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Self-Representation and Presentation of Others in Indic Epigraphical Writing

Edited by
Dániel Balogh and Annette Schmiedchen

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Juxtaposed Genealogies of the Hoysaḷas and their Subordinates

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1. Introduction

The Hoysaḷas were a family that ruled in what is now southern Karnataka and parts of present-day Tamil Nadu between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. First recognised as local rulers in Malenāḍu or the ‘mountain region’ in the Western Ghats, they were ennobled by the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa as *mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras* or rulers of a circumscribed domain in the mid-eleventh century. In 1117, the third major ruler of the dynasty, Viṣṇuvardhana won an important battle against the Cōḷas and reclaimed the city of Talakāḍu, which the Cōḷas had occupied in 1004. This victory was important both materially and symbolically because Talakāḍu had been the seat of the Western Gaṅgas. The Hoysaḷas made a concerted effort to mark themselves as the successors of this dynasty, which had ruled in southern Karnataka between the fifth and tenth centuries.

Following this important military victory, Viṣṇuvardhana commissioned the Vijayanārāyaṇa temple at Belur. The inscriptions that mark the establishment and endowment of this temple also contain the first formalised genealogy of the Hoysaḷa dynasty, including their claim to descent from mythological heroes, and the origin story of the name Hoysaḷa (*Belur 58, Belur 71*). This genealogy, with only minor variations, would become the standard adopted by the Hoysaḷas and their subordinates in the inscriptions they commissioned for the next two centuries. When read at face value, the consistency of this narrative across time and geography indicates a deep loyalty of the subordinates to their overlords. However, subtle discrepancies in the choices made by the Hoysaḷas and their subordinates contradict the absolute and totalising rhetoric the inscriptions imply.

In this paper I compare the instances where and when the subordinate genealogies aligned with the established narrative of the Hoysaḷa family, and

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where and when they deviated from it, to better understand the evolving relationship of the overlord and subordinate with the changing fortunes of each. I choose the words “overlord” and “subordinate” to highlight the relative status that individuals had to one another, rather than trying to locate them in absolute hierarchy, as suggested by terms like “feudatory” or “vassal.” There were several terms that delineated the role of a subordinate in a complex political structure, and while it is difficult to map the exact structure of these hierarchies from epigraphical material, what we can often determine is their position in relation to one another.

We learn of the history of the Hoysaḷas and their subordinates primarily through inscriptions in Kannada, a language still spoken in the present-day state of Karnataka. These inscriptions contained many registers: the eulogistic *praśasti* sections were composed either in Sanskrit or in a poetic register of Kannada replete with Sanskrit vocabulary, while the portion that recorded the actual donation employed more colloquial language. Commissioning an inscription awarded the donor of a grant the opportunity to record and celebrate the achievements of their ancestors. In shorter inscriptions this could include merely the identification of a memorialised warrior’s parents, while longer inscriptions boasted elaborate narratives which celebrated the ancestry of the donor and the lineage of the overlord. It was through these narratives that donors positioned themselves politically, geographically, and cosmologically in relation to the world around them.

It was as subordinates to the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas that the Hoysaḷas emerged as prominent political actors, and during the joint rule of Vinayāditya and Ereyāṅga that subordinates of the Hoysaḷas in turn began to commission inscriptions of their own. Despite their growing influence, the Hoysaḷas continued to acknowledge and even celebrate their loyalty as subordinates to the Cālukyas until the late twelfth century when Ballāḷa finally won independent sovereignty. Even after this, the achievements of Ereyāṅga and Vinayāditya as subordinates continued to be recorded as part of the Hoysaḷa genealogy. This contentious and somewhat contradictory relationship that the Hoysaḷas had with their own overlords is reflected in the ways they chose to represent themselves, but also in the relationships that they had with their subordinates and how these subordinates chose to represent them.

2. Standard expressions of loyalty in Kannada epigraphy

In the Kannada epigraphy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, subordinates expressed their loyalty to their overlords in a number of standardised ways. Inscriptions usually began with a regnal date, which identified the king ruling at the time of composition or at the time of the activity which the inscription commemorated. In shorter inscriptions, the acknowledgment of the overlord was limited to this date. In the case of longer inscriptions, this section could be extended to include royal genealogies and elaborate praise of the king and his ancestors. The inscription then proceeded to identify the subordinate of the king as *tat-pāda-padmapajīvin*, or ‘one sustained by his lotus feet,’ identified his subordinates as sustained by his lotus feet, and the hierarchy went on until the donor of the inscription and the donation was detailed. In some cases, this hierarchy was comprised of several levels, including the king, an intermediate regional ruler, and then a local ruler or administrator.

The different levels of the hierarchy were demarcated by a set of Sanskrit titles, which have been translated variously across regions. The Hoysaḷas’ rank of *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* under the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa is one example. Based on scattered references to the ceremonies that accompanied the conferment of these titles, it is sometimes possible to discern their relation to one another. In the Cālukya polity, *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* was the highest rank below the king himself, who was styled as the *mahārājādhirāja* or ‘king of kings.’ Ronald Inden describes a *maṇḍala* in the political context of early medieval India as a “circle of kings,” (Inden 1990, 229) and makes the distinction between the *mahārājādhirāja*, who ruled the “whole world,” and the *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* who was the lord, *īśvara*, of a “circumscribed domain” or *maṇḍala* (*ibid.*, 239). Similarly, the rank of *mahāsāmanta*, who acknowledged the overlordship of the ‘king of kings,’ was lower than that of *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara*, as discerned by ceremonies which marked the promotion of subordinates from the former to the latter.¹ *Daṇḍanāyaka* was a more basic title for a military leader, which could be held in conjunction with several other descriptive and administrative titles, such as *sarvādhikārin*, *sandhivigrahin*, and *bhaṇḍārin*, roughly equivalent to universal administrator, “officer in charge of the foreign relations department who was often the writer

1 The inscription which provides evidence of this (*Chiknayakanahalli 20*) is discussed in detail below.

of important documents,” (Sircar 1966, 295) and treasurer² respectively. Lower in rank than these officials were the local administrators of smaller villages or groups of villages, namely *pergaḍe* and *gāvuṇḍa*, and other members of society such as merchants, artisans, or female relatives of these officials.

During the time of the first Hoysāḷa rulers, namely Nṛpakāma and Vinayāditya, there were fewer than five subordinates whose inscriptions are extant, and we can trace the progression from the earliest inscriptions — which were short and recorded the donations or memorialised the martial heroism of fairly minor actors³ — to a proliferation of titles and grants once the Hoysāḷas became ennobled by the Cālukyas. It is at this time that subordinates began emerging with administrative titles which suggested a courtlike apparatus in the Hoysāḷa polity.⁴ However, the inscriptions remained relatively basic until there was yet another drastic rise in their quantity and quality after Viṣṇuvardhana’s conquest of Talakāḍu in 1117.

The *mahāmaṇḍalēśvaras* and the *mahāsāmantas* could either be members of the royal family who were given charge over a region, or local rulers who were ennobled with titles and grants from the ruling family. They therefore acted as intermediaries between the royal family and the local administration, and their self-representation often reflected a careful balance between these loyalties. In exchange for the revenue of taxed land, subordinates provided military service, embarking on expeditions on the king’s behalf. The Hoysāḷa ruler Ereyaṅga, for example, is regularly identified as the weaponised right arm of the Cālukya king or *cālukya-bhūpālakana balada bhujā-daṇḍam* (*Shimoga* 64), and celebrated for his victories stretching as far as Mālava in modern-day Madhya Pradesh (*Belur* 58, *Belur* 71).

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- 2 There is considerable discussion about the exact meaning of these titles and their functions in different regional contexts. For the purposes of this argument, it is enough to understand them simply as administrative designations which subordinates held in addition to their martial roles.
 - 3 A heavily damaged hero stone dated 1027, found at Rajendrapura in the Manjarabad Taluk (*Manjarabad* 44), records that a warrior perished as he attacked Banavāsi on Nṛpakāma’s orders. The text of the inscription is very brief and contains very little information either about Nṛpakāma or his subordinate.
 - 4 In a hero stone dated 1084, found at Neralige in the Arasikere Taluk (*Arasikere* 6), Vinayāditya’s subordinate Bammayya is identified with the title *mahāsāmanta*, and a 1096 inscription at Kedagigere in the Kadur Taluk (*Kadur* 142) identifies Nāgadēva Nāyaka as the *mahāsandhivigrahin* when Vinayāditya was ruling with Ereyaṅga as his *yuvarāja* or heir apparent.

These heavily embellished accounts of military success, and the emphatic language of complete loyalty and devotion of the subordinate to the overlord, led early scholars to the assumption of highly regimented models of state formation in which local rulers controlled sub-regions, which then fell under larger kingdoms over which the kings only had ritual authority.⁵ In exchange for the revenue and military support, the kings would provide the local rulers with marks of nobility and divine favour. However, closer examination of the genealogical portion of inscriptions reveals that even subordinate rulers, when given the chance to commission inscriptions and compose genealogies, made subtle deviations from the narratives of the same overlords to whom they swore complete loyalty.

The royal genealogy was primarily concerned with recording the progression of the male line. It therefore included only the successive kings and the mothers of their heirs. All other wives are only known through the inscriptions that they commissioned themselves. The histories of subordinate families were recorded in inscriptions only after first reinforcing the greatness of their overlord. Lengthier, more detailed inscriptions commissioned by subordinates therefore always contain a eulogy of the ruling family while the reverse is almost never the case. While beholden to record the genealogy of their overlords, the subtle deviations that subordinates chose in narrating their overlords' and their own family histories belie the totalising rhetoric of absolute loyalty the inscriptions themselves espouse, especially in the eulogistic portions. Although inscriptions may appear formulaic at first glance, subordinates made deliberate choices about how to represent both their own and their overlords' genealogies.

More recent scholarship⁶ therefore has begun to question the idea of a static model of governance in favour of a loose confederation of polities, the boundaries of which were in constant flux, and whose rulers functioned in complex, nested, and overlapping hierarchies. In this conception, the creation of genealogies which reflected the history and achievements of one's ancestors and relatives was a dialectical process by which political actors constituted and

5 Most relevant to the South Indian context specifically is Burton Stein's "segmentary state" model in which he argued that sub-regions of the Cōḷa polity, or *nāḍu*, were largely self-governed with only ritual affiliation to the imperial dynasties. The local authorities controlled the means of production, but the imperial forces dominated and exploited them through ritual power. This created an image of a self-sustained proletariat, so to speak, with royal families and their activities hovering above them, tenuously connected by ritual authority enforced by the Brāhmanas whom they deployed to shore up their authority outside of their core territory (Stein 1980).

6 See Inden (1990), Heitzman (1997), Talbot (2001).

reconstituted their identity with respect to these hierarchies. As Cynthia Talbot notes in her work on the Kākatīyas of Andhra Pradesh, “although the conceptual inequality inherent in the lord-underling relationship is never forgotten in the rhetoric of inscriptions, it is clear that subordinates were active agents whose accomplishments were admired and who engaged in their own forms of honouring overlords” (Talbot 2001, 150).

3. The Hoysaḷa genealogy

The genealogy of the Hoysaḷa family as presented in the inscription *Belur 58*, dated 1117,⁷ provides a very linear understanding of the family’s descent. It was among the first Hoysaḷa inscriptions discovered in the nineteenth century; the lineage found therein formed the basis of early historiography on the Hoysaḷas. The narrative begins by describing the descent of the Hoysaḷas from Purāṇic figures — Atri, Purūravas, Nahuśa, and Yayāti — and proceeds to identify the dynasty as descendants of Yadu and the Yādava lineage. As William Coelho notes in his foundational monograph on the dynasty, a “cursory examination of the inscriptions reveals the fact that almost all the dynasties of the south claimed Purāṇic descent in about the 11th century A.D.” (Coelho 1950, 7). These narratives of divine and semi-divine descent allowed new dynasties to stake claim to prominence in a recognisable cosmology, through “texts that formed part of an integrated discursive practice” (Ali 2000, 176). By connecting themselves to Purāṇic figures, and in turn connecting those Purāṇic ancestors to local ones, they positioned themselves both as being strongly rooted in the land and powerful enough to be connected to the universally acknowledged cosmology of the *Purāṇas*.

In the Hoysaḷa case, the Purāṇic ancestors are very loosely connected to the local, mythical ancestor Saḷa merely by identifying him as a descendant of the Yādava lineage. The story of Saḷa follows this general contour: in the town of Sosēvūr (in Kannada) or Śaśakapura (in Sanskrit), an ascetic was attacked by a tiger as he was meditating. Saḷa, his pupil and a local warrior, jumped to fight the tiger, at which point the ascetic shouted, “Poy, Saḷa!” meaning “strike, Saḷa.” Saḷa successfully slew the tiger. The ascetic blessed him with sovereignty over the land. Although some effort was made in very early historiography to

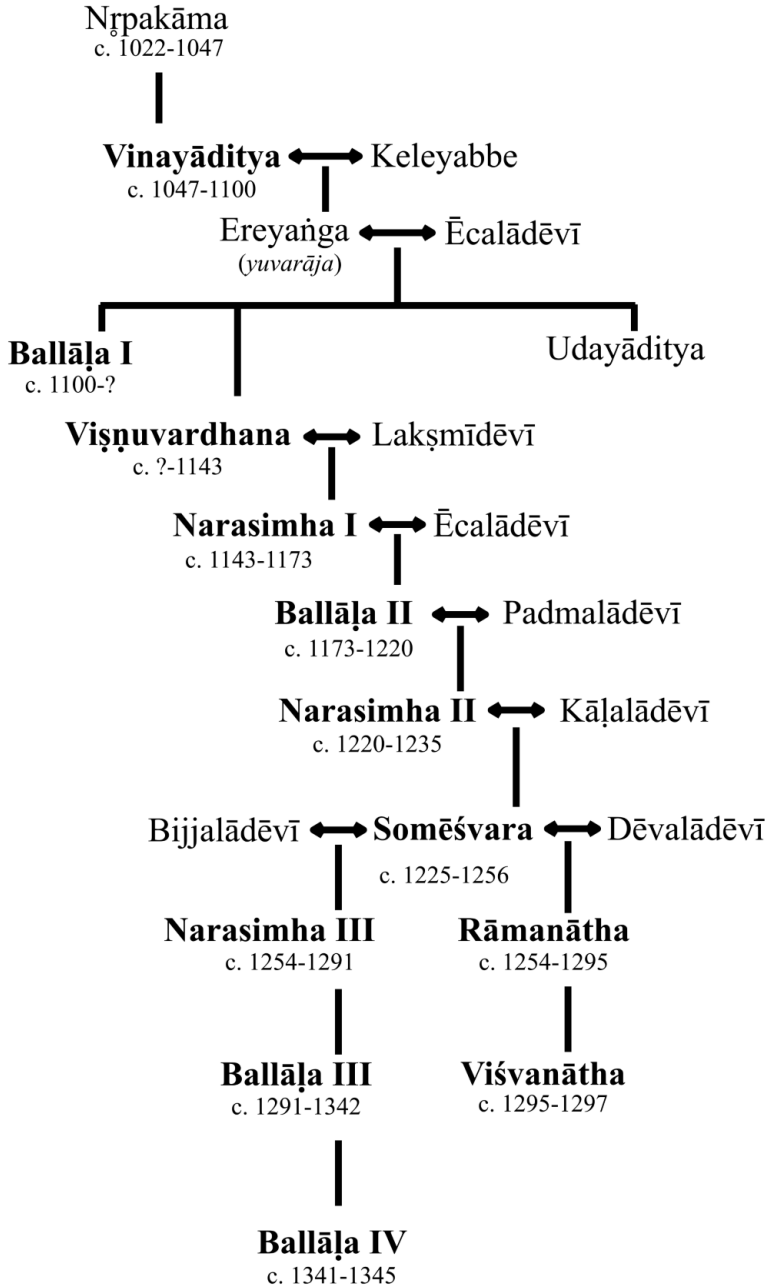
7 This inscription is found on an interior wall of the Cennakēśava/Viyajanārāyaṇa temple at Belur, and an almost exact replica of its contents is recorded in the copperplate inscription *Belur 71*, which was also found in the same temple.

identify Saḷa with a historical figure, it has since been widely accepted that this narrative was invented to explain the family name Hoysaḷa, or the older Poysaḷa. It also serves to highlight the origin of the Hoysaḷa family as ‘hill chiefs’ or *malepar*, an attribute of their lineage which they continued to celebrate throughout their reign.

According to the genealogy, Vinayāditya was a distant descendant of Saḷa. Recognised with the epithet, ‘lord of hill chiefs’ or *maleparol gaṇḍa*, he moved his capital from Śaśakapura in the Western Ghats to Belur and eventually Dōra-samudra (present day Halebidu) in the plains. He is the first historical Hoysaḷa ruler identified in the genealogy. His primary queen was Keleyabbe, and they had a son named Ereyaṅga, who is celebrated in the genealogy for his military expeditions on behalf of the Kalyāṇa Cālukya king Vikramāditya VI. Ereyaṅga in turn had three sons: Ballāḷa, Viṣṇuvardhana, and Udayāditya. Ballāḷa, as the eldest son, succeeded Ereyaṅga but died shortly thereafter, upon which his younger brother Viṣṇuvardhana assumed the throne. It is this Viṣṇuvardhana who commissioned the Belur inscriptions in which this genealogy is first recorded.

Successive generations continued to use this narrative and build on it, resulting in the genealogy visible in Figure 1. Over the years, several variations entered the Saḷa origin story, including the identification of the ascetic as a Jaina teacher named Sudatta and the inclusion of the local goddess Vāsantikādēvī into the narrative, sometimes as a quelled opponent of Saḷa and other times as the deity who recognised his virtue and bestowed sovereignty upon him.⁸ The Hoysaḷas made their roots in the mountain region, or *malēnāḍu*, a foundational element in their origin story. The mythological portion of their genealogy, including their Purāṇic descent and the story of their ancestor Saḷa, worked to simultaneously position them in a broader cosmology and to reiterate their local roots.

8 For details on the variations of this story in different inscriptions, see Joshi (1946), Coelho (1950, 13–16).



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In emphasising the greatness of the dynasty, the established royal genealogy gave the entire credit for military victories to its kings. For example, Viṣṇuvardhana is credited with the victory over the Cōḷas at Talakāḍu in the Belur inscription, and is from then on referred to with the epithet, *talakāḍu-goṇḍa*, or ‘one who made Talakāḍu his own.’ Only from the inscriptions of a subordinate named Gaṅgarāja do we learn that he too played a vital role in the 1117 conquest.⁹

Another noteworthy discrepancy in the Hoysaḷa genealogy as represented by the inscriptions of Gaṅgarāja and his family is the explicit mention of Nṛpakāma. An 1120 inscription — marking Gaṅgarāja’s establishment of a *basadi*, or Jaina temple, at Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa — mentions that his father Ēcirāja had been in the service of Nṛpakāma.¹⁰ Nṛpakāma does not appear in the genealogy commissioned by Viṣṇuvardhana at Belur, which goes straight to Vinayāditya from the mythical Saḷa. The Belur inscription identifies the Hoysaḷas’ place of origin as Śaśakapura in Sanskrit, or Sosēvūr in Kannada. This town was later identified as present-day Angadi in the Chikmagalur District. Located on the slopes of the Western Ghats, it is the findspot for a number of the earliest inscriptions of the Hoysaḷa dynasty. Only through these inscriptions do we learn of Nṛpakāma, Vinayāditya’s father.

According to these early-eleventh-century inscriptions, Nṛpakāma’s reign predated the Cālukyās’ ennoblement of the Hoysaḷas to *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*. In the inscriptions of the time, it was common for subordinates to identify themselves by using the name or epithet of their overlord before their own name. For example, the Hoysaḷas first became subordinates of the Kalyāṇa Cālukyās under the king Sōmēśvara I whose epithet was Trailokyamalla. His subordinates would use the epithet Trailokyamalla before their own names to acknowledge their subordination: Trailokyamalla Hoysaḷa, Trailokyamalla Pāṇḍya etc.¹¹ In the Sosēvūr inscriptions however, we find the Hoysaḷa ruler styled with the epithets *rakkasa* and *rācamalla*, the names of the last Gaṅga rulers.

9 Both a stone slab inscription placed in a doorway on the *doḍḍa beṭṭa* or “big hill” of Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa (*Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa* 240) and an 1117 inscription carved into the hill at Tippur in the Malavalli Taluk (*Malavalli* 31) recount the details of the battle in great detail, where Gaṅgarāja marched against the Cōḷa *mahāsāmanta* Aḍiyama in a surprise attack and caused him to flee, “uniting the whole *nāḍu* under the dominion of a single umbrella.”

10 Nṛpakāma is thought to have reigned from 1022–1047, while Gaṅgarāja commissioned this inscription in 1120. Although this suggests rather long careers of both father and son, I am assuming that Ēcirāja served under Nṛpakāma towards the end of his reign, and that Gaṅgarāja was an older subordinate of Viṣṇuvardhana. This tracks with Gaṅgarāja playing an important role in the conquest of Talakāḍu.

11 See, for example, *Chikmagalur* 15, in which Vinayāditya is identified with the title *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* and the epithet Trailokyamalla, borrowed from the Cālukya king Sōmēśvara I.

The Gaṅga dynasty ruled southern Karnataka from the fifth to the early eleventh century. The region which the Hoysaḷas ruled as subordinates of the Cālukyas was named Gaṅgavāḍi after this family. In 1004, however, they were unseated from their capital at Talakāḍu, southeast of modern-day Mysuru (Mysore), by the Cōḷas. Branches of the family continued to appear in inscriptions, but as subordinates to the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas, ruling under them in the Banavāsi region.

Coelho assumes the relationship between the Hoysaḷas and the Gaṅgas to be fairly straightforward, where the Hoysaḷas, once subordinates to the Gaṅgas, later styled themselves as their successors when the Gaṅga dynasty fell from power. However, closer examination of the inscriptions reveals that the Gaṅgas had an extremely tenuous relationship with the mountainous region where the Hoysaḷas originated. The only Gaṅga inscriptions found in this region are in Coorg, and cite the *malepar* or mountain-chiefs as the protectors of a grant made by the Gaṅga king. One of these inscriptions (*Coorg 2*), discovered at a town called Peggur and dated to 978, corresponds with the rule of Rācamalla IV and his brother, Rakkasa. These are also the epithets which the early Hoysaḷas, Nṛpakāma and Vinayāditya used in their inscriptions.

An inscription (*Mudgere 19*) recording a grant from 1025, found close to Sosēvūr, for example, identifies Nṛpakāma with the title Rācamalla Vermmāḍi, and a 1063 inscription (*Mudgere 13*) located outside the Jaina temple at Sosēvūr declares that the Hoysaḷa king had the syllables *ra-kka-sa-voy-sa-ḷan* emblazoned on this flag. The appearance of these rulers' names before Hoysaḷa indicates that the Hoysaḷas at this time positioned themselves as subordinates to the by then displaced Gaṅga dynasty. With their ennoblement by the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas, however, they began to claim the titles of the Gaṅga sovereigns and style themselves as Gaṅga kings rather than subordinates. When the then Cālukya prince, Vikramāditya VI, was stationed at Banavāsi, ruling the region on behalf of his father, Sōmēśvara I, he took on the titles of the erstwhile Gaṅga kings. It is likely therefore, that the Cālukyas bestowed this title on the Hoysaḷas when they ennobled them to the position of *mahāmaṇḍalesvara* over the region of Gaṅgavāḍi.

This is most likely the reason that Viṣṇuvardhana, when he commissioned the first royal genealogy, chose to omit Nṛpakāma and begin the lineage with Vinayāditya, the first Hoysaḷa to bear the title of *mahāmaṇḍalesvara*. However, Viṣṇuvardhana's subordinate Gaṅgarāja chose to retain the record of Nṛpakāma's rule in order to recall his father's service to the Hoysaḷa family before his own, which provides a slightly different picture of the Hoysaḷa genealogy. In the following sections, I illustrate how this desire to record certain details of the family's history, despite deviation from genealogy commissioned by the royal family, came to depend on the time a subordinate family spent in service to the

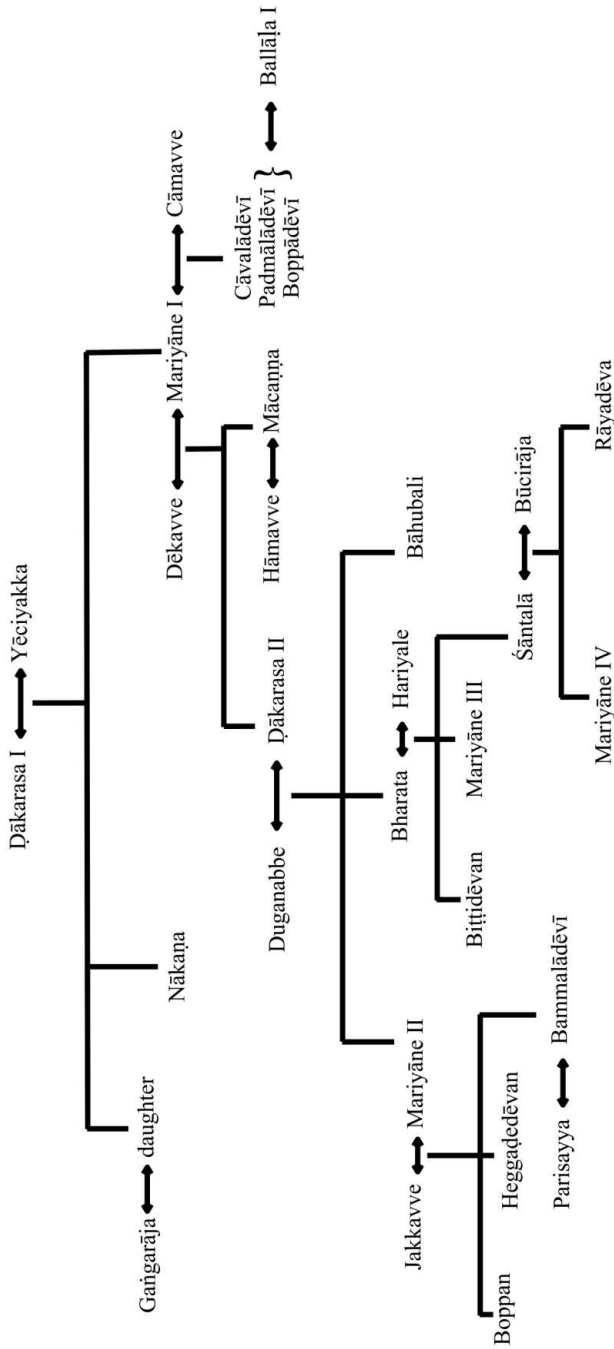
Hoysaḷas, their distance from the Hoysaḷa nexus of power, and the fortunes of the Hoysaḷa family themselves over time.

4. Subordinates with generational ties to the Hoysaḷas

Like Gaṅgarāja, there were many subordinates who boasted generations-long associations with and service to the Hoysaḷa family. Gaṅgarāja, while commissioning inscriptions under Viṣṇuvardhana's patronage, celebrated his father's service to Viṣṇuvardhana's great-grandfather Nṛpakāma. Similarly, other subordinate families who first commissioned inscriptions under Viṣṇuvardhana systematically recorded how their ancestors had served previous generations of Hoysaḷa kings.

One of the most detailed accounts of such a generational association comes from a family who claimed affiliation with the Hoysaḷas starting with the reign of Vinayāditya. I call them the Mariyāne family after their patriarch. I have reconstructed the genealogy of this family (Figure 2) primarily from their two longest inscriptions: a mid-twelfth-century stone slab inscription from Sindigere in the Chikmagalur District, which records the family's relationship with the Hoysaḷas from Vinayāditya to Viṣṇuvardhana (*Chikmagalur 160*), and another stone slab inscription dated 1184, found near the entrance of a village called Alisandra, which extends the genealogy two generations further and records a grant made during the rule of Ballāḷa II (*Nagamangala 32*). There are several shorter inscriptions which make mention of this family, but they provide supplementary information to the chronology that emerges in the inscriptions at Sindigere and Alisandra.

The older Sindigere inscription was commissioned towards the end of Viṣṇuvardhana's reign in the late 1130s. The inscription relates the family's intergenerational relationship on the one hand with the Hoysaḷas, and on the other with the town of Sindigere. The Alisandra inscription shows us how the family's own fortunes grew with those of their overlords — they continued to renew their rule over Sindigere and maintain the Jaina temples there, but also commissioned a Jaina temple at Alisandra, then Anuvāsamudra, to mark the new territories under their rulership. While the cluster of inscriptions among which the above Sindigere inscription is found is closer to the central nexus of the Hoysaḷas, the Alisandra inscription is closer to Mysuru and shows that the Hoysaḷas' territorial expansion reflected in the increased dominion of their subordinates over time. Both inscriptions contain the same narrative, which marks the repeated renewal of the relationship between the Mariyāne family and the town of Sindigere, in conjunction with an event that marked a new connection to the Hoysaḷa family.



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In both inscriptions, the first Hoysaḷa king mentioned is Vinayāditya. According to the account, his senior queen Keleyabbe accepted a military envoy named Mariyāne as her younger brother, and she and Vinayāditya performed the *kanyādāna* or ‘gift of the bride’ at his marriage, along with the *bhūmidāna*, or ‘gift of land,’ of Sindigere. Both inscriptions provide a date for this event, though they differ slightly – 1047 in the Sindigere inscription and 1045 in the Alisandra inscription – and record that it took place in Sosēvūr, the earliest residence of the Hoysaḷas in the Western Ghats (*Chikmagalur* 160, ll. 9–10).

The inscriptions go on to record that the oldest grandson of Vinayāditya, Ballāḷa I, married three highly accomplished daughters of the Mariyāne family in 1103 (*Chikmagalur* 160, ll. 15–18). At the wedding in Belur, Sindigere was granted to the family in payment of the *molevāla ṛṇa*, ‘debt of breastmilk.’ The Sindigere inscription stops detailing the relationship between the Hoysaḷas and the Mariyāne family at this generation. It then proceeds with praise of the king Viṣṇuvardhana and identifies two brothers from the Mariyāne family as his subordinates – Mariyāne II and his younger brother Bharata. The inscription then begins narrating their lineage and identifies an ancestor of the Mariyāne family, Ḍākarasa, who served both the Hoysaḷas and their predecessors, the Gaṅga dynasty.¹² Although this mention is relatively short when compared to the vast amount of the genealogy that does correspond with the established narrative of the Hoysaḷas, the assertion that their ancestor was already a distinguished lord (*prabhu*) under the Gaṅgas emphasised the Mariyāne family’s local prominence with the implication that it preceded the advent of their Hoysaḷa overlords and would therefore likely outlast them.

In these deviances from the Hoysaḷa line – both in the case of Gaṅgarāja mentioning his father’s service to Nṛpakāma, who remained unacknowledged in the Hoysaḷa genealogy, and in the mention of Ḍākarasa’s service to both the Hoysaḷa and Gaṅga families in the Mariyāne family’s case – I see two important signs. First, it was a politically and financially weighted act to commission an inscription, whether it be for the establishment of a new temple or even just for donations to an existing one. Judging by the limited number of inscriptions from a single subordinate family, these endowments were rare chances to record the family history. Later generations therefore bore the responsibility to account for their families’ compounded loyalty to the overlord’s family over generations. Second, these families and their local ties often pre-dated the dynasty to whom they swore loyalty. Deviation from the established royal genealogy, in

12 *Chikmagalur* 160, l. 63: *gaṅga-rājya-poysaḷa-rājyakk’ ēka prabhuvēne negaldam ḍākarasa daṇḍanātha.*

particular, was a way to express that they would remain successfully tied to the land whether or not the fledgling dynasty ultimately established itself.

As it happens, the Hoysaḷas did go on to achieve greater territorial success and firmly plant themselves as rulers of the region, first as subordinates to the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa and then under Ballāḷa II as independent sovereigns after his defeat of the Cālukyas in 1189. The later Alisandra inscription of 1184 allows us to see the progress of the Mariyāṇe family in conjunction with the growing fortunes of the Hoysaḷas. It records achievements of further generations of the Mariyāṇe family, and provides details about members of its many branches. For example, the inscription describes the marital relationships between the Mariyāṇe family and that of Gaṅgarāja. Gaṅgarāja is recognised as the *maiduna*, or sister's husband to Mariyāṇe I, while his son Boppadēva was the *maiduna* to Mariyāṇe II and his brother Bharata I (*Nelamangala* 32, ll. 27–33). According to the inscription, these brothers (also the donors of the Sindigere inscription) named their son Biṭṭidēva after the king Viṣṇuwardhana, and in exchange for a tribute of 1000 *hon* (a unit of gold), renewed their lordship over Sindigere. In addition, they were also given two more territories, namely Baggavaḷḷi and Diṇḍiganakere. During the reign of Narasiṃha I, the brothers paid a tribute of 500 *hon* to renew their lordship over all three places.

Finally, the Alisandra inscription discusses the rule of Ballāḷa II when Bharata II and his younger brother Bāhubali renewed the grant and their lordship of all three places in 1183. This corresponds with the date of the inscription, which records that during the *mahādāna* or ceremony of the 'great gift' following the birth of Ballāḷa's son, Narasiṃha II, the two brothers renewed their previous grants and provided funds for the services of the *basadi* they established at Anuvasamudra. They once again tied the renewal of their grants to a major event in the Hoysaḷa family.

In this later inscription, though the genealogy beginning with the ancestor Ḍākarasa is mentioned, the detail about his service to the Gaṅga dynasty no longer features. By this time therefore, the Mariyāṇe family was content to be recognised solely through their connections to the Hoysaḷas and the network of subordinates that fell under their overlordship. Along with the ongoing and evolving relationship with the Hoysaḷa family, the genealogy in both inscriptions also traces the movement of the dynasty geographically, from their town of origin at Sosēvūr to Belur and finally to Dōrasamudra. At the same time, the Alisandra inscription shows the Mariyāṇe family's acquisition of new territories as their relationship with the Hoysaḷas was sustained across generations.

The genealogy of the Hoysaḷas as presented by the Mariyāṇe family echoes the official royal genealogy, but for the brief mention of their ancestor's

lordship under Gaṅga rule. Like the established royal genealogy, and unlike in the inscriptions of Gaṅgarāja, it omits Nṛpakāma. This shows that even over the short duration of Viṣṇuvardhana's reign, there was an increased alignment between the narratives commissioned by the royal family and the powerful subordinates close to them. We see that both the Mariyāne family and Gaṅgarāja had associations with the Hoysaḷas generations before the reign and victory of Viṣṇuvardhana, but it was the resources and recognition that victory brought which allowed them to quite literally set that history in stone. The mention of figures outside the established Hoysaḷa genealogy reflects the precarity of aligning themselves entirely with the new dynasty, but as time went on and the Hoysaḷas' position grew more secure, even the small reference to their connection to the Gaṅgas disappeared.

To further illustrate this pattern, Kēśirāja, a subordinate of Ballāḷa II who commissioned a much later inscription in the early thirteenth century, makes the explicit claim that his lineage came into being alongside that of the Hoysaḷas.¹³ In concurrence with this claim, the inscription in Agrahara Balguli found on the wall of a temple and dated 1210 (*Chennarayapatna 244*), lists each successive generation of Kēśirāja's family serving a successive generation of the Hoysaḷa family. Rāma-daṇḍādhipa served Vinayāditya, and his son Śrīdhara-daṇḍanātha was Ereyaṅga's eminent minister (*mantri lalāmaṁ*). Śrīdhara had three sons, Mallidēva, Dāmarāja, and Kēśavarāja. As leaders of the army (*mukhya sēnādhipar*) they participated in the expansion of Viṣṇuvardhana's kingdom. Further, Mallidēva's sons were Mādhava, Dvijēdrōpama, Beṭṭarasa, and Dāma who served under Narasiṁha I. To Beṭṭarasa and his wife Lakṣmī were born five sons and one daughter in Ballāḷa II's kingdom. The inscription states that all of these children went on to distinguish themselves in Ballāḷa's kingdom, but proceeds to describe only the descendants of Kēśava (Kēśirāja) and Mallapa (Mallidēva).

The Agrahara Balguli inscription lauds Kēśirāja as one of the most prized ministers of Ballāḷa's court, and describes his extensive construction of temples and tanks, and his establishment of *agrahāras* in Nallūr, Taḷirūr, Bāgiyūr, Bālagarcche, and Beḷgaḷi. The inscription also includes imagery describing the splendour of Ballāḷa's court or *āsthāna*, and Kēśirāja is praised as appearing like a ruby among gems in Ballāḷa's court. He also has the title of *mahāpradhāna*, and the inscription describes in detail the creation of the Kēśavapura *agrahāra* in a village formerly known as Beḷgaḷi in the Nirguṇḍa-nāḍ. Having received the village as a grant from the king, he built two reservoirs named Kēśavasamudra and

13 *Chennarayapatna 244*, l. 7: *end āyṭu poysaḷānṅayam and āyṭu kēśirājan' anṅayam*.

Lakṣmīsamudra, and established the deity Kēśavēśvara, for whose rituals several individuals made donations.

An inscription from 1249 (*Chikmagalur 20*), from the reign of Hoysaḷa Sōmēśvara I, the grandson of Ballāḷa II, records the ongoing genealogy of Kēśirāja's family. The portion that records the Hoysaḷa genealogy and their relationship with it, however, is greatly attenuated and begins only with Viṣṇuvardhana rather than with Vinayāditya. By this time, subordinate families were apparently content to associate exclusively with the Hoysaḷa family, without any deviation from the official Hoysaḷa version of their genealogy. There were no claims to prior association as Kēśirāja's family is literally described as having emerged along with the Hoysaḷas. The Hoysaḷas' growing political influence is reflected in the way the subordinates geographically closest to them no longer felt the need to claim associations other than with their overlords as the Hoysaḷas became the uncontested rulers of Gaṅgavāḍi over the course of the twelfth century.

5. The Huliyar Family: Service to multiple royal families

The last family I examine shows that even this trend was not universal and there was a variable apart from time which determined the genealogical narratives of subordinate families: distance. The Huliyar family — I call them that because of their generations-long association with the town of Huliyar in modern day Tumkur District — were a family of subordinates that first appear in inscriptions during the reign of Viṣṇuvardhana in the mid-twelfth century, and continue to be active through successive generations (Figure 3). They owed their ability to commission inscriptions and record their genealogy to Hoysaḷa patronage; however, they celebrated the varied affiliation of their ancestors to multiple ruling households. Huliyar rests on the border between three districts, namely Hassan, Chikmagalur, and Tumkur. In the early medieval period, this would have been in the Noḷambavāḍi region, which only came under Hoysaḷa overlordship in the reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. The inscriptions associated with the family range from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century.

The earliest inscription of this family, *Arasikere 55* from 1143, identifies one Gōyidēva with the epithet, *huliyēra puravarādhīśvara*, or lord of the town of Huliyera. The genealogy of the family begins with his ancestor, only identified by his titles — in most cases *sthira gambīra* — and later named Kariyabamma in the inscription *Kadur 30* from the 1170s. Multiple inscriptions relate the same account where he earned titles for his service and achievements in different courts. He earned the first title, *vīra-taḷa-prahāri* (*Kadur 30*) or *gaṅḍa-taḷa-prahāri*

(*Kadur* 35),¹⁴ because he defended the Noḷamba king's senior queen,¹⁵ Śrīdēvī, when enemies attacked and abducted her. The second, he obtained due to his great skill in battle. As though killing for sport, he slew the great warrior, Doḍḍanka in the Cālukya king Āhavamalla's camp, thereby gaining the title of *doḍḍanka baḍiva*, or one who strikes in the great battlefield.¹⁶

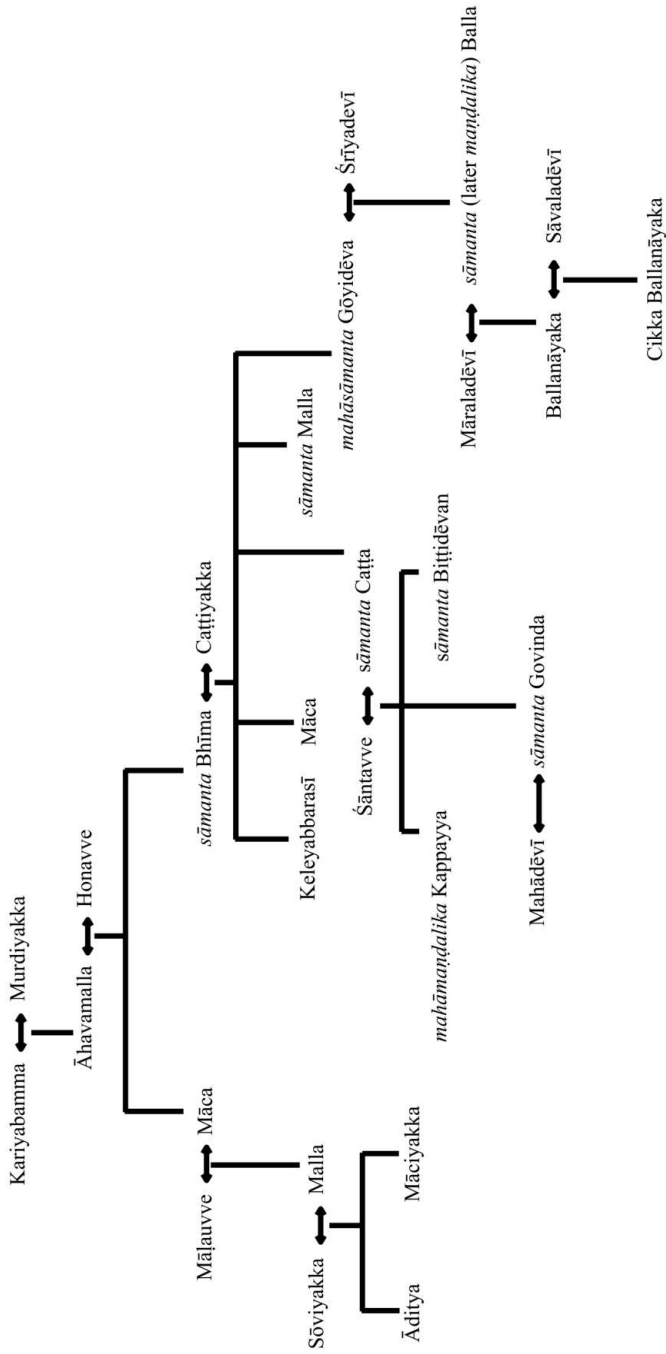
There are two possible explanations for the shift in Kariyabamma's affiliation here. On the one hand, he might have travelled to different courts in search of a patron. However, I think it is more likely, given the family's ongoing connection with Huliyaṛ, that this shift reflected the changing rulership of the locality. While the family remained relatively established in the region, what changed was the suzerain to whom they owed allegiance. This is supported by the fact that the first Hoysaḷa ruler the family served was Viṣṇuvardhana, which corresponds with the latter's eastward territorial expansion, and with Viṣṇuvardhana's and Ballāḷa I's defeat of the Pāṇḍyas of Uccaṅgi in the early twelfth century.

Unlike the families discussed in the previous section, the Huliyaṛ family continued to celebrate their allegiance to the Noḷamba Pallavas and the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa well into the twelfth century when Hoysaḷa power was more established and subordinates like the Mariyāṇe family allowed their identity to be entirely subsumed under the Hoysaḷa genealogy. Gōyidēva's father, Bhīma, gained acclaim in Viṣṇuvardhana's court and it was ultimately Narasiṃha I who gave Gōyidēva the position — not only in his ancestral Huliyaṛ but also in Arasikere, closer to the centre of Hoysaḷa power (*Arasikere* 55) — which allowed him to first record the family history. This earliest inscription describes Gōyidēva as Narasiṃha's "right hand," but that did not compromise Gōyidēva's prerogative to record his ancestors' achievements under multiple rulers.

14 Rice (1901, 6) translates *gaṇḍa-taḷa-prahāri* as "slapper on the cheek" in *Kadur* 30 but I suggest that *taḷa-prahāri* translates to 'the one who struck with his palm,' in reference to the fact that Kariyabamma apparently quelled the enemies who had abducted the Noḷamba queen with just the open palm of his hand (see note 15 below); *vīra* and *gaṇḍa* are prefixes, meaning 'valorous one' and 'lord' respectively.

15 *Arasikere* 55, ll. 16–18: *sthira-gambhīra-noḷamban agra-mahiṣi śrīdēviyaṃ tadviśōtkar ant āgaḷe bandu bandi viḍiyal tad vairi saṅghātamaṃ | bharadind eydi taḷa prahāradoḷe koṇḍ and ittan ā bhūpan ā daradiṃ vīra-taḷa-prahāri-vesaram dhātrī-taḷam baṇṇisa||*.

16 *Arasikere* 55, ll. 18–20: *cālukyāhavamalla nṛpālana kaṭakadoḷe kondu doḍḍankamumaṃ lileyoḷe paḍedan adaṭam pālisi doḍḍanka baḍivan emb ī birūḍam*.



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Kariyabamma and his wife Murdiyakka, who is again identified by name only in a much later inscription (*Kadur 36*), had one son, Āhavamalla. Subordinates often named their children after their overlord, and Āhavamalla was the epithet of the Cālukya king Sōmēśvara I, at whose camp Kariyabamma also gained his second title. Sōmēśvara I was also the overlord of the early Hoysaḷas in the late eleventh century, so it is likely that these local rulers came under the Cālukya umbrella around the same time. This also helps us date Kariyabamma to the early to mid-eleventh century, which is when Sōmēśvara I lived and ruled.

Āhavamalla and his wife Honnavve had two sons, Bhīma and Māca, who are never mentioned together in the same inscription. It is only through their common identification of their father and grandfather that I was able to deduce their relationship by reading across multiple inscriptions. Both lines had among their ranks important subordinates, especially to Ballāḷa II, his son Narasiṃha II, and his grandson Sōmēśvara. Bhīma gained the title of *sitaḡara gaṇḡa*, or 'lord/conqueror of the unchaste,' from Viṣṇuvardhana. In rendering the accomplishments of their lineage, various members of the family recalled the family's service not only to the Hoysaḷa rulers but also to the Noḷamba-Pallavas and the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas. Their geographical location in Noḷambavāḡi meant that they existed on the periphery of the Hoysaḷa polity. It was therefore more important to them to celebrate their loyalty to multiple ruling families and emphasise their continuing presence in the area surrounding Huliyaṛ.

Bhīma's son Gōyidēva is the most prolific member of this family, followed closely by his brother, Caṡṡa. They ruled Huliyaṛ and the nearby Magare in the 1130s. Gōyidēva outlived Narasiṃha I to serve Ballāḷa II, and in honour of this, named his son Ballāḷanāyaka. Members of several different branches of the family have inscriptions around the same area, within a twenty-mile radius of Huliyaṛ. In an inscription from the Channarayapatna District, Gōyidēva's brother Caṡṡa's son Biṡṡidēvan identifies Ballāḷanāyaka as his younger brother (*anuja*), showing that the different branches of the family acknowledged their relationships (*Chiknayakanahalli 21, Chiknayakanahalli 32*).

A stone inscription of 1188, found at Yadagatta in the Chiknayakanahalli Taluk, records Ballāḷanāyaka's promotion from the title *mahāsāmanta* — which his father and previous ancestors held in Huliyaṛ — to *mahāmaṇḡalika*.¹⁷ The transition here, from *sāmanta* to *maṇḡalika*, showed both that Ballāḷa ennobled his namesake in recognition of his family's longstanding connection with the region — over at least three generations — and that the ambit of Hoysaḷa territory

17 *Chiknayakanahalli 20*, ll. 24–26: *idirānta-vairi-nṡparam kadanadoḷ irid' ikki vīra-hoysaṇa meccalu mudadiṃ balleya-nāyakan odavida maṇḡalika-padaviyaṃ nēre paḡedan.*

was growing: they were in control of a large enough territory around Huliyaṛ to warrant a higher-ranked officer there. An inscription from around the same time identifies his wife, Māraladēvi with the titles of *piriyarasi* and *paṭṭamahādēvi* (*Chiknayakanahalli 14*), senior queen and crowned consort, respectively. By ennobling Ballāṅāyaka, Ballāṅa thus raised the status of the entire family. As later inscriptions attest, descendants of the Huliyaṛ family continued to carry the title *maṅḍalika* well into the thirteenth century. In one inscription from 1232 found on a stone at a temple in the village of Heggere, Gōyidēva's brother's son and Ballāṅāyaka's paternal cousin Kappayya is seen holding the title (*Chiknayakanahalli 27*).

In later inscriptions of the family from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, after the promotion of Ballāṅāyaka to *maṅḍalika*, the genealogy of the family changes. In these inscriptions, the narrative begins from Bhīma — the same ancestor who first gained renown in Viṣṇuvarḍhana's court (*Chiknayakanahalli 13*, *Chiknayakanahalli 14*). This illustrates a similar pattern to the subordinates who were closer to the Hoysaḷas geographically, although on a delayed timeline. Once they were secure in the prospects of the Hoysaḷa family in their ancestral locality, they were willing to allow their identities to be entirely defined by the relationship with their overlords.

6. Conclusion

Comparing the genealogies of the Hoysaḷas and their subordinates shows us that though the rhetoric of the inscriptions themselves supported the idea of the subordinates' complete loyalty to their overlords, the deviations in their genealogies and accounts of their family's achievements belies this totalising rhetoric. Instead, it exposes us to a political world in which subordinates had a significant amount of autonomy in how they chose to tell the stories of their ancestors, even when it deviated from the established royal genealogy. However, the evidence also illustrates that the way subordinate families saw and represented the Hoysaḷas changed depending on the security of the family's fortunes and their distance from the nexus of Hoysaḷa rule. Therefore, the subordinate families could either see the Hoysaḷas as one of the many royal families their ancestors served, or — with time and increased faith in the Hoysaḷas' own fate — allow their identity and their history to be entirely subsumed within that of the Hoysaḷas.

The political and military position of the Hoysaḷas therefore determined the way their subordinates represented the royal genealogy as well as their own,

which in turn allows us a glimpse into the inclusions and omissions that went into the process of composing a genealogy. Rather than being merely a record of events, as early epigraphists tended to understand them, they were the product of continuing choices based on the fortunes and relationships of the various families involved.

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See page xvi about references to primary sources.

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