



State, society and economy in medieval Telangana- A study

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Abstract

During the early medieval period, Telangana ruled by the Badami Chalukyas, Rastrakutas and Kalyani chalukyas and their subordinates. The early ruling dynasties made significant contribution towards irrigation, agriculture and allied activities. The agricultural expansion took place in several dimensions such as land grant system reclamation of forest lands, excavation of new irrigation tanks and construction of new temples. All these were greatly influenced for rural expansion as well as nucleation of settlements in Telangana. As a result of, the agricultural surplus gave a stimulus for the growth of market economy, trade, trading communities, trade centers and different kinds of taxes imposed by the state. An attempt is made in this paper to study the trade, trading communities, trade routes, artisans and taxation system and mechanism of tax collection in Telangana during the early medieval period with the help of epigraphical and literary sources.

Keywords: utensils, trade guilds, samaya, nakaram, pekkundru, pentasunkam, madigasunkam, craft guilds

Introduction

Andhra desa including Telangana, has a tradition of industrial activity from very early times. Textiles and diamonds of Andhra were famous even out side India. Iron and copper mining and melting and manufacture of metallic tools and utensils formed different aspects of industrial activity in Telugu country. *Meckenzie (1883: 77-247)*.

It appears that the Iron found here was exported to foreign market and was used in the manufacture of Damascus swords. Kakatiyas revived the old traditions of industrial enterprise in the core region of their authority i.e., Telangana. The *matte nakharam* and *Panchalohala Nakharam* were found busy with trade in metals in Telangana. Marcopolo, who visited Andhradesa in the thirteenth century, paid rich tribute to the industrious habits of the people. He praised Andhra textiles in particular and compared them to the thickness of a spider's web. (*Nilakanta Sastri, 1939, 175*). He gave an interesting description of the diamond industry as well. (*Ibid., 174-175*).

The expansion agriculture in the plains and forest zones and the growth of industries on the basis of agricultural and other products and the surplus in the both fields economic activity led to a spurt in internal and external trade. Trade being a rich source of state income the Rastrakutas and the later Chalukyas encouraged trade and commerce.

The Rastrakutas have known to have encouraged Arab merchants to settle down in their kingdom and carry on trade (*Desai, 1970, 146*). Chalukya inscriptions from about the beginning of the eleventh century contain references to rich merchants like *behari* and *Setti* and merchant organizations like Ayyavoli 510 and Nanadesi (*I.A.P. KN, 1974-75*). Telangana which formed the part of Rastrakuta and Chalukyas of Kalyana rule, felt the impact of trade and made its own contribution to the growing mercantile enterprise.

From the 11th century onwards Telangana epigraphs contain references to merchant organizations. But there is a marked difference between the eastern and western parts of the

region. In the west records from places such as *Avancha (Telangana inscriptions-II, 60-62)* and *Gangapuram (Telangana inscriptions-I, 108, 128)* refer to *Samayas Itinerant trade guilds*. An inscription from Gangapuram refers to *Asaka Samaya (Ibid., 118-119)*. Among other merchants organizations. However, the virtual absence of the term *Samara* in the contemporary epigraphs of the eastern Telangana is striking contrast to the West Inscription from Chillum A.D.1067 (*C.I.T.D.-IV, No.6*). and *Anumakonda A.D.1090 (I.A.P., Wg.71)* in the eastern districts mentions *nakaram* organizations. Kenneth, R.Hall (*1980: 147-153*) has pointed out that *Samaya* denotes an itinerant trade guild where as the *Nakaram* denotes a guild of local merchants. It is therefore clear that in Western Telangana, local merchant guilds did not develop till the beginning of the twelfth century A.D. Kannada merchants formed into samaya guilds and carried on local as well as itinerant trade. However *Nakharam* guilds began to grow all over the region under the patronage of the samantas such as the Chodas of Kanduru and Kakatiyas of Warangal. By the Twelfth Century, the nakaram became the most significant basic unit that set the pattern as an agent of integration in the trade of rural markets in the entire Telangana region. The *Samaya* as an organization of traders, was probably integrated into the *nakharam* network as the latter organization became diversified into several specialists trade guilds such as *Ponka Nakaram, Panchalohala Nakharam* etc., (*I.A.P.WI:71*) moreover, itinerant trade guilds like Ayyavoli-500 (*I.A.P.Kn.1974-75*) and *Mummaridandas (Ibid.,)* played a dominant role in serving the royal centers and temple towns, meeting their demand for a variety of consumer goods. Thus, it may be said that the emergence of the *nakharam* net work drew the itinerant trade linking the intra-regional with inter-regional commerce. The Telangana epigraphs mentions the Telugu words *Pekkandru* denoting an itinerant trade guild. So, we may conclude that the Samaya organizations of earliest times before 1126 developed into the nakaram at local level and the pekkandru at the supra-local level with the

establishments of semi independent Samanta status at Koduru, Anumakonda, Polavasa, Vemulavada, Mudigonda and the expansion of the *Nakharam* network, *artis* ancummercantile guilds and itinerant trade guilds came into existence. The Pekkandru farmed as a corporation of guilds which included member of the above three types.

State policy towards trade in Telangana

Though trade was conducted entirely by guilds which enjoyed considerable freedom the state exercised its power through bureaucratic machinery, contemporary literary works such as the *Vignanesvariyaam* (Ramachandra Rao, ed., 1977) and the *Sakalaniti Sammatam* (Venkta Rao and Apparao eds., 1970) describe that the state played a crucial role in the encouragement and control of trade. The *Vignanesvariyaam* state that it was the responsibility of the state to see that correct weights and measures that were used by traders and to take measures against hoarding and arbitrary pricing (Ramachandra Rao,ed., 1977; verses, 65-85). Again, the king was to take steps to coordinate the activities of merchants collect taxes and punish guilty traders (*Ibid.*). The *Sakalaniti Sammatam* states that the king should encourage foreign merchants by giving them permission to trade in his kingdom (Venkatarao and Apparao, ed., 1970; verses 218-19). Inscriptional evidence shows that the textual injunctions were followed to the maximum possible extent by the rulers of the period. Officers were stationed at the trade centers and some had troops under them. This was perhaps necessitated by the armed guard that accompanied itinerant guilds. The Chalukyas had officers like *Vaddaravula*, *dandanayaka* (Superintendent of market) (*Telangana inscriptions-I, 113-114; P.No.4*) while following the same policy, the Kakatiyas took great interest in improving trade as evidenced from Ganapathideva’s *Abaya Sasana* at the part of motupalli (*Epigraphia India-XII; 188 ff*). Most of the trade centres became capitals of *Mandalikas* and *Nayankaras*. Tax official like the Sunkadhikari (*Pl. No.9; KCSCS, 202, 04*), *Sthala Karanam* (*S.I.I.-X, 521*) and *Tirpari* (*N.D.I: 340*). Functioned at these towns, the names of the officers reveal that they not only collected the levies but settled disputes probably between different trade guilds and between officers and guilds.

Articles of trade

Items of trade included industrial and agricultural products, Forest products as well as minerals and metals. Agricultural products such as *Jowar*, *Paddy*, *rice*, *wheat* and *greegram* were sold in almost every market cotton, pepper, betel leaf and areca nuts were the other agricultural products that entered the markets. Among agro-industrial products, cotton and silk textiles, jute articles and oil were the most marketed, salt was an important product while sandal wood and its powder were the most significant forest products sold and purchased by the Gandhaaseshanakharam, a specialized guild at Warangal (*.A.P.Wg.1974: 62 and 68*). Tamirand was another forest product sold at many trade centres. Trade in precious stones is also mentioned in the Warangal fort inscription (*Ibid.*). These precious stones included *ravva* (diamonds) and glass beads. Panchalohala *Nakharam* was a guild that traded in metals. Metals that were traded included copper, tin, zinc, iron and lead. The Musaravaravu guild mentioned in the Warangal fort inscription might be making and selling metals moulds as

suggested by the word “*musa*” which in telugu means “*mould*”. Alloys such as articles made of them in inscriptions and literary works. Other items of trade included camphor, mask, ivory and pearls. The Motupalli charter of Ganapathideva dated A.D.1244 mentions several items of trade and the rates of duties levied on them (*Epigraphia India-XII, 188ff*). However, the items included both exports and imports elephants and horses were imported where as gems were among the exports. Some items mentioned in Motupalli charter occur in the inscriptions in Telangana area.

Trade centres in Telangana

The surplus agricultural production and industrial activity gave rise to a large number of trade centres all over Telangana region. The table below gives a list of trade centers and the commodities that entered the markets.

Table 1

Types of trade center	Name	References
Rural trade centers Sthalam markets	Chilkur, Tekumbedda	C.I.T.D., No.6 and 10, Telangana inscriptions-I, 91, C.I.T.D.-II, 166-167
Temple towns	Alampur- Govindapuram- Gangapuram	Ibid., 113-114, I.A.P.Wc., 1974, 26
Administrative centers	Patancheruvu, Panugallu, Kolanupaka	C.I.T.D.-IV, 32-35, K.C.S.C.S. 170-173, Telangana inscriptions-I, 169-172
Industrial centers	Awanipalli, Mattewada	Telangana inscriptions-II, 67-69, I.A.P.WI.68
Cantonment towns	Ujjili-Magatala	Ibid.,
River ports	Vadapalli- Yelesvaram	C.I.T.D.-IV, No.6

There many trade centers, such as Warangal, Sirikonda, Vardhamanapuram, Alampur, Gangapuram and Panugallu, were also political head quarters either of the sovereign or a Samanta Chief. Warangal became a large trade center along with two other trading centers Anumakonda and Mattewada. The Warangal fort inscriptions of A.D.1228 refer to specific markets like *Nuvvulapenta* (*gingely market*) and *Uppupenta* (*Salt market*) (*I.A.P.WI.1974: 62*). In addition to the trade centers that cropped up at centers of political power, each *Sthalam* had its own market place *Sthalampentas*. Trade centers also developed at places where a good number of temples came up examples include Alampur, Gangapur and Govindapuram. These trade centers were connected by road used not only by trading carvans but also by armies and pilgrims.

Trade routes

Frequent military operations and increase trade led to the development of transport was a cart drawn by bullocks or buffaloes over long distances. For short distances, animals such as donkeys were used. The Perika community supplied not only the gunny bags but also bullock carts to carry them. (SII X 304). The existence of a few routes were not only used for trade but also became pilgrim routes. These roads therefore connected market towns, capital cities, sea and river ports and pilgrim centers. They were known as *banditeruru* or *Sakata marga*. (Telangana inscription 1:71-72, Telangana inscriptions 11.123.125 and 161-162) These

routes were used for the movement of armies in times of war and therefore, were popularly known as dandubata. The Andhrabhasha Bhushanam of ketana refers to a highway from Kanchi to Ayodhya through Vikramasimhapuram (Nellore) and Orugallu (Warangal), (Ketana. 4, vol.2). The Kridabhiramam describes a route from Palnad to Warangal through Nalgonda and Nekrekal (Vallabharaya 1960, vol.121). This route must have extend up to Tripurantakam as the latter was an important provincial headquarter and a temple town. The Palnativiracharitra refers to a route from Macherla to Panugal through Chityala and describes the thick jungles of Chityala, which was a river port on the Krishna (Pingali ed 1961, Vol 13, 74 -78). Generally people crossed the river Krishna at the ports like Chityala, Eleswaram, Vadapalli Amaravati and of course Bejawada. In the Palnativiracharitra, Somanatha describes the journey of Mallikarjunapandita from Amaravathi to Kalyan (Lalithamba 1976:31). If we put the pieces of information from Panditaradya Charitra and Kridabhiramam together, we understand that there was a highway between Warangal and Kalyan through Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar districts. P.V. Parabrahma Sastri (1978:250) mentions another route from Warangal to Kalyana, through Kolanupaka, Patancheruvu and Bidar. The river Godavari was crossed by traders at Basar Manthena and Mahadevapur, Perur was another big trade center where merchants from Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Andhradesa carried on brisk trade. Inscriptions refer to Perur as a meeting point of several routes. The rivers Krishna and Godavari must also have served as arteries of trade. But definite information is not available about the Godavari as a trade route.

Means of transport

The Chief means of transport was the bullock cart more often peasants and petty traders carried the merchandise on their heads. Bags known as Perika. Perika, Ettuperika, talamopu are referred to in a Peruru inscription (PI no.6). Bamboo cane baskets were also used two loads suspended at the two ends of bamboo stick and supported on the shoulder of a person was another common means of transport called kavidi. Loads were also carried on the backs of oxen, bullocks, horses and donkeys. Inscription refer to traders dealing in horses and at times they were known to have belonged to Vajikula (IAP wg 1974: No 26). Carts drawn by bullock or buffaloes were also used for transport. Cotton, oil seeds and paddy were transported in bags by carts. The Palanquin was another means of domestic transport used by the well off. These were carried by members of the Boya tribe. It is interesting to note that carts and beasts of burden were available for merchandise on rental basis. Big temples maintained carts and beasts of burden not only for temple services, but also for lending them to the needy merchants by collecting rent from them.

Taxes on trade

Trade was an important source of state income and there were different taxes on trade which were generally known as Sunkams (sii 79:80, Telangana inscriptions 1.144-45, IAP Wg1:57). During the rule of the Chalukyas of Kalyana tax on trade was called Vaddaravula Sunka (Pi no.4 CIRD IV No 12 and 27), which term during the Kakatiya times was replaced by addapotlu or addagattusunka. It was also called angadisunkam (CIRD III 166-70). However the sources are not clear about the rate of Sunkam levied on

different items of trade. Nevertheless, inscriptions from Guntur and Prakasam districts belonging to the Kakatiya period gives us some information about the general rate of Sunka. The Tangeda inscription A.D.1308 records the gifts of Modabadivisamu i.e., at the rate of one visa per made of sales by the Ubhayanandesi Pekkondru of the Tangeda Sthalam. The Tripurantakam inscription of A.D.1296 records the gift of Ubhayanandesi Pekkandru to Sri Tripuradevi. The Uppu Sunkam at the rate of Madabadiinamamu (Ibid.,480). Another inscription refers to Vilchuvialuvilchu in Telugu means purchase. An inscription from Perur (Ibid. No.527) records the remission of two sunkas on salt bags payable by local nagaram (PI No.9). The inscription cited above make it clear that Sunka was levied both at the time of purchase and at the time of sale. The terms Visvam and Chinnara help us to calculated the rate of Sunka. A Visa referred to a 16th part, while the value of Cinnam varied from one in eight to one in fourteen. Thus the Sunka came to around six or seven percent.

Penta sunkamu

The Uppunutala inscription A.D.1149 refers to the diversion of Pemasunkam among other taxes by Kanduri Somanathdeva to the gods Kedaresvara and Kesavadeva (KCSCS 138:4u). From this, it may be inferred that in addition to the general Sunka levy, a market cess was also collected. An inscription from Jadcherla 1167 mentions sthalamsunkam (Telangana Inscriptons vol.1 157-158, CIRD ii:12). This might be the same as Pemasunkam collected at the Sthalam or the weekly market held at the headquarters of Sthala. The rate of this tax is not clear.

Madiga sunkamu

The Madiga Sunkam or Maliga Sunkam was another tax levied on traders (KCSCS.202-204). The word Madiga or Maliga means a shop with a number of commodities. An undated epigraph from Perur classified shops into three types Uttam, Madhyamam, Kanista (PI: No.6). An inscription from Rachur A.D.1157 also classifies the shops into 3 classes (KCSLS: 138-140). The Perur epigraph states that the three classes of shops were taxed at the rate of two rukas, 1 ½ rukas & ¾ ruka on first, second, third classes of shops respectively.

Kolaga

The Bairanpalli inscription mentions a tax named Kolaga (Ibid., 36-39; C.I.T.D.-IX: 14). It might have been a tax levied on articles measured and weighed such as oil and sandal. The rate of this tax is also now know. The Uppunutala (A.D.1148) mentions a tax called Prattimalaga (KCSCS: 138-140). The bales name indicates that it was a levy on cotton bales.

Tax collection machinery

There was an efficient machinery of officers for the assessment and collection of taxes. The inscriptions of the Chalukyan time refer to Sunkavergada (Telangana inscriptions-II: 20-21) and Vaddaravula dandanayaka (Ibid., 161-67). The Perur inscription (A.D.1130) records that the mandalika of Perur Kampanam, Ambadeva Pandanayaka, diverted several sunka levies to God Kesavadeva and entrusted the execution of the grant to Sunkadhikari (PI: No.6). From this record, we can deduce that a Sunkadhikari, an officer in charge of commercial taxes was stationed at

Perur a big trade center. Further, the record makes it clear that the mandalika enjoyed the right of diverting. The levies through the officer, the Sunkadhikari might have been responsible for remitting the levies to the royal treasury.

Most of taxes appear to have been collected at the market place. Itself such taxes were known as addavattusunkamie, the tax collected at the market (KCSCS: 202-6) when taxes were diverted as gifts to Brahmanas or temples by a member of ruling class, the local merchant guild was entrusted with the responsibility of executing the decision Somesvara-III made a grant to a brahman Nannaya Bhatta and directed the Settikara Samayas of Patan Cheruvu to implement the grant (CITD-IV: 36-39). We have many instances when the merchant guilds like Samaya, Nakaram and Pekkandru made grants to temples out of the taxes payable by them to the royal treasury either with the consent of king or his local deputy. Hence, it may be said that the guilds themselves collected taxes from the members and paid the King's share through the Sunkadhikari.

During the Kakatiya period the machinery for tax collection became more elaborate. In addition to Sunkadhikaris, we find the mention of such officials as Karanam and Tirpari at the trade centers (*S.I.I.-X: No.480*). Evidently Karanam was a tax accountant. The Tirpari resolved any disputes that arose between official and traders. These officers assisted the Sunkadhikari in the discharge of the duties.

In the view of existence of well organized trade guilds and elaborate state machinery tax contractors appear to be superfluous. However, the Sunkamanyagandru are mentioned only in a single inscription of Tripuranthakam and therefore, they might have been connected with the Sunkas payable to the temple. The levies were collected both cash and in kind. It may be interesting to note that levies on agricultural products were mostly in agricultural products were mostly in kind while taxes on most industrial products were collected in coin.

From the Chalukya period (A.D.973-1126) to the Kakatiya period (A.d.1199-1323) there was a gradual increase in taxation on agricultural products and artisan products. The machinery of taxation also became more elaborate, with number of officials more over, there are numerous reference to market the classification of shops and to a variety of levies. This reveals the growing marketisation of the rural economy as we move into 14th century A.D. This is well borne out of inscriptions from places like Raichur, Bairanipalli, Uppunutala, Duddeda etc., which were mostly rural centers. These were gradually brought into market economy. It is also noticed that the growing tendency of donars gifting revenues from commercial levies to temples suggest the State was receiving substantial revenue from commercial taxes.

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