



Emergence Of The Temple Institutions As Landed Magnets: A Study Of The Village Grant Charters Of The Early Medieval Period Of Dakshina Kosala

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Abstract:

During the early mediaeval period of Dakṣiṇa Kośala, two types of religious village donations were observed: the first was given to the Brāhmanas (individuals or groups), while the second was given to their temple institutions. These religious endowments were largely issued by the newly emerging ruling dynasty to legitimize their political authority. The charters issued to register village grants were meant to bring religious/spiritual merits to the donors, but they also consolidated the political range of various dynasties trying to penetrate into their peripheries or the interiors of the forest territories. With each new royal dynasty, the practice of giving village grants to these Brāhmana donees became more common, resulting in the emergence of landed intermediaries who served as a link between the state and the peasantry. The instances and the provisions of the charters which we have outlined above, point to a process in which village grants were intensified, attached with a growing number of privileges bestowed upon the donees, effectively turned these Brahmana beneficiaries and their temple institutions into landed magnates.

Keywords: Brāhmana, Bhaṭṭaraka, Bhukti, Bali-caru, Sattra, bhaṭṭāraka, Yajña, Dīkṣa, Vyākhyāna, Bhāga, Bhoga, Daś-āparadhas, Vihārikā, Visaya, Vaiśya), Bali, Pūjā, Naivedya, Kavirāja, Karaṇaka, Sādhu, Śrēṣṭhin, Pūjhāri, Mādhas, Tithi, Maṭha, Chūrṇīs, Kārshāpaṇa, Vāṭis, Śrāhi, Māṇas, halā.

The examples of the epigraphic records in the form of village grant charters that have come from the discussing region of Dakṣiṇa Kośala are overwhelming nature. In the first instance of village grant made to the temple institution comes from the Śarabhapurīya dynasty. The 6th century CE Mallar or Rawan (Raipur district of Chhattisgarh) plates of Narendra which was issued from the place called Śarabhapura, records the grant of a village called Torāmaka situated in the Maṅṭarāja-*bhukti* to the temple of a god Śrīdharasvamin.¹

¹ 'Mallar or Rawan plates of Narendra', Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. 12-13; Acharya., *CPIO*, 2014, pp. 31-32.

The current charter was issued by the king to cover the cost of the repair (*khaṇḍasphuṭita-saṁskāra*) and maintenance of the offerings (*bali-caru*) and a free feeding house (*sattra*) of the temple.²

The the Pāṇḍvaṁśin king Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna have issued as many as ten land grant charters of which records various villages included in different administrative divisions called *bhoga*, *mārgga* and *bhukti* were given to the temple of Śrī Bāleśvara (Śiva) and different shrines developed around it. These village grants were as usual given to individuals and groups of Brāhmanas who were possibly entrusted as the in charge of these sacred places and who lived in the vicinity of the temple. There was a hoard consisting of nine sets of the village grant charters, obtained from Sirpur in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, which belongs to the Pāṇḍvaṁśin king named Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna.³ The land grant charter issued in his 38th regnal year records the grant of a village called Bhāṇḍā-cattāka situated in the Aryyaṅka-*bhoga* on the occasion of an establishment of the monastic residence attached to the shrine of Śrī Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka to a Brāhmaṇa named Vyāpa-śivācārya.⁴ The grant was designed to serve the brahmana donee, his disciples, grand disciples and their offspring so that provisions of the ritual sacrifice (*yajña*), recluse (*dīkṣa*), lecture (*vyākhyāna*) and charitable feeding house (*sattra*) could be started in the monastery, which was attached to the temple of Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭārakawer (*vyāpaśivācārye-bhyaḥ śiṣya praśiṣya-ādi santānasya sata yagādi dīkṣ-vyākhyā-bhakta-sattra pravarttanārtha pūrvaakam*).⁵ The grant was exempt from all taxes and told not to be disturbed by regular or irregular forces (*prati-niṣiddha-cāta-bhaṭa-praveśaḥ*), as was customary. The Brāhmaṇa Donees was further given the rights to collect the taxes such as *bhāga*, *bhoga*, *daś-āparadhas*, and made them privileged to enjoy the customary rights over the major and minor treasures (*nidhis* and *upanidhis*) as well.⁶

The second half of the 8th century CE land grant charter issued in the 46th regnal year of the king records the grant of a village called Bhāṇḍāgāratakkaḍaṅśaka to the deity named Udayaśvara Bhaṭṭāraka.⁷ The donee has all of the customary rights and privileges above illustrated. The village grant made in his 52nd regnal year records the grant of a village called Ravituṅga to the Śaiva teachers of the penance grove attached to the shrine of Muktalesvara along with the traditional rights and privileges.⁸ The charter issued in his 55th regnal year records the grant of a village Virttoḍaka to the temple of Abbeśvara within the premise of the shrine of Śrī-Bāleśvara-Bhaṭṭāraka.⁹ The Lodhia plates of the same Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna, issued in his 57th regnal years and dated to the second half and the middle of the 8th century CE, is of the similar type. The charter records the grant of a village called Vaidyapadraka to the god Isanesvara enshrined in the temple at Pattana

² 'Mallar or Rawan plates of Narendra', Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. 12-13; Acharya., *CPIO*, 2014, pp. 31-32.

³ 'Sirpur plates of Maha-Sivagupta', Shastri., *ISPS: Part. II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, p. 377; Acharya, *CPIO*, 2014, pp. 93-94.

⁴ Shastri., *Ibid.*, p. 377; Acharya., *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

⁵ Shastri., *Ibid*; Acharya., *Ibid*.

⁶ Shastri., *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

⁷ Shastri., *Ibid*, p. 377; Acharya., *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁸ Shastri., *Op. Cit.*, p. 376; Acharya., *Op. Cit.*, pp. 98-99.

⁹ Shstri., *Ibid.*, p. 378; Acharya., *Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

Khadirapadratala.¹⁰ There two more villages, Kośambraka and Katambapadūllaka, were donated to the shrine of Ammeśvaradeva-Bhaṭṭaraka by the same king.¹¹

In the further addition the Mallar plates of the king Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna has mentioned that the village called Kailāsapura included in the Taraḍaṁśaka-*bhoga* given as a donation to the temple of Kapālesvara-Bhaṭṭaraka.¹² The charter further describes that a community of honorable monks from four quarters (*caturdiś-ārya-bhikṣu-saṅgha*) who were residing at a small monastery *vihārikā* given the charge of the grant.¹³ All of these village grants were given to the donee with the same rights and exemptions as before. As a result of this circumstance, temple institutions arose as landed magnets with complete judicial, administrative, and fiscal control over their holdings.

During the reign of the Later Eastern Gaṅgas, the widespread practice of village donations to Brāhmaṇa temple institutions was also in vogue. Despite the fact that the geographical locations of these gifts had shifted to the coastal regions of Puri and Bhubaneswar, still they have managed to convey the level of royal patronage these Brāhmanical institutions were accustomed to. One such grant has been recorded in the Boddapadu plates of Vajrahasta III in the form of a village called Avarenga situated in the Koluvartani district (*visaya*) donated to the god Jalesvara of the same village and Erayama (*vaiśya*).¹⁴ The plates were discovered in a cultivation land in the east of the village of Boḍḍapāḍu in the Srikakulam dist. of AP. The granted village was first purchased and then donated as a *bhoga* to the god Jalēśvara of the same village. Mādaramanavarttikā was given to Ērayama (probable recipient of the grant), the son of Mavaya and his wife Kaṁchapā, of the *vaiśya* family.¹⁵ The appearance of the name of a member of the merchant community (*vaiśya*) as the donee suggests that the he was given responsibility for the temple institution.

Vizagapatam Copper-plate Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva (Śāka Year 1003) issued in the month of Mēsha (the solar month of Vaiśakha) eighth *tithi* of dark fortnight on Ādityavāra (Sunday), Corresponding to 4th Apr. 1081 AD.¹⁶ The charter records the donation of a village called Chākivāḍa in the Samvā *visaya* to the god Rājārājēśvara (Śiva) residing in a temple at the village of Reṅgujeḍ.¹⁷ The grant was made for the performance of the oblation of *bali*, *pūjā*, *naivedya* and met the requirements of the festivals of the deity.

¹⁰ 'Lodhia plates of Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna', Pandeya., *EI: Vol-XXVII (1947-48)*, 1956, pp. 319-25; Mirashi, and Pandeya., *EI: Vol-XXIII (1935-36)*, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 113-22; Shastri., *Ibid.*, pp. 128-33; Acharya., *Ibid.*, pp. 100-01.

¹¹ 'Sirpur plates of Maha-Sivagupta', Shastri', *ISPS: Part. II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, p. 378-79; Acharya., CPIO, 2014, pp- 104-05.

¹² 'Mallar plates of the king Mahāśīvagupta-Bālārjuna, Shastri', *ISPS: Part. II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. 134-37; Acharya., CPIO, 2014, pp-106-07.

¹³ Shastri., *Ibid.*, pp. 134-37; Acharya., *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁴ 'Boddapadu plates of Vajrahasta III', Gai., *EI: Vol. XXXIV (1961-62)*, 1963, pp. 42-44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ 'Vizagapatam Copper-plate Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva', Fleet. J.F., *Indian Antiquary: Vol. XVIII (1888-89) No. 178*, pp. 161-65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Puri Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva issued in his 37th regnal Year, corresponding to 1114-15 CE removed out of a plastered wall in the temple of Śiva called Mārkeṇḍēśvara situated in Puri, Odisha.¹⁸ The inscription records the donation of gold coins in lieu of the service provided in the form burning perpetual lamp in the temple of Mārkeṇḍēśvara- two hundred *karaṅka* (name of the measure is absent here) of oil every month. The grant was received by *Sādhu* (mercantile community) Bhīmadēva, a resident of Niralō-grāma called *aṅga-bhōga* (decorations and illuminations of a god), along with Rudra and Hari. After Bhīmadēva, his son returned the amount and freed himself from the duty. Later the job was accepted by Jivanta-*śrēṣṭhin* in the return of certain amount of gold and three three other persons were given the responsibility namely Hari (*Pūjhāri/a priest*), Vandau and Vāsu.¹⁹ Bhubaneswar Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva (Śāka year 1036) issued in his 37th regnal year which corresponds to 1114-15 AD.²⁰ The inscription is engraved on the east wall inside the third entrance of the Lingaraja temple in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The inscription records the grant of a perpetual lamp, containing one hundred wicks and fed by 24 *karaṅkas* (made of coconut-shell) in favour of the god Kīrttivāsa (śiva in the Lingaraja temple).²¹ Another Bhubaneswar Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva (Śāka year 1060) issued in his 62nd regnal year corresponds to 11th March 1140 CE.²² the present inscription has been found engraved on the south wall inside the third entrance of the Lingaraja temple in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The grant was of a perpetual lamp in favour of the god Kīrttivāsa (śiva in the Lingaraja temple) which mentions that the five *māḍhas* of gold were given to fulfil the duty.²³ The donor of the grant has been named as Vīrāṇḍi, son of Māṅgāṇḍi who made the endowment in the presence of Sāmu *Kavirāja* (physician), Kākva, Maṅḍalika (provincial chief), Dēvadhara, Kēśava, Piṅavāmi, Āditya and Sulabhakara.²⁴

The Alagum Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva issued in his 62nd regnal year seventh *tithi* of the bright half in the month of *Māgha*, corresponds to Thursday 11th Jan. 1140 CE.²⁵ The present inscription has been found to be engraved on the walls of the temple of Garteśvara in the village of Alagum which is situated twenty-three miles from the city of Puri, Odisha. The inscription records the grant of a piece of land and an endowment of perpetual lamp. The donor purchased a *hala* of land called Kapālēśvara in the Alagum village and granted to the *maṭha* of the god Garteśvaradeva which was supposed to cover the expanses of food for the ascetics and paddy for daily offerings to the god. Further a sum of money also deposited for a perpetual lamp which was consisting of hundred *chūrṇīs* (cowry-shells) and five *purāṇas* silver *kārshāpaṇa* equals to 1280 cowry-shells).²⁶

¹⁸ 'Puri Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva', Sircar., *EI: Vol. XXXIII* (1959-60), pp. 180-85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ 'Bhubaneswar Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva', Sircar., *EI: Vol. XXX* (1953-54), pp. 29-32.

²¹ Shastri., *Opt. Cit.*, pp. 29-32.

²² 'Bhubaneswar Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva', Sircar., *EI: Vol. XXX* (1953-54) pp. 29-32.

²³ Sircar., *Opt. Cit.*, pp. 29-32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ 'Alagum Inscription of Anantavarman Chōḍagaṅgadēva' Sircar and Sharma., *EI: Vol. XXIX* (1951-52), pp. 44-48.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

There are four set Pātāleśvara Temple Inscription during the time of Anaṅgabhīma III which are engraved on the walls of the shrine of the inner compound of the Jagannatha temple. The first one of which, was issued in the 13th regnal year of the king Anaṅgabhīma III on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha, engraved on the right wall of the shrine, composite of seven lines writing altogether, inner compound of the Jagannātha temple, Puri, Odisha. The donor Śrīkaraṇa (officer of the record department/member of the writer class) named as Suru-senāpati grants three *vāṭis* (20 acres) of land in a locality called Kṣagopaḍā in favour of the God Purushōttama for the offering of (*naivedya*) of milk, clarified butter, rice and curd to the deity with the cognizance of one Mahādeva Pāṭhi.²⁷ Ther second inscription issued in the Śaka Year 1158 24th reganal year of the monarch, on Manday, seventh day of the dark fortnight of the month of Makara (Māgha), in the *śrāhi* (Aṅka year) year 29 of the monarch, corresponds to Monday 5th Jan. 1237 AD.²⁸ The inscription is engraved on the left wall of the temple with five line of composition all together located inner compound of the Jagannātha temple, Puri, Odisha. It records the grant of two *vāṭis* and five *māṇas* (2¼ *vāṭis*) of land in the village of Kṣātayi-Utapalli given to the God Purushōttama for making offering to Halin (Balarāma), Chakrin (Viṣṇu-Cakrin(kṛṣṇa) and Subhadrā) with cognizance of Viśvapati. Certain Padātaka (footman/modern form of *Pāika*) named Khaṇḍa, son of Caṇḍānā has been mentioned as the donor of the grant.²⁹ The third set of inscription has been mentioned as issued in the Śaka Year 1158, on Sunday, seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kumbha (lunar month of Phālguna), corresponds to 3rd Feb. 1237 CE (Tuesday not Sunday).³⁰ Engraved inscription on the left wall of the temple, eight line of writings, records that the donor- Kīrttivāsa Nāyaka has made the grant of One *vāṭi* of land at Kurāṅga and another plot of land consisting of One *vāṭi* at Murāḍa to the God Purushōttama for making offering to the deity.³¹ The last set of inscriptions issued in the Śaka Year 1158, first day of the dark fortnight of the onth of Phālguna, in the 31st *śrāhi* (Aṅka year) of the monarch, 25th regnal year, corresponds to 12th Feb. 1237 AD. (Thursday not Friday).³² Engraved on the left wall of the second entrance to the shrine composite Ten line of writings all in Jagannātha temple, Puri, Odisha. The donor Śrīkaraṇa (officer of the record department/member of the *writer class*) named Suru-senāpati grants two pieces of land for the supply of One *Māṇa* 40 seers or about 45 kg of rice) situated in Āliṣaṇā in the Rāvaṅga division. One of the two plots of land measured 10 *māṇas* (½ *vāṭi*) for making provision for the supply of 10 *halā* (10 pairs of bundal) of fragrant flowers apparently every day.³³

The village grants to the Brāhmaṇas and their religious institutions were, as previously stated, generously endowed by the royalty. All of the aforementioned village grants were generally revenue-free, and the donees were entitled to a wide range of benefits on their holdings. As a result of which, the revenue began to accumulated in these temple institutions, subsequently, transforming them into landed magnates. In the light of the evidences, it would be safe to argue that these institutions grew to be able to control the entire rural

²⁷ 'Pātāleśvara Temple Inscription of Anaṅgabhīma III', Sircar., EI: Vol. XXX (1958), pp. 197-203

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Sircar., EI: Vol. XXX (1958), pp. 197-203

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

economy, at least over their granted holdings. Village grants to these temple organizations resulted in the formation of new settlement patterns in the area, which later emerged as a commercial center.

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