PREFACE

The Bhauma-kara and the Somavamśi dynasties have attracted the attention of the scholars owing to the discovery of numerous Copper plate charters and fresh datas relating to their families. Hither to attempts have been made by the Scholars to focus light on the individual dynasty. No endeavour so far has been made to highlight both the royal dynasties together on the basis of epigraphic records. This is an humble and honest venture in this regard with a view to giving a fresh look on the formative period of Orissan history.

The period from 736 AD to 1110 forms an interlude between the period of stagnation and the period of progress. The foundation of future greatness of Oriya people as a proud race in the political and cultural map of Orissa was laid down during this period. So a new analysis and new look on the basis of the latest Copper plates discovered relating to this phase of Orissan history will certainly germinate interests and eagerness of the Scholars. Various Scholastic books, and articles have been published by the eminent scholars of Orissa and other regions of India relating to the history of the period under study. But no scholar has put the inscriptions of both the important
royal families of Orissa in unbroken continuity taking
the original sources in to account. The epigraphs of
the period consist of Copper plate grants which form the
principal source for constructing the political and
cultural history of the Bhauma-Karas and the Somavamśīs.

Some new Copper plate charters of Janamejaya's
reign have been recently discovered from Bolāngir district
and have not yet been edited. Important among them is
the Copper plate charter dated in the first regnal year
of the king. It was issued from Suvarṇapura at the time
of his Coronation. This shows that Suvarṇapura (Modern
Sonepur) was the capital of the Somavamśīs at least from
the time of Mahāśīvāgupta-rājadēva, the father of Janamejaya I.

These charters bear great historical significance.

The inscriptions of some contemporary ruling
dynasties such as the Śaliodbhavas, the Gaṅgas, the Pālas
and Rāṣṭrakūṭas have been taken into account for framing
the superstructure of the thesis. The sculptural represen-
tations depicted in the temple walls of the period also
focus light on the cultural aspect of the thesis. Besides,
some ancient literary and foreign accounts also provide
informations about the period under review. In fact, they
supplemented our epigraphic sources.
Utilising the above available sources, we have endeavoured to re-construct the history of the Bhaumakaaras and the Somavamsis of Orissa. The thesis consists of six chapters in total.

Chapter One deals with the sources of the Bhaumakaara and the Somavamsi rulers. The superstructure of the thesis has been constructed, by taking mainly the epigraphic records. The Copper plate inscriptions are the principal source that I have utilised in the frame work of the thesis. I have taken all possible cares to go through each and every Copper plate charter donated by the Bhaumakaara and the Somavamsi rulers and have collected ample materials to highlight the history of the period under study. Some of the Copper plate charters are in dilapidated condition and some are even in illegible condition. As a result they have not yet been properly deciphered by scholars. Yet, I have taken much pain and perseverance to collect materials from them so as to shed some new light on life and culture of the period under review.

Chapter Two describes the historical background of the rise of the Bhaumakaara and the Somavamsi rulers and their political history from 736 AD to 1110 AD. During their rule there was remarkable change in the political
and cultural life of the Oriya people. It was in this period that Orissa emerged as a powerful, integrated and unified State in India. Geographically the present State of Orissa owes its origin to the Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamsi rule. Under their hegemony and Sovereign status, the distinct and different geographical units such as Kongoda, Kośala, Kalinga, Utkal (Odra) were brought into one political entity.

The political instability and foreign domination that continued in Orissa after Kharavela up to the Śailodbhavas came to an end with the rise of the Bhauma-Karas of Tosāli. The Bhauma-Karas followed a policy of war diplomacy with the Eastern and the Svetaka Gaṅgas of Kalinga. In the race the Bhauma-karas became victorious and the Gaṅgas disappeared from the stage of history at least for a period of half century (from 752 AD to 802 AD). The early Bhauma-Karas started the process of political unification of Orissa and the Somavamsis, who came from south Kośala, completed it. They raised the individuality of the Oriya people to a certain point. This was the most important phenomenon of the history of this period.

In the Third Chapter attempts have been made to highlight the administrative set up and governmental organisations. The Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamsi rulers
came to power under unlucky stars. When they ascended the throne of Tosāli and Kośala the State of Orissa was engrossed with anarchy, chaos and confusion. External forces made attempts to disrupt the normalcy. There was neither Law and Order nor peace and unity in the kingdom. It was the rulers of these dynasties who brought to an end years of misrule and anarchy and saved Orissa from internal decay and external dangers and set up an efficient, strong and well-organised bureaucratic machinery which aimed at both moral and material welfare of the people at large. Moreover, these administrative developments prepared the ground for unfettered cultural progress.

The pattern of administration followed by the rulers of two royal families were the same. The Somavamsis as successors of the Bhauma-Karas, enthusiastically emulated the examples of their predecessors. The designation of officers are identical in the records of both the Bhauma-Karas and the Somavamsis. Concentration of power in the monarchy was the basis of administration but their Government was not despotic in character. With the spirit of benevolent rulers and guardians of the people, they ruled over them. They maintained council of ministers with Chief Ministers who served as a restraint on the power of the
monarch. The Copper plate charters indicate quite advanced type of Governmental systems. Perhaps the machinery of administration organised by the Somavamsis was more elaborate and systematic than it was under the Bhauma-Karas. Migration of Brāhmaṇas from different parts of India to Orissa brought a great change in the administrative organisations. The epigraphic evidences in the shape of extensive land grants testify to the enlargement of the size of administrative units and increase in the number of administrative personnel. Though the designation of officers was identical in the records of both the Bhauma-Karas and the Somavamsis, some new designations like Samahartri, Sannidhartri Pisona Vetrika, Pundarikāksha, Niyuktaka, Adhikārika etc., are found for the first time in the Somavamsi records. In fact the feudal administration with bureaucratic machinery developed for the first time during this period.

Chapter Four deals with the social conditions of this period. The social state of affairs of the Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamsi period marks a transition from the ancient way of life to medieval. Revolutionary changes are noticed in the social system. The society based on rigidity of caste system of the post-vedic period began to crumble down and a new social order began to evolve in Orissa. Due to social acculturation
intermingling of social orders began during this period. The seeds of liberal and progressive outlook began to germinate in the minds of the people.

Migration of Brāhmaṇas from different parts of India to Orissa and their induction into social fold may be considered as a great incident during the period under study. The Brāhmaṇas became the torch bearers of social change. They focussed new light on Orissan society and injected the tribal elements into different social orders. They aryanaised the existing tribals and enlightened them for the liquidation of caste barriers. A healthy social tradition developed based on amity, friendship, fraternity, unity and tolerance between the tribals and other three higher orders of the society. Thus the social synthesis symbolised the dawn of a new age in Orissa. This rare feature may be taken as one of the new findings of our thesis.

The rise of Kāyasthas or Karāṇas is a new phenomenon in the social history of this period. This new caste laid the foundation of a powerful aristocracy in Orissa.
The women of this period enjoyed a position of honour in the society and played important roles not only in administration but also in the socio-economic and religious fields. But women belonging to lower strata of society were not elevated to the above status.

Education which is the key to all social innovations developed during the period of study. Attempts were made for the promotion of sanskrit learning. Oriya language, the life-breath of Oriya people, took a shape during the Somavamśi rule. We find in the inscriptions of the period that Sanskrit words mixed with Oriya words and written after the fashion of Oriya pronunciation. Thus the birth-cry of Oriya language was heard during the Somavamśi period.

Chapter Five of the thesis speaks of the economic life of the period. The Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamśi rulers excelled not only in socio-political spheres but also in the economic development of Orissa. They intended to make Orissa one of the Progressive States in India.

The economic life of this period marks a transition from ancient community ownership to peasant farming and individual possession. The large donation of land as a
royal gift to Brāhmaṇas and their hereditary enjoyment of this system led to the growth of feudalistic order in the society. The Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamsi Kings allotted land to the officials and Vassals in lieu of salary. The Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries played the role of intermediaries in the agrarian productive system. These new features designate the period from 736 AD to 1110 AD as feudal that lingered till the rise of British power.

The centralised revenue system of the Bhauma-kara and the Somavamsi rulers introduced an organised money economy and placed new order of money lending class in Orissa. The age was also famous for maritime trade and commerce with the Indian archipelago.

The last but not least I have mentioned the religious conditions of the people during the period under review. This period marks the climax of two important religions of India viz. Buddhism and Saivism. There was fusion of thoughts and practices under these two powerful dynasties imbied from different cultures and different religions along with the process of geographical unification and political integration which later changed into grand cultural synthesis.

In the domain of religion the period witnessed the
growth of secularism and harmonious development of all religions. The rulers of the two dynasties were tolerant, liberal and high minded. Orthodoxy of the time did not touch them. Due to their patronising zeal both Buddhism and Śaivism maintained the position of State religions. But other religions like Jainism, Vaiṣṇavism and Saktism were also held in high esteem. The Bhauma-period is specially memorable for the synthesis of various cults and sects. The thesis and anti-thesis of different religions were blended together and turned to be a harmonious whole. Jainism, Buddhism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Saktism had to lose their separate entity and developed into a cosmopolitan religion. The Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamsi age marks a definite mile stone in the harmonious growth of all religions.

The cult worship is one of the features of religious life of the people. The cults like Hari-hara, Krishna cult, Avatāra cult and Nrusingha cult developed during this period. But all the cults took their immersion in the great cult of Lord Jagannāth.

The religious beliefs and religious life of the people led to the establishment of temple building activity in Orissa. Various shrines belonging to different
religions began to be constructed in different places of Orissa, particularly at Bhubaneswar.

Taking into account the above facts it may be concluded that the Bhauma-Kara and the Somavamši period is a formative stage in the annals of the history of Orissa to which the subsequent history and historians were greatly indebted.

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