
The Dynamics of a Supra-Regional Power: Hoysalas in the Medieval History of Kerala

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Abstract: *The present study¹ is based on the inscriptions of the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra which have a significant bearing on the historical developments of medieval Kerala particularly during twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Earlier studies pertaining to that period utilised mainly the native records, legendary accounts and the inscriptions of the contemporary Tamil dynasties and thus failed to understand the dynamic role of the supra –regional power of the Hoysalas in the history of peninsular India including Kerala country. The Inscriptions under study clearly portray the crucial role of the Hoysalas in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of Medieval Kerala. More than anything else, the Hoysala inscriptions provide the vital missing links in the medieval history of Kerala.*

Keywords: Medieval Kerala, Decline of Chera Kingdom, Hoysala Ascendancy, Supra-local Dynamics, Mutual Acculturation, Inscriptional Sources, Grantha Inscription

Introduction

The historical reconstructions of medieval Kerala remained fragmentary as the scholars focussed almost exclusively on the native sources in the form of inscriptions, literary works, legendary accounts, and also the epigraphs and copper-plate grants of the Tamil dynasties. The significance of the non-local evidences, particularly the inscriptions of the Kannada region, as a source for the reconstruction of the medieval history of Kerala was not properly understood. The present study of the Hoysala inscriptions throw further light on the role of that dynasty in the political developments of medieval Kerala.

The kingdom of the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra was a powerful one which in its hay days decided the political and cultural destinies of not only Kannada-Deccan region but to some extent the Tamil region of Peninsular India including Kerala. From the inscriptions we have the names of some early rulers of this dynasty such as Arekalla, Maruga, Nripa Kama I, Nripa Kama II, but from Vinayaditya (c.1047-1098 CE) onwards the political fortunes of the kingdom began to improve as it spread into different parts of Kannada region. A later record of Ballala II from Nagamangala in Mandya district proclaims that Vinayaditya's kingdom include Talakad and Bayal-nadu (Wayanad).²

This claim is however untenable because the inscriptions of the Cholas and the later Kadambas of Bayal-nadu of this period clearly show that the regions like Talakad and Bayal-nadu were in fact under the control of the Cholas.³

During the succeeding reign of Ereyanga (c.1098-1102 CE) parts of the Kerala region were invaded by him. A later inscription (1117 CE) belonging to Vishnuvardhana's reign from Belur says that '*the burning of Baleya-pattana on the sea-shore by the flames of king Ereyanga's anger, brought to mind the appearance of the waves of the sea when consumed by Rama's fiery arrow.*'⁴ This *Baleya-pattana* is the present *Valapattanam*, the coastal town in Kannur district which was once the abode of the *Mushaka* rulers otherwise known as *Nannans* of Ezhimalai. According to *Mushakavamsa Kavya*, a Sanskrit work which gives the genealogical history of this dynasty, the city *Baliapattanam* (*Valabhapattanam* or *Valarpattanam*) was constructed by the *Mushaka* ruler Valabha II in 10th century CE.⁵

One of the records of Hoysala Ballala I (c.1102-1108 CE) says that the boundaries of his kingdom embraced Bayal-nadu as well⁶. Similarly, a record belonging to Vishnuvardhana's reign (1125 CE) from Nagamangala in the Mandya district states Ballala's bravery is warning the '*Cheras to abandon their enmity.*'⁷ Another record belonging to Ballala II (1177 CE) from Arsikere in the Hassan district speaks that the drum beat of Ballala I make the sound alike the king's proclamation as '*Cherama give up your courage.*'⁸ But on the basis of these flattering descriptions it is difficult to imagine that Ballala I conquered the Kerala country. Moreover, inner meaning of the record itself says that during that time Chera kingdom was very powerful.

Vishnuvardhana (c.1108-1152 CE)

King Vishnuvardhana alias Bitti-deva was the real establisher of the Hoysala imperialism. After the capture of Talakad, the ancestral capital of western Gangas from the Cholas, he sounded the death knell to Chola imperialism in the Kannada region. A number of inscriptions of his time clearly indicate that his kingdom not only extended over the Pandya and Chola territories but over the Cheras as well. A record from Chamarajanagar (1117 CE) says that Bitti-deva's general Punnisa Raja once after getting the order from his lord '*seized Niladri (Nilagiri), and pursuing the Maleyalas, captured their forces and made himself master of Kerala before showing himself again in Bayal-nadu.*'⁹ Certain other inscriptions describe Vishnuvardhana as '*a lion to the Chera elephant-herd,*' '*a royal lion to the elephant Chera,*' '*a lion to the royal elephant Cherama,*' and so on.¹⁰ A Shravanabelagola record (1123 CE) says that he captured *Baleya-pattana* fort,¹¹ which must be the same *Valapattanam* of the *Mushaka Nannans* which was once burnt by Ereyanga Hoysala. However, the complete subjugation of *Mushaka* territory along with *Kongu* (Coimbatore) is evident from another inscription of Shravanabelagola dated 1135 CE.¹²

Many later inscriptions also record the political achievements of Vishnuvardhana. An inscription from Arsikere (1197 CE) glorified him as '*a devouring epidemic to Chera.*'¹³ Another record from the same place (1177 CE) says that he was '*a pursuing Makali*

(Goddess Kali) to eat him up.¹⁴ The Channarayapatna record (1190 CE) describe that king Vishnu in glorious terms as the one who '*broke down the bones of Chera-Kerala*' and two records from Arsikere and Belur (1161 CE) claims that he uprooted the Chera kingdom.¹⁵

Some more inscriptions claim that he captured *Elumale*, *Anamale* along with *Bayal-nadu*.¹⁶ *Anamale* could be the present Anamala on the Western Ghats which share boundaries of Kerala and Tamilnadu. During this period probably Anamala was a petty kingdom which was under the control of the Chera kings. In the case of *Elumale*, it must be the same as the same *Ezhimala* near Kannur, the abode of Mushaka rulers¹⁷. A Belur record (1185 CE) mark out the boundaries of his kingdom: Kongu on its south, Kanchi on the east, Rivers Krishna and Venna on the north, and the Arabian Sea on the west, where he is '*setting up piles (of stone) as marks of the permanent limits of the land*.'¹⁸

A crucial record from Hassan (1149 CE) speaks about one of his generals Sankara who defeated '*Malayalar, Pallikarar*¹⁹, *Valiant sons of kings, adalajas who were masters of the horse, and generals of the feudatory kings*.'²⁰ This inscription also mentioned some places like *Korati*, *Kantapura*, *Tamarecharu*, *Aranimale*, etc., where Sankara erected Vishnu temples. The term *Malayalar* must be denoting the people from Kerala and *Pallikarar* possibly the administrators of the Sramana temple lands. The Kinalur vatteluttu inscription from Kinalur near Kozhikode (1083 CE) speaks about the tenancy right in *Korati*, *Kantapura* and some other places by a person namely Arappan Kunchi alias Kurumpurai²¹. *Korati* could be the *Kurandi* mentioned in number of ninth and tenth century Jaina inscriptions from Chitharal and Madurai region, chief among the centres of Jainism in medieval south India.²² K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyar identified it as the place with same name as '*Kurandi*' near Agastheeswaram in southern Travancore.²³ *Aranimale* can be identified as the present '*Arunattarmalai*' near Karur known for its Jain Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions giving the genealogy of ancient Chera rulers.²⁴ There are no further corroborative evidences to identify *Kantapura* and *Tamarecharu* but possibly they existed inside the Kerala territory during medieval times. *Tamarecharu* was most probably the present Thamarassery in the Kozhikode district. This place is about fifteen kilometres away from Kinalur village in the Balusseri taluk where we got the Kinalur Jain vatteluttu inscription.

Here we have to address the issue of the conversion of Vishnuvardhana from Jainism to Vaishnavism. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Ramanuja's Vaishnava philosophy greatly influenced the cultural and religious history of not merely the Kannada region but Kerala as well. After it, Jain communities of Kannada region including the present Wayanad district of Kerala possibly divided into two groups and one began to profess Vaishnavism. But the ultimate result was the religious assimilation of these two groups. It is clearly evident from the Gowda communities of Wayanad region such as Vaishnava Gowda and Jain Gowdas. These groups are maintaining close family connections including marriage alliances. They are experts in handling Kannada language like their mother tongue and customarily have their

mother tongue status. Moreover, some of the Jain basties of Wayanad region clearly prove this fact. The *Janardhanagudi* and *Vishnugudi* Jain basties in Panchavayal near Panamaram are so confusing that it is difficult to distinguish them as either Jain or a Hindu Vishnu temple. The architectural and sculptural features of these temples indicate that they belong to twelfth century CE.²⁵

We have inscriptional evidences to show that Vishnuvardhana's general Punnisa Raja used his wealth to reinstate Jain basties which were ruined during his expedition in Gangavadi possibly Kerala as well.²⁶ The *Janardhanagudi* and *Vishnugudi* could be the reconstructed temples of Punnisa Raja. A Shravanabelagola record (1120 CE) says that Vishnuvardhana's minister *maha-pradhanadanda-nayaka* Ganga-Raja got that title by restoring innumerable ruined Jina temples in all places to their former condition.²⁷ Another Shravanabelagola record (1123 CE) describes the setting up of a basti namely *Savatigandhavarana* by his loveable wife Santala Devi.²⁸ These evidences prove that even after Vishnuvardhana embraced Vaishnavism, he was not against Jainism and his family members and subordinates who were still following that faith. We have no evidence to show that Vishnuvardhana persecuted the Jains.

Vishnuvardhana's Kerala affiliation can further be traced through an inscription from Arsikere (1142 CE).²⁹ This record speaks about the setting up of a new Brahmin village in Kellangere (near Arsikere) for certain Brahmin refugees who previously had land at *Kodanganur* which they received as *Janameejaya*. This record further says that the '*great king Vishnu saying I will give you a much better village and bringing them along with him, he gave them here Kellangere, which was adorned with all the Brahmins.*' *Kodanganur* must be the same Kodungallur, which was once the integral part of the Perumal's capital Mahodayapuram. The term *Janameejaya*³⁰ can be read as *Janmideya* which is similar to *Brahmadeya* in other parts of India. The Brahmin-temple-land oriented medieval feudal system of Kerala is known as *Janmi* system and the landlords known as *Janmies*.³² The content of this record help us to formulate a hypothesis on the cause of this Brahmin migration to Hoysala country.

Here we have to note some important factors regarding Hoysala and Chera rulers. At the present state of our knowledge Rama Kulasekhara was the last Perumal of Mahodayapuram (c.1089 -1122 CE), and after that the great empire has declined.³³ Around the same time the Hoysalas established their empire under the iron hand of Vishnuvardhana between c.1108-1152 CE. It was also at the same time the Cholas lost their political clout in the South except in their core region i.e. the Thanjavur territories. Inscriptional evidences clearly show that the Cholas and the Pandyas were totally defeated and they were subordinates under Hoysala Vishnuvardhana.³⁴ Contemporaneity of all these historical facts and events leads us to formulate some new hypotheses regarding the collapse of the second Chera Empire. Here we have to observe the valuable opinion of M.G.S.Narayanan, on this subject. According to him '*meanwhile something strange appears to have happened to the Chera kingdom though the wars against the Pandyas and the Cholas apparently did not produce anything more than a stalemate*

*with slight occasional gains and losses. How far this new phenomenon was internal and how far it was related to external invasions and the impact of wars cannot be assigned in the present state of our knowledge.*³⁵

We do not have any solid evidence about the causes for the decline of the Chera Empire except some traditional accounts and narrations. The popular tradition like *Keralolpathi* attests that the last Perumal embraced Buddhism, then Islam and went to Mecca.³⁶ The Muslim tradition according to *Tuhafat Ul Mujahideen* by Sheikh Zeinuddin too testifies the partition of the kingdom among governors by the last Perumal and his conversion to Islam and his journey to Mecca.³⁷ At the same Rama Kulasekhara's worry to please the Brahmins and to make amends for having offended them could be found reflected in the *prayaschitta* (compensation) which he offered to the Brahmins at Kollam by an inscription.³⁸ This record clearly says that he is living at the *Panainkavu* palace in *Kurakkeni Kollam*, 'sitting in council with Ariya Brahmins,' made amends for some offence against them by donating paddy for their daily feeding.³⁹

The interesting issue to probe here is why king Kulasekhara left his traditional capital at Mahodayapuram in the central Kerala and living at Kollam in the South? Definitely the ruler must have faced some severe external attack most probably from Vishnuvardhana the powerful Hoysala emperor, the emerging saviour of Brahminical faith. A record from Nagamangala (1178 CE) says that king Vishnu captured a number of forts including *Karukankollam*.⁴⁰ This must be the same *Kurakkeni Kollam* (Kollam alias Quilon) of the Rama Kulasekhara's *prayaschitta* grant. These two instances: Rama Kulasekhara's *prayaschitta* to the Brahmins at Kollam along with the accommodation of Brahmin refuges at Kellangere by Vishnuvardhana support the traditional accounts of the former's conversion to another religion.

Narasimha I (c.1152-1173 CE)

Vishnuvardhana was succeeded by his son Narasimha I. A record from Hunsur exalts his prowess thus: '*when his war drums sounded, Pandyas chest split open like a door broken in two, Cholas brave words diminished a hundred fold; Chera's heart suddenly began to palpitate.*'⁴¹ One inscription confirm that the southern boundary of his kingdom was Vikramesvaram alias Rameswaram⁴² and another one⁴³ testifies that his kingdom extended up to Kongu (Coimbatore), Bayal-nadu and as far as western Ocean. Narasimha I seem to have ruled the inherited vast kingdom peacefully. A record from Chamarajanagar (1167 CE) speaks about a grant made by certain chiefs and farmers of Tibbahalli to a Brahmin settlement namely *Keralantaka-Chaturvedimangala* of *Enne-nad*.⁴⁴ A Chola record (1033 CE) belonging to the reign of Rajendra Chola from Kolar also mentions about *Keralantaka-Chaturvedimangala* alias *Amanakudi* in *Vennadu*.⁴⁵ *Amanakudi*⁴⁶ which could be the present Manakudi near Nagercoil in the Kanyakumari district, and *Vennadu* must be the *Venadu* which was the medieval name of Travancore state. Whatever it is, the above said facts clearly show that during the reign of Narasimha I, the political and cultural influence of the Hoysalas extended over the entire Kerala region.

Ballala II (c.1173–1220 CE)

Ballala II, son of Narasimha I, who ascended the throne on 22nd of July 1173,⁴⁷ was one of the powerful rulers of the Hoysala dynasty. Some records glorify his expedition to Kerala as, '*the western ocean roared and the whole of the great Chera country rose and fled.*'⁴⁸ But we do not have any evidences apropos for the existence of Chera Empire during this period, but certainly it was the group of petty kingdoms under the feudal governors controlled by either a Chola or a Pandya king. An undated Tamil-Grantha record from Tirumakudal Narsipur mentioned a place *Kumari*,⁴⁹ (Kanyakumari?) as equally sacred as Ganga. The inscription also speaks about consecration of a god namely *Manavala-Alvar* by the *Maha Sabha* (Great Council) of Brahmins of *Velliyur* in the Vadakara-nadu. *Velliyur* could be the same Valliyur alias Vadakku Valliyur near Nagercoil which was once part of Travancore kingdom. This place is known for its medieval temples and Brahmin settlements. Probably a temple namely *Alagiya Manavala Perumal* can be identified as the same god *Manavala-Alvar*, situated in Puthugramam near Suchindram where some records connected to later Travancore kingdom were discovered.⁵⁰ A body called *Ayirattirunurruver* (twelve-hundred) was also mentioned. Such organisational bodies as *Narpattennayiravar* (The Forty Eight Thousand), *Arunurruvar* (The Six Hundred),⁵¹ *Aiyayiravar* (The Five Thousand), *Muvayiravar* (The Three Thousand), *Ayiravar* (The Thousand), and *Munnurruvar* (The Three Hundred) were very frequently mentioned in the records of medieval Kerala.⁵²

Another interesting record in Tamil-Grantha script with old Tamil-Malayalam language from Malavalli in Mandya district (1180 CE) speaks about some unique rituals practiced by Kerala Hindu community.⁵³ This inscription states that a person namely Karikudakkuttan of Talakad alias Rajarajapuram purchased land in lieu of gold (*ponnar ittu mannar kkondru*) and constructed temple (*pallipaduttu*) and decorated the gods with dress and ornaments (*pallikaputirti*) at Vagisvaramangalam. He benevolently offered (*dhara-purvakam panni kkudutten*) serpent dance (*pampu thullal*), *noorum-paalum* and all other rituals as well to the three gods (*id-devarkal muvarkum*) of this temple.⁵⁴ Vagisvaramangalam temple of the present inscription could be the same Viswanatha temple of Somanahalli where the inscription was found. Here, the rituals *Pampu Thullal* and *Noorum-Paalum* are the unique rituals still prevalent as the part of *Kavu* cult exclusively in Kerala.⁵⁵ Here we have to trace the reason behind this kind of cultural transmission from Kerala to Kannada region. From very early times western coastal region of Kerala and its fertile inland trade with the neighbouring countries led to the cultural and religious diffusions from the region. We have a number of inscriptions speaking about traders from Kerala and their guild organisations playing crucial role in the Hoysala kingdom.⁵⁶ They were not merely traders but sometimes brave warriors too.⁵⁷

It is reasonable to suppose that after the decline of Chera Empire, large scale migration of warrior class ensued from Kerala particularly of Nairs to Chola and Hoysala armies. The group called Nayakas who were famous for bravery had an important role in the Hoysala army.⁵⁸ Etymologically both *Nair* and *Nayaka* give the same meaning as

military commander. The name *Nayaka-Devar-Pillai* in a record (1171 CE) attests *Nair-Nayaka* integration.⁵⁹ The *Pillai* is a sub cast among the Nairs of Kerala. The *Tirinalur-Nayaka* in the Halebidu record (1281 CE) is another example.⁶⁰ The place namely *Tirinalur* could be the same Thirunelli in Wayanad. This record says that his daughter's name is *Ranganili*. The women's surname *Nili* or *Neeli* was very common among the Nairs of medieval Kerala. We have a fourteenth century CE literary work (*Sandesakavya*) namely *Unnuneeli Sandesa*. According to this work a royal lady *Unnu Neeli* belongs to a Nair royal family.⁶¹ We have some more Hoysala records speak about the Nayaka soldiers from Kerala like *Malayala Babeya-Nayaka*, *Puliyavadambu Paramesvara-Nayaka*, *Nambi-Nayaka*, etc.⁶² *Nambi* in the *Nambi-Nayaka* deserve special mentions. The *Nambi* later became *Nambiar*. Presence of *Nambiar* sub caste of Nair community generally found in the northern region of Kerala similar with *Pillas* in the south.⁶³ Another interesting factor we have to note here is that the *Pampu Thullal* and *Noorum-Paalum* in the Malavalli records are still being practiced by traditional Nair families in their Kavus. On the basis of all these facts the Nair-Nayaka assimilation in medieval Kerala can be established.

Narasimha II (c.1220-1235 CE)

When we come to the rule of Narasimha-II, records says that he ascend the throne on eighteenth April 1220.⁶⁴ Inscriptions of his regnal period repeatedly explain that he was the protector or saviour of the Cholas from the mighty hands of the Pandyas.⁶⁵ According to one record he made the Chola king '*as a general in command of his forces*.'⁶⁶ Some records prove that Rajaraja III (c.1216-1256 CE), the Chola king was a son-in-law of Narasimha II.⁶⁷ The healthy relationship between both royal families might be the secret behind this protection. However, regarding Kerala country, an Arsikere record (1234 CE) says that his minister cum General Hiriya Bammeya captured Chera country.⁶⁸ A Channarayapatna record (1223 CE) states that Narasimha forced to capture Chera, Pandya, and some other kingdoms.⁶⁹ During this period possibly the Pandyas got the support of the petty chieftains of Kerala against the Hoysala-Chola alliance and that must be the reason behind the attacks on the Kerala country by the Hoysalas. Interestingly though, a later record (1267 CE) from Krishnarajpet in Mandya district tells us the Hoysala's healthy relationship with the *Moovendar* (Chola-Chera-Pandya). This record explain as when Somesvara first began to walk '*Chera went before him, calling out Bravo; mind your steps, Deva! While the Chola king and Pandya one on each side held his hand*.'⁷⁰

Somesvara (c.1235-1263 CE)

Somesvara was undoubtedly the last most powerful ruler among the Hoysalas. Inscriptional evidences clearly testify that the weak Cholas and the Pandyas along with the Kerala chieftains reigned under his iron hand. A record from Arsikere (1239 CE) says that first he defeated the Chola king Rajaraja III in the battle field and after 'when he sought refuge,' protected.⁷¹ Some records say that he was the establisher of the Chola kingdom.⁷² More than eight inscriptions indicate that he was the sole protector

of the *Chola Kula* and some of them include Pandya as well.⁷³ Another record from Tirumakudal Narsipur (1239 CE) describes that he was ruling from the Chola kingdom.⁷⁴ Some other records say that he was at his capital at Kannanur,⁷⁵ and this place has been identified by Hultzsch as a village near Tiruchirapalli.⁷⁶

It is interesting to note that in the year 1229 CE the boundaries of the Hoysala kingdom extended between Kanchi on the East, Belur on the West, River Krishna on the North, and Bayal-nad alias Wayanad on the South.⁷⁷ On the basis of it we have to reach a conclusion that except Wayanad all other parts of the Kerala region were under the dominance of the Cholas which was benevolently allowed by Narasimha II to his son-in-law Rajaraja Chola III. But later evidences clearly unveil that Rajaraja's uncle such as Somesvara was not much kind to him. A record dated 1237 CE says that Somesvarawas in the Pandya kingdom⁷⁸ and another two dated 1242 CE states that he was in the Chola kingdom⁷⁹ and two more records from Nagamangala and HD Kote dated 1243 CE and 1256 CE respectively, confirm that his capital was at Kannanur.⁸⁰ A record from Mandy (1237 CE) mention a place name *Chalaseravi* as the southern boundary of his kingdom, and this place was located by Lewis Rice as the present Chalissery in Ponnani.⁸¹ Nevertheless, we cannot completely negate the opinion of Rice on account of the historicity of Chalissery Angadi and its peripheral areas like Pattambi, Trithalain the district of Palakkad, especially the presence of some unfinished stone monuments like Pattambi Tali temple, Kattilmadam stone structure, etc., which show some non-Kerala architectural and sculptural features. These areas are famous for Brahmin settlements as well. Geographically, Chalissery is situated on the leading trade route connecting Malabar part of the western coastal region of Kerala and Kongu region of Tamilnadu.

A record dated 1252 CE from Arkalgud taluk in the Hassan district exalt Somesvara as '*a lion to the deer Kulothunga-Chola and the Kerala chief, a submarine fire to the ocean the Kerala forces, a wild-fire to the forest Mukkanna Kadamba.*'⁸² During this time we did not have any records speaking about a Chola ruler named Kulothunga. Possibly he was a Chola prince who is in charge of Kerala country. By this record the Chola supremacy in Kerala during mid-part of the thirteenth century CE is again confirmed. Another crucial thing regarding this record is Mukkanna Kadamba. He must be the ruler belonging to the Kadambas of Bayal-nadu alias Wayanad. We have the last available record of the Kadambas of Bayal-nadu dated 1138 CE which belongs to another Mukkanna Kadamba.⁸³ The date and some tittles in this record assumed by Vishnuvardhana Hoysala show that they had some flexible family relationship. Remarkably, Vishnuvardhana sometimes cited Kadamba in his title as '*Bhuja-bala-Vira-Gangam-Kadamba-Vishnuvardhana-Devaru.*'⁸⁴ At the same time, we have records attesting the existence of this petty kingdom even before the appearance of the Hoysalas in the political scenario of Karnataka.⁸⁵ After the removal of Chola imperialism in this region by Vishnu probably these petty rulers reigned under the over lordship of the Hoysalas up to the time of Somesvara. This inference is further

attested by the absence of any reference to the capture of Bayal-nadu by any of the successors of after Vishnuvardhana except Somesvara.

Thus, Decline of second Chera Empire created a political uncertainty in the Kerala country and most of the powerful Hoysala rulers utilised this situation well. The weak Chola and Pandya kings along with the diplomatic marriage alliances with Chola family by Ballala II and his son Narasimha II created a good political ambience for the establishment of imperial supremacy in the extreme southern part of peninsular India by Somesvara. The inscriptional evidences discussed above speak about the suppression of the Cholas and Pandyas on their own soil by the mighty Hoysala Somesvara.

Kerala after Hoysala Somesvara

Starting of internal feuds in the royal house of the Hoysalas from the time of Narasimha III (c.1263–1292 CE) onwards, the political scenario began to change. During his reign partition of the kingdom took place between him and his half-brother Ramanatha.⁸⁶ The Tamil portion of the kingdom including southern part of Kerala came under Ramanatha. Records say that Ramanatha was ruling from his capital at Kannanur near Tiruchirapalli.⁸⁷ We have number of records testifying the frequent wars between Narasimha III and Ramanatha.⁸⁸ They fought at *Soleur* and *Mannana-Koyil*.⁸⁹ Both these places can be identified as Solaiyar in Anaimalai and Mannarkovil in Tirunelveli. Mannarkovil alias *Mannarkoyil* had come under the sway of later Chera rulers, and kings such as Rajasimha (c.1021-1036 CE) and Rajaraja (c.1036-1089 CE) constructed temples there.⁹⁰ Tradition says that Chera king Kulasekhara Alvar spent his last days at Mannarkovil.

We have a Tamil-Grantha inscription (1282 CE) from Nanjangud which speak about certain land grants at *Kulavur* to god *Kesavanatha* of *Niriliyir* alias *Nirili* by minister, *Sarvadhikari*, officials, and feudatories (Gavundas) of Narasimha III, they were from *Idai-nad* in *Periya-nad*.⁹¹ *Kulavur* is famous as one among the thirty two Brahmin settlements in Kerala referred by *Keralolpathi* tradition.⁹² Certain historians identified *Kulavur* in the *Keralolpathi* as the present day *Kulur* on the Annamanad-Kuntur road in the Trissur district.⁹³ Other places in the record are difficult to be identified at the present state of our knowledge but they are certainly located inside the present Kerala country or the nearby boarder areas of Karnataka. The *Idai-nad* and *Periya-nad* might be administrative divisions under the Hoysala rule.

During Ballala III (c.1292-1343 CE) Hoysala kingdom reached its ultimate stage of disintegration. Sultanate invasion under Malik Kafur gives final blow to the kingdom. King Ballala left his traditional capital and began to live in Tiruvannamalai (*unnamale*) of Tamilnadu.⁹⁴ One of his records from Chamarajanagar dated 1295 CE which says that he was a 'tiger to the deer of the Kerala',⁹⁵ proves his hold over the Kerala country. We have two records dated 1310 CE clearly speaking about the Sultanate invasion of the Hoysala kingdom.⁹⁶ Probably the Hoysalas could have maintained their grip over

the Kerala up to the last decades of thirteenth century. The Turkish invasion definitely altered the political equations in the entire peninsular India including Kerala. However, during the year 1312 CE political influence over Bayal-nadu including Gudalur and Nilagiri regions by Ballala III are evident from another record.⁹⁷ After Ballala III we didn't have any records regarding their influence over the Malaya country.

Conclusion

The political history of Kerala specifically of the ancient and medieval periods is disfigured due to the presence of many missing links. Most of the previous studies depended mainly on the fragmentary native evidences along with the records of the Tamil dynasties, which led to the creation of the 'Dark Ages' in the Kerala History. In the case of the medieval period especially immediately after the decline of the Chera empire historians generally believed that it was the exclusive history of the Pandya and the Cholas along with their feudal allies. But they failed to look into the prominent role of the Hoysalas in the historical developments of not only the Tamil country but of Kerala as well. The present study based on the inscriptional evidences of the Hoysalas has revealed that this dynasty had a clear-cut political influence over the Kerala country. The brisk trade and commercial activities with western and far eastern countries through the ports of Kerala was the chief concern of Hoysala rulers. That necessity compelled them to have control over the Kerala territories as the part of their kingdom. From Vishnuvardhana onwards this perception worked out successfully. The conversion of Chera Perumal to a non-Hindu religion and subsequent events created favourable ambiance for their military ambitions.

The obscurity behind the disintegration of second Chera Empire points the finger towards Hoysala Vishnuvardhana. The concurrences of the rise of Vishnuvardhana (c.1108-1152 CE) and the decline of the Chera Empire after Rama Kulasekhara (c.1089 - 1122 CE) corroborated by certain native and Hoysala records giving good probability to reach the conclusion that Vishnuvardhana was the real political reason behind the waning of the Perumal supremacy in Kerala. His attack and capture of Kollam created a fresh epoch in the history of medieval Kerala. He made Bayal-nadu alias Wayanad as the sole property of the Hoysala family subsequently the later Kadambas of Wayanad became mere feudatories. The political authority over Wayanad established by him lasted up to the last prominent Hoysala ruler Ballala III. There is no doubt to say that Malabar region of Kerala including Bayal-nadu alias Wayanad was from Vishnu onwards completely under the Hoysala sway. Inscriptional evidences after Vishnuvardhana did not bother about the conquest of Ezhimalai and Wayanad. The Bayal-nadu conquest was again conducted by Somesvara only, and the reason behind it was nothing but the relation framed by his father and grandfather through marital relations.

The weak Chola and Pandya rulers of Tamil kingdom created a favourable ambiance for the political supremacy of the Hoysalas. The marital relations made the Cholas as

mere gatekeepers and army commanders under the Hoysala Ballala II and his son Narasimha II. The mixer of Tamil valour and Kannada political tactics moulded Somesvara as most powerful emperor of Hoysala family next to Vishnuvardhana. Under the iron hand of Somesvara they controlled the entire Pandya, Chola and the Kerala country from their capital at Kannanur in Tamilnadu. During the time of the successors of Somesvara the disintegration of the Hoysala kingdom started but records attests their presence in the Kerala soil up to the last prominent king Ballala III.

Kerala trade and traders contributed greatly to the Hoysala economy. These commercial transactions also transmitted social, religious and cultural elements between the two countries. Kerala's unique customs and traditions crossed the borders and reached to the Kannada soil. The large scale Kannada influence in the cultural and social spheres is particularly evident from the districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode and Wayanad. The influence can be visualised in the fields of language, onomastic, festivals, rituals, cults, etc. The period between eleventh to fourteenth centuries C.E must be the period when the consolidation of all the present day cultural edifices of Kerala such as caste structure, religious establishments, festivals, fairs, rituals and arts.

Here we have the answer the question why Malayalam Champu *Manipravalam* namely *Unniyachi Charitham* dated c.1325 CE praise Dwarasamudra as *nirasamudra* (bursting Sea), *Tirumarudur* (Maddur in Mandya) as Golden city (*Tirumaruturiti-Kanchana-Nagarī*), and Mangalapuram as the upcoming prosperous city (*mandikrita-mangalapura-mahima*).⁹⁸ At that point of time there were no political or economic boundaries between these two countries and they are mutually and thoroughly acculturated cultures. The medieval Kerala may be justly called as Hoysala Kerala.

Notes

¹This paper is the revised and enlarged version of the one presented under the title "Medieval Kerala through the Hoysala Inscriptions" in the 76th session of the Indian History Congress held at Malda, West Bengal during December 27-29, 2015

²EC, Vol. 4, Pg.32. The Bayal-nadu (present day Wayanad) was also mentioned in the records of the Kadambas ruling from this region. They were the offshoots of the early Kadambas of Banavasi. Some Hale-Kannada inscriptions from HD Kote Taluk of Mysore district and a Malayalam vatteluttu record from Sulthan Bathery of this dynasty clearly shows that Bayal-nadu comprised of two sub sections, viz., Bira Bayal-nadu and Changi Bayalu-nadu. The present Wayanad district of Kerala included in the Vira or Bira Bayal-nadu section and the present name Wayanad must be derived from the Kannada Bayal-nadu. Certain later records from Wayanad also mentioned Vira-Vayalnad as Peraviyanad or Piraviyanad. For further details see. EC, Vol. 4, Pg. 50, 56, 73, 75, 77, 79, 80, ARIE-1960-1961, p.59, Ramachandran Nair, *Keralacharithrathilae Chila Vismrithadhyayangal*, pp.134-135, Ragava Variyar, *Jainamatham Keralathil*, pp.49-50.

³ Inscriptions clearly say that Talakad was captured by the Hoysalas only during the time of Vishnuvardhana, and his coins glorify him as Talakadu-Gonda. EC, Vol.3, Introduction.p.14, MI.31, EC, Vol.4, Hs.143, Ng.76, Hg.50,56,73,75,77,79,80, EC,Vol.5, BI.58, Ng.30.

⁴ EC,Vol.5, BI.58.

⁵Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, pp.180,196

⁶EC,Vol.5, BI.199

⁷EC,Vol.4, Ng.28,

⁸EC,Vol.5, AK.62

⁹EC,Vol.4, Ch.83

¹⁰EC,Vol.4, Ng.76, EC.Vol.5, BI.17,Ak.18

¹¹EC,Vol.2, SB.132

¹²EC,Vol.2, SB.384

¹³EC,Vol.5, Ak.23

¹⁴EC,Vol.5, Ak.62

¹⁵EC,Vol.5, Ak.117,Cn.179, BI.193

¹⁶EC,Vol.2, SB.384, EC,Vol.3, Sr.74, EC,Vol.4, Ng.28,32,Hs.137, EC,Vol.5, AK 48, Hn.69,102,BI.77,137,170,171a

¹⁷ The word Elimalai or Ezhimalai has its origin from two Malayalam words such as Eli and Malai denotes rat and mount respectively. The dynasty of these rulers known as Mushakavamsa in Sanskrit and the word Eli or rat is the Malayalam form of Sanskrit Mushaka which also means rat. These chieftains reigned in the northern part of Kerala comprising present districts of Kannur, Kasaragod and part of Kozhikode and Mangalore. They were the ancestors of Kolathiri kings of the Kolathunadu. Ezimala rulers played an important role in the ancient and medieval political history of Kerala. The Sanskrit MushakavamsaKavya authored by Atula who is believed to have lived at about twelfth century C.E, the court poet of Mushaka king Srikanta give ample evidence about that kingdom. Unni, *A History of Mushikavamsa*, pp.7-23. Marco Polo explains it as Eli kingdom which situated 300 miles west of Comari (Kanyakumari). "The king was very rich, but less power full in men." Murray, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, p.311

¹⁸EC,Vol.5, BI.119

¹⁹The term Pallikarar in the Hassan record must be the administrator of Jain palli lands. We have the term Pallikkari used to denote the property of goddess PalliBhagavati of Nilamperur temple, a converted Sramana temple of central Kerala. RagavaVarier. 'Yakshi Cult in Kerala', pp.21-22. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Pallikarar could be the administrators/protectors of the JainaPallikkari of Kerala. Furthermore, the equitable inference that the places mentioned in the Hassan record especially Korati, Kantapura, Aranimale, Tamarecharu, etc., where Sankara erected Vishnu temples already might had some Jain affiliation. The Nilamperur temple tradition connects it with the CheraPerumal who is said to have been converted into some non-Hindu religion (PalliBanaPerumal tradition). RagavaVarier. 'Yakshi Cult in Kerala', p.22, SreedharaMenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p.98

²⁰EC,Vol.5, Hn.65

²¹ Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, pp.76-78

²²TAS, Vol.4, Part 1, p.146, Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs*, pp.62,66

- ²³P.B. Desai has given probability to nearby areas of Madura region. We have another term Kuratti to denote Jain nuns. For further discussions, see. *TAS*, Vol.4, Part 1, p.146, Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs*, pp.62,66-67
- ²⁴The Kalugumalai in the Kovilpattitaluk of Thoothukudi district, another famous Jain hub of Tamilnadu also had its medieval name as Araimalai. We can't deny the probability for Arani male in the Hoysala record as Araimalai.
- ²⁵Ragava Variyar, *JainamathamKeralathil*, p.53
- ²⁶EC, Vol.4, Ch.83
- ²⁷EC, Vol.2, SB.118
- ²⁸EC, Vol.2, SB.132
- ²⁹EC, Vol.5, Ak.110
- ³⁰Janamejaya was a legendary king belongs to Pandava Kula. Mittal, *History of Ancient India: A New Version from 4250 BC to 637 AD*, pp.653-655. Some of the later rulers like Somavamsi kings of Orissa used this as their surname. *EI*, Vol.3, pp.248-255, *EI*, Vol.23, pp.323-340. But this occasion, corroborative evidences not supports present term than other one.
- ³¹Brahmadeya was one of the typical features of the Brahmin-temple oriented medieval feudal order of entire India. This is the tax free land grant either in the form of single plot or an entire village donated to Brahmans.
- ³²Kunjan Pillai, *JanmiSambaradhayamKeralathil*, pp.8-44, *Veluthat, Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies*, pp.113,121-123
- ³³Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, pp.73-74
- ³⁴Vikrama Chola (1118–1135 CE) was the Chola ruler during this time and he was one among the weak rulers belongs to that dynasty. *EC*, Vol.5, Hn.53,119, Cn.149, Ak.18, BI.17,124
- ³⁵Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, p.129
- ³⁶*Keralolpathi: The origin of Malabar*, pp.26-29, Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, pp.129-134
- ³⁷*Tuhfat-al-Mujahidin*, pp.29-31
- ³⁸Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Index.A.71, pp.130,145,469
- ³⁹Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Index.A.71, p.469
- ⁴⁰EC, Vol.4, Ng.70
- ⁴¹EC, Vol.4, Hs.137
- ⁴²EC, Vol.5, Introduction. p. xviii, Ak.55
- ⁴³EC, Vol.5, Hn.69
- ⁴⁴EC, Vol.4, Ch.98
- ⁴⁵EC, Vol.10, KI.109
- ⁴⁶The Tamil word Amana (amanan) means Sramana and Kudi means settlement. Probably the name derived on account of the settlements of Sramana followers, most probably Jains. Subsequently 'a' has lost its importance like Jain faith in the country. Here we have to remember the fact that before the formation of the Kerala state, Travancore kingdom comprised present Kanyakumari and adjoining areas of Tamilnadu.
- ⁴⁷EC, Vol.5, Hn.71,119, BI.118, Ak.71
- ⁴⁸EC, Vol.5, Ak.23,62,104
- ⁴⁹EC, Vol.3, TN.130
- ⁵⁰*TAS*, Vol.6, part 2, pp.187-189

⁵¹Both *Narpattennayiravar* and *Arunurruvar* find mentioned in the native Jain records. *Narayanan, Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, pp.70-71,75

⁵²*Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala*, pp.231-239,250

⁵³*EC, Vol.3, MI.99*

⁵⁴*Lewis Rice* read this part of the inscription as, ‘... talakkadanarajarapurattunaretarapura-namputrankarikudakkuttanponnarittumannarkkondunammurukku or appaneyahatambipuludipamuranvagsivaramangalamidirpallipuduttapulikapuderti-bhupatulikkalnar-pal-ellaiyum id-devarkalmuvarkumdhara-purvakampannikkudutten...’ *EC, Vol.3, MI.99*. But the terms “bhupatulikkal” should be read as *PampuTulikkal* and “nar-pal” as *Noorum-Paalum*.

⁵⁵ *Fawcett, Nayars of Malabar: Madras Government Museum Bulletin. Vol.3, pp. 276-277, 280-81, Ravindran Nair, Snake Worship in India, pp.21-22*

⁵⁶*EC, Vol.5, Ak.22,82,83,108,109.BI.89*

⁵⁷We have some early records belongs to *Cholas* speak about the active role of traders cum warriors from Kerala in their country and even army. *Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala*, pp.100-101, 113

⁵⁸*EC, Vol.4, Kr.9,10*

⁵⁹*EC, Vol.3, Sr.51*

⁶⁰*EC, Vol.5, BI.90*

⁶¹*Unnuneeli SandesaManipravalakavya* has great evidential value for reconstructs the cultural, social and political history of late medieval Kerala particularly regarding feudal social system, status of women, festivals, minor kingdoms like *Venadu, Odanadu, Tekkumkur, Vadakkumkur* and their kings, Muslim invasion to *Pandya* kingdom, so on. *UnnuneeliSandesam*, p.89, 127-174

⁶²*EC, Vol.5, BI.89, Ak.125*

⁶³According to *Keralolpathi* tradition *Nambis* were warrior class with half-Brahmin origin. ‘*ArdhaBrahmanarAyudhapaanikalaiapaadunadakkukayumpadakoottukayumakambadynadakkukayumcheyyum; athukonduvalnambiyayathu*’. *Keralolpathi: The origin of Malabar*, pp.7,14

⁶⁴*EC, Vol.5, Introduction. pp. xxiii, Cn.172b*

⁶⁵*EC, Vol.3, Md.121, TN.97, EC, Vol.4, Ng.29, EC, Vol.5, Cn.197, 203, 211b, BI.74*

⁶⁶*EC, Vol.3, Md.121*

⁶⁷ *Duncan, The Hoysalas: A Medieval Royal Indian Family*, p.107

⁶⁸ *EC, Vol.5, Ak.42*

⁶⁹*EC, Vol.5, Cn.203*

⁷⁰Here the record says that *Ballala II* was the father of *Somesvara*. *EC, Vol. 4, Kr.12*. There is some obscurity and controversy still exists regarding *Somesvara*. For further discussion, see. *Duncan, The Hoysalas: A Medieval Royal Indian Family*, pp.107, 204-205, *EI, Vol.27, p.92*

⁷¹*EC, Vol.5, Ak.123*

⁷²*EC, Vol.3, Md.122, EC, Vol.4, Kr.9,63*

⁷³*EC, Vol.3, Md.122, EC, Vol.4, Ng.78, 98, Hs.9, EC, Vol.5, Ag.12, Ak.108, 166, Cn.180*

⁷⁴*EC, Vol.3, TN.103*

⁷⁵*EC, Vol.3, Nj.36, Md.62b, EC, Vol.4, Hg.10, Ng.55, EC, Vol.5, Ak.108, 166*

⁷⁶*EC, Vol.5, Introduction. p. xxv*

⁷⁷*EC, Vol.4, Ng.98*

- ⁷⁸EC, Vol.4, Kr.63
- ⁷⁹EC, Vol.4, Kr.8, 76
- ⁸⁰EC, Vol.4, Ng.55, Hg.10
- ⁸¹EC, Vol.3, Introduction.p.19, note.2, Md.122
- ⁸²EC, Vol.5, Ag.53
- ⁸³EC, Vol.4, Hg.50
- ⁸⁴EC, Vol.5, Ak.34, 105, 119, 124, Hn.69, Bl.178
- ⁸⁵ Epigraphic records mention six rulers of this dynasty such as Raviyammara (1007 CE), Kandavamma (1079 CE), Siva (1083 CE), Kanthirava (1090 CE), IraviChallamma (1107 CE) and Mukanna (1138 CE). EC, Vol.4, Hg.50, 56, 73, 75, 77, 79, 80
- ⁸⁶ EC, Vol.5, Introduction. p. xxvi
- ⁸⁷EC, Vol.5, Cn.231
- ⁸⁸EC, Vol.5, Cn.206, 232, Bl.187, Ak.149, Hn.47
- ⁸⁹EC, Vol.5, Bl.187, Ak.149
- ⁹⁰ Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala, Index.A.55, 56, pp.70, 71, 84, 121, 462, 463*
- ⁹¹EC, Vol.3, Nj.96
- ⁹²Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies, pp.41-42. Gundert version of Keralolpathi mentioned Kulavur as Kuzhayur. See: Keralolpathi: The origin of Malabar, pp.25-26*
- ⁹³Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala: Historical Studies, pp.51, 90, 149*
- ⁹⁴EC, Vol.5, Introduction. p. xxviii
- ⁹⁵EC, Vol.4, Ch.65
- ⁹⁶EC, Vol.5, Hn.51, 52
- ⁹⁷EC, Vol.3, Nj.71
- ⁹⁸Unniyachi Charitham, pp. 20-22. RagavaVariyar located Marudur alias Tirumarudur in the UnniyachiCharitham as the present Varadur in Wayanad. RagavaVariyar, *JainamathamKeralathil, p.54. But this must not be true. Present Maddur in Mandya district of Karnataka could be the Marudur in the poem. Inscriptions from there in the VaradarajaPerumal and the NarasimhaPerumal temples clearly attest its medieval name as Marudur. Interestingly, two Tamil-Grantha inscriptions from these temples speak that it was engraved from the order of a king namely KonerinmaiKondan. This name must be a surname, and the earliest evidence of the use of KonerinmaiKondan has found in the Jewish copperplates (Cochin deeds) dated 1000 CE by the Chera sovereign BhaskaraRavivaraman (c.962-1021CE). EC, Vol.3, Md.3, 7. Narayanan, Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala, Appendix.3, pp.79-81*

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