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ANJUVANNAM
A Maritime Trade Guild of Medieval Times

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The term *añjuvaṇṇam* (or *añchuvaṇṇam*) was first noticed in the Chēra copper-plate grants edited by Gundert (1844, pp. 115–46). In one of them, this term occurs along with *maṇikkirāmam* (*maṇigrāmam*). Gundert thought that these two names stood for the Jewish and Christian principalities or corporate bodies of those two communities. V. Venkayya and T.A. Gopinatha Rao, who re-edited these records, did not concur with Gundert's view. Venkayya took the two bodies as just semi-independent trading corporations like the *Vaḷañjiyar* (*EI*, IV, pp. 293–94). Hultzsch translated the term as "five castes" by splitting it as *añju* (five) and *vaṇṇam* (caste) while re-editing the Jewish copper-plate grant:

> The object of the grant was Añjuvaṇṇam. This word means "the five castes" and may have been the designation of that quarter of Cranganore in which the five classes of artisans — *ainkammāḷar*, as they are called in the smaller Kottayam grant resided (*EI*, III, pp. 67–68).

Hultzsch is cetainly mistaken in this regard, as in the said smaller Kottayam grant (*EI*, IV, pp. 290 ff), the *ainkammāḷar* are given as servants (*aḍima*) to a merchant leader who was honoured with the title of "maṇigrāmam". On the other hand the Añjuvaṇṇam and Maṇigrāmam are found in the Cēra copper

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plates as two independent bodies of equal standing and enjoying a number of trading rights at Kollam and themselves employing (or purchasing) servile people too. A brief analysis of these copper plates may be in order here.

Of the two earlier grants[1] in the possession of the Syrian Christian church at Kottayam, the first one dated in the fifth regnal year of Sthāṇu Ravi (849 CE) records that the Vēṇāḍu chief Ayyanaḍikaḷ Tiruvaḍi gave a charter assigning certain *īḻavar* (toddy-tappers) and *vaṇṇār* (washermen) tenants or cultivators (*kuḍi*) to Tarisā-paḷḷi, obviously the Christian church built at Kurakkēṇi-Kollam by the efforts of one Maruvān Sapīr Īso.[2] These serfs were relieved of some tax encumbrances and permitted to enter the fort and market area for carrying out their duties. The *paḷḷi* (church) was given the right to enjoy all taxes and also the right to keep the measuring instruments, a right which had been the prerogative of the donor-chief until then. The grant was made in the assembly of some dignitaries, officials, and añjuvaṇṇam. Perhaps maṇigrāmam was also present then (the name is mutilated and illegible).

The first portion of the second grant containing the name of the king and date is missing. From other details and the names of the donor and the donee, etc. this should be put close to the above one. Actually it purports to make some additional grant to the same Tarisā-paḷḷi. Some more tenants such as carpenters (*taccar*) and cultivators (*veḷḷāḷar*) were assigned to the church and some demarcated land was gifted for the supply of oil. The church was given the right to punish its erring tenants itself. The officials were warned not to interfere in those matters. The bodies called *aṟunūṟṟuvar* ("the six hundred", a military body), añjuvaṇṇam, and maṇigrāmam were asked to protect the *paḷḷi* and its landed property as per the charter.

The subsequent section records details of the "72 rights and privileges" (*vīḍupērū*) given to both the añjuvaṇṇam, and maṇigrāmam[3] as follows:

(1) Remission of one-sixtieth part of the customs duty (that they had been paying to the government).
(2) No poll tax on the slaves (*aḍima*) employed (or purchased?) by them.
(3) They can collect 8 *kasu* on both incoming and outgoing merchandise transported by carts and 4 *kasu* on those transported by ships and boats.
(4) Only in their presence should the fixing of the customs duty and the fixing of prices for the merchandise be done.
(5) The two bodies shall do the accounts of the collection of the customs duty daily.
(6) They can receive one-tenth part of the rent (*pati-patavāram*) on the land let on lease within the four gates (of the town).

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(7) They are permitted to carry on elephants the purification water for their rituals.
(8) If they feel wronged (by the officials) they can get it redressed by stopping the payment of the customs duty and the weighing fees (*tulākkūli*).
(9) They alone can enquire about the crimes committed by their members.

Thus the añjuvaṇṇam, and maṇigrāmam became the rightful occupants (*kārāḷar*) of the *nagaram* and they were to act together always. Sapīr Īso, who is said to have established the *nagaram* or township by a king's charter, was permitted to use the measuring instruments owned by the church and (instead) pay the measuring fees to the latter. The above details may show that añjuvaṇṇam, and maṇigrāmam were important trading bodies, responsible for collection and remission of customs duty and for fixing the sale prices of merchandise transacted in the port town of Kollam. They were granted the customary (seventy-two) rights and privileges by the ruler of the area. The relation between Sapīr Īso and the two bodies should be a close one as the former is said to be the founder of the *nagaram*, and the latter, the occupants of the *nagaram*.

The "seventy-two" rights and privileges are again mentioned in the Jewish copper plate of Bhaskara Ravi (1000 CE) found at Cochin (*EI* , III, pp. 67–68). In that record, one Issuppu Irappan, that is, Joseph Rabban, obviously a Jewish merchant, was granted (the title of) añjuvaṇṇam, the free use(?) of boats and vehicles, the añjuvaṇṇam rights, the use of torch in the daytime, decorative cloth, palanquin, etc. He was exempted from payment of duties and weighing fees. Though brief, it is in the same vein as the Syrian Christian grant. We may not be wrong to say that Maruvān Sapīr Īso and Joseph Rabban were the chief merchants of the respective towns like the *paṭṭaṇasvāmi* mentioned in ayyavoḷe-500 inscriptions.

All said, there is no direct evidence to recognize añjuvaṇṇam and maṇigrāmam respectively as Jewish and Christian bodies, as was proposed by Gundert. It is only the possession of the above copper plates by the present owners, a Jewish synagogue (at Cochin) and a Syrian Christian church (at Kottayam) respectively, that directly prompts the above identification. This fact was stressed by Venkayya while editing the Kottayam grant of Vīra Rāghava (c.1220) (*EI*, IV, pp. 290 ff). At the same time the signatures in Arabic, Hebrew, and Pahlavi scripts given by several persons at the end of the second Syrian Christian grant cannot be ignored lightly. Those signatures would suggest that there was a mixed population of West Asian traders, consisting of Jews, Arab Muslims and Christians, and Persians at Kollam in

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the ninth century. Coupled with this fact, the fact that in the Jewish copper-plate grant, the donee who is a Jew was specifically honoured with the añjuvaṇṇam rights, would support the proposition that the añjuvaṇṇam was a body of West Asian traders. In the case of maṇigrāmam, however, it could only be a body of indigenous merchants as it is found very much rooted in various interior places such as Rāmantaḷi and Taḷakkāḍu in Kerala; Koḍumbāḷūr, Uṟaiyūr, Srīnivāsanallūr, and others in Tamil Nadu. This aspect has been thoroughly discussed by Gopinatha Rao (*EI*, XVII, pp. 69–73).

While editing some copper-plate grants of the Rashtrakuta kings and their subordinates of the tenth and eleventh centuries from Chinchani (north of Mumbai) in Thana District, D.C. Sircar observed the occurrence of the term *hamyamana* or its variant *hañjamana* in the inscriptions of Northern Konkan and conceded that it could have denoted the Parsee settlements. (*EI*, XXXII, p. 48). In this regard he agreed with J.J. Modi who traced *hañjamana* to the Avestic Hañjamana and Persian Añjuman (*Indian Antiquary*, XLI, pp. 173–76). A passage containing this term is as follows:

> *hamyamaniya-mukhya- vallana-vyavaharaka- valkasma-vyavaharaka-alliya- mahara- madhumat- ādayah paura-mukhya- śrēshṭhi-kēsar-i suvarṇṇa-Kakkala- vaṇijō-uva- suvarṇṇa-sōmaiy- ādayah tathā vishayī-Verthalaiyah …* (Ibid, p. 66, II. 10–12).

Which in a free translation would mean the following:[4]

> [While ruling over Samyāna, Chāmuṇḍa passed an order regarding a grant, to be made by him, to his subordinates and others] including the elders of *hamyamana,* namely Vallana-*vyavaharaka*, Valkasma-*vyavaharaka*, Alliya, Mahara, Madhumati, and others; the elders of the *paura*, namely Srēshṭhi-Kēsari, Suvarṇṇa Kakkala, Vanijō-Uva, Suvarṇṇa-Sōmaiya, and others; the district officer Verthalaiya; …

The names Alliya and Madhumati, as D.C. Sircar has explained, are obviously the Indianized forms of the Arabic names Ali and Muhammad respectively. That means that at least some of the Hamyamana (Hañjamana) elders are Arabic Muslims. In the case of the *paura* elders they seem to be local merchants only, if we go by names such as Kesari, Kakkala, Uva, and Somaiya. And the prefixing segments such as *srēshṭhi, suvarṇṇa* and *vaṇija* denote their specialized trades.

In the Kannada inscriptions of North and South Kannada Districts the name *hañjamana* is mentioned in several coastal places such as Basrur, Barakur, etc. even during Vijayanagara times (Ramesh 1970, pp. 252–53). It is found either separately or along with *nakhara* (same as *nagara*). Ummara-

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marakāla, a *hañjamana-mukhya* (that is, a Hanjamana leader) mentioned in an inscription of Dēvarāya I (1427) from Kaikini is considered by K.V. Ramesh as a Parsee from the name Ummara (Umar), *marakāla* being sailor in the Kannada language. D.C. Sircar, however, thought that *hañjamana* in Kannada inscriptions could not denote a Parsee settlement as there is no other evidence for the existence of Parsee settlements so far south. It is seemingly contradictory to his earlier interpretation of this word mentioned above; he further suggested that it may be a word of Kannada or South Indian origin and concluded that it may be related to Tamil *añju-pañchāḷattār* through the Kannada *pañcha-vaṇṇa* and Tamil *añjuvaṇṇam* (*EI*, XXXV, p. 292). This argument is based on so many assumptions without any valid evidence and it has rightly been criticized by K.V. Ramesh. Strictly speaking, *hañjamana* would not have denoted just the Parsee settlement. Like the term *yavana/yōna/sōnaka*, this term also seems to have denoted collectively the West Asian traders, Arabs, Jews, Christians, Parsees, etc., and from the above evidence, it may be inferred that Arab Muslims figured more prominently than others from the eleventh century onwards, if not earlier.

The form añjuvaṇṇam (or añjuvaṇṇam) is found only in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Its derivation from *hañjamana* may be easily conceded; in Tamil the sound "ha" in the initial position is generally reduced to "a". Though this derivation cannot be verified empirically, since both terms do not occur close to each other in the known records, it is far-fetched in point of time to equate añjuvaṇṇam and *anju-panchalattar* ("the five artisans") as was done by T.N. Subramanian (1957) and T.V. Mahalingam (1967, p. 394) and which was accepted by D.C. Sircar. This equation cannot be sustained on other circumstantial grounds either, for the artisans or *kammāḷa*s did not occupy a good social position in the early medieval centuries. They were treated only as servicing communities (*kīḻ-kalanai*) to the merchant and landholding people (*SII*, IV, no. 223) until the fourteenth century. They got better recognition in society only during the Vijayanagara times and later when commodity production increased enormously (Karashima 1992, pp. 159–69).

There is, however, some little noticed literary evidence, from a literary work of the twelfth century, called *Palchandamālai* which supports unequivocally that the añjuvaṇṇam group was made up of the Muslim community (Pandarattar 1971). This work refers to the members of the añjuvaṇṇam, residing in Nagapattinam, both as Yavana and Sōnaka, and as followers of Kalupati (obviously Khalifa) and as the worshippers of Allāh.

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As mentioned above, unlike the maṇigrāmam, añjuvaṇṇam is confined to coastal towns only. It is found all along the west and east coasts in several port towns. The body's presence in the Konkan coast was referred to above. It is encountered on the Kerala coast in Pandalāyini-Kollam (near Kozhikode) and Kurakkēṇi-Kollam (south Kollam) and on the Coromandel coast, from the south to the north in Tīttāṇḍatānapuram (Ramnad coast), Mayilāppūr (Chennai), Krishṇapaṭṇam (south of Nellore), and Vishākhapaṭṇam. Of these, the evidence for the southern Kollam has already been noticed. This port town is the most important town known to medieval Chinese and Arab sources. For Pandalāyini-Kollam (which is Fandarina of Ibn Battuta) we get only the name in a fragmentary Cēra inscription (*SII*, VII, no. 162), datable to about 1000 CE in the reign of Bhaskara Ravi,[5] found on three broken stones in a mosque called Jamāt-paḷḷi in the town. Though the inscription is fragmentary, it refers to the Vaḷañjiyar and some other merchants usually found in the assembly of ayyavoḷe-500 (also simply called *ainūṟṟuvar* or the Five Hundred) trade guild. A high royal official (*kōyiladikārikaḷ*) is also referred to. Whether this inscription has anything to do with the mosque cannot be ascertained from the available portion. In any case, it may be inferred that the inscription concerns an important occasion when the Añjuvaṇṇam people were present along with the Ayyavoḷe merchants.

In Tīttāṇḍatānapuram, añjuvaṇṇam is found, in the year 1269, in a big assembly consisting of several merchant groups and weavers, including maṇigrāmam, vaḷañjiyar of south Ilaṅgai (that is, Sri Lanka), etc. (*ARE*, 1926–27, p. 93). From the fact that this body is mentioned first in the list of the assembled groups, we may infer that it had an influential position in this settlement. In Mayilāppūr the evidence is only from a fragmentary inscription, datable in the thirteenth century, referring to both añjuvaṇṇam and Vaṇiga-grāmam (maṇigrāmam) (Nagaswamy 1970, no. 1967/20). In Krishnapaṭnam, the añjuvaṇṇam merchants (*vāṇigar*) of maṇigrāmam (that is, Kerala) are found along with the *nāḍu*, *nagara*, and various itinerant merchants (*samasta-paradēsi*) of the *18-bhūmi* (*ARE*, 1963–64, no. 78, and *Nellore Inscriptions*, I, Gudur 45), which decided in 1279 on some contribution to the local temple on the merchandise imported as well as exported in the local port.

The evidence from Vishakhapatnam is interesting. There are three inscriptions, two in Telugu and one in Tamil, which is a duplicate of one of the Telugu records. Unfortunately the texts as published and the brief English summaries are not accurate enough. The first one (*SII*, X, no. 651) is dated in Saka 1012 and the thirteenth year of the Eastern Ganga king,

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Anantavarmadeva, equivalent to 21 September 1090, and purports to remit some taxes on house-sites within the demarcated precincts of the Ainūṭṭuva-perumballi in Vishākhapaṭṭaṇam *alias* Kulōttuṅgachōḻa-paṭṭaṇam by the "Twelve" of the *nagaram* of the town. The grant was entrusted to a merchant (*vyāpari*) of the añjuvaṇṇam of Mātōṭṭam *alias* [Rā]makulavalli-paṭṭaṇam. This merchant has a high-sounding name, that is, pattanāditya nānā-rājavidyādhara samaṅgattu-ghaṇṭi Asāvu *alias* 18-bhūmi-nagara-sēnāpati *alias* malaimaṇḍala-mātā. Asāvu may be his personal name and may be derived from the Arab name Asaf; the other preceding and following strings must be just titles. The title *vidyādhara* is associated with a *sōnaka* official found living in a bazar street called Rāja-vidyādhara at Tañjāvur (*SII*, II, no. 66). Therefore, most probably Asāvu is a Muslim merchant. Mātōṭṭam, the place from where the merchant hailed is obviously Mahātittha (the present Māntai), the famous seaport town on the north-western coast of Sri Lanka facing the Gulf of Mannar. From the second title *malaimaṇḍala-mātā*, it can be suggested that he had some links with the Kerala coast too. The Tamil version of the above inscription (*SII,* XXVI, 103) is much mutilated. But it is not difficult to recognize its exact correspondence to the Telugu version from the surviving passages. Actually both the inscriptions are written on different sides of the same stone. It may also be noted that the Telugu inscription has some Tamil features. Though there is no explicit evidence to identify the religious affiliation of the ainūṭṭuva-perumballi (literally the Big Palli (*palḷi*) called the Five Hundred), it may be easily guessed that it was a mosque,[6] from the cumulative evidence discussed so far.

The second Telugu inscription (*SII*, X, 211) records a similar grant to the same ainnūṭṭuva-perumballi by a chief, Mahamaṇḍalēśvara Kulottunga-Prithvīśvara. The date of this inscription has been read by the Epigraphist as Saka 112[.] with three probable equivalent dates: 1200, 1204 or 1207. The boundaries of the Palli and the wording of the taxes are identical in both cases. In this grant the receiver was another merchant belonging to the añjuvaṇṇam of Pāśay. The name Pāsay is strikingly similar to Pasai or Samudera-Pasai on the north coast of Sumatra in Indonesia. Their identity is quite possible.[7] The name of the merchant again looks exotic: Sāvasāṇḍi[ba]lla, son of Bōyarāṇḍi[ba]lla. He had the title Mā[va]ṅgari-vallabha-samaya-chakravartti. The attribute *mā[va]ngari-vallabha* is similar to, if not identical to, *mā daṅgari-vallabha*, found in the Barus guild inscription as part of the second name of Barus: Mādaṅgari-vallabha- dēsi-uyyakoṇḍa- paṭṭinam. The phrase *mādaṅgari-vallabha* means "a favourite of Mādaṅgari" (the deity Durga) and the second part of the title, *samaya-chakravartti*, is usually the title given to an active representative of the *samaya* or assembly. Here the title

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must have been given to the añjuvaṇṇam merchant by the ayyavoḷe-500 after whom the mosque is also named. The above inscriptions would suggest that the añjuvaṇṇam people were patronized by the ayyavoḷe-500 guild and were even treated as members of that guild.

Here it may be appropriate to consider some information from Indonesia relating to the añjuvaṇṇam. There are several royal inscriptions of the ninth and early tenth centuries in central and eastern Java which contain references to the terms *hunjeman*, *hunjaman*, and *hinjaman* (Sarkar 1972, pp. 131, 140, 151, 236; Barrett Jones 1984, pp. 151, 186–87). In these inscriptions, *hunjaman* and its variants are found as the name of a group or body amidst several other bodies. These bodies are found to be put under certain restrictions to enter the newly created *sima* (villages whose royal revenue had been transferred to a religious institution). It can be understood from the contexts that these bodies were trading groups coming from several foreign countries, including South India. It is not difficult to understand that the term *hunjeman* (or *hunjaman/ hinjaman*) is a variant of *hanjamana*. The variants must be due to the peculiarities of Arabic orthography where vowel sounds are supplied according to the context. If the identity is accepted, we can say that the trade activities of the hanjamana/añjuvaṇṇam group extended up to Indonesia in the ninth century and afterwards. The presence of maṇigrāmam in Southeast Asia by this time is a well known fact. Therefore, it is no wonder that the other body should also be present there simultaneously. If we ignored the name huñjaman, etc. in Javanese records,[8] it would be curious to note that the Arab and other West Asian traders are otherwise not mentioned in Southeast Asian records, in spite of the fact that the role of the Arabs in the maritime activities of the Indian Ocean is well attested to by contemporary Arab and Chinese sources.

To sum up, the añjuvaṇṇam of Tamil inscriptions in Kerala and Tamil Nadu coasts is the same as the hañjamana found in the Konkan coast in the Marathi-Sanskrit and Kannada inscriptions and it was the name of a trading body composed of West Asian seagoing merchants. Originally it denoted all West Asian merchants, both Arabs and Persians, including Jews, Syrian Christians, Muslims, and Parsees. This body surfaces in the inscriptions from the middle of the ninth century, as traversing the whole of Indian Ocean from Arabia to Java. Initially it interacted with maṇigrāmam, a south Indian merchant guild, which itself had been carrying on sea trade by the ninth century, besides being active in the interior towns and villages. When the ayyavole-500 emerged in the tenth century and developed as a big overarching trade guild in southern India, most of the existing indigenous and local trade guilds got associated with it. Añjuvaṇṇam too interacted with the ayyavole

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guild and actively participated in big gatherings (*samayam* or *peruniravi*) led by the latter. In the eleventh century and after that, añjuvaṇṇam seems to have been mostly composed of Muslim traders. There was a remarkable difference between añjuvaṇṇam and other trade guilds. While all the others were found both on the coastal sites and in the interior, the former confined itself to coastal sites. That is, it was primarily a maritime guild. At the same time it became a permanent part of the local community in the coastal villages. Its presence as a trade guild was visible until the end of the thirteenth century after which it is not heard of and of course the Ayyavoḷe-500 and other guilds too almost disappeared from the scene in the fourteenth century and afterwards.

Notes

1. Both the grants have been edited with elaborate notes by T.A. Gopinatha Rao in *TAS*, II, no. 9, pp. 60–85.
2. A variant of this name is given as Ēśō of Tapir, perhaps in its Latin form to mean Ēśō dā Tapir, according to Gopinatha Rao, the editor of the inscription.
3. The editor, Gopinatha Rao, by some oversight took these rights and privileges as being given to the church. Going on this interpretation, Meera Abraham (1988, pp. 28–29) gives a direct role to the church in the commercial activities of the town. Actually the church is only a beneficiary enjoying some specified income from the land etc., granted to it by the ruler and enjoying the benevolence of the traders.
4. Thinking that the inscription is written in corrupt Sanskrit, D.C. Sircar has introduced several emendations, thereby obscuring the correct meaning. The above translation, by the present writer, is made without considering his emendations.
5. From personal communication from Professor M. G. Narayanan, an authority on medieval Chera history.
6. *Paḷḷi* in Tamil inscriptions denoted any non-orthodox place of worship: Jain temple, Buddhist vihara, Christian church, Jewish synagogue, and Muslim mosque. This naming practice still continues in Kerala in the case of the latter three institutions.
7. Interestingly we find in 1204 another merchant from Pāsai in Tiruvāymūr, a village about 20 km south of Nagapattinam (*Nagapattinam District Inscriptions*, Tamilnadu State Archaeology Department, 2007, p. 190).
8. Jan Wisseman Christie, a prolific researcher of Javanese history, has simply put a question mark next to this name which appears in a record of 1021 in the reign of Airlangga in the following passage (in her own translation): "… As for the *kilalan* (non-resident tax group: Kalingas, Āryyas, Singhalese, Paṇḍikiras, Dravidians, Chams, Khmers, Ramanyadesis, mambang(?), soldiers, sailors, *huñjman*(?), …"(Christie 1993, p. 204).

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SII = South Indian Inscriptions.

TAS = Travancore Archaeological Series.

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