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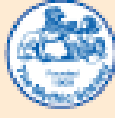
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An Ayyavole Inscription of the Fourteenth Century: A Note

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Abstract

Ayyavole inscription refers to the operation change pre-Vijayanagar to Vijayanagara period in southern coastal Karnataka, there was a gradual decline in Ayyavole mentioned in the Hoysala inscription to Ayyavole of Vijayanagar period, during the Vijayanagar period, administration at Ayyavole was more centralized, while Hoysalas gave greater freedom to Ayyavole. However, there were some changes in Ayyavole, it was similar to pre-Vijayanagar times. **Keywords:** Rashtrakuta, Coinage, Palaeography, Iconography, Nirupama, Garuda, Nagari, Telugu-Kannada.

Keywords: Ayyavole, Hoysala, Vijayanagar, nanadeshis, nadas

Ayyavole Five Hundred was an ubhaya nanadesi (comprising two merchant guilds presumably local and external or svadeshi and paradeshi). It operated mostly in South India. The scholars such as R.Champakalakshmi and Y.Subbarayalu¹ have documented the activities of Ayyavole in Tamil Nadu while in the context of Karnataka, there are not many specific studies that deal with this organization. In this context, it becomes important to analyze this trade guild, particularly with reference to Karnataka.

Generally, scholars have not discussed the role of Ayyavole Five Hundred under the Vijayanagar. For instance, Meera Abraham, who made a detailed discussion regarding the Ayyavole Five Hundred in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, has not discussed the

significance of the inscription belonging to the Vijayanagar. Abraham argues that the Ayyavole of the pre-Vijayanagar period was not the same as the Ayyavole of the Vijayanagar inscription. Her argument is based on the change in the 'deities' mentioned in the inscriptions belonging to these periods.² However, the present paper disagrees with the assertion of Abraham and argues that they represented a single organization and there was continuity between this organization found in the Hoysala and Vijayanagar periods.

This paper has implications to study different challenges that the Ayyavole faced while operating in the business world. One needs to note that this organization remained in operation for more than five hundred years. Up to the fourteenth century,

there were no major changes in the area of its operation of Ayyavole. However, in the fourteenth century, it changed its area of operation. For instance, the pre-Vijayanagar inscriptions do not refer to the operation of Ayyavole in southern coastal Karnataka (today comprising Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts). However, the Vijayanagar inscription refers to its operation in Mangalore.³ We argue that the main reason for this development was the incorporation of this region by the Hoysalas initially and Vijayanagar later. It is also important to note that Ayyavole, being a trans-regional organization depended on a strong state system. Consequently, it was found in the regions controlled by the major kingdoms such as the Cholas, Chalukyas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar. However, in the Vijayanagar period, it diverted its attention from Tamil Nadu to Karnataka and the Andhra region. The main reason for this change was the fall of the Cholas, a strong state that existed before the Vijayanagar in the Tamil region. It was apparent that in the Tamil region, this trade guild would not obtain the same support from the State that it experienced earlier. Consequently, it shifted its operations completely to Karnataka and the Telugu-speaking region. However, one may note that Ayyavole was already present in these regions, particularly Karnataka under the Hoysalas. There are large numbers of references to the Ayyavole under the Hoysalas. The Ayyavole established several southern Ayyavoles, most of whom were found in the southern part of Karnataka. The Hoysala patronage was critical for the growth of this organization.

This inscription is also important on another count. It shows the possible reason for the decline of Ayyavole. A few historians attempted to analyze the reasons for its decline. Champakalakshmi

argued that it declined due to monetization and competition from other nanadeshis. Monetization may be a reason for its decline in the Tamil region but not in Karnataka, which witnessed considerable monetization in the twelfth century. However, one can accept the contention of Champakalakshmi that the Ayyavole declined due to competition.⁴ This is apparent even under the Hoysalas, as the inscriptions refer to not one but several *nanadeshis*.⁵ In some cases, even though *nanadeshis* are mentioned, Ayyavole is not referred to, thereby showing that apart from Ayyavole other nanadeshis took the cue from this organization to trade in different regions.

Gavareshwara: The Merchant Deity

Based on the identification of the deities mentioned in the Vijayanagar inscription, Meera Abraham believed that the Vijayanagar Ayyavole was not the same as the Ayyavole mentioned in the Hoysala inscription. While the Hoysala inscription refers to Gavareshwara, a prime deity of the Ayyavole, the Vijayanagar inscription mentions Gavareshwara and Ganeshwara. It is also mentioned that Gavareshwara was the signature of the Ayyavole. As this deity is mentioned in the Hoysala and Vijayanagar inscriptions, there was continuity between the Ayyavole mentioned in the inscriptions belonging to this period. One may note that Gavareshwara represents the Gavares, the corn dealers. The Gavares are represented as Kavares in the Tamil Nadu inscriptions, thereby showing that there was a connection between the Kannada and Tamil traders of Ayyavole Five Hundred. However, Noboru Karashima expressed his reservation to accept that Aihole was the place of origin of Ayyavole Five Hundred even though a large number of inscriptions appear to make this claim.⁶ The reference to Gavares and Ga-

vareshvara (Kavareshvara) in the Kannada and Tamil inscriptions proves beyond doubt that both belonged to the same trade guild. However, one can accept that the Tamil traders dominated Ayyavole in the Tamil region and South East Asia as most of these inscriptions were written in Tamil.

This inscription was issued from Belur, an important urban centre belonging to the Hoysalas. The region is called Hoysala territory. The Vijayanagar administrators were aware that previously Belur was under the control of the Hoysalas. This is important evidence to show the continuity between the Ayyavole found in the Hoysala and Vijayanagar inscriptions.

There are similarities between the epithets found in the pre-Vijayanagar and Vijayanagar Ayyavole inscriptions. For instance, both mention that they were born along the lines of Bhaladeva, Khandali, Vasudeva and Mulabhadra. They are the lords of the city of Ahichhatrapura. In this context, one can mention that the term Ahichhatra refers to Ayyavole or Aihole in the Bijapur district. The Ayyavole of Karnataka maintained the relationship with the Aihole where it was established for the first time under the Chalukyas of Badami. These records agree that they belonged to the *Balanju* sect. They represent various values such as honesty and integrity. They have to follow the religious rules or the *dharma* of *Balanju*. The Vijayanagar inscription, like its Hoysala counterparts, refers to southern Varanasi. The records also claim that the trade guild was an *ubhaya nanadesi* or two nanadesis. According to Meera Abraham, they represent *svadeshi* and *paradeshi* traders, even though it may also mean two *nanadesis*.⁷ However, the argument of Abraham is convincing as the Ayyavole traders travelled from one place to the other. Consequently, they were found in different parts of South India. The pre-Vijayanagar

and Vijayanagar inscriptions also mention *nakharas* and *mummuri-dandas*. *Nakharas* or the *nagaras* were the market/urban centres. The latter may be considered as the associates and the guards of the Ayyavole traders. However, in some cases, *mummuri-dandas* are also shown as trading on their own. In any case, they are mostly associated with Ayyavole Five Hundred. The presence of *nakharas*, *mummuri-danda* and *Gavareshvara* show the continuity between the Ayyavole before and during the Vijayanagar period. The inscription also mentions the sign manual of Gavareshvara. Consequently, this term is the most important signature of the Ayyavole Five Hundred.

Change

The inscription in question also exhibits a few major changes. By this time, it appears that the kings and their subordinates took more interest in the collection of commercial taxes even though the *nadus* continued to collect the rural taxes. In the twelfth century, the kings allowed trade guilds to collect commercial taxes. However, in the Vijayanagar period, it changed as the state exhibited considerable interest in the collection of taxes from the traders. In actuality, the leaders of Ayyavole, in this inscription, state that they have agreed to remit the taxes to an important official. A long list of taxes is mentioned. It is apparent that the State collected a huge amount of urban taxes, which became the basis of the state authority.⁸

A second change that we note in this inscription is the area of operation. The inscription gives the list of various towns where there was the presence of Ayyavole Five Hundred. It mentions the towns such as Dwarasamudra, Gutti, Penugundi, Adavani, Chandragiri, Kanchi, Padevidu, Man-

galuru, Barakuru, Honnavura, Chandavura, Araga, Chandragutti, Annigere, Huligere, Talakalambi, Singapattana and other towns. It may be mentioned here that the western coastal towns (particularly those belonging to Karnataka and Goa) were generally not mentioned in the pre-Vijayanagara Ayyavole inscriptions. However, the present record refers to the western coastal towns such as Honnavar, Barkur and Mangalore, a clear sign of the expansion of the Vijayanagar to these regions. It also shows that these regions formed the core territory of the Vijayanagar. On the other hand, the inscription does not refer to the towns that belonged to the Tamil region, thereby indicating that after the fall of the Cholas, the Ayyavole had shifted its focus from Tamil Nadu to Karnataka and the Telugu speaking region. The term *haliyajanguli* may refer to the armed bodyguards who accompanied the Ayyavole traders. It is possible that these traders obtained the service of the new militant class apart from the *mummuri-dandus*. Under the Vijayanagar, there was a practice of the collection of commercial taxes by government officials. The state attempted to directly collect the taxes and use the same in the day-to-day administration.

Another change that one could note in the case of this inscription is the reference to *salumule balanja* while the earlier inscriptions only mentioned *balanja*. It is possible that Ganeshvara was the deity of the *Salumule-balanja* while Gavareshvara was the deity of the Ayyavole. A 1382 CE inscription mentions refers to the *salumule* of different *nadus* of Vijayanagar. Some of these *nadus* are Kunche nadu, Huligereya nadu and Bale nadu. It appears that *salumule* is the trading association belonging to these *nadus*. They maintained a close relationship with the state officials. For instance, *salumule* is associated with the official named Mude Dannayaka or the military officer. *Salumule*

and the officers were involved in a grant, as there is a reference to the term *umboli*. The term *settiluna* also indicates that the *salumule* traders were given the position of *setfi* or merchants.⁹ A Vijayanagar inscription belonging to 1351 C.E. mentions the deity Gavareshvara and Salumule, thereby showing the continuity between the Ayyavoles belonging to different periods.¹⁰

A Telugu inscription found in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh proves the fact that the Ayyavole under the Vijayanagar maintained its unique character. It mentions the deities Ganeshvara and Gavareshvara. As we mentioned earlier, Gavareshvara represents the signature of Ayyavole. In addition, it mentions *salumule*. It also mentions *ubhaya nanadeshi*. The leader of this trade guild was Prathvi Setti RayanaMantri Bhas-kara.¹¹ After the decline of Vijayanagar in the western part of South India, Ayyavole shifted to the Telugu region (eastern part of South India) where the Vijayanagar continued to rule in the early seventeenth century. It also shows that the Ayyavole followed the major political powers and constantly shifted its base. However, while doing so it also retained its original epithets.

Conclusion

It is true that under the Vijayanagar, the Ayyavole experienced considerable changes. It was closely associated with the State. However, it was compelled to delegate its authority to the State. It also shows the nature of the Vijayanagar state, which attempted to centralize its authority, particularly in the core territories. It is possible that competition from other *nanadeshis* was mainly responsible for the fall of the Ayyavole even though it continued to be mentioned in the seventeenth-century inscriptions. The emergence of *salumule balanja* was another

development. It referred to the traders who were associated with the *sahamale* of various nadus of Vijayanagar. While Hoysalas gave greater freedom to Ayyavole, under the Vijayanagar it was considerably controlled by the State. However, one can note the continuity between the Ayyavole of Hoysala and the Vijayanagar period. Gavreshwara deity was the signature used by the Ayyavole

inscription found in both Hoysala and Vijayanagar contexts. *Mummuri-dandas* were associated with these trade guilds. It is apparent that the militant groups supported the Ayyavole while travelling from one place to the other. They also have similar origins. Even though there were some changes in the Ayyavole of Vijayanagar, it was also similar to the pre-Vijayanagar Ayyavole.

Appendix

Taxes to be paid by the Ayyavole traders to the government official Mudda Dannayaka

Rate	Item
¼ bele per gadyana	Of the rental land in cash (honguttage) of the village to sthavarasthala;
Bele per gadyana	Monetary revenue (suvamadaya) of the villages, which gives a certain share in lieu of rent
Two ballas for every Khanduga	Paddy, various grains, income from both
Details of muleya svamya	
PERFUME	
2 panas for every 100 gadyanas of the price	Of nine precious gems
Haga per bundle	Of camphor
Bele per	Fennekuru
Bele per	Tola of musk
Haga per	Nannu of saffron
¼ adda per	Tola of agilu (fragrance)
Adda per	Tola of sandal
Haga per	Every three kanajus of sandu, civet, viverra civetta (punugu)
CLOTHS	
Bele per	Fair of Devagiri cloth

Visa per	Pair of marriage cloth
Adda per	Malavi of eighty bleached cloth
Adda per	Tolavi of silk yarn (pattinulu)
Haga per	Tola of silk cloth
Haga per	Malavi or blankets
Adda per	Malavi or yarn
Visa per	Kageyapatte
Haga per	Malavi or figured carpet and carpet
Haga per	Malave of Palmyra leaves
Haga per	Malave of patte of sack
GRAINS	
Bele per load	Paddy, jowar, raggy, navane, millet (baragu) and save for six grains
PULSES	
Haga per load	Wheat, Bengal gram, sesamum, common flax (agase), kusube, green gram, uddu, togari, horse gram, etc.
Bele per load	Rice
Haga per	Manyada ettu coming from outside
Adda per load	Of oil and ghee
Bele per	A load of salt
Haga per	A load of jaggery
Adda per	A load of sugar
Haga per	Load of areca-nuts
Haga per	A load of betel leaves
Adda per	A load of black pepper
Haga per	A load of turmeric, onton, cumin seeds, a box of fenugreek (mentheya damva?), sabbastge, mustard, etc.
Haga per	A cart load of sugarcane
Haga per	A load of green ginger
Haga per	A load of lime fruits
Haga per	Cart-load of coconuts and vegetables
Bele per	Head load of fruits, nuts, vegetables
One betel leaf per day	For every floor shop (padara) of betel leaves
One areca-nut per day	For every floor shop of areca-nuts

Bele per	Cart-load of timber
Bele per	A load of grass and fuel
Bele per	Each horse within the marketplace
Bele per Gadyana for	Holeyakudure, khedleyakudure, and nadakudure
Haga per gadyana	Elephant
Bele per gadyana	Camel
Bele per gadyana	Slaves
Bele per gadyana	Per cart
Bele	Ox
Haga per	Female buffalo
Huluvtisa per	Goat and sheep walking on foot
Bele per gadyana	Custom dues both the ways
One pana per annum	Every man of Parivara
Five panas per annum	Each horse of the amara-dannayakara kattale
One pana per annum	Every Jtvitagara who earns between ten and hundred hons
Two pana per annum	Every Jtvitagara who earns more than 100 hons
Two panas per annum	For every hundred gadyanas for the umbal of the prince and the king

The sign-manual of salumule: Sri-Ganesvara- Gavaresvaradevaru

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- 5.For example, *Epigraphia Carnatica III (new series)* Nanjangud, no. 213.
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- 8.The same has been provided in the form of a table in the appendix.
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