CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Nature and Scope:

The Sirsi region including the famous Banavasi in the Uttar Kannada District represents the bed-rock of Karnataka culture. Its history and antiquities right from the Maurya-Sathavahana period is not only rich but various. Some of the core centres of art like Banavasi, Sonda, Somasagara, Karur, Manjuguni deserve a separate and detailed study. There are a good number of inscriptions, monuments and sculptures that merit a detailed study.

This region is essentially a Malnad zone with thick forests, valleys and river-side plains. Field explorations and spot studies of the antiquities in this area will have to be not only systematic but undertaken with all care, for many of the antiquities are hidden in the forest. Therefore the research work has to be practically field-work oriented.

The major concern of the present research work is to trace the evolution of the local culture with special reference to the local art idiom against the backdrop of the Karnataka art or vise-versa.

Another important concern is to correlate certain geographical factors like the availability of the local stone material with the art activities. In other words how far the locally available stones like laterite and schist prompted or influenced the art activity and the stylistic aspect of the art.
A Review Of Earlier Researches:

Earlier historical references on the Sirsi region are found in the account of Francis Buchanan’s *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (1870). He visited several villages of the region, including Banavasi and Sonda and collected historical information from the villagers, priests and pontiffs belonging to the royal family. His account of the history of Sonda is particularly interesting. He mentions the reign of one Sadāśivarāya, prior to the commencement of the rule of the Sonda family. But this ruler is not known from other sources. The genealogy given by Buchanan is also found to be faulty in the light of the later discoveries. However the pioneering attempt made by Buchanan to study the history of the Sirsi region is admirable.

The Imperial Gazetteer of Bombay Province Canara II, published in (1894) has a section on the history of the Sirsi region. However the account given in this book is based on the report of Francis Buchanan. Since then specific studies of particular dynasties like the early Kadambas, who ruled in the region, have drawn the attention of the scholars.

The next important effort in this regard, was the publication of *Śiva Charitra Sāhitya* in 8 Khanḍas by Khare in (1921). This is a collection of documents from the Marātha Bakhairs. It gives valuable information regarding the relationship between the Sonda chiefs and the Marāthas.
Śri Vādirāja Guruvara Charithre by Shrinivasa Bhatta (1924) deals with the history and the relations of Śri Vādirāja with the Sōnda Royal Family. He gives in his work a fairly good text of the epigraphs located near the Thrivikrama Temple at Sōnda.

In the Kannāḍa monthly magazine Jayakarnataka, K.G. Kundangar published some articles during 1926-27. They include seven inscriptions found at Jaina Matha in Sōnda. The seventh of these inscriptions belongs to the royal family of Sōnda. It also gives information pertaining to the Socio-Political and economic life of the age.

In the South Indian Inscriptions Annual Reports for the year (1939-40) a gist of 4 inscriptions found at Sonda has been published.

Important among the other studies is Kadamba Kula by G.M. Moraes, published in (1951). It brought out historical information regarding the various Kadamba families along with an account of culture under them. Similar attempts on the earlier Kadamba families may be found in the works of B.R. Gopal and P.K. Mishra. The history of some of the later families of rulers like the Biligi and the Sōnda is recorded in the works of K.G. Vasantha Madhava, Suryanath Kamath, K.V. Ramesh and P. Gururaj Bhatt, H.R. Raghunath Bhat and M.M. Kalburgi. The Epigraphia Carnatica Vol. VIII edited by Rice has some useful information about the Sirsi region.
In the *Epigraphia Indica*\textsuperscript{16} Vol. XVIII, XXXII, XXXIV the texts of 7 inscriptions out of the 14 reported in *ARSIE* for the year 1939-40 are published.

The *South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. XX Edited by B.R. Gopal\textsuperscript{17} contains six inscriptions issued by the kings of the Sônda family found at the Madhukēshwara temple complex at Banavēsi. In a Kannada monthly magazine *Śarana Sāhitya* Vol. 8 (1947)\textsuperscript{18} two inscriptions from Sahasralinga are found edited. One among them mentions the name of one of the Sonda rulers Sadashivaraya who got a Linga consecrated there. This also deals with the Socio-Political and economic conditions prevailing in the Sonda principality of the Sirsi region in Brief.

P.B. Desai edited two copper plate inscriptions found one each at Hulekal and Sônda in *Śarana Sāhitya*, Vol. XX (1957)\textsuperscript{19}. He gives some valuable information in the same article about the early history of the Sonda Nayaka Family.

S.S. Malwad in his booklet *Swādi Arasu Manetana* (1956)\textsuperscript{20} has dealt briefly and in a cogent manner with almost all aspects of the history of the Sônda Nayaka Family.

The *Gazetteer of Uttara Kannada District* edited by Suryanath. U. Kamath\textsuperscript{21} has a separate section on the history of the Sirsi region. Various researches of other scholars upto date are made use of in this thesis.
The *Karwar Jilla Darsana* (edited by M.N. Bhandarkar)\(^22\) and the *Uttara Kannada Jilla Darshana* (edited by T.K. Mahamood)\(^23\) are in the vernacular and contain several articles on various facets of the history and culture of the Sirsi region by different authors.

Recently S.R. Shetty\(^24\) has worked on Banavasi through the ages. It contains a useful account of the history of the Sirsi region up to the advent of the Vijayanagara Empire with Banavasi as the focal point. This work also covers the cultural aspects of particular period including art and architecture. The recent M.Phil. dissertation by P.R. Hegde\(^25\) also has a bearing on the cultural study of Sonda.

B.S. Shastry\(^26\) has worked on the Indo-Portuguese history and some of the incident thereof in relation to the chieftaincies of the region.

There are very few studies made on the religions of the region. B.A. Saletore’s\(^27\) *Mediaeval Jainism* deals partly with the position of Jainism in the Kanara region. B.N. Narsimhamurthy’s\(^28\) thesis has for its theme *Jainism in Coastal Karnataka*. K.G. Vasantha Madhava\(^29\) recently published a book titled *Religions In Coastal Karnataka* between 16th and 18th Centuries.

In respect of the Epigraphical studies of the region Henry Cousin’s. *The Chalukyan Architecture of the Canarese Districts*\(^38\) and K.G. Bhatsoorish Ph.D. Thesis titled art and architecture of North Kanara\(^39\) deserve careful attention. A number of articles have been published by A. Sundara\(^40\) and H.R. Raghunath Bhat. They have brought to light fresh material pertaining to
the iconographical and temple studies as also epigraphical and numismatic studies of the Sirsi region.

In *Sirsi Talukina Itihāsa* (1988)\(^{41}\) by A.K. Sastry is found a brief history of the area. In *Śrī Svarnavalli Matha Samsthanada Aitihāsika Dākhalegalu*, Vol. 1 A.K. Sastry has highlighted the social, economical and religious conditions in the math on the basis of the records.

*Mariśāntaśāvatadvēvāra Svāra Vachanagalu* a contemporary work edited by Shivanna (1988)\(^{42}\) has two Vachanas about the history and society of the Sonda Kingdom.

Inspite of these impressive works, it should be noted that a single work dealing with all the aspects of art and architecture in the region has not been attempted so far and importance has only been on major dynasties like the Kadambas of Banavāsi. One more feature of these works is their excessive stress on political moorings rather than cultural aspects. Thus we hardly find a comprehensive account of the history of the culture, art and architecture of this area. These observations are not intended to underestimate the works of the mentioned scholars, but only to indicate that a lot of work remains to be done according to the changed contours of the region’s history. It is for this reason that the present research has been undertaken and the results are embodied in this dissertation.
METHODOLOGY:

In tracing the vicissitudes of a region like this including Banavāsi, Sōnda, Sōmasāgara etc. as whole we will have to be basically descriptive, but this description will have to pass through some antecedent stages which foster the ideas that ultimately crystallize into a coherent whole. In pursuing the present work, two basic tools of research used are: 1) collection of published data and 2) collection of field data.

The collection of published data consisted of both modern works on the subject and ancient epigraphical records bearing on the history and culture of the region. After collection, the data has been carefully analyzed and interpreted in order to cull out the essential information relevant to the history and culture of the region with special reference to art and architecture. Several visits have been made to Banavāsi, Sōnda, Sōmasāgara, Manjuguṇi, Karūr and other remote places to make detailed studies. Much of this field data has been availed of, for studying religion and society. Thus we have here a blend of published and field data resulting in a descriptive account of the region and its culture involving all important stages of research such as collection, analysis, interpretation and synthesis.

As already said, the present work is based on field work. Each and every surviving monument has been individually studied. Based on our field work, I have followed a general descriptive method without forgetting the interpretative aspect. With the help of the data, which I have collected, and
attempt has been made to give an assessment of the Art and Architecture of the region in its proper perspective.

Chapter II: Sources: Archeological and Literary:

This chapter deals with the sources for the study of art and architecture here. Sources furnishing information about the history of the area are as numerous as those pertaining to the history of India. They may be broadly classified into two classes, viz, Archeological and Literary. Archeological sources may be further classified into four categories namely excavations, epigraphs, art and architectural remains and coins. Of these, epigraphs are undoubtedly the most important. A good number of epigraphs which help reconstruct the history and culture of the region are found in the Sirsi region itself or nearby places. However many more inscriptions of importance may also be found in the region if systematic explorations are done.

A micro-historical study of art and architecture of the region including Banavasi, Sonda, Somasagara, Manjuguni, Karur and other places will help us to have a better understanding of Indian art and architecture in general and the Karnataka architecture in particular. The study also helps us to trace the regional art that has been neglected so far. In the larger context of the art activity as a whole it helps us to study man's creative ability in art. Therefore, though we have to concentrate on a micro-historical study of the art and architecture of the region, we have to realise its importance and pose the
region into the wider field of man's creativity. A fair analysis and assessment of the art and architecture of the region has been attempted here.

It is in the regional study of art that we find the use of the locally available material and realise the artistic talent and style of the local rulers under different dynasties. But still drawing the inspiration from the overlords is as it were one of the common features of all regional cultures. Therefore it is regional in one sense and part of the National or the Macro in another.

The field work also attempted to make some fresh observations on the art activity of the region with special reference to Banavasi and Sonda taking into consideration the advancement of temple art, techniques and development of engineering, both theoretical and practical.

CHAPTER III:

This chapter deals with the History and Antiquities of the region and also makes a review of the reigns of the major and minor dynasties.

CHAPTER IV:

This chapter reviews the socio religious aspects of the area. The dynasties that ruled the region were religious minded. A large number of grants made by the different dynasties and their rulers to religious persons and institutions speaks of their religiousness.

CHAPTER V:
This chapter has been devoted to a study of the economy, trade and commerce of the region in the different periods.

CHAPTER VI:

Here an attempt has been made to highlight the language, literature and scripts of the area with special reference to the period from the Kadambās of Banavāsi to the Nāyakās of Sōnda.

CHAPTER VII:

In this chapter it has been attempted to highlight the special features of the art and architecture of the region. This is in fact the core of the thesis. It includes the religious, civil and military architecture under the rule of the different dynasties. The religious architecture deals with temples built during the Kadamba period region and the reign of the Nāyakās of the Sōnda with special reference to Banavāsi, Sōnda, Sōmasāgara, Sirsi, Manjuguni, Karür etc. The contributions of the rulers who ruled in this region to the field of architecture has been discussed with special reference to the temple architectural plan, elevation, medium and the art style.

The civil architecture section deals with the structures built under royal patronage and their plan of elevation and dominant style. Apart from residential buildings the civil works of the region noted include towns, cities, tanks, ponds, sluices and bridges which reflect the technical know-how of the people then.
The military architecture consists of forts and fortresses. The forts that were constructed or strengthened during the various dynasties have been listed. Their plan, elevation, geographical setup and types have been discussed. The Karūr, Banavāsi, Sirsi and Sōnda forts serve as models for the study of military architecture of the region.

CHAPTER VIII:

In this chapter attention has been devoted to a study of the iconography of the region. An attempt has been made to present the salient features of the sculptures of the various periods, noting their evolutions in shape and style.

CHAPTER IX:

This chapter focuses attention on the hero-stones and Mahasati stones and Gōśāsa inscription-stones suggesting an increase in the military activities in the region. It also reviews some of these important sculptures and their salient features, shedding light on the prevalent social practices. At the same time, an element of deterioration in the art style here has been noticed. The hero-stones and Mahāsati stones in the region have been studied in detail. Stone, metal, wood and stucco images, Terracotta figures, paintings and Kāvi art have been touched upon.

CHAPTER X:

This being the concluding chapter tries to point out the significance of the study of the art and architecture of the region made here.
On the whole the work is intended to highlight some aspects of the Sirsi region in general and the art and architecture in particular on the basis of extensive field work and spot studies.

APPENDICES:

1. List of Monuments.
2. List of Inscriptions.

Select Bibliography

ILLUSTRATIONS:

1. Maps, Figures, Plans to Temples and other monuments.
2. Plates.

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