

Feudatories under the Administration of the Kalyana Chalukyas

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Abstract

The Kalyana Chalukyas, also known as the Western Chalukyas, established a powerful kingdom in the Deccan between the tenth and twelfth centuries CE. Their administrative system depended substantially on feudatory chiefs who governed different regions while acknowledging the authority of the central ruler. These feudatories included influential dynasties such as the Hoysalas, Seunas, Kakatiyas, Kadambas and Kalachuris. They collected revenue, maintained armies, administered justice and protected their territories. In return, they paid tribute, provided military assistance and demonstrated political loyalty to the Chalukya emperor. Although this arrangement enabled the Kalyana Chalukyas to control an extensive and culturally diverse territory, powerful feudatories occasionally challenged imperial authority and gradually established independent kingdoms. The study examines the administrative position, military responsibilities and political influence of feudatories under the Kalyana Chalukyas. It also highlights how the feudatory system contributed both to the expansion of the empire and its eventual decline. The analysis demonstrates that feudatories were not merely subordinate officials but important regional powers who shaped the political structure of medieval Deccan India.

Keywords: Kalyana Chalukyas, feudatories, medieval Deccan, provincial administration, political hierarchy, regional governance, vassal states.

A distinctive feature of the social system in ancient India is that the lives of the people were not uniform; rather, the system evolved in accordance with the rule of various dynasties. Consequently, the living conditions of the people varied from one dynasty to another. Social activities play a crucial role in the proper functioning of an empire's political and administrative systems. This chapter examines the lifestyle and administration of the Kalyana Chalukya feudatory kings, focusing primarily on the class, Varna, and caste systems, the family structure, public activities, and the educational system. The study of social stratification covers the ruling class, the working class, and the caste system. The analysis of the family system addresses the status of women, their opportunities in administration, marriage practices, polygamy, the ascetic life of widows, and the practice of prostitution. The educational system is described with a focus on the feudatory kings' patronage of centers of learning such as Agraharas, Brahmapuris, Ghatikasthanas, Mathas, and temples, as well as the endowments and grants provided to these institutions by the feudatories and subordinate officials. This section analyzes the influence of official classes and the nature of charitable

endowments regarding public amenities—such as tanks, wells, reservoirs, water-distribution kiosks (Aravattige), rest houses (chhatra-satra), and temple tanks (Pushkarani) commissioned by feudatory rulers (Maha-mandaleshvaras), Maha-samantas, Dandanayakas, Gavundas, and their queens. Only inscriptions commissioned by these feudatories have been utilized in this chapter. Studying the social structure reveals how these feudatories established their hold over society; such control serves as excellent evidence of their administrative functioning. Varna, Varga, and Jati: The systems of Varna, Varga (class/category), and Jati (caste) have existed since ancient times. It has not yet been possible to state precisely which of these systems originated first during the reign of the Kalyana Chalukyas and their feudatories. The term Varna does not denote caste; rather, it signifies knowledge, authority, and occupation. Regarding the Varga system, the Purusha Sukta of the Rigveda states that the Brahmana emerged from the mouth, the Kshatriya from the arms, the Vaishya from the thighs, and the Shudra from the feet of the cosmic being (Purusha or Paramatma). From this, it is understood that this classification was based on human personality and intended for the development of society.

- **Varna System:** As various kingdoms emerged and established their rule in the history of ancient Karnataka, many professions evolved into hereditary family occupations; consequently, a sense of discrimination—distinguishing between 'high' and 'low' status—began to develop within these groups. Eventually, the Varna system lost its dominance. This provides an overview of the Varna system.
- **Brahmins:** The Varna system comprises four categories: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The Brahmin class held a prestigious position in society. Inscriptions from the era of the Kalyana Chalukyas mention Brahmins, recording instances where they received donations and where they themselves made donations. They are praised in various ways in these inscriptions. For example, an inscription from 1128 CE found at Gorta in the Basavakalyana Taluk of Bidar district describes two Mahajanas (prominent Brahmin scholars/community leaders). They are referred to as Shatkarmanirata (devoted to the six prescribed duties) and Pratyaksha Narayana (manifestations of Lord Narayana). This indicates that Brahmins were respected and regarded as living embodiments of Lord Narayana. The Pulakurthi inscription of 1058 AD records the administration of Bacharasa, Gonarasa, and Bhimarasa—feudatory chieftains (Mahasamantas) of the Karikala lineage serving the Chalukya king Trailokyamalladeva and documents their grant of land to the Mahajanas (community leaders/elders) of Pudukurke, an Agrahara (a village granted to Brahmins) near Vemulavada. The inscription reveals that these feudatories made land grants to the Brahmins residing in the Agrahara. The Mahajanas allocated land to support the Angabhoga (ritual offerings to the deity) and Rangabhoga (ritual performances/entertainment for the deity) initiated by a woman. Thus, the inscription also sheds light on the scholarship of the Brahmins.
- **Kshatriya:** This class held the second position in the Chaturvarna (four-fold social) system of Hindu society. It comprised kings and the warrior class. References to the Kshatriya community appear in the inscriptions of the Kalyana Chalukyas. Regarding this

class, an inscription from Koppal district (dated 992 AD) while mentioning the Ganga dynasty king Ereganga—records the name of Rama, a Kshatriya and the son of Ajavarma and Gonambekanti.

- **Vaishya:** This class occupied the third position among the Chaturvarnas. They pursued trade and commerce as their hereditary occupation. A 1128 CE inscription from the Kalyana Chalukya period mentions the Vaishya community, describing them with the phrase "Vaishyakulamavikashita..." (meaning a flourishing Vaishya lineage). It records that members of this community donated a garden measuring one Mattar to the Malleshwara deity (situated near the Jagadeshwara temple) and, after acquiring the service holdings (Vrittis) of the Ujjale Nayaka, gifted another three mattars of land to support the deity's rituals—specifically for Angabhoga (personal offerings to the idol), Rangabhoga (ceremonial performances), Naivedya (food offerings), and Deepige (lamps).
- **Shudra:** This constitutes the fourth and final Varna (social stratum). People belonging to this class held a lower status compared to those of the upper three Varnas. They lacked social respect, rights, and privileges. Upper-caste individuals viewed this class with disdain and subjected them to oppression. No specific inscriptions mentioning this Varna have been found.

Class System : The Ruling Class: Throughout history, the social structure has been divided into the ruling class and the working class. While the ruling class comprised priests, kings, ministers, and various officials, the working class consisted of the common people engaged in diverse professions. The merchant class bridged these two groups, maintaining a balance between them. Within this social hierarchy, the highest status was accorded to Brahmins, priests, and sages, as ancient religious scriptures upheld them as the superior class.

- **Brahmins:** Also known as Mahajanans, they held the foremost position in society since ancient times and commanded respect across political, social, religious, and educational spheres. They were dedicated to rituals, worship, study, and teaching. Their duties included performing and officiating Yagas (sacrificial rituals), studying and teaching, as well as giving and receiving alms; these six activities were known as the Shatkarmas (six prescribed duties) of the Brahmins. Even within the Brahmin community, there were distinctions between higher-ranking and lower-ranking Brahmins. Brahmins who engaged in the study and teaching of the Vedas and Puranas, and performed rituals such as worship and adoration, held the highest status. Brahmins who undertook the duties typically performed by Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, or who served in the military, belonged to a secondary tier; since they engaged in non-Brahminical occupations, they were required to pay taxes.

Thus, the Brahmin community comprised various groups, including priests, officials, merchants, and holders of Agraharas (land grants). Kings, officials, and members of other social classes bestowed gifts, offerings, and land grants upon them. An inscription from 1148 CE, found at Kanakantapura in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, mentions

Bammanayya a commander (Dandanayaka) serving the Chalukya King Jagadekamalladeva and lists a group of approximately 70 Mahajanas (prominent local citizens). The inscription records their names as follows. The inscription lists the names of approximately 70 Mahajanas (prominent Brahmin residents), including Vasudeva Vadashagranthi, Chandogakrishna Bhatta Ayyapaphalidasa, Ramanika Bhatta, Vishnu Bhattopadhyaya, Ishwara Bhattopadhyaya, Narayana Bhatta, Keshava Bhatta, Someshwara Bhatta, Diwakara Bhatta, Padmanabha Bhatta, Raghava Bhatta, Sriranga Bhatta, Perumala Bhatta, Anantamurthi Bhattopadhyaya, and Bhavanarana Bhatta. It records that Recha-sa—the son of a Dandanayaka (commander)—allocated the village of Tohi, located near the 'Kavutala-12' cluster, as a vrutti (endowment/livelihood grant) to the Mahajanas of Karikantadevapura in Tumbalabeedu.

The inscription reveals that the names of Brahmins were recorded in such documents and that the son of an official granted the village of Tohi to them. References to Agraharas are found in many inscriptions of the Kalyana Chalukyas; Brahmins would transform villages into Agraharas and reside there. An inscription from Kotuvumachi in Gadag district mentions ten agraharas and refers to Keshavayya a Mahasamantadhipati (great feudatory chief) and Mahaprachanda-dandanayaka (supreme commander) under Vikramaditya V. It records that Keshavayya petitioned his emperor to grant the village of 'Ummachige' located within the Nereyangallu-12 division as an Agrahara to Sridharabhatta of Rona-Maunara, and subsequently endowed it to the deity. Like agraharas, Brahmapuris were also endowments granted to Brahmins; these settlements housed scholars engaged in religious and educational pursuits. References to them appear in certain inscriptions of the Kalyana Chalukyas. The Mulgunda inscription of 1028 CE mentions Vavanarasa, a Mahadandanayaka under Jayasimha II, and notes that a Brahmin named Nagaswami served as the head of the Brahmapuri. The inscription further details that he held the position of Sarvadharmadhikari (chief administrator of religious affairs) and engaged in acts of charity and benevolence. Thus, this inscription confirms that Brahmins also held the position of head of a Brahmapuri.

This study examines the social structure within the Kalyana Chalukya administration, specifically focusing on the role of their feudatories. Since the feudatory rulers issued 168 inscriptions, these records serve as the basis for understanding the educational system prevalent under their administration. The study analyzes aspects such as social classes (varga), varna, caste, water bodies (tanks, wells, and streams), family structures, and educational institutions. This chapter describes the social system by focusing on the feudatories and other officials within the Kalyana Chalukya administrative framework. It briefly outlines the varna, class, and caste systems, covering the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra categories. Regarding the class system, it details the grants and endowments bestowed by officials upon the elite class comprising Brahmins, Sthanacharyas (temple administrators), and Pujaris (priests). It also discusses, based on epigraphic evidence, the grants provided to the working class including carpenters, blacksmiths, sculptors, stonecutters, Parekaras (drummers/heralds), Malegaras (garland makers), musicians, and singers. Finally, the study identifies eighteen castes and discusses their origins within the caste

system. The study discusses how officials established public amenities such as tanks, wells, the sea, aravatiges (wayside water kiosks), chhatra-satras (charitable rest houses/feeding centers), and pushkaranis (temple tanks) and provided endowments for their maintenance. It also examines the status of women within the family structure during the Kalyana Chalukya period; certain inscriptions reveal that women participated in state administration during this era. Practices such as polygamy among officials, the Diksha (initiation) system, and the custom of ritual sacrifice have also been studied. The official class established educational centers—including Agraharas, Brahmapuris, Ghatikasthanas, temples, and Mathas and appointed teachers to manage them. This study, drawing on specific inscriptions, indicates that these institutions provided education to the king, his feudatories, and their children.

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