

Inscriptional Evidences of Corporate Social Responsibility and the Social Role of Trade Guilds in Medieval Karnataka with Special Reference to Hoysala Period

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Received: 17-12-2021

Revised: 03-01-2022

Accepted: 27-01-2022

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the trade guilds during Hoysala period in Medieval Karnataka. The paper examines the factors which assisted the flourishing guild system and also contemplates on the factors leading to the decline of trade guilds. Hoysala kings expanded the empire across South India and were able to dominate natural resources of the vast regions. The Medieval Karnataka economy under Hoysala kings exhibited affluence, prosperity, and wealth. Trade guilds and merchants guilds donated to social causes and were very popular with the general public. Inscriptions give detailed information about the philanthropic role played by trade guilds. Rapid alteration of Political hegemonies diminished the support forms for medieval trade guilds. The political support provided by royal dynasties weakened over time. Hence, the backbone for flourishing trade contacts also destabilized and weakened. As medieval Karnataka witnessed far reaching political transformation after the fall of the Hoysala dynasty, resultant trade guilds influence also diminished and their reliability turned towards new emerging power centre.

Keywords: medieval karnataka, trade guilds, corporate social responsibility, epigraphic evidences

I. INTRODUCTION

The Trade guilds during Hoysala period served a variety of social economic and religious functions.

Functions of the Trade Guilds during Hoysala Period

The Trade guilds during Hoysala period helped with finances and advances for expansion of local economy.

Inscriptions from

1. Hassan,
2. Belur,
3. Hampapura,
4. Pandava pura,
5. Akki hebbalu,
6. Shravanuru,
7. Dora samudra,
8. Talakdu

and such other economically rich places refer to the philanthropic donations by trade guilds and other merchant groups. The Trade guilds during Hoysala period provided education and transferred skill to apprentices. They helped the others to diversify and improve their skills. They helped others to achieve specialization. They built created awareness about guild structure and safeguard standards for trade relations.

The Trade guilds during Hoysala period functioned as local monopolies. They controlled the prices of goods, wages of the labour, profit percent and other expenditure. They had every information on quantity of goods and services produced. They provided training and employment

- ✓ They also restricted trade competition through monopoly rights. The Trade guilds during Hoysala period regulated the prices of goods and services, They set standards for the quality of goods. They influenced the local governments
- ✓ They provided support to family members and dependents of the guilds. The merchants associations were very particular to safe guards the family members interests and in case of any accident they came up with financial support to the members of the bereaved family.
- ✓ The Trade guilds during Hoysala period encouraged harmonious living in society through ample donations to socio-religious causes. They often financed building rest houses, vasantha mantapas, temple prasada distribution,

community bhajane functions, festivities, dharma yatre, feeding students of Agraharas , funding establishment of Agraharas etc . Trade guilds and merchants guilds donated to social causes and were very popular with the general public, Inscriptions give detailed information about the philanthropic role played by trade guilds. Trade guilds and merchants guilds donated to **Dhoopa, Deepa, Naivaidya, Geetha, Nritya, Ahaara, Khanda Sputita, Jeernodhadhara, Yateenam, Vidyarthinam, Cha Shatram Nimitam.**

- ✓ The Trade guilds during Hoysala period invested on building tanks. There are several inscriptions which deal with merchant guild donations to tanks construction. Epigraphia Carnatica VII, In 1200 AD **Mahadevashetty** built Gatingana kere in Tipaturu region. Epigraphia Carnatica VII, **Pattana Swamy** Sovi shetty built three tanks in 1178 AD in Nanjanagudu region. An inscription from Hassan region refers to **Pattanaswamis** investing on construction of tanks. Epigraphia Carnatica VII. In 1154 AD, a rich merchant from Balligame supported restoration of Temple of **Nakhareshwara** of Balligame. It was also important to note that the properties of the people who died heirless was donated towards the expenditure management of this temple. (Epigraphia Carnatica VII sk 118).
- ✓ The following social and charity works were taken up by merchant guilds .The trade guilds were known popularly as **Shreni**. Construction of rest houses Construction of tanks Construction and restoration of temples and basadis financing local developmental projects. Trade guilds and merchants guilds donated to
 - ✓ Agraharas,
 - ✓ Choultries,
 - ✓ Aravattiges,
 - ✓ Aramas,
 - ✓ Totikes,
 - ✓ Anicuts,
 - ✓ Mantapas,
 - ✓ Canals and inland waterways,
 - ✓ Basadis,
 - ✓ Gardens, etc.

II. IMPORTANT TRADE GUILDS DURING PERIOD CONCENTRATED

1. Arasikere
2. Angadi halli
3. Banavasi
4. Belahuru
5. Bankapura
6. Channaraya Pattana
7. Dorasamudra
8. Hanagal
9. Honnavara
10. Shravanabelagola
11. Talakadu
12. Tondanuru
13. Uchchangi

The following was the important trade routes medieval Karnataka trade merchants has operational links with trade guilds.

1	Arsikere Beluru Angadi and coastal link through Chikka nayakana halli
2	Banavasi , Balligave , Bankapura, Uchchangi through Honnavara
3	Nidugallu , Dora Samudra , Channaraya Pattana , Shravana Belagola , Tondanuru Sri Ranga Pattana , Talakadu through Devagiri
4	Inscriptions also deal with trade routes to Tamilnadu from Dorasamudra
5	The land routes linked to the markets of Melukote and Todanuru on the northern borders Chananrayapattana, Arakere and Hassan on the southern borders. Akkihebbalu and Holenarasipura on the eastern borders and Santhe bachenahally and Sasalu on the western borders

Inscriptions refer to several guild heads which are listed as below

1	Sri Karnada Beeranna
2	Sri Karnada Boppaih
3	Sri Karnada Heggade Ereyanna
4	Tantradhishta Annaiah
5	Tantradhishta Mavunatha
6	Tantradhishta Nayaka,
7	Tantradhishta Beera Nayaka,
8	Tantradhishta Thimma Nayaka,
9	Tantradhishta Naganna Nayaka,
10	Tantradhishta Sovi Raja,
11	Veera Gopa Nayaka
12	Veera Pradhana Sanna Nayaka

Inscriptions also speak of trade guilds consisting of:

1. Artisans
2. Chisellers
3. Stone cutters
4. Sculptors
5. Iconographers
6. Architects
7. Designers
8. Oil-pressers
9. Gardeners
10. Garlanders

Inscriptions also speak of abundance of resources in Hoysala nadu and the plenty of opportunities for trading. This made trade guilds and associations flourish in Medieval Karnataka. Important trade guilds included

1. **Ayyavole 500** - This was a group of 500 merchants called as **Veera Banajigaru** hailing from **Aihole** but operated in entire south India.
2. **Nagaratharu** – They were a group of merchants who were devotees of Nagareshwara temple of **Balligave** and popular among general public for their philanthropic activities.
3. **Mummari Danda** - They were troops who supported merchant guilds during travelling. They also safeguarded the goods along the highways and supported the merchants to make safe journey.
4. **Nanadesis** – They were merchant groups who operated in present day Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil nadu and Maharashtra regions and variedly popular as **ubhaya naadesis**.
5. **Gavare sangha**- They were merchant groups who operated in.
6. **Gatrikas**- They were merchant groups who operated from southern main land of Hoysala empire and had trade links with Tamilnadu merchant groups.
7. **Shettiyaru** - They were merchant groups who operated from southern Karnataka region through **Nidugallu, Tondanuru, Sri Ranga Pattana**.
8. **Gavundas** - They were merchant groups who operated in from southern Karnataka region through Dora Samudra, Channarayana Pattana, Shravana Belagola. Epigraphia Carnatica Vol IX B1 234 & B1 156.
9. Epigraphia Carnatica Vol.VIII Vol IX B1 122 B1162 B1567.

III. CAUSES FOR THE DECLINE

Trade guilds which were very popular in Medieval Karnataka declined owing to economic and religious reasons.

1. Emergence of new markets weakened the operational scope of Medieval trade guilds.
2. Hereditary structure of the medieval trade guilds also became out dated.
3. Quick transformation of Political hegemonies dwindled the support forms for medieval trade guilds. The political royal support which was the backbone for flourishing trade contacts weakened with time as medieval Karnataka witnessed far reaching political transformation after the fall of the Hoysala dynasty.
4. Political powers ascending the throne soon after the fall of the Hoysala empire were busy with expansion and political turmoil continued. Without stable administration, economic relations with nearby trade centres suffered a heavy blow.
5. Guilds created barriers to entry by not allowing non guild members to work in the occupation

6. Some political powers curbed the supremacy of trade guilds. The supremacy they exercised during Hoysala rule weakened following political unpredictability and confusion.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, trade guilds of medieval Karnataka played a key role in the socio-economic sphere and guilds were organised and allowed workers to learn skills from other experts. They exercised great deal of influence on other local governments. Some of them served as local administrative heads. This allowed guilds to form legislations in their favour. The religious activities provided by these guilds helped the community to live harmoniously and cordially. But they declined due to political instability and tumult.

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