GAṆḌIKṆṬA to-day is a village of less than two thousand inhabitants situated on a hill on the southern bank of the river Pennār, about five miles west of Jammalamāḍugu, Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh. The name is comprised of two Telugu names—Gaṇḍi, a g̣orge and Koṭa, a fort. An attempt is made in the following pages to reconstruct the political history of the Gaṇḍikotā sima during the Vijayanagara period—1509 to 1650 A.D. Under the rule of the Vijayanagara kings the sima constituted an important administrative division. A number of simas were grouped into a rāiva. The simas in their turn were sub-divided into a number of smaller administrative divisions like rādu, prantya, and sthala.

Gaṇḍikotā sima as an administrative division appears in the inscriptions of Vijayanagara period only from the time of Krishṇadēvarāya. An inscription of his time from Gulya, Ālūr Taluk, Bellary district dated in Śaka 1431 (1509 A.D) refers to the Lord of

Yet turn in the Gaḍikōta sima. After the death of Mallikarjuna the districts in Rayalasima fell into disorder. The Saluva usurpation too led to political confusion. The wars between Purushottama Gajapati and Saluva Narasimha aggravated anarchy in that area. Gaḍikōta and its adjoining territory at that time formed part of Udayagiri Ṛājya.

Krishnadevarāya after coming to the throne made some changes in the military organisation. According to Nuni's "he remained after his coronation at Vijayanagara for a year and a half learning the affairs of the kingdom. He collected an army of thirty-five thousand foot and eight hundred elephants". From Rāvaṇaḥakamā we know that Krishnadevarāya sent his spies to ascertain the political condition in various parts of his Empire after coming to the throne. Among the various places to which spies were sent, mention is made of Chandragiri, Gaḍikōta, Kaḍapa and Nandyāla sthalas. Krishnadevarāya devoted much of his attention

2. The Sambēta chief Vīra Narasimharāya who defied the imperial authority was defeated by Dhūli Basivinayaku depited by Saluva Narasimha for that purpose. (Further Sources: Extract No. 79). Another Sambēta chief Sivarāja who began to collect taxes not only from his pāyankara but in the neighbouring simas was put down by Saluva Narasimha who demolished the fort (Further Sources: Extract No. 80) Saluva Mallideva of Bommavaram too, an enemy of the Emperor was defeated by Saluva Narasimha and his fort and palaces were demolished (Further Sources: Extract No. 82)

3. F.E., p. 316.

in strengthening his military forces because the stability of the Empire depended upon the military organisation. A major portion of the income of the state was spent in reorganising and strengthening the army. He took special care in erecting fortresses and garrisoning them with strong military forces.

Gāndikōṭa was a place of great strategic importance. It would serve Krishṇadēvarāya well as a base of his operations in his future campaigns against the Oriya king who was holding the fort of Uhayagiri from the time of Sāluva Narasimha. Sāluva Narasimha on his death-bed requested his successors to capture the forts of "Bacolol, and Odegary and Conadolgi" with their dependent territories which he could not subdue "because time failed him". But no attempt was made by his immediate successors to recover those fortresses. Krishṇadēvarāya must have realised the strategic importance of Gāndikōṭa and fortified it with a view to use it in his future campaigns against the Gajapati. He formed a new ṣīna with Gāndikōṭa as its headquarters.

The extent of the Gandikota sima can be fixed approximately from the names of villages mentioned as belonging to it in inscriptions. These were identified with villages bearing the same names or with slight changes. Eighty-nine villages mentioned in inscriptions have been identified. These villages are now to be found in the taluks of Pulivendala, Proddatur, Jammalamadugu, Gudivapah, Kamalapuram and Badvel in the Gudivapah district, and the southern portion of the two taluks of Koilkuntla and Sirivell in the Kurnool district. All this area was constituted into what was then known as Gandikota sima. Sima appears to have been the highest administrative division after the rāiva. In extent Gandikota was the largest sima in the Udayagiri rāiva.

Gandikota sima was divided into a number of sub-divisions for the sake of administrative convenience. They were (a) Mulikināti sima, (b) Potladurti sima, (c) Chernuri sima, (d) Sakali sima, (e) Pulivendala

8. Epi. Coll. No. 326 of 1905. Note: Potladurti sima and Chernuri sima formed part of Mulikinādu according to this epigraph.
(g) Pushpagiri, a small administrative division, and Vukuru, a thana, were figures as parts of Mulikinadu also. From the inscriptions cited here it appears that sometimes a sima incorporated within itself another sima. Because Gandikota sima was the largest in extent, it was divided into a number of small simas like Potladevarti sima, Chernuri sima, Cuddapah sima, Sakali sima, etc., for administrative convenience. Prantya, thana, and sthala were smaller administrative divisions than the sima and formed part of a sima. Of all the sub-divisions in the Gandikota sima, Mulikinadu or Mulikinati sima was the largest in extent and in fact Potladevarti sima, Chernuri sima, Pulivendala sima and Pushpagiri prantya figure as parts of Mulikinadu or Mulikinati sima. Such an important place was assigned to Mulikinadu in the territorial divisions because it enjoyed the status of a big administrative division since the days of the Telugu-Chodas.

The early kings of the Sangama dynasty used to appoint princes of the Royal family as Commandants of the various forts. Kampana I, Udagiri Virupanna, Vira Sri Savanna Odhya, Sangama II, Bhaskara alias Bhavadura, Devaraya and Rama Chandira were princes related to the imperial family and they were sent as Governors of rajas and Commandants of forts so that they would gain administrative experience and military training. But the practice was later on discontinued by the kings of Vijayanagara. In his Amuktamalyada, Krishnadivaraya enunciates the principles that should be followed in selecting ministers and appointing commandants of forts. He writes:

"Entrust your fortresses to such Brahmins (Generals) as you are best acquainted with. Do not keep them weak but you give them such strong forces that they can be devoid of fear from enemies."14

"Because a Brahmin would stand to his post even in time of danger and would continue to serve though

reduced to becoming a subordinate to a Kshatriya or a Sudra, it is always advisable for a king to appoint Brahmins as his Officers. 15

"The Commander (of a fort), if he is weak, having no money, no land, elephants and horses cannot defeat the enemy. So (the king) should give him territory well protected by forts and troops. If these are given to anyone but a Brahmin, he may turn against the king himself." 16

"That king can lay his hand on his breast and sleep peacefully who appoints as masters of his fortresses such Brahmins as are attached to himself, are learned in many sciences and arts, are addicted to Dharma, are heroic and have been in his service since before his time, who makes arrangements for storing in those fortresses tigers' cheese (Tel: Puli-jumnu) and other articles to last for a generation." 17

15. Amuktamālaṇa, Canto IV, verse 217.
16. Amuktamālaṇa, Canto IV, verse 256.
17. Amuktamālaṇa, Canto IV, verse 261.

NOTE: 14, 15, 16 and 17 verses, along with others, from Amuktamālaṇa were translated into English by A. Rangaswami Saraswati. See "Political Maxims of the Emperor - Poet Krishnadevarāya" in Journal of Indian History, Vol. IV, pp. 61-88.
Krishnadaśvarāya appears to have put these maxims strictly into practice. He had formulated these principles out of his own experience. He was a king of great ability and his views on politics proceed from practical experience in that sphere. He appointed Saluva Gavindarāja a Brahmin to rule over the fortress of Gāndikōṭa (Saka 1437 = 1515 A.D.).

Saluva Gavindarāja's rule over Gāndikōṭa appears to have come to an end some time before Saka 1448 (1526 A.D.). For in that year three inscriptions obtained from Pōruṇamillā and Katteragāḍhla refer to Avasaram Devarusayya as the Governor of the fort and the śīma of Gāndikōṭa. An undated epigraph from Pandillapallī during the reign of Krishnadaśvarāya mentions Ayyaparasayya who held Gāndikōṭa śīma as amāra. During the subsequent reign Ayyaparasayya held the nāyakāra of the Gāndikōṭa śīma. But he was the governor of the Udayagiri rāya. He gave away the pārūpetya over the Gāndikōṭa śīma to Sāluvaka Narasappayya. In Saka 1462 (1540 A.D.), in the reign of

Achyutadēvarāya, a general Timmarusayya, son of Somarasayya of Chandragiri figures as the ruler of Gaṇḍikōṭa ṭīma. During the same reign, a Brahmin general Bācharasu also ruled over the district of Gaṇḍikōṭa for sometime. But this epigraph is not dated and hence it is not possible to say when he actually ruled over Gaṇḍikōṭa.23 Krishnādēvarāya’s son-in-law Aliya Rāmappayyādeva Mahārāja also held Gaṇḍikōṭa ṭīma for sometime as his nāyankara.24

The policy of appointing only Brahmins as rulers of forts and governors of rājyas was not strictly followed after Krishnādēvarāya. Bāmarāya, while he was protector of the infant son of Krishnārāya and joint ruler along with Achyutadēvarāya, strengthened his position in the state by appointing his friends and relations to the most important posts under the government. In the words of Ferishta, "By degrees raising his family to the highest rank and destroying many of the ancient nobility, Bāmarāya aspired to reign in his

own name". The Anonymous Historian of Göloconda also corroborates this information: Rāmarāya "took pains to strengthen his power by reduction of many troublesome neighbours and elevation of his adherents and relatives". Rafiuddin Shiraji also affirms the same facts: "Rāmarāya conducted the administration for three years, nominally for the son of Krishnarāya during which period he removed all the old nobles and state servants, and appointed his own relatives to high offices". 27

Rāmarāya appears to have granted the fort of Gāṇḍikōṭa and its adjoining territory to the Nandyāla chiefs who were related to him, sometime after the death of Achyutadēvarāya in 1542 A.D., Pemmasāni Yara Timmānāyudu was holding this fort on behalf of the Nandyāla chiefs. Subsequently, Rāmarāya, having lost ground at Vijayanagara on account of the machinations of Salakam Timmāyya* repaired to the fort of Gāṇḍikōṭa and sought the help of the Nandyāla

26. Ibid. p.79.

* Salakam Timmāyya and Salakarāju Tirumala - both the forms of the name refer to the same individual.
chiefs and Pemmasani Yara Timmanayulu. When Salakam Timmayya demanded the surrender of Ramaraya, Pemmasani Yara Timmanayulu boldly refused to do so. Consequently a fierce battle took place at Komali in which Salakam Timmayya and his followers were defeated. Ramaraja and Yara Timmanayulu pursued them as far as Vijayanagara and destroyed them. The fear of the enemy being rooted out in this manner, Ramaraja became the de facto ruler from that time and he rewarded Yara Timmanayulu by giving him much money. The defeat and death of Salakam Timmayya at the hands of Aliya Ramaraya and Pemmasani Yara Timmanayulu occurred in Saka 1465 (1543 A.D.) and in the same year the coronation of Sadashiva took place.

After becoming the de facto ruler of Vijayanagara, Ramaraya further strengthened the position of the Nandyala chiefs by continuing them as rulers of Gandikota. Eventhough the Nandyala chiefs were granted the amaram of the fort of Gandikota and its adjoining territory in 1542 A.D. epigraphic evidence confirming their rule over

Gandikota is available only from 1544 A.D. The first Nandyala chief to rule over the fort of Gandikota was according to an inscription from Hopur dated in Saka 1486 (1544 A.D.), in the reign of Sadaseva, Mahamandalesvara Timmayadeva Maharahja, son of Narsingayadeva Maharahja and grandson of Aabhaladeva Maharahja.29 There are a number of inscriptions which mention him as the ruler of Gandikota and Sakali simag.30 But in view of the fact that the Nandyala chiefs were already ruling over the fort of Gandikota in 1542 A.D. and Yara Timmaayada was acting as the commandant of the fort on their behalf at the time of Namaraya's wars with Salakaraju Tirumala, it may be concluded that Nandyala Timmayadeva Maharahja ruled over the fort of Gandikota from 1542 A.D. to 1548 A.D. He was succeeded by his son Guna Timmayadeva Maharahja. His governorship is attested by two inscriptions.31

In his time Gaṇḍikōṭa rājya was formed. Because of the enormous extent of the sīma and also because of the strategic importance of the fort a separate province with Gaṇḍikōṭa as its headquarters was formed by Sadāśiva. 32 China Timmayyadēva appears to have ruled upto Śaka 1472 (1550 A.D). He acted as the Commandant of the fort for a brief period when he was succeeded by Nandyāla China Aubhalarāja, son of Peda Aubhalaraja.33 He too acted as the commandant of the fort for a brief period for in Śaka 1473 (1551 A.D) he figures as the governor of Mayagiri rājya.34 Evidently he was transferred to another fort. His place as governor of Gaṇḍikōṭa was filled by Nandyāla Narayya- dēva Mahārāja, son of Nārāsingayyadēva Mahārāja.35 He appears to have ruled this area upto Śaka 1477 (1555 A.D). In that year, according to an epigraph from Porumānila, Gaṇḍikōṭa dūrgam along with its

33. V.R. 487 Cuddapah; Ins. Cod. Dist. p.378, No.34.
adjoining territory was assigned as nayankara by Sadasivaraya to Nandyala Timmaraja. He acted as the governor of the fort from Saka 1477 (1555 A.D) to Saka 1490 (1568 A.D). His last inscription in this area is dated in Saka 1490. Evidently he must have been the governor of the fort in between these two dates. The Nandyala chiefs continued to rule over the fort after the battle of Rākṣasi-Tāṅgaṇi. But it is not possible to show the succession list of governors of this fort in a chronological order due to dearth of historical material from inscriptions, which are taken in this account, as the main source of information for the reconstruction of the political history of Gaṇḍikōṭa.

By 1580 A.D. the fort of Gaṇḍikōṭa was held by Nandyala Narasimharaja, a distant cousin of Venkaṭapatiraya II. It was in or about this year Amir-ul-mulk, a general of Sultan Quly Qutb Shah marched against the fort. Narasimharaja resisted for some time but ultimately he gave way and agreed to pay

tribute to the Sultan. Thus Gaṇḍikōṭa ceased to be a feudal fief of the Vijayanagar king temporarily. Sultan Quli entrusted the defence of Gaṇḍikōṭa to Sanjar Khān. But, it was taken back during the same reign by Velugōti Chennappa and Yōhāmanāyaka. The Sultan of Gōlcoṇḍa had to recognise the river Krishna as boundary between his territory and the kingdom of Vijayanagara. But, unfortunately for Venkaṭapatirāya II, the troubles at Gaṇḍikōṭa did not end with the Muslim invasion: Nandīśa Krishnāmarāja, son of Narasimharāja, who succeeded his father as the ruler of Gaṇḍikōṭa refused to pay tribute and raised the standard of rebellion. Venkaṭapatirāya II marched in person against the rebel accompanied by Matla Ellamarāja and Pemmasāni China Timmānāyuddu II. At Jambulamaḍugu Krishnāmarāja sustained a severe defeat and was later on taken to Chandragiri where he remained as a prisoner until his death. For the valuable service rendered by Pemmasāni China Timmānāyuddu II, the king gave him the fort of Gaṇḍikōṭa and its adjoining territory.

a stronghold of the Nandyula chiefs became the capital of Pemmasani China Timmanayulu II, and his descendants. This rebellion and its suppression occurred in 1598. A.D.

Pemmasani China Timmanayudu III and the Siege of Gandikota by Mir Jumla

The siege of Gandikota is one of the epic episodes of South Indian History. Gandikota (Gandi-gorge + kota-fortress) as the name indicates is a fortress of the gorge. It is a strongly fortified hill fortress, which is located just at the entrance of the gorge through which the river Pennar rushes. The gorge is rather narrow and the hill-sides are nearly perpendicular. This was the place, where the French jeweller-traveller, Tavernier, was interviewed by the celebrated Mir Jumla of Golconda.

"The fort is built", says Tavernier, "on the summit of a high mountain and the sole means of

41. For the identification of Pemmasani Timmanayulu with Pemmasani China Timmanayulu II and other details relating to his achievements etc. Vide. Infra. pp. 299-304.

42. For the identification of this chief, Vide. Infra. pp. 303-305.

access to it is by a very difficult road, which is only 20 or 25 feet wide and in certain parts 7 or 8. On the right of the road, which is cut in the mountain, there is a fearful precipice, at the base of which runs a large river. When on the mountain, you see a small plain about a quarter of a league wide and half a league long. It is sown with rice and millet and is watered by many small springs. At the level of the plain to the south, where the town is built on a point, the limits are formed by precipices, with two rivers which bound the point at the base. So, that in order to enter the town, there is but one gate on the plain side and it is fortified in this direction with three good walls of cut stone, with the ditches at their bases faced with the same stone. Consequently during the siege, the inhabitants had only to guard a space of 400 or 500 paces wide.44

The chief of Gandikota, Pammasaani Timmânâyulu "was considered to be one of the best and bravest commanders among the idolaters".45 He had two


45. Ibid.
guns to protect the fort, a 12 pounder and the other 7 or 8, the first placed on the gate, and the other on the point of a bastion. "Until the Nawab found a means to mount the guns above", writes Tavernier, "he lost many men from the frequent sorties made by the besieged. The Rajah ........... was in the town...
..... and the Nawab seeing at length that the place could not be taken unless guns were carried up to the heights, ordered all the Franks who were in the services of the king as gunners to come to him and promised to each four months wages more than their ordinary pay, if they could find some means of conveying guns to the heights. In this they were successful. They mounted four guns with which they bombarded the place and they were so fortunate as to direct them against the gun which was on the gate and which they rendered useless. When they had battered down half the gate of the town, the besieged capitulated; they evacuated the place under honourable conditions .......46.

But if the heroic defenders "evacuated the place under honourable conditions", Mir Jumla

46. Ibid.
certainly did not take possession of it by honourable means. Thévenot bears witness to the fact that the Golconda general took the place by treachery and breach of faith. The Gandikota Kaifiyat has a graphic story about this siege of the fort. When the guns were fired, we are told, the explosion was so terrific that pregnant women had abortions, and men who were in the vicinity died of the shock. Mir Jumla laid siege for any length of time but was not able to take the fort. Ultimately he resorted to treachery. He sent a message to Timmanayudu, the governor of the fort, that if he surrendered, he would give him Gutti fort in exchange. Timmanayudu replied saying that the Gutti fort should be first surrendered to him and then he would evacuate Gandikota. Mir Jumla reiterated that the Nawab wanted that Timmanayudu should first surrender Gandikota and then true to their word they would give the Gutti fort in exchange. Friends and relations of Timmanayudu advised him to believe in the promise.

47. Sen, Dr. Surendranath (Editor): Indian Travels of Thévenot and Carezi (New Delhi, 1949), p.145.

of Mir Jumla and surrender Gandikota first. They pointed out that Mir Jumla was a great general who occupied a large part of the Vijayanagara territory west of Gandikota and if the offer was refused, sooner or later, Gandikota would be captured by the Muslim soldiers. Timmännayudu at last decided to evacuate the fort of Gandikota and came down the hill with all the members of his family, relatives and friends and encamped on the plains of Gandikota. Mir Jumla immediately occupied the fort. Timmännayudu sent word to Mir Jumla asking him to issue a firman ceding the fort of Gutti. The followers of Mir Jumla told him that the strong fort of Gutti should not be given to Timmännayudu lest he should become very powerful and to keep up his promise outwardly, the village of Hanuma Gutti in Kamalapuraum taluk may be given to him. Accordingly Mir Jumla issued a firman to Timmännayudu giving him the village of Hanuma Gutti. Timmännayudu was enraged at this ghastly treachery and replied: "You have first promised to give the fort of Gutti in exchange for Gandikota. Now you have issued a firman giving the hamlet of Hanuma Gutti. It is not befitting the dignity of a Wazir. By deviating from the path
of justice and truth you have made me a Fakir. You will also become a Fakir in the fort of Gaḍḍikōṭa which you have occupied by treachery*. Timnā- nāyuḷu did not care to take possession of the village of Hanuma Guttī. Along with his relations and followers he migrated towards Dharmavaram in the South.

Once Mir Jumla secured possession of the fort, he indulged in vandalism dictated by fanaticism and cupidity. A very interesting story is told by Tavernier who was with Mir Jumla at the time: "The Nawab having taken Gaḍḍikōṭa and desiring to have some cannon inside the fort, where it was very difficult to carry them, proposed to Maille (a French gunner in the service of the Nawab) to cast twenty pieces, ten of 48 pounds and ten others of 24 pounds; this Maille undertook to do. He was supplied with copper for this purpose from all quarters and the Nawab collected a quantity of idols which had been removed from the pagodas which his army had visited. There is in Gaḍḍikōṭa a pagoda which is considered to be one of the principal in
India where there are many idols, some being of gold and others of silver. Among those idols there were six of copper, three of which were seated on their heels and the three others were about 10 ft. high. After Maille had made all preparations to melt these metals and the idols which had been brought from different places, he accomplished the melting of all except the six large idols of the famous pagoda at Gândiköta. It was impossible for him to melt them, no matter how much the Nawab expended and he even threatened the priests of the pagoda whom he accused of having bewitched the idols. In short, Maille never accomplished making a single cannon, one being split, another incomplete, and so he relinquished all the work he had undertaken and sometime afterwards quitted the service of the Nawab. 49

The capture of the fort of Gândiköta is corroborated by other sources of information. Khafi-khan who consulted Shāh Jehan Nāma, writes: "Mir Jumla having gone to Gajiköta brought under the

49. Tavernier, op. cit., p.284.
suzerainty by means of the blow of his sword and strategy the Rajahs who were unsubdued so far and enormous wealth and had an army of "foreigner" under his control and then he began to think himself independent." 50 Mir Jumla is said to have succeeded in ousting the Pemmasani chiefs of Gandikota with the consent of the Sultan of Bijapur. 51 The Kaviya of Tolla Madugu states: "while Pemmasani Timmunayulu was ruling, the Kutupu Saha or Golconda laid siege to the fort of Gandikota in the year Vikriti and captured it." 52 The Keifivat of Sugumanchipalli also corroborates this information. It states: "while Pemmasani Timmunayulu was ruling at Gandikota the Nawab came from Golconda in Saka 1571 Vikriti and captured it." 53 Thus the fort of

   b)Dr.J.N. Sarkar also maintains that Mir Jumla captured Gandikota in the spring of 1650 A.D. See Dr.J.N. Sarkar: op.cit. Appendix B. Date of the conquest of Gandikota by Mir Jumla, pp.299-300.
Gandikota fell into the hands of Muslims. The presence of the Golconda "Mudrakarta" at Gandikota in Saka 1572 (1650 A.D) is testified by an inscription of Anumpalli village, Gooty Taluk, Anantapur district.

The victory of Mir Jumla was complete and decisive for subsequently no attempt was made either by Sri Ranga III or by Pemmasani Timmannayudu to recover the fort of Gandikota. The Pemmasani chiefs migrated to Dharmavaram in the South and settled down there. Thus Gandikota which had been an important fort of the Nayas of Vijayanagara from Saka 1431 (1509 A.D) to Saka 1571 (1649 A.D) fell into the hands of Muslims and became one of their strong holds. The name of Pemmasani Timmannayudu and the siege of Gandikota have become legends in the annals of South India.