

## Forts in Haryana during medieval period

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### Abstract

During medieval period many rulers built fortified building on strategic position. Rulers used that type buildings for residence and security purpose. Many remains of the fort in Haryana from medieval period are available. Forts, built with stones, bricks, mud and Cuna. Fort of Hisar, Fort of Kotla, Fort of Hansi and Fort of Sohana, its famous structures.

**Keywords:** fort, shipa sastra, sultanate, mughal, Hisar, Kotla, Hansi, Sohana range

### Introduction

In Indian History, we saw, the capital of each king was fort around which a township grew and developed. In ancient time, fortified cities were common in India as Rajagriha, Ujjain, Kosambi. The science of building forts and fortifications in early times was so advanced that the *Shilpa Sastras* mention at least nineteen varieties of forts<sup>[1]</sup>. Muslim Rulers in Medieval period focused on the fort. They built many forts in Delhi, Agra, Allahabad and Fatehpur Seekri etc. Even Provincial states as Gujrat, Bengal, Bahamani, Masoore, Maratha, Captured and Built forts. With the Advent of the East India Company, the British Established trading posts. The need for security against local Kings as well as other European Rival nations led to the construction of forts at each post as William fort in Kokata, St. George Fort in Chennai etc. Thus fort was a significant structure for security and Residence.

In Medieval period Forts were used for defense purpose and other important buildings were located in the Forts. In this period many forts built by the different Dynasties during sultanate and Mughal period. The forts, however, assumed greater importance in the medieval times. The three consistent components of medieval forts were walls, towers and gates. Generally, the outer walls of the forts were built of bricks, red sand stone or mud. It usually had two gates, one at the front and the outer at the rear. A large number of forts and their associate structures existed in Haryana but now only the following are available as Hisar Fort, Kotla Fort, Hansi Fort, Sohna Fort.

### Fort of Hisar

At present hisar is the Administrative head quarter of district. Hisar is a historical city from ancient times. Hisar was founded in 1354 AD, as Hisar-e-Firoza by Firoz shah from Tughlaq dynasty of Delhi sultanate. He built a fort at here and construction of the fort started in 1354 AD and completed in 1356 AD. Here is a large complex and different buildings situated as Lat ki masjid, Baradari, Diwan-e-aam. In 1398 AD Timur invaded the city and his soldiers set fire to the fort. The city later come under the rule of Sayyad and Lodi dynasty. During Mughal period Hisar become one more a place of considerable importance.

The Fort is situated on the opposite side of the City Bus Stand and most of fort has been fallen. The boundary wall of Hisar Firoza was built with stones.

Only the north western area of the fort with a gateway, the *Lat Ki Masjid* and two of the courtyards can be seen<sup>[2]</sup>. The Fort has originally at least three levels still exist in good condition. The lower level had arcades with massive rubble stone piers. The middle level has masonry arcades supported by columns with monolithic shafts. The third level of the fort is now lost and only the bases of a few columns shafts remain. The lower level consists of numerous halls, chambers and narrow dark corridors

The entrance to the fort is through the main gate, which is built in the western wall and leads in to the south court. This is the only gateway of the fort, which is still standing. The gateway has an arched opening leading to a passage with guardrooms on either side. The gate is built of rubble stone and a vaulted roof. The walls of the gate are battered. The south courtyard is bounded on the western side by the fortified wall and on the eastern side by the rear wall of the *Lat Ki Masjid*. The defense wall is battered from outside and upper parts have been reconstructed. The arcade wall of the northern side has a doorway, apparently opening to a corridor. These arcades are a common feature of the sultanate courtyards and this type of arcade is also found in Firoz Shah Kotla in Delhi<sup>[3]</sup>.

The western fortified wall continues north of the south court with a semi- octagonal tower. The tower has a roofed chamber. An arched opening in the center of each wall gives access to a passage running around the chamber and connected to the north. To the north of this chamber, there is also a vaulted hall connected with chamber and passage. Outside wall of the western side has an opening, which let in a small amount of light. A passage goes to the eastern court, to the north of the *Lat ki Masjid*, from the south court. There is a wide hall with arches of red sandstone. It is, however, possible that this hall is of a later origin than the rest of the fort<sup>[4]</sup>. The remains of the fort are quite visible in the North Courtyard. These structures include part of the outer shell of two great halls on the northern side of a central courtyard. There is a row of holes half way up the inside the northern wall, which must have been for brackets

supporting a timber, floor on another level. These holes are the only evidence of the use of timber in the structure of the fort buildings. The general appearance of this historical fort of Hisar can be compared with the *madrassa of Firoz Shah at Haus-i-Khas* <sup>[5]</sup> built on similar principals of design. This building was constructed in the first years of Firoz Shah's rule and earlier than the fort of Hisar. The Fort of Firoz Shah in his capital Firozabad might also have followed the same principal of design but as we have already noted little has survived from these buildings, although the ruins of the ground level show that this level the fort was constructed with masonry piers and vaults. The upper storey are now lost. The design principal seen in the fort of Hisar constructed to be applied to buildings in later periods. In view of its historical and architectural importance it was declared protected as a monument of national importance <sup>[6]</sup>.

### Fort of Kotla

Kotla is a historical village in Nuh district of Haryana state. Kotla had been the capital of Bahadur nahar khazada. Bahadur Nahar was a resident of Sarehta village near Kotla who became a favourite of Sultan Firoz Shah during his visits of Mewat for hunting in its vast jungles. He was a Hindu and his name was Sambharpal. According to a local tradition Sambharpal had once saved the life of Sultan Firoz Shah with a lion for that sultan was very much impress for his bravery. So his name was called Bahadur Nahar and Sultan Firoz gives him a *zagir* of Kotla. After some time he enlarges his *zagir* then captured almost Mewat. Soon, he became very famous *zagirdar* in the court of Delhi. Bahadur Nahar constructed this fort in 1380 AD for its strategic importance. It still exists but is unoccupied. The northern wall, with its gateway at the north east corner and remains of bastioned walls are still standing. The gateway is arch-in-arched. It is unprotected monument. In the western side there is a very depth tunnel, probably the soldiers were used this tunnel to reach the fort. The fort is built of massive blocks of stone and rectangular on plan. The walls are rugged, slope inwards and crowned with line of battlements of solid stone and these too are provided with loopholes.

### Fort of Hansi

Hansi is a city in hisar district of Haryana. Hansi has several buildings of historical importance. About the origin of the city, same controversies are describe by historians, but it was a historical city. A Prominent feature of this Ancient city is its Fort. This fort is extended in an area of thirty acres and in square shape. Some historians say that, the fort was built by Prithivi raj chauhan. And many ancient statues of Jain gods, scattered at here. The old town of Hansi was located in this fort. The outer wall of the fort had five gates opening, in different directions. These were Delhi Gate on the east, Hisar Gate in the west, *Gosain* Gate in the northwest, Barsi Gate on its south and Umra Gate in the southwest <sup>[7]</sup>. Of these gates, only Barsi Gate is now available. The Barsi Gate is named after the village of Barsi, situated to the south of Hansi. Now, it is locaed in the centre of the *bazaar*. It is an impressive piece of fort architectural craftsmanship. As recorded in an inscription <sup>[8]</sup> over the pointed arch of the gate, *Hazrat Shaikh* Jalaludin-din Muhammad Sahib built this imposing gateway during the reign of Sulttan Alauddin Khalji.

The Gate is a baked brick structure with a central archway

flanked by defensive towers. The towers are semi circular on plan and are heavily battered, increasing the impression of massiveness <sup>[9]</sup>. it is single storey monument. The towers are provided with three rows of arrow slits. There is a further row slits around the parapet of the gate, which above the towers imitates battlements. The spandrels of the arch and the recesses are decorated with glazed tile work in blue colour. The panel encasing the arched opening has full blown lotus medallions a on the top. On either side of the gateway are three blind niches on each side in a same level. These niches are decorated with bricks and glazed titles. Upper niches are also decorated with inverted lotus medallions. The correct year of the erection of Ala-uddin's fortification is 703 A.H. as given in the inscription. The building has been restored many times but it has preserved most of its original appearance. According to the foundation inscription set over the entrance it was built in 703H/1303AD at the time of the Khalji Sultan 'Ala al-din Muhammad on the road from Multan to Delhi. It records one of its restorations in 1522 during the region of the Lodi Sultan Ibrahim Shah when it would have been part of the defenses of the town. This restoration seems to have been relatively substantial, using a different type of brick, smaller in size than those of Khalji period <sup>[10]</sup>. On the southern decorative niches formed in the brickwork with geometric patterns picked out with blue tiles. It has relieved the massive effect of the solid piers on either side of the entrance.

### Fort of Sohana

The town of Sohana derived its name from the Gold dust (Sona) which was found in the beds of neighboring streams after heavy rains. The town was occupied by three races in succession, namely the Kambhos, Kanzadas and the Rajputs. Each Ruler made preparedness for his defence and Safety. So some building built by many kings as Fort. According to Ain-i-Akbari, A Fort on Hills was there, in Akbar's Reign. Another Fortress (Garhi), possibly built by Kambhos Chiefs, in the West of town on Nagli Road, where lives the signs of broad stone walls and one of the enclosing walls in visible to a greater extent. Bharatpur Kings <sup>[11]</sup> also built a Fort on top of the Hills who ruled on Sohana for many years. But Bharatpur Kings could not complete the construction of the fort. Its unfinished remains are now existing on the hills commemoration the rule of Jat King over this area.

Thus stone was the most important material for fortification in Haryana during medieval period. Every ruler want to built forts for security and residential purpose. Fort of hisar is situated on strategic location. Ghagger and Dhishavati rivers once flowed through the city. so Firoz shah built same buildings at here. kotla was a capital of khazadas in earlier period. The fort of kotla is situated on the peak of hills [aravali]. Bahadur Nahar built this fort for strategic and security purpose. Ruin fort of hansi, also tell us story of glorious past of many kings. During Medieval period sohana was famous location for every ruler. so many kings built forts for his safty.

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