

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Notes

THE VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

The empire of Vijayanagar was founded as a result of the political and cultural movement against the Tughlaq authority in the South. The early history of Vijayanagar is obscure. According to Sewell, the foundation of Vijayanagar was laid by Harihara and Bukka. According to a legend, they had been the feudatories of the Kakatiyas of Warangal and later became ministers in the kingdom of Kampili in modern Karnataka. When Kampili was overrun by Muhammad Tughlaq for giving refuge to a Muslim rebel, the two brothers were imprisoned, converted to Islam, and appointed to deal with the rebellions there.

The Muslim governor of Madurai had already declared himself independent, and the Hoysala ruler of Mysore and the ruler of Warangal were also trying to assert their independence. After a short time, Harihara and Bukka foresaw their new master and their new faith. At the instance of their guru, Vidyaranya, they were admitted to Hinduism and established their capital Vijayanagar. This much can be said with certainty that the Vijayanagar Empire was founded in A.D. 1336 by Harihara.

SANGAM DYNASTY (A.D. 1336-1486)

Harihara I: The dynasty founded by Harihara I and Bukka I is known as Sangam dynasty after the name of their father Sangama. Harihara was successful in extending the boundaries of his little kingdom. In this work, he was aided by his brother Bukka, and he started an era of conquest and expansion. By 1346, the whole of the Hoysala kingdom had passed into the hands of the Vijayanagar

rulers. In 1347, the Kadamba territories were also annexed. Harihara also sent two armies in A.D. 1352-53, one under prince Suvanna and the other under Kumara Kampana, against the Sultan of Madura. Kumara Kampana annexed the Sultanate of Madura to the empire of Vijayanagar. Harihara died in about 1353 and was succeeded by his brother Bukka I, who took up the onus of strengthening and expanding the nascent Kingdom.

Bukka I: Bukka I was a liberal minded ruler. [Bukka I ruled from A.D. 1353 to 1379. He sent an expedition against Rajanarayana Sambuvarayar. The beginning of the Vijayanagar-Bahmani conflict started on a large scale during his reign in 1367 A.D. He fought with the Bahmani Sultan Muhammaa Shah-I and signed a treaty with him, which made him virtual master of the Krishna-Tungabhadra Doab. He also sent an ambassador to the Emperor of China. The Sultan of Madura was defeated by his son Kumara Kampana, who governed the Tamil districts, and annexed his dominions to the Vijayanagar Empire.

Harihara II: Bukka I was succeeded by his son Harihara II, who ruled from 1377-1406. Under him the Vijayanagara empire embarked upon a policy of eastern expansion. He invaded the Konkan and northern Karnataka, attacked the Reddi rulers, and occupied the Addanki and Srisailan areas. In 1398 he defeated the Velamas and the Bahamanis. From the inscriptions it appears that Vijayanagar empire in the time of Harihara II extended over the whole of Southern India including Mysore, Kanva, Chingleput, Trichnopoly and Kanchi.

DevA Raya I (A.D. 1406-1422) : Harihara II was succeeded by his son Deva Raya-I. Deva Raya I was defeated by the Bahmani ruler Firoz Shah Bahmani. He undertook various welfare schemes. In A.D. 1410, he had a barrage across the Tungabhadra constructed, which helped agriculture. He also encouraged the construction of a dam on the river Haridhara for irrigation purposes. Towards the close of Devaraya rule an Italian traveller, Nicolo Conti visited the imperial city. He constructed a dam across the Tungabhadra so that he could bring the canals into the city to relieve the shortage of water. The next ruler was Vijaya-Bukka or Vira-Vijaya. He ruled for a few months and was succeeded by Dev Raya II.

DevA Raya II (A.D. 1423-1446) : He was the greatest sovereign of the Sangama dynasty. In order to strengthen his army, he inducted more Muslims in his army. With his new army, Dev Raya-II crossed the Tungabhadra river in A.D. 1443 and tried to recover Mudkal, Bankapur etc., which were south of the Krishna river and had been lost to the Bahmani Sultans earlier. Three hard battles were fought, but in the end the two sides had to agree to the existing frontiers. Devaraya-II annexed *Kondavindu* (Andhra Pradesh) to his kingdom, attacked the Gajapati Kingdom of Orissa and subjugated a few chiefs in Kerala. Except the Zamorin of

Calicut, all other kings and chieftains of Kerala accepted his suzerainty. Sri Lanka was invaded a number of times, which after being defeated agreed to pay tribute to Vijayanagar.

Devaraya-II was called *Immadi Devaraya* and also '*Proudha Devaraya*' by his subjects. In his inscriptions he has the title of *Gajabetekara*. He was a great patron of literature and himself an accomplished scholar in Sanskrit. He wrote Mahanataka Sudhanidhi and a commentary on the Brahma sutras of Badarayana in Sanskrit. Abdul Razzaq of Persia visited his kingdom. The reign of Devaraya was followed by the short reign of Vijayaraya-II (A.D. 1446-47) and Mallikarjuna (A.D. 1447-1465)

Virupakska II (A.D. 1465-1486): was the last ruler of the Sangam dynasty. He was an incompetent ruler and there was confusion and disorder in the country. He was murdered by Saluva Narsimha and the Saluva dynasty was established.

The Saluva Dynasty (A.D.1486-1503): Vira Narsimha ruled the Vijayanagar empire from 1486 to 1492. The inscriptions tell us that after his death, his minister Narasa Nayaka placed on the throne Immadi Narasimha, the son of Narasimha Saluva. But he kept all the powers in his own hands His son deposed the last Saluva ruler and seated himself on the throne, which ended the rule of the Saluva dynasty and brought in the Tuluva dynasty.

The Tuluva Dynasty (A.D.1503-70): Vira Narsimha was the founder of the Tuluva dynasty. He ruled from 1505 to 1509. After his brief reign, he was succeeded by his younger brother Krishnadeva Raya (1509-30 A D). He was the greatest ruler of the Vijayanagar Empire. During his reign, Vijayanagar emerged as the strongest military power in the South. In 1510, he marched against the rebellious chief of Ummattur in Southern Mysore. The Chief was defeated and the fort of Sivasamudram was captured.

In 1513, he attacked Gajapati Prataparudra, the ruler of Orissa. In 1514, the fortress of Udyagiri was captured by him. In 1520, he defeated Ismail Adil Shah and tried to recover Raichur Doab. He successfully invaded Gulbarga and Bidar and restored the puppet Sultan Mahmud to the throne. It was in this way that Krishna Deva Raya was able to extend his empire in South Konkan in the west, to Vizagapatam in the east and to the extreme border of the peninsula in the south. He maintained friendly relations with Albuquerque, the Portuguese Governor whose ambassador Friar Luis resided at Vijayanagar. He concluded a series of treaties with the Portuguese, who were trying to capture the territories of the Adil Shahi kingdom, their common enemy. His relations with Portuguese were governed by two factors (a) common enmity with Bijapur (b) the supply of ported horses by the Portuguese to Vijayanagar.

Krishnadeva Raya was also a great patron of art and literature and was known as *Andhra Bhoja*. He was the author of the Telugu work *Amuktamalyada* and one Sanskrit work *Jambavati Kalyanam*. "*Ashtadiggajas*" (the eight celebrated poets)

adorned the court of Krishnadevaraya. He was also a great builder. He constructed gopurams and temples and tanks in various parts of the empire.

Krishna Devaraya was succeeded by weak rulers like Achyuta Ray and Venkata 1. Sadashiva Raya, was the last ruler of Tuluva dynasty. Sadashiva Raya ascended the throne in 1543. But the real power was in the hands of Rama Raja, the son-in-law of Krishna Deva. The main aim of the foreign policy of Rama Raja was to make Vijayanagar supreme and this got Vijayanagar involved in the interstate politics of the Bahmani succession states. Thus, the Bahmani rulers except Berar combined to inflict a crushing defeat on Vijayanagar in the Battle of Talikota or Rakshasa Tangadi in 1565. This battle is generally considered to mark the end of the great age of Vijayanagar. After this disaster the Vijayanagar government was shifted first to Penukonda and then to Chandragiri where the fourth or the Aravidu dynasty was founded.

The Aravidu Dynasty (A.D. 1570-1649): This dynasty was founded by Kama Raya's brother Tirumala. Though the dynasty survived till the middle of the 17th century its glory had vanished. The central government became weak and as a result the Nayakas of Vijayanagar declared their independence. Later on, the Mughals and Marathas took advantage of this situation. It was under these circumstances that the Vijayanagar empire disappeared.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

Vijayanagar empire had a very efficient system of administration. The Vijayanagar administration was a feudal organisation but the king was the fountain of all authority with a distinct flair for autocracy.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

King: The Vijayanagar state was a monarchy. The king formed the most important element in the administration and, in fact, was considered equal to God. He was required to rule according to dharma. He was required to keep in view the goodwill and welfare of the people. For administrative convenience, the king was assisted by a council of ministers.

Minister: The King was helped in his work by a council which consisted of ministers, provincial governors, military commanders, men of priestly class and poets. The council met in a hall called *Venkat Vilas Mandapa*. The Council of Ministers played a more important part in influencing the policy of the government. *Pradhani*, the Prime Minister, presided over the meetings of the Parishad. Ministers bore the title *dandanayaka*. They were lords of the administration and not the leaders of the forces

The members of the council were taken not only from the Brahmans but also from the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, The office of a minister was sometimes hereditary and sometimes not. It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of ministers. The important officers of the state were the Prime Minister, Chief Treasurer, and

Custodian of the jewels and the Prefect of the police. The *rayasam* recorded oral orders of the king. The *karanikam* was the accountant.

Provincial Administration: The Vijayanagar Empire was divided into two hundred provinces which according to some historians, included the tributary vassal states also. The terms used for the province are Rajya and Mandala. Each province was under a viceroy or Nayaka or Naik. The latter was either a member of the royal house or an influential noble of the state or some descendant of some old ruling family. Every Governor exercised civil, military and judicial powers within his jurisdiction. The provincial administration was a miniature replica of the central administration. The viceroy kept his own court, army, etc. and was a despot within his own dominions. The powerful king however, kept a constant vigilance on their governors. If the Governor oppressed the people or became a traitor, he was likely to be punished by the king. His jagir could be confiscated if he did not send one-third of its income to the Central Government. The country was divided into *Kuttams*; a *kuttam* into *nadu*, a *nadu* into *sthalas*; below this came the *agaram*.

Village (Agaram) self-government was considerably weakened under Vijayanagar rule. The village assembly was responsible for the administration of the village. Gauda, village headman, looked after the village administration. The Ayagar system was an important feature of the village organisation. Body of twelve functionaries, known as '*ayagars*', conducted every village affairs. They were granted tax free lands. In addition to land tax there were various other taxes such as property tax, tax on sale of produce (rate varied according to the type of soil, crop, method of irrigation etc.) profession taxes, military contribution, taxes on marriage etc.