

The Evolution of Trade and Commerce in the Hoysala Kingdom (11th–14th Centuries): An Historical Analysis

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Abstract: *This study explores trade and commerce in the Hoysala period from the 11th to the 14th centuries. The Hoysalas ruled in additional parts of the current Karnataka and mainly in the Tamil region. The Hoysala Kingdom of Halebidu administered Karnataka from the 10th to the 14th centuries. During this period, Karnataka was carrying on a considerable amount of modern trade with foreign countries. The Hoysala Kingdom was a famous Kannadiga authority establishment from the Indian subcontinent that ruled, and it is the most contemporary state of Karnataka between the 10th and 14th centuries. The capital of the Hoysalas period was located at Belur, but it was later transferred to Halebidu. The Hoysala rulers were initially from Malenadu, a prominent region in the Western Ghats of the state. This study analysed the agriculture system, trade system, commerce, tax system, and economic development in the Hoysala period.*

Keywords: Agriculture System, Trade, Commerce, and Tax System

1. Introduction

The Hoysala Empire was a prominent South Indian Kannadiga empire that ruled most of the modern-day state of Karnataka between the 10th and 14th centuries. The capital of the empire was initially based in Belur and later transferred to Halebidu. The Halebidu administered the state from the 10th to the 14th centuries in the Hoysala dynasty. The Hoysala Empire's economy was primarily based on agriculture, though business within India as well as foreign trade flourished to some extent. Karnataka was carrying on a consistent amount of contemporary trade with foreign nations. The kings of Hoysala initially came from Malenadu, a prominent region in the Western Ghats of the state. In the 12th century, attractive improvements in the inner conflict between the Western Chalukya Kingdom and the Kalachuris of Kalyani occupied parts of contemporary Karnataka and the productive regions north of the Kaveri delta in current Tamil Nadu. They ruled much of the state, a few parts of Tamil Nadu, and parts of western Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the Deccan Plateau.

The Hoysala era was an important period in the development of art, architecture, and religion in South India. The empire is remembered today primarily for Hoysala architecture. Over a hundred surviving temples are scattered across Karnataka. Well-known temples that exhibit an amazing display of sculptural exuberance include the Chennakeshava Temple (Belur), the Hoysaleswara Temple (Halebidu), and the Chennakesava Temple (Somanathapura). The Hoysala rulers also patronised the fine arts, encouraging literature to flourish in Kannada and Sanskrit.

Research Objectives

- 1) To study the important aspects of the evolution of trade and commerce in the Hoysala period.
- 2) To analyse the structure of administration and tax system status in the Hoysala period.

Research Methodology

The research paper was mainly based on secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from various books,

articles, journals, epigraphic, Wikipedia, published and unpublished theses, websites, etc.

Agriculture System in Hoysala Period

In the Hoysala period, the administration continued itself through agriculture. Land grants were made by the kings to religious beneficiaries like Brahmins, Jains, and persons rewarded for services rendered to the king. The type of land grant was generally wetland that was already under cultivation. This was popular in the fertile river valleys of the Tungabhadra and Kaveri. In addition, clearing forests for cultivation was viewed favourably, as it not only brought new sources of revenue but also created job opportunities for the landless and introduced forest dwellers to a more agrarian lifestyle. Whenever land was cleared for cultivation, it was on a large scale. Knowledge of agriculture included assessing irrigation systems like tanks, reservoirs with sluices, canals, and wells, which were built and maintained at the expense of local villagers. The more impressive irrigation tanks, such as Vishnusagara, Shantisagara, and Ballalarayasagara, were created at the expense of the state. Irrespective of whether the expense and control came from local or state bodies, organising labour to till the land was taken up at the village and across village levels, and the job of cultivation was largely that of the landless. The highlands (malnad regions), with their favourable climate, were suitable for cattle farming, orchards, and spices. Paddy and corn were staple crops in the plains (Bailnad). In Kannada country, key figures in rural areas were the rich landowners called gavunda, gauda, and heggade. They are mentioned in inscriptions relating to land transactions, maintenance of irrigation, collection of taxes, and the work of the village council. The gavunda of people (praja gavunda) was lower in status than the wealthy lord of gavundas (prabhu gavunda). The gavundas sometimes had a dual role as village representatives and appointees of the state. Some judicial responsibilities were also included, like raising a militia if required.

Centres of Trade

In the Hoysala period, there were several centres of trade. They are capitals and capital towns that participated in commerce: Banavasi (12000), Badami, Kalyana, and Dorasamudra, a cosmopolitan centre gathered around by

merchants from all over the country, dealing in goods of all categories, such as rice, cotton, and grocers-wares. Arasiyakere, also in Hassan district, besides being a Rajasthani and treasury town, was an equally famous trading centre dealing in innumerable articles, of which the most popularly grown and traded commodity was areca nut. The other articles in which they traded includes cloth, turmeric, camphor, silk, and sandals. There were godowns in Palmyra called sitale malige for the storage of goods. Balligamve, a capital town in Shimoga district, was an important export and import centre.

Trade and Commerce System: Exports and Imports

The Hoysala period is one of the trade and business marketing systems in Karnataka. The import of domestic animals on the western seaboard was a prosperous business, and inscriptions speak of Brahmin merchants who were dynamic and active. Arabs made wealth from the unending need for horses in Indian kingdoms. During this period, rich forest produce, namely teak, was exported through the ports of current Kerala. Merchants from this region settled down in Arasiyakere and Halebidu, in addition to Jain traders. Virgal in the coastal areas describes ships demonstrating active or operative sea trade and commerce with shipping fleets. The term for Virgal is hero stone. Piracy was common, and virgals made for fallen heroes have been set up.

Inscriptions mention a flourishing textile industry sector. Trade and commerce with foreign kingdoms reached unprecedented levels. Sung dynasty records from the Republic of People's China mention Indian merchants in ports in South China. In India, Chinese interest in astrology and alchemy is well known. South India exported products such as textiles, spices, medicinal plants, precious stones, pottery, and salt made from salt pans, jewels, gold, ivory, rhino horn, ebony, and camphor to China. The same products are reaching ports like Dhofar and Aden. In addition, aloe wood, perfumes, sandalwood, and condiments reached western ports like Siraf, which was the entry port to Egypt, Arabia, and Persia. Cairo and Alexandria were in active trade throughout the Arabian Sea. Architects, sculptors, quarry workers, goldsmiths, and others whose trade was directly or indirectly related to the construction of temples were also well-to-do owing to the forceful temple-building activities undertaken during this period.

Vijñanesvara refers to foreign trade and commerce in several situations. A Mysore piece of evidence from 1178 A.D. refers to such an officer under Hoysala Ballala II, by the name of Narana, who was in charge of the toll at a ferry ridge. An inscription of Sikaripura (1054 A.D.), for example, revealed that the merchants used to travel by both land and water routes, penetrating all the countries of the six continents (sat-khanda mandalagalam pokku) and that they traded in precious stones and gems, horses, and elephants of the great breed. The Hoysalas are content with countries like Persia. The merchants of Belagola requested that they be skilled in conducting several trades with various seaports. As is evident from a Belur inscription (1136 A.D.), Dorasamudra, Beluru, and Visnusamudra were also functionally involved in sea trade. In Teridal, it is revealed that the traders were also involved in sea trade. They worked on the boards of ships and, using boats, several commodities

of value and visited various sea ports for trade. Airlangga (1019–42 A.D.), it is interesting to point out that the Java refers to the circumference of the ports controlled by the ruler and situated at the mouth of the Brantas in the Bay of Surabaya, where merchants from Karnataka lived.

Exports

In the Hoysala period, several agricultural products were exported. Among several spices, a special indication may be the end of pepper, a staple item in excessive demand in the West as well as the East during the middle Ages. Yaqut (1179–1229 A.D.) is evidence that Mangalore and Barakur were the chief towns of Malabar from where pepper was exported. Dimishqi (1325 A.D.), mentions the enormous quantity of pepper that was accessible at Mangalore. In Ibn Battuta (1333–45 A.D.), it is stated that the port of Mangalore used to sell large quantities of pepper as well as ginger in the 14th century A.D. Vijayanagara, as per Barbosa, Mangalore, Goa, and Bhatkala, used to export rice to several countries across the sea.

Tax System of Hoysala Period

The Hoysala period had very good tax systems at that time. Tax measurement was done by the village assembly, which was responsible for collecting for the government. Land revenue was a primary source of income in the Hoysala period. Often, land taxes were paid in kind. The term permanent (land) revenue or revenue settlement, which ranged from 1/6th to 1/7th of the gross produce, was known as Siddhaya and included the original assessment (Kula) and various cesses. The cesses were collected in percentage for Kula. In this period, land taxes included Sunka, Kumara, Kumara-ganike, Nibandha, and Sri-karana for each settlement, Crown Prince, royalties, pensions, and nad treasury personnel.

Taxes were levied on professions, marriage, goods in transit chariots, carriages, and domesticated animals. Taxes on commodities like gold, precious stones, perfumes, sandalwood, ropes, yarn, residence, hearth, shops, cattle pans, sugarcane presses, and produce like black pepper, betel leaves, ghee, paddy, spices, palm leaves, coconuts, and sugar are mentioned in records. The cattle tax was called balavana, and loom tax was called maggadere. Fines for violating laws were also collected. The village assembly could levy taxes for a specific purpose, like the construction of water tanks.

Economy of the Hoysala Period: Development of Trade and Commerce

The Hoysala period is one of the very important roles in the economy development this period. The Hoysala inscription is administration supported itself through revenues from an agrarian economy. The Hoysala kings gave grants of land as rewards for service to beneficiaries who then became landlords to tenants producing agricultural goods and forest products. Two types of landlords (gavunda) existed; gavunda of people (praja gavunda) lower in status than the wealthy lord of gavundas (prabhu gavunda). The highlands (Malnad regions) with its temperate climate proved suitable for raising cattle and the planting of orchards and spices. Paddy and corn served as staple crops in the tropical plains (Bailnad). The Hoysalas collected taxes on irrigation

systems including tanks, reservoirs with sluices, canals and wells built and maintained at the expense of local villagers. The state created irrigation tanks such as Vishnusagara, Shantisagara, Ballalarayasagara at their expense.

Importing horses for use as general transportation and in army cavalries of Indian kingdoms became a flourishing business on the western seaboard. Hoysalas harvested the forests for rich woods such as teak, exporting through ports located in the area of present-day Kerala. Sung dynasty records from China mention the presence of Indian merchants in ports of South China, indicating active trade with overseas kingdoms. South India exported textiles, spices, medicinal plants, precious stones, pottery, salt made from salt pans, jewels, gold, ivory, rhino horn, ebony, aloe wood, perfumes, sandalwood, camphor and condiments to China, Dhofar, Aden, and Siraf (the entry port to Egypt, Arabia and Persia). Architects (Vishwakarmas), sculptors, quarry workers, goldsmiths and other skilled craftsmen whose trade directly or indirectly related to temple construction also became prosperous due to the vigorous temple building activities.

The village assembly assumed responsibility for collecting government land taxes. The government included land revenue, called Siddhaya, in the original assessment (Kula) plus various cases. Professions, marriages, goods in transit on chariots or carriages, and domesticated animals all had taxes levied on them. Village records note taxes on commodities (gold, precious stones, perfumes, sandalwood, ropes, yarn, housing, hearths, shops, cattle pans, sugarcane presses) as well as produce (black pepper, betel leaves, ghee, paddy, spices, palm leaves, coconuts, sugar). The village assembly could levy a tax for a specific purpose such as construction of a water tank.

2. Conclusion

It can be mentioned above that there were various aspects of the evaluation of trade and commerce in the Hoysala period during the 10th and 14th centuries. At that time, several aspects of depending on the Hoysala economy and their administration were a systematic way for the ruler to be administered. So, this period plays a very vital role in the Karnataka economy. Also, the Hoysala era emerged as an important period in the development of art, architecture, and religion in South India. The import of horses on the western seaboard was a flourishing business, and inscriptions speak of Brahmin merchants who were active. Arabs made wealth from the unending need for horses in Indian kingdoms. Trade with overseas kingdoms reached unprecedented levels. Sung dynasty records from China mention Indian merchants in ports in South China. Chinese interest in Indian astrology and alchemy is well known. During their wealthier period, the Hoysalas promoted agriculture and land reclamation, increasing revenue through scientific assessment and collection. They also implemented successful water supply mitigation schemes.

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