

A STUDY ON THE HISTORY OF PALLAVAS

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Abstract: Having arranged the various genealogies in the Sanskrit charters of these Pallavas in a consolidated table, we might now turn to enquire what exactly it is possible for us to know of the Pallavas from these records and other sources of information available to us. Turning to the the Velurpalaiyam plates we can pass over the document till we come to Ka'abhartr described as the head jewel of his family like (Vishnu)the husband of Indira (Lakshmi). This perhaps give us a hint that he bore the name Kumara Vishnu as the Ongudu plates No. 1 would make us infer. No information of a historical character is given in regard to him. Then follows his son Chutapallava identified in the table with Skandavarman of the Uruvapalli and other grants. Even that name seems to be a mere eponymous name, the later tables giving instead the name merely Pallava. It is in his son Virakurcha that emerges the first historical character. He is said to have grasped the complete in sign in of royalty together with the hand of the daughter of "the chief of the serpents" thereby becoming famous.

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Introduction: Put in ordinary language this would mean that he married a Naga Princess and thereby acquired title to sovereignty of the region over which he ruled. This obviously has no connection with the birth of Tonclaman-Ilam-Tiraiyana who, according to the tradition embodied in the classical poem Perumbanarrupadai, was the son of a Chola king by a Naga Princess whose union with him was not exactly what Virakurcha's union as described is intended to be. The former is purely an affair of love which may even be regarded as a liaison. Virakurcha's is a regular marriage to a Princess and, through her, the acquisition of sovereignty. Neither the detail of the marriage nor the acquisition of sovereignty will agree with the story of Ilam-Tiraiyan. The explanation of this apparently is that the Pallava chieftain, whoever he was, contracted a marriage with a more influential Naga chieftain in the neighbourhood and thereby acquired his title to the territory which came to be associated with the Pal lavas. We have; already noted that the Satavahana Viceroy of the region round Adoni was the great commander Skandanaga. We also noted tha even before his time the territory round Chittaldrug, extending westwards to the sea almost, was in the possession of a family which went by the name Cutukula the members of which family sometimes described themselves as Satavahanas also. This would mean that they were a clan of the Satavahanas other than that which held rule over the Dakhan, but connected by blood and perhaps even by alliance with that clan. At one time under the rule of the later Satavahanas these Nagas appear to have extended their authority and even acquired a considerable portion of the kingdom of the Satavahanas themselves. If the Pallava chieftain in the neighbourhood made himself sufficiently distinguished and contracted a marriage alliance with these Nagas from whom came the early Satavahana queen Naganika, it would have been possible for him to have become recognised a feudatory sovereign of the region of either the Satavahanas themselves nominally, or of their successors the Nagas. This hint, vague as it is in the inscription, seems to let us into the secret of the rise of this dynasty of the Pallavas to power, and may give us even a clue to the time when these Pallavas should have risen to the kingly position. This must have happened at a time when the Satavahanas as a ruling dynasty had passed away, and the attempt at the assertion of the Gupta power over this region under Samudra Gupta had in a way shaken the authority of the older dynasties and left the field open for new dynasties to spring up. The character of the invasion of Samudragupta itself makes it clear that the whole of the western portion of the empire of the Andhras was in the hands of a power whom for some good reason Samudragupta did not attack. One such reason might have been that they held possession of the territory with some power. It is likely that their authority was not readily acquiesced in by the smaller chieftains, feudatories of the Sata-vahanas along the east coast. If this surmise should turn out correct it is possible to conceive that the western portion was held by the powerful family of the Nagas, relations of the Sata-vahanas, and the Pallavas were among the feudatories who showed a ready

inclination to throw off the Satavahana yoke. When Samudra-gupta had come and gone, the western power, whatever that was, might have entered into a marriage alliance with the Pallavas and recognised them in the position to which they had already risen by their own efforts. This state of affairs seems supported from what is said of Virakurcha's successor. Skandashya, son of Virakurcha succeeded the father and is described as "the moon in the sky of his family"; in other words the most distinguished member of the family. He seized from King Satyasena the "Ghatika" of the Brahmins. We already indicated the possibility that the Satyasena here referred to may be Mahakshatrapa Svami Satyasena of the coins whose time would be the ninth decade of the 4th century A.D. We do not know definitely that the power of the Mahakshatrapas extended as far south as to come into contact with the Pallavas. The probability seems to be the Pallavas co-operated with the dynasty of the Western Dakhan in a war with the Kshatrapas of Malva who might, it is possible, have made an effort to extend their authority southwards into the region of the Dakhan.

Decadence of the Andhra Power: The state of things foreshadowed in the previous section is confirmed by the history of the decadence of the power of the Andhras who held sway for more than three centuries in the whole of the Dakhan extending even into the Tamil country round Kanchi. According to Professor Rapson an elaborate study of the coins and inscriptions relating to this dynasty leads to the conclusion that after the long reign of Yagna-Sri Satakarni the empire broke up into two. The Puranas mention only three names after this Satavahana. One of the names Sri Chandra could be read on coins found in the Andhradesa proper. There are three other names also traceable in the coins of this region and in the Chanda district of the Central Provinces. The coins of neither of these groups have been found in western India. This distribution of the coins of the later Andhras seems to justify the conclusion that the Empire was divided.

What is more, this investigation seems to confirm what the Matsya Purana has to say regarding the dynasties that succeeded the Andhras. This portion of the dynastic list according to the version common to several manuscripts of the Matsya, Vayu and Brahmanda Puranas begins, "Andhranam Samasthi rajye tesam bhrty anvaya nrpah Sapt-aiv-Andhra bhavisyanti" meaning that while the Andhras were still ruling a family of their servants who were themselves Andhras ruled for seven generations. One version of the Matsya Purana, however, has "Andhrah Sriparvatyas ca te dvi-panqasatam samah" that the Sri Parvatiya Andhras ruled for 52 years. Taking the two together we get to this. That one section of the Andhras who could be designated Sri Parvatiya Andhras who were subordinate to the authority of Yagna-Sri asserted their independence and ruled for 52 years in the region round Sri Parvata, that is, the home territory if it may be so called, of the Andhras. There is no mention in that list of what had happened to the western portion of their territory unless we take the next following passage to refer to what probably happened to that part. Ten Abhhras. servants of the Andhras as the others, ruled for 67 years. We have an Abhira governor of the Mahakshatrapa Rudra Simha, son of Rudra Daman with a date 103 which is equivalent to AD. 181. The Abhira 23 concerned here is the General Rudra Bhuti, son of the general Bapaka, the Abhira.¹

The Puranas seem to be correct to this extent that the Abhira feudatories in the region of Gujarat set up rule on their own account in the later years of the Andhras, in all probability in the years following Yagna-Sri. This would have reference to the early years of the third century A.D., and if the Abhira ruled for 67 years it would bring them practically to the end of the third century. The inscription of the Abhira king Isvara Sena at Nasik is a clear indication that that part of the Andhra country was under the rule of the Abhira. Isvara Sena himself was the son of the Abhira Sivadatta. If with Professor Rapson we can take these Abhira to be identical with the members of the Traikutaka dynasty, the Traikutaka era beginning A.D. 249 would be the era of the Abhira as well. The Abhira Isvara Sena may therefore be referable to about the same time. The inscription found in Jaggayya-petta of one Sri Vira-Purusha Datta of the family of Ikshvaku, and dated in his 20th year shows that even the eastern territory of the Andhras was passing into other hands. This inscription is referable on pal geographical grounds to the period of the later Andhras. What is most

¹ Luder's list of Brahmi inscriptions. Ep. Ind., X., No. 963. (Southern list.) important to our present purpose here is that the southern portion, and perhaps by far the largest portion of the Empire of the

Andhras, passed into the hands of a family of feudatories who called themselves Satakarnis as well, and had for their capital Banavase (Vaijayanti). This is the famous Cutu dynasty who give themselves the name Naga as well, and who have for their crest an extended cobra hood. Their inscriptions are found in Kanheri, in Kanara and in the Shimoga district of Mysore. From their inscriptions so far made available to us we know of three generations of these and two reigns, namely, that of Haritiputra Vishnukada Cutukulananda Satakarni and his grandson by the daughter Sivaskanda Varman, also called Siva Skanda Naga Sri in the Banavase inscription, and Skanda Naga Satavahana in the Kanheri inscription. These two rulers appear to have preceded the Kadambas almost without any interval. It would appear as though the Kadambas made the conquest of the territory which became associated with them from this Siva Skanda Varman himself. The inscriptions of this dynasty at Kanheri may be taken as an indication of the extent of the territory to which they had become heir when the Satavahana power decayed. These were themselves Satakarnis, and almost from the commencement of the rule of the Satavahana held possession of the southern viceroyalty for them. Their ascent to independent power would again support the statement of the Puranas that it was the Andhrabhritas that ascended to power and independence while yet the Andhras were still ruling. It is these Cutukula successors of the Andhras in the territory immediately adjoining that of the Pallavas that must be the Naga family by a marriage alliance with which Vira-kurcha was able to make good his position as ruler of the south-eastern viceroyalty of the Andhras. Probably the Pallavas in the locality of the Prakrit charters fought and took possession, of the territory from the later Andhras. It may be that the Sri Parvatiya Andhras and the Pallavas of the Sanskrit charters, at least the early members among them, either felt it necessary, or considered it advantageous, to get their possession validated by this alliance with, and countenance of, perhaps the most powerful among the successors of the Andhras. It may be possible even that the Princess mother of Sivaskanda Varman Skanda Naga had married the Pallava chieftain perhaps a Mahabhoja, as holding an important viceroyalty of the Andhras. If this surmise should turn out correct, as we have as yet no direct evidence to confirm it, Sivaskanda Naga Sri of the western inscriptions would be the Skandasishya of the Pallava inscriptions. Such a position for Skanda Varman would be in accordance with the tradition associated with the foundations of the dynasty of the Kadambas.

Light from Kadamba Inscriptions: According to the tradition as we find it recorded in the inscription of Kakustha Varman, it was a Brahman by name Mayura-Sarman who went to complete his Vedic studies to the "Brahman settlement," (Ghatika) of Kanchi. There he got into a quarrel with either some cavalry men, or an important officer of the cavalry of the Pallavas, and gave up the life of a Brahman and assumed that of a warrior. He was so successful in his new life when he acquired possession of all the forest country up to Sri Parvata, laid the great Bana under contribution, and otherwise made himself a very considerable obstacle to the pretensions of the Pallavas who were just then rising into importance. The Pallava monarch for the time being considered it prudent to recognise the redoubtable Brahman as a military officer of his with the government of a considerable province extending from the sea in the west to the eastern limit of "Prehara."¹ Who were the Pallavas to appoint this Brahman to the Governorship of the province whose capital was Banavase? The Pallavas must have possessed the territory which the Brahman perhaps made his own, and then the Pallavas rightfully conferred it upon the Brahman as his fief. If it had not been so, there is no sense in a Kadamba inscription claiming this as the rightful foundation of their title to the province. It seems therefore that the alliance between the Naga and the Pallava which gave the title to the Pallava for the possession of the whole of the territory means nothing more than an alliance between the Pallavas and the Cutus. This alliance resulted in the Pallavas becoming ultimately rulers not only of the Pallava territory proper but of practically the whole Empire of the Andhras, as much of it at any rate as had not gone into the possession of others like the Abhiras and the Ikshvakus of the east. This assumption would satisfactorily explain the setting up of the Kadamba power in the region which was peculiarly the province of the Cutus. If that should turn out to be so, the statement regarding Skandasishya that he took from Satyasena the ghatika of the Brahmans would become not merely possible but very likely. It is perhaps a subsidiary branch of this family of the Cutus that ultimately overthrew the Kadambas in this region, and founded the dynasty of the Chalukyas.

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