Kalachuri Inscriptions : A Reflection of Dwindling Political Power

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Abstract: The Kalachuri dynasty emerged in the 6th century AD ruling over Maharastra, Gujarat and parts of Malwa. However, around 8th century AD they emerged as a strong force in the region around Jabalpur with their capital at Tripuri. From c 980 AD to 1090 AD, we hear of the Kalachuris of Sarayupara, modern Gorakhpur in UP. Around 1000 AD, another branch of the Kalachuris ruled from Sarayupara, in the Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh. After 15th century AD, a branch of Ratanpur family was founded at Raipur.

Present Paper based mainly on the study of the inscriptions highlights some very interesting facts about the nature of genealogy of the Kalachuris.

The inscriptions belonging to the Kalachuris of Tripuri, Ratanpur and Raipur do not convey much information about the genealogy. But we get a detailed description of the genealogy of the Kalachuri dynasty from the 2 inscriptions of the Kalachuri of Saryupara namely the Kasia Stone Inscription and the Kahla Plates.

Now the question arises – why only the Sarayupara branch refers to the genealogy in a comprehensive and detailed manner ? Was it not related to the dwindling political power of the Kalachuris of Sarayupara ? Whether it was used to identify them with historical antecedents ? Whether it was used to relate traditions about origins ? Whether it was used to legitimize the political functions of the ruling dynasty ? Whether the ruling dynasty tried to legitimize its power through the various strategies like the fabricated genealogy, the claim to Chandravansi kshatriyas status, patronage to brahmanas etc.? An attempt will be made in the present Paper to throw some light on these aspects with the help of the inscriptions.

Keywords: Kalachuris, Tripuri, Sarayupara, Sarayupara, Ratanpur, Raipur, Genealogy.

1.   **Introduction**

The Kalachuri dynasty emerged in the 6th century AD ruling over Maharastra, Gujarat and parts of Malwa. However, around 8th century AD they emerged as a strong force in the region around Jabalpur with their capital at Tripuri. From c 980 AD to 1090 AD, we hear of the Kalachuris of Sarayupara, modern Gorakhpur in UP. Around 1000 AD, another branch of the Kalachuris ruled from Ratanpur in the Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh. After 15th century AD, a

branch of Ratanpur family was founded at Raipur. Names of the rulers of different branches of the Kalachuri Dynasty –

The early Kalachuris of Mahismati –

Krishnaraja [550-575 AD], Sankargana [575-600 AD], Buddharaja [600-620 AD].

The Kalachuris of Tripuri –

Vamarajadeva [675-700 AD], Sankaragana I [750-775 AD], Lakshamanaraja [825-850 AD], Kokalla I [850-890 AD], Sankaragana II [890-910 AD], Balharsha [910-915 AD], Yuvarajadeva I [915-945 AD], Lakshamanaraja II [945-970 AD], Sankaragana III [970-80 AD], Yuvarajadeva II [980-990 AD], Kokalla II [990 1015 AD], Gageyadeva 1015-41 AD], Karna [1041-73 AD], Yasahkarna [1073-1123], Gayakarna [1123-53], Narasimha [1153-63], Jayasimha [1163-88], Vijayasimha [1188-1210], Ajayasimha.

The Kalachuris of Ratanpur – Kalingaraja[1000-20], Jajalladeva[1090-1120],Prithwideva II[1135-65],JajalladevaII[1165-68],Jagaddeva[1168-78],Pratapamalla[1200-25].

Large number of works have appeared on the history of the Kalachuri dynasty such as the works of H.C. Ray, R.C. Majumdar, V.V. Mirashi, Rai Bahadur Hiralal, R.D. Banerji, M.G. Dikshit, Ajay Mitra Shastri, R.K. Sharma, Rahman Ali. In my book entitled Feudal Social Formation under the Kalachuris of Tripuri, I have tried to prove the existence of feudalism under the Tripuru Branch of the Kalachuris. Inscriptions of various branches of the Kalachuri dynasty have been edited by V.V. Mirashi in his Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum [Vol. IV, Parts I & II].

Present Paper based mainly on the study of the inscriptions highlights some very interesting facts about the nature of genealogy of the Kalachuris. Out of 93 inscriptions studied by me, 4 belong to the early Kalachuris, 38 to the Tripuri branch, 2 to the Saryupara branch, and 49 to the Ratanpur and Raipur branch. There are five Supplementary Inscriptions all belonging to the Kalachuris of Tripuri.

The inscriptions belonging to the Kalachuris of Tripuri, Ratanpur and Raipur do not convey much information about the genealogy. No doubt, the two inscriptions belonging to the Kalachuris of Tripuri namely the Bilhari Stone Inscription and the Banaras Plates of Karna give a brief idea about their genealogy. But we get a detailed description of the genealogy of the Kalachuri dynasty from the 2 inscriptions of the Kalachuri of Saryupara namely the Kasia Stone

Inscription and the Kahla Plates. Moreover, the Kahla Plates record that king Sodhadeva granted twenty nalus of land in the fields of certain villages to fourteen Brahmanas who are said to have originated from the following places such as Kataughana, Kahalla, Kulancha, Tikari, Tali, Nagara, Nikhatigrama, Mahauli, Mathura, Sankasthana and Hastigrama.

Now the question arises – why only the Sarayupara branch refers to the genealogy in a comprehensive and detailed manner? Was it not related to the dwindling political power of the Kalachuris of Sarayupara ? Whether it was used to identify them with historical antecedents? Whether it was used to relate traditions about origins? Whether it was used to legitimize the political functions of the ruling dynasty? Whether the ruling dynasty tried to legitimize its power through the various strategies like the fabricated genealogy, the claim to Chandravansi kshatriyas status, patronage to brahmanas etc.? An attempt will be made in the present Paper to throw some light on these aspects with the help of the inscriptions.

According to Romila Thapar, genealogies claim to be records of succession in the past although their preservation or even invention can derive from the social institutions of the present for which they provide legitimizing mechanisms. They change over time and are rearranged if need be, the arrangement being in accordance with the requirements of later times. Genealogies are legal charters and the rearrangement of fragments of genealogies or the compilation of such fragments into a coherent whole are closely tied to the changing political status[1].

The Early Kalachuris ruled from Mahismati, modern Onkar Mandhata, which from very early times has been famous as a holy city.[2] Like Kalidasa, Rajashekhar also describes Mahismati as surrounded by Narmada. Some identify the city with Maheshwar in the former Indore State. The earliest dated record of the Kalachuris is Sankargana's Abhona grant of K. 347[596-97 AD]. His successor Buddharaja was defeated by the Chalukyan king Pulakesin and the Kalachuris were reduced to a state of servitude.

Until recently there was a perfect blank in the history of the Kalachuris for more than two centuries after the overthrow of Buddharaja. Kokalla I [850-885 AD] mentioned at the head of the genealogical lists in the Bilhari Stone Inscription of Yuvarajadeva II, [undated],[3] and the Banaras plates of Karna[4], dated KE 793 , 1042 AD, was believed to be the founder of the Tripuri branch of the Kalachuri dunasty. The discovery of two lithic records, one at Saugor[5],[undated]

and the other at Karitalai[6] [undated], in the Murwara tahsil of the Jabalpur District, has carried back the genealogy of the Tripuri branch by a few generations.

The Saugor inscription was put up during the reign of Sankargana I, [undated], who meditated on the feet of Vamarajadeva. Both Sankaragana and Vamarajadeva are mentioned in this record with the imperial titles. Vamraja was held in such a veneration by all Kalachuri kings of Tripuri probably because he was the founder of the northern Kalachuri power. Vamraja overran Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand and established himself at Kalanjara in the Banda district near Allahabad. Since the time of Vamaraja, the Kalachuris came to be known as Chaidyas or lords of the Chedi country ie. Modern Baghelkhand. Vamaraja seems to have transferred his capital from Mahismati to Tripuri mentioned in Mahabharata, modern Tewar, 6 miles west of Jabalpur. Later the family divided itself into two branches, one establishing itself in the country of Sarayupara and the other in the Chedi ie.the Kalachuris of Tripuri. Thus we observe that the genealogy mentioned in the inscriptions of the Tripuri branch is not very comprehensive ,detailed and fabricated, the reason being the fact that they did not need fabricated genealogy to legitimize their power and political functions. Moreover, they reached the zenith of power through the acts of great kings, through their patronage to the Brahmanas whom they considered as the earthly gods.[7], through constructions of temples etc.

When we compare the genealogical charts mentioned in the Tripuri branch with that of the Sarayupara branch of the Kalachuris, we find Sarayupara genealogy more comprehensive, detailed and also fabricated and as such this genealogical chart may be regarded as one of the ideological claims for sovereignty to bridge the dwindling political importance and power. The first seven verses [6-12] of the Kasia Stone inscription of Bhimata II describe the mythical ancestors. The god first created Brahma, who himself produced the seven Prajapatis. One of them Atri brought forth the moon. His son was Buddha who married Ila. Their son was Pururvas. The genealogy is then carried on through Ayu, Nahusha, Yayati, Yadu, Sahasrada and Haihaya to Kartavirya. In the dynasty of Kartavirya of the Kalachuri family, there was born the king Sankaragana , from him was born Nannaraja. The son of Nannaraja was the illustrious Lakshamanaraja I. From him was born Sivaraja I . The latter's son was Bhimata I, who again had a son named Lakshamanaraja II. Lakshamanaraja's son was Sivaraja II. The latter's son was described in verse 22, but his name is now lost. His wife was named Bhuda. Next is mentioned

Lakshamanaraja III who was probably a son of Bhuda. He married a lady named Kanchana and their son was Bhimata II.

The Kahla Plates of Sodhadeva[8], dated 1077 AD, also traces the royal genealogy to the moon. After describing his mythical and legendary descendants Buddha, Pururvas, Nahusha, Haihaya and Kartavirya Arjuna, the record states that in the family of Kartavirya was born a personage who established himself in Kalanjara and gave the kingdom to his younger brother Lakshamanaraja. In the family of this prince was born the king Rajaputra. His son was Sivaraja I who again had a son named Sankaragana I. Other mentioned kings in the inscription are Gunasagar I, Bhamanadeva I, Sankaragana II, Bhamanadeva II, Sankaragana III, Bhima and Vyasa. The son and successor of Vyasa was Sodhadeva who is described as the life of the country of Sarayupara.

On the basis of the genealogical charts given in the inscriptions of the Sarayupara dynasty, we can infer the following points –

- Genealogy was used to legitimize power and function of this new branch.

- Earlier portion of Genealogy was fabricated to relate the present kings to their mythical ancestors.

- For the purpose of authenticity, efforts were also made to relate the kings to the earlier great and famous kings such as Sankaragana, Lakshamanaraja through genealogy.

- Some of the names of the kings mentioned in the genealogy do not correctly match with the kings who actually ruled during the Sarayupara period . It is evident from the names of the kings who actually ruled –

Sankaragana IV[980-1005], Bhima or Bhimata III [1005-31]

 Vyasa [1031-55] and Sodhadeva [1055-90].

Thus the genealogy cannot be faithful records of the past reality but they can be memories of social relations.

- When we compare the genealogy given in the two inscriptions of the Sarayupara, we find some new names. It suggests that genealogy also change over time and are rearranged if need be, the rearrangement being in accordance with the requirements of later times.

- The Sarayupara genealogy records actual migration, fission and incorporates such changes in a genealogical pattern .

- The Sarayupara genealogy record supposed ancestors, for, the connections do not necessarily have to be biological and required in order that status be bestowed on those making claims.

- The genealogy assumes the centrality of high status through birth and , therefore, access to power, and provides the descent of those of such status.

- The curious origin myths, grand dynastic traditions, inflated genealogies and kshatriya lineage, it is said, lent prestige to the dynasty as a whole and the Sarayupara genealogy was not an exception to it. For example, the Kasia Stone Inscription refers to the kings in the following manner – In the dynasty of Kartavirya of well-known prowess, [adorning] the Kalachuri family, which is the crest jewel of the three worlds, there was born the king

Sankaragana, to whom Siva being pleased instantly granted his own emblem i.e. the bull. From, him whose fame spread up to the ocean which is the garment of the earth, was born Nannaraja, whose rising fortune, honoured by all, shone forth exceedingly owing to the absence of faults and who like the sun [whose rising splendour, adored by all, shines forth at the close of the night] purifies the earth. G.W. Spencer has rightly observed that after all, the function of genealogies, like other state rituals and ceremonies, was to strengthen royal authority.[9]

Therefore, the comprehensive and detailed genealogy certainly points to the efforts made by the Sarayupara branch of the Kalachuris to stop the process of their dwindling and declining political power. As has already been mentioned earlier, the Tripuri branch of the Kalachuris did not need the detailed, comprehensive and fabricated genealogy.

Now another question arises – how did the Tripuri branch legitimize its political power and function? Various works have appeared on the legitimation process such as the works of Romila Thapar, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, H. Kulke, Burton Stein, G.W. Spencer, James Heitzman, B.P. Sahu and others.[10]

In the light of above mentiond works on the process of legitimation , it may be said that the Tripuri Branch in order to legitimize its power, engaged itself in a variety of strategies such

as the land grants to the brahmanas and dispensing their resources on brahmanas, tirthas, temples and monasteries.

We get the information about the land grants\ other grants such as village, granary made to the Brahmanas from the following inscriptions—Banaras Plates of Karna [11], Chhoti-Deori Inscription ofSankaragana I[12], Kritalai Ins. of Lakshamanaraja II[13], Goharwa Ins.[14]14, Khairha and Jabalpur Ins. of Yasahkarna[15], Jabalpur and Rewa Ins. of Jayasimha[16], Rewa and Kumbhi Ins. of Vijayasimha [17].

Ratanpur Branch -- Raipur and Amoda Ins. of Prithvideva I[18], Ratanpur Ins. of Jajalladeva I[19], Sheorinarayan and Sarkho Ins. of Ratandeva II[20], Daikoni , Rajim, Bilaigarh ,Koni, Amoda, Ghotia, Amoda Ins. of Prithvideva II[21], Mallar, Sheorinarayan, Amoda Ins. of Jajalladeva II[22], Pendrabandh and Bilaigarh Ins, of Pratapamalla[23], Paragaon Ins. of Ratandeva II[24], Paragaon Ins. of Prithvideva[25].

According to Ratanpur Ins. of Prithvideva II, village was also donated to the god Somanatha.[26]

According to Gurgi Ins. of Kokalladeva II ,villages were also granted for the maintenance of the Saiva ascetics[27].

Scholars such as R.N. Nandi, R. Champakalakshmi, M.L.K. Murty, Upinder Singh have observed that in the post 10th century there seems to have been a shift in the pattern of patronage insofar as the temples emerged as the major recipients of royal donations in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra and Orissa.[28]

We find some traces of the same in the Tripuri Branch inscriptions such as – Baragaon Ins. of Sabara refers to gift of granary to God Sankaranarayana temple [29], Bhera –Ghat Ins. of Narasimha refers to grant of villages together with all income to Vaidyanath [Siva] temple.[30] In an inscription[31] discovered at M alkapuram in the Guntur District, it is stated that Yuvarajadeva I gave three lakhs of villages to his guru Sadabhavasambhava of the Golaki Matha . Dr. Mirashi has identified this Math with the temple of Chaunsatha – Yogini at Bheraghat.[32]

Pilgrimages were also popular. According to Banaras Plates of Karna[33],the samvatasara sraddha of Gangeyadeva was performed by his son Karna at Pryaga. According to the Khairha Plates of Yasahkarna[34], Gangeyadeva attained salvation with his hundred wives at Prayaga. The

Bilhari Stone Inscription [35] records that Lakshamanaraja II marched with his army and feudatory princes from Tripuri to Somanatha Pattan and bathing in the sea there, worshipped the God. The Jabalpur Stone Inscription of Jayasimha[36]36 refers to Gokarna and Gaya in addition to Prabhasa, as pilgrim centres. The Pujaripali Ins. of Gopaladeva of Ratanpur Branch refers to various pilgrim centres such as Kedara, Prayaga, Pushkara, Purushottama, Bhimesvara, Goplpura, Varansi, Prabhasa, Vairagyamatha, Sauripura and Pedara.[37]

References

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4. ibid, Ins. No. 48

5. . ibid, Ins. No.35

6. Inscription of Lakshamanaraja II, ibid, Ins. No.42

7. ibid, Ins Nos.. 90,106,108

8. ibid, Ins. No.74

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12. ibid, Ins. No. 36

13. ibid, Ins. No. 42

14. ibid, Ins. No. 50

15. ibid, Ins. Nos. 56 & 57

16. ibid, Ins. Nos. 63 and 65

17. ibid, Ins. Nos. 68 & 70

18. ibid, Ins. Nos. 75 & 76

19. ibid, Ins. No. 77

20. ibid, Ins. Nos. 82 & 83

21. ibid, Ins. Nos. 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92 & 94

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30. ibid, Ins. No. 60

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32. C I I,IV,p. lxxxiv

33. ibid, Ins. No. 48

34. ibid, Ins. No. 56

35. ibid, Ins. No. 45

36. ibid, Ins. No. 64

37. ibid, Ins. No.114