

# History of Goa with Special Reference to its Feudal Features

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## Abstract

This article deals with some aspects of the history of Goa from the fifth century AD to the early eleventh century in a larger historical perspective. It is a novel attempt to examine the issue of feudalism in Goa. During this period Goa was part of one or the other larger kingdoms of the Deccan and it existed as a feudatory political entity. It was a region that was much sought after due to its geopolitical and commercial importance. The various inscriptions issued by the Bhojas, Konkani Mauryas, Badami Chalukyas and Shilaharas are analysed here with a view to identify and delineate the feudal features that were present in early medieval Goa. They included decentralisation of political authority, system of land grants, sub-infeudation of land grants, absence of large-scale exchange of goods and dominant role of the Brahmanas in the management of land and administration. Such characteristics are noticed in Goa from the beginning of the fifth century AD to the end of the tenth century AD. Subsequently Goa witnessed the decline of feudalism, and increase in trade coupled with urbanisation. There was emergence of substantial trade and urbanisation in the region by the beginning of the eleventh century AD.

## Keywords

Goa, dynasties, rulers, feudatories, *Sahyadri Khanda*, copper plates, inscriptions, feudalism, land grants, decentralisation, Brahmana settlements, *Khajjana*, *Srenis*, *Mathas*, *Hanjamana*, *Gaoncars*, ports, Arab trade, urban centres, *Chandrapura*, *Gopakapattana*

## Introduction

The ancient history of Goa is shrouded in mystery due to the paucity of sources for its reconstruction. This has resulted in some assumptions and tentative conclusions relating to the early history of Goa. It is probable that even one of the *rajukas* (commissioners) of the Mauryan Emperor, Ashoka, might have governed Goa. However, no material remains of the Mauryan period are found so far in Goa. The Satavahanas who were powerful in

the Deccan might have had Goa as one of their tributaries. The Satavahana coins, earthen ware and bricks have been unearthed from Chandrapura in Goa. It is possible that the Chutu dynasty which ruled over the Kuntala territory also had control over Goa.<sup>1</sup> While all these are indicated only in a few sources, further historical investigation is required to throw more light on the pre-Bhoja period in Goa's history. The recorded history of Goa is traced back tentatively to the third or the fourth century AD. Nevertheless, there are many topics in the history of Goa during the pre-Kadamba period which needs further research. The genealogy and chronology of the Bhojas, the Konkan Mauryas, extent of their territories, nature of their administration, their relations with their suzerains and socio-economic milieu need much more clarification. Similarly, there are many historical details of the Chalukyan and Shilahara rule in Goa which require advanced elucidation.

This article analyses the history of Goa from the period of the Bhojas to the end of the Shilahara rule, roughly covering the period from the fifth century AD to the beginning of the eleventh century. For the first time an attempt is made here to analyse the feudal features that existed in Goa.

One common feature of Goa's history during this period was that Goa was a part of larger kingdoms, that is, the Bhoja, the Konkan Maurya, the Badami Chalukya and the Goa Shilahara reigns were not just confined to the region of Goa only. Further while the ruling periods of the Bhojas and the Konkan Mauryas more or less coincided, both of them overlapped with that of the Chalukyas at least for some time. During the Chalukyan period, Goa existed as a feudatory political entity. Besides, the Goa Shilaharas ruled first as the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed and later on as that of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. V.T. Gune has rightly remarked that 'the defence of the west coast of the Rashtrakutas and later on the Chalukyan Empire was the responsibility of their feudatories, Shilaharas and the Kadambas'.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the territory of Goa continued to exist as a peripheral or feudatory region in the political field. The powers of the Deccan like the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed and the Chalukyas of Kalyani administered Goa as the political overlords through their feudatories or representatives. However, Goa was a much sought after region due to its geographical and strategic importance. The ports of Chandrapura and Gopakapattana, and the coastal or sea trade that they facilitated were the special attractions for the different political powers.

## The Bhojas

From around the fourth to the seventh century AD some Bhoja kings had ruled from Goa.<sup>3</sup> Out of the six copper plates with grants of the Bhojas of the South Konkan inscribed on them, three are found in Goa. The discovery of the Siroda copper

<sup>1</sup> Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 33; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 58, 65; Larsen, *Faces of Goa*, p. 67; Costa, *The Heritage of Govapuri*, p. 7; D'Souza, 'Reconstructing the Urban Maritime History of Goa', p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 83; Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, pp. 29–30.

<sup>3</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 65; Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, pp. 15–16.

plate<sup>4</sup> of the Bhojas traced back the history of Goa to c. 400 AD. The king, Devaraja, associated with this plate was the first known ruler of the Bhoja dynasty. The plate was issued from Chandrapura or Chandor (in Salcete taluka), situated on the bank of the river Paroda.<sup>5</sup> The royal emblem of the Bhojas was elephant and can be seen on the seal of the copper plate. It is written in southern Brahmi script, and the language used is mainly Sanskrit, with some expressions in Prakrit. The plate was composed by the *Rahasya Adhikari* or Private Secretary of the king, Prabhakara. It records a grant or gift of tolls from the village, Thanniyarka Kottinkayya (identified with Tanem-Kuttal or Thana Cortalim in Salsette), in the division of Jiyaya, to two Brahmanas, namely, Govindasvamin and Indrasvamin of Bharadvaja gotra, along with house-site and pasture land for cows. The king ratified these gifts made by Prabhu Naga-Bhogikamatya, who seems to be an official having feudatory status. The inscription shows delegation of authority of toll collection to Brahmanas. This shows that the Brahmanas had participated in secular activities, such as, management of farm land, agricultural production and toll collection. In this way, the state delegated its power to beneficiaries of grants. Along with tolls, the inscription also refers to grant of house-site (*griha sthana*) and pasture land for cows to beneficiaries. The house-site indicates the settlement of Brahmanas as landlords. The peasants would have served the Brahmanas as serfs. This is because without assistance of peasants, the Brahmanas could not have cultivated the land. The reference to pasture land indicates the existence of cattle without which cultivation of land was almost impossible.

The other two copper plates of the Bhojas were found in Bandora (Bandiwadi) of Ponda taluka and were issued by Prithivimallavarman. These are dated to the latter half of the fifth century AD.<sup>6</sup> The first grant refers to the grant of a field to a Brahmana, and the second one is addressed to the present and future *Bhogikas*, *Ayuktas* and *Sthayins*,

<sup>4</sup> Discovered by P.S.S. Pissurlencar. N.P. Chakravarti (ed.), *Epigraphia Indica* (henceforth *EI*), Vol. XXIV, 1937–38, pp. 143–45.

<sup>5</sup> The river Paroda is also called by the name Kushavati. See D'Souza, 'Reconstructing the Urban Maritime History of Goa', pp. 103–04, 105. Chandrapur served as the capital city of the Bhojas, the Shilaharas and the Kadambas. See D'Souza, 'Reconstructing the Urban Maritime History of Goa', pp. 103–04; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 38. The Kadambas shifted their capital from Chandrapura to Gopaka (Gopakapattana) in about 1049 AD. See Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 85–92; Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, p. 247. The ancient 'Hindu' city of Goa is designated in the Kannada inscriptions as Gove, and in the Sanskrit as Gopakapuri, Gopakapattana and Govapuri. See Fonseca, *An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> D.C. Sircar (ed.), *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, 1959–60 (ASI publication, Delhi, 1963), pp. 61–62; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, pp. 33–34; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 65–66; Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, pp. 207, 228. It may be noted that in early medieval India, the Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra *varnas* were identified by the suffixes sarman, varman, gupta and dasa added respectively to their names. The rulers claimed Ksatriyahood. The adoption of the Ksatriya caste suffixes can be seen in the cases of the Pallavas, Pandyas, Ceras and Colas in south India. See Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, p. 46. In the context of Goa, we may notice this practice in the cases of the Bhoja and Konkan Maurya rulers.

and it also records the grant of a field named *Kapoti Khajjana* to a Brahmana.<sup>7</sup> The main objective of the first inscription was to record grant of a field in the village of Bhagala-pallika to the donee Madhvarya of Agniveshya gotra. It is mentioned that the grant was made for merit of the king's mother Chetasadevi. The grant is addressed to subordinate officials like the *Bhojakas*, *Ayuktas* and *Sthayins*. Interestingly, the king is not introduced with any royal title. But due to reference to the subordinates, it is assumed that the king was independent. It is possible that these officials were, in actuality, king's feudatories.<sup>8</sup> The second inscription is issued from the place Prithviparvata. The main purpose of this charter was to record grant of a field called *Kapoti-khajjana*, situated in the village Malara, to Damarya of Bharadwaja gotra. The charter was written by Buddhadasa of the Kamboja gotra. The term *khajjana* can refer to rice cultivation in this region. Rice cultivation, which was labour intensive, needed exploitation of local peasant population.<sup>9</sup> Both these copper plates refer to land grants made to the Brahmanas. The names and gotras of the two Brahmanas or the recipients of the grants, the officials involved in writing the inscription and the execution of the grant are also mentioned. One of the grants is also addressed to the present and future *Bhogikas*, *Ayuktas* and *Sthayins*. This indicates that the village officials were given due importance in the administration. The two donees could have been either from the same place or from an outside area, but they were identified by the state and they in turn represented the authority of the state. The state utilised the services of the Brahmanas in administering the particular locality.

Of the remaining three, two copper plates of the Bhojas are from Uttara Kannada district, namely, the Hiregutti (Kumta taluk) copper plate of Asamkita and the Arga (Arga or Arge village near Karwar) copper plate of Kapalivarman. On palaeographical grounds the Hiregutti copper plate is dated approximately to the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth century AD, and the Arga copper plate is dated to the early part of the sixth century AD. Only one copper plate was found in Kopoli village of Khanapur taluk of Belgaum district which mentions the king Asamkitavarman of the Bhoja lineage. The Kopoli copper plates of the Bhoja king Asamkitavarman refers to the chief Elakella of the Kaikeya lineage, who at the instance of the king granted a valley (land) to a Brahmana, Nagasharman, of the Harita gotra. This reference to the Kaikeyas, a north Indian dynasty, is in tune with what some other south Indian dynasties like the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madura did. In fact, claiming Aryan descent and establishing some relation with a north Indian dynasty was quite common in early medieval south India. The grant was written by the son of Govinda-bhogika

<sup>7</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 61–62; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 65–66. *Bhogikas* or *Bhojakas* were those who collected state tax in kind, and they were also considered as village proprietors or village headmen. *Ayukta* was the governor of a district or a subdivision. The term *Sthayin* meant permanent tenants of a village. For details, see Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 55, p. 42 and p. 324 respectively. The reference to *khajjana* implies that the system of cultivating the *khazan* land in Goa was in existence during the period of the Bhojas. Future research might throw more light on the antiquity of the *khazan* land in Goa. According to D.C. Sircar *khajjana* refers to '...cultivable land created from the bed of a river which carries the flood water from the sea'. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 63–64.

and he was the official who was entrusted with the work of writing royal charters. This indicates that the Bhojas issued various charters to patronise Brahmanas.<sup>10</sup>

From the find-spots of these six plates, it is evident that the Bhojas ruled over parts of Goa, Uttara Kannada, Belgaum and Dharwad districts of Karnataka state. In Uttara Kannada, the capital of the Bhojas was at Sivapura, and in Goa it was at Chandrapur. In fact, Chandrapur continued as the centre of political power for the post-Bhoja dynasties also in Goa. The six plates have provided us the names of the Bhoja kings—Devaraja, Asamkita, Asamkitavarman, Prithivimallavarman, Kapalivarman, Chetasadevi (the mother of Prithivimallavarman) and Satrudamana (the brother of Prithivimallavarman). They belonged to the period from the fourth to the seventh century AD.<sup>11</sup> The genealogy of the Bhojas is not furnished in any of the six copper plates.<sup>12</sup>

The Bhojas might have had well-organised administrative machinery for conducting the affairs of the government. They had officials like *Bhogika Amatya* (Minister for Revenue and Finance), *Sarvatantradhikari* (Chief Administrator), *Rahasyadhikari* (Private Secretary), *Bhogikas*, *Ayuktas* and *Sthayins*.<sup>13</sup> As the designation of *Bhogika* or *Bhojaka* meant village headman, probably there existed some kind of village commune which had developed during the subsequent centuries. All their records are written in Sanskrit language.<sup>14</sup> They seem to have taken interest in the development of agriculture and issued grants of marshy lands by the seaside (*khajjana*) to the Brahmanas and others for their development.<sup>15</sup>

The Bhojas adhered to the Brahmanical religion and also supported Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> They issued land grants to both the Brahmanas and the Buddhists. The Hiregutti plates of Bhoja Asamkita refer to grant of land to Buddhist viharas. This inscription shows that Bhojas patronised Buddhism. The inscription, which belongs to fifth–sixth century AD praises Lord Buddha, his disciples and King Asamkita. The inscription was written to record the gift of village Sundarika of Dipaka Vishaya<sup>17</sup> for the enjoyment of the

<sup>10</sup> D.C. Sircar (ed.), *EI*, Vol. XXXI, 1955–56 (ASI publication, Delhi, 1960), p. 235; Kulke and Rothermund, *A History of India*, p. 98; Thapar, *Early India from the Origins to AD 1300*, p. 329.

<sup>11</sup> For example, one inscription refers to the king Kapalivarman. See N.P. Chakravarti (ed.), *EI*, Vol. XXVI, 1941–42 (ASI publication, Delhi, 1952), p. 339.

<sup>12</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 143–45; *EI*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 337–40; B. Ch. Chhabra (ed.), *EI*, Vol. XXVIII, 1949–50 (ASI publication, Delhi, 1958), pp. 70–74; *EI*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 232–36; *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 62–64; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 34; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 65–68.

<sup>13</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 62; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 69; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 143–45; *EI*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 337–40; *EI*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 70–74; *EI*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 232–36; *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 62–64; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 69; Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, pp. 228–29.

<sup>15</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 63; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXI, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 74. *Vishaya* refers to a district, territorial division and kingdom. Sircar *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 377. According to P.B. Desai, Dipaka Vishaya, which is a sort of territorial division, may be either in the island of Divar (in Goa), or in the island of Angediva. See Desai quoted in Gerald A. Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, p. 21. Also see Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 68–69; Pitre, 'Buddhism in the History of Goa'.

Buddhist viharas. Arya Samgha, the assembly of Buddhist monks, which was in charge of the monastery, was requested to manage this grant. The grant pleads for its own protection, and mentions punishment for violators of this gift. This inscription is significant because it refers to the grant made to Buddhists, whereas the other Bhoja records represent grants to Brahmanas. The Bhojas are connected with Mahabhojas<sup>18</sup> and Maharathis, who enjoyed their position as feudatories who were respected by the Satavahanas. The grant given to Buddhist viharas indicates that the king Asamkita patronised Buddhism, even though other Bhoja kings supported Brahmanas. Nevertheless, grants to Buddhists and Brahmanas succeeded in creating a class of landed intermediaries, an essential feature of feudalism during the early medieval period.

### The Konkan Mauryas

The two branches of the Maurya dynasties ruled Rajputana and Konkan. These branches claimed their descent from the Kumara viceroys of Ujjain and Suvarnagiri sent by the Mauryas of Magadha. Two copper plate grants of the Maurya kings are found in Goa. They are the Shivapura plates of Chandravarman and the Bandora (Bandiwade) plates of Anirjitavarman. The first grant records the donation of some land to the *Mahavihara* (Buddhist monastery) situated in Shivapura, which is identified with Siroda in Goa.<sup>19</sup> On palaeographical grounds, it is dated to the fifth or the sixth century AD.<sup>20</sup> The second grant is addressed to the inhabitants of twelve village-desh<sup>21</sup> as well as the present and future officials. The record registers the king's grant of one *hala* of *khajjana* land as well as a piece of land, including a house-site, a garden and a tank belonging to an unnamed Rashtrakuta, to a learned Brahmana, Hastyarya, of Hariti gotra. In addition to this, some land to be reclaimed by clearing the forest, and by employing four batches of workers, was also granted. The grant or gift was exempted from all taxes (*panga*). The donee, Hastyarya, was to enjoy the produce of the land by putting up a *bund* to prevent the salt water from entering the field on the seashore. It is to be noted that this grant makes a definite reference to the technology of construction of a *bund* and the system of *khazan* land cultivation in Goa. This grant also belongs to the fifth or sixth century AD. The name and gotra of the Brahmana are mentioned in the inscription. This grant refers to two methods of extension of cultivation, by developing the *khazan* land and by forest reclamation. The Brahmana was given incentive to develop the land as he was exempted from all taxes and he was supposed to employ four batches of workers to do the work. He was given a house-site to construct a house and thereby live in the village. The grant also refers to a garden and a tank and these indicate the

<sup>18</sup> Mahabhoja was a title of a feudatory ruler. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup> *EI*, XXIV, pp. 143–44; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 71–72; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, pp. 35–36; Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 71; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, pp. 35–36; Larsen, *Faces of Goa*, p. 67.

<sup>21</sup> An administrative unit comprising twelve villages.

existence of garden cultivation or horticulture and also tank irrigation system. It is interesting to note that the grant is addressed not only to the officials but also to the inhabitants of twelve villages. Obviously, the recipient of this grant wielded considerable power in that village, and in its administration.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the two copper plates mentioned earlier, a stone inscription of the Konkan Mauryas was found at Vada to the north of Thana near Mumbai. It refers to Suketavarman of the Maurya dynasty.<sup>23</sup>

It is said that the Konkan Mauryas were involved in external trade and commerce. Their sailors were active in sea navigation. Their period also witnessed inland trade, and customs posts were set up in the border villages, like those in Tana and Curdi in Ponda, and Cortalim in Salsette. This indicates that there existed trade between Goa and the neighbouring regions like Karnataka and Maharashtra, and the traditional system of transport was used.<sup>24</sup> However, we do not have evidence to quantify this trade and analyse the trends therein. Probably the trade that existed was limited in character.

The Bhoja and Konkan Maurya grants refer to the *khajjana* land. This indicates that the traditional *khazan* fields were developed during their period by constructing the embankments to prevent the sea water from entering the paddy fields. It implies that there were officials engaged in increasing the agricultural productivity and thereby the revenue base of the state. There were also officials who were involved in the execution of land grants. This also indicates the presence of agricultural labourers.

## The Chalukyas of Badami

After the rule of the minor dynasties like the Bhojas and the Konkan Mauryas, the first major dynasty to establish itself on the coast was that of the Chalukyas of Badami or the Western Chalukyas. All the dynasties of the Deccan Plateau were eager to control the sea coast due to its strategic importance and the Chalukyas did not lag behind in this venture. The Chalukyas established their regional headquarters in Iridige Vishaya or Konkan Vishaya or Revatidvipa, that is, in the village Redi of Sawantwadi taluk of Maharashtra. It is situated just on the northern border of Goa and Goa was a part of their kingdom.<sup>25</sup> They ruled in Goa from about 540 AD to 757 AD.

The system of granting land continued under the Chalukyas of Badami. A few examples may be noted in this context. So far seven copper plates of the Badami Chalukyas were found in the region of Sawantwadi. One copper plate of Satyashraya Druvaraja Indravarman, the Governor of the Chalukyas, was found in Goa, and is dated Saka 532, that is, 610 AD. Kirtivarman (566–598), who succeeded his father Pulakesi I, was the first Chalukyan ruler to establish political sway over South Konkan and Goa. Kirtivarman nominated his brother-in-law, Shrivallabha Senanandaraya, as tutelary

<sup>22</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 293–96.

<sup>23</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 293–96. Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 36; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, p. 231.

<sup>25</sup> Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 36; Larsen, *Faces of Goa*, p. 67.

Raja of Goa, while the Bhojas continued as feudatories at Chandrapura. Mangalesa succeeded Kirtivarman and ruled from 597AD to 610AD. Meanwhile, Svamikaraja, the Chalukya feudatory at Revatidvipa, revolted against the Chalukyan domination. Then Mangalesa not only defeated and killed Svamikaraja, but also placed Satyashraya Dhruvaraja Indravarman of Batapura family as the governor of the four Vishayas of Konkan. Pulakesi II (610–642) succeeded Mangalesa and he was one of the greatest rulers of the Chalukyas.<sup>26</sup> The copper plate grant of Goa of Satyashraya mentions that with the permission of Maharaja, the governor Satyashraya-Dhruvaraja-Indravarman, stationed in Revatidvipa, granted to a Brahmana a village named Karellika in the Khetahara desa, which is identified with Ratnagiri district.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that as in other parts of the Chalukyan kingdom, in Goa also, there were instances of grant of land and villages to Brahmanas. A copper plate grant from Kandalgaon in the Ratnagiri district mentions that a Brahmana was granted a village named Pirigipa on the northern bank of River Mahanadi in Revatidvipa.<sup>28</sup>

After Mangalesa, Vikramaditya (654–681) ruled over the Chalukyan kingdom. In the grant from Nerur in Sawantwadi there is reference to kings like Kirtivarman I, Satyasraya or Pulakesi II, Vikramaditya I and Chandraditya. Chandraditya was the elder brother of Vikramaditya I. During the reign of Vikramaditya I, Chandraditya succeeded Indravarman as the Governor of South Konkan.<sup>29</sup> Vijayamahadevi or Vijayabhatarika was the Queen of Chandraditya, and succeeded him as the ruler after his death. The Nerur inscription of 659 AD records a grant of land by Vijayamahadevi to a Brahmana, Aryaswami Dikshit. Another inscription of the queen discovered at Kochre village in Vengurla taluka, dated 659 AD, refers to a grant of *khajjana* land from that village to a Brahmana of Vatsa gotra. Vijayamahadevi was the first known woman ruler in this region. The subsequent Chalukyan rulers were Vinayaditya (680–696), Vijayaditya (696–733), Vikramaditya II (733–744) and Kirtivarman (744–757). Due to the lack of sources, our information about Goa under the Badami Chalukyas is limited.<sup>30</sup> In another copper plate grant dated Saka Samvat 622 or 700 AD from Nerur in Sawantwadi, the king Vijayaditya, at the request of Nandereya, granted to a Brahmana the village of Nerur.<sup>31</sup> Another copper plate grant dated Saka Samvat 627 or 705 AD refers to grant of village Hikulamba situated in the Iridige Vishaya, by the king Vijayaditya, at the request of Upendra to eight Brahmanas who were scholars in Vedas and Vedangas. This grant itself records six gotras of the Brahmanas.<sup>32</sup> The village is mentioned as part of Iridige Vishaya, a part of seven Konkanas.<sup>33</sup> An undated copper plate grant from Nerur

<sup>26</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, p. 349. Fleet identifies Revatidvipa with Konkana-900, which included the present territory of Goa, in addition to Vengurla taluka and southern portion of Malwan taluka. Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, p. 347.

<sup>27</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 355–56.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>29</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>30</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 365–66; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, pp. 36–37; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 72–82; Larsen, *Faces of Goa*, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, p. 370.

<sup>32</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 80–81.



in Sawantwadi mentions the killing of Svamiraja. The inscription refers to grant of a village named Kundivataka in the Konkana Visaya to a Brahmana.<sup>34</sup>

It is possible that the grouping of the territorial divisions on the basis of numerals like Tiswadi, Sasashti, Sattari and Bardez that began in the Bhoja period might have developed further during the Chalukyan period.<sup>35</sup>

The port of Chandrapura on the bank of the river Paroda, due to years of neglect, got silted, degraded and could be used only for domestic navigation. Vantuvallabha, the vassal of Pulakesi II, decided to build an alternative port on the river Zuari at Agasaim and ordered the de-silting of the river and the reconstruction of the port with facilities to berth merchant vessels. The plan was to receive such vessels from the Malabar Coast and foreign cargo ships with their cargoes of horses from Persia, Arabia and Afghanistan. The port was named Sindabur or Sindapura and it received merchant ships from many countries and subsequently became a commercial entrepot on the western coast of India. As the horses required regular grooming, Arab slaves were brought to work as stable hands in Goa.<sup>36</sup>

The feudal political system that emerged in Goa during the Bhoja–Konkan Maurya period later on developed under the Western Chalukyas. The references to land grants in the inscriptions issued by the rulers of these dynasties support this contention.<sup>37</sup> The land grants were made to the Brahmanas, who in turn legitimised the position of the kings. This they did as scholars or officials assisting the kings in their courts and by recording the munificent deeds of the kings. Studies conducted in other parts of India also show that land grants to Brahmanas represented the attempts made by the rulers to obtain support from the Brahmanas, a dominant social class of that period.<sup>38</sup>

Sub-infeudation of land grants was also in existence. This is known from the Arge copper plate of the Bhoja king Kapalivarman. It states that the land grant given by Kapalivarman to Swamikaraja for religious purpose was in turn granted by Swamikaraja to a Brahmana, Bhavarya of Kaundinya gotra, to secure merit.<sup>39</sup> This indicates that the vassal possessed the power to give land grant without the permission from his overlord. Decentralisation of authority was an important feature of feudal polity that can be found in the post-Gupta period.<sup>40</sup> It is significant to note that the grant is addressed to inhabit-

<sup>33</sup> Flect, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, p. 372.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>35</sup> Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> The Muslim presence in Goa can be placed from the seventh century AD. See Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, p. 300. Cosme Jose Costa has stated that the port of Sindapura was frequented by the Arab travellers from the eighth century AD. The Pilar Seminary Museum has some bits of Arab pottery of the eighth century indicative of the trade between the Shilaharas and the Arabs. See Costa, *The Heritage of Govapuri*, pp. 12, 14. V.R. Mitragotri has stated that during the period of Jayakeshi I of the Goa Kadambas (c. 1050–78 AD), Gopakapattana became a great commercial centre. See Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 40 and Appendix – XI. Information concerning Jayakeshi I is available in various inscriptions. Refer *Annual Report of Epigraphy (ARE)*, 1951–52, No. 3, p. 7; *ARE*, 1963–64, No. 93, p. 23; *EI*, 1968, p. 284.

<sup>37</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 143–45; *EI*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 337–40; *EI*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 70–74; *EI*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 232–36; *EI*, XXXIII, pp. 62–64.

<sup>38</sup> Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*, p. 154. Avari, *India, the Ancient Past*, p. 188.

<sup>39</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXI, p. 233.

ants of the village. This shows that settled land was given to beneficiaries so that they would be able to obtain peasants to cultivate the land. This is because without support of peasants beneficiaries could not cultivate or get the land cultivated. The grant refers to officials called *Bhojakas*, *Ayuktas*, *Sthayins* and others of Sivapura-vishaya.<sup>41</sup>

Many other land grants might have been made by the Bhoja, South Konkan Maurya and Western Chalukya rulers both in Goa and other areas under their jurisdiction. All of them may not be extant today. Based on the available evidences, we may conclude that land donation to Brahmanas was a major feature that existed in early medieval Goa.

Another crucial fact is also available to establish the argument that feudalism existed in Goa. We have noted earlier that the Chalukyan rulers appointed tutelary or feudatory rajas or chieftains in Revatidvipa. One such feudatory chieftain, Svamikaraja, had revolted against his lord, Mangalesa. Then Mangalesa killed him and replaced him with another governor or feudal chieftain. Earlier reference is made to a copper plate grant issued by one of the governors of the Chalukyas in Goa. These facts indicate that often the feudal chiefs tried to assert themselves by undermining the authority of their lords.

## The Shilaharas

After the suppression of the power of the Badami Chalukyas, the Rashtrakuta ruler Dantidurga laid down the foundation of the Rashtrakuta kingdom in about 753 AD. The Rashtrakutas ruled over the Deccan, Karnataka and Gujarat until around 973 AD. They had their capital at Manyakheta or Malkhed in Maharashtra. They looked upon the Konkan region as their feudatory province and the South Konkan Shilaharas or Goa Shilaharas ruled over the Konkan region. Thus, the Goa Shilaharas were the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas.<sup>42</sup>

It is fascinating to note the mythical origin of the Shilaharas. They claimed their descent from the mythical Vidhyadhara prince Jimutavahana, the son of Jimutaketu, who sacrificed himself as *ahara* or food for *garuda* or eagle, on the *shila* or stone and rescued the life of the great *naga* or serpent known as Shankachuda. Consequently, his descendants came to be called as the Shilaharas.<sup>43</sup> The claim of affiliation to some mythical origin or mystical past of a ruling dynasty was a typical feature of the ancient and medieval times.<sup>44</sup> This was done to obtain some sort of sanctity or authority to

<sup>40</sup> Sharma, *Indian Feudalism C. 300–1200*, pp. 12–13. Other notable works on Indian feudalism are: Byres and Mukhia, *Feudalism and Non-European Societies*; Thakur, *Historiography of Indian Feudalism towards a Model of Early Medieval Indian Economy c. A.D. 600–1000*; Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*; Jha, *The Feudal Order*.

<sup>41</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 233–35.

<sup>42</sup> Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, p. 28; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 82; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 38. The other two families of Shilaharas were North Konkan or Thana Shilaharas and Kolhapur or Valivade Shilaharas. See Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 83; Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>43</sup> Fleck, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 536–37; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 83.

establish their political control over the people. The Shilaharas had the golden eagle or *suvarnagarudawaja* as their standard.<sup>45</sup>

There are three copper plate grants of the Goa Shilaharas: the Chikodi or Pattanakudi (in Belgaum district) grant of Avasara III dated Saka 910 or 988 AD, the Kharepatana<sup>46</sup> grant dated Saka 930 or 1008 AD and the Valipattana (or Balipattana) grant dated Saka 932 or 1010 AD, both issued by Rattaraja' can be replaced with 'the later two issued by Rattaraja. The Kharepatana charter provides the complete genealogy of the Rashtrakutas, the overlords of the Shilaharas, up to the time of the last Shilahara king, Rattaraja, and also the names of Tailapa and Satyashraya, the Chalukyan kings, who were their next overlords. Thus, it is evident that after the fall of the Rashtrakutas, the Shilaharas ruled South Konkan as the feudatories of the Kalyani Chalukyas.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, the Kharepatana inscription glorifies the family of the 'Rashtrakuta lords', which was the ornament of the Yadu race. There is reference to members of Rashtrakuta family, such as, Dantidurga, Krishnaraja, Govindaraja, Nirupama, Amoghavarsha and others. The Rashtrakuta king Kakkala was defeated by the Chalukyan ruler Tailapa who was succeeded by Satyashraya. The grant was issued during the period of Satyashraya. This clearly indicates that Rattaraja was the feudatory of Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas of Kalyani. This inscription also comprises genealogy of Shilaharas wherein there is reference to kings like Sanaphulla and Dhammiyara. Sanaphulla was a favourite of king Krishna. He acquired the country from the seashore up to the Sahya Mountains. The king Dhammiyara was the founder of Valipattana. His son Aiyaparaja captured Chandrapura. Avasara supported the rulers born at Chemulya (identified with Chaul) and Chandrapura. Rattaraja was the son of Avasara III.<sup>48</sup>

The genealogy of the Shilaharas as given in the Pattanakudi grant and the Kharepatana grant are slightly different. V.T. Gunc has furnished a tentative list of the periods of the regime of each Shilahara ruler from the founder of the family, Shanaphulla (c. 765 to 795 AD), to Rattaraja (c. 995 to 1020 AD), the last ruler. Shanaphulla obtained control over the South Konkan territory between the Sahyadri Mountains and the sea coast by the favour of his suzerain, Krishna I. From both the grants of Rattaraja, this territory seems to have been called as Simhala Dwipa by the Shilaharas. Perhaps Goa Velha or Gopakapattana was their capital during the reign of Shanaphulla.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For details on origin myths, see Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, pp. 30-34.

<sup>45</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 84; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 37; Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> According to Gunc, this is in Ratnagiri area. See Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> Fleck, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 537-38; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 84; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> E. Hultzsch (ed.), *El*, Vol. III, 1894-95 (ASI, New Delhi, 1979), p. 294; Fleck, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 537-38.

<sup>49</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 84-85; Larsen, *Faces of Goa*, p. 69; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 38; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, Appendix - X for genealogy of southern Shilaharas.

Dhammiyara succeeded Shanaphulla.<sup>50</sup> He is said to have fortified Balipattana and probably the capital was changed from Gopakapattana to Balipattana. There is no unanimity among the scholars in the identification of Balipattana. It is stated that Vantuvallabha, the vassal of the Chalukyas, had developed the port of Sindabur or Sindapura, and it was used by the Shilaharas and Kadambas later. Probably, it came to be called as the port of Gopakapattana during the Kadamba period. However, there is uncertainty regarding the identification of Sindabur. Whether Sindabur represented Chandrapura or Gopakapattana is a matter of debate among the scholars.<sup>51</sup>

The Goa Shilaharas were in constant war with the Chandramandal rulers.<sup>52</sup> Aiyapa, a *vigigishu*<sup>53</sup> ruler, waged war with the ruler of Chandrapura, and conquered that principality.<sup>54</sup> Adityavarman and Avasara II helped the rulers of Chandrapur and Chemulya or modern Chaul. Bhima is said to have annexed Chandramandala. When Avasara III issued his Chikodi grant, the last Rashtrakuta ruler, Karka II, was overthrown by Tailapa, the founder of the Chalukya dynasty of Kalyani.<sup>55</sup>

The Chikodi grant of Avasara III records that the merchants, Nagai Shreshthin, Lokai Shreshthin and Adityavarman, made a present of 40 *dinars* at the *padypuja* of the king Avasara III, and thereby obtained the confirmation of the king to their hereditary rights over the places, Kinjala and Pulisa, which were the source of their livelihood. In return to this confirmation, they were to grant annually 2 lakhs of betel-nuts towards

<sup>50</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, p. 537.

<sup>51</sup> G.M. Moraes has identified Sindabur with Chandrapura. See Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, p. 215. Gerald A. Pereira has identified Ibn Batuta's Sindapur with the city of Gopakapattana (*Voddlem Goem*). Jose Nicolau Da Fonseca has identified Sindapur with the city of Goa (that is, *Goa-Velha*) and not with Chandrapura. See Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa*, p. 17; Fonseca, *An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa*, pp. 118, 124. A.R.S. Dhume has identified Sindapura with *Vodlem Goen* (Goa Velha), that is, Gopakapattana. See Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa*, pp. 247, 266–67. Olivinho J.F. Gomes states that 'the Arab chroniclers and traders refer to Chandrapur as Sindabur or Sandabur. But it is taken to refer to the whole kingdom of Mabir, as mentioned in Ferishta, which included the second capital of the Kadambas, which was Gopakpattan, on the banks of the same river Zuari, nearer the sea than the first.' See Gomes, *Goa*, pp. 45–46. Recently, Alviya Mary D'Souza also identified Sindabur with Chandrapur. See D'Souza, 'Reconstructing the Urban Maritime History of Goa', p. 103. There is a need for further research to arrive at the final opinion regarding the identification of Sindapura.

<sup>52</sup> The identification of this Chandramandal region is still a problem to be solved. See Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 85. *Vigigishu* means one who wishes to conquer. Aggrandisement was the recognised duty of the ruler; he had to be a *vigigishu* and the general acceptance of this ideal led to frequent wars and skirmishes resulting in changes in the relative precedence of the different powers involved. See Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 164, and Sastri, *The Colas*, p. 331.

<sup>54</sup> The name of the ruler is not known. V.T. Gunc wrote that he must have belonged either to the family of the ancient Bhojas of Chandrapur or the Konkan Mauryas who had extended their sway over South Konkan by the end of the sixth century AD. See Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 86; Mitragotri, *Socio-cultural History of Goa*, p. 38. Here Mitragotri writes that Chandrapura was the erstwhile capital of the Shilaharas.

<sup>55</sup> *EI*, Vol. III, p. 294; Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 86–87.

the expenses of the royal bag of betel-nuts. The share received by Nagai Shreshthin was exempted from the taxes. This transaction was made in the presence of several officers including *hadapa* and some committee like *Hanjamana*. It was composed by Devapala, the *Nagara Sandhivigrahika* (minister in-charge of the capital), and was engraved by *Vajjada*.<sup>56</sup>

Avasara III was succeeded by his son Rattaraja. The Kharepatana plate of Rattaraja records the grant of three villages: Kushmandi, Asavanire and Vadagule to a Brahmana by the name Atreya. Atreya was the disciple of Acharya Ambhojashambhu, who belonged to a clan of Shaiva sect. The grant was made to meet the expenses involved in the worship of god Avveshvara and maintenance of the temple.<sup>57</sup> Rattaraja ordered that these villages should not be entered by regular and irregular soldiers. The beneficiaries, the learned people who belonged to the Mattamayura line, could enjoy this grant as long as sun and moon endure. The beneficiaries were granted a *gadyana* of gold from every vessel arriving from foreign lands, and a *dharana* of gold from every ship arriving from Kandalamulya. The beneficiaries were also assigned families of female attendants, oil men, gardeners, potters and washermen. There is also reference to a dwelling house.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that learned men who belonged to Mattamayura school emerged as landed intermediaries between the state and the actual peasant. They were given land and peasants to work on the land. Apart from the peasants, artisans were also given to them. The grant of taxes enabled them to perform their religious and secular activities. It has to be noted that the Mattamayura school originally belonged to central India. Rattaraja, being a devotee of saints who belonged to Mattamayura school, attempted to invite them to his kingdom that included Goa.<sup>59</sup>

The Valipattana grant of Rattaraja refers to him as Mahamandalika Shri Rattaraya Raja. It records grant of a plot of land named *Kalvala* from the village Bhaktagrama, and a garden of betel-nut near the *agrahara* village, Palaure, to Sankamaiya, son of Brahmana Senavai Nagamaiya. This is perhaps the earliest reference to Shenavi Brahmanas in Goa.<sup>60</sup> The emperor Vikramaditya V of Kalyani Chalukyas succeeded Satyashraya in 1009 AD. He was a weak ruler and could not suppress his powerful feudatories. Taking advantage of the relatively weak power at the centre, Rattaraja seems to have declared himself independent before the issue of this grant in 1010 AD. In contrast to the Kharepatana grant, this grant does not state the genealogy of any of his suzerain rulers. There is no record of the house of the Goa Shilaharas subsequent to the Valipattana grant. It appears that their rule came to an end when Jayasimha II, brother of Chalukya Vikramaditya V, invaded Konkan in 1024 AD and

<sup>56</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 87. Whether *Vajjada* is the name of the engraver or the office which he held is not clear.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>58</sup> *EI*, Vol. III, p. 294.

<sup>59</sup> *EI*, Vol. III, p. 297.

<sup>60</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 87. For more details about the Saraswats, see Keni, *The Saraswats*.

occupied Saptakonkan or South Konkan. The Miraja plates (1024 AD) of Jayasimha II bear testimony to this invasion and the major historical event which saw the end of the Goa Shilahara dynasty. It gave rise to the emergence of the Kadambas of Goa who were the feudatories of the Chalukyas of Kalyani and later on of the Yadavas of Devagiri.<sup>61</sup>

The Goa Shilaharas styled themselves as *Mahamandalikas* or *Mandalika*.<sup>62</sup> They ruled first as feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and later as that of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. The king was assisted in his administration by a ministry consisting of *Pradhan*, *Amatya*, *Sandhi Vighraha*, *Pauras* of *nagar* or town, heads of *Hanjamana* (trade guild that comprised mostly of Muslim traders) and settlement of *Shrenis* (guilds) of artisans and traders. The towns were administered by the committees consisting of representatives of important classes, heads of *Shrenis* and *Mathas*.<sup>63</sup> The Chikodi grant refers to several officers including the *hadapa* (one who was in-charge of the royal bag of betel-nuts, the *hadap*), the *Nagara Sandhivighraha* (minister in-charge of capital), composer, engraver and committees or guilds like the *Hanjamana*. The Kharepatana plate also refers to ministers, *Amatyas*, and citizens, and states that their consent was obtained in making the grant.<sup>64</sup> All these details support the fact that during the Shilahara period the system of administration was fairly well developed and the functions of the different organisations and their officers were defined.

The Shilahara rulers were Shaivites. The Shiva temple at Curdi (Sanguem) seems to be the best specimen of the structural remains of the Shilahara temple architecture in Goa. They also worshipped goddess Mahalakshmi. The Mahalakshmi temple at Netroli also seems to have been originally constructed under the Goa Shilaharas. The Saptakoteshwara temple at Opa (Ponda) also belonged to the same period. The Kharepatana plate of Rattaraja records the grant meant to support the maintenance of the Avveshvara temple in his capital Balipattana. The grant was provided for the maintenance of the family of the priest of the temple also. There was an oil man to supply oil for the lamp of the God, a gardener for the supply of flowers for worship of the deity, a potter to arrange for pots for serving foods, a washer man for cleaning the clothes, a courtesan for performing dance before the God. Religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were equally respected by the Shilaharas. The Chikodi grant of Avasara III states that a portion of the royal share of betel-nuts received from the three donees of the grant by *Hadap* was to be donated for the worship of *Arhanama*.<sup>65</sup> The Vaishnavi sculpture of Chandor (now exhibited in the Museum of the Heras Institute at Mumbai) and the Mahishasuramardhini sculptures of Korgaon are a few of the best pieces of the Shilahara period in Goa.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, pp. 88–89, 91.

<sup>62</sup> Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, pp. 536–37.

<sup>63</sup> Gunc (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, p. 90.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 84.

<sup>66</sup> V. Gopal Rao, 'Temples of Goa', p. 35.

## The Feudal Features

There is a need to analyse regional history in the broader historical context to delineate the uniqueness or otherwise of the history of a region. This also helps in overcoming the problem of regional glorification. When we examine the historical facts presented so far in the pan-Indian context, there emerges a broader historical theme, that is, feudalism in India. Did feudalism or feudal tendencies exist in Goa? If decentralisation of political authority, issue of land grants, absence of large-scale exchange of goods or trade and dominant position of the Brahmanas involved in management of land and administration are the dominant features of feudalism in India, then it existed in Goa also. Such features are seen in Goa (from the beginning of the fifth century AD to the end of the tenth century AD), which witnessed the rule of the Bhojas, Konkan Mauryas, Chalukyas and Shilaharas.<sup>67</sup>

As in many other parts of India, the early medieval Goan society also witnessed social changes and social stratification. This was mainly due to the process of Brahmanisation of the society. It happened over a period of time as the Bhoja, Konkan Maurya, Badami Chalukyan and Shilahara rulers encouraged the settlement of Brahmanas in Goa. It is pertinent to recall that Goa is a part of the Parashurama *kshetra* and tradition as mentioned in the work *Sahyadri Khanda*, which purports to be a part of the Sanskrit text *Skanda Purana*.<sup>68</sup> Based on Parashurama tradition and epigraphical sources, we can assume that early Goa was influenced by the Brahmanical culture. It is a well-known fact that the Brahmanas, generally, did not take up large-scale agricultural activity in ancient India. But the munificent offer of land grants to the Brahmanas made them to manage the production activities. Therefore, they had to do their traditional work as religious functionaries and learned people, and also manage the new duties as secular officials involved in administration and agricultural production. This is because the land grants implicitly and explicitly permitted the Brahmanas to act as the administrators of the different localities or sites allotted to them. This trend can be seen in some other parts of India as well. For example, studies undertaken in the case of the Rashtrakutas in Karnataka show that the land grants had enhanced the authority of the state by delegating power to the dominant local social groups.<sup>69</sup> The numerous land grants also show that agriculture, garden cultivation and cattle rearing were the main economic activities. The Brahmana land owners had to depend on peasants or agricultural labourers for cultivating the land. Thus, the state, the landlord and the peasant figured as the major groups in the agrarian set-up.<sup>70</sup>

It has to be noted that the early inscriptions refer to religious practice, different government officials, Brahmanas, settled villages, landlords and labourers. However,

<sup>67</sup> The Shilahara kings are considered as feudatories, an important feature of feudalism. See Gadre, *Important Inscriptions from the Baroda State*, p. 38.

<sup>68</sup> Kosambi, *Myth and Reality Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture*, p. 166; Nagendra Rao, 'Land Grants in Early Medieval Goa', p. 63–72.

<sup>69</sup> Gadgari, *Society and Religion*, p. 179.

<sup>70</sup> Nandi, 'Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India'. India: Annamalai University.

they do not refer to trade as an important economic activity. This is a typical feature of the feudal age as revealed from the studies conducted in the other parts of India. At the same time we cannot conclude that trade was non-existent. Definitely some amount of trade existed and we do get a few references to it during the period from the Bhojas to the Shilaharas. The Siroda plate of king Devaraja refers to the grant of tolls among other items from a village to two Brahmanas, Govindaswami and Indraswami.<sup>71</sup> This indicates that there was exchange of goods and it was taxed by the state. It also reveals that either the state was not keen to collect the customs duty, or it was unable to manage the same. Consequently, the work of collecting tolls was entrusted to the Brahmanas, who obviously emerged as an influential group in the society. This proves that trade and traders were not considered important by the state. Similarly, we have noted references to trade and port during the rule of the Chalukyas of Badami in Goa, and to trade, merchants and towns during the reign of the Shilaharas in Goa. These tendencies do not contradict our proposition that feudal tendencies did exist in Goa as such co-existence between limited trade, urbanism and feudalism is proved by the existing historical writings on feudalism. Even in the classic feudal age, the coastal regions exhibited trade contacts with neighbouring regions.<sup>72</sup> In the feudal age, Goa cannot be considered as an isolated region. Landlocked regions such as the kingdom of the Chalukyas of Badami and the Rashtrakutas needed to maintain contact with Goan political authorities. With the help of feudatories, the powers of Karnataka and Maharashtra attempted to control the region of Goa. However, there are not enough sources which would help us analyse the social stratification and to explain the nature and extent of trade that existed during these centuries. However, the sources available to us definitely reveal the emergence of Brahmanas as the feudal or intermediary social class who played a dominant role both in the administration as also in the cultivation of land.

## Conclusion

In the foregoing pages we have tried to look at the land grants of Goa made during the reigns of the Bhojas, Konkan Mauryas, Badami Chalukyas and Goa Shilaharas. During their rule, roughly from the beginning of the fifth century AD to the beginning of the eleventh century, Goa was a part of one or the other larger kingdoms in the Deccan region. The different rulers of Goa ruled as feudatories rather than as kings with supreme political powers. The inscriptions that we have analysed clearly indicate that feudal polity prevailed in Goa. There was the rise of Brahmanas as an important social group in the Goan society. Land and agriculture were dominant in the economy, though artisanal and trading activities also existed. The period of the Shilaharas witnessed a transition as we get more references to trade, guilds and coins during their period and gradually feudalism declined in Goa.

<sup>71</sup> *EI*, Vol. XXVI, p. 339.

<sup>72</sup> V.K. Thakur argues that '...the evidence for an urban centre in a region or the discovery of a very few coins or proof for a limited commodity exchange should not be projected as counter to the Indian feudal model, for a thorough analysis of such developments generally unravels the feudal framework within which they were operating'. Thakur, *Historiography of Indian Feudalism*, p. 85.



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