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A BRIEF STUDY OF TRADE GUILDS IN ANDHRA FROM 1300 AD TO 1600 AD

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ABSTRACT

The period between to 13th century AD and 16th century AD is very crucial in the political history of South India general and especially in the history of Andhrapradesh. Because the first part of the 14th century (1323 AD) witnessed the Muslim invasions which cast for the rise of revolts by the federated of the chief Kakatiyas to liberated Andhradesa from the Muslim leaders when the Andhra region caught in political disturbances. It impact on the socio-economic spheres of the period, the conditions of trade and commerce became a setback. After freed the Andhradesa from the Muslim conquers, the socio-economic conditions became slowly as use well. Naturally the trade and commerce especially internal & external trade with foreign countries slowly gained economic profits the trade and merchant guilds were also moved towards in progress. So the present paper is focussed on a brief study of trade guilds in Andhra (1300 AD to 1600 AD) is discussed briefly.

Keywords:South India, Trade, 13th Century, 16th Century.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of 14th century is witness the political chaos in South India in general and Andhra in particular. The first part of century (1323 A.D) marked the fall of *kakatiyas* caused disorder in Andhra which led several revolts started by the feudatories of *kakatiyas* to free the Andhra region from the muslim rulers. The revolts known as the movement of liberation started in 1329 A.D by the chiefs of *Musunurinayakas* which several chiefs join with them.They liberated warangal from muslim rule in 1336A.D and it came under the rule of *Musunurinayakas* . Thus after the movement of liberation a number of petty kingdoms were

founded by the chiefs in Andhra such as the Reddies of *kondaveedu*(1325 A.D to 1425 A.D), The *Velamas* of *Rachakonda* and *Devarakonda* (1336 A.D to 1475 A.D) etc. The period also marked as significant especially the second part of 14th century in the political history of South India because of the *Bahamani dynasty* (1347 A.D to 1538 A.D) and the *Vijayanagar dynasty* founded in their kingdoms neighbouring state of *Karnataka* became contemporary to the above mentioned kingdoms in Andhra. Thus the second part of the 14th century marked the new scenerios in the political history of Andhra. The kingdoms were busily engaged in wars with each other for the supremacy and expansion of their kingdoms. Though they were busily engaged in wars they established a well administrative organization and encouraged commercial activities in their kingdoms. Thus the internal and external trades developed in this period well. The traders and merchants who involves in the business were called *srenis*, *sanghas*, *nigamas* and *nakaramu* or *nagaramu*. (*Trade guilds and merchants guilds*) Added to this the professional guilds or craft guild were also organised by the artisans. The trade guilds occupied a subordinated position next to the kings and nobels in the society because they controlled the goods produced by the craft guilds. This is evidenced in the inscriptions and literary works of this period and referred several merchant guild such as *pekkendru*, *nana desi-Pekkandru*, *suravaram -pekkendru*, *ubhaya nana desi- pekkendru* and so on. So the present paper is focused on a brief study of trade guilds in Andhra (from 1300 A.D-1600A.D) and discussed.

Meaning of the Trader: The common term for a trader is *behari* and the business he does is called *vyavahara*. The word *behari* is derivative of the *vyavahara*. So, the traders or merchants were broadly of two kinds viz *svadesi* and *paradesi*. The *svadesi* merchants were belong to the kingdom and the *paradesi* going from place to place. The *svadesi* merchants are also called *Nakaramu* and the *paradesi* traders known as *Nanadesi-pekkandru*, *Ubhaya-Nanadesipekkandru*. The *svadesi* or *Nagaramu* or *Nakaramu* included the *Balanjasettis* and their guilds. But there is discrimination between the *Vaishyas* and *Balanjas*

Merchant / Trade Guilds:

PEKKENDRU : The term *Pekkendru* literally means “ many “. The guild of *pekkandru* was not confined to the geographical limits of one area; nor was the trading activities of its member limited to the geographical confines of India. The guild *Pekkendru* existed in different part of South India under a variety of names like *NanadesiTisaiYayirattuAinnurruvar*. The *AyyavaliAivatu*, *Ainnuruvar* etc. An inscription found at *vutukuru*(*Rajampettaluka* , *kadapa district*) dated 1370 A.D refers to *Pekkandru*. Another inscription found at *Animela*(*Kamalapuramtaluk* , *kadapa district*) dated 1531 A.D gives some information about this guild. The inscription from *Tripurantrakam*(*Prakasam district*) furnishes two long lists of names of the members of the trade guilds of *Pekkandru* a powerful merchant guild. It is referred in the inscription with different names of *Pekkandru*. They are *Suravaram – Pekkandru*, *NanadesiPekkandru*, *Ubhaya-nanadesi-pekkandru*, *chalu-mula-ubhaya-nanadesi-pekkandru*, *Yanamandla-sthala-pekkandru*.

Another inscription of *Achutaraya* founded at *kadapa district* dated 1531 A.D mentions that the *chalu-mula-samsta-yabhaiaru-desala-pekkandru* decided to levy taxation on certain commodities brought through *Plivendalagandi* and *pendlimaripasses* in *kadapa district*. The derived amounts through the taxes were gifted to the gods *Sanghamesvara*, *Virabhadra* at *Aimela*(*Kamalapuramtalukakadapa district*).

The guild pekkandru traded with all over the important place like *Suravaram, Alampur, Tripurantakam, Warangal* and so on. in and around of the Andhra region with various articles like *Spun-Silk, Spun-wool, Cotton, Camphor, Cosmetics, paints, ivory, coral, pearls, rudraksha, gajupusa (glass-beads) oils, spices, ginger, betel-leaves, fruits, turmeric, etc.*

THE VIRA BANAJIGAS : The guild constituted an important mercantile corporation in the Karnataka region and appeared not only in this region and also in Andhra and Tamil regions during the period. The *Virabanajigas* as they were called in *Kenarese* and *viravalanjar* as styled in Tamil. The name signifies valiant merchants. They claimed to have come originally from Ahichchattrā (Karnataka or Kenerese) and their guilds were at Aihole or Ayyavoli (Badami district, Karnataka state) which was the seat of their board of directors consisting of council of 500 members. The ayyavoli 500 guild consists of members of not only the settis but also other classes like Reddies, Nayudus, Boyas and Dasaris. Most of them belong to the villages of Telugu country only, though they call themselves as Ayyavoli 500/Ayyavoli Ainnuruvau and sometimes called Nanadesi-pekkandru.

Balanjigas or *Banajigas* must be the original or a corruption of the Sanskrit *banija*. *Banijika* means merchant or trader. *Banijga* is a division of the *Lingayats* and *Virabanajigain* old canarese means a strict trader or *Viravaniga, Virabanajiga*. They took the title *NakaraParivara* and *Mummuridanda*. This *Virabanajigashad* a vast organizations in the 12th and 13th centuries and spread a network all over the greater part of Southern India and Ceylon. In the beginning , they had simple trade and then developed into an elaborate trade guild. The *virabanajiga* trade guilds flourished in some important trade centers such as *Vijayanagara, Dvarasamudram, Nangaluru, Honnovar, Candavaru, Tariyakallu, Telakalambi* and *singapattana* (Karnataka region), *Gutti, penugonda, Udayagiri, Chandragiri* (Andhra region) *muluvay, kanchi, padaividu, caturangapattanam* (Tamil region). The guild also obtained trade licence for trading in Pakanadu-2100, (The present Nellore and prakasam district), Vengi-16000 (The present West Godavari, Krishna, and Guntur district) and Anmakondapattana-sthala (Warangal district). The members of the guild are called *prabhu-mukhyas* which means nominated of the trading centres of the local merchants.

NAKARAMU: The Nakramu is another organization of merchants frequently referred to in the epigraphs. The members of the Nakaramu were all traders are amply attested by the records. This corporate body is mentioned to in the inscriptions by various names viz, *Nakaramu, Nagaramu, Nakharamu, Nagara etc..*

The *vaisyapuramu* of *Bhaskaracharya* purported to have been written in 1508 A.D throws some lights on the guilds of Nakaramu. According to this work, the *Nagara* was exclusively a vaisya organization and the organization existed in 18 different places in many towns and cities throughout the Andhra. Some of them were *Dharma, Dhanada, Panchala, Ghantasala, Trigunitabhima (The three Bhimaramas/ Aramas in Godavari district) Visaka, Kalinga, Viranarayana and Penugonda, Penogoda (the present Vaizag, Godavari and Odissa districts)* appears to have been their chief cities and headquarters. The guild Nakaramu was referred to in the inscription with a variety of names like *Nelluri-Nakaramu, Samasta-Nakaramu, Bala-Nakaramu etc.*

An inscription founded at perur (*Miriyalagudataluka, Nalgonda district*) gives some interesting information regarding the guild. This is the only inscription so far discovered in the entire Andhrapradesh. This refers to the Tamil and Telugu Nakarams. It gives that the

some Tamil merchants who were originally the members of a Nakhara of Tamil region might have migrated into the Andhra region and settled at perur along with the Telugu merchants who were the members of a Nakaras that place. Though they maintained cordial trade relations, they designed to have an independent existence of their own organizations and hence they had independent guilds and even temples.

Likewise it was the most important guild in the Tamil region. According to Tevaram / Devaram hymns of *saivabhaktas* or *Nayanamars*, four types of merchants Vyaparigal, *Saliyar*, *Sankarapadiyar* and *vaniyar* were considered to be Nagarattur. But an inscription from Chidambaram of the reign of Rajendra-I (1012 A.D-1044A.D) of chola dynasty records the established Nakaram consists of a group other than merchants mentioned above. According to the epigraph it consists of an agrarian group, fishermen, carpenters, black smiths, gold smith and leather workers. Among the Nakaram members, merchant group had the greatest prestige and importance besides the agrarian group.

THE GUILDS OF NANADESI AND PARADESI:

Nanadesi means those belonged to or coming from different countries and paradesi means foreign merchants. They appear to have been functioning in important port-towns where extensive trade, both inlands and foreign, was carried on. We have scanty information about the organization Nanadesi. They migrated to different parts of the country like the Portuguese, the Dutch and English who were engaged in commercial activities in Vijayanagar country. The brokers assisted the merchants. They were instrumental in fixing the price of articles and effected wholesale purchases on behalf of their merchants. An inscription found at Loboetoewa in Sumatra (South East Asian Country) referred to the existence of Nanadesi guild in that region. Again we learn from a 13th century inscription that a native of carnaganore (Tamil country) made a donation in favour of a Vishnu temple which had been founded by the Nanadesi guild in that distant city of upper Burma. The Vijayanagar rulers took sufficient interest in extending protection to the Nanadesi (foreign merchants). Thus the trade guilds of this period promoted trade and commerce particularly Sea-borne trade.

THE GILDS OF VAISYAVANIYA NAGATTAR OR MAHANAD-SETTIS OR PATTAN SETTIS

It appears to have been a Tamil organization in some parts of the vijayanagar empire. It was trade in common articles. This guild was known as *NagaramuNagarattasor settis* in the inscriptions. They were local associations only and hence the constitution and working of a guild must have differed from place to place and from time to time. Each guild had a leader. He was known in the Karnataka and Telugu counties as the *pattanasvamis* or *settis*.

The mahanadusetis were a rich and powerful merchant guild and enjoyed the monopoly of trade in their area, western guards of Karnataka. They regulated the commerce in those areas levying customs duties on their goods. The source from which we have this information enumerates the various customs houses located Ikeeri, Sirivante, Kabur, Durga, Gutti, Mosarur etc. where the transit duties were levied presumably by this guild of Mahanadasettis and also transported goods by the roads and animals. It also appears that the various regional guilds were mixed into bigger organization.

TRADE ACTIVITIES OF THE GUILDS:

The trade guilds operate its business in the main towns and cities in their respective areas, but also other parts of the countries. All most all trade guilds maintained regular contacts with the merchants in towns and cities. The important trade towns and cities in this period were Pakanadu (Nellore and Prakasam districts) Venginadu(Godavari district and Krishna and Guntur districts) Orugallu, Anmakonda (Warangal Telangana) Hampi, Vijayanagar, Badami, Gulbarga Darvad, Banavasi (Karnataka)Kanchi, Girinchipuram, Madhura (Tamil region) and so on., The trade articles included *areca* , *gingili*, *grain*, *cotton*, *betel-leaves*,*betel nuts*, *vegatables*, *coconuts*, *mangoes*, *tamarind*, *pickles*, *salt*, *oil*,*ghee*, *pepper*, *green gram mustard*, *honey*, *paddy*, *jawar*, *metals like zinc*, *tin and copper*, *camphor*, *musk*, *silk*, *precious stones*, *pearls*, *beads*, *tamaric*, *onions*, *ginger*, *roots*, *yarns* and so on., Thus the trade guilds carried on business activities with these articles in Added to this, the other products included oil from gingili, Jaggary, sugar (desi-sakkar) and so on. The svadesi-beharulu played an important role in selling these commodities to the other traders like paradises.

Thus trade guilds were an important feature of the economic organization in this period and its members were assist to promote their common interest, that is the development of commercial activities. The corporations of the trade guilds were vast organizations of traders which had spread a network over the greater part of South India in the 14th and 15th and 16th centuries in general and Andhra in particular. So the trade guilds involve in trade and sold their articles to one another in the markets of the important places. The merchants and traders traced their decent common ancestor as from Kubera, Vasudeva which went along way to maintain their bonds of close relationship and co-operations. They existence primarily for the regulation and protection which was carried on by its members individually, though they as a economic corporate body and did commercial transactions in common.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there were two kinds of guilds viz, the craft-guilds and trade guilds. The former was a professional association based on the caste system. The latter was a private organization but gradually they obtained public recognition. The guilds exercised vast powers and influence in the society but also played a major role in the internal and external trade and control the finance of the countries. They also enjoyed the two right, conferred honours for services rendered to the trade of the countries. For instance, during the period of the *vijayanagaramuddayadannayaka*, a officer for customs of *fifty-six countries* was honoured as *prithviseltitana* which means mayoralty on earth. They lavishly donated to the existing temples and under took repairs of the ruined ones in their concern countries. Besides this the guilds contributed for the welfare measures of their countries. Thus the trade guilds played a major role in the progress of commercial activities of their countries and made contribution for the general economic prosperity.

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