

Settlement Patterns Under the Kalacuris of South Kośala (10th – 12th Century CE): An Epigraphic Study

Key Words: deśa, maṇḍala # viṣaya # pattalā # pura or pattana

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Abstract :The Kalacuris ruled different parts of India from about the middle of the sixth century CE. In the early medieval period, they held several centres of power such as Sarayupāra, Ratanpur and Raipur. This paper focusses on the settlement patterns under the Kalacuris of South Kośala with special reference to their kingdom and polity. The Kalacuris have been for the first time referred to as Haihayas in the Bilahari stone inscription of Yuvarājadeva II. The Kalacuri kings called themselves Haihayas, i.e. descendents of Kārtavīrya Arjuna, born in the family of moon. The Kalacuris, therefore, claimed to be of the famous lunar race. They had matrimonial relations with all the principal Kṣatriya families of the age, viz., the Cālukyas, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Candelas and the Pālas.

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The political ascent of the Kalacuris marked an important phase in the history of the regions over which

they ruled, particularly Dāhala and Dakṣiṇa Kośala which were their seats of power. Towards the close of the ninth century CE. the Kalacuris of Tripurī tried to establish one of their branches in Dakṣiṇa Kośala the territory comprising modern Chhattisgarh and the adjoining territory in Odisha up to the boundary of Sonapur district. That Tummāṇa was the capital of this newly established branch is indirectly hinted in the Ratanpur stone inscription of Jājalladeva I, which states that Kalingarāja had chosen Tummāṇa as his capital as it was the seat of government of his forefathers.

At the apex of the administrative apparatus was the king who commanded supreme authority insofar as he appointed governors, ministers and important civil and military officers, and transferred them from one province to another. The king usually conferred titles and other distinctions such as pañcamahāśabda for meritorious service. There was a council of eight ministers in the time of the Later Kalacuris, it may have consisted of the following who are generally mentioned in their records: mahāmantrin, mahāmātya, mahāsāndhivigrahika, mahādharmaḍhikaraṇika (or mahāpurohita as stated in some records), mahākṣapaṭalika, mahāpratīhāra, mahāsāmanta and mahāpramātr.

The mahāmantrin was chief among these ministers, though no information about him can be obtained from the early Kalacuri royal records. However, the later inscriptions record their religious and charitable works, thus providing some information about their activities and achievements. The Kalacuri king Yuvarājadeva I had an able counselor named Bhākamiśra, who was a Brāhmaṇa of the Bharadvāja gotra. At times, the governors of provinces were

members of the royal family. The Sheorinarayan Stone Inscription of Jājalladeva II of Cedi Era 919 states that Sarvadeva obtained Soṅṅhivapaṅṅikā as part of the inheritance. Sometimes the governership of a province became hereditary in the family of a royal house so that in course of time they established their independent branch such as the branches of Ratanpur and Raipur. Such governors often enjoyed the status of important intermediary chiefs and bore pompous titles like mahāsāmanta or mahārāṅaka, māṅṅṅalika, māṅṅṅalika-agraṅṅī, mahāmāṅṅalika, mahāmāṅṅdaleśvara and mahāsāmantaṅṅhipatī, sutradhara, rupakara.

Features of Kalacuri Inscriptions

Of the 31 inscriptions of the Kalacuris discovered so far, 12 are inscribed on copper-plates, 16 on stone and four on statues, suggesting that the Kalacuris almost equally used both stone and copper as media for inscribing their records. The largest cluster of inscriptions that mention the issuers' names, i.e., 12 out of 30, constituting about 40 per cent of all inscriptions, belongs to one ruler Pṅṅrithvīdeva II. Thus, all these inscriptions can be broadly classified into those belonging to Pṅṅrithvīdeva II's period and those belonging to pre- and post- Pṅṅrithvīdeva II periods.

Settlements, Spatial Markers and Administrative Units under the Kalacuris

The political geography of the Kalacuri kingdom can be understood from a study of the numerous settlements, mentioned in the inscriptions. A total of 77 place names can be classified into the following categories: deśa, māṅṅṅala, viṅṅaya, place of issue of grants, donee's village, and donated village. Besides, the term Kośala is used twice in the inscriptions, and the category of 'unclassified' mostly includes settlements that are

mentioned as locational markers for various endowments such as tanks, lakes, ponds, temples, gardens, groves, feeding houses, stepwells, undertaken for religious and/or charitable purposes, etc.

Like the inscriptions of other early medieval dynasties, those of the Kalacuris, too, refer to a number of territorial units into which the kingdom was divided from time to time. A critical study of Kalacuri inscriptions shows that the term used for the various administrative divisions differed from branch to branch of the dynasty and from time to time. During the rule of the Kalacuris at South Kośala, *deśa*, i.e., a country or a province was the largest territorial unit. The second term used for the largest territorial unit representing a country is *janapada*, such as the Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jājalladeva I refers to the *janapada* of Dakṣiṇa Kośala, whose capital was at Tummāṇa. The inscriptions of Ratanpur branch refer to the *deśas* of Bhaṭṭavila, Viharā, Kākayara, Tamanāla, Bharamaravadra and Tummāṇa. Sometimes the term *deśa* is used as synonymous with *maṇḍala*, which at that time represented a much smaller unit. The Amoda Plates of Pṛithvīdeva I refer to *Madhyadeśa* which actually refers to *Madhya-maṇḍala* (the territory around modern Bilaspur). The Ratanpur Inscription of Pṛithvīdeva II refers to the *Cedimaṇḍala* which in fact stands for the Cedi country. Similarly, the Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jājalladeva I refers to the *Andhra maṇḍala*, which stands for *Andhra deśa*.

We seldom come across the smaller administrative unit *viṣaya*, equivalent to a district in the records of this period. Its place was taken by *maṇḍala* in the south and *pattalā* in the north. The

Sheorinarayan Plates of Ratnadeva II refers to Anarghavallī viṣaya in which the village Tinerī was situated. The records of the Kalacuris from South Kośala mention several maṇḍalas, such as Komo, Aparā, Madhya, Sāmanta, Talahāri, etc. The term maṇḍala used by the administration of the Ratanpur branch of the Kalacuris and their successors, was a substitute for the term pattalā. There are references to pattalās such as Devagrāma, Khaṇḍagahā, Kuyīsambapālisa, Dhanavāhi and Revā from Vindhya Pradesh; and Sambalā, Nava and Jāuli from the Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. A pattalā was divided into smaller territorial units of 10, 12, 40 or 100 villages, but they rarely find a mention in the inscriptions of this period. The term maṇḍala is again sometimes used in the sense of a province, bhūmi and bhukti. This can be inferred from the title mahāmaṇḍaleśvara referred to in a number of inscriptions used by the governors of provinces. The Rajim Stone inscription of Pṛithvīdeva II refers to the bhūmi of Talahāri, meaning actually, the Talahāri maṇḍala. The maṇḍala of Daṇḍakapura of the Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jājalladeva I is called Daṇḍabhukti in the Koni Stone Inscription of Pṛithvīdeva II.

The maṇḍala was constituted by towns (pura or pattana), capitals and villages. Some towns were named after the kings or queens who founded them, for example Ratnapura or Ratanpura founded by Ratnadeva I and Jājallapura by Jājalladeva I. All these are still known by their ancient names, which in some cases are slightly changed. Ratnapura is said to have resembled the city of Alakā. The existing extensive ruins of buildings and temples and large tanks at both

the places testify to the past splendour of the towns. Tummāṇa the earlier capital in Chhattisgarh is said to have been beautified by Ratnadeva I with magnificent buildings, lofty temples of gods and beautiful groves of mango trees.

The viṣaya denoted district throughout the Kalacuri rule. The head of the viṣaya was called viṣayapati, who was in charge of the law and order of the area under his jurisdiction. The viṣayapatis must have been exercising considerable revenue powers as they are invariably mentioned in the copper plates among the officers ordered not to disturb the possession of the donees of land or village granted. The officer-in-charge of comparatively smaller sub-division, i.e., bhoga was bhogin, are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Kalacuri branch of Ratanpur. The head of revenue department was probably mahāpramātr, who is mentioned in the later Kalacuri records. He surveyed all land and fixed its assessment. The mahākṣapaṭalika was the head of the Records Department. The Department of Religion seems to have attained a greater importance in the period of the later Kalacuris. Its head, the mahādharmaḍhikaraṇika or mahāpurohita is invariably mentioned among the officers to whom the royal order about a land-grant was to be communicated. In one record he is called dharmakarmāḍhikārin, i.e., the officer in charge of religious works. The scribe who recorded the royal order about a grant was called dharmalekhin.

The mahāsāndhivigraha, i.e. the head of sandhi-vigraha-adhikāraṇa (the department of peace and war) often figures in the inscriptions as the writer of copper plate charters. In fact it was laid down that such charters should be written only by this office in

accordance with the instructions received from the king. The reason was that of all the departments of the state, the department of peace and war was most likely to have an accurate information about the conquests of the king and his ancestors which were generally described in the initial part of such charters. The cities and towns were put in the charge of mayors. The Amoda Plates of Pṛithvīdeva I and Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jājalladeva I refers to śreṣṭhin Yasa, who was the mayor of Ratanpura. He may also have been a local notable as the prefix śreṣṭhin suggests.

The Vaiśyas, though mainly engaged in trade and commerce, also exercised great influence at the royal court as well as in the pañcakulas. Some towns which had predominantly a merchant population were known as vaṇin-nagaras (merchant-towns). All the affairs of such towns were managed by the pañcakulas elected by them. Some merchants were appointed mayors of the towns and contributed liberally to the religious and charitable institutions in the state. Some Vaiśyas distinguished themselves in the military professions also. Several later records from Chhattisgarh give a description of the victories won by Vallabharāja, a Vaiśya intermediary of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur. He constructed several temples, excavated tanks and reared mango groves.

During the rule of Pṛithvīdeva I, the entire Kośala comprised 21,000 villages (Amoda plate). He also conquered Komo- mandala and Dandora; Koma is identified as an important mandala and Dandora an important region within Kośala. Sonthiva was another important region which was acquired as patrimony and ruled by Sarvadeva, the younger brother of Pṛithvīdeva I (Sheorinarayan inscription-98). There is no evidence

about continuation of this branch. R.N. Mishra argues that Jajalladeva became the undisputed ruler of the whole of Dakṣiṇa Kośala including its eastern portion consisting of Sambalpur District and former states of Patna and Sonpur in Odisha.

The Kalacuri inscriptions mention many master craftsmen bearing titles such as rūpakāra, śilpī and sūtradhāra and associated with temple-building or other religious endowments. Rupakara seems to be the main artisan skilled in ornamentation of temples and Sutradhara seems to be the main architect of the building. These titles were important and must have been given by royal houses. These master crafts men were designated titles in hierarchy. The sūtradhāra was at the top of this hierarchy followed by śilpīs, vijñānika and rūpakāra, This hierarchy was particularly true for Dakshina Kosala as argued by R.N.Mishra.

The picture that emerges from the above discussion is that the Dakṣiṇa Kośala in the 10th -12th centuries CE witnessed the emergence of an integrated political authority with a fairly elaborate administrative apparatus. The political geography of the kingdom was shaped by the numerous settlements are mentioned in the inscriptions. A total of 64 settlements can be classified into the following categories: maṇḍala, viṣaya, place of issue of grants, donee's village, and donated village. Side by side, the term Kośala is used twice in the inscriptions, and the category of 'unclassified' mostly includes settlements that are mentioned as locational markers for various endowments such as tanks, lakes, ponds, temples, gardens, groves, feeding houses, step wells, undertaken for religious and/or charitable purposes. In the post-10th-century period, while agrarian

settlements increased in the Dakṣiṇa Kośala region, the politico-administrative apparatus became better organized in terms of administrative units and bureaucracy.

CII, Vol. IV, p. 246.

R. K. Sharma, *The Kalachuris and their Times*, Sandeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1980, p. 42.

V. V. Mirashi (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, p. CXXXIX.

R. K. Sharma, *The Kalachuris and their Times*, pp. 99-100.

One inscription, viz., Sheorinarayan Statue Inscription (no. XXVII) dated in year 898 of Kalacuri era does not mention any issuer.

CII, Vol. IV, Inscription No. 42 verse 34.

R. K. Sharma, *The Kalachuris and their Times* p. 97.

Table No. V.2, Inscription No. III.

Table No. V.2, Inscription No. XVI.

Table No. V.2, Inscription No. III.

Some instances of viṣaya are Gunakala viṣaya mentioned in the Kahla plates and Anarghavallī viṣaya in the Shēorinārāyaṇ plates.

Table No. V.2, Inscription No. V. II.

V. V. Mirashi (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, p. CXXXVI.

R. K. Sharma, *The Kalachuris and their Times*, p. 98.

Table No. V.2. Inscription No. III.

R. K. Sharma, *The Kalachuris and their Times*, p. 100.

CII, Vol. IV, Inscription Nos. 96, verse 13.

V. V. Mirashi (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, p. CXLIV.

Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, *The Changing Gaze: Regions and the Constructions of Early India*, pp. 65-75.

R. N. Misra, *Sculptures of Dahāla and Dakṣiṇa Kośala and their Background*, Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1987, pp. 14-60.

