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HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PENUKONDA RAJYA UNDER THE RAYAS OF VIJAYANAGARA - AS DEPICATED IN INSCRIPTIONS

Dr. E. Sreedhar

Historical geography is the study of geography based on Historical data. The rulers divided the empire in to major as well as minor administrative divisions. However, the exact extent of these divisions is not known. The study and identification of the administrative divisions referred to in the inscriptional records of a particular territory should reveal the approximate extent of that territory.

The term used for the province during the Vijayanagara period is Rajya. It became a prominent and bigger division from 14th century onwards. They were located in strategic places. These Rajyas comprising many subdivisions which inturn contained smaller units. There were 12 Rajyas covering the Telugu linguistic region of Vijayanagara empire. Penukonda Rajya is one among them which extended from 1397 to 1645 A.D, which covers the four Dynasties of Vijayanagara.

The present paper deals with the historical geography of Penukonda Rajya during the Vijayanagara. The scope of this papper is to study all the administrative divisions that flourished within the jurisdiction of the Penukonda Rajya during the Rayas of

Vijayanagara and identified with their modern parralles as accurately as possible. Data are drawn from the epigraphical sources.

Penukonda was the headquarters of the Penugonda Rajya. Because of impregnable hill fort this Rajya is also referred to as Penugonda Durgam. Penukonda means in the local language Big Fort. Ghanagiri or Ghanadri are the Sanskrit variants of Telugu Penukonda.

The earliest inscription naming this place as Penugonda belongs to 1320 A.D¹. Bukka-I, incharge of the Gooty fortress conquered the fortress of Penukonda from Eswara Dannayaka, the subordinate of Viraballa III of Hoyasala Dynasty in 1340 A.D and shifted his headquarters from Gooty to Penukonda². The earliest reference to the Vijayanagara rule over Penukonda found in an inscription dated 1352 A.D at Kadiri³.

An inscription from Penukonda dated 1354 A.D⁴ states that, Penukonda was entrusted by Bukka-I to his son Virupanna under guidance of Anantarasa Chikkavodayar, who was responsible for building the fort of Penukonda. After the fatefull battle of Tallikota in 1565 A.D,