



Garhwal Forts

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Why in News

Recently, a study has identified **193 sites having either intact or ruins of Garhwal forts and fortalices** spread along the north, east and southern regions of the Garhwal Himalayas.

This is the first of its kind database. A total of **36 major forts** and **12 prominent fort clusters** have been identified.

Key Points

- **Garhwal Forts:**
 - **About :**
 - A majority of **medieval forts in the Garhwal Himalayas** of Uttarakhand were strategically built to form clusters.
 - The forts, dating back to the **8th century** Common Era (CE), were built at diverse altitude zones like valleys, along the ridges and prominent hilltops, some **standing more than 3,000 metres above Mean Sea Level (MSL)** in the Garhwal Himalayas.
 - These well networked forts were built either during or after the downfall of the **Katyuri dynasty**.
 - **Importance:**
 - Geographically, the forts were built away from one another. But the ruler's back then ensured that they were **surrounded with smaller fortalices**, which **primarily functioned as watchtowers**.
 - These fortalices were erected and positioned around 15 km periphery of a major fort.
 - Numerous such fortalices then formed a strategic network, **enabling them to relay information, particularly when invaded by enemies**.
Fire, smoke or similar light signals could have been the common means to convey messages.

- **History of Garhwal:**
 - **Katyuri Dynasty:**
 - History suggests that between 700 CE and 800 CE, the rulers of the **Katyuri dynasty** divided this region into many small mandals or units for administrative purposes.
 - However, as the dynasty began to politically weaken around the turn of the millennium, these units came under the rule of Garhpatis or chiefdoms, each of whom built individual forts.
 - **Foreign Attacks:**
 - Since the Garhwal Himalayas are located en route to many religious places, it often came under foreign attacks and faced enemy invasions, mainly led by the **Nepalese and the Tibetans**.
 - The invasion by Askochalla and Krachalla, two Nepalese kings during 1100–1200 CE, is considered among the first foreign attacks here.
 - **Consolidation:**
 - By the 15th century, King Ajaypal, the **37th king of the Parmar dynasty**, **consolidated all these multiple chiefdoms** in the region into a single state. This is the present day Garhwal.

Katyuri Dynasty

- The Katyuri kings were a **medieval ruling clan** of present-day Uttarakhand, India. They ruled over the region now known as Kumaon from 700 to 1200 CE.
- The Katyuri dynasty was **founded by Vashudev Katyuri** (sometimes spelled Vasu Dev or Basu Dev).
- At its peak, the **Katyuri dynasty of Kumaon extended from Sikkim in the east to Kabul, Afghanistan in the west**, before fragmenting into numerous principalities by the 12th century.

Source:IE