ed.)

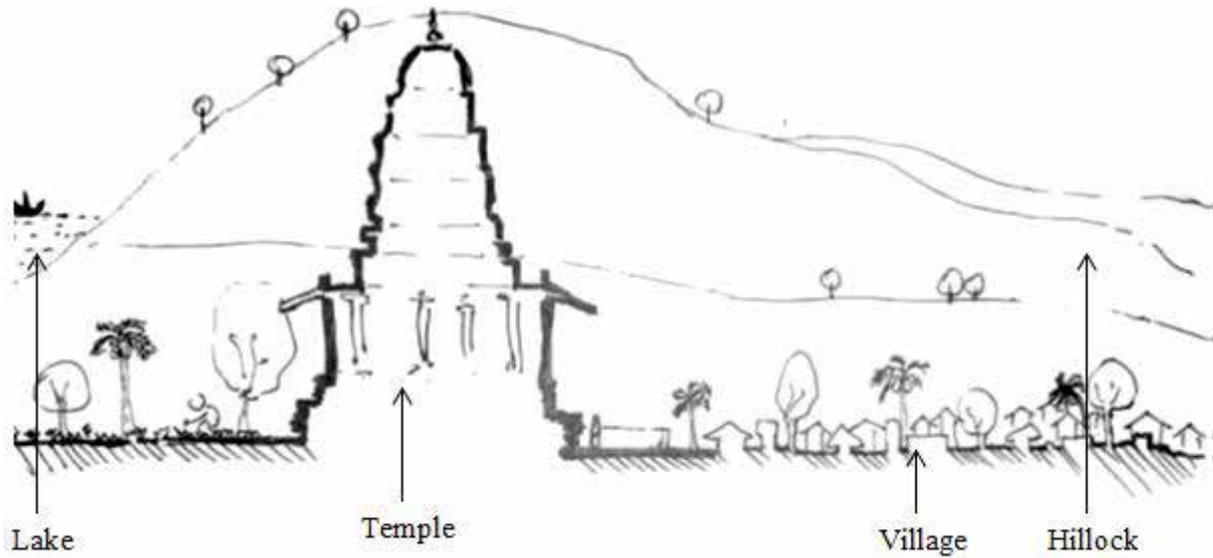


Fig. 2 : Skyline of Kakatiya town
 (Source : *Cultural Landscapes of Kakatiyas and Mission, Kakatiya Scheme under Govt. of Telangana (2021, Springer)*, Prof. G.S.V. Suryanarayana Murthy, Vaibhavi Dhote, Ashita Agarwal)

The Kakatiya kingdom of Telangana in the Warangal District historically had Orugallu as its capital. They ruled for 300 years, marking their lands with the philosophies of *Saiva Siddhantha*. They built huge places of worship, brought hydraulic systems to their towns, developed trade and finance institutions, set up medical facilities and evolved merging with their surroundings. The Kakatiyas arose from the Chalukyas of Kalyani in Karnataka. The first Kakatiya- Beta I was appointed as a chief in Telangana. Beta I was succeeded by his son Prola who is said to have acquired the rulership of the Anumakonda region from Someswara I of today's Warangal district. Prola I thus, became the first Kakatiya king.

Culturally, the people of this region were religious and followed the feudal system for law and order. Special care was taken for external trade and commerce, and any kind of exploitation of the layman and traders was punishable. The Kakatiyas also followed the guild system. These guilds were mainly encouraged by the regional authorities. This feudal system included merchant guilds, traders; farmers, etc. at different levels. People of certain communities engaged in various activities related to agriculture, occupation and trade. These guild systems later established a connection between the rural and urban centers of the state.

Geographically, Telangana state consists of the Hyderabad plateau region, graced with the River Godavari and tributaries of rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra. The rainfall was minimal in the Warangal district and the Kakatiya kingdom seemed to have evolved in terms of the geography and topography to sustain livelihoods in building technology and architecture. The Kakatiyas evolved with their natural habitat to meet their needs of water and food production. They intervened into the existing landscapes by constructing artificial irrigation systems, *cheruvus* (lakes), tanks and bunds for the population. A general Kakatiya town settlement consisted of a temple, a water source, and residential settlements surrounded by paddy fields on one side and the hillocks on the other. The landscape typically can be imagined to consist of green fields, units of residential modules, a temple whose vimana raised to the sky, being the tallest of all building structures and a hillock in the background. Thus, the Kakatiya town portrayed the nature-culture relationship profusely. Such culture-induced landscapes can be seen in the sites of Palampet and Ghanpur. Palampet region consists of the Rudreshwara temple popularly called Ramappa Temple (dedicated to Lord Siva), and a large lake called the Ramappa Lake, and agricultural lands surrounding the village on the other side. The planning of the town included nature in its perceivable beauty, which can be perceived as both tangible and intangible heritage today. The connection of people to nature, their dependence on their surroundings was inevitable, but also they created resources to sustain in their lands and prosper through centuries. The Kakatiya landscape showcases the harmony between people with respect to culture and nature.

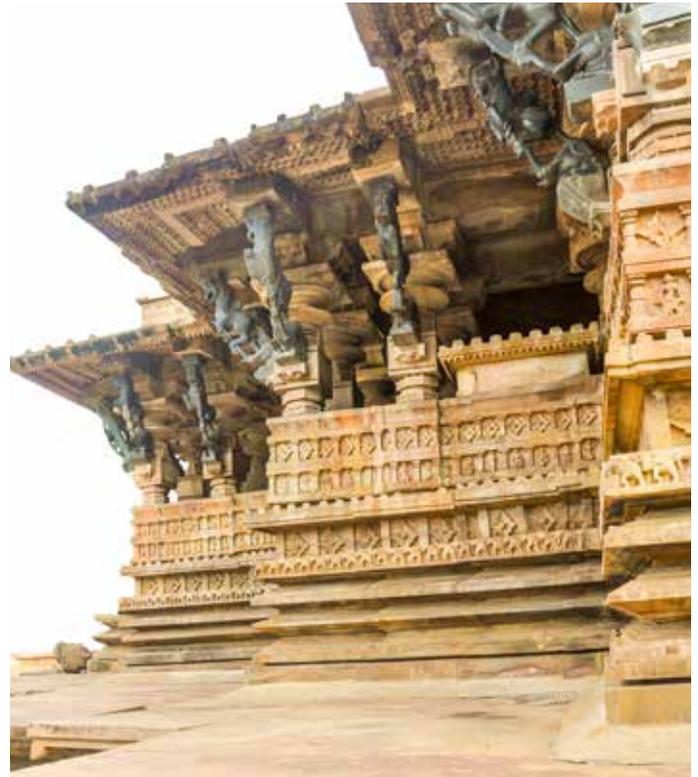


Fig. 3 : Madanikas in Rudreshwara Temple
 (Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)



Fig. 4 : Kota Gullu Complex
 (Source : Guru, M/s Kshetra-Guru)



Fig. 5 : View of Rudreshwara 'Ramappa' Temple at Palampet
(Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)

The Kakatiyas built statement consisted of religious spaces, political spaces and featured water sources for supporting livelihood. They developed and evolved in building irrigation sources and hydraulic systems throughout their rule. The artificial means of water storage for supporting day-to-day lives and majorly for agriculture in regions of insufficient rainfall led to the building of irrigation sources with techniques developed by understanding the topography of the region. The earliest form of irrigation was of course small scale that began with minimum investment and available manpower. They were mostly canals that were dug out from natural sources like rivers and later the digging of wells to procure groundwater. The information we have today is from inscriptions of the time that state the building of canals and tank bund in Telangana state. The Kakatiyas built irrigation tanks to meet the demands of the town. The contextual topography consists of stony ridges over granite mounds and black stone dykes occurring at regular intervals. The *sthapathis* (engineers) of the Kakatiya period used these mounds and sloping terrains to build thousands of *cheruvus* (lakes) connected through manually dug canals. The idea was to collect and store every drop of rain to be utilized and benefited for cultivation and livelihood. These tanks were built two to three times bigger than the store yield, to collect and store more water in case of a good monsoon period, which ultimately can be used during times of drought. A total of 46000 tanks were built along with open wells to manage and store groundwater. The land on the banks of these canals became fertile and fit for cultivation. Hence, these lands were contributed to fields that fed the village and also helped economically through trade. The Ramappa Lake of Palampet village mentioned earlier is an example. The act of the lake building was also seen as an act of charity from the Saptasanas. The Ramappa Lake was constructed along with Rudreshwara Temple (1213 A.D) as a part of Saptasantana given by Recharla Rudra. Ramappa Lake holds a capacity of 2.912 TMC, i.e., more than 2.5 times the irrigation required for a year's yield. The earthen bund connecting Vanagutta and Varalagutta to the north of the lake is 600 metres and has a width of 6.2 metres at its top. Ramappa Lake was about 100 feet in-depth and 1 km in width stretching from one hill to the other. This setting helped in collecting rainwater that flowed through the hills and ridges into the storage tank. The construction design of the Ramappa Lake was such that it had slopes both towards the inside and outside onto a flat top facilitating water to overflow. Excessive erosion was avoided by planting trees near the lake. For protecting the Lake from periodic flooding of the tank bund stones were placed on the inside of the ridges along the bund. Such a thought process was put in to prevent damage to the surrounding colonies and cultivation lands, at the same time, water to be available throughout the year. From the inscription stone present in the Sasana Mandapa (Inscription Shrine) of the Palampet temple (Ramappa Temple). There is a mention of the lake that was constructed with the perception of an ocean that

reflects the panorama of the town. The inscription also mentions that the water-dwelling had the austerity to soothe one's mind. Other lakes are the Pakhal, Laknavaram, Dharmasagar, and Kesamudram which are sustaining even today, constructed for irrigation and support the demography of the villages. These irrigation structures became essential features of the Kakatiya town landscape enabling sustainable living of the towns.

The town planning and construction followed the topography, geography, and geology of the region; another important feature was the defence. The town was to be protected from any kind of attack or any similar disaster. Orugallu (Warangal) capital was such a planned city, with huge fortification walls. This too was constructed with appropriate *Vastu* where the direction of the sunlight and wind



Fig. 6 : Sculptures of madanika and yali in Rudreshwara Temple
(Source : Alaknanda, M/s Kshetra)



Fig. 7 : Remains of Svayambhu Temple in Warangal Fort
(Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)

played a vital role along with the plan following ancient sigil shapes, forms, and patterns. The circular plan was a reference to such Pauranic traditions and knowledge.

THE TOWN OF WARANGAL : WARANGAL FORT

Warangal Fort was built in 1261 CE. The plan took the form of concentric circles where the outer wall was constructed with earthen material and the inner wall was built in stone masonry. The fort had four entrances. The concentric circle can be envisioned as the cosmic pattern- the spiral to attract spirituality and energies. The outer wall had seventy-five bastions at regular intervals which were guarded by security officers called 'nayakas'. Today only the four gateways, the *Keerthi Thoranas* stand, and the rest are in ruins. Each *Keerthi Thorana* consists of two pillars supporting an entablature that projects laterally and is balanced by brackets on either side onto the pillars. The *thoranas* built in the four disas or cardinal directions- east, west, north and south. They have peculiar characteristics where the eastern and northern gates are similar and the western and southern ones are similar. The pillars of the gates are monolithic and the long horizontal lintel is supported by brackets carved in the form of lions whose heads are turned backward holding their prey. At the top of the entablature on the west and south gates are two beautiful swans carved in granite placed on either end. The lintel is also ornamented with symmetrical dripstone (7 drops) that appear to be lotus buds hanging downwards symbolizing purity and beauty.

The Kakatiya reign contributed to construction of many temples due to prosperous economic conditions. The construction designs for building structures followed the *Vastu Purusha* principles, hence, the square and rectangle forms were commonly used for the temples and residential colonies.

The shape of the temple according to the *Agni Purana* can be interpreted as the substance and shape which is the *Prakriti* (nature) while the form as a whole is the seat of the Supreme spirit. It was principally commissioned by the *Istapurusha* (favorite man of god) who essentially was the king. The Kakatiya kings built huge places

of worship as 'houses of God'. Interestingly the subordinates of the kings also built temples to commemorate God in the local regions away from the capital. The temple held the cosmic and spiritual significance of the *Mahapurusa* - Cosmic Man and revolves around the concept of terrestrial man becoming the cosmic man, an object of life to accept God. Temple construction during the Kakatiya reign began with a series of rituals and offerings to the gods after which the site was selected. The plan of Kakatiyan temples consists of the major temple components: *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and *sabhamandapa*. The temples can be classified further as *ekakuta* or the one-shrine temple, *dwikuta*- two-shrines temple and *trikuta*- three shrines temple.

The art and architecture displayed by the Kakatiyas are ingenious features of the temples. They inherited the architecture style from their superiors- the Chalukyas of Kalyani. they merged their style to the materials available in the region namely the chelvai sandstone, dolerite, and granite. The walls of the temples are graced with sculptures with the finest details, guided by the *Shilpashastras*. These sculptures tell stories of mythology and history. Some were for aesthetic purposes like the *dwarapalikas*- female figurines on the door frames of the *garbhagriha*. Others were sculptures of Nataraja and Bhairava depicting their stories as seen in the Rudreshwara Temple at Palampet.

SVAYAMBU TEMPLE

The Svayambu Siva Temple enclosed in Warangal Fort is a self-manifested *Linga* of Siva that emerged during the reign of the Kakatiya King Prola I, who constructed a temple and a city within the fortification around the temple. The context around the temple consisted of a lake, and the *ekasila* (one stone) hill geographically and the fortification walls of the Warangal Fort formed important features of its landscape. Today the temple is in ruins. It seems to have been built with the central squared-sanctuary roofed with rectangular projections around the self-manifested *Linga* that opened to the outside in all four directions. When intact, all four directions would have featured four *Nandis* looking in the direction of the *Linga*. The east pavilion is well preserved which shows how the conjectured layout would have been.

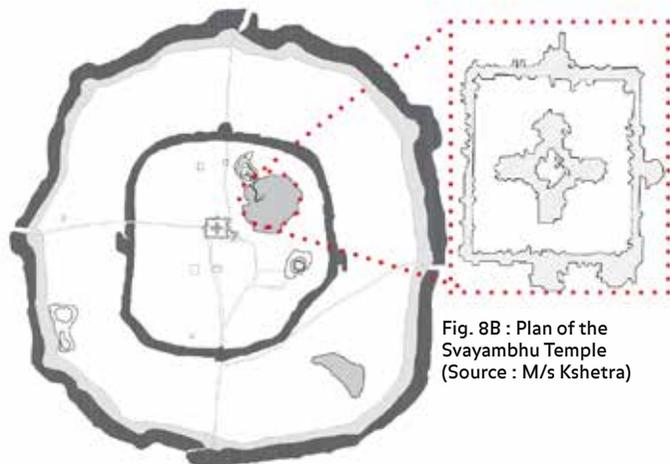


Fig. 8B : Plan of the Swayambhu Temple (Source : M/s Kshetra)

Fig. 8A : Site Plan of Warangal Fort (Source : M/s Kshetra)



Fig. 11A : Site plan of Rudreshwara 'Ramappa' Temple (Source : M/s Kshetra)

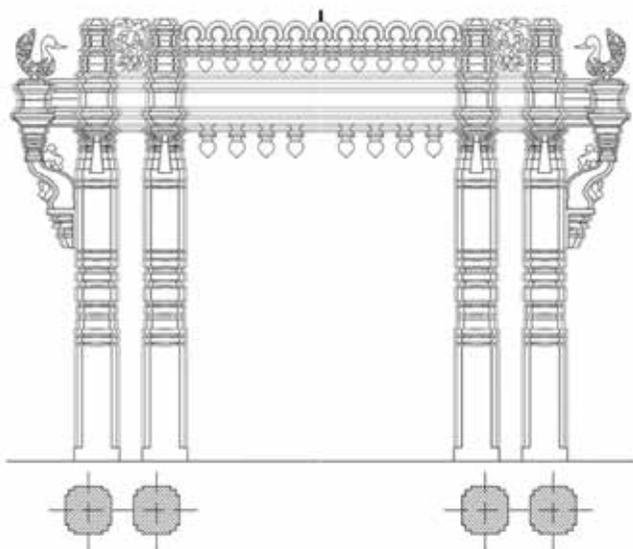


Fig. 9 : Plan and elevation of thorana (Source : M/s Kshetra)



Fig. 10 : View of Keerthi Thorana (Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)



Fig. 11B : View of the vimana of Ramappa Temple (Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)

RUDRESHWARA 'RAMAPPA' TEMPLE, PALAMPET, MULUGU DISTRICT

The Rudreshwara Temple, popularly known as Ramappa Temple is situated in Palampet village, Mulugu District in the Telangana state of India. The Ramappa Temple was built in 1213 CE. The temple is in the hub of a large irrigation lake, hill topography, agricultural lands and the village. Credit for the Rudreshwara temple goes to Recharla Rudra, the Commander-in-Chief. The Ramappa Temple complex consists of the Rudreshwara Alayam, the Kateshwara Alayam, the Nandi Mandapa, the Sasana Mandapa, and the Pakasala.

The Ramappa Temple is an exceptional example of the Kakatiya style of temple architecture with the use of engineering innovation

by creating floating bricks, sand-box foundations, material selection knowledge and ingenuity in stone sculpting as a technological ensemble. The temple expresses great artistic splendors with forty *madanikas* and *gaja-vyalas*, 6 feet in height, relief sculptures, thematic sculptures and dance sculptures, 600 in all.

The Ramappa temple was awarded the World Heritage tag this year under Criteria I and III. The dossier was prepared in 2018. It was presented as India's nomination for World Heritage Site 2020 that emphasizes the human creative genius, monumental display, and interchange of cultural values in the area and to have a uniqueness representing the Kakatiya dynasty's art and architecture.



Fig. 12 : View of the Thousand Pillar Temple
(Source : Tanya, M/s Kshetra)

THOUSAND PILLAR TEMPLE AT HANUMAKONDA

The Thousand Pillar Temple is situated in the Town of Hanumakonda, 9 km from Warangal. It was planned in a setting with the water tank and a hill in the surroundings. Today the temple stands in an urban setting of the modern town of Hanumakonda. The Thousand Pillar temple is a trikuta temple built in the style of Kakatiya architecture. It faces the south and consists of three shrines divided into two sections- a triple shrine in the north and a mandapa in the south. The Nandi sits gloriously between the two, facing the triple shrine. The temple was constructed in 1261 CE by King Rudradeva to honor the gods Siva, Vishnu and Surya in gratitude for his many battle victories. A step-well was constructed for holy rituals in the north-eastern corner of the temple complex's compound wall called prakara. The trikuta form constitutes to give importance to the three gods, mainly Siva's *garbagriha* that faces the east. The religious importance of the temple has continued over the years valorizing the faith and the heritage of the Kakatiyas.

KOTA GULLU COMPLEX AT GHANPUR, MULUGU DISTRICT

Ghanpur village is at a distance of about 9 km from Palampet. It is said to be built in the first half of the 13th century during the Kakatiya King Ganapatideva. Similar to the Rudreshwara 'Ramappa' Temple, the Kota Gollu at Ghanpur is constructed adjoined to a lake and the main temple is dedicated to Lord Siva. There are about 22 temples in the Ghanpur complex of which 19 are small shrines and the main temple is placed at the centre. A sole Nandi Bull, at the centre of the courtyard, remains the only witness of the glorious days of the Kakatiya dynasty. The main shrine also contains bracket figures of *gajja kesaris*, *mandakinis*, and other mythical creatures from Hindu mythology. Even though being in a decrepit state, the temples still display the glory of the architectural style of Kakatiyas.

The 300 year rule of the Kakatiyas set an important chronological advancement in engineering and technology. It cannot be overlooked that the knowledge systems of the Kakatiyas are beyond the teachings of today both in science and culture. The marvelous art and architecture of the Kakatiya kingdom and the story of culture leave a significant mark on our Telugu heritage as discussed in the article. The culture-induced landscapes of Kakatiya show the nature-culture relationship from the anthropological perspective. It is understood that human beings and their culture exist with nature. Human needs

will intervene with nature and the Kakatiyas portrayed boundless limits without exploiting it. It is important to merge with nature and help it prosper. Creating awareness and educating ourselves about Kakatiya's cultural and technological advancement will help in connecting future generations to its heritage. It can be concluded that the Kakatiya rule was the Golden Age of Telangana.



Fig. 13 : Ghanpur Temple
(Source : Manthan, M/s Kshetra)



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