

Architecture militaire du Deccan

Une réponse défensive face à la
guerre moderne

Deccan Military Architecture
A response to early modern warfare

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Préface de George Michell

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À ma famille,

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Les dates mentionnées dans cet ouvrage sont indiquées uniquement selon le calendrier grégorien, sauf mention contraire.

En couverture : tour polylobée de Naldurg

En quatrième de couverture : tour Bahmani de Torgal

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PREFACE

A comprehensive history of military architecture in India covering the evolving apparatus of war and the response by local builders in the different parts of the country has yet to be written. Until then, we have Nicolas Morelle's landmark contribution to the subject. Using the most up to date investigative techniques, such as photogrammetry, 3D modelling and aerial photography in both graphic and photographic form, Morelle uncovers a wealth of hitherto unknown data. This he presents in urban maps, architectural plans and detailed descriptions of walls, bastions, moats, towers, gates, cavaliers, granaries, hydraulic features, etc., a meticulous approach that signals an entirely new direction of enquiry.

In this volume, Morelle focuses on the Deccan region of peninsular India, a zone that was for some 400 years at the interface between indigenous Indian culture and the Persianate world, and afterwards with the French and English Colonial enterprise in Asia. This was a period fraught with conflict, but it was also an era of inventive adaptation, nowhere better seen than in the evolution of architectural fortifications that is the author's principal interest. This he explores in a limited number of four sites that he believes are particularly representative.

Firozabad, the first of Morelle's forts, is an exemplar of a military camp established by the Bahmani sultans in the 14th-15th centuries. This fort exhibits influences from pre-Islamic sites in the region, such as Warangal, as well as from contemporary Vijayanagara. Torgal, the next fort, spans the period from the Chalukyas and Hoysalas in the 11th to the 14th centuries to the Marathas in the 18th century. Commercial and religious structures at Torgal help Morelle identify successive constructional episodes.

Further developments in military technology are exemplified at Naldurg, Morelle's third fort. This site had a long career, passing from the Bahmanis in the 15th century to the Nizam Shahis and Adil Shahis in the 16th-17th centuries, and from them to the Mughals and eventually the Nizams in the 18th century. Naldurg overlooks a river gorge with a great dam and is of particular interest for its hydraulic features. Furthermore, its ramparts, gates and cavaliers reveal the impact of artillery warfare. Bellary, the last of Morelle's forts, though dating back to the 17th century, was substantially modified by French engineers employed by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan in the second half of the 18th century. It illustrates the introduction of European fortification strategies.

It can only be hoped that the present volume will inspire other researchers to apply Morelle's surveying techniques and descriptive accounts to other Indian fortified sites, not necessarily restricted to the Deccan. Only in this way will a more complete understanding of the evolutionary phases of India's military architecture emerge.

George Michell
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