

A Peep into the Economic Life Of Eastern India Between The Period 6th Century A. D. to 9th Century A. D.

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Abstract

This paper deals with the economic life of eastern India in the first half of early medieval period. We are dealing with a period when the Palas in Bengal and Bihar, the Salasthambas of Assam, and the Bhaumakaras of Orissa were making their pulses felt in the political scenario of eastern India. We have dealt both with rural and urban economy of the concerned region in our paper. Our sources have been mainly archaeological excavations and inscriptions.

Key words: Land tenure, Kara, Trade, Monastic establishment, Eastern India

Introduction

The connotation eastern India comprises the states of West Bengal, Bihar, parts of Assam and parts of Orissa of modern India. As E. H. Carr has defined History as a continuous dialogue between the past and present, so do we agree? History is a continuous commentary on the economic, political, religious and social life of our forefathers. And in this paper we will touch on the economic life of a neglected period of the eastern region of India.

We are dealing with the economy of a period when the political scene was hovered over by the Palas of Bengal and Bihar, Salasthambas of Assam and Bhaumakaras of Orissa.

The economy of the concerned period was mostly based on land. The income source of the state was based on land tenure and land based products. There were monastic establishments, administrative centers, political centers and also port-cities which served as trade centers and centerport.

Objectives

The concerned period in the study suffers from paucity of sources. We have tried to re-construct the economic History through epigraphic records and Archaeological excavations conducted in this region and have tried to bring out the rural and urban economy of the period concerned.

Rural Economy

The rural economy of eastern India was based on land tenure. Epigraphic records draw our attention to *akshaya nivi-dharma* as well as to the system of sale and gift of land for pious purposes, and to the details of boundary marks (which may be natural or by such devices as permanent marks by chaff and charcoal [*chira-kala-sthayu-tush-angar-adinam chihnaih*] [1] or pegs of beautiful design [*Kamal-aksha-mal-ankita*] [2]. A definite and comprehensive account of the nature of lands and conditions of tenure is not possible [3]. Three kinds of lands were donated throughout this period: revenue free (*Samudayabahya*), untilled (*aprahata*) and fallow land (*Khila Kshetra*). Lands were granted by Pala kings for some pious