

A study on the history of Chalukya dynasty

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Abstract

The Chalukya dynasty was an Indian royal dynasty that ruled large parts of southern and central India between the 6th and the 12th centuries. During this period, they ruled as three related yet individual dynasties. The earliest dynasty, known as the "Badami Chalukyas", ruled from Vatapi (modern Badami) from the middle of the 6th century. The Badami Chalukyas began to assert their independence at the decline of the Kadamba kingdom of Banavasi and rapidly rose to prominence during the reign of Pulakesi II.

Keywords: Chalukya, dynasty, period, independence, kingdom

Introduction

After the death of Pulakesi II, the Eastern Chalukyas became an independent kingdom in the eastern Deccan. They ruled from Vengi until about the 11th century. In the western Deccan, the rise of the Rashtrakutas in the middle of the 8th century eclipsed the Chalukyas of Badami before being revived by their descendants, the Western Chalukyas, in the late 10th century. These Western Chalukyas ruled from Kalyani (modern Basavakalyan) until the end of the 12th century.

The rule of the Chalukyas marks an important milestone in the history of South India and a golden age in the history of Karnataka. The political atmosphere in South India shifted from smaller kingdoms to large empires with the ascendancy of Badami Chalukyas. A Southern India based kingdom took control and consolidated the entire region between the Kaveri and the Narmada rivers. The rise of this empire saw the birth of efficient administration, overseas trade and commerce and the development of new style of architecture called "Chalukyan architecture".

Kannada literature, which had enjoyed royal support in the 9th century Rashtrakuta court found eager patronage from the Western Chalukyas in the Jain and Veerashaiva traditions. The 11th century saw the birth of Telugu literature under the patronage of the Eastern Chalukyas.

Origin

While opinions vary regarding the early origins of the Chalukyas, the consensus is that the founders of the empire at Badami were native to the modern Karnataka region. According to one theory, the Chalukya were descendants of the "Seleukia" tribe of Iraq and that their conflict with the Pallava of Kanchi was, but a continuation of the conflict between ancient Seleukia and "Parthians", the proposed ancestors of Pallavas. However, this theory has been rejected as it seeks to build lineages based simply on similar sounding clan names.

Another theory, that they were descendants of a 2nd-century chieftain called Kandachaliki Remmanaka, a feudatory of the

Andhra Ikshvaku was put forward. But this has failed to explain the difference in lineage. The Kandachaliki feudatory call themselves Vashisthiputras of the Hiranyakagotra. The Chalukyas, however, address themselves as Harithiputras of Manavyasagotra in their inscriptions, which is the same lineage as their early overlords, the Kadambas of Banavasi. This makes them descendants of the Kadambas. The Chalukyas took control of the territory formerly ruled by the Kadambas.

A later record of Eastern Chalukyas mentions the northern origin theory and claims one ruler of Ayodhya came south, defeated the Pallavas and married a Pallava princess. She had a child called Vijayaditya who is claimed to be the Pulakesi I's father. However, there are Badami Chalukya inscriptions that confirm Jayasimha was Pulakesi I's grandfather and Ranaranga, his father. It was a popular practice in the 11th century to link South Indian royal family lineage to a Northern kingdom. The Badami Chalukya records themselves are silent with regards to the Ayodhya origin.

While the northern origin theory has been dismissed by many historians, the epigraphist K V Ramesh has suggested that an earlier southern migration is a distinct possibility which needs examination. According to him, the complete absence of any inscriptional reference of their family connections to Ayodhya, and their subsequent Kannadiga identity may have been due to their earlier migration into present day Karnataka region where they achieved success as chieftains and kings. Hence, the place of origin of their ancestors may have been of no significance to the kings of the empire who may have considered themselves natives of the Kannada speaking region. The writing of 12th century Kashmiri poet Bilhana suggests the Chalukya family belonged to the Shudra caste while other sources claim they were Kshatriyas.

The Badami Chalukya inscriptions are in Kannada and Sanskrit. Their inscriptions call them *Karnatas* and their names use indigenous Kannada titles such as

Priyagallam and *Noduttagevum*. The names of some Chalukya princes end with the pure Kannada term *arasa* (meaning "king" or "chief"). The Rashtrakuta inscriptions call

the Chalukyas of Badami *Karnatabala* ("Power of Karnata"). It has been proposed that the word "Chalukya" originated from *Salki* or *Chalki* which is a Kannada word for an agricultural implement.

Historians DR. Bhandarkar and Hoernle hold the view that Chalukyas were one of the ruling clans of Gurjars (or Gujjars), citing the name change of Lata province to Gurjaratra during the reign.

Bhandarkar explains that If the chalukyas had not been Gurjars, it is inconceivable how that province could have named *Gurjaratra* (country ruled or protected by Gurjars) when it was up-till their advent known as *Lata*. However according to the scholar D. P. Dikshit, the Chalukyas ruled over that part of country formerly known as *Lata* and taken as *Gurjaratra* or Gujarat did not imply the Chalukyas didn't make any change in the nomenclature because of their close association with the region. V. A. Smith and A. M. T. Jackson also endorsed the view that Chalukyas were a branch of famous Gurjar.

Architecture

The Badami Chalukya era was an important period in the development of South Indian architecture. Their style of architecture is called "Chalukyan architecture" or "Karnata Dravida architecture". Nearly a hundred monuments built by them, rock cut (cave) and structural, are found in the Malaprabha river basin in modern Bagalkot district of northern Karnataka. The building material they used was a reddish-golden Sandstone found locally. Though they ruled a vast empire, the Chalukyan workshops concentrated most of their temple building activity in a relatively small area within the Chalukyan heartland – Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Mahakuta in modern Karnataka state.

Their temple building activity can be categorised into three phases. The early phase began in the last quarter of the 6th century and resulted in many cave temples, prominent among which are three elementary cave temples at Aihole (one Vedic, one Jain and one Buddhist which is incomplete), followed by four developed cave temples at Badami (of which cave 3, a Vaishnava temple, is dated accurately to 578.

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CE). These cave temples at Badami are similar, in that, each has a plain exterior but an exceptionally well finished interior consisting of a pillared verandah, a columned hall (*mantapa*) and a cella (shrine, cut deep into rock) which contains the deity of worship. In Badami, three caves temples are Vedic and one in Jain. The Vedic temples contain large well sculpted images of Harihara, Mahishasuramardhini, Varaha, Narasimha, Trivikrama, Vishnu seated on Anantha (the snake) and Nataraja (dancing Shiva).

The second phase of temple building was at Aihole (where some seventy structures exist and has been called "one of the cradles of Indian temple architecture") and Badami. Though the exact dating of these temples has been debated, there is consensus that the beginnings of these constructions are from c. 600. These are the Lad Khan Temple (dated by some to c. 450 but more accurately to 620) with its interesting perforated stone windows and sculptures of river goddesses; the Meguti Jain Temple (634) which shows progress in structural design;

the Durga Temple with its northern Indian style tower (8th century) and experiments to adapt a Buddhist *Chaitya* design to a brahminical one; the Huccimalli Gudi Temple with a new inclusion, a vestibule, connecting the sanctum to the hall. Other *dravida* style temples from this period are the Naganatha Temple at Nagaral; the Banantigudi Temple, the Mahakutesvara Temple and the Mallikarjuna Temple at Mahakuta; and the Lower Sivalaya Temple, the Malegitti Sivalaya Temple (upper) and the Jambulingesvara Temple at Badami.

Culture

The Chalukya era may be seen as the beginning in the fusion of cultures of northern and southern India, making way for the transmission of ideas between the two regions. This is seen clearly in the field of architecture. The Chalukyas spawned the *Vesara* style of architecture which includes elements of the northern *magara* and southern *dravida* styles. During this period, the expanding Sanskrit culture mingled with local Dravidian vernaculars which were already popular. Dravidian languages maintain these influences even today. This influence helped to enrich literature in these languages. The Hindu legal system owes much to the Sanskrit work *Mitakshara* by Vijnaneshwara in the court of Western Chalukya King Vikramaditya VI. Perhaps the greatest work in legal literature, *Mitakshara* is a commentary on *Yajnavalkya* and is a treatise on law based on earlier writings and has found acceptance in most parts of India. Englishman Henry Thomas Colebrooke later translated into English the section on inheritance, giving it currency in the British Indian court system. It was during the Western Chalukya rule that the Bhakti movement gained momentum in South India, in the form of Ramanujacharya and Basavanna, later spreading into northern India.

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