

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KALACHURIS



Research Paper—History

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THE NAME - KALACHURI

The name of this dynasty most commonly found in the inscriptions is “Kalachuri”. Other names often referred to in the inscriptions are Katakchuri, Katakchhuri, Kalatsuri, Kalachhuri, Kalachuri, Kulachuri etc.¹ Prthvirajvijaya refers to the term Kalichuri, Later records refer them as Haihayas.

ORIGIN OF THE KALACHURIS

Most of the Rajput dynasties of the post-Gupta period, like the Chandellas, the Paramars etc. tried to trace their origin from the lunar or solar race or the Pauranic times. The traditional theories of their descent are generally mentioned in the laudatory verses of bardic ballads or even in unwritten folk-tales or songs. The Kalachuris, like the other contemporary Rajput dynasties called themselves as “Chandravanshis”, and traced their descent from Haihaya Sahasrarjuna (the son of Kartavriya) who vanquished Ravan.²

THE EARLY KALACHURIS OF MAHISHMATI

A small information is available about the Early Kalachuris and their capital Mahishmati which was considered to be a holy city from very early times. The copper-plate grants given by the Early Kalachuri rulers were issued from their camps fixed at Ujjayini and Vidisha in Malwa and Anandpur in Gujrat. However, their rule at Mahishmati is testified by later works like Balamayan of Rajashekhara and Anargharaghav of Murari which mention Mahishmati as the family capital of the Kalachuri kings. That Mahishmati was the capital of the Early Kalachuris is confirmed by the records of some of the later princes of the Haihaya dynasty who ruled in the south as feudatories of the Chalukyas, The records mention with pride their title Mahishmatipuravareshvar, “The lord of Mahishmati, the best of towns”. In their grants, the Early Kalachuris do not mention themselves as Haihayas, but they soon

came to be referred to by that name as is evidenced by some inscriptions of the Early Chalukyas, dated in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D.³

THE KALACHURIS OF TRIPURI

After the death of Harsha, northern India became the political chess-board and several chiefs played their role. The more prominent among these were the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, Gurjara-Pratiharas in Kanauja and the Kalachuris in Dahalamandala whose capital was Tripuri. For a period of nearly five centuries, i.e., between circa 8th-circa 12th century A.D., the Kalachuris of Tripuri could outshine their contemporaries and they have left a rich legacy in the history of early medieval India. The Kalachuris were supposed to have migrated from Mahishmati (modern Mandhata of Nimar district, M.P.).⁴ But Sir Sankalia has suggested that Mandhata can not be identified with ancient Mahishmati.⁵

To reconstruct the history of this House we have ample materials, i.e., the inscriptions, copper plates, coins and the contemporary literature. Krishnaraj was probably, the first ruler of this House as found from the inscriptions of his son Sankaragan. We do not know about his political career but his son Shankaragan must have played some important role as indicated by his inscriptions and several high sounding titles like Paramabhataraka, Maharajadhiraja and Parameshvara. During his time the Kalachuri power extended upto Nasik.⁷ The son and probably successor of Shankaragan was Buddharaj, who was defeated by the Chalukya king Mangalesh in circa 6th century A.D.⁸ and hence they might have acknowledged the suzerainty of the Chalukyas. The period intervening from Buddharaj to Kokalla I is a dark period in the history of the Kalachuris. Scholars like Mirashi⁹ are of the opinion that Vamaraj was the ruler under whose

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feet Shankaragan meditated. Vamaraj appears to have ruled in circa 8th century A.D. over a vast kingdom comprising Gomati in the north to the Narmada in the south, the part of Bundelkhand, Bhagelkhand, Sagar, Jabalpur, (Madhya Pradesh) and the central part of Uttar Pradesh. Since the time of Vamaraj the Kalachuris became popular by the name of Chaidays. The Chedi country was situated along the south bank of Yamuna from the Chambal on the north-west to Karvi (which flows north-east to Chitrakuta)¹⁰ on the south-east. Vamaraj may have transferred his capital from Mahishmati to Tripuri. The modern village Tewar, situated on the Jabalpur-Bheraghat road is identified with Tripuri. Tripuri is a city of high antiquity. It is mentioned in various later vedic texts, Jain and Buddhist texts as well as in various puranas.¹¹ It was one of the sixteen mahajanapadas.

In later Vedic literature it is mentioned as three important cities of Asuras, while in the puranic literature we are told that the city was destroyed by converting them to Buddhism and Jainism. The Mahabharata mentions it as Traipura and attributes its destruction by Vishnu in the form of a cow-bull.¹² The situation of Tripuri is placed in south-eastern division in the Brhatsamhita, whereas Hemachandra calls it Chedi-nagar as the capital of Chedi country.¹³ We do not know the history of Tripuri prior to the advent of the Kalachuris but the discovery of a few coins and pottery have provided valuable guidance in this respect. Tripuri seems to have passed on to the rule of the Kshatrapa and the Satavahanas who might have included the major part of Deccan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Central India. Thus, probably in the first century B.C. they extended their rule over Central India and added Tripuri and other places of importance like Sanchi, etc.¹⁴ But Mirashi thinks that Chedi country might have been under the rule of the Parivrajaka rajas.¹⁵ Thus it is not known that from whom Vamaraja conquered Tripuri. From the time of Vamarajadeva to Shankaragan I is supposed to be the dark period.¹⁶ Shankaragan I is the next important ruler of the Kalachuris whom we can place palaeographically in circa 8th century A.D. The names of the successors of Shankaragan are not known until we come to Lakshamanaraj I of the Karitalai inscription dated (841-42 A.D.). Lakshamanaraja was rendered to a

subordinate position by the Rashtrakutas. Later on, the Rashtrakutas entered into matrimonial alliance from time to time with the Kalachuris of Tripuri. This alliance with the Kalachuris made a bulwark on the north of Narmada against any possible invasion from the Gurjara-Pratiharas to their territory. Kokalla I succeeded his father Lakshamanaraja in circa 875 A.D.

Balaharsha was succeeded by his younger brother Yuvarajadeva I in circa 915 A.D. who was a great patron of art and literature. He is credited with having built many temples and Mathas like the Golakimatha, and texts like the Viddhasha abhanjika were composed by his court poet Rajashekhara. He seems to have led his successful army against the countries of Bengal, Kuntal, Gujarat, Kashmir, Orissa, Magadha, Panchala, Avanti, Jalandhara, Kerala and married the ladies from these places, as mentioned in the above mentioned text.¹⁸ He was also victorious against the Malawas. He married the Chalukya princess Nohata. As he was the lord of Orissa is proved by his Viruda Trikingadhipati. He was a devout worshiper of Shiva, and patronised many Shaiva Acharyas to preach their doctrines. He donated three lakhs of villages for the maintenance of Golakimatha. His wife Nohaladevi was also a devotee of Shiva and is said to have made donations to the matha and Shaiva Acharyas of the pashupata cult. She built many temples i.e., a temple of Nohalesvara and donated seven villages for its maintenance. The temple at Gurgi (now ruined) was built by the king and probably, a monastery at Chandrehe was also built by king for meditations and training of Shaiva Acharyas. Lakshamanaraja II succeeded his father Yuvarajadeva. He was undoubtedly a great warrior as proved by his various military exploits against the distant countries like Bengal, Lat, Kashmir and Gurjara. He also took part in the northern expedition of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. His conquests over Bengal and Kashmir seem to be mere exaggeration but his conquests over Orissa and Koshala might be true. Banerji¹⁹.

Lakshamanaraj had the services of a learned brahman minister named Someshvara who was the son of Bhakamishra. Like his father, Someshvara built a Vishnu temple at Karitalai, donated a village for its maintenance and established eight brahmanas to take care of it. His queen Rohada and son Shankaragan are

also mentioned as the worshipper of Vishnu. Lakshamanaraj II was succeeded by his son Shankaragan III in circa 970 A.D. This king is known from two records of Karna.²⁰ The Banaras plate omits him, while Baragaon inscription records some of his gifts in the honour of Shankarnarayana whereas Karitalai inscription actually states that he was a param vaishnav. His reign was uneventful, he met his inglorious end in conflict with the Chandellas and probably the Chandella Prime Minister Vachaspati defeated and killed him. Shankaragan III was succeeded by his younger brother Yuvarajadeva II in the last quarter of 10th century A.D. about whom we do not have much information. The Karanabel inscriptions state that he conquered all the kings of all the quarters on the earth. It is no doubt a mere boast which is uncollobrated by fact but duly mentioned in the later records. The Paramar king Vakapati-Munj defeated him.²¹ The reign of Yuvarajdeva II and his father was dark period. Ganguly²² suggests that the Chedi country was raided by the Chalukya king Tailap II ignoring his close relationship with Yuvarajdeva II. But on the basis of epigraphic and literary sources Mirashi²³ has interpreted it that it was mere exploits of king Utpal whom he subjugated and threw him into the prison. However, Mirashi²⁴ admitted that there is no chronological difficulty in identifying Munj who triumphantly entered Tripuri and caused the death of many Kalachuri generals. After the withdrawl his son Kokalla II was placed on the throne by his chief minister.

Kokalla II succeeded his father in circa 900 A.D. He was a great warrior as he raided Gurjara country and when the kings of Kuntal and Gaud heard his military advance they deserted their country. The absence of name of the Kalachuri king among the list of chiefs in the Tarikh-i-Firista, who offered resistance against Sub uktagin, has made Mirashi²⁵ to believe that Kalachuris lost their power during the reign of Kokalla II and his father. His rule ended by 990-1015 A.D. Kokalla II was succeeded by his illustrious son Gangeyadev in circa 1015 A.D. Unlike his predecessors he was a great general, victorious of many battles and raised the prestige of his home to the high ebb. He entered into confederacy with the Paramar Bhoj, Rajendra Chol and defeated the Chalukya ruler Jayasimha.²⁶ Gangeyadev defeated Mahashivagupt

Yayati. After defeating the Utkala king he reached the eastern sea-shore and assumed the title Trikalingadhipati.²⁷

In 1033 A.D. Niyaltgin raided the city of Banaras, but he was forced to leave on the news of the approach of Gangeyadev. It was probably a surprise raid of the Muslims. Gangeyadeva launched a successful expedition against the Kira (Kangra valley) country. He conquered the Doab and defeated the Chandellas also. The reign of Gangeyadev was not merely the stories of military exploits. During his reign the economic condition of his country was far from being weak as proved by his gold, silver and copper coins. The Gaj-Lakshmi type coins stand to this point. He was not only popular in own country but was counted among the important contemporary rulers.²⁸

Gangeyadev was an ardent Shaiva as Bheraghat inscription of Narasimhadev informs us that he erected a lofty temple and made donations to it.²⁹ Gangeyadev died at Prayag under a banyan tree with his hundred wives in 1041 A.D. Lakshmikarn succeeded his father Gangeyadev in circa 1041 A.D. With the beginning of his reign, we are no longer groping into darkness as epigraphic and literary sources have enabled us to get the general records of his reign. Karn was one of the greatest generals of his time. He was victorious in the east, south and west.³⁰ He also overran the southern district Kanchi (Cheevaram).³¹ He claims to have defeated the Pallavas, the Kungas (Coimbatore TN), the Murals (the Malabar coast), the Pandyas of Madura. He defeated the Chalukya king Someshvara I. All these expeditions must have been over before circa 1048-49 A.D. He defeated the Candellas and captured Bundelkhand for some time in 1051 A.D. but he was driven out of Bundelkhand by a feudator of the Chandella king Kirtivarman named Gopal. In the later part of his life, Karn had to face reverses.

Thus, it seems that though Karn fought a number of battles with many powers, far and near, throughout the greater part of his life he did not get much material advantage from them. According to the Rasamala one hundred and thirty-six kings were attending up on him.³² He assumed imperial titles like - Paramabhataraka, Maharajadhiraja, Trikalingadhipati and Nijabhuj-aparajit-ashvapati-gajapati-Narapati, etc. But at the last part of his life he created enemies for his

successor and he could only include Banaras and Allahabad to his paternal territory. Malawa was regained by Jayasimha, the Chanadella kingdom also slipped out of his hands³³ and the Chalukyas became foes for several generations. From the Jabalpur and Khairha plates of Yashakarna we learn that Karn himself crowned his son Yashakarna; it may be presumed that he abdicated the throne in favour of his son due to the failure of his schemes to bring the whole of India under one banner. Karn was great in war and peace alike. He patronised men of letters. The learned scholar Bilhana was paid much regards by the king. He composed the text *Vikramankadeva-Charita*. The other scholars of his court were Vallana, Nachiraja, Karpura, and Vidyapati. Karna was also a great builder. He built a high and lofty Shaiva temple at Banaras. It was of twelve storeys, and known as Karana-Meru. He built a ghat at Prayag, which is known as the Karna-tirth. A lofty triayatana temple at Amarkantak is still existing and known as Karana-Matha or Karana-Daharia-kamatha. Karna married a Huna princess named Avallidevi,³⁴ the mother of king Yashakarna who succeeded him. His two daughters named Virashri and Jauvanashri were married to Jatavarman and Vighrahapala respectively. Yashakarna succeeded him in circa 1073 A.D. Yashakarna succeeded his father Karna shortly after 1073 A.D. He led two aggressive campaigns against Chaniparanya (Bihar) and Andhra. The ruler of Andhra was Vijayaditya VII of the eastern Chatukya dynasty. He had to fight a number of battles in defence of his kingdom and lost many of them.

Dahala was raided by Jayasimha, the younger brother of Chalukya Vikramaditya VI before 1081 A.D., while he lost Banaras and Allahabad to Chandradev of the Gahadaval dynasty. The Paramara king Lakshmanadev plundered Tripuri and encamped on the banks of Reeva (Narmada) for sometime. The final blow came from the Chandella king Salakshavarman who was supposed to have defeated the Chedi king probably Yashakarna.³⁵

FALL OF THE KALACHURIS OF TRIPURI

Yashakarna was succeeded by his son Gayakarn in the first quarter of 12th century A.D. So far, only two records of his reign are available. The earliest one comes from Tewar dated circa 1150-51 A.D., which records the erection of a Shaiva temple by a Shaiva Acharya Bhavashiva. Jayasimha was succeeded by his son Vijayasimha, last known king of this branch of the Kalachuris. Most probably, in circa 1200 A.D. he had to submit himself to the Yadav king Simhana.³⁶ Nothing more is known about him nor do we have any idea about his son Mahakumara Vijayasimha and last prince Ajay Simha. But Dr. R.K. Sharma³⁷ suggests that Trailokyamalla is the last known ruler of the dynasty of the Kalachuris of Tripuri. When and how his reign came to an end is not known in the existing state of knowledge. A stone inscription found at Rahatgarh in the Sagar District M.P., which is dated in V.S. 1312 (1256 A.D.) mentions Maharajadhiraja Jay Varman II of Dhara.³⁸ This indicates that by the middle of the 13th cent. A.D. the Paramaras had penetrated into the territory of the Kalachuris of Tripuri.

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