CHAPTER VI

SĀMANTAS OF SĪMANTŪRŪ OR MULKI

The chiefs who ruled around Mulki (Mangalore taluk of South Kanara) were known as the Sāmantas. These chiefs rose to prominence in the fifteenth century. The sources which narrate the political history of the Sāmantas are scattered and meagre. However, they give clue to the fact that these chiefs along with other chiefs in Kanara played their own role during the period under study. The existing indigenous sources speak of their patronage to Jainism, art and literature, and tells us of the prosperity of the people under them. The foreign records supply a lot of information about the activities of the Europeans and general condition of the people in that principality. R. Narasimhachar seems to doubt the very
existence of this dynasty. But the study of inscriptions and records disproves his contention.

Though the tradition quoted by Aigal informs us about the rule of the Sāmantas in the twelfth century A.D. the existing sources do not substantiate it. The late Govinda Pai in one of his articles refers to an inscription of Duggappa Sāmanta, dated in 1338 A.D. found at Kōtekerī basadi. But strangely enough, this inscription is not traceable at all.

An inscription on a mānastambha in front of present Chandranātha Basadi at Kōtekerī (Mulki) mentions Kinnigēsha. Probably he is the first known ruler of this family. But we are not in a position to determine his date as the inscription does not mention it. On Palaeographic grounds it can be assigned to the latter fourteenth century. It is believed that these chiefs had their headquarter first at Simantūru, then shifted to Kōtekerī and still later to Vaḷa-Lankey. But it is hard to tell when this transfer of headquarter took place.

The earliest dated reference to these chiefs is in a broken lithic record of 1411 A.D. found in the Durga-paramēśvari temple at Bappanādu in Mulki. It refers to one Kinnakka Heggade.
Another inscription of the same year found at Simantūru records a political agreement amongst chieftains and it refers to Kinnikka Sāmanta alias, Kinnikka Heggade and his nephew Kānta Heggade. On the basis of the inscriptions available, the following genealogy of the rulers up to 1565 A.D. can be constructed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kimnegesha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnakka Heggade I or Sāmanta (nephew of Kimnegesha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōtiyana Heggade (nephew of the former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnakka Heggade II or Sāmanta (1512-1542 A.D.) (nephew of the former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dugganna Sāmanta (1542-1569 A.D.)</td>
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</table>

The above genealogy shows that these chiefs followed aliya santāna kaṭṭu (the succession through nephews). Further, the poet Padmanābha, the court poet of Chennāmbike substantiates this.

The first member of this family pertaining to our period of study was Dugganna Sāmanta, the nephew of Kinnakka Sāmanta. He figures in an inscription dated in
1542 A.D. Like his predecessor, he was zealous patron of Jainism. The epigraph records a grant made to Anantanātha basadi by him jointly along with his sister Chennamma at the instance of ascetic Chṛukīrti Paṇḍitadēva.

Aigal is of the opinion that Gauda Sārasvata Brahmanaśas settled in this area during this period and they were patronised by Dugganna. He further holds that this resulted in predatory activities of the Portuguese, to avert which Dugganna agreed to pay 800 bales of rice to the latter. This information is available in the Portuguese record of 1530 A.D. But it is not supported by any contemporary source.

Another epigraph of 1559 A.D. belonging to Dugganna records donation of money by Palmayaka to Chandrōpādyya for obtaining knowledge. (Śastraḍāna)

For four decades after Dugganna Sāmanta, we are not able to trace the history of this family. An unpublished copper plate inscription dated in 1606 A.D. found at Kōṭekēri basadi mentions Tirumalarasarāda Kimunikka Sāmanta and then records a grant of Sankararaśa to Anantarānātha basadi. The grant was made by him under the orders of the Sāmanta chief.

Poet Linganna mentions the victory of Keladi Venkaṭappa over the Sāmanta chief and his construction of a
fort in the principality. Though the poet does not mention the name of the Sāmanta chief of that period, it is probable that Tirumala Kimnikka Sāmanta was ruler of Mulki principality since the chief was a contemporary of the Keladi Nāyaka.

The Jinadattarāyana Charitre of the eighteenth Century A.D. furnishes some important information regarding these chiefs. The Kāvyā introduces Dugganna Sāmanta, who was obviously succeeded Tirumalarasarāda Kimnikka Sāmanta. It further tells us that his Guru was Vijayavarni, who was preaching Jina Sāstra to the Brahmanas. The chief is described in the work as an efficient ruler and well versed in all Sāstras. In this context the poet tells us that Bhavyas of Karasgapura approached Dugganna II with a request to construct a basadi. The chief did it at the instance of his Guru and installed Vardhamana Jina. The same Kāvyā further informs us that Dugganna had a sister called Dēvammāji, who was married to Mahālinganripati of Vēṇupura, (i.e. Padubidre) Kimniga, Tirumala, Chenniga, Sankaranripati, Chennāmbike, Ambakkadēvi and Chikkarāya were her children.

Dugganna Samanta's reign appears to have come to an end by 1612 A.D. because we hear of a queen of Carnate (Kārnāḍa was within the principality of the Sāmanta) in the
Portuguese source as well as Della Valle's account.

This queen was identified with Devammāji, the sister of Dugganna Sāmanta, by Saletore B.A.

The queen was also involved in the Political intrigues initiated by the Portuguese against Keḻadi Venkaṭappa in 1612 A.D.

As stated elsewhere, she and her allies suffered heavy defeat at the hands of the Keḻadi forces and her allies particularly, the Portuguese were not in a position to help her in this critical situation.

About this queen, Della Valle writes that she was a lady of much prudence and virtum, that she administered her principality as her son was a minor, and that she was a friend of the Portuguese, and enemy of Venkaṭappa. The latter who had brought huge force during his expedition in Mangalore, sent word for the queen to surrender. But the queen had no intention of yielding to the invader. She summoned her captains and urged them to defend her principality against the great of the invader. But her minister and captain either through cowardice or treachery showed no interest to defend the principality. Finding herself deserted, the queen resolved to surrender to Venkaṭappa. The same traveller continues to say "Venkatappa Naieka received her honourably and took her into his friendship and protection"
but with all that he caused the city to be dismantled of strong wall it had, to prevent her rebellion against him afterwards and left her as before the government of the state trying her only to obedience to the payment of tribute and the profession of an honourable vassalage to him.  

With reference to her territory the same traveller says "(her) territory and city is two or three leagues distant from Mangalore upon the sea coast towards the north. The city stands upon a river which encompassed it and overflow the country round about. It was to be strong both by art and situation."  

The pathetic condition of the queen after this incident (1616 A.D.) has been described by Della Valle in these words: "Then they (Keladi forces) dismantled the city, the queen unable to endure the sight retired into solitary place, a little distant, cursing in those her solitude, infidelity of her own people, no less than the bad fortune and weakness of the Portugal her defenders to whom she had always been faithful friend. At this time, she lives with her young son either in Carnate or some other places thereabout". We do not know the exact date of the end of her rule. Since a chief of Kurnad in alliance with Banga queen Sankaradvi, who asked for the Portuguese help is mentioned in the record of 1631 A.D., we may presume that the successor of
the queen of Karnāḍ came to throne in that year. But their attempt of securing the Portuguese help against the Keḷadi did not get desired results. The chief mentioned above, may be Kinniga Sāmanta, the nephew of Dugganna Sāmanta. The former succeeded Devammājī. We learn from the poet that he revived Jainism which had declined under his predecessor and encouraged education and other arts.

The next chief of the line was Tirumalarāya, the brother of Kinniga. It is interesting to note that the poet refers to this chief as Kadambakula Dīpa.

He was followed by his sister Chennāmbike. Then the Kāvya mentions her minor son Chikkarāya. It is, however, difficult to fix the reign period of each chief. The Keḷadi-dinripavi jayam states that Sāmanta chief along with other Tuluva chiefs revolted against Keḷadi Chennammājī. But it is difficult to indicate this chief. The result of this rebellion seems to be the Sāmanta chief became subordinate of the Keḷadi Nāyakas.

In 1705 A.D. the Portuguese got right to collect export duties in the port of Mulki along with other towns as a result of a treaty with the Keḷadi ruler Basavappanāyaka. This treaty confirms that the principality of the Sāmanta was within the jurisdiction of the Keḷadi kingdom. In addition to this, it enables us to surmise that a brisk trade was flourishing in the port of Mulki. Further this surmise has been corroborated by another work Rāmachandracharitra.
The enemity between the Portuguese and the Keladi Nayakas affected Mulki town. On January 27, 1713 A.D. Joseph Britto, with 13 war ships came to Mulki, destroyed the fort which was defended by 1500 Canarian soldiers (i.e. Keladi forces) and burnt several houses.

The next important ruler of the family was Channarāya Samanta. He was the son of Siddāmbike and the nephew of Mātula Kudayarasa. The reign of this chief is noticed in a palm leaf manuscript preserved in the church at Kelapadi near Mulki, as also in the Rāmachandra Charitre composed in 1751 A.D. by Padmanābha in the court of that chief. The palm leaf manuscript records that he made a grant to Sivamekaru for the construction of a church in 1730 A.D.

Poet Padmanābha says that Chennayarāya Samanta built Chandranātha basadi inside the palace. He is the last known chief of the family during the period under study.

THE EXTENT OF THE PRINCIPALITY

These chiefs ruled over new Magamis stretching between the river Sambhavī in the north and river Pūvanji in the south.

The principality ceased to exist when Haidar occupied Kanara. But the descendants of this family have continued to survive at Padu-Panambūru, near Mulki, and even today they enjoy respectable position in social and religious ceremonies in Mulki region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dugganna Samanta</td>
<td>1542-69 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tirumala Saradh Kimnikka Samanta</td>
<td>1607 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dugganna Samanta II</td>
<td>1608-11 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devammaji</td>
<td>1611-1629 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sister of Dugganna Samanta II)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kimniga I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tirumala Chenig Sankara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chenniga Ambakka Chikka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chennaraya Samanta</td>
<td>(1730-1765 A.D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(son of Siddammaji)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Aliya of Matulla Kundaras)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rulers

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REFERENCES AND NOTES

4. SII. VI, No.260.
5. Aigal, Op.Cit. p.342. The reference to Vola Lankey is first time mentioned in the literary work Jinadattaraya Charitre, composed by Padmanabha in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Simanturu is situated one and a half miles from the east of Mulki. The Janardhana of Simanturu is the family deity of the Samantars.
6. SII. VII, No.259.
7. This temple is Sime Devasthan. According to local tradition this temple was supposed to be built by a moor merchant from Malabar called Bappa Byari. But in support of it we do not have any definite evidence.
9. For detailed discussion, See Gururaja Bhatt, Studies in Tuluva History and Culture, p.101
11. SII. VII, No.262.
14. SII. VII, No.263.
15. Unpublished copper plate inscription found at Kotekeri basadi. Govinda Pai noticed this inscription and according to him the grant was made by Haleyangadi Samasta Halara (See Government High School Magazine, 1959, Mulki, p.17). But the epigraph says "Tirumalarasadada Kimmka Samantara Appaneyinda Hosangadi Samasta Halara Samantainda Bagempi..."


33. Padmanabha Op.Cit. I Sandhi, verse 64. In another context the poet says that Kimniga succeeded Devamāji. (It seems that the poet ignored the rule of the queen of Karnata. (see Op.Cit. verse 67).

34. Ibid. verses 68, 69, 70, 71.

35. Ibid. verses 71, 76, 78, 83, p. 7.


37. Ibid. verse 93.

38. Ibid. verse 103.


41. MSS. Last Sandhi, verse 141.

42. Shastry B.S. Keladiya Arasaru Hagu Portugeejaru, p. 146.

43. Padmanabha, Ramachandra Charitre, verse 145,153.

44. Last Sandhi, verse 178.

45. Unpublished Palm leaf manuscript secured through P. Srinivas Bhatt.

46. Ramachandra Charitre, Last Sandhi, verse 145.


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