



Social and professional identities in the Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants of Śrīcandra

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Abstract

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription of King Śrīcandra, a major epigraphic record of the Chandra dynasty, gives us important information about the political power, social and economic order, and cultural diversity of early medieval Bengal. The charter, which was issued in Śrīcandra's fifth year as king, not only confirms the legitimacy of the dynasty through genealogical and religious eulogies, but it also lists large land grants for settlement and institutional support. In addition to its political aspects, the inscription clearly shows the wide range of social and professional groups that were part of the Chandra polity. These groups included Brahmins from different gotras, Buddhist monastic communities, and people who worked as astrologers, potters, blacksmiths, barbers, washermen, and performers. This paper contends that an examination of the textual and socio-historical dimensions of the Paschimabhaga grant reveals it to be not merely a record of land distribution, but a narrative construction of social and professional identities that influenced the lived experiences of early medieval Bengal.

Keywords: Chandra dynasty, Śrīcandra, Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription, early medieval Bengal, land grants, socio-economic structures, religious diversity.

Introduction

The Chandra dynasty ruled southeastern Bengal from the ninth to the eleventh century CE. Their political and cultural contributions had a lasting effect on the region's social and political landscape. The Chandras became a strong Buddhist dynasty in Samatata and the areas around it. They strengthened their power, expanded their territories, and supported both religious and educational institutions. King Śrīcandra (c. 930–975 CE), son of Trailokyacandra, is especially important among their rulers because he ruled for a long time and there are many high-quality inscriptions from his time (Dani, A. H., 1966).

Epigraphic sources, especially copperplate charters, are the main way that historians put together the Chandras' political, economic, and cultural history. These records not only show land grants, but they also show the ideas that rulers used to try to gain legitimacy and social power. The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription, released in the fifth year of Śrīcandra's reign, is one of the most helpful of these texts. It gives us a unique look at how agriculture grew, how administrative divisions were set up, and how land was divided among different groups, such as Brahmins, monastic institutions, artisans, and professional guilds (Gupta, K., 1967).

The Paschimabhaga charter shows that land was given to a lot of different groups, not just the Brahmanical elite. These groups included astrologers, potters, washermen, barbers, blacksmiths, and even performers (Basak, 1913–14). This inclusivity emphasizes the interconnected socio-

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economic frameworks of early medieval Bengal, characterized by royal patronage that spanned various societal strata. It also shows that copperplate grants were not just acts of piety or religious charity; they were also tools of political strategy meant to strengthen control, boost agricultural productivity, and keep order in the government (Bhattachali, N. K., 1923–1924a).

From a religious point of view, the charter shows that the Chandras were involved in both Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions. The inscription starts with the usual good luck prayer and praises Buddhism while also keeping track of grants to Brahmanical schools and teachers (Chowdhury, A. M., 1967). This coexistence is a sign of the pluralistic society of the time, when Buddhist leaders carefully balanced different traditions to strengthen their political legitimacy and social harmony. (Dani, A. H., 1966) demonstrated in his examination of the Mainamati plates that the Chandras consistently utilized inscriptions to publicize their commitment to Buddhism, while concurrently acknowledging the entrenched position of Brahmanical orthodoxy.

The Paschimabhaga charter also helps us understand how the region's culture and education have changed over time. The references to monastic institutions and the distribution of land for academic endeavors reflect the prevailing trends of intellectual life in Bengal during that era. The grant's provisions for Brahmins of different gotras and its recognition of Buddhist monasteries show that there was a rich intellectual and cultural scene, with centers of learning thriving with royal support (Ray, 2004). Some scholars have even said that these charters show that there were proto-universities in the area that were centers of both religious and secular knowledge (Rashid, 1997).

The charter is important for the economy because it shows how people farmed and traded. The inscription emphasizes the processes of rural expansion that defined early medieval Bengal by recording the settlement of new territories and the redistribution of agricultural resources. (Ahmad, N., 1990) contends that these developments are inextricably linked to Bengal's involvement in extensive interregional trade networks, especially with Assam, highlighting the dynamic interplay of political and economic spheres.

Additionally, the inscription's literary qualities need to be stressed. The verses use classical meters like *anuṣṭubh* and *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, which puts the Chandra inscriptions in line with other Indian epigraphic traditions (Fleet, J. F., 1894–1895). The aesthetic aspect of these inscriptions demonstrates both the technical proficiency of their engravers and the ideological significance of depicting royal authority through poetic and culturally resonant expressions (Huntington, 1984).

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription is an important historical source that sheds light on many parts of early medieval Bengal's political, social, cultural, and economic life. This paper aims to reevaluate the reign of Śrīcandra by juxtaposing the charter with other Chandra inscriptions, including the Rampal copperplate (Basak, 1913–14) and the Kedarpur plate (Bhattachali, N. K., 1923–1924a), as well as conducting comparative analyses of land grants in Bengal and Assam. In doing so, it highlights the role of epigraphy not just as a way for dynasties to show off, but also as a way to see how people lived in a region that was changing.

Review of the Literature

The examination of the Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription of Śrīcandra and the Chandra dynasty has elicited significant scholarly interest, chiefly in the domains of epigraphy and medieval Bengali historiography. R. and other early historians, G. Basak (1913–14) and Bhattachali, N. K., 1923–1924a) established the groundwork by publishing and analyzing copperplate grants, including the Rampal and Kedarpur plates. Their work focused on the Chandras' family tree and how important inscriptions are for putting together the history of social and political events. Subsequent investigations by on the Mainamati plates (Dani, A. H., 1966) shed more light on the

dynasty's religious and cultural environment. He pointed out that the Chandras were Buddhist but also supported Brahmanical institutions.

Researchers have argued about the family trees that are written on these stones. R. C. Majumdar (1943) and D. C. Sircar (1971) noted that although the charters offer a continuous dynastic narrative, they may amplify or romanticize the roles of specific kings, especially regarding their connections to regions like Harikela. The connection between Trailokyacandra, Śrīcandra's father, and Harikela has been understood in different ways, such as a result of political growth, military campaigns, or a safe place to stay during times of trouble (Sircar, 1971; Basak, R. G. (1949–1950). These different interpretations show how hard it is to rely only on royal genealogical notices, which were often meant to make dynastic authority seem more legitimate than to give accurate historical accounts.

The copperplates also tell us a lot about the social and religious makeup of medieval Bengal. (Gupta, K., 1967) and Chowdhury, A. M., 1967) have highlighted the incorporation of various groups in the land grants, encompassing Brahmins from multiple gotras, Buddhist monastic communities, and occupational groups. These allocations indicate a calculated effort by the Chandras to integrate diverse social and professional identities into the structure of their polity. References to Brahmins of the Chāndogya carāṇa, as documented in other contemporary grants, further connect Bengal to extensive Brahmanical networks that reach into Assam and northern India (Ray, 2004). The mention of Brahmins from Hastipada, which is connected to Śrāvastī, shows how religious groups moved between regions and became part of the local community (Niyogi, 1967).

From a cultural standpoint, these charters illustrate the interaction between Buddhism and Brahmanism in the legitimization of royal authority. (Bhattachali, N. K., 1923–24a) and (Dani, A. H., 1966) underscored that although the Chandras were professed Buddhists, their patronage encompassed Brahmanical schools, thereby promoting a pluralistic religious environment. Huntington (1984) posited that this pluralism is manifest in the artistic and sculptural traditions supported during this era, which exhibit both Buddhist and Brahmanical motifs.

The inscriptions show that agriculture was growing and becoming part of regional trade networks on a larger scale. (Ahmad, N., 1990) emphasized the importance of land redistribution and agricultural settlement in fortifying the dynasty's economic foundation, associating these processes with the Bengal-Assam trade nexus. Rashid (1997), in his examination of Mainamati-Devaparvata, substantiated this perspective by highlighting the archaeological evidence of settlement and institutional development during Śrīcandra's rule.

In general, scholars agree that the Paschimabhaga and other copperplates have two important uses: they can be used to learn about dynastic history and as stories of how different cultures came together. (Ali, D., 2000) has warned, though, that these records should be read carefully because they were meant to boost the prestige of the dynasty. While they are essential for reconstructing the history of early medieval Bengal, they should be augmented with numismatic, archaeological, and literary sources to prevent excessive dependence on potentially idealized narratives.

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants of Śrīcandra

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Inscription, which was found in 1958 in the village of Paschimabhaga in Moulvibazar, is one of the most important written records of the Chandra dynasty. The copperplate, which was made in the fifth regnal year of King Śrīcandra, son of Trailokyacandra, is a large and finely engraved object that measures 17.5 by 12 inches and has 65 lines of writing on it. It has a royal seal in the middle that says "Śrīcandradeva." The text is written in the northern Nāgarī script of the 10th–11th centuries and includes benedictory verses, genealogical accounts, land grants, and ritual injunctions.

The charter shows that a lot of land was given away in Chandrapur and the areas around it. It gave 400 paṭakas of land to Brahmins from different gotras, Buddhist monasteries, and different types of workers, such as scholars, astrologers, artisans, musicians, potters, barbers, washermen, and healers. Also, almost 6,000 Brahmins were given tax-free land, as well as land for Buddhist Ratnatraya (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and for keeping ports in good shape. The inscription also keeps track of current officials, administrative boundaries, and social and political structures. Its poetic verses follow established metrical rules. It paints a vivid picture of early medieval Bengal, showing royal power, Buddhist devotion, social diversity, and how agricultural, artisanal, and religious communities depended on each other during Śrīcandra's rule. Here is the transliteration of the Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants of Śrīcandra:

Front Side

1. +O svasti 'jīnasya bhagavān karuṇaika-pātraṃ vaśopasau bi-
2. jayete jagadevandīpaṃ | yat-sevayā sakala eva mahānubhāvasaṃghāra-
3. pāram upagacchati bhikṣu-saṅgaḥ | (1) Pūrṇacandra iti śrīmān īsannyāsī rājaṃ rajah |
yasya pūrvarayopūrvānā-
4. tapa ema-patrapā' | (2) lagnaḥ viśuddho na tulādhiroḍhaḥ kintu prakṛtaiḥ yuto
parimāṇaṃ tathāpi kalyāṇasu-
5. varakalpasa Subarṇacandra-sukṛti tato'bhūt | (3) darśe'sya mātā viśa-dohadena
didūṣkamāne ditam indu-
6. bimbaṃ | Su-pūrṇacandre hi toṣitetyi Subarṇacandraṃ yam udāharanti | (4) asmad-
vandivilocana-nendu dhūṣa-dalli-
7. sasyanda candrādayaḥ | kaulīnāt sabhaya-sabhā phalalinī suprāta-sandhyātapaḥ tṛṣṇaka-
cakra-maṇḍala-navasana-su-
8. prajñāsikaḥ || Trailokya-prathitorukīrtir-jani Trailokyacandra nṛpaḥ | (5) catuḥpayo-
rāśi-samāpta-
9. pṛthvī-jayābhilābo viṣaye khalubdhaḥ | sundara-nibhṛṇśalatā-bale yo vairi-vahniṃ
śamayāñcakāra | (6) Kṣīro dāsa-
10. Naradeva-parvata iti śrīmat tad etat pūrvaṃ yatrāgaṇḍajanasya vismaya-vasa
kame'bhavārttā-ḍutaiḥ | Lālambi-vanam atra vāti-
11. kaśatair-aśviṣṭā-sandho vidhavyāhārā iti-hkṛtāḥ Samatatannirjitā yat sainikāḥ || (7)
bhuktā Caṅgadadhini-kṛṣṇa-śikha-
12. ri-grāmeṣu kautūhalāṃ Vindhāsyāpādimeghlānana-talaṃ pītvā Suruṅgī-nadīm |
Turṣasya balyaiga-
13. babhyāmīśra-kolāilena || (8)

14. Indrāñīr-Mahendrasya Bhavāñīr-Bhavasya vā | tasya Śrī-Kañcika nāma bakula-mahiṣī
priyā (9) sa rāja-yogena śubha-muhūrte
15. mauṅgutikaiḥ sūcita-rāja-ciḥnam | avāpa tasyām tanayaṁ nayajñāḥ Śrīcandra (indu-
pama-mindratējaḥ) | (10) ekātapa-
16. eva erapāṇḍubaraṁ so vidhāya vaidhaijana-vidheyah | cakāra bābāsu niveśitāri-yaśasu-
gandhanī diśāsu-
17. khāni | (11) vat sainyaiḥ kila Kāmarūpa-vijayaṁ bohata-kapotīkṣaṇā nirviṣṭāḥ (tā) bhūl-
pāśa-piṅga-kadalī-kuñja-
18. bhramad-vānarāḥ | Romañthālavindhya-nidrā-camabāisaṁ (savitā-prāntarā lo
(Lauhisya-vanasthalī-parisā) kālāgu-
19. 19. ru-śyāmalāḥ | (12) Saiva citra-śilā manorama-śilā puṣpa-pratānācitā tāli-sacchada-
masārnaraiḥ parisaraiḥ
20. sā Puṣpabhadra-nadī | ity utkaṇṭhalam uttarāpatha-bhāre yat sainikāḥ śrotriyaḥ adhyāye
pāthāc-ciraṁ hima-gitro
21. dṛṣṭyā sthali peratāḥ || (13) santoṣaraṁ raśadevatāṅgamayatā vīrbābadā naimnijair
unmuṣṭaṁ samamī pasodharataḥ-
22. patrāṅgulī-maṇḍalaṁ | śoka-pracchanna-jararjaṁ vīracitama haṅganikapolā-daraṁ
yena mūlittamyutkalī nayanayontālī surā-
23. ghunnitaṁ || (14) sprṣṭaḥ pāṛthiva-pādudohada-rasāślāghānaṁ (nai)pi-
jñendretroṇāmanimeṣataḥ parihṛto dūreṇa vṛ-
24. ndarekaiḥ (1) keśada-spasām apūrvadvā pālita-bhrānti samāropayan santāno bājasām
jayino yaśya dyumārj-
25. gataḥ || (15) sa khalu Śrī-Vikramapura-samavāsita śrīmat-jaya-skandhābārāt parama-
saugata paramēśvara paramabhāttāraka-
26. This is the name of the god that is the most powerful, the most beautiful, and the most
powerful of all.
27. rājādhirājaḥ śrīmān Śrīcandradevaḥ kuśalī | Śrī-Pauṇḍravardhana-bhukta-ntaḥpāti
Śrīhaṭṭa-maṇḍala-mandel vargaja-
28. sambandha-averikā-sameta Garala-viṣaya Poga-viṣaya Candrapurī-viṣaya-yu samagata
meṣ rāñji rā-

Back Side

29. ekā rājaputraḥ | Mahāsandhivigrahika | Mahā-senāpati | Mahāmudrādhikṛta |

30. Mahā-pāṭalika, Pādamūlika, Mahā-pratihāra, Mahā-candrādhikṛta, and Mahā-sarvādhikṛta
31. Mahā-balādhikaraṇika, Mahā-vyūhapati, Maṇḍalapati Raṇatpāla, Dausasādhāsādhānika Caur-odvaraṇika, and Naubala Hastaśvage-mahi-
32. śāṇvikādībya-prṭhaka | Gelasmika | Śālmika | Dāṇḍika | Dāṇḍapāsi (śika) | Dāṇḍanāyaka | viśayapatyādīn yāśca rājapādyo-
33. ti | Bodharati | Samājñātāpayatic | Matasambhavatāḥ viśayanetan pūrvena bṛhat-kotṭali-sīmā | Dakṣiṇe Maṇi-nadī-sīmā | paścime-
34. na Jujjana-khātaka-kāṣṭapanna-khātaka Vetraghaṇṭṛi-nadī-sīmā | uttarataḥ Kośiyārā-nadī-sīmā | ity evaṃ catuḥ-sīmā-paryantān śrī-śrī-
35. Candrapurābhīdhānam Brahmapuram-pavikalpya | etasmin Śrī-Candrapure brāhmaṇe etam manīprītivat Candra Vyāsanopādhyāyasya- h-
36. śadro (drau) nika-daśa-pāṭakāḥ | daśa-chātrānām pālikuṭa-kārtham daśa-pāṭakārah (1) apūrva pañca brāhmaṇānām pratyekaṃ bhuktāndā-bhūmi-pakā-
37. ṭakāḥ | etadadhiṣṭhāya kārayitvā babrāhmaṇasya paṭakāḥ | gaṇakas/paṭaka-dvayaṃ | mālākāra-catuṣṭayaṃ | tailikādvārāsyā | kumbhakāra-dvārāsyā | pañca-kāhalikānām | śaikhavādaka-dvayasya cakṣvāda (ka) dvayasya | aṣṭa-drāgaḍikānām | dvāvimśati karmmakara-varman-bārānām ca pratyekaṃ ardha-pāṭakāḥ | naṭasya paṭaka-dvayaṃ | sūtradharedvayasya | supatī-dvārāsyā | karmmakatār-dvayasya ca | pratyekaṃ paṭaka-dvayaṃ | aṣṭa-bettikānām pratyekaṃ pādonapāṭaka navakarma-nimittam ca sapta-caṇḍābhi-vaśat paṭakāḥ | evaṃ anena niyamena varṣī-śaty-adhika-paṭaka-śatam | tathā deśāntavī-maṭha-catuṣṭaye | Bāṅgāla-maṭha-catuṣṭaye | Vaiśvānara Yogeśvar-
38. jñāmaṇi Mahākālebhyaśca | eṣāṃ ubhūyeṣāṃ maṭha pratibaddha ṛg-yajus-sāmātharvopādhyāyānām aṣṭānām pratyekaṃ daśa-pāṭakāḥ |
39. prati-maṭha pañca-chātrānām pañca-pāṭakāḥ | mālākāra-nāpita tailika-rajakānām aṣṭa-karmmakara-karmmakārāṇām ca pratyekaṃ ardha-
40. paṭakāḥ | bettikā-prayāsyā pratyekaṃ pādonapāṭakāḥ | prati-maṭha-navakarma-nimittam ca daśa-pāṭakāḥ | prati-maṭha-catuṣṭaye ca | m-
41. tarabrāhmaṇasya | paṭaka-dvayaṃ | bārikasya sārḍha-pāṭakāḥ | Kāyasthasya sārḍha-paṭaka-dvayaṃ | gaṇakasya paṭakāḥ | Vaidyasya paṭa-
42. katrayaṃ | evaṃ anena niyamena | āśīty-uttara-paṭaka-śatadvayaṃ | Bābus Datta | Harṣa | Śekhara | Viśyarūpa | Bhānudatta | Isāna |

43. Vaisyāgananda (1) Yaśaḥ | Caṅga | Govardhana | Siṅgadatta | Kamalanandi | Savitāra |
Mānikya-kāmuka (1) Bhīmapāla | Antaga | Vyāsadhara | Nandaghoṣa |
44. Śrīdhara, Rāma, Śivabandhu, Maṅgala, Vedo, Dhavala, Bihradatta, Śāntidāma, Garja
Śarma, Mahīndra, Soma, Ravi-kara, Bhānu, and Nārāyaṇa
45. Garja Gupta, Śaśidatta, Hari, Jayadatta, Gornāgāchi, and ca brāhmaṇa-sahasra-bhyaśca
nānā-gotra-pravarebhyaḥ | catuḥśaraṇa-nānā-śākhādhyāyitabhyaḥ |
46. samavibhāgena śeṣa-bhūmiḥ | itoka Brahmā | Agni | Yogeśvara | Jaimini-
Mahākālebyaḥ | ṣaḍ-brāhmaṇa-sahasrebhyaśca | uparil-likhita-
47. sīmā-vicchinna | Redikā-sameta viśayā ete | Saulāḥ | Sodeśāḥ | Sāmrapanasāḥ |
Sagvānalikerāḥ | Sajal-sthalāḥ | Sagartoṣavāḥ | Sa-
48. daśāparādhāḥ | Sacaur-oddharaṇāḥ | Parivrata-sarvva-pīḍā acāṭa-bhaṭṭa-praveśāḥ
akiñcid-grāhyaḥ | sīmānta-samasta-rāja-bhoga-kara-hariṇyaḥ pratyā-
49. ya-sahihitāḥ | Ratnatraya-bhūmi-varjitāḥ | Indeśvara-naubandha-pratibaddha daśa-dro
(drau) nika-dvā-pañcāśat paṭaka-bahiḥ | Mahā-mudrādhikṛta Śrīvā
50. Bhagavastayuddha-bhaṭṭāraka-mūrvaddhaśa matopihorātmānanda-puṇya-yaśo-
vivṛddhaye Śrāvaṇa-ravi-saṃkrānto vidhidudaka-
51. pūrvvakam kṛtvā | ācandrārka-kṣiti-samkālāṃ bādhā | bhūmi-chchidra-nyāyena |
tāmṛśāsana-kṛtyaṃ | pradattāsmābhiḥ | yatobhavodbhijjana-padeḥ |
52. kṣetra-kairava-brāhmaṇaiśca vidheyībhūya yathādīyamāna-pratyāyopanaḥ kārbaṇaḥ |
yathākāla uparibhoga-patibhirapi bhūmi-ddāna-phala-gau-
53. rabā | apahāṇe mahā-naraka-pātabhayāc ca | dānam idam samāganumodyānu
pālpālānīyam iti | saṃvat 5 (pañca) Vaiśākhadine 5 (pañca) | tathā ca Dharma |
54. nṛśaṃsinaḥ (śaṃsinaḥ) (Śrāvaṇa) | bahutir vasudhā dattā rājābhiḥ Sagarādibhiḥ | mūlya
yasya vadā bhūmiḥ tasya tasya tabhya phalaṃ | bhūmiṃ yaḥ pratigṛhṇāti yasya
55. bhūmiṃ prayacchati | ubhau tau puṇyakarmamāṇau niyataṃ svargagāsinau | sarvvanetān
bhāvin pārthivendrān bhūyo bhūyaḥ prārthayatoṣa-rāmaḥ |
56. sāmāno'yam dharmmasatermupānāṃ (nā) kāle kāle pālānīyaḥ | kramena svadattāṃ
paradattāṃ o'svā yo bhavet vasudhā (ndha) rāḥ | sa viśṭāyāṃ-kumibhūtvā |
57. pītṛbhiḥ saha pacyate | iti Kamala-balāmbuki-dulolāṃ śrayam-anucintā manuṣya-
jīvitaru sakalam idam udāthataṃ ca buddhā na hi puruṣaiḥ parakīrtayo vilopaḥ |
58. This is how the king, Śrīcandrade, got the order to go to Candrapurā-śāsanam.

59. Vasya | Kāligramabhavo Vaiṣṇavaḥ samāropayāṃ bahu-vakṛtī | śrīman Vināyakākhyah
viprāṇāṃ ghaṭa-sahasrāṇi || etac-chāsanam-
60. prākīrṇam Haradāsena śilpinā | vārtā (bi) nirmitam yasya sādṛśya-karmaśaḥ kachid |
sāmbinī ānu ||

Note about the context

The numbered cues in the Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants of Śrīcandra (1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20) were added to show that they are very similar to Śrīcandra's other copperplate charters. Nani Gopal Majumdar had already translated all but section (2) of the stanzas in Bāṅglār Śīlālīpi, vol. III. The prefixed Khandtta (५) above the charter is probably a stylized auspicious marker (a localized, sacred siglum) instead of a phonetic character.

Section (2) is basically a list of the Buddha's names and titles, such as sarvajña (all-knowing), sugata, buddha, dharmarāja, tathāgata, samantabhadra, bhagavān, lokajit, jina, ṣaḍabhijña (endowed with the six superknowledges), daśabala (possessor of the ten powers), vināyaka, munīndra, śāstrī/muni, and others. It also includes names like Śākyamuni, Śākya-simha, Sarvārthasiddha, Gautama, (son of) Śuddhodana, Arkabandhu, and (son of) Sārādevī. So, the stanza puts Śrīcandra's royal order in a clearly Buddhist devotional context.

Section (3) provides the name-etymology (nāmvyañjanā) of Subarṇacandra ("Golden Moon"): from a Buddhist moral-economy of dharma—artha, the populace referred to the prince by that epithet because his mother, while pregnant, expressed a desire typical of doḥada lore—gazing upon the full-moon's perfect orb—and, upon being blessed with a son radiant "like a golden moon," found her wish fulfilled. The passage connects royal legitimacy to good maternal desire, lunar imagery, and Buddhist soteriological praise. This makes the Paschimabhaga charter fit in with other Chandrapur inscriptions.

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate in English

The charter starts with the good luck word svasti (prosperity), which is a common sign of health. It goes on to praise the Buddha, who is called Jina and is said to be a personification of compassion. Dharma spread like a bright light through his teachings, and the Buddhist saṅgha kept a spiritually grounded life through his hard work.

King Pūrṇacandra came into being in this blessed time. His enemies were so scared of him that they would hide in the dust before his troops in battle. From his family came an extraordinary son, Subarṇacandra, who was like pure gold—unbreakable by fire and impossible to measure on any scale.

Trailokyacandra, Subarṇacandra's son, was known for how bright and beautiful he was. It was said that prisoners would close their eyes in shame when they saw his beautiful face. He looked like the morning sun shining on everything around him when he was in royal assembly. Trailokyacandra was known as the "protector of the three worlds," and he kept his people safe. He wanted to rule the whole world, but he wasn't greedy. Instead, he calmed his enemies' anger with the wisdom of a doctor giving medicine.

Word of the amazing Kambojas land spread to his kingdom, and many people came to see his peaceful and beautiful capital, which was compared to an ocean of milk. His army conquered the area of Samataṭa, which included the forested areas of Lālamvī and Lālamāi, which were known

for their healing herbs that healers used. Trailokyacandra traveled through mountains and valleys during his campaigns. He tasted sour curd in a village, drank from underground streams that flowed through the Vindhyan valleys, and later conquered the Malaya hills, where the Kāverī River roared with thunderous force as it flowed down with boulders.

His main queen, Śrīkañcikā, was better than Indrāṇī, Indra's wife, and Bhavānī, Śiva's wife. She was smart and good at running the government, and she had a great son named Śrīcandra. When he was born, astrologers said he would become king. Over time, Śrīcandra united many different areas under one roof, wisely ignoring the advice of fools, defeating his enemies, and making his capital famous.

After he took over Kāmarūpa, Śrīcandra and his soldiers enjoyed the beauty of the land. They heard the sounds of pigeons, monkeys, and bears, saw lots of birds in the forests, and watched herds of yak graze lazily. The Puṣpabhadra River flowed through rocky land and the banks of the Lohita (Brahmaputra) River were lined with fragrant forests of agarwood and aloe. The flowers, vines, and palm tree groves that surrounded the area made the air feel sad and soft. As his armies moved north, they stopped at shrines mentioned in holy texts and performed acts of bravery and devotion at the Himalayan heights, which were dedicated to the god of war.

The soldiers were compared to beautiful maidens in the sky, dressed in musk and jewelry and standing out. Deer stood still, and elephants enjoyed the dust clouds that victorious troops kicked up. The gods, who couldn't close their eyes, couldn't stand the dust either. People said that even the heavens were amazed by the show.

Vikrampura, the capital of Śrīcandra, was the place where good luck and victory happened. A devout follower of the Buddha (Sugata), Śrīcandra, son of the famous Trailokyacandra, made this copperplate in Vikrampura. It lists three administrative units (viṣayas) within Śrīhaṭṭa—Garala, Pāgara, and Candrapura—under the larger Pundravardhana province.

The inscription lists the royal dignitaries who were there, such as the queen, the crown prince, the mahāsandhivigrahika (foreign affairs minister), the mahāsenāpati (general), the mahāmudrādhikṛta (keeper of the royal seal), the mahākṣapaṭalika (chief accountant), the pādamūlika (personal secretary), the mahāpratihāra (palace superintendent), the mahātantrādhikṛta (director of internal administration), the mahāsarvādhikṛta (chief of public works), the mahāvīyūhapati (commander of battle arrays), the maṇḍalapati (provincial head), and the koṭṭapāla (fortress guard). There are also doorkeepers, law enforcement officers, naval officers, infantry, elephant and cavalry divisions, cattle and livestock supervisors, toll collectors, and judicial officers on the list.

The charter says that the grants are only valid in certain areas: in the east, Koṭṭālī; in the south, the Maṇi River; in the west, the Jujjana canal and Vetrasaṅghi River; and in the north, the Kosiyaṛā River. Candrapura, which is also known as Brahmapura and is a Brahmin settlement, was built in this area.

The inscription says that each upādhyāya (teacher) got 10 paṭakas, each student got 10, each newly initiated Brahmin got 5, and smaller shares went to administrative Brahmins. Artisans and service groups also got land. These included potters, oilmen, malākāras (garland-makers), barbers, washermen, musicians, conch-blowers, architects, carpenters, and performers. Monasteries, both local and foreign, received large amounts of money for rituals and teaching, including shares for scholars who worked with the four Vedas.

In total, 280 paṭakas of land were given out, along with 120 paṭakas that had been given out before. The rest of the land was split up among about 6,000 Brahmins from different gotras and

pravara lineages. The inscription goes into great detail about the names of the people who received it and their connections to ancient Vedic sages like Agastya, Bhṛgu, Viśvāmitra, and Gautama. The focus on gotra and pravara shows how the Brahmanical system of legitimacy works.

The charter also says how it will be enforced: guards were hired to stop serious crimes like theft, murder, lying, and bad behavior. All granted lands were tax-free, except for those set aside for the Buddhist Ratnatraya (Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha). There were 52 paṭakas set aside for upkeep at the port of Indreśvara.

The ceremony for the donation took place in Śrāvaṇa, during the solar conjunction, in the name of the Buddha, for the king's parents' well-being, and for the king's own fame. The bhūmichchidra rite made the grants holy and stressed that they could not be changed. Future rulers were told to respect and protect the grants, and those who broke the rules were told they would go to hell.

The charter was written in the fifth year of Śrīcandra's reign, on the fifth day of Vaiśākha. It ends with moral thoughts on how wealth and life are short-lived, like dew on a lotus leaf. The text talks about how Śubhāṅga, a Varendri envoy, helped carry out the charter and names Vināyaka, a well-known Vaiṣṇava from Kāligram, who helped settle the Brahmins. The inscription ends with the name of the sculptor Haridāsa, who is credited with engraving it and making it permanent.

Stories about social and professional identities

The Paschimabhaga copperplate charter creates a very dense social text in which identities are made through space, office, lineage, craft, and ritual. At the top is a list of kings—Pūrṇacandra, Subarṇacandra, Trailokyacandra, and Śrīcandra—whose good deeds and victories are told in bright metaphors that link royal charisma to cosmic order. This dynastic preface is not just for show; it gives the gift its ideological meaning. The presence of a fully articulated bureaucratic stratum—mahāsandhivigrahika (minister for treaties and war), mahāsenāpati (commander-in-chief), mahāmudrādhikṛta (keeper of the seal), mahākṣapaṭalika (chief accountant), pādāmūlika (personal secretary), mahāpratihāra (palace superintendent), mahāvīyūhapati (deployer of battle arrays), maṇḍalapati (provincial head), koṭṭapāla (fortress warden), among others—locates royal generosity inside a legal-administrative spectacle.

The grant is given in assembly, and it is witnessed by office-holders whose titles are their own identities, each of which means a different kind of training, authority, and moral duty. In this conception of statehood, governance is not an abstract principle but a choreography of roles that makes the act of donation both legally valid and socially comprehensible. If kings and officials are one part of identity, Brahmanical lineage is another part that is just as important. The charter gives a lot of attention to naming Brahmins by gotra and pravara, which links them to remembered Vedic ancestors like Agastya, Bhṛgu, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, and others.

This is not just a list; it is a way to tell the truth about society, and the people who get it are certified as ritual experts whose ancestry, teaching style, and purity make them eligible for tax-free ownership. The mahattara brāhmaṇa (village head Brahmin) figure establishes an intra-Brahmanical hierarchy and local authority, linking the sacred to everyday duties like teaching, judging, and supervision.

The focus on bhūmichchidra rites and execration formulae reinforces the concept of landholding within a juridical-ritual framework: the earth is bestowed not merely as property but as merit (puṇya), and transgression of this gift is considered a moral offense with eschatological consequences. In this way, Brahman identity is based on texts (the Veda), family trees (lineage), places (the seat at Candrapurī), and laws (immunity and oath).

A third group, which is separate from the others, is made up of monastic-scholastic communities, which include teachers (upādhyāya), students, and houses called "foreign" and "Bengal" monasteries. The provision for Veda-specialist instructors (Rg, Yajus, Sāma, Atharvan) and for routine monastic services (novakarma) indicates that the inscription funds a whole ecology of learning: not only doctrinal instruction and recitation, but kitchens, cleaning, repairs, and ritual supplies.

The charter's political theology is useful because it turns royal virtue into institutional stability. Learning is not an idea; it is paid for, provided for, and protected. In this way, the text builds a scholarly economy in which earmarked agricultural surpluses support both pedagogical work and religious observance.

Scribal, medical, and divinatory professionals constitute another prominent group of identities. The kāyastha is in between being literate service and administrative authority. As a registrar of boundaries, dues, and obligations, he is the anchor for the archive on which the gift depends. The gaṇaka (astrologer) gives the information about calendars and predictions that is needed for good timing.

In fact, the charter is timed to a solar transition in Śrāvaṇa, which shows how cosmic and civic time are linked. The vaidya (physician) affirms a notion of public good wherein the well-being of individuals is interconnected with the well-being of institutions. Even though these specialists get less money than Brahmins or monasteries, their names show that there is a hierarchy of important technical knowledges that are needed for agrarian expansion and legal order to work.

The charter's most interesting part is its long list of artisanal and service groups, such as mālākāra (garland-maker and horticulturalist), tailika (oil-processor), kumbhakāra (potter), karmakāra/lohakāra (smith and metalworker), leather-workers, sūtradhara (carpenter), sthapati (architect), and cleaners/attendants (betṭikā). Their identities are not merely designated; they are quantified through specific land shares, frequently fractional, which indicate corporatized labor connected to monastic precincts and regional markets.

The incorporation of leatherwork alongside ritual crafts indicates a pragmatic political economy: purity regimes are recognized yet do not diminish the essential nature of trades that support ritual, warfare, architecture, and daily sustenance. These grants create a social contract: artisans bring goods and skills to sacred and administrative sites, and the government gives them secure usufruct and immunities in return.

The inscription also shows how sound and performance professions are organized, such as the naṭa and a range of musicians, including kāhalika (large drum), śaṅkhavādaka (conch), dhāk drummers, and drāgaḍi war-clarion players. The charter here lists culture as part of the infrastructure. Music and performance are not just for show; they are an important part of royal ceremonies, mark important dates on the calendar, make up the soundscape of festivals, and help keep people in line during processions and battles. Landed endowments for these practitioners stabilize the ritual calendar and the emotional economy of sovereignty. In short, the text is an aesthetic polity.

A littoral and logistical identity develops around the Indreśvara naubandha (port), for which significant land area is allocated. The charter's notice of toll-collectors and timber channels (kāṣṭha-panya khātak) makes it clear that transport workers and regulators are two different types of people in society. Timber's journey from hills to waterways, probably for shipbuilding and construction, connects upland resource zones with lowland markets and monasteries.

This riverine circuitry gives the grant a geography of labor: agriculturalists, foresters, carters, boatmen, and clerks whose coordinated activities turn land into money, wood into boats, and ritual into entertainment. The port grant is both a tool for making money and a way to build an identity by bringing people together around navigation, maintenance, and trade.

There are two levels of gendered identities. The queen Śrīkañcikā emerges as a political figure, her wisdom and abilities distinctly acknowledged, linking royal femininity with governance and dynastic continuity. The betṭikā, on the other hand, defined women's work in monastic settings, such as cleaning, maintenance, and preparing for rituals. It is significant that these women are listed with quantified shares: their work, which is often not mentioned in standard texts, is here budgeted and legally protected. The charter encompasses both the sovereign feminine and the institutional feminine, correlating each with specific, acknowledged contributions to the state and the cult.

The text also uses ethnonyms and geocultural labels—Kāmboja, Kāmarūpa, Yavana, Utkalī—to build identities. It puts Candrapurī and the Śrīhaṭṭa region in a bigger ethnoscape of conquest, flight, visits, and pilgrimage. These kinds of names do more than just tell you where enemies or neighbors are; they are narrative tools that show movement and the making of boundaries. The winning army that moves to the Himalayan foothills, drinks from underground streams in the Vindhyan valleys, and conquers the forested Samataṭa carries with it a collection of remembered places that make up a "mental map" of the area. Professional identities function within territorial identities, each validating the other.

Lastly, the legal-moral system—lists of serious crimes, tax breaks, and threats of punishment after death—turns people into moral subjects. The land is given "as long as the moon and sun endure," and not only guards and officials are in charge of enforcing the rules; there is also a cosmology that links breaking the rules to hellish consequences. These formulas are not exaggerations; they are ways to get people to agree that keep farmers, Brahmins, artisans, and monks on the same page.

The oath with water, the setting of boundaries by rivers and canals, and the recitation of names all help people remember their rights and responsibilities. In this way, identity is both contractual and devotional: being a kāyastha, mālākāra, naṭa, betṭikā, or upādhyāya means living in a network of privilege, duty, and reputation that the king and the gods protect.

The Paschimabhaga charter does more than just record a transfer of land; it also writes a social constitution. It envisions the polity as an interconnected system where royal charisma transforms into bureaucratic order, lineage into legal standing, craft into corporate entitlement, performance into political liturgy, port maintenance into maritime citizenship, and women's labor into institutional continuity.

So, the story of social and professional identities that comes out is not a list but a structure that connects sovereignty to labor, doctrine to revenue, and territory to community. In that map, Śrīcandra's gift is more of a plan for living than a gift of land, where the rights to land are the same as the duties to cultivate, teach, heal, build, sing, sail, record, and serve.

Conclusion

The Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants of Śrīcandra are not just a record of royal gifts; they are a complex socio-political text that explains how identities were formed, validated, and maintained in early medieval Bengal. The charter, at one level, asserts dynastic authority by using bright metaphors to link royal charisma to cosmic order in the genealogies of Pūrṇacandra, Subarnacandra, Trailokyacandra, and Śrīcandra. But these genealogical stories are not just for show. They give the

ideological grammar that gives the act of giving meaning and makes it morally and cosmologically acceptable.

The charter goes into great detail about a lot of administrative offices, such as mahāsandhivigrahika, mahāsenāpati, mahāmudrādhikṛta, mahākṣapaṭālika, pādāmūlika, and others. These offices make governance clear as a legal-administrative spectacle. The existence of these titles not only indicates a well-defined bureaucratic structure but also confirms that state authority functioned through a coordinated arrangement of specialized roles. Governance is depicted not as abstract authority or capricious directive, but as a cohesive framework of offices, each with specific jurisdictional and ethical obligations.

The charter's thorough examination of Brahmanical identities is equally important. The text organizes grantees by gotra and pravara, which places them in remembered Vedic lineages and makes them ritual authorities whose lineage and purity make them eligible for tax-free possession. This careful attention to genealogy shows how the distribution of land was a legal, ritual, and moral act at the same time, linking Brahmanical authority to the ideological strengthening of the state.

The inscription also suggests that it is open to everyone by mentioning a wide range of professional and artisanal groups. Not only are the names of garland-makers, oil-pressers, potters, smiths, leather-workers, carpenters, architects, drummers, dancers, astrologers, doctors, and women attendants (betṭikā) listed, but they are also given specific amounts of land.

Their acknowledgment signifies that Śrīcandra's polity esteemed various labor modalities—ritual, technical, artisanal, and performative—as essential to both civic and monastic existence. The charter affirms a view of sovereignty that is based on reciprocity between the ruler and the subjects. This view includes artisanal and service communities as important parts of the realm's moral and economic fabric.

Lastly, the charter puts these identities into geography and ritual time by drawing lines through rivers and forests and syncing the grant with a solar transition. These details show that identity was seen as relational, based on lineage, profession, territory, and cosmology all at the same time.

In combination, the Paschimabhaga Copperplate Grants create a unified view of government in which kingship, lineage, profession, and ritual all come together. They show that social and professional identities were not on the edges of governance but were at the heart of sovereignty itself. In this way, Śrīcandra's copperplate is more than just a record of land transfer; it is a plan for social order that made sure that land, labor, and law were always connected in the lives of people in early medieval Bengal.

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