ABSTRACT

The salankayanas ruled over a part of the east coast in Andhradesa with Vengi as their capital in the early centuries of the Christian era. Their origin and early history are not clear as inscriptions, literary works and archaeological excavations are not sufficient to give clear picture about their origin. However, an attempt has been made on the basis of new evidences and arguments made by many scholars on this aspect.

1. INTRODUCTION

The earliest reference to Vengi and Salankayanas is noticed in Ptolemy’s work on “Outline of Geography” written about the middle of the second century A.D., which mentioned Benagouron in the country of the Salakenoi. Historians identified this ‘Benagauron’ with Vengipura, ‘Salakenoi’ as Salankayanas (Yazadnai, 1982). On the basis of this evidence, it is clear that the Salankayanas established a small principality, like the Brihatphalayanas, to protect the extensive seaboard and inland trade routes in the mainland from the imperial Andhras some time prior to the second century A.D. It seems Brihatphalayanas and Salankayanas were contemporaneous and tried to exert independent power in the delta region, north to Krishna river, during Satavahana rule in the second century A.D. Like other feudatories, the Salankayanas were also subordinates to imperial Satavahana and Ikshvakus; and finally emerged as independent rulers in their locality after the fall of their over lords (Krishna Rao, 1942).

In this context, to support this view, the very important finding is noticed at Kausambi, which is the earliest record that mentions the existence of Salankayana rule in second century A.D. This record was recovered outside Andhra Pradesh (Tiwari, 1987). On palaeographical grounds, it is assigned to the early 2nd century A.D. The language of the Text is Prakrit. According to this inscription, Salankayana minister named Bhutila was either stationed at Kausambi or had relatives at Kousambi. It indicates that the Salankayanas were ruling at that time.

2. REVIEW
Another interesting evidence was unearthed from the excavations at Adam, near Nagapur. This finding is a terracotta sealing of Salankayanas (Amarendra Nath 1996). I.K.Sarma, who conducted excavations at Peddavegi (infra chapter IV), discovered a Cernelian Intaglio (a pendant) near stupa of 4th century A.D. This object with its carving is very important for the history of Vengipura and its external contacts. He opined that the Salankayanas referred by Panini and Patanjali who hailed from North-West India, rose to prominence around Kausambi, and Vidarbh, reached Dakshnia-Kosala and Godavari-Krishna region & established an independent kingdom in coastal Andhradesa by the mid 4th century A.D. with Vengi as their capital. They rose to eminence and became vaingeyakas to the northern powers (Sarma, 2002).

The Salankayanas, like their contemporary rulers Brihatpalayanas and Anandas, also called their family after their gotra name “Salankaya”. According to Matsyapurana and Pravarananjari of Purushottama, “Salankaya” was the name of a rishi. He was a descendent of Salanka, who was one of the sons of Visvamitran (Krishna Rao 1942). In the Pravarakanda, there are two gotras named after ‘Salankya’. One belongs to the Angirasana gana and the other is the Visvamitra gana. In the Ganapatha of Panini, the work ‘Salankaya’ occurs twice. In one instance, the name Salankayana was derived from a gotra descendant. In another case, the name was given after the name of a certain rulers of a territory namely, ‘Salankayanaka’. The reference to the Salankayanas and their territory as Salankayanaka in Panini’s work, indicates that the Salankayanas were an ancient family (Ganapatha 1939).

According to the Sanskrit Dictionary ‘Medini’, the word Salankaya means ‘Nandi’ or bull, the sacred bull of Lord Siva. The seals of the Salankayana copper plate records have the emblem of a bull seated to the proper left as in Early Pallava charters. Though the Salankayanas, were Brahmins, they, mentioned their names with a suffix ‘Varman’ which was in practice at that time (Subba Rao 1926). The earliest evidence to the existence of Salankayana rule with the name of the king Hastivarman is noticed in Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Gupta Emperor (Sircar, 1986). This inscription gives a picture of Andhradesa during the early part of 4th century A.D. According to this record, Andhradesa was then a land of petty kingdoms and could not offer stiff resistance to Samudragupta, who easily defeated nine rulers in Andhra one after the other. Except for Hastivarman of Salankayana dynasty and Vishnu Gupta, the Pallava ruler, little is known about other kings and the extent of their territories. However, Samudragupta’s invasion was more a raid than a conquest. He left South India without annexing any territory to his empire.

After the fall of the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus, the Salankayanas and the Pallavas established independent powers and ruled over the adjoining countries on the east-coast, on either side of river Krishna. R.Subba Rao, while editing the Peddvegi copper plates of Nandivarman II, drew some resemblances between these two dynasties. They are:

1. The earlier grants of both the dynasties are found in the prakrit language while the letter are in Sanskrit.
2. Both place the Nandi or bull on the seal of their grants.
3. Both claim as belonging to Bharadwaja gotra.
4. While the Salankayanas worshipped Surya in the form of ‘Chitra Radhaswami’, the Pallavas are known to be Agni worshippers.
5. The names of the early kings of both the dynasties show close resemblance (compare Salankayana Vijayavandavarman, Nandivarman with the Pallava Sivaskandavarman, Nandivarman).
6. The suffix ‘Varma’ is peculiarly common to both.
7. Both had the title Maharaja.

After the fall of the Ikshvakus, the Brihatpalayanas and the Salankayanas came to power one after other and ruled over the country lying on the left bank of the river Krishna, while the Pallavas succeeded to the country lying on the right bank of river Krishna” (Subba Rao 1927).

3. OBSERVATIONS

Along with these commonalities, the historians observed other common practices followed by the dynasties of Dakshinapatha during the third and fourth centuries A.D. The word ‘Bappa’ frequently occur in the inscriptions of several dynasties such as, Guptas, Vakatakas, Pallavas and the Kalingas. It is clear “Bappa” is not a proper name but simply means in respectable terms ‘the venerable father’. All these dynasties adopted the epithet ‘Bappa Bhattacharya-pada-bhakti’. The Satavahanas and Ikshvakus adopted a matronymic nomenclature like Vasishthiputra, Gouthiputra, Mathariputra, Haritiputra which was abandoned by their political successors (Gopalachari 1976).

Regarding their religion, Salankayanas called themselves ‘Parama Bhagavatas’ (E.I, 1907). One of the Salankayana kings Vijayadevaravarman declared himself to be a ‘Paramahesvarya’ and claimed himself to be a performer of ‘Asvamedhayaga’ (Subba Rao 1927). No other king claimed himself as performer of a horse sacrifice. Patanjali in his Mahabhashya mentioned both the Bhagavatas, i.e., Siva and Vishnu Bhagavatas’. The tutelary deity of the Salankayanas was the God Chitraradhaswamin. The epithet Chitrarathaswami-padadvishayatah, “one who is absorbed by devotion to the holy feet of the Lord ‘Chitrarathaswamin’, occurred in all Salankayana records.

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Vacaspatyam, a Sanskrit lexicon mentions Chitraratha as a synonym for ‘Sun-god’. Therefore, the Salankayanas were worshippers of the Sun-god and this view was supported by the emplom the Sun-god, represented on the surface of some of the Salankayana seals. The reference to the worship of the Sub-god in the Salankayana records is the earliest evidence of Sun worship in Ancient Andhradesa (Gopalachari 1976).

4. POLITICAL HISTORY

Political history of Salankayanas can be traced from ten records (Appendix-III) nine of which are copper plate records, and one is a lithic record. These are written in Prakrit and Sanskrit languages. As per these records seven king ruled from 320 A.D. to 446 A.D (Sankaranarayana, 1977). After finding two more inscriptions, the Penugonda plates of Hastivarman and Dharikaturu plates of Achan lavarman, V.Sundara Rama Sastry made a fresh attempt at the reconstruction of the geneology and chronology of Salankayanas. He formulated the chronological list of the seven rulers of this dynasty by taking Samudragupta’s invasion as the upper limit or beginning for the Salankayana history. According to him Hastivarman I might have assumed independent power rising against Pallavas and Kadambas. He carved an independent principality and waged wars against other petty chiefs of the neighbouring region, like Mataraja of Kaurala, Jayavarman of the Brihatphalayana gotra, who were also perhaps in their trials to assert independence from Pallavas and extending their dominions. About A.D. 350, Hastivarman faced Samudragupta’s invasion and was defeated. He was immediately succeeded by his son Nandivarman who ruled Vengi between A.D. 350 and 390. He issued the Kanukollu prakrit inscription. It is the first inscription of the Salankayanas. It is in prakrit and was issued from the victorious Vengipura. It does not mention the gotra name ‘Salankayana’ or the tutelary deity ‘Bhagavat Chitraradasawamin’. It simply mentions the ruler Nandivarman as ‘Bappa bhattaraka padapariggahita Maharaja’. Perhaps the family had not yet developed precise conventions of the type, by the time, he was issued. He extended his territory towards the South of the Krishna river by subduing the other petty rulers.

The Dharikatura plates of Yuvamaharaja Achandavarman stand second in the prakrit series of Salankayana records. As per the record, the status of Achandavarman was Yuvamaharaja not as a Maharaja. Perhaps he might be assisting his father (Sundarama Sastry, 2001). This record refers to the gotra and to the tutelary deity of the family. The next prakrit record is the Eluru plates of Vijayadevavarman. It also mentioned the names of gotra and the tutelary deity (E.I, 1965). It claimed that Vijayadevavarman was an ‘asvamedhyajin’, and a meditator on the feet of Bappa Bhattacharya. According to B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao’s proposal on geneology of Salankayanas Devavarman was the brother of Nandivarman, who occupied the throne after the demise of the latter. Hence, he performed the horse sacrifice and claimed himself as Vijayadevavarman (E.I, 1907). After 15 years of rule, the Vengi throne was again occupied by Achandavarman, the eldest son of Nandivarman, namely the Hastivarman II seem to have been over looked in succession to the throne, for which no definite cause can be ascertained at the present state of knowledge. But his son Skandavarman seems to have placed him on the throne, most probably as a collateral line at Jayapura, their headquarters. Hastivarman II appears to be very old and can be assigned rule only for a couple of years. He was succeeded by Skandavarman, whose rule too might have losted not more than a couple of years. In the war of succession for the Vengi throne between Scandavarman and Nandivarman II, the latter succeeded to the throne. He was the last member of the family known so far. Due to these internal wars the Salankayana power waned.

By this time, the Vishnukundins kings who rose to power in the western parts of Andhra were trying to penetrate into coastal Andhra. According to the Mangaluru plates of Simhavarman, it seemed that the Pallavas gained the authority in Vengi only for a brief period (Hanumantha Rao 2000). The Vishnukundin kind Madhavarvarman II annexed Vengi territory into his kingdom by overthrowing the last Salankayana ruler.

The Salankayana chronology formulated by V.Sundara Rama Sastry is as follows:

1. Hastivarman -- 320-350 A.D.
2. Nandivarman -- 350-390 A.D.
3. Achandavarman -- 390-410 A.D.
4. Devavarman -- 410-425 A.D.
5. Hastivarman II -- 425-427 A.D.
6. Skandavarman -- 427-429 A.D.
7. Nandivarman II -- 429-446 A.D.

Thus more than 125 years of Salankayana rule in the eastern parts of Andhradesa at Vengi played an important role in maintaining peace and prosperity in this region.

5. RESULTS

The antiquity of Guntupalli can be traced on the basis of structural and inscriptive evidences. Longhurst and H.Krishna Sastry by reading two inscriptions which are dated to 2nd century B.C. explained that this Guntupalli caves
were in possession of the Jains. One record mentions that the lady disciple of Suyajanath caused steps leading to the vihara in which the Acharya was living. The word Suyajanatha sounds like a jaine name. The other record belongs to Kharavela who is known to be a great jain and the presence of his minister at Guntupalli may be taken to establish the jain affiliation of the place (Subba Rao 1927). Hence, later these caves were occupied by the Buddhists. The literary traditions are also attesting to the fact that Andhredasa witnessed very early a conflict between Jainism and Buddhism. The Kannada work Dharmamritta of Nayasaena gives an account of the early stage of the conflict. Another writer Harisena repeats the same account with slight modifications in his Brhatkathakosa. Another interesting findings around Guntupalli fields are many jaina relics including the images of Tirthankaras. I.K.Sarma also concluded that this site might have been occupied by the Buddhists probably after the death of the great jaina monarch Kharavela. Huian Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim of the 7th century A.D. mentioned the existence of Sangharama near Vengi. He explained that the monastery had spacious halls, storeyed towers, balconies, beautifully carved and ornamented. There was an image of Buddha, the sacred features of which had been portrayed with the utmost artistic efficiency. In front of this vihara were erected two stone stupas, one being several hundred feet high. In that monastery, according to Chinese pilgrim, Dignaga, great Buddhist philosopher, the father of Indian logic lived. His work Pramanasamucchaya an authority on logic was composed on a solitary hill with a stone stupa near Vengi. The monastery where Dignaga lived and composed his masterpiece may be identified with the Guntupalli (Mahanagapurata) vihara (Robert Sewell 1888).

Robert Sewell identified the importance of the village for the first time during his visit in 1888. He recognized the historical importance of the Dhanam dibba, a huge mound north of the village which was being dug out by the locals for the construction of canal some bricks and stones were removed24. Later, Alexander Rea visited this mound in 1902 and discovered another six archaeological sites within the village limits of Peddavegi and expressed the need for protection by the government from Vandalism. Rea listed seven ancient historical mounds for proper protection.

The excavation branch of the Archaeological Survey of India, Nagapur, started the excavation at Peddavegi in the year 1984-85 to know the cultural sequence and study the nature of structures partially visible on the surface. The ruins left in the old eroded site are represented by one or two temples of late Chalukyan period, loose sculptures, pillars, brick sculptures, pillars, brick structures, ancient lake and fortification wall around the village. The centre of the village where lies a partly exposed ashar masonry wall, probably a gateway traceable on surface was undertaken for excavation. The excavation had revealed two circular stupas, a rectangular brick shrine along with other antiquities such as pottery, terracotta of animal and human figures, precious stones, bangles of shell and terracotta and other objects of early historical period. Among these antiquities is a unique discovery of a carnelian Intaglio found near the steps of the stupa. In continuation of this work, further excavations were planned on a larger scale, spread over two seasons during the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 by the same branch under the direction of I.K.Sarma, in a phased manner. The most precious and rare object is a carnelian intoglia which was recovered during a clearance for excavations. It is an oval-shaped transparent locket, plano-convex in section.

6. CONCLUSION
A standing female beauty is carved centrally on this red cernelian semi precious stone in such a fine manner, the skill, tools and techniques employed in its execution is beyond the pale of scientific analysis (Sharma, 2002). A two handed woman facing front, stands in abhanga. Her face is quarish in shape with wide-eyes, sharp nose, and bulbous cheeks with a sharp chin and prominent pout. She has elongate neck, sharp shoulders, round heavy breasts, slender waist and prominent navel. The right arm is half-raised, holding very gracefully a four-petalled lily (nilotpala) by its slender tall stem with the first finger and the thumb. The left hand is at the upper part of the hip, which is slender and slightly bent. She wears a be jewelled turreted crown. The most important aspect is her dress. She wears transparent garment which covers her hips and legs with a special foldings in two parts. The upper part of the garment is shown around her waist in frills hanging down covering the hips and front. The lower part of the garment is tied around left thigh, and on right leg up to the ankle and long drils on back are shown hanging down the feet. The dress and turreted crown show close similarities with the female deities depicted on Indo-Greek or Indo Scythian coins and seals dated to first century B.C. from north-west India. The jewellery of the figure depicts the style more common among the layer Satavahana-Ikshvakus sculptures of the Andhra region (Krishna Murthy, 1977). I.K.Sarma identified this figure as a Devi or Durga, the city Goddess (Nagaradevata) presidng over Vengipurp of the Salankayanas (Sharma, 2002).

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