



HISTORICAL SETTING OF DEVER KUNDANI: THE CAPITAL CITY OF HOYSALA MONARCH VIRA RAMANATHAN

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Introduction

The Hoysales, an indigenous dynasty of kings, ruled for over three centuries over almost the whole of Karnataka, leaving a rich heritage of imperishable monuments of art and cultureⁱ From the position of petty tribal chiefs and later from that of vassals of more powerful neighbours such as the Cholas, they rose to power in the 11th centuries., from 1000 CE.ⁱⁱ They proceeded to strengthen themselves in the southern part of Karnataka and ruled as contemporaries of the Seunas, from the 12th to 14th centuries, i.e., from 1100 CE. - 1346 CE, in the course of their rule, they subdued the local chiefs in the western region and also drove the Chola governors away from the Kannada country.

Hosala king Somesvara partitioning of the country resulted in frequent conflicts between Narasimha III and Ramanatha. These continued until Narasimha III in 1291 CE. Owing to his death, Ramanatha was able to secure some territories in Kolar and Bangalore districts. However, Ramanatha lost Kannanur after a clash with a Pandya ruler and thereafter shifted his capital to Kundani in present Krishnagiri district.

The Hoysalas

At the time of the Kalachurl usurpation of the Chalukyas over eighty, the Hoysalas declared their independence from the Chalukyas whose feudatories they had beenⁱⁱⁱ. Thus they were the most powerful dynasty towards the end of the 12th century.

Origin

There are several versions regarding the origin of the Hoysala dynasty given by various scholars. According to tradition, the Hoysalas are descendants of the Yadavas, who belonged to the lunar race.^{iv} According to Rice, the Hoysalas were family of hill chiefs to start with, on the western ghats. Joshi views them as a community of people in the north Kanara district, known as Hosaleru, which is pronounced as Holsaleru. In the opinion of Derrett, they could be descendants of the megalithic civilisation existing in northern Mysore in the third century B.C. He adds, however, that they could also have descended from the Aryan conquerors of the south-west Deccan^v. Sewell agrees with Rice in equating the Hoysalas with a family of hill chiefs living in 'the extreme west of Mysore' near the Ghats, at Angadi in the Mudigere taluk.^{vi}

Epigraphical tradition leads one to conclude that the Hoysalas had a purely indigenous origin. Ancient Tamil literature provides further insight into the origin of the Hoysalas. The later Hoysala rulers assumed the title 'Bellala' (Vellala = Val Alar – corrupted into Vallala = Val Alar), which indicates the descent of this mediaeval dynasty from the ancient Vells of Tuvara-pati. Sangam literature confirms this descent of the Hoysalas from the ancient Tamil tribe, the velir community of south Mysore^{vii}

The most noteworthy kings: The reign of the Hoysalas was marked by acts of conquest and annexation carried out by the ambitious chiefs who made their regime memorable by their achievements,

Kama (C. 1000 - 1045 CE)

Epigraphical sources portray a Hoysala chief in 1006 A.D. who enters into combat with Aprameya, a Chola General. This chief can be identified with King Kama/ the first Hoysala chief who came into conflict with the Cholas while trying to assert himself. Cherishing the ambition to build his own kingdom, this chief moved from the hilly tract to the plains.^{viii}



Vinayaditya (C. 1045 - 1098 CE)

Kamas successor was his son Vinayaditya who extended his influence over a major part of Gangavadi.^{ix} Towards the end of his reign, Vinayaditya had made the Hoysalas powerful enough to earn recognition from the Chalukyas.

Ereyanga (C. 1098 - 1100 CE)

After a brilliant career as a prince, Ereyanga succeeded to the throne at a late age and ruled only for two years till 1100 CE.

Ballala I (C 1100 • 1108 CE)

Ereyanga was succeeded by his eldest son Ballala whose kingdom consisted of Konkana, Bayalnad and savimale. At the outset, Ballala was attacked by Jagaddeva, the Paramaraprince who lived in the Kalanupaka as a Chalukya subordinate. However, Ballala was able to strike terror in the Chalukya forces and push them back. He proceeded to expand his territories by subduing the Chengalvas, a petty clan of chieftains ruling over certain areas in the modern Coorg and Mysore districts. After this, he occupied Alvakheda, then proceeded against the Pandyas of UchchangI and attempted to occupy the Belvola country after crossing the Tungabhadra. This open violation of the authority of Vikramaditya provoked him into sending his feudatory Achugi II to defeat the Hoysalachief and drive him back to his capital.^x

Vishnuvardhana (C. 1108 - 1152 CE)

The successor of Ballala -I was his younger brother Vishnuvardhana who began his rule with a campaign to the south in order to subjugate Gangavadi and Nolambavadi.^{xi} After that, it appears that he attacked and subdued the Kongalvas and the Nidugal Cholas, who were Chola subordinates. He also made expeditions to the Nilgiris and the Kongu country to extend the Hoysala authority over the Salem - Coimbatore area. In an attempt to declare his independence of Chalukya allegiance, Vishnuvardhana began to precede against the Chalukya feudatories such as the Pandyas of UchchangI who were governing the Nolambavadi province. This made him adopt the title of Nolambavadi gonda, i.e., the conqueror of Nolambavadi. Next he captured Baltare and crossed Tungabhadra to conquer the fort of Kummata. By attacking the territories of the Kadambas of Hangal, he also secured that fort.^{xii} In 1136 CE, he captured Bankapura after a victory over the Kadambas. Thus by 1149 CE, his territories included Gangavadi, Nolambavadi, Banavasi, Hangal and Huligere with his capital at Bankapura^{xiii} Though he did not achieve independence, Vishnuvardhana succeeded in liberating the entire Gangavadi area from Chola control and spread his influence as far as Belvola and Bellary in the north.

Narasimha I (1152 - 1178 CE)

The son of Vishnuvardhana by name Narasimha inherited the kingdom, but failed to take advantage of his reign to consolidate his position. As such he proved to be an unworthy successor of this father.

Ballala II (1173 - 1220 CE)

A significant event in the reign of Ballala II was his defeat of the Pandyas and conquest of UchchangI. By 1178 CE he secured Hangal^{xiv}, and in 1190 CE he was victorious in a fierce battle near Soratur in Gadag taluk, after which he established himself in Belvola, with Lakkundi as his stronghold. By moving into Raichur district, he captured important places such as Kukkanur and Manvi, and then turned eastward to capture parts of Raichur, Bellary area. Ballala extended Hoysala control up to Malaprabha in the north, after defeating Seuna Bhillama. By intervening in the Chola affairs, he earned great prestige in the southland secured for his family the position of a sovereign ruling powder^{xv}

Narasimha II (1220 - 1235 CE)

Succeeding his father to the Hoysala throne in 1220 CE Narasimha II rule for 15 years was significant for his achievements in the Chola territory. He secured from the Chola ruler some territory around Kannanur which he entrusted to his son Somesvara. He helped in reinstating Rajaraja on the Chola throne, and was regarded as the saviour of the Chola throne after he subdued the Pandya king Naravarman Sundara Pandya. Thereafter, there was a



tremendous increase in his influence over the Chola country and the Kannanur region was added to the territory controlled by the Hoysalas.

Somesvara (1235 - 1253 CE)

The reign of somesvara brought about a shift in the policy of the Hoysalas as regards their neighbors in the north and in the south. After having supported the Cholas all this time Somesvara now turned to the aid of the Pandyas'. He defeated Rajendra and declared himself as the saviour of the Pandyas.

Then somesvara divided his kingdom into two parts and made his elder son Narasimha III govern the northern area with Dorasamudra as the capital, while he placed the southern region from Kannanur under his young son Ramanatha, somesvara himself lived in Kannanur for a few more years,

Narasimha III (1253 - 1292 CE) and Ramanatha (1253 - 1295 CE)

Somesvara partitioning of the country resulted in frequent conflicts between Narasimha III and Ramanatha. These continued until Narasimha III in 1291 CE. Owing to his death, Ramanatha was able to secure some territories in Kolar and Bangalore districts. However, Ramanatha lost Kannanur after a clash with a Pandya ruler and thereafter shifted his capital to Kundani to the north of Kannanur^{xvi}

Ballala III (1291 - 1342 CE)

Narasimha III's son Ballala III succeeded to the throne in 1291 CE. He ruled over the united Hoysala kingdom by 1301 CE. Epigraphically records reveal that Ballala fought against the Muslims but had ultimately to submit to them and surrender his wealth to them, though he could return safely to his country by 1313 CE, he had to send his son to the court of Delhi. Later he was able to annex areas around Arunasamudra which he made his southern headquarters. Ballala met his death in 1342 CE. at the hands of Ghiyasuddin after being captured by the Muslim General Nasirudin.

Virupaksha Ballala IV (1342 - 1346 A.D.)

He was the successor of Ballala III and was crowned in August 1343 A.D. However, his reign was not significant for, by this time, the new kingdom of Vijayanagar was founded by the Sangama brothers in the Hoysala territory. By this time, the Hoysala kingdom comprised of the Salem district, the western half of north Arcot and Chittoor districts, the whole of Thiruchirapalli district excluding Karur, the Tanjore, the Papanasam and Mannargudi taluks of the Tanjore district and the eastern part of Pudukottal state as well as east Mysore country comprising the modern Kolar district, Kannanur and south Arcot. It is reported that by 1346 A.D. most of the Hoysala territory was under the dominion of the new power. In this way, the rule of the Hoysalas, which had lasted for over three centuries, came to an end.

Kundani alias Devar Kundani

Kundani alias Devar Kundani became the capital of Ramanathan's fraction after losing the capital Kannanur. Now appears a small village in present Krihngiri district in the name Koththur or China Koththur. It has a glorious past history from the megalithic culture datable to 500 BCE.

Situated in the valley of Markandanadi, is bounded on the west by a range of hills, the northern half which is known as Kundani Malai.^{xvii} Close to the foot of the north-east spur is the village of Devar-Kundani, the site of the capital of the "Kundani Kingdom", which was said to have extended as far as Tirtam to the north and Veppanapalli in the east. To the west of Tirtam is a village of Hale-Kundani i.e., Old Kundani. Near Veppanapaali is the village of Budi-mutlu which is said to have derived its name from the fact that the ashes of the capital were dumped there.

The Megalithic culture is represented by Cairn Circle type Megalithic monuments and Labrynth structure found in Baire Gouni. And by historic period, the most interesting relics at Kundani are the six temples situated near the north-east spur of the hills. They are dedicated respectively to Chennigiriayaswami, Hanunan, Nandikeswara, Kundaniamma, Vireswara and Kuntiswara. Of these six temples, the last is by far the finest of the group. It is



surrounded by a covered colonnade and containing wall, the columns being arranged in two rows. It contains a fine Kalyana mandapam brone on 28 pillars and backed by a stone dais at the western end. The stone work of the whole temple is well and neatly furnished. The walls of garbhagraham i.e., sanctum Sanctorum and the porch outside are covered with inscription.

There are however very few epigraphic records on Hoysolas rule. A Tamil inscription dated 1268 in the south wall of the Kuntivara temple at Kundani records gift of land bellow the Devasamudram tank in masandi Nadu to the Kalailasanatha temple by a native of Marudu in Malai nadu. The proceeds of the grant were to be enjoyed by Brahmins who recited the Vedas and the Maheswaras who worshipped in the temple.^{xviii}

Another inscription dated 1278 in the same temple records the gift of village called Kalakkimuttal alias Kakkauayakkanallur in Pudupatru to the temple Tiruvegambamudaiya Nayanar by Purvadh Raja alias Bhumi Nayakka. It mentions a number of items under which an income from a village was generally calculated.^{xix}

There is a reference to Ramanatha's son, Viswanatha in the fragmentary inscriptions found in the Kundaniamma temple. Another inscription in the Kuntivara temple, dated 1463 in the reign of Vijyanagar Raya, Mallikarjuna, refers to an endowment of the temple of Kalailasanatha of Kundai by one Chicka Viorabhadra Nayaka. This record show that Kundani was in Viravi Nadu of Nigarilicholamandalam.^{xx} Another partially damaged inscription in the same place inscribed in 16th Cen. CE, without name of the king or Kingdom refers to an endowment of a land and the donor's name is mentioned with three names of his ancestors, father, grandfather and grand grand father.^{xxi}

Another inscription in Kunjamal temple without the name of king and reigh year records the endowment made by Arumbarkilar to the Kalilasanathar temple in Kundani in Viruvi Nadu.^{xxii}

The Chola reign inscriptions are also found in Kundai. One belong to Kulothunga Cholan –I did not bear his regnal year is found in Kunjama temple. It said, his chieftain named Cholappallavrayan, who made endowment in gold coin for doing various temple rituals.^{xxiii}

Hero stone inscriptions found in kundani records the heroic activities of people of Kundani. One found at the northern roof of Kunjamma temple record the ruler name Athimallan. The name of the hero is Marazhalvan, he was said, participated in the army of Narasingadevan and died in the war.^{xxiv} Another one on the roof of north pragarah, records the death of Ammaiya naickkan and his brother sons of Somiya naiyakkan. This memorial stone is established for their memory. The died the skirmish when Puraththazalvar was ruled in Celavandai, the Pothamar was involved in the cattle fetching act, both these were repulsed him.^{xxv} Another one in the same place, record the rule of Mallapurvathirayan. When Kiramainka Sanagar attacked Podumbar kottai, the son of Ponmani Virapichai Andai was died in the war.^{xxvi} One hero stone found in the agricultural land record Sokkan, the name of the hero was died in the horse killing action.^{xxvii} On paleographic ground all these inscription are datable to 14th cen. CE.

Conclusion

Kundai now called Chinna Koththur is situated in Krihmagiri district is the capital city of Hoysala king Ramantha fraction. It holds the pride for a short period. Its anciently begins with the Megalithic culture. However a long gape prevailed till the 11th Cen CE inscriptions. The inscriptions show the Colas influence prior to the Hoysalas. The temples particularly the Kundeswarar temple seems constructed in Later Chola Architect. Except one inscription of Ramanatha's son, Viswanatha there is no other records existed to illustrate the glory of the Hoysala rule from this capital. The later period inscriptions mostly hero stone inscriptions show chieftain rulers and skirmish.



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