

“A case study of cultural history of Harapanahalli in the Kannada inscriptions of the taluk”

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Abstarct:

Harapanahalli region played an important role keeping intact Kananda language and culture. It was center of various empires imporatnat ones being Western Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Vijayanagara. The present paper seeks to unravel these aspects through study of cultural history of Harapanahalli in the Kannada inscriptions of the taluk. The Western Chalukyas played an important role in art and cultrure development in the region. The Western Chalukyas developed an architectural style known today as a transitional style, an architectural link between the style of the early Chalukya dynasty and that of the later Hoysala empire. Most of its monuments are in the districts bordering the Tungabhadra River in central Karnataka. Well known examples are the theMallikarjuna Temple at Kuruvatti, the Kallesvara Temple at Bagali and the Mahadeva Temple at Itagi. This was an important period in the development of fine arts in Southern India, especially in literature as the Western Chalukya kings encouraged writers in the native language Kannada, and Sanskrit. Knowledge of Western Chalukya history has come through examination of the numerous Kannada language inscriptions left by the kings (scholars Sheldon Pollock and Jan Houben have claimed 90 percent of the Chalukyan royal inscriptions are in Kannada), and from the study of important contemporary literary documents in Western Chalukya literature such as GadaYuddha (982) in Kannada by Ranna and VikramankadevaCharitam (1120) in Sanskrit by Bilhana.

Key words: Kannada, inscriptions, Western Chalukyas, structure, vesara style, dravida style

Introduction

Present day Harapanahalli is a Taluka, with population of about 3 lakh is Davanagere district's the 4th least populous sub district, located in Davanagere district of the state Karnataka in India. There are 79 villages in the sub district, among them Halavagal is the most populous village with population of about 10 thousand and Kayakadahalli is the least populous village with population of 214. Halavagal is the biggest village in the sub district with an area of 42 km² and Joislingapura is the smallest with 1 km².

Historically Harapanahalli came to prominence mainly during Western Chalukya Empire, this empire ruled most of the western Deccan, South India, between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Sometimes called the Kalyani Chalukya after its regal capital at Kalyani, today's Basavakalyan in Karnataka, and alternatively the Later Chalukya from its theoretical relationship to the sixth century Chalukya dynasty of Badami. It is commonly called Western Chalukyas to differentiate from the contemporaneous Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, a separate dynasty. Prior to the rise of those

Chalukyas, the Rashtrakuta empire of Manyakheta controlled most of deccan and central India for over two centuries. In 973, seeing confusion in the Rashtrakuta empire after a successful invasion of their capital by the Paramara of Malwa, Tailapa II a feudatory of the Rashtrakuta ruling from Bijapur region defeated his overlords and made Manyakheta his capital. The dynasty quickly rose to power and grew into an empire under Somesvara I who moved the capital to Kalyani.

Objective

To study key features of inscriptions found in Harapanahalli taluka with reference to

- Kannada language extant that time
- Cultural influences that persist till date

Illustration found in Neelagunda

Neelagunda is a village in Davanagere district of Karnataka. It has been referred as Nirgunda in its inscriptions. On its etymology, L D Barnett suggests that 'nir' stands for water and 'gunda' might refer to Kannada word 'gundi', standing for 'low ground'. As the village lies at the bank of Tungabhadra and there exists remains of few ancient tanks hence the name Nirgunda seems appropriate for it.

The history of the village can be traced from eleventh century CE. An inscription, dated in 1087 CE, mentions that the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI, granted Neelaguda with its two adjacent hamlets to three-hundred Brahmans who migrated from Dravidian lands. Neelagunda was then part of Vikkiga-70 territory. The same inscription also traces the Chalukya descent from their ancestors who were ruling in Ayodhya. It is indeed interesting to see that an agrahara is setup for the brahmans who migrated from Dravidian lands, or most probably might be the case that those were invited to live at this newly setup agrahara.

However, the above inscription is not the earliest one as there is another inscription which is dated in 1079 CE mentioning a land grant made by the brahmans of Neelagunda to a temple in Haleyahalu. Few years later, few more additional villages were also granted to the same Brahmans.

The village continued receiving the patronage from the Kalachuris and Hoysalas who came ruling after the Western Chalukyas. Interestingly, we do not find any inscription of the Vijayanagara period, perhaps the village had already lost its importance by that time and no royal patronage was provided.

Monuments and architectural details:

There are three temples of interest in this village, Bheemeshvara, Lakshmi-Naryaana and Anantasayana. The best preserved is Bheemeshvara Temple and the other two are in various stages of preservation.

Bheemeshvara Temple – The east facing temple is consisted of a garbhagrha (sanctum), antarala (vestibule), a mandapa (hall) and two lateral shrines with their antaralas connecting to same common mandapa. Thus this forms a trikuta structure however the antarala of the lateral shrines is half the size of the antarala of the main shrine. The main cell faces east, while the lateral ones are in south and north. A small porch is attached to the eastern entrance of the mandapa. There is another shrine, opposite to the eastern entrance of the mandapa, not directly connected to the main structure however is axially aligned to the main shrine. All together, these four shrines form a chatur-kuta structure.

The mandapa is interesting with its feature of jali screens at the either side of the main entrance. The central ceiling of the mandapa is supported on four pillars and the roof has depiction of ashta-dikpalas. Inside the mandapa are four niches, two on either side of the anatarala doorway and one each at northern and southern end. Ganesha and Mahishasuramardini occupies the antarala side niches while the other two houses Sapta-matrikas and a yaksha or nidhi. A loose sculpture of Lakshmi-Narayana is placed in this mandapa, this image was brought from the nearby Lakshmi-Narayana temple.

The antarala doorway is very interesting and very beautifully carved. It has Gaja-Lakshmi on its lakata-bimba. Above this is a trimurtitorana depicting the Hindu Trinity. Shiva is in middle, Brahma and Vishnu on either sides, all with their respective goddesses sitting on their laps. Shiva is also accompanied with Ganesha and Kumara. Shaiva dvarpalas are on the door jambs. The sanctum doorway is simple and it also has Gaja-Lakshmi on its lalata-bimba however it is not carved as a separate stone but within the doorway frame. Shaiva dvarpalas are also present at the sanctum door jambs.

The main shrine has a shivalinga inside. The two lateral shrines are empty except one which has few loose sculptures. The roof over these two lateral shrines has no more survived expect the first tala (storey). The central shrine has a tri-tala (three story) vimana with a square dome on the top. Kalasa above is missing.

The temple vimana has interspersed projections and recesses. The projections are decorated with shikharas of vesara style supported on pilasters while the recesses are decorated with shikharas in dravidian style supported on a single pilaster. There are three niches on the three sides of main vimana, housing a Shiva image in the western niche, ugra-Narasimha on the northern niche. Southern niche is at present has a loose sculpture however Rea mentioned that it houses a mutilated Bhairava during his visit.

The shikhara has many carved panels depicting Brahma, Shiva and various gods and goddesses. A curious Hoysala image of a man wearing a long robe is also found here. He is usually shown wearing a cap and holding a ring and a snake. Here, he is shown without cap however holding a ring but his snake seems to have broken off.

Foekema is of opinion that though the earliest inscription is from the Western Chalukya rule, however the temple seems to have undergone major reconstruction during the Hoysala period. The original temple would have been constructed around 1100 CE but the current structure can be dated between 1200-1250 CE.

Historical details of Inscriptions

On a slab set up inside the Muktesvara Temple – South Indian Inscriptions vol IX, no 141 – dated in Chalukya-Vikrama year 4, corresponding to 1079 CE – refers itself to the reign of the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI – . It records that, while his feudatory Tribhuvanamalla-Rayapandyadeva was ruling over Nolambavadi-32000 and Kaniyakallu-300 from the nelvidu of Uluva, the Brahman Mahajanas of Nirgunda made a grant of land for the service of Mulasthana-Svayambhu-Ramesvara of Haleyahalu. The five-hundred merchants of the place made a gift of a kani per load of betel leaves. It also records that in the Chalukya-Vikrama year 61, corresponding to 1136 CE, the Totigas, Konekaras, Telligas and others made money contributions at the rate of a paga per uli and per ladder and a sotige of oil per oil-mill for the service of the god.

Nilgunda plates of Vikramaditya VI – Epigraphia Indica vol XII – Written in Nagari characters, language is Sanskrit – dates in Chalukya-Vikrama year 12, corresponding to 1087 CE – The inscription refers to the grant of village Nirgunda and two adjacent hamlets to a number of Brahmans by the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI made in 1123 CE in confirmation to his previous grant of the year 1087 CE. It mentions that 59 sovereigns of the Chalukya family were formerly ruling in Ayodhya and later 16 of them ruled in the South. After the temporary obstruction, their fortunes were restored by Jayasimha I, who overcame the Rashtrakuta king Indra, son of Krishna, and slew five hundred other kings. Then came his son Ranaraga, his son Pulakesin I, and his son Kirtivarman I, the conqueror of the Nalas, Kadambas and Mauryas; his younger brother Mangalisa, who captured the island of Revati and humbled the Kalachuri kings, reigning as regent during the childhood of his elder brother's son; and then the later Satyasraya I (Pulakesin II), who conquered Harsha of Kanauj.

We are then informed that next two monarch's were Satyasraya's son Nedamari and the latter's son Adityavarman. From Adityavarman, the genealogy is Vikramaditya I, Yuddhamalla, Vijayaditya, Vikramaditya II, Kirtivarman II. It was Kirtivarman II when the dynasty suffered an eclipse. Then came the brother of Vikramaditya II, whose name is not given. The genealogy of this brother is given as, Kirtivarman III, Taila I, Vikramaditya III, Bhima II, Ayyana I. Ayyana I married the daughter of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. From her he got Vikramaditya IV, who married Bonthadevi, daughter of the Chedi king Lakshmana. From her, he got Taila II who conquered the Rashtrakuta Karkara and Ranastambha and restored the fortunes of his dynasty and married Jakabba, the daughter of the RattaBharmaha. His son was Satyasraya II and Dasavarman. Dasavarman was married to Bhagyavati. Their son, Vikramaditya V ruled after the death of the elder brother of his father. His younger brother was Jayasimha II (also styled as Jagadekamalla and Mallikamoda) ruled after his. His son Ahavamalla (Somesvara I) made his power felt by the kings of Malva, Chola and Kanauj. His sons were Bhuvanaikamalla (Somesvara II) and Tribhuvanamalla

(Vikramaditya VI) who made the present grant. In twelfth Chalukya-Vikrama year, from his victorious camp at Kalyana, Vikramaditya VI on a petition of Palata Pandya, grant to three-hundred Brahmans coming from Dravidian lands, the village named Nirgunda situated in Vikkiga-70 forming part of territory of Kokali-500. Later, in forty-eighth Chalukya-Vikrama year, the same king from his victorious camp at Vaijayanti, on a petition of Raya Pandya, the grandson of Palata Pandya, grant the same village and likewise Krishnapallika, together with lands thereof, to the same Brahmans, five-hundred in number, for four hundred pieces of gold as alimony to be paid to the owners to these lands by the Brahmans.

The bounds of the villages are mentioned. For the worship of the local god Bhimeshvara and proper maintenance of various activities related to the temple, the hamlet of Adityapallika has been granted. Then comes verses by Veda-Vyasa specifying moral duty of a king to respect the past grants from his ancestors or other kings.

On a hero slab set up in front of the Ramalinga Temple – South Indian Inscriptions vol XI, no 188 – This inscription is dated Chalukya-Vikrama year 3[1], corresponding to 1106 CE – It records the death of Chava-Gavunda and Holli-Gavunda in a battle on the occasion of a campaign of Nilagunde by Chagaladevi, wife of a Mahasamanta (name lost) of Toragale.

On the third slab set up in the courtyard of Bhimeshvara temple – South Indian Inscriptions, vol IX, no 176 – dated in Chalukya-Vikrama year 33, corresponding to 1107 CE in the reign of the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI – It records the grant of some land made by a Dandanayaka (name lost) in charge of the toll-revenue, for the service of the god Viresvaradeva.

On a slab set up in the courtyard of the Bhimeshvara Temple – South Indian Inscription, vol IX, no 181 – dated in Chalukya-Vikrama year 35, corresponding to 1110 CE, in the reign of the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI who was ruling from Kalyana – His Dandanayakas, Anantapalayya and Muddarasa who were in charge of the toll-revenue, made a gift of a portion of the tolls for the service of the god Bhimesvaradeva at Nirgunda. The record is damaged.

On a slab set up in the court yard of the Bhimeshvara Temple – South Indian Inscriptions vol IX, no 293 – dated in the cyclic year Chitrabhanu and belongs to the reign of the Kalachuri king, Mahamandalesvara, Bhujabalachakravarti Bijjala II. Chitrabhanu in the reign of Bijjala was Saka 1084 corresponding to 1162 CE – The king's feudatory, Tribhuvanamalla-Vira-Pandyadeva who had the title "lord of Kanchipura" is stated to have been ruling over Kogali-500 and Kadambalike-1000. Under Vira-Pandya's orders Kallimayya, the Superintendent of tolls (Sunkad-adhish-thayaka) in Kogali and Kadambalike, made a grant of a fixed portion of the toll-revenue in Nirugunda, the chief town of Kogali-500, for the service of the god Bhimesvaradeva in the village.

On the fourth slab set up in the courtyard of the Bhimeshvara temple – South Indian Inscriptions vol IX, no 340 – dated Saka 1145, corresponding to 1224 CE – It belongs to the reign of the Hoysala king Narasimha II. His father Ballala is stated to have driven out single handed the Seuna army from Soratur up to the bank of the Krishnaveni

river, being mounted on his elephant. It register the gift of some village (name lost) for the service of the god Bhimesvara.

On the fourth slab set up in the courtyard of the Bhimeshvara temple – South Indian Inscriptions vol IX, no 352 – dated in the cyclic year Kilaka, probably 1309 CE – This record, which is engraved in continuation of no 340, registers the gift of the village Talavagilahalli by the MahamandalesvaraBijjarasa-Achchutadeva.

On a pillar in Bhimeshvara temple – Annual Report on Epigraphy 1913-14, no 117 of 1913 – Mentions the MahasamantadhipatiAdipemmana of Mahabali-vamsa and the village Nirgunda.

On a viragal set up in front of the Mukteshvara Temple – Annual Report on Epigraphy 1913-14, no 119 of 1913 – Records the death of Kallaganga, the Muliga of Nirgunda on the occasion of Mareyal[v]a. son of Chayandiyarasa, fought in Banavasi-nadu to rescue the cows of Nirgunda.

On a second viragal set up in front of the same temple – Annual Report on Epigraphy, 1913-14, no 120 of 1913 – Much damaged, mentions Pallavadhirajadhiraja.

Conclusion:

All the kingdoms which ruled the region have predominantly used local language Kannada for inscriptions and administration, a trend that started with the Badami Chalukyas. Some historians claim ninety percent of their inscriptions have been written in Kannada, the remaining in Sanskrit. More inscriptions in Kannada attribute to Vikramaditya VI than any other king prior to the twelfth century, many of which have been deciphered and translated by historians of the Archaeological Survey of India. Inscriptions have been either carved in stone (Shilashasana) or etched on copper plates (Tamarashasana). That period saw the prolific growth of the regional language into a literary and poetic medium, a trend encouraged by earlier empires, the Kadambas, Chalukyas of Badami and Rashtrakutas. Further impetus for the use of the local language came from the devotional movement of the Virashaivas who expressed their closeness to their deity in the form of simple lyrics called Vachanas.[62] At an administrative level, the regional language had been used to record locations and rights related to land grants. When bilingual, the inscriptions beginning section stated the title, genealogy, origin myths of the king and benedictions generally used Sanskrit. Kannada had been used to state terms of the grants, including information on the land, its boundaries, the participation of local authorities, rights and obligations of the grantee, taxes and dues, and witnesses. That ensured the content would be clearly understood by the local people without any ambiguity. Focus of this paper was to present birds eye view of cultural moorings of Harapanahalli inscriptions and architecture

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