

THE HISTORY OF BOYA CASTE IN MEDIEVAL ANDHRADESA

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Abstract

The Boyas also called as Bedar Nayaka or Valmiki are a community found in the South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Their occupation was hunting and other martial pursuits. The word 'Boyas' is found in an inscription of the Eastern Chalukyas. According to Earlier scholars the meaning of Boyas called "inhabitant" of the early Boyas were thought to have been a tribal community who were graduated acculturated into caste society. This is based on evidence from clan names in inscriptions. In Medieval Andhra Desha, particularly Nellore, and Guntur region were being made to Boyas and a chieftain described as Nishada was ruling the tringers of Nellore as a feudal lord of Vishnuvardhana-II. After death of Vishnuvardhana-V, the Boyas rose up against the Chalukyas and quickly captured Vengi, in Andhra Pradesh. The new king sent pandranga, a general to defeat the Boyas, Pandranga, successfully retook vengi and conquered twelve Boyas estates and to Prevent a recurrence was made governor of the whole region. In Kannada areas in the Medieval period the Bedars were originally known as "Billavas" and had some power, enough to give land grant.

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Introduction

The inscription also reveal Bedars formed associations to promote their welfare and glorify themselves. Many Bedars Chieftains, who had previously been subordinate now began to control territory more openly. Many of these polygars began to amass large forces of Boyas troops. The Boyas were heavily recruited into the armies of Mysore during the reigns of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. The early status of the Boyas is hard to pin down. As they most likely originated as a tribe, they were outside the caste system and within the same community its members could pursue different occupations. However different sections of the community who were pursuing different occupations would identify themselves with their occupation in Brahminies society such as Boya – Bhrahmans. Some inscriptions indicate some Boyas clans officiated as priests for the entire community traces of which can still be found in the relations between the Myasa – Boyas and Uru – Boyas. Now a days no Boyas are accepted as Brahmins, although they claim descent from Brahmnic rishis like Valmiki. Now Boyas worked in a variety of fields. Many Boyas were granted high administrative positions such as collection of revenue and other positions.

Origin of Word Boya

The Boyas are a hardy warlike aboriginal people of Andhradesa. Boyas are primarily hunters, they live in the thickly forested mountainous tracts of Prakasam, Chittore and Nellore districts. According to district gezetters the Boyas called “An old fighting caste”. Some of the Medieval inscriptions the home land of the Boyas was referred to as Boyaviharadesa, Boyavidu and Boyavila. The Boya Viharadesa of these inscriptions corresponds to the Eastern taluks of Nellore district. Boyaviharadesa appears to Indicate the original concentration of the Boyas. The Word ‘Nisada’ is taken to be the Sanskrit Synonym of Boya and interestingly some of the Boyas sects trace their descent from the mythical Nisada son of Venaraja, depicted in puranas as a wicked king. Nisadas appears to be a generic term used to describe all the aboriginal tribes and particularly as the synonym of Kirata. The Medieval telugu poets like Peddanna Allasani says abouts Boyas are the sense of Mericiless persons. According to Vijayanagara ruler Sri Krishnadevaraya says about Boyas a policy of cautions appeasement towards the hill and forest tribes which included the Boyas. He considered of Boyas lords from eighteen kapanas. In modern period Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan employed the Boyas in their wars against the trouble – some palegars and against the British.

History of Boyas

The Boyas are divided into several groups which are mainly occupational. Among the Boyas there are two main branches. (1) Uruboyas, thye are from ‘Village

Boyas', (2) Mysaboyas, they are from grassland Boyas, and each and every Boyas is sub divided into a numbers of sub-divisions. Like Mandalavaru (Herdsman) Pulavaru (Flowermen), Yenumulavaru (buffalomen), Minalavaru (Fishermen). In Early Eastern Chalukyan records and inscriptional records the above names and occupation mentioned. The Boyas are not a homogenous tribe, they are occupational groups. The Reyur grant of Vishnuvardhana-II. Introduces names called Mandasarma, Kappa Sarma of the houses of Alaboya, Koliboya, Manduboya and Pular boyas. Pular means grass in telugu and pulurboya might have belonged to the Mysaboya sect. Manda Sarma might be of Mandalavaru, Manduboya means medicine man Koliboya is a temple man, was a priest. Some copper plates like koneti copper plate, says koliboya king was Kappa Sarma, patisarma as pati in telugu means flower bed pati means Fertile, Mannu means soil. Patisarma may be belongs to the Pulavaru Boya' section. Actually the Boyas do not engage Brahmins in their religious activities as they had their own priests. Koliboyas (Koli means temple) are the priestly class among the Boyas. The Boyas are appears to have been saivite faith. Siva is known as the god of Nisadas. Dhurjati's Srikalahastishwara satakam, a telugu poet of the 16th century describes Kanappa worshipped Siva with his own eyes. Venkataramanayya, Nelaturi says about Boys "Minor communities like the Boyas are Occasionally mentioned in the inscriptions but they were far down in the scale of civilization and the part played by them is indeed very significant. According to Eastern Chalukyas records that the Boya tribe was transformed into the caste of Boya Brahmins. The Boyas played an interesting role in the political and social history of Medieval Andhra desa. It was a story of several sections of the Boyas giving up their aboriginal habits and entering into the fold of the neighbouring Brahmanical social order. The Eastern Chalukyan records suggest that the Boya priests emulated their counterparts in the Brahmanical society in mastering Vedic learning and performing Vedic rituals. Bezawada plates of Chalukya Bhima-I describe Revamaiah alias Unmarakamthibol as a master of Vedas and Vedangas', Ketanna (13th Century) translated 'Dasakumara Charita' into telugu poem says that the Brahmins became teachers of the Boyas. The Dasakumara charita may give us a clue to the mastery of the Boya priests over Vedic lore and their skill in performing vedic rituals. The Koliboyas suggests that the Boyas had built temples of their own and engaged priests for conducting worship in them. It was the period when Brahmanism developed into theism of the puranic type with temple as the centre of religion and there was brick temple building activity in the pallava and chalukya Kingdoms between Boyadesa was interposed.

The Boyas politically this time organized themselves into Kottams. 'The word Kottam is Frequently met with in the Tamil inscriptions in the meaning of a

subdivision of nadu. The word Kottam means 'a Fortress and each of the Kottams might have developed around a Fortified town and under a chieftain. The Boyas chieftains were known as Doras or Simhasana Boyas. Boyas kingdom formed a loose confederacy under the leadership of the chief who held katteru. The Pallavas and the Vengi Chalukyas coveted to occupy the Boyakottams as a result of which they frequently changed hands till about the middle of the 9th Century, when Panduranga destroyed the Boyas strongholds and dispersed the Boyas. The Eastern Chalukyas appear to have cast their greedy eyes on the Boyakottams. Jayasimhavallabha, ruler of Eastern Chalukyas came into conflict with the Boyas, defeated their chief, but was silent about his name as he was too insignificant for him to be mentioned. After Victory of Jayasimha, the Vengi Kingdom extended Southwards, beyond manner right into the very heart of the 'Boyakottams'. The successor of Jayasimhavarma one of the ruler Indravarma divided the village of Kondanagur into sixty four shares and gave it to Candisarma grandson of Duggasarma alias Irralur Boya. The names of the witness of the grant end in 'bol' which is only the honorific plural of Boya, Vishnuvardana-II, Eastern Chalukyan king divided the village of Reyur between Seventy four Boys Brahmins. The same king gifted Koneki to Several Boya Brahmins. After his successor's, Mangi granted Chandalur to Sixteen Boya Brahmins.

The Pallavas as the rulers of the Kanchi and Palkkada pulicat, regions came into contact with the Boyas and realized the need of winning their loyalty and took them services as village headmen. According to Reyur grant Vemmisarma and Chamundasarma are stated to have been Marataboyas. These grant describe about the meaning of Boyas called 'Vastavyay or "resident". Not only Reyur grant but also anthon grants described about the Boyas, the grants were made mostly on the recommendations of the military officers of the Chalukyas were probably entrusted with the governance of the Boya kottas. According to koneki grant village names of Boyas are different villages is also mentioned. Madisarma alias patiboya is also characterised as kummurboya, Kummanur is identified with Konur in the Sattenapalli taluq, Guntur district. Among the Boya Brahmins the most popular gotras are Kaundinya, Bharadvaja, KAsyapa and Parasara. The officers in charge of the administration of the Boyakottams encouraged the Boya Brahmins with land grants to settle down in different villages of 'Karmarastra' almost adjacent to the Boyaviharadesa as "a second line of defence" to the Eastern Chalukyan authority. The policy of the Vengi officers towards the Boyas was successful and the Boyakottams remained peaceful under that Chalukyan rule.

Udayendiram plates described about the Boya chief and his name is a clear proof of his loyal Subordination to the Chalukyas and of the increased fascination

of the Boyas for Sanskrit names. Udayendiram plates also states that Pallavamalla followed an aggressive policy towards Boyas. After Pallavamalla Dhantivarman, Nandivarman were also powerful rulers, there are achievement on military power. The Boyakottams continued under the pallava rule for considerable time. The Dharmavaram epigraph of Chalukya Bhima states that Vijayaditya Fought with the opposing Boyas and drove them into forests.

Addanki record the Pandaranga, the redoubtable general of Gunaga states that the engagement with the Boyas took place soon after the coronation of the king. The Boyas attacked the Vengi kingdom and exasperated by their hostile activities, Gunaga a chalukyan ruler was determined to take permanently effective steps againsts the Boyas. The military exploits of panduranga not only shattered the base of the political power of the Boyas but also disturbed the Tribal concentration in the Kottams as the Boyas are found in the post Gunaga Era, scattered across as the Boyas are found in the Fertile Coastal plains of Andhra region. The Boyas even crossed the river Krishna and migrated into the Telangana region. In Telangana region, the Boyas operating hydraulic machines for irrigating agricultural lands. Gradually, the Boyas entered the main stream of the socio-political, and economical life of the land. The middle of the 11th Century the Boyas appear from Srikakulam; the northern most Hindu Pilgrim centre in Andhra. In several inscriptions says 'Golla boyas' in preseant day in Telangana, Andhra region called 'Golla caste'. The Boyas were recruited even into the staff of temple service and the Boya girls were admitted into the Sani Munnurvu.

The Boya temple servants like those in charge of temple gifts received land grants in lieu of monthly salaries. The Boyas entered the agricultural class of Fertile plains, Trade was not closed for the Boyas. The Boyas as members of the Nanadesi, Pekkamdru, an eminent marchant organization. The Boyas aspired for corresponding social status and respectability. At 12th century Boyas frequently come across inscriptions recording gifts of cattle money and land made by Boyas to temple and priests. In Boya caste, there are many Sanskrit names called as Bhima Boya, Chandana Boya, Surya Boya, Trikotu Boya.

The Genealogy of Boya Community

An inscription in the Malleshwara temple at Bezawada in 1264 states the genealogy of Boya caste i.e. reddy, naidu, naik being used by different persons of the some Boya family. Some inscriptions says Naganaboya, Malleboya, Enjiliboya, Trikotiboya etc. The beginning of the 12th Century the Boyas are found in high positions of responsibility in most of the kingdoms in Coastal Andhra. Boyas distinguished themselves as a daministrators and generals and rose to the highest positions including that of Mahamandaleshwara and began to share the honours of

the traditional ruling elite such as the kotas and Haihayas. The most prominent and powerful among the Boya officers of their time was Gundaboya. There were several Boyas in the service of Kulottunga Rajendra chola occupying of authority. Jillaboya was prominent general under Rajendra chola, it appears that he took a leading part in the famous battle of Koccherulakota between the forces of Velanadu and Karnataka and won a victory for his master. Ganapatideva a Kakatiya ruler also mentioned about Boyas, the Koppulas were another Boya chieftain family who rose to political prominence during the Kakatiya period under prola and rudradeva. The Koppulas family Boyas might have hailed from Koppolu village in Prakasam district. The Koppulas like the Ayyas, shifted their locality to the Kakatias became powerful as Virasamantas and held the title 'Pagameccuganda. Kapayanayaka was the first of the Koppulas who held the office of Nayaka probably under Kakatiya Prataparudra. Gayapovala and Jagadobbaganda in describing his patron a Koppula chief by name Vallabhupala. The Boyas today the people of warrior race who were the Erstwhile professional warriors lost their identify with the collapse of powerful local Kingdoms. Those warrior soldier who managed to retain their control over large tracts of lands became zamindars, administrators farmers. Among the Boya community in various states, they are in different category castes. The Boya caste comes under OBC in central list. In Tamilnadu as OBC Andhrapradesh as BC-A group, and Karnataka as BC category, Now a days the Boyas population more than 15 million spread throughout India and other countries.

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