



Revisiting the Dynastic History of Nalas through the Lenses of Epigraphic and Numismatic Data

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Abstract

The Nalas were a minor dynasty who ruled in the ancient south Kośala (comprising of modern Bastar region of Chhattisgarh and some parts of Sambalpur region of Odisha) region during 4th to 8th century. The history of this dynasty is very much little known as there is dearth of proper historical sources. Nalas were probably a forest tribe who ruled mainly forest tracts of the Bastar region. Later they emerged as a monarchical power and played an important role in the process of state formation of the region. The present article will look deep into the dynastic history of the Nalas on the basis of available epigraphic and numismatic data. The paper will also attempt to evaluate the relation of the Nalas with other contemporary power such as the Vākaṭakas or the Cālukyas.

Keywords: Nalas, South Kośala, Niṣadhadeśa, Vākaṭakas, Cālukyas.

INTRODUCTION

The historical *Nala* kings claim their descent from the mythological king *Nala* of Niṣadha known from epics. The episode of *Nala-Damayanti* finds prominent and repetitive mention in the epics. A critical evaluation of the *Nala-Damayanti* episode in the *Mahābhārata* and other literature may provide us some information to understand the myths and their connection *Nala* dynasty. As far as geographical location is concerned the *Nala-Damayanti* episode is composed in backdrop of the Niṣadhadeśa. The name of the country Niṣadha probably originated from the name of its inhabitants, Niṣāda. In *Mahābhārata* Niṣādas are described as a tribe who used to live in the mountains and forests (Karve, 1951, 135-138). The country of the Niṣāda tribe was mentioned as Niṣadha in the epics and its

king *Nala* is described as a famous king of this country. Still now the places which were within the ancient Niṣadha kingdom and later came under the historical *Nala* kingdom are mostly populated by the people of Niṣāda tribe. One can assume that the historical *Nala* kings claimed descent from the epic hero *Nala* (king of Niṣadhadeśa) for the sake of legitimacy.

The earliest accounts of Niṣadharegion can be traced in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (3:3:2:113). In the *Vanaparva* of *Mahābhārata* (3:53:70) we get the account of *Nala* and *Damayanti*. In that episode *Nala* has been mentioned as the son of Niṣadha king *Virasena*. His wife *Damayanti* was daughter of king *Bhīmasena* of *Vidarbha*. She was so beautiful that even some gods wanted to marry her, but she married *Nala*. This event wielded few gods to become envious of *Nala* and they put *Nala* in troubles. He had to suffer for a long period in the hills and the forests of Niṣadha. *Nala* and *Damayanti* reunited after a long painful separation. This story is present in almost every subsequent literary works.

In the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of *Pāṇini* Niṣadhadeśa is mentioned as an adjacent country of Vidarbha. In the *Vāyu* and *BrahmāṇḍaPurāṇas* it is mentioned that “all the kings of Niṣadha born in the family of Nala, valiant and very powerful will exist till the termination of Manus” (*Naiṣadhahpārthivāḥsarvebhaviṣyantiāmanuṣayāt/nalavaṃśaprasūtastevīryavantomahābalāḥ*). Pargiter on the basis of Puranic evidences places Nala dynasty in the third century A.D (Pargiter,1982,51). In some other later Sanskrit literature, like *Bānabhaṭṭa'sKādambārī*, *TrivikramaBhaṭṭa'sNalaCarita*, *ŚrīHarṣa'sNaiṣadhacaritam* there are also mentions of Nala kingdom and the great king Nala. The Nalas had their early settlement in the Bastar region and parts of south Kośala, and for some time they also had under their possession portions of Vidarbha which they probably conquered from their principal adversary, the Vākātakas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of the Nala dynasty is not a very well researched area. The book named *Dynastic History of Nalas* authored by C.B. Patel is the only comprehensive study on the history of the Nalas. However, the author has very often misinterpreted available historical sources and wrongfully combined historical sources with local folklores or hearsays (Patel,1990). P.L. Mishra written *Political History of Chhattisgarh* also discusses a little about the Nalas (Mishra,1979). There are few other articles published in various local journals regarding the history of the Nalas, but most of them are devoid of historical facts.

Methodology: It would be interesting to situate the Nalas in a historical frame on the basis of available literary and archaeological data. Though direct sources are very meager and do not help us to fully understand their rise and reign yet, a reconstruction of the history of this dynasty from available sources has been attempted here. Before going into further details, it is important to scan the sources for such reconstruction. Among epigraphic sources we have five records belonging to the rulers of this dynasty, besides these the direct and indirect references to the Nalas are found in the Cālukya and Pallava records. Gold coins issued by the Nalas have been reported from sites in Bastar and Durg. The hoards of such coins and their provenance are given in Table A. Besides the epigraphic and numismatic source material the architectural and sculptural remains at Rajim throw light on the activities of the Nalas and reflect upon their occupation of this portion of South Kośala.

Dating: Scholars are not unanimous in assigning a proper date to the Nalas. V.V. Mirashi stated that chronologically Nala dynasty should be placed in the 4th or 5th century C.E. (Mirashi,1939,29). Dr. B.V.K. Rao had assigned this dynasty to 5th century C.E (Rao,1942,662). C.R. Krishnamacharlu had assigned them to latter half of 5th century C.E (Krishnamacharlu,1985,155). V.D.Jha has commented that the Nalas of Puskari ruled from Bastar during the second quarter of 5th century C.E (Jha,1977,231). According to him Varāharāja was the first Nala ruler. D.R. Bhandarkar holds the view that Nala dynasty emerged in the middle of 8th century C.E (Bhandarkar,1903,48).

Arthapati and Bhava(da)ttavarman and beginning of the Nalarule: The Rithapur copperplates (Gupte,1985,100-104) of Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka discovered at Amaravati district of Maharashtra, along with a set of copperplates of Vākātakas Queen PrabhāvatīGuptā is one of the earliest known Nala records. The inscription refers to MahārājaBhaṭṭārakaArthapati of Nala dynasty and his father Bhavattavarmanⁱ. V.V. Mirashi opines that Bhava(da)ttavarman was probably the son of Varāharāja (Mirashi,1939,29). The characters of Rithapur plates are of the box headed variety of Brāhmī, paleographically assignable to the latter half of 5th century A.D or first half of 6th century C.E. The record is said to have been actually made for the merits of Mahārāja Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka's own parents. It is also referred that Arthapati was actually favored by his *Āryyaka*. D.C. Sircar opines that the term *Āryyaka* actually means grandfather (Sircar,1985,13). According to him it can be assumed that Bhava(da)ttavarman was

Arthapati's grandfather. King Bhava(da)ttavarman or Bhavattavarman (as is mentioned in the records) is said to have obtained royal fortune through the blessings of Maheśvara (Śiva) and Mahāsena (Kārtikeya). The Rithapur plates were actually issued from Nandīvardhana, the earlier capital of the Vākātakas dynasty. Later Pravarasena II founded the new Vākātakas capital at Pravarapura. From the Chhamak copperplates of Pravarasena II it is quite evident that the Vākātika capital was shifted from Nandīvardhana to Pravarapura before 18th regnal year of Pravarasena II. The Chhamak copperplates (Mirashi, 1963, 22-27) were issued from Pravarapura on Pravarasena II's 18th regnal. The Beloōra plates (Mirashi, 1963, 16-21) were the last issued copperplates from the former capital Nandīvardhana. But the actual reason of the shifting of the capital is not quite clear. It is quite possible that there was a continuous tussle between the Vākātakas and the Nalas, although there are no concrete evidences of this tussle. Whether the shifting of the capital was due to the Nala conquest or some other set back is not known from any other source. We get the first real evidence of the contestation between the Vākātakas and the Nalas in the Rithapur plates of Arthapati. We shall discuss it later.

Previously scholars had opined that Bhava(da)ttavarman had defeated the Vākātakas. Dr. Goyal has remarked that there was an alliance between Gupta king Kumāragupta I and the Nala king Bhava(da)ttavarman on the basis of Rithapur copperplate of Arthapati (Goyal, 1967, 274). In the Rithapur plates it is mentioned that Bhava(da)ttavarman had visited Prayāga with his wife to perform sacred rites and on this occasion, he had given a village named Kadambagiri to Mātradyāryya and his eight sons for seeking blessings for a long-lasting matrimonial relationship of king and queen. Goyal considers it as the evidence of the Gupta-Nala relationship. However, the evidence does not indicate any political or bonding otherwise between the Nalas and the Guptas. Prayāga was a tīrtha and merely visiting the sacred places (tīrtha) to perform religious rituals and making donations on such occasions was a very common practice. Secondly the donated land was very much within the boundaries of the Nala kingdom. Thus, the interpretation by Goyal cannot be accepted.

The Rithapur plates were issued on the seventh day of dark fortnight of the Kārtikamonth in the 11th regnal year of the king. The grant records gift of a village, named Kadambagiri to Matryādhyāryya and his eight sons by Bhavattavarman. The regnal year, which has been referred here, is probably of Arthapati. It was written by Rahasyādhiḥṛta Chulla. In the last part of the inscription, it is clearly stated that the gift was originally made by Bhava(da)ttavarman but the grant was issued to continue the possession of the village to the eight sons of Matryā dhyāryya. The grant was issued from Nandīvar dhana, the Vākātika capital. Rai Bahadur Hiralal has identified it with Nagardhan of Maharashtra (Gupte, 1985, 102). If we take the regnal year referred in this inscription as that of Arthapati then in Arthapati's 11th regnal year Vākātika capital Nandīvardhana was under his control. In this context it is worth stating that the Keśaribeda plates of Arthapati (Sircar, 1985, 12-17) were issued from Puskari in the 7th regnal year of the king Arthapati. The inscription records a grant of a village named Keśela kagrāma. The grant was also written by *Rahasyādhiḥṛti* Chulla, the composer of Rithapur plates. The expression '*maheśvara-mahāsena-ati-śreṣṭha-rājya-vibhaba*' does also appear in both the inscriptions. If the regnal year mentioned in the Rithapur plates does belong to Arthapati then we can assume that when Keśaribeda grant was issued, i.e. in his 7th regnal year then the Vākātika capital Nandīvardhana was not under his control, but when Rithapur grant was issued, i.e. in his 11th regnal year then he had already captured and annexed Nandīvardhana. Therefore, a battle between the Vākātakas and the Nalas could have taken place in the interim period.

The Vākātika king Narendrasena was probably the contemporary contender who was defeated by Arthapati. Arthapati's control over Vākātika capital probably did not last too long. Narendrasena's son Pṛthivīsenā probably took revenge by defeating Arthapati and even destroyed the Nala capital Puskari. In

the Balaghat plates (Kielhorn, 1985, 267-271) Pr̥thiviṣena claims himself as the restorer of the fortune of his family.

Skanda varmaṇa and the turmoilous phase: After Arthapati we can place (Skandava)rmmaṇa of Podagarh inscription (Krishnamacharlu,1985,153-157). The reading of the first part of the name of the king is not beyond doubt, but most of the scholars restore the effaced words as Skandavarmaṇ. His name is not mentioned in any other record. There is no numismatic evidence that may help to corroborate the supposition. In the inscription the king has been described as the noble son of Bhavadatta, (*nṛpaterbhavadattasyasatputtrenāmyasamsthitaṁ*) who was the foremost of the glorious Nala family and repelled his enemies. Bhavadatta of this plate is seemingly identical with the Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇ of Rithapur plates. The characters of the inscription resemble the Talagunda pillar inscription of Kākutstha varmaṇ, which Prof. Kielhorn assigns to the first half of sixth century C.E.(Kielhorn,1985,31)ⁱⁱPodagarhin scription is the earliest stone record of the Nala dynasty. It records the construction of a Viṣṇu *Pādamūla* (shrine) by the king (Skandava)rmmaṇa. The inscription was written by Janturadāsa the son of Chauli. According to the editor of this inscription C.R. Krishnamacharlu probably Chauli is identical with Chullathe writer of Rithapur and Kesaribedaplates (Krishnamacharlu,1985,157). This further corroborates the chronological sequence and helps in placing (Skandava)rmmaṇa after Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇ.

(Skandava)rmmaṇawas probably the younger son of Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇ. The Podagarh inscription mentions that (Skandava)rmmaṇaascended the throne in a very grievous condition which might bear and allusion to the death of his predecessor Arthapati. It further mentions that (Skandava)rmmaṇarevived his family fortune (*bhraṣṭamākr̥ṣya-rājarhi-śūnyamvāśya-puskarim*)(Krishnamacharlu,1985,155). He also claims to have repopulated the deserted city of Puskari. An in-depth study of the Nala and the Vākāṭaka records clearly shows that there was a long-drawn struggle between the two dynasties which probably began in the time of Arthapati. It is interesting to note that Vākāṭaka king Pr̥thiviṣenaII in his Balaghat plates claims to have regained twice his fallen family fortune (*nimagna-vam̐sasyoddhārttuḥ-Vākāṭakanām-parambhāgavatamahārāja-śrī-Pr̥thiviṣenasya*) (Kielhorn,1985,271). It is quite possible thatPr̥thiviṣenaII avenged his father Narendrasena's humiliation by defeating (Skandava)rmmaṇa 's predecessor Arthapati. Podagarhinscription hints that Pr̥thiviṣena II destroyed the *Nala* capital Puskari and (Skandava)rmmaṇahad later restored itⁱⁱⁱ. On the basis of this we can assume that Nalas defeated the Vākāṭakas twice and had to face a defeat once.

Stambha and Nandanraj; Towards decline: After (Skandava)rmmanathe genealogical succession of Nala dynasty is difficult to ascertain due to dearth of evidence. Stambha and Nandanarāja may be placed after (Skandava)rmmaṇa.Few coins of those rulers are discovered along with *Nala* rulers Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇ and Arthapati. From the Kuliya hoard (Jain,1979,108-110) coins of Stambha and Nandanarāja are found. One Repoussé gold coin of Stambha has been found from Kuliya hoard. On the basis of stylistic features of the coins Stambha and Śrī Nandanarāja which resemble the coins of the Nala kings both Stambha and Nandanarāja have been considered as Nala rulers^{iv}. However, there are no epigraphic records or any other source to support or corroborate this succession list. Balachandra Jain has opined that (Skandava)rmman of Podagarh inscription supposed to be identical with Stambha or ŚrīStambha, whose coin have been discovered in Kuliya hoard (Jain,1979,110). It is difficult to accept this view as the coins of Stambha bear the bull motif, which clearly indicates his Śaivaaf filiation. But the issuer of Podagarh inscription has declared his inclination for Vaiṣṇavismin a pronounced manner.

For the reconstructing the history of the reign of Nandanarāja and Stambha we have to rely on the numismatic specimens alone. In the Kuliya hoard one gold coin of Nandanarājahas also been found (Nigam,

1987,157). This coin is almost similar to the coin of Stambha. On the obverse of the coin with in circular dotted border a left facing couchant humped bull is shown on the upper half of the coin and a crescent and a bull are depicted. The coin is divided by a horizontal line. In the lower half there is the legend 'ŚrīNandanarāja'. Some copper coins bearing the legend 'Śrī Nanda' have been discovered from Gandibedha (consists of 147 coins) and Palai hoard (consists of 41 coins)(Rajaguru,1956,157-159). It can be assumed that 'ŚrīNandanarāja' and 'Śrī Nanda' are identical.

Apart from the Nala Vākāṭaka struggle there are evidences of political contestations with the Western Cālukyās. In the Aihole inscription Kirtivarman is described as the night of doom of the Nalas, Mouryas and Kadambas (*nala-mauryya-kadamba-kālarātriḥ-tanayas-tasya-babhumā[va] kīrtivarmā*)(Kielhorn,1985,4). It might be possible that there was a traditional rivalry between the Nalas and the western Cālukyās. This is further supported by the description of the Nalas as an enemy of the Cālukyās in the Yewurinscription (Fleet,1879,11). Further the Kurnool grant of Cālukya king Vikramāditya I mentions a territory by the name Nalavādiviṣaya (Fleet,1940,238). With such evidences, one feels tempted to assume that the Cālukyās had defeated the Nalas and subdued them to the extent that their territory or kingdom was now a viṣaya or district of the Cālukya kingdom. But the term vāḍi here may be a boundary marker and this would indicate that the granted land was situated adjacent to the Nala territory.

Period of obscurity and the ultimate end:Few Nala rulers are mentioned in the Rajim stone inscription (Mirashi,1985,49-58) of Vilāsatuṅga which records the establishment of the Rājīvalocana (Viṣṇu) temple. On paleographical grounds this grant has been assigned to the 7th century C.E. by V.V. Mirashi (Mirashi, 1985, 50). The scribe of the Rajim inscription was Durgahastin who claims to be the son of Jalahastin (*jalahastisuteneyam*). The name of Durgahastin also appears in the Gandheshwar temple inscription of MahāśivaguptaBālārjuna (C.E.762-820)(Rajaguru,1966,102). The latter inscription was engraved by Durgahastin's son (*Durgahastisutaneyam-praśastih*). Considering this point Vilāsatuṅga may be roughly placed around C.E. 750(Rajaguru,1966,102). The characters of the inscription are of proto Nagari type, which are almost identical with the characters of the Sirpur plates of the time of MahāśivaguptaBālārjuna(Mirashi,1985,50).

Rajim inscription mentions Pṛthvīrāja as the grandfather of Vilāsatuṅga (line 7).In the fifth verse of the inscription the Nala dynasty is apparently glorified as it is compared with the Sun. In the sixth verse Nala has been described as one who has surpassed the god of love by his splendid form. It is also referred that Nala's lotus like feet were kissed by the bee like crest jewel of a crowd of hostile kings who submitted to the king (*khyātā-nṛpo – nala-iti-praṇatāricakracuḍāmaṇi-bhramara-cumbita-pāda-padma*). In the seventh verse Pṛthvīrāja has been described as a pious and popular king who served his subjects (*nirmalam-sevya-sarvajanasya*). He is also recounted as Kṣitipati and has been equated with Māndhātā (*māndhātṛrājopamā*). D.C. Sircar has identified Pṛthvīrāja with NiṣadhapatiPṛthvīvyāghra of the Udeyendram grant of Pallava king Nandīvarman (C.E. 730-800)(Sircar,1985,233-238). From this grant we come to know that Nandīvarman's general Udaycandra claimed to have conquered the king of NiṣadhaPṛthvīvyāghra (Foulkes,1879,11), who had grown powerful in the north and also performed the Aśvamedha sacrifice. Udaycandra made Pṛthvīvyāghra prisoner from the territory of Viṣṇurāja. From this grant it is evident that Pṛthvīvyāghra was a powerful ruler who performed Aśvamedha sacrifice. If we take Vilāsatuṅga as an almost contemporary king of MahāśivaguptaBālārjuna then Sircar's opinion seems correct.

According to Rajim inscription Virūparāja succeeded his father Pṛthvīrāja. In this inscription Virūparāja is mentioned in the ninth verse. It is claimed that he was very popular among his subjects who praised him in eulogistic terms. He was a famous warrior and skillful general. He is described magnanimous as 'himavanta'

(*khyātāhimavanta*) and prisoners were praying at his foot (*digvandiṅdastutam*). He was regarded as the marrow of the truth (*satyānvitastya*). He was very handsome, truthful and was endowed with all great qualities (*pr̥thuraṇevōṣmapratāpena*). It is also mentioned that he dominated his enemies (*śatruḥnātibalena*).

The name of the Vilāsatuṅga appears in the verses 11 to 13, but these verses are very badly mutilated. In verse 20 the king Vilāsatuṅga expresses his wish for the eternal existence of his architectural creation. He also wished that the future rulers would take care of that religious monument (*jābadgandhāvahebintiñcajagattāvatprajātṅnādimaṅkīrtināpālayata*).

In the following phase the history of the Nalas is obscure. However, we come across a ruler named Bhīmasenadeva who is styled as 'Mahārāja dhirāja Parameśvara Bhīmasena' in the Pandiyapatharcopperplate (Sircar,1985,233-238). In this plate he mentions his Nala origin (*nala-vamsodbhava-kūla-kamalṅkara-bhū [mahā]rājādhirāja-parameśvara-Śrībhīma-senadevāḥ*). From the title MahārājadhīrājaParameśvara it appears that he was an independent ruler^v. Though Bhīmasena traces his origin from the Nalas but he probably did not any connection with the previously mentioned Nala rulers. Hence while constructing the genealogical chart of this family, we have excluded the case of Bhīmasena.

Conclusion: Reconstruction of this dynastic history has brought to light the first ever claim of a mythical origin of any political power from the epic hero Nala. His association with the forest is attested from the mention of this episode in the *vana-parva*. It was this which attracted the Nalas of Bastar whose domain was located in the enduring landscape of dense daṅḍaka forest. The matrimonial alliance in the Nala Damayantī episode does not resonate in the Niśadha -Vidarbha historical framework. However, the sufferings of Nala due to the Vidarbha connection and the reunion of Nala and Damayantī after a long separation reminds one of the conquest of portions the Vidarbha region by the Nalas and the setbacks to the family fortunes mentioned in the epigraphs and restoration of the same by the royal personages of this dynasty. The present study has brought to light two phases in the history of the Nala dynasty. One early phase and the second later with the Rajim inscription and architectural and sculptural remains at Rajim. It was probably due to the aggression of the Cālukyās that the family had to shift further north and carve out a niche for themselves at the cost of the Paṅḍuvamśins of South Kośala and it is in the heart of their territory that the Nalas built their massive architectural landmark-the Rājīvalocan temple. It may be assumed that the main superstructure of the temple was built at the time of the Nala, but the most of the architectural and sculptural parts of the temple were brought here from the kingdom of the Paṅḍuvamśin's, Sirpur. The clear impact of Vākāṭaka art on this temple indicates that some parts of this temple were certainly created at the time of Nala as the Nalas had a very close association with the Vākāṭakas. Other temples and sculptures created during the time of early Nala rulers also had the same Vākāṭaka influence.

Different evidences of the Nala dynasty hint at the conglomeration of Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta religious ideas. Other dynasties of the south Kosala region contemporary to the Nalas, like the Vākāṭakas, the Śailodbhavas, the Śarabhapurīyās and the Paṅḍuvamśin s were mainly patrons of a single religious ideology. But exceptionally the Nalas gave patronage to Vaiṣṇavsm, Śaivism and Śāktism the three most eminent Brahmanical religious cults.

The early Nala rulers were distinct worshippers of lord Śiva and Mahāsenā or Skanda Kārtikeya. Bhavadattavarmaṅ and Arthapati were known to have dedicated their kingdom to Maheśvara and Mahāsenā. One of the earliest Nala rulers Varāharāja was also a Śaivite by faith and it is evident from the couchant humped bull (symbol of Nandī, the vāhana of lord Śiva) effigy on the obverse side of his coins. The next known Nala ruler is (Skandava)rmmaṅa . In the Podagarh inscription it is mentioned that (Skandava)rmmaṅa had built a temple of lord Viṣṇu (*pādāmūlamkṛtam Viṣṇurājñāśrīskandavarmaṅena*). Hence,

he was undoubtedly a Vaiṣṇava by faith. The next known group of Nala rulers includes Śrī Stambha and Nandanarāja. From the crescent moon and humped couchant bull representations on their coin it may be deduced that they had changed their devotion in favour of Śiva. Vaiṣṇavism again is manifested by the Nala royal household and this is evident from the Rājī valo can temple inscription of Vilāsatūṅga. The second phase of patronization towards Vaiṣṇavism flourished with the ascendancy of the Rajim group of Nala rulers like Pṛthvīrāja, Virūparāja, Vilāsatūṅga etc. The Rājīvalocan temple inscription begins with the prayer to lord Viṣṇu. There are also mentions of Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, and Rāma incarnations of lord Viṣṇu, which testify the popularity of incarnation worship during the Nala rule. The sculptural panel representing different avatāras in the doorway of the Vāmanaav atāra shrine in the Rājīvalocan temple complex also indicates the same. The sculptures in the Badrīnārāyaṇa temple are mostly Śaivite, Śākta of Tantric association. Perhaps this period was the formative stage of the religious amalgamation and cultural manifestation in this region. Nala kings were great champions of Brahmanical faith and many Brahmanical traits were diffused in the religious culture of South Kosala during their rule.

TABLE 1: Coins and Coin hoards

<u>Name of the king</u>	<u>Number of the coins</u>	<u>Name of the hoards</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Device</u>
Bhava(da)ttavarman	3	Edenga Hoard (1)KuliyaHoard (2)	Gold (Repoussé type), round	The coins are divided in two halves. In upper half of the obverse side there is a couchant humped bull facing right with a crescent moon behind it. In the lower half there is the legend <i>ŚrīBhavadattarājasyain</i> the box headed Brāhmī characters: Reverse – Negative intaglio.
Arthapati	3	Edenga Hoard (2), Kuliya (1)	Gold (Repoussé type), round shaped	Same as above. The effigies are identical with the coins of Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇa. But the legend is <i>ŚrīArthapatirājasya</i> in the same box headed Brāhmīcharacters.

Varāharāja ^{vi} (Mirashi,1939,29)	29(7 larger and 22 smaller)	Edenga Hoard	Gold (Repoussé type), round shaped	On the 6 larger coins and 22 smaller coins there is a couchant humped bull facing left with a crescent front of it and in one larger coin there is a couchant humped bull facing right with a crescent above its back. The larger coins bear the legend <i>ŚrīVarāharāja</i> and the smaller coins bear the legend <i>ŚrīVarāhain</i> the box headed Brāhmī script.
Stambha	1	Kuliya Hoard	Gold (Repoussé type), round shaped	On the obverse side of the coin there is a couchant humped bull facing left with a crescent front of it. The coin bears the legend <i>Stambha</i> in the box headed Brāhmī characters.
Nandanarāja	1 Gold Coin and 188 Copper Coins	Kuliya Hoard (1 Gold Coin), Gandibeda Hoard (147 Copper Coins), Palai Hoard (41 Coins).	Gold (Repoussé type), Copper (Die struck type), round shaped	On the obverse there is a couchant humped bull facing left or right. The gold coin bears the legend <i>ŚrīNandanarāja</i> and the copper coins bear the legend <i>Śrī Nanda</i> in the box headed Brāhmī script.

Table 2: Nala Rulers and their period

Genealogy of the Nala Rulers	
Name of the Kings	Time
Varāharāja	4 th Century C.E.
Bhavadattavarmaṇa	5 th Century C.E.
Arthapati	5 th Century C.E.
Skandavarmaṇa	5 th Century C.E.
Stambha	6 th Century C.E.
Nandanarāja	6 th Century C.E.
Pr̥thvīrāja	8 th Century C.E.
Virūparāja	8 th Century C.E.
Vilāsatuṅga	8 th Century C.E.

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¹ Although the editor of that inscription Y.R.Gupta takes the word 'Arthapati' just as an epithet, which literally means *the lord of the riches*. He also commented that *Bhavatta* might be the Prakritized form of Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇa.

² However, the editor of the Podagarh inscription C.R. Krishnamacharlu opines that the inscription belongs to the second half of the fifth century.

³ Restoration of family fortune has been depicted in the same fashion in the records of the Sātavāhana king Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi and Gupta king Skandagupta. In the Nasik inscription Gautamiputra is said to have regained the pride of the Sātavāhanas. Skandagupta in the Bhitari inscription claims that he regains his family fortune by defeating the Puṣyamitras and pacified the *vicālita kulalakṣmī*.

⁴ On the obverse of the coin there is a circle of dots along the edge. The coin is divided in two parts by a horizontal line, on the upper half there is a couchant bull and below there is the legend 'Stambha' in the box headed character of Brāhmī in early sixth century.

⁵ The grant was issued from Bhīmapura of Khiddirasrṅga maṇḍala. D.C. Sircar opines that Bhīmapura was Bhīmasenadeva's capital. According to S.N. Rajaguru the Khiddirasrṅga mandala situated in between Kalinga mandala and Khinjali mandal. This Khiddirasrṅga maṇḍala can also be identified with the Khiddirasingha of the Madras



Museum plate. He also identifies Bhīmapura with the present Bhīmanagar near Aska of ganjam district of Orissa. The grant was addressed to the feudatory chiefs (*samantyādinām*), the Brāhmaṇas, and the officer-in-charge of an administrative unit called 'rāṣṭra', big and small jagirdars with reference to a district called *kamaṇḍulapaṭṭa* (*kamaṇḍulapaṭṭarvra* [[*hmṇa pu*][*rvva*][*m*]*sāmantādinamrāṣṭ* [[*aku*][*ku*]*tāvri*][*br*]*had bhogi pr*][*a*]*mukhān*). In Pandiyapathar inscription the Bhaumakara era has been used. From this point of view, it can be assumed that he was a feudatory chief under the Bhaumakaras in his earlier life but later he established himself as an independent ruler.

⁶ V.V. Mirashi has opined that Varāharāja was the first *Nala* ruler and Bhava(da)ttavarmaṇsucceeded him. But there is no evidence to support this argument.