B. CHIEFS OF NORTH KANARA

CHAPTER IX

BILIGI CHIEFS

The chiefs of Biligi played their own role in the political and cultural history of Kanara during the period under study. They rose to power in the late fourteenth century and reached the zenith in the latter half of the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth. Their power began to decline in the middle of the seventeenth century and finally came to an end towards the end of the eighteenth. The rule of these chiefs over three centuries is to be remembered for their patronage to religions like Jainism and Virāsaivism and also to literature. The chiefs of Biligi ruled over the region above the western Ghats. During
the period under study, these chiefs first acknowledged the authority of Vijayanagara and had friendly contacts with Svāḍi and other chiefs. They often came into conflict with the Nāyakas of Keladi. They some time sought the help of the Sultan of Bijapur and occasionally faced the resistance of the Marathas also.

A few inscriptions and literary works like the Biligiya Arasugala Vamsāvali and the Keladinripavijayam provide some information about the origin of these chiefs and their achievements in the political field. The first known ruler of this family was Andanna who ruled at Aisuru. It is believed that Andanna was the founder of this dynasty. The genealogy of this family is known from a copper plate inscription dated in 1545 A.D. It says that in a land of Karnataka at Svētapuri sanctified by Jina ruled many chiefs who bore distinguished titles such as entumaneyaraganda, Maleya Huli, Ugra Marakōla and Gadiyanka simha. Then it traces the genealogy of the family up to Virappa Odeyar. (i.e. 1545 A.D.) Another inscription found in the deserted basadi at Biligi dated in 1580 A.D. also gives the genealogical account. On the basis of these, the genealogy of the chiefs of Biligi up to 1565 A.D. can be reconstructed as follows:
THE LINE OF BILIGI RULERS

Mundanna — (Andanna)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bholappa</th>
<th>Kallappa</th>
<th>Ammannna</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Mundanna

Narasa I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhairava</th>
<th>Kallappa</th>
<th>Ghantannaodeya</th>
<th>Mundha II</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

1474 A.D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abanava Bhairava</th>
<th>Timmara-</th>
<th>Timambika</th>
<th>Narasa II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>salya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1530 A.D.

Lakshamana

Virappa Odeyar (Virammaji his Umen)

1545 A.D.

EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

Not many details are forthcoming about the early rulers of this family, till 1472 A.D. It was in that year Bhairava, the son of Aisuru Mundanna, was ruling over the region of Haraguppe, Hebballanadu covering the regions of Siddhapura and Sagar taluka of North Kanara and Shivamogga district respectively. The chief recognised the overlordship of Vijayanagara emperor Virupaksha. Finally, the epigraph informs us that Bhairava was an ardent disciple of Jaina ascetic Visalakirti Bhattaraka and made grants to different Jaina basadis. 

4
This chief was followed by Abgimava Bhairava, the son of Bhairava. He figures in an undated copper plate inscription found at Muḍabidre. The epigraph tells us that he named Harali Baila grāma within the Chikkamaligēnādu as Gammatapura and donated a piece of land in that village worth 36 varāhas for performing religious ceremony at Beḷagola."

The next important ruler is Ghanṭanṇodeya (Ghanṭēmdra). He was the son of Narasimha I. During his rule the headquarter of this principality was transferred from Aisūru to Biligi. The Vamsāvali says that he made the town of Biligi invincible by suppressing turbulent tribes at Beḍakaṇi, Kunchi and Mugadanduru and constructing forts with huge tower there. The date of this ruler is not known to us.

Next we hear of Narasa II (Narasimha), a contemporary of Krishṇadēvarāya of Vijayanagara. An epigraph dated in 1530 A.D. refers to Biligi Narasimha's court where Vādiveṇḍanaṇanda elucidated Jīna Darśana. About this chief Vamsāvali says that he defeated Asūvapati (Bahmani) and planted a pillar of victory at the instance of Vijayanagara king Krishṇadēvarāya. It adds that in recognition of this signal service the latter honoured him by giving his daughter Hariyamma in marriage along with the rulership of the province of Penugonda, Gutti yielding the revenue of three
There is, however, no supporting evidence to substantiate this statement. We know that two daughters of Krishnadevaraya were married to Ramaraja and Tirumala. In this context Desai P.B. thinks that this statement was later fabrication. Kamath S.U. is of the opinion that this only indicates their subordination to Vijayanagara authority.

The next ruler was Virappa, the son of Narasimha. By his liberal donation to Jaina basadi, he earned the title of Kalikālada Dharmaputra.

LATER RULERS

On the eve of the commencement of our period, the chiefs of Biligi had already strengthened their hold in the Chandragutti rajya. The first ruler of this family following in the period under study was Rangaraja, the son of Virappa Odeyar. From one of the inscriptions dated in 1315 A.D. we learn that he continued the tradition of patronising Jaina ascetic and institutions. He is also credited with the construction of Sivālaya at Biligi. He is also stated to have driven out the Muhammadan forces from his territory.

It is interesting to note that one epigraph of 1570 A.D. mentions Narasimha as the son of Virappa Odeyar. In view of this, it can be surmised that both Ranga and...
Narasimha were the names of the one and the same person. He can be designated as Narasimha III. An important event that took place during the rule of this chief was the fight between himself and the queen of Gerasoppe, Chennabhairādevī. This we know from an epigraph dated in 1573 A.D. from Haldipura. An epigraph of 1575 A.D. records that he donated 62 Varāhas of money to the Jina saint Akalankadeva for the study of Śāstras. This indicates that this chief was a favourite disciple of Akalankadeva. Narasimha III was succeeded by his son Ghantēndra II, (Ghanṭodeyar), some time before 1580 A.D. This chief was a devoted disciple of Bhattākalanaka and made liberal grants to Jaina institutions. He also constructed Rangamaṇṭapa, Chandraśūla and Munivāsa in the Ratnatraya basadi at Biliḷi. This basadi was built by his father Narasimha III (Rangarāja). He also installed the images of Nemisvara and Vardhamāna for beatitude of his grandfather and father respectively. He also installed Pārśvanātha image in that basadi.

He continued to recognise the overlordship of Vijayanagara emperor Venkaṭapatirāya. In the political field the conflict between the two families, i.e. the Biliḷi and Gerasoppe continued during his rule also. It is said that he attacked the Gerasoppe territory unannounced under the pretext of hunting expedition and destroyed the armies of Gerasoppe completely. Probably at this time Gerasoppe was threatened by Keladi Venkaṭappanāya I. We hear from
the *vamśāvali* that on behalf of the Vijayanagara emperor Ghantendra attacked the Nizamshahi forces and defeated the Sultan. The work further adds that in recognition of his valour Venkaṭapatirāya of Vijayanagara gave his daughter in marriage to Ghantendra along with the territory from Penugonda to Gutti yielding a revenue of nine lakhs. But there is no corroborative evidence to this statement.

Shama Shastry gives a different account of the same event. He says that Keladi Venkaṭappa was highly pleased with the valour of Ghantendra. The latter led expedition to Bijapur at the instance of Keladi Nāyaka, who honoured victorious Ghantendra by offering his daughter in marriage to him and presenting the territory between Penugonda and Gutti. We do not know the source from which R. Shama Shastry got this information. This account does not seem to have known from any other sources. He also did not have hold on Penugonda region which he could present to Ghantendra. On the other hand the *Kelaḍintaṇṭipaviṇaṇaṇaṇya* speaks of Keladi Venkaṭappa's conquest of Biligi and subjugation. One of the Portuguese records of 1629 A.D. also indicates that Ghantendra was reduced to the status of subordination by the Keladi Nāyaka.

The *Vamsāvali* says that Ghantendra II married the daughter of Svāḍī Arasappanāyaka II and to them was born Ghantendra III.
But Shama Shastry says that Ghantendra III was the son of Ghantendra II. On the other hand, inscriptions give a different account. For example, according to an epigraph of 1666 A.D., Ghantendra III was the son of Timmappa who belonged to a different line commencing from the son of Ghantendra I. This seems to be more authentic than other sources. Ghantendra III is said to have clashed with the Keladi forces, probably he tried to make good, the loss of territories by his predecessor Ghantendra II. If the Portuguese record is to be believed, he sought the help of Svadi chief and tried to revolt against the Keladi authority. The Keladinripavijayam gives a different version of the situation. According to this work both the Svadi and Biligi chief, tried to exploit the disturbed political condition in the Keladi kingdom caused by the revolts of Sadasiyanayaka, the brother-in-law of the ruling chief Virabhadra. They gave asylum to Sadasiya who had to run away from Ikkeri and they even sought the help of the Sultan of Bijapur to placate Virabhadra. Sadasiyanayaka died in the meantime but the Biligi and Svadi chiefs continued their hostilities. But they could not succeed in their attempts. Virabhadra also followed conciliatory policy and came to an understanding with the Svadi and Biligi chiefs as a result of which, the latter chiefs got back their territories. The Keladinripa-
vijayam also adds that Ghantendra III gave his daughter in marriage to Bhadraiyya, the son of deceased Sadāśivaiyya.  

According to Vamśavali, Ghantendra III received invitation from Svādi (Sōde) Raghunāthanayaka to visit a festival at Banavasi. He accepted the invitation. On his way, Tarekeri Hannappa attacked Ghantendra and the latter was forced to withdraw to his capital where he died. This narration indicates that there existed friendly relations between the chief of Svādi and of Biligi.

The death of Ghantendra III seems to have changed the situation. The Vamśavali tells us that Ghantendra IV, the successor of Ghantendra III, had to face an attack of Keladi Nayaka, whereupon he sought the help of Bijapur Sultan. Consequently, the Keladi Nayaka had to withdraw his attack. Ghantendra IV constructed a fort at Belagoda. (near Biligi). He was known for his patronage to Vīraśaiva faith. An epigraph of 1643 A.D. informs us about his gift of land worth hundred and four Varāhas to Mahāprabhu Pancha-Vāmaniga Basavalingadēva for the services in the Matha at Sidhāpura.

It is interesting to note that now the Biligi chiefs drifted towards Vīraśaivism. The earlier rulers were devout Jāinas and the change seems to have met with criticism in Jaina circles. As tradition goes to say that as a result of this change Ghantendra turned mad.
The death of Ghantendra IV brought bad days to the Biligi principality. The deceased chief had no issue and the Keladi Nāyaka always had an eye on this principality. However, the officers of the principality rose to occasion and averted the danger of annihilation. A son was adopted by the queen Chennamma and he was declared the ruler of Biligi some time after 1651 A.D. under the name of Sivappa.

This chief carried on the administration smoothly. He had two wives Santamma and Gauramma. Like his father he patronised Vīrāsaivism. An epigraph of 1665 A.D. tells us that he made gift of land to a Matha built by Doḍa Venkaṭayanāyaka in Sidhāpura. His another grant to Guru Somappadevaru is recorded in a grant of 1667 A.D. It seems that this chief met an accidental death. Shama Shastry refers to a tradition which tells us that he died by falling from horse back.

Sivappa had no issue. One of his queens Santamma adopted one of the sons of Jambūru Sāntaiyya as her own and made him the chief of Biligi. He was named as Immaḍi Sivappanāyaka.

In 1674 A.D. he is known to have made grants of village Nirgudi to Kollurudēva of Mahētina Matha at Huluganahalli. This Sivappa too died without any issue.
Therefore his mother Santamma had adopted another son of Jamburu Santaiyya and placed him on the Biligi throne. This event took place before 1678 A.D. in which the earliest known record of this chief is dated. This epigraph tells us that he made a grant of land worth 12 Varahas in a village known as Kakanakuli village to Basavaprabhudeva for the mathas which was proposed to be constructed on the bank of the Saravati. In the year 1685 A.D. the same chief made provision for the conduct of daily worship and certain rituals such as Rudrabhiseka and Mahapuja to be performed in the Mahabalesvara temple at Gokarna.

A skilful rider of horse, Biligi Somasekhara won the admiration of Keladi Chennammaji. It is said that he won the territories which were lost during his predecessors. But we do not have any corroborative evidence.

After the death of Somasekharanayaka, his son Immadi Somasekhara ascended the throne of Biligi. An epigraph of 1710 A.D. informs us that his queen Chennammalammaji made a grant of land in the suburb Balugani alias Chennammallambapura of Bedakani village to Basavalin-gadeva. Further, in 1716 A.D. this chief along with the same queen donated land in the village of Chikkabailahalli of Gutti Venthe (sub division of Banavasi-12000) to Malli-karjunadeva.
An important achievement of Immadi Somaśekharana was the repulsion of the Maratha attack under Bajirao who made an attempt to invade Biligi.

Immađi Somaśekharana was followed by his son Vīrabhadra. He was a great scholar and a great devotee of Lord 'Siva. His son was Basavendra who was crowned in the Amgirasa Samvatsara corresponding to 1752 A.D. He is said to have driven out the Muslim forces which attacked his principality. The poem ends with eulogy of Basavendra thereby indicating that it was composed in the reign of this chief. It is also believed that he was the last ruler of this principality. But two epigraphs dated in 1769 A.D. refer to Somaśekharana III as Mahāprabhu indicating that he succeeded to Biligi throne. His reign period falls beyond the scope of the present study.

THE EXTENT OF PRINCIPALITY

On the basis of epigraphs and literary works it is possible to get some idea about the extent of the Biligi principality. It included the present Sidhapura Taluka of North Kanara and a few portions of Shivamoga district.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BILIGI RULERS

The chiefs of Biligi are known for their patronage to the cultural development within their territories. As patrons of art and literature these chiefs made Biligi
one of the centres of cultural activities during the period under study.

As stated above, in the beginning these chiefs were devout followers of Jainism and were responsible for the construction of a number of Basadis round about Biligi and made generous donations to Jaina institutions in important Jaina centres at MUDabidre. But they followed a policy of Catholicism and patronised Saivism. From the days of Ghantendra IV they came under the influence of ViraSaivism. Many grants of these chiefs to different ViraSaiva Mathas are recorded in the inscriptions, but grants for the promotion of Jainism are conspicuously absent. The Biligi chiefs were patrons of literature also. The famous scholar Bhattakalanka, the author of SabadhanaSasana, was a luminary of the period. An epigraph of 1591 A.D. composed by this scholar gives a detailed account of his scholarship in logic, drama, music, astrology, grammar and above all, Jaina Sastra. His contribution to grammatical study through SabadhanaSasana is well known.

Narasimha III (Rangaraja) was known for his scholarship and earned the title 'Bhojaraja'. ImmaDi SomaSekhara is also eulogised as a poet well versed in Bharata Sastra and Mimamsa. His successor Virabhadra is said to have been a great patron of poets, orators and scholars.
Ratnatrāya āsadi is a distinct contribution of the Bīḷiḷi chiefs to the development of architecture. The Virūpākṣha temple in this place, known for its architectural and sculptural beauty, is yet another contribution of these chiefs. It was built by Viṇāma, the queen of Viṇappa, in 1570 A.D. 63

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GENEALOGY OF THE BILIGI CHIEFS

Ghantendra I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narasa II</th>
<th>1545 A.D.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Ranga)Narasimha III</td>
<td>1570-80 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ghantendra II</td>
<td>1580-93 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(no issue)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ghantendra III

1600-30 A.D.

Ghanṭe Ammaji 
marrided to Keladi
Bhadraiyya

1632-51 A.D. (no issue)

Ghantendra IV

1652-67 A.D.

Sivappanayaka (Adopted son of the former)

1674 A.D.

Immati Sivappanayaka (Adopted son of the former)

1670-85 A.D.

Somasekhara I (Adopted son of the former)

1710-30 A.D.

Virabhada

1730-52 A.D.

Basavendra

1752 A.D.

Somasekhara III

1769 A.D.

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REFERENCES AND NOTES

2. ARSIE. 1940.41, App. No.2. Original inscription secured through Desai P.B.
4. EC.VIII, Sa.60, pp.276,273,279.
5. Undated copper plate inscription secured through Devakumar Jain from Muṣābidre.
7. EC.VIII. Nr.46.
8. Āsvāsa I, verse 6-7, QJMS. XIII, p.756.
9. 'Six copper plate records of Biligi' (Unpublished article)
11. See Note No.2.
13. JK. (November 1925) p.93, Panjeyavara Nenapīgāgi, p.17
15. Vamsāvali, verse 16.
16. ARKRI. 1939-40, No.87, Sāharana Sāhitya, (1940 Sam.3,) p.643-646. The rule of Narasimha at Biligi in 1573 A.D. is recorded in a hero stone found at Haladipura. (Descriptive lists KRI. 1941-42. No.67.
17. Descriptive Lists (KRI. 1941-42, No.67.
18. JK. (November 1925), p.93.
22. Ibid.
24. Ibid. verses 90, 120.
25. QJMS. p. 756.
26. Āsvāsa V, p. 74.
27. Heras, BIHRC. XI, p. 108.
28. Verses, 125, 126.
28a. QJMS. XIII, p. 756.
32. Āsvāsa I, verses, 135, 135, 133.
33. Ibid. verses 134, 135.
34. Vamsāvalī, 138.
35. MAR. 1923, p. 104.
36. Panievavara Nenapigāgi, p. 22.
37. Vamsāvalī, verse 140.
38. Ibid. verse 141.
39. Kamath S. U. things that this thief ascended the throne in 1665 A.D. (Ref. KSPP. p. 31.) However this is not so, as we know that Biligi Sivappa was a contemporary of Kejadi Sivappa whose reign came to an end in 1661 A.D. EC. VIII Sa. 44.
40. Vamsāvali, verse 142,143.
42. Ibid. 1929, p.173.
43. QJMS. XIII, p.757.
44. Vamsāvali, verse, 144.
45. EC.VIII, T1.70. Chitnis K.N. identifies this Śivappa with Immadi Śivappa of Keladi (Ref. Keladi Polity, p.49) But the epigraph reads like this "Sri Māmahāprabhu Biligi Ghaṭe Odeva Paṭra Rāda Śivappañayakara Putrarāda Immadi Śivappanāyaka." On the basis of this we are not in a position to accept the contention of Chitnis.
47. MAR. 1923, Ins.No.101, p.98.
48. ARSIE. 1940-41, App.No.17A.
49. Vamsavali, verse 157.
50. Ibid. II, Āsvāsa, verse 1
51. ARSIE. 1939-40, App. No.7A.
52. Ibid. 1939-40, App. No.13A.
53. Desai P.B. Six copper plate records of Biligi.
54. Vamsāvali, II, Āsvāsa, verses 240-246.
55. Ibid. II, Āsvāsa, verses, 251-253. Kamath S.U. assigned the date of Basavendra in 1692 A.D. (Ref. KSPP, Dec.1970) p.31. It is difficult to accept this date as two inscriptions of 1710 and 1716 A.D. mention the rule of Biligi Immadi Somaśekhara Nāyaka who was the distant predecessor of Basavendra.
56. Vamsāvali, verse 269.

60. Ibid. KB. (Jan. 1975).

61. ARKRI, 1939-40, No.89.

62. Vamśavali, Āśvāsa II, verses 21, 22, 240


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