

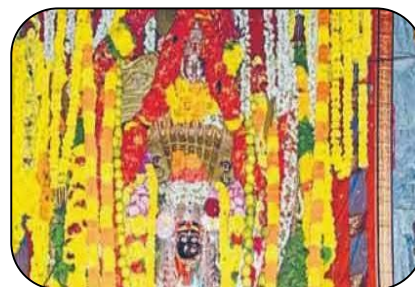


PALEGARS OF SUGUTURU

Kavitha K. M.¹ and Prof. L. P. Raju²

¹Assistant Professor, Research Student,
Department of Studies and Research in History and
Archaeology, Tumkur University, Tumkur.

²Department of Studies and Research in History and
Archaeology Tumkur University, Tumakuru.



ABSTRACT

The Palegars or local lords played a major role in the political history of medieval Karnataka. Palegar was the feudal title for a class of territorial administrative and military governors appointed by the Nayaka rulers of Southern India (notably Vijayanagara Empire, Madurai Nayakas and the Kakatiya dynasty) during the 16th–18th centuries. The Palegar's role was to administer their Palaiyams (territories) from their fortified centres. Their chief functions were to collect taxes, maintain law and order, run the local judiciary, and maintain a battalion of troops for the king. They served as regional military and civil administrators. In turn they were to retain 1/4 of the revenue collected as tax, and submit the remaining to the king's treasury. The Palegars also at times founded villages, built dams, constructed tanks and built temples. Also the rulers taxed regions according to the cultivable and fertility of the land. Their armed status was also to protect the civilians from robbers and dacoits who were rampant in those regions and from invading armies which often resorted to pillaging the villages and countryside.

KEYWORDS: Palegar, Feudal, law and order, military, status, tax.

INTRODUCTION :

The South-Eastern region of Karnataka consisting of Kolar, Bangalore and Chikkaballapura districts had been always acted as parts of administration during the major kingdoms Cholas, kadambas, Gangas (Kolar was their 1st capital only for few years), Hoysalas and the Vijayanagar etc. After the downfall of Vijayanagar Kingdom petty palegars belonged to Morasu Vokkaliga caste made these places as the administrative centers and they developed into political, economic ,religious and cultural strongholds.

OBJECTIVES

The present study is meant to fulfil the following specific objectives.

1. To know in detail the administration of Suguturu palegars
2. To know about the lineage of Suguturu Palegar family
3. To study in detail the religious policies, practices and the works of these rulers
4. To make the society aware about the importance and contributions of this family.

METHODOLOGY

Historical and analytical method is used in the present study. The entire study is mainly based on primary source of information. Secondary data is also used to supplement the information gleaned from primary sources.

The political history of Morasu Vokkaligas is one of the fascinating periods in Karnataka History. They were the subordinates of Vijayanagar empire and became powerful by the end of 16th century. For more than 500 years they ruled the south eastern part of Karnataka. They were able to establish an organized and stable administration during this period. They were responsible for the rise of many cities, towns, forts, agraharas, maths, temples and many more.

Among the Morasu Vokkaliga Palegars of Avati, Yelahanka, Chikkaballapura, Masti, Harapanayakanahalli, Suguturu, this research paper is focused on the Sugutur palegars of Kolar who ruled the region around 500 years with their benevolent administration.

On the basis of inscriptions and available literature, it can be said that Devappa Gowda was the originator of the family. Lakkondahalli Inscriptions of 1379 A.D. reports that Devaiha Wodeya son of Naganna Wodeya was the Commander-in-Chief under Vijayanagar ruler Immadi Harihara in 1377 to 1404 A.D.

There are 105 inscriptions about sugutur Palegars which reveal different informations. The literary works 'Maleyaraja Charite' of Seje Siddalingarya courtier of Mummadi Tamma and 'Shankara samhite' of Mummadi Tamma throws scanty information. Recently available kaifiyat gives information about Anekal branch of this family. Other works of neighbouring rulers such as 'Kempgowdana Jaya Prashasti' 'Yashak Prathapa keerthanegalu' help us to decide the periods of these palegars.

Devappa Goeda, appears to have ruled over the provinces around Sugutur from the last decade of 14th century to 1421 A.D. The earliest inscription² referred to Sugutur prabhus and their administration issued by Thammegouda of Sugutur is available at Jodipura village in Malur Taluq, belongs to 1422 A.D. In this Thammegowda has mentioned about his father Devappa Gowda. Another inscription referring to Devappa Gowda is found at Valigenahalli in Chintamani Taluk³.

His grandson, Chikkaraya Thammegouda issued that inscription. After him, his son Thammappa Gowda (1422-1464) had begun to rule from 1422 A.D. as revealed by the inscription reported from Jodipura Village in Malur. The Hosakote Copper plate inscription reports that he had constructed a new fort earlier than 1494 A.D. and had granted Hosahalli village to his guru Nijaguna Sujana Swamy.¹

He was succeeded by his son Chikkaraya Thammegowda (1496-1542 A.D.). During his times, he expanded his kingdom in all the four directions. When Penugonda was seized by Muslims he was able to retreat them by exhibiting his valour. Impressed by his courage vijayanagar ruler Narasinga Raya endowed him with a unique honour 'Gandapendera' an anklet worn on leg. Gummalapura inscriptions of his period in 1474 A.D. registers about a grant made to Venkateshwara Upadhaya, a Brahmin². In 1527 A.D. it is stated that he had constructed a beautiful Chennakeshava temple at Billagondanahalli (present Surjapura). After seven decades of his rule, he was succeeded by his son Thammegowda II (1542-1608 A.D.). His wife was Veerambike and he had a sister by name Halusamma. Venkatambe was his wife as stated by Shankarasamhite. Inscriptions of 1600 A.D. explains about a village Kadajakkana Halli in Anekal Taluk was granted as Nettarakoduge by him. Ayyappagowda, Nanjappagowda, kempagowda and Thimmiahgowda were his brothers. Ayyappagowda was controlling Mulabagal and Kolar. When Mummadi Thammegowda came to power after the death of his father Immadi Thammegowda in 1608 A.D., Ayyappagowda seized his power and occupied Hosakote, Bilagondanahalli and other surrounding places. But, Kempgowda II, palegar of the neighbouring Bangalore opposed this illegal occupation, killed ayyappagowda in 1612 A.D. and reinstated Thammegowda III at Hosakote.

At the age of 11 years he was strong enough to defeat Ibrahim Sikander Badshah of Adilshah as revealed by the work Maleyaraja Charitre of his court poet Sejjeya Siddalingarya. He himself was a poet, had composed literary works in three languages Kannada, Telugu and Sanskrit. He had patronized not only Kannada and Telugu poets but also the Sanskrit poets. Among them Baddaveti dattayar who wrote 'Ganita Deepika'. He had achieved mastery in sabda, tarka, Vedanta and vishaya. He wrote Rajendra Chola Charite, Kumaranya, Soundarash Charite in Telugu language, Nandinatha Charite, Shankara Samhite in Kannada. He had written Nandinatha charita a ayakshagana based work, 'Shankara Samhite' a shatpadi work. Above all, he had also written books in Sanskrit language, Koumudi Vyakarana and Rasikamana Ranjana.

In 1638 A.D., the Commander-in-chief of Bijapur army Ranadullaha Khan invaded the provinces of Kolar, Hoaskote etc and thereafter they were given to Marath ruler Shahji. According to the agreement signed between maratha's Shahji and Sugutur families around 1638 A.D., Shahji had owned the provinces of sugutur, hosakote Jangamakote and Kolar. He had also accepted the responsibility of bringing up the child Chikkaraya Basavagowda, the love succend of Sugutur palegar family. Punganuru, Saddamu, Kunduru, piler, Guntical places were given to Halasamma, the maternal aunt of the child and the provinces of Anemalai and its surroundings to the South of Hosakote to Chikkaraya Thammegowda III who was then ruling Hosakote as Jagir. As a consequence, Anekal fort was built in Anekal. Amrita mallikarjuna temple and Thammamubidi kere was constructed and Anekal name was given to the place.

In 1642 A.D. Mummadi Thamme gowda would have died and he was succeeded by Mummadi Karudu Tamme Gowda would have succeeded him. In the meana while Shahji had died in 1660 A.D. and his younger son Venkoji had was captured in Tanjore in 1675 A.D. On the condition of payment of tributes and taxes an agreement had been made according to which Hoskote and Suguturu restored to palegars of Suguturu.

Chikkaraya chikka Thammegowda [1670-1693 A.D.] appers to have continued as subordinate ruler of the marathas, and in 1686, the province of Hoskote was taken over by the Mughals. Sira, having been transferred into a provincial centre and Khasin khan, as a provincial official, administered from there on behalf of the Mughals. An inscription dated 1688 AD reported from Mulabagilu records the grant of a donation with all its detail to a certain muslim soldier named Yusifji in recognition of his valor. The inscriptions issued after 1693 AD, refer to Chikkaraya Thammegowda III. The rule of this family continued down to 1800 AD, with Anekal as its capital, having played a significant role. It is probably an indication of Mughals relationship with this family. The inscription dated 1693 AD onwards mentions about Mummadi Chikkaraya Thammegowda the son of Chikkaraya Thammegowda.

Two inscriptions dated 1706 AD are found at Bisanahalli and Kattigenahalli. They mentioned about Shivanegowda. He might have passed away around 1742 AD. There after Veerananjunda Thammegowda came to power. He had two wives Kempamma and Parvathamma. In 1758 AD Hyder Ali by occupying Anekal kept Thammegowda under imprisonment for about 34 years.

In 1791 AD When British occupied Bangalore, a charter was granted to Mummadi Aimagowda son of Veerananjunda Thammegowda. Around 1793 AD he would have passed away without heir. When British were approached regarding family dispute between Queens of Mummadi Aimagowda, Colonel Alexander Read Declared the Queens of Veerananjunda Thammegowda have no right on the principality as property partition was already been done when the palegar was alive, but Queen Chennamma and Imagowda got a part of principality and the jewelry was given to Queen Chikkamma. Eldest Queen Gowramma was given the presidency rights and was made to settle in Krishnagiri. The surrounding places Palkonda, Marandahallai were also brought under her control. Evidences addressing her as 'Doresani' can be seen. She got all these powers at the conditions of her assistance in all the British military conquests. As she too had no children, adopted Chikkaraya and was appointed as the successor of Anekal principality. In 1799-1800 AD Diwan Poornaiah brought Anekal under Mysore principality. But at the request of Chikkaraya, he was told to remain as pancharagiri in Poornaiah's office and he was assured about 1000 varahas. His wife was Chokkammanni. Later in 1815 AD Mummadi krishnaraja Wodeyar issued the order of pension. By then Chikkaraya had passed away. In 1860 pension amount was increased by 50%. Again in 1860 this was increased by 25% and altogether it was 148 Rs 4anna7kasu. Till 1860 Virachikkarajaiah, son of Chikkaraya was the beneficiary. After his death in 1868 AD his wife Akkajammanni was eligible for this pension. They were paying the tax amount 150rs as shown in 1893 documents. Till India got freedom they continued to get pension.

From the period of sangam family till the aravidu family of Vijayanagar Kingdom and there afterwards for about 500 years they remained as their obedient feudatories and benevolent local administrators. Now even though they are no more in the people's memories, the benevolent works like construction of highest number of tanks, temples, agrahars are the true examples of their concern towards public and their farsightedness.

ADMINISTRATION

They followed the administrative system of the Vijayanagar rulers. There were various administrative divisions such as Rajya, seeme, valitha, pattadi, sthala and grama units. Names of administrative units such as Suguturu sime, Hosakote sime, Kolala sime, Anekal sime, Malavai sime, Bilagondanahalli sime are appeared in the inscriptions. It is to be noted that Inscriptions mention about administrative units Samethahalli valitha, anekal valitha, Sime valitha ,

Inscriptions mentioning administrative units such as Kotanur pattadi, Auluru pattadi, Holali Pattadi are highly useful for understanding the administrative structure.

Village was the basic unit. There were sub villages for some villages. Villages were controlled by gowdas. A chieftain Nadaprabhu was in charge of nadu or sime. Overall administration was decentralized and every village was self sustained.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Temples are means of livelihood for thousands of people. Many inscriptions talk about such temples structure, renovations and installation of deities, conducting of festivals and day to day pujas. Chennakeshava temple of Sugutur is also their contribution. Halasara, the elder sister of Chikkaraya Tammegouda, has offered pinda to the ancestors as evidenced from an inscription by engraving 16 gods single foot line drawing and mentioning below the names of Devatas and Rishis as Vishnu, Rudra, Rama, Seethe, Karthikeya, Kamadeva, Dakshinagni, Aahavaniya, Grihaspatya and Valmiki, towards the north of Dhanushkoti Tirtha on the Avani hills the place which she has described as gods appeared before Seethabhagavathi.. Beethanahalli inscription dated 1559 AD from Kolar taluk refers to a land grant given to priest Nanjaiah for rendering services at the temple of god Veerabhadra in Beethanahalli.

When Hosakote was built, they constructed Avamukteshwara temple was erected in dravida style. They also constructed Amruta Mallikarjuna temple in Anekal and chennakeshava temple in Bilagondana halli (sarjapuar). The beauty of embossed carvings of Narasimha, Krishna, Vishnu on the outerwalls of chennakeshava temple is recorded by Narasimhacharya.

The inscription of Chikkaraya Tammegowda found in Haralakunte village dated 1670 A.D. states that he had installed idols of Ekambaranatha and Kamakshamma along with around 33 parivara devathas on the banks of Antharagange on Kolar hills and named the village as Shivakanchipura.

Inscription found in Chinnaholali village dated 1657 A.D. states that Chikkaraya Thammegowda had constructed Shiva temple and Mahadeva idol had been installed inside the temple .

RELIGIOUS RITIUALS

Inscription dated 1556 A.D. found in Bittenahalli in Kolar taluk mentions about land grant to priest Nanjaiah of Veerabhadra temple for the purpose of day to day pujas.¹ Inscription dated 1556 A.D. found at Nandagudi village of Hosakote taluk speaks about attributing tank, ponds, entire suvarna income, grains of a village to meet out the expenses of Amruthapadi naivedya [food offering]. The inscription dated 1560 A.D. found in Anupahalli tells that Anupahalli was gifted as endowment to the Prasanna Gangadhara Linga temple of Shivaganga for preparing Amruthapadi Naivedya [food offering]. In the same manner 3 villages Mugabalu, Rama gowdanahalli, Kilu hosahalli were endowed to the priest Nilakantaiah diverting the different income of villages Mugabalu of Hoskote taluk to prepare Amruthapadi, Deepotsava, Ratotsava for the Veerabhadra and Someshwara Deities. The inscriptions of these chieftains reveal about village of land endowment to Gopalaswami deity of Kendatti village of Kolar taluk, Eshwara temple of Nelavagila village of Hosakote taluk and Ekambaranatha and Kamakshamma temple near Antaragange on Kolar hills to meet the expenses of occasional rituals. Thus Suguturu chieftains have showed their religious interest not only in the construction of temples but also enduring endowments for performing day to day pujas and other rituals.

MATHAS

The Suguturu chieftains were known not only for endowment of lands, villages, puras to Veerashaiva saints(odeyas) , sharanas and gurus but also for the construction of mathas. And for the management of mathas they had arranged for grants and endowments.

Inscriptions at Hosahalli, kotur, Gonakahalli and kattigenahalli tell about mathas being constructed by Suguturu chieftains for mahadevaru son of Seji Siddalinga deva gurubasavanna, Veerattadeva respectively and also their coronation by the chieftains.

Inscriptions and literary documents tell that the one Sujnanamurthy Deshika or Sujnanamurthy Deva was the rajguru of Sugutur chiefs. These chiefs had made special offerings to Hosur matha, one of the ancient mathas. The reference of Pattada Gurunanjendra in many inscriptions indicate that he would have been a popular religious guru of his times. Inscription dated 1574 AD tells that Rayasamudra and Thammapura village were granted for the time being to Ashesha Veeramaheshwaras. Inscription dated 1609 AD of Busanahalli gives information about Mummadi tammegouda gifted the village Busanahalli to Devanaradhya of gurumatha. An inscription dated 1662 AD records the gift of Doddanallur village to sadabasadevaraiah by Tammappagowder of Sugutur.

Thus the suguturu rulers being devotees of veerashaiva religion patronised number of veerashaiva gurus and Sharanas through gifts, grants and endowments.

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