



Amaranayaka system and Amaranayakas in Chitradurga in during Vijayanagara kingdom

Boaraiah R.N

Abstract

The amara-nayakas is a military commanders and it was a political innovation of Vijayanagara Empire which was influenced by from the iqta system of the Delhi Sultanate. The amara-nayakas received territories to govern by the rulers of the Vijayanagara Kingdom and they have responsibility to collected taxes and other dues from villagers, formers, craft-persons and business traders and some part of revenues sent tribute to the their authoritative ruler annually and personally to express their loyalty and retained part of the revenue used for their personal, local administration and maintaining a stipulated contingent of horses and elephants and also retained revenues used for new construction or rejuvenation of new / old temples and extend irrigation works in their administrative geographical jurisdictions. Also they take lead role in provide effective well trained shouldered, horses, elephants fighting forces to the vijayanagara rulers with which they brought the entire southern peninsula under their control. Once Vijayanagara Kingdom was destroyed in battle of Talikota and then many of these nayakas were declared themselves as independent kingdoms that largely affected the central imperial structure of the empire. In this paper, research has made an attempt to demonstrate the origin of amarayaka systems, nature of amarayaka systems, levels of amarayaka systems, advantages and disadvantages of Amaranayaka system, role of Amaranayakas and Amaranayakas of the Chitradurga Nayakas/ Palegars in during Vijayanagara kingdom.

Keywords: Amaranayaka system, Amaranayakas, Vijayanagara kingdom, Chitradurga district.

Boaraiah R.N
Research Scholar,
Department of History,
Bharathiar University,
Coimbatore- 641046

1. Introduction

The hall mark of territorial administrative system of Vijayanagara Empire was '*Nayankara system*'. As per this system emperor was the sole landlord of the empire. He had the discretionary powers to allocate the part of the land to his subordinate rulers. Those rulers who suppose to uphold the status and dignity of the emperor by helping him during the war .It was the belief during the medieval India that duty of a Vassal or (subordinate ruler) was to invade and capture the enemies land ,finally handing over the authority to the empire. As a whole the person who gets the authority of the land from the emperor called '*Nayaka*'. The whole part of the land that the Nayaka could receive was known as '*Amaram*' or '*Nayakattanam*'. One fixed and resolved revenue generated by that part of the land was given to the '*Senanayaka*'(subordinate ruler). This was the system followed by Vijayanagara emperors.The system was called '*Amara-nayankara paddathi*'. The land which was given to Nayakas was normally ruled by the hereditary rulers.This was continued permanently. Thereby the derived name for this was '*Amaranayakatana*'or '*Amaramagani*'.In fact the military service was served by the Vassal or the subordinate ruler.This was the duty of Nayaka.He used to submit '*Pogadhi*'(the payment by one ruler to another) to the emperor for the military services.In turn he used to get '*Amaram*' or '*land*' from the emperor.Normally the *Pogadhi* amount and military troupe numbers was decided by the Emperor. '*Amara*' refers to army troupe comprising 1000 soldiers.The emperors were ruling directly through their subordinates, some of the territorial divisions or provinces and in addition to these they handed over the responsibility to Amaranayakas or Nayaka Palegars some other provinces.

From the above facts it was believed that '*Nayaka*' in one way merely a warlord or military commander.He was there in assisting to strengthen the finance and military force and even though in their territorial divisions they were independent and strong.They were responsible for the developments in irrigationforestry,public works services. In Nayankara system in the beginning it was then confined to the individual responsibility, but later it had changed to hereditary ruling system.

The feudal system was implemented effectively in territorial divisions of Vijayanagara empire.For this they established many '*Paleyapattus*'(*the region under the rule of a feudal chieftain*). Tanjavooru, Jinji, Madhure, Keladhi, Chitradurga, Belur, Mysore, Ullala, Nagire and

Haduvalli, were the examples for the Paleyapattus. These were ruled by Vassals and they had possessed different level of hierarchy in their territorial division. This was one of the noteworthy concepts. Beniprasad made reference in this aspect. As per his view Vijayanagara Empire was an ancient Hindu model feudal system. All those were unified to form the nation^[1].

Vijayanagara Empire political administration was not centralized but it had distributed to the lower strata. It had many administrative and military units. Each unit comprised with soldiers and officials. In the following three levels of the Amaranayakas mentioned.

- Grade –I : Keladhi, Yelahanka and Chitradurga.
- Grade –II : Only few villages under their control.
- Grade –III : Only one or two villages under their control.

Based on the geographical location, space or the volume of land, and the income generation potential they decided the prominence of the Amaranayakas. On this basis the Keladhi Nayakas possessed more powers in their regime. Chandraguthi, Araga and 40 smaller territorial divisions were under their control. They used to submit Pogadhi to the empire. These smaller units were ruled by subordinate to Vassal. They were politically not loyal to Vijayanagara emperor but to Vassal of Keladhi. Compare to Keladhi scope or volume of space, natural resources Chitradurga was quite smaller. Hiriyooru, Harathi-Iyemangala, Nannivala, Nayakanahatti, Molkalmooru, Matthodu and many smaller paleyapattus were under the control of Chitradurga Nayakas. The custom of appointing subordinate ruler for Vassal was an example. This is one kind of sequential grade system. The Vijayanagara emperors were having vast empire under their control only because of the support of Amaranayakas. This truth bound to be accepted. From this point of view Krishnadevaraya and Sadhashivaraya during their regime they appointed Amaranayakas in large numbers. This was a noteworthy fact^[2].

2. Advantages of Amaranayaka system:-

1. Amaranayakas were the mainstay in controlling the large Vijayanagara Empire.
2. Execution of law and order became very easy. Because each Nayaka held the judicial responsibility of respective territorial division. Based on this fact Krishnadevaraya and Sadhashivaraya had nominated large number of Amaranayakas during their regime.

3. Each Nayaka had the responsibility of holding in his custody the specific quantum of army troupe to be in ready condition to offer services to the emperor. That was the major onus of the Amaranayaka^[3]. With the support of their army troupes they were capturing new Rajyas and hence expanding their empire. They used to fight with the enemies. We had observed that kings of Keladhi^[4] and Nayakas of Chitradurga had fought with enemies in the battle and in turn the emperor had rewarded them suitably.
4. At last Amaranayaka was executing the role of connecting link between the citizens and the emperor.

Thus the Amaranayaka system had helped the emperor to keep their empire in stable condition^[5].

2.1. Disadvantages of Amaranayaka system:-

1. As long as the emperor was strong and he had kept Nayakas under control, this system was successfully executed. But if the weak emperor occupied the throne the Nayakas were starting proclaiming themselves as independent rulers of their respective territorial divisions.
2. Gradually this system transformed into *hereditary*^[6], as a result it became very difficult for the emperor either to take back the 'Amaram' from the Nayaka or to transfer the same to someone. It was very much impossible to capture the Amaram without the invasion of military.
3. The Amaranayakas were having large territorial division and huge number of citizens under their control. Obviously the loyalty of the public was first to Nayak rather than the emperor who was at the farthest place.
4. This system had gone smoothly as per their desire to the maximum period of Talikote battle. In 1565AD battle the backbone of this empire smashed into pieces. In fact the *last petal of the last flower fell down*. The pompous of the dynasty vanished. Later the Nayakas became most powerful. The empire was divided and finally it transformed into semi independent provincial group. Keladhi, Yelahanka, Shivanasamudra and Chitradurga were the important provinces thus formed. After this historical battle they started disregarding the central lordship. They started combating among themselves. After 1565AD battle created anarchy in the Vijayanagara Empire. Devaraya and Krishnadevaraya were the two capable emperors to rule the empire in stable manner. Weak emperors were not able to control the

powerful Nayakas. In these circumstances many Nayakas proclaimed themselves as the king of their respective territorial division.

3. Role of Amaranayakas-Chitradurga Nayakas/Palegars

Vijayanagara Empire adopted federal system of administration in that vassals were integral component of the system. In that Chitradurga was also one component of the system. Chitradurga nayakas never adopted independent foreign policy. They never ever brought their own currency or coins for circulation. Therefore they stood unique compare to Keladhi Nayakas. Chitradurga had seen six significant Nayakas. Thimmannanayaka, Obannanayaka and Kasthoori Rangappanayaka were first three Vassals of Vijayanagara empire. They ruled upto 1565AD as the Vassals of Vijayanagara. In Vijayanagara Empire, Thimmannanayakan played a major in the administration. As per M.S.Puttanna there were three predecessors to Thimmannanayaka. They used to visit Hampi to worship Lord Sri Veerupaksha, the family deity of Vijayanagara emperors. The vassals had relationship of reciprocity with the emperors.

As per Puttanna Sabbagadi Obannanayaka, Jadavinayaka and Bullenayaka were belonging to Valmiki Gothra. Earlier they were working as servants at Delhi. It was believed that they migrated from Jadekallu Durga situated in Northern side. While these three brothers were coming, they brought the family deity Ahobala Narasimhaswamy idol and other things along with them and stayed at southern part. On the way they stayed at Vijayanagara for certain period. They offered puja to Bhagavan Veerupaksha at Hampi^[7]. It was believed that on the invitation of Vijayanagara kings they might have of visited capital. By seeing their humbleness the emperor might have nominated them Holalkere Nayakas.

The emperor was of the belief that they would serve as the loyal and obedient Vassal to the Empire. In fact the strong foundation was laid by Thimmannanayaka as Chitradurga Nayaka. He started his political and administrative career as Amaranayaka of Chitradurga²⁵⁶. He got Holalkere as a gift from Krishnadevaraya, subsequently with the permission of the emperor he associated the Hiriyooru and Chitradurga territorial division. He also built fort at Chitradurga with the permission of the emperor. Thimmannanayaka always follows the order of the emperor. He participated in all the warfare of the emperor.

Puttanna had made sincere and honest attempt to give clear picture about Chitradurga Nayakas. In that he wrote about the relationship of reciprocity between the emperor and the

Nayakas of Chitradurga and he mentioned about the disloyal nature of Thimmannanayaka. But he never mentioned the reason for the rift between the emperor and the Nayaka and even in other articles or publications the reason for friction between the two royal families. The available contemporary inscription there was no mention about this. Even B.L. Rice also was silent about this. Hulluru Sreenivasa Jois^[8] had written on Chitradurga Nayakas about their business transactions, but he also never mentioned about this matter. Therefore without ensuring the specific base how the animosity was developed between the emperor and the Nayaka would become very difficult to come to a conclusion. Finally Thimmannanayaka became the prisoner of the emperor. Probably the ambition of expansion of their territory would be the cause for the development of the rift between them.

The Thimmannanayaka was sent to prison for his disloyalty to the empire, because it was considered as the crime. Obannanayaka was installed as successor to him^[7]. He served the empire with great loyalty. Before the inception of Chitradurga Palegara family, there were many Amaranayakas were ruling at Holalkere and Davanagere territorial divisions. On these aspects many inscriptions were found. Hiriyooru, Molkalmooru, Challakere, Jagalooru and Chitradurga places inscriptions were found^[10]. In these inscriptions there was a mention about the esteemed personalities belonging to these regions, who received the rewards from the empire. Among them many were stationed at Holalkere and Davanagere regions. They were rewarded with titles and granted the land to their authority.

The Vijayanagara Empire adopted federal system of administration in that vassals were integral component of the system. In that Vijayanagara Rajya Chitradurga territorial division had played major role. From the economic point of view in comparison to Keladhi and Coastal territorial divisions did not possess that much wealth. This division comes under dry land area. Irrigation was done during rainy season. But from the military point of view it was best suited for army base. In addition to this the main highway which was passing through this province had connectivity between North and south-West part of India. Therefore the Chitradurga territorial division Nayakas was gained the attention of Vijayanagara kings.

Secondly it comprised with lower ranking Nayakas. That means this territorial division associated with many endowment lands (the smaller portion of land gifted to Nayakas). The emperor had of the view that instead allocating vast area of land to one particular Nayaka, they

made smaller divisions and handed over the authority to many Nayakas(subordinate rulers).This would avoid supremacy of one particular person.For this guideline strategic location of Chitradurga was the main reason.

Thirdly the landlords were stationed at Holalkere and Davangere regions. They were rewarded by the titles such as *Amaranayaka, Mahamandaleshwara, Maha Arasu*. Finally if we make the research on the history the subordinate rulers, we could get clear picture of federal system. The authority of holding Nayaka status depends solely on the judgement of the emperor. As long as he was loyal to the emperor so long he would be in the authoritative position. Imprisonment was the punishment to the disobedience. Territorial division position, domination, Variety and authority of inheritance were exceptional features of Chitradurga Nayakas. Vijayanagara Empire adopted federal system of administration in that vassals were integral component of the system.

Chitradurga nayakas were became one important link of the system, these Palegars were even before the inception of Vijayanagara Empire. These Palegars got the distinctive recognition during the period of Vijayanagara Empire and after the fall of the empire. During Vijayanagara empire period they ruled as Vassals and Amaranayakas. After the collapse of the empire they became Palegars of Chitradurga and ruled that region with independence.

In Chitradurga district there were seven 'Paleypattus' were existed. Namely Rayadurga, Harathikote, Beluru, Chitradurga, Santhebennooru Hatti and Matthinadu(Matthodu) were the important ones. Many inscriptions revealed that even before Chitradurga Palegars Rayadurga, Harathi and Beluru Palegars had ruled some of the regions of this district. All of them during the Vijayanagara king's administrative period were ruled as Vassals, Amaranayakas at the various territorial divisions of this district.

3.1. Bhodhihalu Palegars(Sreerampura)

Bhodhihalu is hobli centre of Hosadurga taluk of Chitradurga district. Since seventy years this place is known by the new name Sreerampura. In the past this place was called by different names, namely Bhasmapura, Vibhoothipura, Bhodhihalu, Kayebhodhihalu etc., Apart from these some '*Shasanagranthas*'. This place was called by several names. They were Harapura, Besandakote, Ava---nagiridurga, Girijanagara and Sirumanadu^[11] etc., Bhodhihalu place was existed in 12th century and it had gained fame during that period. It was inscribed in

inscriptions^[12]. First half of the 15th century Bhoodhihalu Palegars had installed 'Palepattu' and ruled in this region. On these Palegars three 'Sangathya' (poem having three lines) were written. They were Siddaveya Siruvana sangathya,

'Gollusirumana Charite' of Malla poet, 'Sirumana Charite' of Rama poet. M.M. Kalburgi had collected these poems and published them. Based on these three poems a research article was published recently^[13]. Saluva Narasimha of Vijayanagara king was ruling Penugonda Rajya. Bhoodhihalu was ruled by Sirumana. Both of them contemporary rulers, between these two rulers there was a conflict about the territorial region. He did the battle against Narasimha. Sirumana showed great valor in that battle. In that poem they extolled the braveness of Sirumana and the beauty of Bhoodhihalu Township. Hiriyooru, Honnavalli, Yekkatti, Kandhikere, Haranahalli, Halukurike and Bagooru territorial divisions were associated with Bhoodhihalu Rajya. This Bhoodhihalu Rajya was ruled by Sirumana and spread across vast land^[14].

3.2. Harathi (Harathikote) Palegars

The Harathikote is in Hiriyooru taluk of Chitradurga district. The capital of Harathi Palegars was Harathikote. They ruled from 1340AD to 1800AD by keeping Harathikote as their capital and they popularly called Harathi Palegars. It was revealed from the inscriptions that they ruled in different regions of this district.

Many research scholars already did strong debate about the origin of these Palegars^[15]. From the available inscriptions M.V. Chitralingappa compiled all the essential points had published family tree of them^[16]. All these records revealed that Thipparaju (Thippanayaka) was the forefather of this family and their ancestors belonging to Harathi-Dharwad territorial division of Bijapur. The inscriptions found in this district revealed that they belong to 'Harathi-Iyemangala'^[17], Harathi-Nidagallu^[18] royal family. Around 45 Nayakas had declared themselves Harathi Palegars. They ruled in Rayadurga, Dodderi, Nidagallu, Ratnagiri, Sira, Hiriyooru and Iyemangala. Forefather of this family Thipparaja was in fact contemporary of Hakka-Bukka of Vijayanagara. He was the 'Dalapathi' (Military commander) in Vijayanagara army. He exhibited his strength to the emperor. The emperor had gifted Vedavathi river basin to him as a token of appreciation. That place was domicile of his ancestors. In their memory he built a fort at that

place. He ruled from 1340AD to 1355AD. Thipparaja had installed Chandragiri in his father's name and Ratnagiri in his mother's name^[19].

Kamayya nayaka was the son of Thipparaja, Abbaiahnayaka and Kotenayaka were his two sons. Among them Abbaiahnayaka was quite famous. He stationed at Kotekere. Mallenayaka was the son of Kotenayaka. His family made Parashurampura as their residing place. Palanayaka was the eldest son of Abbaiahnayaka. He had ruled Kotekere and Harathikere fort. Iyemangala and its surrounding territorial divisions ruled by Katanayaka and Bommanayaka. The Bommanayaka whom was installed in Dodderi and Talaku by getting the permission of Vijayanagara Empire. In that region he installed Gosikere, Yerambade nayaka was the son of Bommanayaka. He installed Yerambadenahalli (Yeraballi) in his name. His son was Chikkathipparaja who was the king of Nidagallu Durga. He was significant in Harathi Palegars^[20]. Third son was Kamanayaka in the beginning he stationed at Iyemangala until 1342AD and later he shifted to Harathikote, Kameenayaka, Gaddadabrahmanayaka, Hottennanayaka, Immadi Beerannanayaka, Eshwara Devinayaka, Basavi nayaka, Mummadi Brahmanayaka, Dollappanayaka and Doddappanayaka,

The Lakshmipathi nayaka were ruled Harathikote in succession. Later Rangappanayaka- I, who was ruled the Harathikote. His Guru (*religious preacher*) was Kalamukha Hotteshwaraiah. He resided at '*Simhasana Mata*' (Monastery). He handed over Hemandihalu Grama to this Mata as a gift. In this way Harathi Palegars had ruled by occupying various positions such as Military commandant, 'Jagirdhara' and Palegar. They ruled Harathikote, Kotekere, Parashurampura, Dodderi, Bukkapattana, Midigesi, Nidagallu, Ratnagiri, Sira, Hiriyooru and Iyemangala by having positions in various capacities as mentioned above. After the decadence of Vijayanagara Empire, they became independent rulers. But they continued the legacy of Vijayanagara Empire. They gave boost to Political, cultural and religious tradition. Like in the Vijayanagara period they retained the territorial divisions such as Seeme, Vente and Sthala etc, By keeping various administrative divisions they ruled their regime appropriately. They used to give generously land or title to the temples, Mata and warriors.

3.3. Hatti (Nayakanahatti) Palegars

In Chitradurga district many Paleyapatus were ruled at various regions. Nayakanahatti of Challakere taluk Paleyapattu was one among them. By keeping Nayakanahatti as the core place of administration they ruled this territorial division. They were popularly called Hatti

Palegars. This town was built by Kote Mallanayaka in the past. As per Nayakanahatti *bhakair*, he was stationed at Karamale and Kommamale area which was near Sreeshaila Mountain. He owned huge number of livestock. That part of the land had faced severe famine. He decided to migrate from that place. He along with his six brothers, 12 'Pettige Devaru', 1200 livestock and 500 members Myasas started moving in search of fodder and water. Finally he reached Nayakanahatti and camped there. This place was covered with forest, he cut the trees and established conducive the place. He built a cowshed (Hatti) for his livestock and house for his family. He built a dwelling place without the permission of the Vijayanagara Empire. The emperor sent an army to capture him.

Then Mallanayaka released the livestock against the army. When large numbers of bulls rush towards the army, the army move helter skelter. By seeing his valor the emperor in appreciation gave permission to build 'Hatti' or dwelling at that place. In addition to that he rewarded him by giving the title Palegar and handed over the authority of Chitradurga territorial division^[21]. The successor of Hatti Mallappanayaka was Bodimallappanayaka. Among the Palegars belong to this family he was quite famous. During his period Nayakanahatti had made all round developments. He was very much loyal to Vijayanagara emperor and he defeated a wrestler in the competition. By seeing his service and the strength the emperor honoured him by giving title 'Bheema' (most powerful muscle man). In its memory Mallappanayaka had built 7 lakes and 7 township at Nayakanahatti^[22].

3.4. Matthodu Palegars

At present Matthodu is a hobli centre in Hosadurga taluk, from 17th century to 18th century AD by keeping Matthodu as their capital Palegars ruled that region. They were popularly called Matthodu Palegars. At present it is called Matthodu but in the past it was known by the name Matthinadu. The same place was inscribed in the inscriptions as Matthinadu^[23], Matthanada^[24] and Matthodu^[25]. In folklore this place was called Mutthaidara Nadu, Mathivantharanadu.

Forefather of Matthodu Palegars was Giriappanayaka. He was most powerful and skilled hunter. He was having the excellent skill to tame the animals. By seeing his bravery and valor the Penugonde king Venkatapathiraya had invited Giriappanayaka to his kingdom. At these circumstances an elephant had gone mad and created chaos. He tamed that elephant with his

skill. Venkatapathirayahad honoured Giriyanpanayaka by handing over Lakkavanahalli and its surrounding areas, which was yielding revenue of 9000 Pagodas in 1604AD^[26].

The Halappanayaka was the most excellent Palegar among Matthodu Palegars. He transformed Matthodu to a big city. In Matthodu he built very strong fort around the city. In addition to this he built Batheri, Main gateway, Temples, Palace, Warehouse, Elephant stable, Horse stable, 'Sadara chavadi' (the flat and uniform construction above the ground level) Ministerial bungalow, wells, highways. He was the devotee of Shiva. He built a Mata (building to preacher) to his Gurujee Murigeswamy at Matthodu. For its maintenance he handed over 'Arehalli' village on charity. This was inscribed in the inscription^[27]. Another inscription had revealed about the renovation of Ganjigere agrahara^[28].

3.5. Belooru Palegars

The Belooru palegars belonging to Belooru situated in Hassan district. They ruled in the different regions of this district that was inscribed in the inscription. In these inscriptions they inscribed about their family tree, received titles, tax structure and charity. Errakrishnappa (Hadapada Krishnappa) Nayaka was the nominated subordinate ruler of Vijayanagara Empire of Belooru Seeme. He was ruling Bagooru (Banooru) Seeme, which was in Hosadurga taluk of Chitradurga district^[29]. His immediate subordinate ruler built Krishnapura in his name. Venkatadri son of Krishnappanayaka in 1559AD had given charity to this Grama. These Palegars in their Seemes had taken up renovation works of lakes and temples. They gave charity to the public works. These Palegars were rewarded by *Hadapada, Sindhugovinda, Shithakaraganda, Bheema and Dalavalanka* titles^[30].

3.6. Rayadurga Palegars

The inscriptions dated 1389AD to 1559AD were belonging to Rayadurga Palegars. They were found in Molakalmooru, Hiriyooru, Challakere taluks of Chitradurga district. Veerabhoopathi Odeya, Papayyadeva, Thirumallayyadeva, and Hottannanayaka were four Rayadurga Palegars. They ruled in different regions of this district. These were inscribed in the inscriptions. These Palegars had proclaimed themselves as Mahamandaleshwara and belonging to Surya family. They followed the Vijayanagara administrative system. It was mentioned in the inscription that they had given charities to Agrahara and temples. In this way many

Amaranayakas were ruled entire Chitradurga district as the subordinate rulers of Vijayanagara Empire. It was clearly inscribed in the inscriptions^[30].

4. Conclusion

The inscriptions related to charity of land gave the lot of evidence for the existence of special category military commandants. It was quite clear that the Vijayanagara dynasty had involved in series of battles with the neighbouring kingdoms. We could say it was a military administrative system. Therefore from the point of view of defending the entire administrative system the military was always in vigilant state. Only from two elements support this could have been achieved. The soldiers and farmers involved in building the army was the most needed one. How to build the huge armed military system was the biggest challenge to the dynasty.

The emperor alone sitting at the centre could not build such huge armed military system. That had paved way for the emperors of Vijayanagara Empire to adopt decentralization of power. It was quite clear that many territorial divisions were ruled by nominated Nayakas of the dynasty. The each Nayaka had the responsibility to keep certain quantum of army equipped with armoury for the battle at any point of time. The emperors made use of the army whenever the necessity arises. The second element for the stability of the government was its agricultural sector. The farmers were the backbone of economy of the Rajya. They used to cultivate land and growing foodgrains. In turn they pay tax to the government. Therefore on these two important, integral components of administrative system the dynasty was dependent. The Amaranayakas were at the latter stages had grown to become Palegars. In Vijayanagara empire system they held chief military commandant post.

The dynasty granted land to the Amaranayakas, for the land granted to them called by the name '*Amaram*'. The judiciary, economy and political administrative powers lied with the Amaranayakas belonging to the respective territorial division of that region. The Chitradurga palegars those were performing duties in financial and military sectors were not having any problems from the side of the emperors. The emperor had granted land to the Amaranayakas, this information was engraved in the inscription^[32].

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