

## **Forgotten Chieftains (Matli's) in Kadapa District- A Study**

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**Abstract:** Some of the local chiefs of Cuddapah district deserve more than a passing allusion. By for the most important was the Matla or Matli family of chieftains. They were more than Palegars because their territory amounted to a principality and from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century at least they assume the title of Raja. We have epigraphs, paper grants and kaifiyats of Siddhavatam, Chittiveli etc., which form the main sources to record their history.

**Key Words:** chiefs, palegars, epigraphs, siddavatam, chieftains, karyakarta,

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### **I. MATLI CHIEFS:**

The Matli chiefs, as they are called, were the chieftains of Cuddapah district hold in sway over Siddhavatam (Siddhout), Jammalmaduu, Chennuru and other places. We have epigraphs, paper grants and kaifiyats of Siddhavatam, Chittivell etc., which form the main sources to record their history<sup>1</sup>. But, although these chiefs ruled over this region for more than two centuries, it has not been possible for us to give a connected and chronological account of these chiefs. Since some of the names overlap and the names of chiefs become identical, it is quite possible that there were one or two collateral branches also. These chiefs were powerful in pottappisima, puluur-nadu as the epigraphs and paper grants indicate<sup>2</sup>.

They belonged to the Devachoda family. R.Sewell thought that these chieftains claimed descent from the old chola kings and bore the title Chola-maharaja. But the inscriptions like the Siddhavatam inscription clearly show that "Devachoda" was their family name. They cannot be associated with the Telugu cholas but were from Matli which could be taken as a place name. Nelaturi Venkataramanayya opines that the Kondraju brothers were 'like the Matlis' telugu cholas of the Devachoda line, tracing their origin from the sun through Ikshvaku of the solar race<sup>3</sup>.

Metla Rajulu, also called Metlu Rajas, ruled in Cuddapah. They were the last princely state to be captured by the British when Rayalaseema was ceded to them by the Nizam after layin siegeto the fort for a couple of months. The Metla Rajulu had alliances and married off their daughter to Sada Siva Raya of the Tuluva Dynasty which helped them establish and play a prominent role durin the reign of the Tuluva and Araveeti dynasties. Matli (Metla) Varada Raju, son of Somaraja, was married to Krishnamma, the sister-in-law of Araveeti Rama Rayalu and the second daughter of emperor Srikrishnadevarayalu<sup>4</sup>.

Earlier to the Siddhavatam epigraph, we have other records that refer to these chiefs. The Nandalur epigraph dated saka 1444 corresponding to 1522-23 A.D., states that Mattakumarayya Devachoda-maharaja made a gift to od chokkanathaswami of Nellandalore. Mattakumara may be a mistake for the name Muttukumara. Cuddapah Gazetteer is said to refer to a record of saka 1459-1537-38 A.D. in the time of 'Matli Ananta' at Pottapi. If this is true we find the earliest reference to a Matli Ananta in this. But, this is not referred to anywhere else. Another source of record, however, refers to this chief. But it is dated saka 1640-1718 A.D. At Pottapi, at the very entrance the Mulasthnesvara temple there is an incomplete record of Sadasivaraya which registers a dasavanda gift to some reddy by Varadayya Devachoda-maharaja, son of Pocharajayya. Varadayya dug up an irrigation canal Anantarana-kaluva at Pottapi<sup>5</sup>.

The Penaalur inscription, on a set of copper plates dated saka 1493 (1571-72 A.D.) records that Matla Tirumalaraja converted the village of Penagaluru of 128 shares into an agrahara named 'Yellamarajusamudram' and gifted it to Brahmanas<sup>6</sup>. This Yellamaraju, thus, happens to be the father of Tirumalaraju. The Gurrampad epigraph of the rein-period of Aravidu Sriranga I, dated 1578 A.D. registers a gift of land in Gurrampadu of sirivella-sima to two individuals by the same Tirumalaraju. But it reveals the fact that Yallamaraju was the son of Matli konamaraju<sup>7</sup>.

The Siddhavatam record mentioned above, states that Matli Anantaraja was the son of Yallaamaraju, born to Ranamamba. This would therefore, indicate that Yellamaraju had two sons Tirumala and Ananta and Ananta's son was Tiruvengalanatha. It also indicates that Yallamaraju had an younger brother Tirumala<sup>8</sup>.

The Hastavaram epigraph (Pullampet taluk) dated saka 1522 registers a gift of land by Matla Ananta Devachoda. More than four decades later in saka 1566. We find kumara Ananta making a grant. The relationship between the two is not clear, although they might be father and son. The Bommavaram inscription dated saka 1557 states that Basavayya, the seal-bearer (mudrakarta) of Muttukumara Anantaraja made a grant of land to an individual<sup>9</sup>. This epigraph, now published reads 'Muttukumara' as 'Matli kumara' in which case, therefore, the name of the chief would be kumara Anantarajayya. The chief is, in all probability identical with kumara Anantaraja of 1644-45 A.D<sup>10</sup>. Basavayya would be, according to the text of the record, the seal-bearer of Satani Yalavareddappa who was the **karyakarta** of Kumara Anantaraja. Records dated saka 1605,1609,1611 and 1612 refer to Muttukumara Venkataramaraju<sup>11</sup>. Here also the name is Matli kumara Venkataramaraju. He is said to have been the son of kumara Anantaraju. The pullampeta copper-plate grant gives a geneoloical account. We learn that five generations- roughly 125 years- had passed between pedda Ananta, the author of Kakusthvijayamu and venkataramaraju. But kumara ananta ruled for a period more than 40 years<sup>12</sup>.

Of all these it is only about Yellamaraju and his son (pedda) ananta that we have more details. The kondaraju brothers held important places as nayankara under Srirana I of the Aravidu dynasty<sup>13</sup>. Of these, Tirupatiraju and Venkata, the chiefs of siddhavatam and chennuru respectively did not accept the suzerainty of Venkatapati II. Since Yellamaraju and his sons joined venkatapati ruling from Chandragiri, the kondaraju brothers fortified utukuru and tried to expand their power in Pottapi-nadu<sup>14</sup>. Yellamaraju was sent against them, on the promise that if he succeeded in subduing them he would bestow Siddhavatam for his chieftaincy. In the battle that followed Tirupatiraju was killed. Later, Venkataraju was also defeated and chennuru was captured by tirumalaraju, younger brother of Yellamaraju. There after, other manne chiefs and palems of Duvuru, Porumamilla, Kamalapuram and Badevolu were captured. Ananta was probably a lieutenant then<sup>15</sup>.

Matli Ananta put down the sardar of the fort of Gurramkonda, as a part of Venkatapati's fights against the Qutbshahis. He also claims to have winning victory over the sultans of Golconda which, however, is only partially true. Several other chiefs rushed to help Venkatapati. Ananta also fought against and put down the rebellion of Nandyala Krishnamaraju in the battle of Jambulamadaka-Jammalamadu. Besides these political achievements Ananta was a patron of letters, the Ayyalaraju poets, Ayyala and Bhaskara having adorned his court. They translated the Kannada work Rattamatasastra Jakkaraju venkata composed Andhra Kamandakam. The chief himself was the author of kaakutsthvijayamu besides other nibhandha granthas (commentaries)<sup>16</sup>.

Unfortunately, we do not know details about such achievements of other chiefs. But, as already seen above, they constructed temples and or renovated them, excavated and repaired tanks, rehabilitated ruined villages and established new ones.



**Panoramic view of Siddhavatam fort**



**Panoramic view of Gurrankonda fort**



**War weaponry of Matli chiefs**

**NOTES AND REFERENCES:**

- [1]. Brackenbury c.f. **Cuddapah District Gazetteers**, Vol.I (Madras) p.39
- [2]. **Epigraphia Indica**, XXXVII, p.104
- [3]. V.Ranaacharaya, **Topographical list of Inscriptons**, Cuddapah, 832
- [4]. **Ibid.**, p.65
- [5]. P.V.Parabrahma Sastri (ed.,) **Inscriptions of A.P., Cuddapah District**, III, No.189
- [6]. V.Ranaacharaya's list, 1, Cuddapah, p.85
- [7]. **Ibid.**,p.86
- [8]. Cuddapah District Inscriptons, III.No.62
- [9]. V.Ranaacharaya's list, 1, Cuddapah, p.67
- [10]. **Ibid.**,p.402
- [11]. **Ibid.**,p.65
- [12]. **Cuddapah District Inscriptons**, III.No.205
- [13]. V.Ranaacharaya's list, No.663,656,863A,681 and 682
- [14]. **Ibid.**,p.86
- [15]. **Ibid.**,p.78
- [16]. Cuddapah District Inscriptons, III.No.245

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