The Protected Fort Sites in the Heart of India

Our Cultural Heritage is an important asset which is often under-valued and under-developed when in the public arena. The Madhya Pradesh Monuments Project (MPMP) is a unique endeavor where a dedicated team of experts is working to bring these forgotten monuments to life. The project is a partnership between the Government of Madhya Pradesh, the Department of Culture, and the World Monuments Fund to conserve 43 historic monuments and sites across the state. It is guided by the Memorandum of Understanding between MP and WMF to provide technical support to the project.

The project is also supported by the Madhya Pradesh State Government, which has allocated a significant portion of its budget to conservation efforts. The project is expected to bring economic benefits through increased tourism and cultural heritage protection. The project is also working to increase awareness among the public about the importance of preserving our cultural heritage.

The methodology for the project involves a comprehensive approach to conservation planning, which includes detailed surveys, analysis of existing records, and the development of detailed site plans. The project is also working to involve local communities in the conservation process, ensuring that their perspectives and needs are taken into account.

The project has already made significant progress, with several sites successfully restored and open to the public for tourist visits. The project aims to continue this momentum and restore the historical significance of these sites for future generations.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Kaga Bhui, the most significant site of the Pratihara dynasty (665–1337 AD), established its capital in Dhar in 1010 AD and ruled until 1619 AD. For the next 500 years, Dhar continued to be the capital of the Pratihara Dynasty. The fort is on a small hill in the north-east of the town, known to Mangari Hari as a golden crown in Mangari Hari Somnath and a building called “Nal Madhukar Mahal” which are put in evidence every monsoon. Apart from the fortifications, the only other Pratihara period constructions is the bath of the east-cut end of the fort which is still evident. The bath was constructed in the main source of water for the inhabitants of the large garden but was later used for drinking purposes as well. By the early 16th century, the fort was under attack and invasions from various quarters. In 1585, the fort was captured by Ali Quli, Muta, the conqueror of the Delhi Sultanate, Ali Muta Khan. In this attack all Pratihara constructions (including the fort) were demolished and thereafter were used for building along with repairs of fortifications. In 1589 AD, Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughril appointed Malik Kamlah as the ruler of Malwa, who constructed the Shah Mahal and the banquet. Muhammad ibn Tughril stayed in the Shah Mahal in 1594 AD, as it was the Governor of Shah Jahan. In 1589 AD, Dhar lost its importance with the Malwa Sultan Husain Shah Gheril shifting his capital from Dhar to Mandsaur. However, the fort continued to be used as the military head quarters of Malwa. By 1647–48, Dhar was taken by Muhammad Khan (Khitai) I built three gateways: these gateway 394 AD, along with a well, to increase the density of the fort. It also built stairs to the fort. During Aurangzeb’s reign, Dhar fell under the dominion of the Mughals, with whom it remained till 1760, after which it was captured by the Marathas. Aurangzeb in his diary described the fort as very elegant and beautiful with empty space inside. Dhar was handed to the Mughals in 1711 AD, and later Aurangzeb reconstructed the outer fortifications well on the west side of the fort and the gateway. After the downfall of the Mughal Empire, Malwa was taken over by the Marathas and Asaf Raza Khan made Dhar its head quarters in 1715 AD. Kamlah Mahal was constructed between 1730 and 1764 AD, as the royal residence. Pratihara Spharan II, the last Pratihara ruler was born here in 1776 AD. Dhar was an important centre during the period in 1720, when the British took possession of the fort and built stairs and built barracks within the fort. Today, the fortifications and remnants of structures are the testimonies of this great chronicle.

FORTIFICATION

The fort covers an area of approximately 35.12 acres (including the fort hill with the fort walls of about 1.35 km length). The soil of the fort is treated with coal, cinders, and sandstone as a means of defense against the enemy. The fort is situated on a hill and the main entrance of the fort is secured by an orchestra on the south side. It is approached through a series of five gates, aligned at an angle to each other and at a sharp angle. The walls consist of two layers of earth and stone (sandstone or Dharwad stone) and the outer, unbricked area on the ramp and at the top of the wall were once part of the outer wall. The outer wall was strengthened and solidified by the fortifications, but evidence of Pratihara architecture in the battlements with stone false shutters are found in later periods. There are two types of battlements: small battlements of 1–2 meter diameter at the corners, and the balista, small bastions of 12 to 13 meter diameter against brick walls. The fort has a total of thirteen bastions and a square bastion at the entrance where a Kamlah Mahal was built by the Pincus. The bastions are interconnected, some striped and some striped, and some striped, and the interior of the bastions is filled up with rubble and stone pinnacles. The foundations of these bastions have been laid over hard stone, and the base is hollowed. Simultaneously, the stone wall is also strengthened by five smaller bastions. The bastions are of various patterns and sizes with loopholes and square stone ditches covered with battlements and stone battlements. Other important features include old stone fragments from the earlier construction used in the inner period buildings and walls indicating reconstructions. One can also see remains of a terrace of stone, a Pillar, and a stone member inside the bastlements.

ISSUES:
* Extensive growth of vegetation and big trees causing access problems to the fortification.
* Damaged and broken masonry.
* Bas battlements and other features.
* Damper and water stagnation.
* Deterioration and destruction of stone pilasters.
* Chamber under basement unstable and damaged.
Location and Setting

Garhkundar, the first capital of Bundela dynasty is situated 56 km from Orchha, near the village Tikamgarhodari, located in the north-eastern part of Madhya Pradesh. The name ‘Kundar’ is derived from ‘Kund’ (pond) and ‘Arki’ (fire), ‘Kundar’ means ‘pond and Arki’ means ‘fire’. There was a pond in the village, built by the sun-worshipping kshatriyas (called Arkaarwati). It is said that people could get rid of their skin diseases after bathing in this pond.

Garhkundar is located atop a small hill, overlooking the Vindhayachal mountains and river Betwa. A series of hills can be seen near the temple of ‘Gajanan Maa’. The name ‘Kundar’ is derived from ‘Kund’ (pond) and ‘Arki’ (fire). The name ‘Kundar’ means ‘pond and Arki’ means ‘fire’. There was a pond in the village, built by the sun-worshipping kshatriyas (called Arkaarwati). It is said that people could get rid of their skin diseases after bathing in this pond.

The fort and its fortification walls hold a dominating position in the vast surrounding landscape. The topography of the region comprises of the Bundelkhand plateau, the Vindhayachal mountains and river Betwa. A series of hills can be seen near the temple of ‘Gajanan Maa’. The name ‘Kundar’ is derived from ‘Kund’ (pond) and ‘Arki’ (fire). The name ‘Kundar’ means ‘pond and Arki’ means ‘fire’. There was a pond in the village, built by the sun-worshipping kshatriyas (called Arkaarwati). It is said that people could get rid of their skin diseases after bathing in this pond.

All the forts conforming to Bundela style of architecture have a connecting or linking corridor on the ground floor.
GULGANJ FORT


THE HISTORIC STRUCTURE IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LOCAL ARCHITECTURE- A MIX OF RESIDENTIAL AND DEFENCE, A BUILDING TYPE COMMON TO THIS REGION. THOUGH NOT MASSIVE IN SCALE OR GRAND IN EXPRESSION, GULGANJ FORT PROVIDES IMPORTANT CLUES TO THE EIRSTWHILE BUILDING TRADITIONS, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND WATER MANAGEMENT DUE TO A FAIRLY INTACT SETTING AND ARCHITECTURAL VOCABULARY.

MATERIALS

THE FORT IS MAINLY CONSTRUCTED WITH TRADITIONAL BRICKS AND LOCALLY MINABLE STONE IN RANDOM RUBBLE MASHERY SET IN LINE WORK. THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS Comprise OF LOAD BEARING MASONRY WALLS, ARCHES AND COLUMNS AND SCAFFOLDS TO TRANSFER THE LOAD. THE MASONRY WALLS BOTH INTERNAL AND INTERNAL REST ON THE HARD ROCK. NO SEPARATE DESIGNED FOUNDATION IS VISIBLE IN THE WALLS OF THE BASTIONS.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FORTIFICATIONS AND WORLD HERITAGE

DOCUMENTATION OF FORTS IN INDIA:
AN EXHIBITION
NSC ICOFORT
NSC DOCUMENTATION

CLIENT
MADHYA PRADESH MONUMENTS PROJECT
Government of Madhya Pradesh
Department of Culture

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GULGANJ FORT
CHHATARPUR, M.P.
The Fort at Mahidpur is immensely significant and holds high archaeological potential. Excavations have been undertaken at the Bhoomi Tekdi by ASI in 1990s and Calcuttahit Remains dating back to the Mahab Period (red and black pottery) has been found at the site. The Fort is represented by its walls, bastions, gateways, temples, ruins and remains of other Royal buildings as well as ghats belong to the 18th century Hakhar (Maratha Confederation) period and is still in occupation by a local community.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Strategically located on the ancient trade route of Dakshinapath, the Mahab Purat, Mahidpur-Fort was one of the ‘hills’ on the banks of the river Kshipra is believed to be built on a site of pre-historic importance. The town was known as Mahamana in the times of the Mahabharata, it was renamed Mahabpur “the great city” by the Mughal Emperor of the Holkar when the Marathas gained control in the 18th Century. Built by the Mughal ancestors Sartaj, it was characterized by its bastioned stone wall and deck and narrow streets lined with tall stone houses on either side with graceful balconies and windows of arched wood. Across the river is the historic battlefield where the Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817) was fought between the armies of Tipu Sultan (Hyderabad) and John Malcolm leading to the defeat of the Holkars.

**URBAN CONTEXT**

The Fort locally known as Qila Mahabpur is located on a mound at the northern edge of the town of Mahidpur along the eastern bank of the Kshipra River covering an area of approximately 50 acres. It is characterized by its bastioned stone wall punctuated by lofty gateways towards the southern entrance. The western edge of the Fort abuts the riverfront of the Kshipra River and is characterized by the Shiva Temple along the Tarkhat and Rawla Ghat. Within the citadel are two temples all dedicated to Shiva, facing the river adjacent to the Rula Ghat and Sarkari Ghat respectively. Within the fortification is a large Temple Compound as well as a monument which have been built in the span of the last 10 years. A small Muslim community of about 100-150 people reside within the fortification between the main gate and the river embankment. A Hindu Temple has been built just outside the main gate.

The Fort is located at the northern edge of the town of Mahidpur along the eastern bank of the Kshipra River and is characterized by its bastioned stone wall. The Fort covers an approximate area of 50 acres. The fortified citadel is punctuated by an arched gateway characterized by large pointed and multilingual arches with solid inner doors topped with cornices in brick with voussoir piers. The northwestern arm of the Fort connects Gate 01 and Gate 07 (Ruda Ghat) while the E/W Arm connects Gate 02 and the Gate 08 (Sarkari Ghat). At the intersection of both these arms is located the Kothi or the Royal Palace. The western edge of the Fort abuts the riverfront of the Kshipra River and is characterized by the Shiva Temple along the Tarkhat and Ruda Ghat. Within the citadel are two temples all dedicated to Shiva, facing the river adjacent to the Ruda Ghat and Sarkari Ghat respectively. Within the fortification is a large Temple Compound as well as a monument which has been built in the span of the last 10 years. A small Muslim community of about 100-150 people reside within the fortification between the main gate and the river embankment. A Hindu Temple has been built just outside the main gate.
Sabalgarh fort is situated at a distance of 106 kilometers (approximately) from Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), at a distance of 217 kilometers (approximately) from Kanori (Rajasthan), and approximately 51 kilometers (approximately) via Mandaur. Rajasthan tourism functioned only for months in a year. Sabalgarh fort is built on a high hillock and is situated at the southern edge of the town of Sabalgarh. The Chambal river flows at a distance of 20 kilometers north of the fort. On the eastern side, there is a small hill (Pratarpur) on which it is built. It was surrounded by an outer fortification wall on the north and the east side. A continuous fortification wall of 1800 meter length can be seen on the north side along the state highway, while some small sections of fortifications are seen along the east side. The east and west side had the dense forest as a natural defence. Further to the south remains of a fort along the southern side.

Art work

Building embellishments within the fort complex can be divided into two categories Tempura Paintings: Paintings depicting the war scenes, mythological and human figures etc. have been observed on the exterior walls and at the dado level, whereas floral motifs can be seen at the cornice level. and Decorative stone work: Decorative stone work through out the fort is integral part of the fort complex. Stone work ranges from floral motifs on doorways to ornate columns in Kacheri, Nawal Singh Haveli and other miscellaneous structures.
Sheopur town is located in Sheopur District, in the northern part of Madhya Pradesh, India. It forms a part of the Chambal division. Located approximately 210 km from Gwalior and 120 km from Shiviupur, Sheopur district is bounded by Rajasthan to the south and west, District Sheopur to the east and district Morena to the north.

Sheopur town covers an approximate area of 4.8 square kilometers. It is situated on the banks of river Seep and is surrounded on other two sides by Chambal canal and river Amol (almost dried).

The town is accessible from State Highway 6, connecting Sheopur to Sawai Madhopur in the north and Shiviupur in the south-east.

Sheopur Fort and its settlement are two separate fortified enclosures. For the purpose of security, there are three levels of defense mechanism for the entire fort complex.

- The outer fortification houses the settlement. It covers an approximate area of 120 acres. The wall is studded with strong bastions, merlon parapets and gateways.
- The inner fortification comprises the palatial, recreational, memorial structures and landscape areas.
- A moat runs along the fortification, providing another layer of security. Most parts of the moat are now dried and covered with land used for cultivation. River Seep feeds water into the moat.

The fort was built at the highest altitude, on a mound adjacent to the River Seep.

**Structures in the inner fortification of Sheopur Fort**

1. Naoriya Mahal  
2. Gujar Mahal  
3. Moti Mahal A  
4. Moti Mahal B  
5. Dhare-e-tam  
6. Dharian Hall  
7. Ghodal  
8. Chhat  
9. Bari House  
10. Buradi  
11. Charbag  
12. Bachi

Palatial structures with intricate jali work and paintings, cupolas, gardens forms part of the inner fort’s elements.

**Current Scenario**

Fort Complex has been subjected to neglect and misuse which has accelerated the decay process. Moti Mahal - B is one of the finest examples of this case. During condition assessment of the structures in the fort complex, historic drains were identified near Moti Mahal B which were redundant. This has resulted in soil subsidence and subsequent partial collapse of Moti Mahal - B. Thus restoring Moti Mahal - B forms a part of high priority intervention to maintain the historic integrity of the complex.

**Elements of the outer fortification include Fortification wall with merlons, bastions and gateways.**

**Documenting the Architectural Elements.**

Architecture of this fort complex has reflection of predominant architectural elements of this region like chaur, [harakan], cupshaped arches, jalis in stone/lime, stone chajjas, wall paintings, stone columns and masonry. The construction materials identified at this fort complex are sandstone in masonry, lime for mortar/plaster and metal gliders which forms part of later interventions.
Evolution

The fort has undergone a lot of changes in the course of time and with change of ownership. The chronology can be read by the study of architectural features and elements most characteristic of a particular period as no written records of the above are found. The outer fortification walls with the moat and entrance gateway belong to the first layer of development. The inner fortification wall with central small temple having just a garthika griha, the Mudia Mahal with an entrance gateway and a fortified forecourt, the Mehmankhana and the Rang Mahal were built in the first phase. The Kacheri Mahal was constructed by assemblading and reusing columns, beams and brackets from old temples of the region. The mandapa of the temple was also added at this same phase as is evident from the similar column style. A 12th century Kachchhara period frieze can be noticed being reused as lintel along the west façade of the mandapa. Similar columns can be seen at the veranda of the Mehmankhana. The last phase is the development post 1857 revolts after which the fort fell in the hands of the British. The British added the first floor over the Mehmankhana. They also made changes in the rest of the spaces to suit their lifestyle and to provide privacy. The ceremonial northern flight of steps to the Rang Mahal was also added in this phase.

Site & Surroundings

The fort is secluded from the settlement which lies to its north. It has fields and vegetation on rest of the three sides. The fort has a moat which was fed by Mahanadi that flows on the eastern side. On the north eastern side of the fort there is a complex which houses a historic temple and the cenotaph of Thakur Sarju Prasad (as per local sources).

Art Work

The embellishments in plaster works, stucco, exquisite painted frescoes on walls and vaults etc. enhance the aesthetic value of the built forms. The building embellishments in various structures in the complex are:

- Fresco paintings on araisah plaster
- Plain araisah plaster
- Decorative lime (stucco) work
- Sandstone brackets with stucco works
- Brick and lime past
- Carved sandstone columns and panels

Spatial Planning

The fort is rectangular in plan aligned along the north south direction. It has the outer fortification wall with a protective meat at its periphery. The moat is crossed over by a bridge to enter into the sole entrance gateway which is on the centre of the northern façade. The entrance has an L-shaped vestibule, A Jali Bhasha-durgai, is based on the Arthasashtra principles for fort planning wherein Kautilya suggests that the roads should be laid along the four cardinal directions with a temple at the centre and the King’s house should be at the north. This is to a great extent followed in the planning of Vijayraghavgarh fort. The paths are oriented north south. The temple must have been built as the first structure at the centre of the fort complex and later the other pala in the inner fortification must have been built. The entrance of the fort complex was positioned north, so the King’s Palace could not be built at this end due to security reasons, but to confer to the planning principles of traditional forts, the royal highly ornamental Mehmankhana (guest palace) was built at the north end of the fort complex.

Documentation and Condition Mapping

The fort was documented by the MADC team in 2017 with 3D scanning and condition mapping. The project was supported by the department of Culture, Government of Madhya Pradesh. A digital 3D model is now available for future studies. The project is a part of the Madhya Pradesh Monuments Project, a collaboration between Conservation of Madhya Pradesh, Department of Culture and World Monuments Fund.
ORCHHA — A fortified citadel of Bundela Kings

Architectural Components & Features of Raja Mahal

Historic layers of the structures based on architectural analysis and study of plan, elevation, and section.

Spatial analysis of the architecture and its components.

The palace was built in phases and is best known for its fort-like structures. It is surrounded by 2.7 kilometers of walls and has an internal area that is designed to accommodate about 8000 people. The palace is home to several temples and shrines, with structures built in the form of smaller forts and bastions. The palace was extensively restored by several emperors, including a number of Bundela kings, and is still operational today.

Decoration with the use of red sandstone, architectural elements, and the use of the rajas’ titles.

Ground Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

Section A

Section B

West Elevation

Total station survey of the cluster of buildings

World Monuments Fund

Client

MADHYA PRADESH MONUMENTS PROJECT

A collaboration between

Government of Madhya Pradesh, Department of Culture and

World Monuments Fund

International Conference on Fortifications and World Heritage

Documentation of Forts in India

NSC - ICONFORT N5C - DOCUMENTATION

ORGANISATION NAME:

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

DOCUMENTED PROJECT:

ORCHHA — A Fortified Citadel of Bundela Kings

DRAWN TITLE:

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE:

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DATE: 14.02.2013
A fortifed citadel of Bundela Kings

ORCHHA - A fortified citadel of Bundela Kings

Documentation & Building Analysis of Jahanir Mahal

Jahanir Mahal, Orcha located in Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh, is a massive structure with unique ornamentation, elegant in conception and execution. Construction of the edifice appears to have begun in the first half of the 16th century, and then accelerated until completion of the design in the last century. The original plan for this fort was to construct a series of nine small forts, each with a unique architectural style, surrounding a central palace.

Inscriptions seen on the inner side of the eastern corridor on the first floor suggests that construction could have begun around 1542 or 1548 A.D. predicting, it was begun before 1542 A.D. and completed within 20 years of the construction on the site in the year 1560. 1577 and 1578, identified as 304.2, 304.3, and 304.4. The latter dates could be the actual years of construction.

Unlike common belief the palace would not have been explicitly constructed by Jahanir's reception, owing to its long period of construction. Though the palace bears the name Jahanir Mahal, there exists no visible evidence that Jahanir was involved in the construction. The palace could have been influenced by the architectural style of the Bundela Kingdom, which is characterized by the use of vibrant colors and intricate designs.

While the garden complex was originally part of a larger palace, encompassing the entire area of the Jahanir Mahal, it is now used exclusively as a part of the palace's outer gardens.

The garden to the west of the palace was further elaborated to form a small canal connecting the two into a single natural lake. In its original form, there would have been spill points extending the boundaries of the lake towards the north and south. The boundaries were further elaborated to form a small canal connecting the two into a single natural lake.

The difference in the quality of the water is evident in the opening...