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## **Chronicles on stone: A Kadamba inscription and historical consciousness in pre-modern India**

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A few scholars who studied India's sense of history and attempted to find historical consciousness argued that India did not have the tradition of writing down its history. Based on this finding, it was argued that Indians lacked a sense of history and the need to preserve their past. A few imperialist historians made this argument. However, several Indian scholars have attempted to prove that Indians did write about their past.<sup>1</sup> They present *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana as a classic example. Since then, scholars have found several works exhibiting historical consciousness. It shows that like other nations of Asia and Europe India also exhibited a sense of history. Such an argument can be made based on a study of inscriptions. Thousands of inscriptions have been discovered in different parts of South India. The present attempt is to study an inscription of the Goa Kadambas. The present work will study the content of this inscription while at the same time, analyzing its function and audience.

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<sup>1</sup>For a recent study see Aruna Pariti, *Genealogy, Time and Identity Historical Consciousness in the Deccan Sixth Century CE-Twelfth Century CE*, Delhi: Primus Books, 2015.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE there was a major development in the history of Goa in the form of the rise of the branch named Goa Kadambas. According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Kadambas did not deserve to be a state due to lack of static lineage formation.<sup>2</sup> It is found that compared to the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas, Kadambas did not remain in the same place. Different branches of the Kadambas were established in different regions. However, we find the attempt made by the Goa Kadambas to legitimize their administration and propagate state ideology.

The inscription was discovered near Mallikarjuana temple, Narendra, Dharwar district and it belongs to early 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the inscription is to issue a land grant, which is mentioned only at the end of the inscription. Land grant seems to be only a pretext to write the history of and achievements of kings such as Shashtadeva, Jayakesin I and Jayakesin II - three generations of kings. Narration of the achievements of the kings has a major purpose, to impress the subjects concerning the need to respect the authority of the king. Consequently, it was an attempt to create the 'self-image of royalty'.<sup>4</sup> There is a statement of the genealogy of the kingdom. The audience of the inscriptions seems to be the subjects of Karnataka as the inscription was issued in Kannada language and found in Kundur. There is a clear strategy on the part of the author of this inscription to enhance the authority of the state. While we find Kalhana wrote the chronicle in the form of a book, the Goa Kadambas issued the chronicle on stone. It is possible that there were officials involved in the writing of this inscription. Original draft is generally issued in palm

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<sup>2</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India', In Hermann Kulke, *State in India 1000-1700*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Lionel D. Barnett, 'Inscriptions at Narendra' in *Epigraphia Indica, vol. XIII*, ed. Sten Konow and F.W. Thomas, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1982, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> For a study of concept of self image of royalty see Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2012, p. 47.

leaf manuscript. After obtaining the sanction of the concerning official and perhaps the king, it would be given to the clerk and the scribe who inscribed the inscription. It shows that by this period, there was a process of reconstruction of history in south western India. It is difficult to accept the argument that ancient Indians did not have a sense of history. Further, it would be difficult to accept that only *Rajatarangini* was the earliest historical work. The process of recording the history of the ruling families had begun and it was done in most systematic way. The present inscription is only a specimen of such a process. This is a huge inscription of more than 200 lines containing the genealogy of not only the king but also the minister. The inscription also contains the place names around Kundur and Dharwar district, thereby indicating the intended audience.

The inscription begins with the mythical past of Lord Siva after conquering Tripura came down to the Kadamba territory and while taking rest under the shade of the Kadamba trees there was the birth of the primogenitor of the Kadambas. It then narrates the achievements of the king Chattayadeva described as the lord of the ocean. It is stated that he conquered Kavadi dvipa identified in south Konkan and conquered Lanka by building a bridge of ships up to this territory and obtained tribute from the people of Lanka who are termed barbarians. In his kingdom or Goa, there are gardens on both the sides, white plastered houses, bazars, quarters of servants. It provides a visual image of the prosperity of his kingdom. Along with the people of Goa he went to Saurashtra. To facilitate people to worship Somanatha, he reduced the price of root camphor.<sup>5</sup> He is praised for giving lot of gifts to the Brahmanas and thus obtaining their blessing. He later went to Theneya (Thana) and married the daughter of Mummuri who gave five lakh gold to his son-in-law.

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<sup>5</sup>Barnett, 'Inscriptions at Narendra', p. 309.

The details indicate that by this period, there was the emergence of prosperous trade in the Goa-Karnataka region. The reference to boats, travel to Saurashtra and the urban centres with the houses, gardens, white plastered houses are indicators of the extent of trade and urbanisation in this region. In this way, we can consider that the Kadambas in Goa laid the foundation for a maritime polity. The reference to the battle on the ocean with the Cholas indicates that the Kadambas maintained a navy even though accurate details of such a navy is not available. However, it appears that the Kadambas realised the need to build a strong navy. This is also realized by the making of a bridge of boats to Lanka. Along with taxation, plunder was also an important source of revenue for the state. Development of a strong navy assisted the Kadambas to defeat the Cholas who were known to maintain a strong navy.

Chattayadeva was succeeded by his son Jayakesin I who fought with seven potentates. He gave his daughter in marriage to Permadiyadeva. His major achievement was the war with the Chola force, which came like “as the ocean stream over its bounds”.<sup>6</sup> It appears that the war was fought on the ocean as both the Cholas and Kadambas maintained a navy. Jayakesin assumed the title of Konkana Chakravarti, thus showing that he was the lord of the ocean. He was succeeded by Guvaladeva and later his brother Vijayadityadeva. The latter was succeeded by his son Jayakesin II. It is mentioned that the Emperor of Kuntala (Vikramaditya VI) was impressed by Jayakesin and gave his daughter Mailaladevi in marriage to him. There is a eulogy of not only Jayakesin but also his wife Mailaladevi. Interestingly, there is a history of the family of the minister Laksamana. They have provided a considerable service to Vikramaditya VI. His sons are Bhavyaraja, Soma, Lakshana and Singharasa. The latter married a lady named Mailadevi and he built a Shiva temple called

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 198.

Lakshmeshvara. It is mentioned that Jayakesin II maintained a close relationship with Vikramaditya VI. Jayakesin is described as the mahamandalesvara or a feudatory of Vikramaditya. It is also mentioned that Jayakesin belonged to the lineage of Trilochana Kadamba. The last part of the inscription gives details regarding the land grant, which is not significant considering the elaborate details regarding the achievements of the kings of the Kadamba lineage.

The inscription shows that Indians did not lack a sense of history. It is true that we do not obtain a comprehensive historical text like Rajatarangini. However, some features of this text are available in the inscription that we discussed here. However, there is a purpose behind this narration. An attempt was made to obtain legitimacy by narrating the important events in life of three kings of the Kadamba kingdom. In addition, it claims the support of the Western Chalukya monarch Vikramaditya VI. There is element of glorification, which is expected from the state-sponsored history. By using such inscriptions, the historians are able to reconstruct history. Consequently, the scholars such as G.M. Moraes and others have used the information provided in this inscription to write the history of the Goa Kadambas.<sup>7</sup> However, in all the inscriptions we may not obtain such elaborate details. It is possible that an attempt was made to introduce the subjects concerning the Kadamba kings to obtain their acceptance. The inscription shows that pre-modern Indians were capable of writing linear history.

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<sup>7</sup>Moraes, G.M. *The Kadamba Kula: A history of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka*, Bombay: Furtado & Sons, 193.