



ROYAL LINEAGE AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY *The Genealogy of the Later Ganga Rulers of Bamanda*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the genealogy of the Later Ganga rulers of Bamanda in western Odisha and analyses its significance in relation to political legitimacy and regional state formation. Drawing upon literary chronicles, genealogical records, and historical works, the study reconstructs the succession of rulers from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century and situates their rule within the broader political environment of the Sambalpur region. It argues that genealogical traditions functioned not merely as records of lineage but as important ideological instruments that reinforced dynastic continuity, legitimized authority, and facilitated governance in a frontier region inhabited by diverse communities. The study thus highlights the historical importance of genealogy in understanding regional polity.

KEYWORDS: *Genealogy, Kingship, Later Ganga, & State Formation.*

INTRODUCTION

The reconstruction of political history in pre-modern India often relies upon the study of royal genealogies. These genealogies were not merely chronological lists of rulers but important instruments of political legitimacy, social prestige, and cultural identity. In many regional polities, particularly in the frontier zones of eastern and central India, lineage traditions played a crucial role in legitimizing authority and ensuring continuity of rule. By connecting contemporary rulers with prestigious dynastic traditions of the past, genealogies provided symbolic legitimacy and strengthened the ideological foundations of kingship.

In the regional history of western Odisha, the Ganga rulers of Bamanda—identified with the present district of Deogarh—occupied an important position. Bamanda formed a part of the Sambalpur group of tributary states and represented a distinctive political formation within the forested and tribal belt of the region. The ruling dynasty traced its origin to the prestigious Ganga lineage that had earlier produced the renowned Eastern Ganga rulers of Kalinga. This association helped the rulers of Bamanda reinforce their political legitimacy and strengthen their authority within the wider socio-political landscape of Odisha.

Historians generally distinguish between the Early and Later phases of Ganga rule in Bamanda. The earlier phase extended from the late fourteenth century to the eighteenth century, when the rulers governed from Bamandagad before shifting the capital to Suguda and later to Deogarh, reflecting the gradual consolidation of Ganga authority in the region.¹

The Later Gangas represented a new phase in Bamanda's political and cultural development. While the earlier rulers were associated mainly with Shaivism and Shakti worship, the Later Gangas promoted Vaishnavism alongside existing religious traditions. Their reign also witnessed developments in administration, education, and literary activities. Basudev Sudhaldev, in particular, promoted Odia and Sanskrit learning and established a printing press at Deogarh, supporting the publication of the weekly *Sambalpur Hitaisini*, which contributed to the linguistic movement in Odisha and earned Bamanda the reputation of the "Ujjaini of Utkala."²

The genealogy of the Later Ganga rulers, preserved in literary chronicles and historical works, therefore provides an important source for understanding the political evolution of Bamanda and the role of royal lineage in legitimizing regional authority.

SOURCES FOR THE GENEALOGY OF THE BAMANDA GANGAS

The reconstruction of the genealogy of the Ganga rulers of Bamanda largely depends on a combination of literary texts, traditional chronicles, administrative records, and modern historical works. Since the history of the Bamanda state was not systematically recorded in inscriptions or official chronicles in the early period, historians have relied heavily upon literary compilations produced in the royal court of Deogarh as well as later historical studies. These sources, though valuable, require careful critical analysis because they often contain inconsistencies in chronology and identification of rulers.

Among the most important literary sources for the genealogy of the Bamanda Gangas is the *Sachhidananda Granthavali*, a compilation that preserves valuable information regarding the succession of rulers and major political developments in the state. The text enumerates several rulers of the dynasty and attempts to provide a genealogical framework for understanding the history of Bamanda. For instance, the *Sachhidananda Granthavali* lists Rudranarayanadev, Dulhadev, and Prataprudradev respectively as the sixth, eleventh, and twenty-first rulers of the Ganga lineage, thereby presenting a structured account of dynastic succession³.

However, the genealogical details provided in this work sometimes differ from interpretations offered by later historians. Such discrepancies illustrate the difficulties involved in reconstructing a precise dynastic chronology solely from literary sources.

Another important literary source is the *Balabhadra Granthavali*, which provides valuable narratives about the political achievements and military exploits of several Ganga rulers. The text contains references to significant events such as the defeat of the Jit ruler of Barkot by Rudranarayanadev and the subsequent annexation of the territory into Bamanda⁴.

These accounts contribute to our understanding of the expansion of Ganga authority and help situate individual rulers within a broader genealogical and political framework. However, like many courtly chronicles, the *Balabhadra Granthavali* tends to emphasize the achievements of rulers and may contain elements of exaggeration or selective narration.

Equally significant for the reconstruction of the Bamanda genealogy is the work titled *Bamanda Rajavamsanucharita Champu*, which preserves the dynastic traditions of the ruling house. This literary composition provides information regarding the lineage of the Ganga rulers and their contributions to the political and cultural life of the state. The work also reflects the courtly perspective of Bamanda and highlights the importance of royal lineage in establishing the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. References to the construction of temples and the patronage of religious institutions by various rulers further illuminate the socio-religious policies associated with the dynasty⁵.

In addition to literary texts, administrative documents and district gazetteers constitute another valuable category of sources for the study of the Bamanda Gangas. Works such as the *Dhenkanal District Gazetteer* and other official reports provide useful information regarding the territorial extent, administrative structure, and political relations of the Bamanda state with neighbouring regions⁶. These records are particularly helpful for understanding the later phases of the dynasty when Bamanda came under the influence of Maratha and subsequently British authority. For example, administrative

accounts indicate that Bamanda formed part of the group of tributary states associated with Sambalpur and later came under British control following the Anglo-Maratha conflicts of the early nineteenth century.

Modern historical studies also provide important interpretative frameworks for understanding the genealogy of the Bamanda Gangas. Works such as S. P. Das's *Sambalpur Itihas*⁷, Jagabandhu Singh's *Prachina Utkala*,⁸ and the multi-volume *History of Orissa* edited by N. K. Sahu and others offer valuable insights into the political developments of western Odisha⁹. These studies often utilize a combination of literary evidence, archival records, and regional traditions to reconstruct the dynastic history of Bamanda. At the same time, historians have identified several chronological inconsistencies in earlier sources. For example, certain scholars attempted to identify Prataprudradev with earlier rulers such as Rudranarayanadev and Dulhadev, an interpretation that has been questioned on the basis of genealogical evidence preserved in traditional texts¹⁰.

Despite the richness of these sources, the reconstruction of the genealogy of the Bamanda Gangas remains a complex task. Many of the available texts were composed long after the events they describe and often reflect the ideological concerns of the royal court rather than strictly chronological historical narratives. As a result, variations in the identification and sequence of rulers are frequently encountered. Moreover, the absence of a large corpus of inscriptions or contemporaneous records further complicates the process of establishing an accurate dynastic chronology.

Nevertheless, when these sources are examined collectively and critically, they provide a reasonably coherent framework for understanding the genealogy of the Bamanda Gangas. By cross-referencing literary traditions with administrative records and modern historical research, scholars have been able to reconstruct the lineage of the Later Ganga rulers and situate them within the broader historical developments of western Odisha. The study of these sources thus forms the foundation for analysing how royal genealogy functioned as a mechanism of political legitimacy and dynastic continuity in the Bamanda state.

EMERGENCE OF THE LATER GANGAS IN BAMANDA

The history of the Ganga rulers of Bamanda represents an important phase in the regional political development of western Odisha. For analytical purposes, historians generally divide the ruling lineage of Bamanda into two broad phases—namely the Early Gangas and the Later Gangas. This distinction helps to differentiate the formative stage of Ganga rule from the later period when the dynasty consolidated its authority and introduced significant political, administrative, and cultural transformations in the region.

The Early Ganga rulers governed Bamanda for several centuries, beginning from the last quarter of the fourteenth century and continuing until the eighteenth century. During this period, the rulers gradually established their authority in a region characterized by dense forests and inhabited largely by diverse tribal communities. The early phase of Ganga rule therefore coincided with the gradual expansion of state authority into frontier zones where political power had to be negotiated with local chiefs and tribal groups.

The earliest political centre of the Ganga rulers in the region was Bamandagad, which served as the initial capital of the state. Bamandagad functioned as an important administrative and military centre from which the rulers exercised control over surrounding territories. Archaeological remains discovered at the site—including sculptures of Ganesha, Yamuna, and the Navagraha, as well as evidence of Sakti shrines—indicate that the early Ganga rulers were patrons of Shaivism and Shakti worship. These religious establishments suggest that temple patronage played an important role in legitimizing royal authority and integrating local populations within the ideological framework of the state.

Over time, changing political circumstances and administrative needs led to the relocation of the royal headquarters. The capital was first shifted from Bamandagad to Suguda, which emerged as a new

administrative centre. Later, during the reign of Raja Ramachandradev, the capital was moved again when Suguda was abandoned and a new centre was established at Began, which subsequently came to be known as Deogarh. This relocation marked an important turning point in the political history of Bamanda, as Deogarh eventually developed into the principal administrative and cultural centre of the state.¹¹

The emergence of the Later Ganga rulers is closely associated with this phase of political consolidation and institutional development. While the earlier rulers had laid the foundations of Ganga authority in the region, the Later Gangas strengthened the administrative structure of the state and introduced new ideological elements into governance. One notable transformation during this period was the growing patronage of Vaishnavism. Although the early Ganga rulers had primarily supported Shaiva and Shakta traditions, the Later Gangas incorporated Vaishnavite practices into the religious life of the state, thereby expanding the ideological base of their authority.¹²

This shift in religious orientation reflected broader cultural developments in Odisha during the early modern period, when the cult of Lord Jagannath and Vaishnavite devotional traditions gained increasing prominence. By supporting Vaishnavism while continuing earlier Shaiva traditions, the Later Gangas were able to integrate diverse religious communities and strengthen their political legitimacy among different social groups.

The rise of the Later Ganga rulers also marked an important stage in the political integration of western Odisha. Bamanda occupied a strategic position within the Sambalpur region and maintained interactions with neighbouring states such as Keonjhar, Rairakhol, and Pallahara. The consolidation of Ganga authority in Bamanda contributed to the formation of a relatively stable regional polity in a landscape otherwise characterized by fragmented chiefdoms and tribal territories.

Another important aspect of this process was the relationship between the ruling dynasty and the tribal communities inhabiting the region. The Bamanda state lay within a predominantly tribal zone inhabited by groups such as the Khonds and Gonds, whose cooperation was essential for maintaining political stability. The Ganga rulers appear to have adopted a policy of accommodation and integration by combining traditional forms of kingship with the patronage of local religious traditions. Such strategies helped them establish durable authority over a culturally diverse population.

By the late eighteenth century, the Later Gangas had firmly established their rule in Bamanda and began to play a more prominent role in the political affairs of the Sambalpur region. Their reign witnessed developments in administration, cultural patronage, and regional diplomacy. At the same time, the state encountered new political challenges arising from Maratha expansion and later British colonial intervention.

Thus, the emergence of the Later Gangas represents a crucial stage in the historical evolution of Bamanda. It marked the transition from an early phase of dynastic establishment to a period of political consolidation and cultural transformation. Through the relocation of capitals, religious patronage, and engagement with regional power structures, the Later Ganga rulers succeeded in establishing a durable political authority that shaped the history of western Odisha for several centuries.

GENEALOGICAL SUCCESSION OF THE LATER GANGA RULERS

The genealogy of the Later Ganga rulers of Bamanda provides an important framework for understanding the political continuity and dynastic legitimacy of the state. Genealogical records preserved in literary texts, court chronicles, and historical studies indicate a relatively continuous succession among the Ganga rulers, although certain ambiguities remain regarding the identification and chronology of individual rulers. These discrepancies largely arise from differing interpretations of literary sources such as the *Sachhidananda Granthavali* and the analyses of modern historians.

The Later Ganga lineage becomes clearly visible in the late eighteenth century following the death of Chandrasekhardev around A.D. 1780, after which his son Prataprudradev ascended the throne of Bamanda. According to traditional genealogical accounts, Prataprudradev was recognised as the

twenty-first ruler of the Ganga dynasty, thereby emphasizing the long continuity claimed by the ruling house.¹³ Some historians attempted to identify him with earlier rulers such as Rudranarayanadev or Dulhadev; however, genealogical evidence preserved in the *Sachhidananda Granthavali* clearly lists Rudranarayanadev, Dulhadev, and Prataprudradev as the sixth, eleventh, and twenty-first rulers respectively, confirming their distinct identities within the dynastic sequence.

The reign of Prataprudradev represents an important phase in the development of the Later Ganga dynasty. He is credited with introducing Vaishnavism into the Bamanda region while continuing earlier Shaiva traditions. In connection with this religious orientation, he is believed to have constructed the Jagannatha Temple at Purunagad, which became a significant centre of religious activity.¹⁴ Through such acts of temple patronage, the ruler strengthened the ideological foundations of kingship and reinforced the legitimacy of the dynasty among the local population.

After the death of Prataprudradev around A.D. 1804, the throne passed to his son Sarvesvardev, thereby maintaining the hereditary principle of succession. His reign appears to have been marked by political tensions with the neighbouring state of Keonjhar, which eventually led to armed conflict between the two polities.¹⁵ Although the precise causes remain debated, the dispute was likely related to territorial claims over regions such as Pallahara, which had earlier been under the suzerainty of Bamanda. These conflicts illustrate the complex political environment in which the Ganga rulers operated and underscore the importance of dynastic continuity in sustaining authority.

Sarvesvardev was succeeded by his son Arjundev, who ascended the throne around A.D. 1804. Historians differ regarding the exact chronology of his reign, but available evidence suggests that he ruled approximately between A.D. 1804 and A.D. 1810. His rule coincided with a period of considerable political upheaval in western Odisha due to the expansion of Maratha influence.

Following Arjundev's death, the throne passed to Balunkabrishavadev, who continued the genealogical line of the Later Gangas. Although detailed information regarding his reign is limited, historical references suggest that he maintained the authority of the Bamanda state during a period of regional instability associated with Maratha political influence.¹⁶

Balunkabrishavadev was succeeded by his son Khagesvardev, whose reign was extremely brief. According to historical records, he ruled for only eighteen days before his death at Sambalpur while negotiating a treaty concerning the political status of Bamanda.¹⁷ Some historians mistakenly interpreted this as an eighteen-year reign, but later research clarified that this was due to a misreading of the sources.¹⁸

After the death of Khagesvardev, the throne passed to his brother Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev, who emerged as one of the most significant rulers of the Later Ganga dynasty. His reign, extending roughly from A.D. 1818 to A.D. 1868, marked an important phase in the political and administrative history of Bamanda.¹⁹ During this period the state experienced major transformations resulting from the decline of Maratha authority and the increasing influence of the British. Despite these external pressures, Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev managed to retain considerable autonomy in the internal administration of the state.

Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev also made important contributions to religious and cultural patronage. He constructed temples such as the Gokarnesvar Temple at Deogarh and the Girigobardhana Temple near Pradhanpat, reinforcing the traditional association between kingship and religious patronage.²⁰ These activities strengthened the legitimacy of the ruling house and helped integrate diverse religious traditions within the political structure of the state.

As Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev died without a direct heir, he adopted Basudev Sudhaldev, the son of his brother Harihardev, as his successor. This act ensured the continuation of the dynastic lineage and prevented a potential succession crisis. Basudev Sudhaldev ascended the throne in A.D. 1868, inaugurating what is often regarded as a "Golden Period" in the history of Bamanda.²¹ His reign witnessed extensive reforms in administration, agriculture, trade, and infrastructure, demonstrating how dynastic continuity could contribute to political stability and economic development.

The genealogical succession of the Later Ganga rulers thus illustrates both the continuity and adaptability of dynastic authority in Bamanda. While hereditary succession generally guided the transfer of power, the dynasty also employed mechanisms such as adoption to preserve the royal lineage. In a region characterized by tribal populations, shifting political alliances, and external pressures, genealogy functioned as a powerful instrument of legitimacy, enabling the rulers of Bamanda to sustain their authority for several centuries.

GENEALOGY AND THE LEGITIMIZATION OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In pre-modern Indian polities, genealogy often served as a crucial ideological foundation for the exercise of political authority. Dynastic lineage not only recorded the succession of rulers but also functioned as a symbolic mechanism through which kings justified their sovereignty and reinforced their legitimacy among subjects and neighbouring powers. In the Bamanda state, the Ganga rulers strategically utilized genealogical traditions to legitimize their authority by tracing their descent from the prestigious Ganga dynasty, which had earlier ruled large parts of Odisha and played a prominent role in the political and cultural history of the region.

The association with the Ganga lineage carried considerable prestige in the historical consciousness of Odisha. The Eastern Ganga rulers, particularly those associated with the great temple of Jagannath at Puri, were regarded as powerful and culturally influential monarchs. By linking themselves genealogically with this illustrious dynasty, the rulers of Bamanda sought to establish continuity with a recognized tradition of kingship. This claim to Ganga descent enhanced their status within the complex political environment of western Odisha and strengthened their authority over a region inhabited by diverse tribal communities. Such genealogical assertions therefore served not merely as historical records but as instruments of political ideology.

The legitimacy derived from dynastic lineage was particularly important in frontier regions such as Bamanda, where political authority often depended upon negotiation with local chiefs and tribal groups. In such contexts, the prestige associated with a recognized royal lineage helped rulers assert their supremacy while simultaneously integrating local elites into the broader political structure of the state. Genealogy thus functioned as a symbolic framework that linked the ruling house with sacred traditions, regional history, and established models of kingship.

Another important dimension of genealogical legitimacy was its role in maintaining stability in dynastic succession. In many Indian royal families, the absence of a direct heir could potentially lead to disputes and political fragmentation. To prevent such crises, dynasties frequently adopted successors from within the extended royal family, thereby preserving the continuity of lineage and ensuring the uninterrupted transmission of authority. The Bamanda Ganga dynasty provides a clear example of this practice.

A notable instance occurred during the reign of Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev, one of the most prominent rulers of the Later Ganga lineage. As he did not have a biological heir, he adopted Basudev Sudhaldev, the son of his brother Harihardev, and designated him as his successor. This act of adoption was not merely a familial arrangement but a deliberate political decision aimed at preserving dynastic continuity. Basudev Sudhaldev was still a minor at the time of nomination, but the adoption ensured that the ruling lineage remained intact and prevented the emergence of competing claims to the throne²².

The succession of Basudev Sudhaldev following the death of Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev in A.D. 1868 illustrates how genealogical continuity could stabilize the political structure of the state. Since the successor had already been recognized within the royal family, the transition of power occurred without major conflict. During the early years of his rule, the administration of the state was temporarily managed by his guardian Harihardev until Basudev Sudhaldev attained maturity. This arrangement ensured both the preservation of dynastic authority and the continuity of governance.

The importance of genealogical legitimacy is also evident in the broader cultural and religious policies of the Bamanda rulers. The Later Ganga kings reinforced their dynastic prestige through acts of religious patronage, including the construction and renovation of temples and the promotion of Hindu religious traditions. Such activities strengthened the ideological connection between kingship and divine sanction, further legitimizing the authority of the ruling house.

Thus, genealogy in the Bamanda state functioned as more than a record of succession; it served as a vital political institution that sustained dynastic continuity and reinforced royal authority. Through claims of descent from the Ganga lineage, strategic adoption practices, and the cultivation of religious and cultural prestige, the rulers of Bamanda were able to maintain their legitimacy and authority over a complex and diverse political landscape. The genealogical traditions of the dynasty therefore played a central role in shaping both the political stability and historical identity of the Bamanda state.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND REGIONAL POWER DYNAMICS

The political authority of the Later Ganga rulers of Bamanda was shaped by a complex network of regional interactions involving neighbouring states, tribal communities, and expanding imperial powers. Located in the western part of Odisha within the Sambalpur tract, Bamanda occupied a strategic frontier position where political authority depended not only on military strength but also on diplomatic negotiation. As a result, the rulers of Bamanda had to navigate a dynamic political environment marked by territorial disputes, shifting alliances, and the growing influence of larger powers such as the Marathas and the British.

One of the most significant aspects of Bamanda's regional politics was its interaction with neighbouring princely states, particularly Keonjhar. Historical accounts indicate that tensions between the two states intensified during the reign of Sarvesvardev, who succeeded Prataprudradev around A.D. 1804. According to traditional narratives, a conflict arose during a marriage ceremony involving members of the Bhanja royal family of Keonjhar, which eventually escalated into open warfare and resulted in the defeat of Sarvesvardev.²³ Although Keonjhar sources attribute victory to the Bhanja rulers, historians suggest that the deeper cause of the conflict was the control of Pallahara, an important territory that had previously remained under the suzerainty of Bamanda. The marriage alliance between the Bhanja family and the ruling house of Pallahara led to the transfer of the territory to Keonjhar as part of a dowry arrangement, thereby intensifying political tensions between the two states.

Apart from regional rivalries, the rulers of Bamanda also faced challenges arising from the expansion of Maratha power in western Odisha during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Marathas of Nagpur extended their influence over the Sambalpur region after imposing a treaty on the Chauhan rulers of Sambalpur in A.D. 1793, which required the payment of heavy tribute.²⁴ As Bamanda formed part of the network of tributary states associated with Sambalpur, these developments significantly affected its political position.

The situation became more complicated during the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1800–1804), which resulted in the transfer of Odisha to the control of the British East India Company in 1803. Although Bamanda retained autonomy in its internal administration, it gradually came under the influence of the British political system. Political instability continued for some time as Maratha forces intermittently attempted to reassert their presence in the region between 1805 and 1817.

The reign of Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev (A.D. 1818–1868) illustrates the complex nature of Bamanda's relations with both regional and colonial powers. Following the defeat of the Marathas in the Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817–1818), Sambalpur and its associated tributary states were incorporated into the British sphere of influence.²⁵ Despite this change, Bamanda retained considerable autonomy in its internal administration.

Relations between Bamanda and the British were sometimes cooperative. In 1848 Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev assisted British authorities in capturing Somnath Singh, the Raja of Angul, who had

rebelled against colonial rule. In recognition of this assistance, the Bamanda ruler was awarded the title of *Raibahadur* along with ceremonial honours such as an elephant and artillery.²⁶

At the same time, the region experienced significant unrest during the tribal uprising led by Surendra Sai in the Sambalpur region during the mid-nineteenth century. The rebellion, which began in the 1830s and intensified after the Revolt of 1857, affected the political stability of western Odisha. During this period the ruler of Bamanda himself was reportedly captured for a brief time by forces associated with Surendra Sai, demonstrating the fragile nature of political authority in the region.²⁷

These developments show that the authority of the Later Ganga rulers was closely linked with wider regional and imperial dynamics. They had to balance relations with neighbouring states, respond to tribal movements within their territories, and adapt to the growing influence of colonial power. Nevertheless, the Bamanda Ganga dynasty succeeded in maintaining a significant degree of autonomy in internal administration. Their ability to sustain political stability under such circumstances reflects both the resilience of the Ganga lineage and the adaptability of their governance. Through diplomatic negotiation, strategic alliances, and administrative flexibility, the Later Ganga rulers were able to preserve their authority and maintain a relatively stable political order in western Odisha.

CULTURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Apart from consolidating political authority, the Later Ganga rulers of Bamanda made significant contributions to the cultural and administrative development of the region. Their rule marked an important phase in the transformation of Bamanda from a frontier polity into a relatively organized and culturally vibrant state. Through religious patronage, educational initiatives, administrative reforms, and economic development, the rulers strengthened the institutional foundations of their authority while promoting social and cultural advancement.

One notable feature of the Later Ganga rulers was their patronage of religious institutions. While earlier rulers had primarily supported Shaivism and Shakti worship, the Later Ganges expanded the religious landscape by promoting Vaishnavism alongside existing traditions. This development represented not only a shift in religious orientation but also a broader ideological strategy aimed at integrating diverse communities within the political framework of the state.²⁸

The introduction of Vaishnavism in Bamanda is often associated with Raja Prataprudradev, who is believed to have constructed the Jagannatha Temple at Purunagad during the late eighteenth century. The temple complex included subsidiary shrines dedicated to Ganesha, Kartikeya, Bhairavi, and Kali, and soon became an important centre of religious activity in the region.²⁹ Such temples not only reflected the rulers' religious devotion but also reinforced royal legitimacy by linking kingship with divine patronage.

Religious patronage continued during the reign of Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev, who constructed the Gokarnesvar Temple at Brajavihari Sasan in Deogarh and installed the image of Lord Gokarnesvar, regarded as the presiding deity of the Imperial Ganges. He also built the Girigobardhana Temple near the Pradhanpat waterfall and renovated the Jagannath Temple complex at Purunagad. These activities strengthened the cultural prestige of Bamanda and reinforced the traditional association between kingship and sacred authority.

The Later Ganga rulers also encouraged education and intellectual activity within the state. Recognizing the importance of learning in administration and social life, they established educational institutions and promoted the study of classical languages. Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev founded a Sanskrit school at Deogarh, which became an important centre for Sanskrit learning in the region.³⁰ Such initiatives fostered an intellectual environment that supported both religious scholarship and administrative governance, while also enhancing the cultural legitimacy of the ruling dynasty.

Support for the Odia language and literary activities was another important aspect of the cultural policy of the Later Ganges. The rulers encouraged the use and development of Odia as a literary and administrative language. A notable initiative in this regard was undertaken during the reign of

Basudev Sudhaldev, who established a printing press at Deogarh and patronized the weekly newspaper *Sambalpur Hitaisini*.³¹ The publication played a significant role in the Odia language movement and contributed to the growth of linguistic consciousness in Odisha during the nineteenth century. Because of such progressive policies, Bamanda gained the reputation of being the “Ujjaini of Utkala,” reflecting its status as a centre of intellectual and cultural activity in western Odisha.³²

Administrative reforms also formed a major component of the Later Ganga rulers’ achievements, particularly during the reign of Basudev Sudhaldev. His rule is often described as a “Golden Period” in the history of Bamanda because of the extensive reforms introduced in governance, economy, and infrastructure.³³ Basudev Sudhaldev reorganized the administrative structure by introducing a Council system of nine members to assist in governance, replacing the traditional *darbar* with a more structured decision-making body.³⁴

For administrative convenience, the state was divided into three *tahsils*—Deogarh, Kuchinda, and Barkot—each supervised by officials responsible for judicial and administrative functions. Magistrates were appointed to deal with civil and criminal cases, while police stations were established to maintain law and order across the state.³⁵ These measures contributed to the development of a more systematic and efficient administrative framework.

Economic development was another major focus of Basudev Sudhaldev’s reforms. Efforts were made to expand agricultural production by bringing uncultivated land under cultivation. An experimental agricultural farm was established at Balam, where various crops were cultivated and agricultural techniques were tested. Irrigation facilities were improved through the construction of dams across rivers such as the Kalajira and Matuali, which enabled the development of canal systems and increased agricultural productivity.³⁶

Industrial and commercial activities also received considerable attention. Large saw mills were established in the capital with the assistance of French engineers, and the Rajkumar Slipper Trading Company was founded to supply wooden railway sleepers to companies such as the East India Railway and the Bengal-Nagpur Railway.³⁷ These enterprises generated revenue and created employment opportunities for local people.

Trade and communication were further promoted through the establishment of commercial depots in centres such as Cuttack and Calcutta and by encouraging riverine trade along the Brahmani River. Infrastructure development was also undertaken through the construction of roads linking Deogarh with neighbouring regions such as Sambalpur, Pallahara, and Rairakhhol.³⁸

Through these initiatives in religion, education, language, administration, and economic development, the Later Ganga rulers transformed Bamanda into an important cultural and administrative centre in western Odisha. The reign of Basudev Sudhaldev in particular marked the culmination of these efforts, as his reforms greatly enhanced the prosperity and stability of the state. The achievements of the Later Ganga rulers thus demonstrate how dynastic authority could be reinforced through a combination of cultural patronage and effective governance.

GENEALOGY AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE

Genealogical traditions constitute an important category of historical evidence for reconstructing the political and social history of regional polities in pre-modern India. In situations where inscriptions and official chronicles are limited or fragmentary, genealogical narratives preserved in literary texts, court chronicles, and local traditions often provide valuable information regarding dynastic succession, political relationships, and processes of state formation. The genealogy of the Ganga rulers of Bamanda represents one such case in which the reconstruction of regional history relies significantly on genealogical records preserved in literary and historical works.

These genealogical traditions offer important insights into the development of political authority in western Odisha. By tracing the succession of rulers such as Prataprudradev, Sarvesvardev, Arjundev, Balunkabrishavadev, Khagesvardev, Brajasundar Tribhuvanadev, and Basudev Sudhaldev

help establish the chronology of the Bamanda state and provide a framework for understanding its political evolution. In a frontier region inhabited by diverse tribal communities, the projection of an unbroken dynastic lineage helped reinforce political stability and strengthen the ideological foundations of kingship.

Genealogical narratives also reveal the role of religious patronage in legitimizing authority. References to temple construction, including the Jagannatha temple at Purunagad and other religious establishments associated with the Later Ganga rulers, demonstrate how religious institutions were used to consolidate political power and integrate diverse communities within the state structure. These records further provide insights into Bamanda's interactions with neighbouring states and external powers such as the Marathas and the British.

At the same time, genealogical traditions must be approached critically. As products of courtly historical writing, they may contain exaggerations or inconsistencies, including variations in the identification and sequence of rulers. Therefore, genealogical evidence must be carefully corroborated with other sources such as administrative records, district gazetteers, archival materials, and inscriptions. When used critically, these traditions remain invaluable for understanding dynastic continuity, political legitimacy, and regional state formation in western Odisha.

CONCLUSION

The genealogy of the Later Ganga rulers of Bamanda provides an important framework for understanding the relationship between dynastic lineage, political legitimacy, and regional authority in western Odisha. In pre-modern Indian polities, genealogical traditions often functioned as ideological instruments through which rulers asserted sovereignty and reinforced continuity with earlier traditions of kingship. The Bamanda rulers strengthened their legitimacy by tracing their descent from the prestigious Ganga dynasty and by maintaining an unbroken line of succession from Prataprudradev to Basudev Sudhaldev, even employing adoption when direct heirs were absent.

The history of the Later Gangas also demonstrates how political authority was consolidated through effective administration, diplomatic engagement, and cultural patronage. Their support for religious institutions, temple construction, education, and the promotion of Odia and Sanskrit learning enhanced the cultural prestige of Bamanda. When examined critically alongside other historical sources, these genealogical traditions offer valuable insights into dynastic continuity, regional governance, and the process of state formation in western Odisha.

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