CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE THESIS
INTRODUCTION

A deep study of history without prejudice or bias bestows a special insight into human affairs enriching knowledge and adding to wisdom. The caption of this thesis "History of Thanjavur through the ages" is far from the conventional way of study of history. The 'Thanjavur region' is treated as a geo-political unit and the problems based on the political, economic, religious and social conditions have been posed as never before and have been endeavoured to be solved to a good extent. It is a panorama that starts with the Imperial Chōlas followed by Nayaks, Marāṭṭas to the Mughals and to the European influence in the 18th century. This fascinating survey through the corridors of time, has all the qualities which Fuller sets out that "History maketh a young man to be old without wrinkles or grey hairs, privileging him with experience of age, without either the infirmities or inconveniences there of".

Location:

The city of Thanjavur is situated on the southern bank of the river Vaṅgavaḷu, a tributary of the river Kāviri, and lies in between 10° 45' north and 79° 5' east. The city played an important role in the history of South India from the later half of the 9th century A.D. down to the 18th century. It
was the capital of the Chōlas, and also a great centre of culture and learning. During the rule of the Marāṭṭas, it was acclaimed as a very important city, where art and music were patronised. After the occupation of the British, the city was made a district headquarters. In the present century, the city and its neighbourhood are styled as the rice-bowl of the south.

It is not so much the city of Thanjavur as the region around it that deserves notice. For the purpose of this thesis, the Thanjavur region may be demarcated as (a) outer region, and (b) inner core. The outer region may be represented by a circle, enclosing the Kōṇikkarai on the south east, Tiruchi-rapalli on the west, Cuddalore on the north east and the Bay of Bengal on the east. The inner core may be represented by another smaller circle, enclosing Nāgapattīnām on the east, Thanjavur on the west, and Chidambaram on north. (see map 1.)

This thesis deals with the History of Thanjavur region as a cultural unit with special reference to study of the region as a geo-political unit. The Chōla country, of which Thanjavur region is the heart was studied as a political unit in recent years by various scholars. But this thesis attempts something different and more. Being entitled 'History of Thanjavur through the ages' by its caption it may be mistaken for an attempt in putting together in chronological sequence
the political histories of the different dynasties which ruled there or a mere regional history of Thanjavur region understood as a cultural area. This thesis is not content to be merely either of these, though even a regional history of Thanjavur considered as a cultural unit will be a original contribution to the study of the history of Tamilnadu.

The vastness of the sub-continent is such, that even its regions are normally large areas whether administratively demarcated or culturally conceived. Tamilnadu itself or Maharashtra, Rajasthan or Bengal would be regions with their individual characteristics determined by the regional language. In a country like India, Thanjavur region as a cultural unit could be deemed a sub-region. The concept of sub-region is not as widespread as that of the region here—at least it has not been thought of as a proper area for historical or sociological study. Frykenberg's Guntur is however an important exception to this. It is submitted that the present thesis is not merely a sub-regional study from a single point of view; its form has been fashioned as follows: while giving a connected account of the political and social histories of the sub-region, certain important problems in this regard which have either not been posed so far or have been posed but left unsolved are taken up for discussion with a view to providing possible answers. For instance, Uttama Chola's involvement in the murder of Aditya II, the transfer of capitals, Kulottunga I's whereabouts before his
accession to the Chola throne, the problem of the mode of acquisition of the Thanjavur principality by Devappa Nayaka, and the social consequences of the Maratha rule in Thanjavur region are among the issues that are considered here.

The main theme of this thesis, however, is more comprehensive than what is detailed above. The tangled history of the region is, possibly for the first time, treated as geo-political. Geo-politics would lay emphasis on politics viewed from the geographical angle.

This thesis is also concerned with the cultural developments of Thanjavur as a distinct geographical unit and deals with the unique characteristics of the society of Thanjavur region. It may be conceded that Thanjavur region is noted for a certain easily and clearly recognisable culture which has all along been dominantly Brahminical generating a process of Sanskritisation. This appears to have influenced the well-to-do upper class Vellalas. This process on the whole puts a definite Brahminical stamp on the local culture. The development of the local economy and the evolution of art in its various manifestations are dealt with only in so far as they are relevant to the cultural uniqueness of this region.

Thus, in this thesis the ecological determinants of social and political growth are emphasised. Such an attempt
may be presumed as a departure from the usual study of Thanjavur region. Apart from the various minor contributions to the knowledge of Thanjavur made by this thesis, this somewhat unusual approach itself may be considered as a major contribution to regional history. A considerable amount of well-settled and non-controversial political historical material is however provided to maintain the continuity of the story of Thanjavur region from the beginning to its final annexation by the British in 1856.

**Sources:**

(a) **Primary sources:**

The primary source material for the present study includes epigraphy, numismatics and monuments on the one hand, and literature and foreign notices in addition to legends on the other. For the British period, the Correspondence, the Despatches and practically all the related records maintained by the East India Company and its successor Governments are valuable. Of these, what the archaeological sources are to the earlier period, the Records and Despatches are to the later. Contemporary literature covers the entire period only very meagrely. Historical literature, even of a narrative nature, is awfully scarce and critical accounts of historical events simply do not exist. Poems of an epistolistic nature, written in conventional style, though valuable generally speaking, are
rarely intimate in their details. Often there is a judicious mixture of flattery and factuality. Now at such a distance of time from the past, the shifting of the one from the other is a perennial problem.

**Epigraphy**

For the mediaeval period, relatively speaking, the epigraphy is admittedly more valuable. The relative importance of epigraphy does not mean that, it is absolutely satisfactory source. Epigraphs are cryptic records of a donative or legal nature, lucky often prefaced by accounts of the political achievements of contemporary kings or chieftains. The contemporaneity can operate as an advantage as well as a disadvantage. In the case of epigraphs, for instance, the **prāsātis**, **maykkīrtis** announce contemporary royal achievements and can be depended upon and are praiseworthy. This praise showered on contemporary rulers avoid references to events and acts which might detract from their greatness. Even the ancestors of the contemporary rulers are not spared from flattery. In all references there are two areas namely (a) those which directly relate to facts and (b) those which are merely opinions and judgements passed. These facts could be suitably selected by omission of inconvenient data or even statement of non-facts. Fortunately this rarely occurs and a large measure of accuracy is attributed to most of the data. In the case of opinions and judgements, however,
we are at the mercy of the epigraph-maker's subjective assessment of men and situations. Though these do not occur often explicitly, the overtones and suggestions generally made by conventional phraseology cannot be missed. But these epigraphs being contemporary are valuable, because the epigraph-makers may be expected to know more facts with greater certitude than those who come later. The forces which restrain them from expressing these facts fully or even adequately for our purposes can be understood also. These advantages and disadvantages are reversed in the case of non-contemporary references. In such cases, the corpus of facts to which the author of such reference has access to, is bound to be meagre as well as uncertain. This is a disadvantage. He certainly has the advantage of being free from the obligation to be nice to the rulers or men in power of whom he writes. However there is an equality of utility of the two sources, though chronologically apart. It is obvious that the pros and cons balance one another.

Epigraphy is undoubtedly the most substantial source of information for the Chōla period. The Chōla period is noted for temple building. Temples were not merely places of worship and popular congregation for social purposes but veritable archives of the Chōla rulers. The kings of those times inscribed on the stone walls of the temples their ancestors'
and their own achievements. The inscriptions of historical value culled from these temples are the primary source material for the historian of this age. Inscriptions have been found in places other than temples and they are also valuable. The number of inscriptions of utility for the historian diminish as time passes and from the Marāṭha period they cease to play any important role as historical source material. We get an account of the Marāṭha rule in Thanjavur in a series of inscriptions in Marāṭhi carved on the stone walls of the Great Temple in Thanjavur. These inscriptions belong to the times of Serfoji II (1798-1832). The charitra itself was inscribed in A.D. 1803. The epigraphs are also useful for the earlier period because they throw a flood of light on social and political matters. These epigraphs have been noticed in the various Annual Reports on Epigraphy. A considerable number of these epigraphs were published in the volumes of Epigraphia Indica, and South Indian Inscriptions. Apart from these works, the Inscriptions of the Pudukotta State and the volumes of Travancore Archaeological Series have published a number of epigraphs pertaining to their region. The South Indian Temple Inscriptions and the Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam Inscriptions have published some epigraphs which are also useful.
Literature:

Literature as a source for this thesis is predominantly in Tamil, generally for the entire period and particularly for the Chōla period. The earliest reference\(^1\) to the city of Thanjavur itself occurs in a literary context to be followed somewhat later by an inscriptive reference\(^2\). During the rule of the Imperial Chōlas beginning from Vijayālaya, a vast and impressive volume of Tamil literature was produced of which the Kalingattuparani\(^3\), the Māvarula\(^4\) and Kulottunga Chōlan Pillaiittamil\(^5\) are the most important examples. These works, though more historical than the rest and full of explicit historical references, suffer from the defects common to conventional literature. There is no consistency among the genealogical lists except in so far as all of them assign a divine origin to the Chōla family, taking the dynasty back to Viṣṇu and tracing it through Brahma and his offspring. These works are not seriously concerned with strict chronology,

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1. Māḷavira Divya Prabhanda, Kyaṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟ tamil

2. EI., Vol. XIII, No. 10, p. 142-B


   E. Ulagamatha Pillai.
nor do they fully tally either in respect of the total number of rulers mentioned, or in regard to the order in which they are mentioned. However, with regard to the major rulers like Karikāla, they agree at least in mentioning their names. These considerations however do not detract from the historical value of the reference to contemporary events like the Kalinga war. Though these works refer a lot to individual kings, all the reference put together do not help us to give credible or convincing pictures of those monarchs. The nature of literary patronage of the Chōla times changed during the Vijayanagar period; there was little patronage of Tamil under Vijayanagar. This was compensated by ample patronage of Sanskrit. The Śahityarāmākara of Yaṅganārāyaṇa Dīkaḥita and the Raghunāthabhyudāyaṇa of Rāmahadrāmāba are important Sanskrit works for the history of Thanjavur.

The Vaiṣṇavites since the days of Rāmānuja established the Maṭas presided over by Āchāryas in succession. The history of these religious institutions came to be later written down as Guruparamparais which contain a lot of allegedly historical information though they do not always refer to contemporary events.

The Nayak rule in Thanjavur made Telugu a popular language not only as a spoken tongue but as a medium of literature also.
During their rule, patronage of Tamil suffered and Telugu took its place as court language. Undoubtedly Sanskrit received pronounced patronage. The Telugu literature of that period is valuable to the historian. Thanjavuri Andhra Rajula Charitramu, Thanjavuri Vāri Charitram, The Nannarudāsa, Vilāsānu, the Uṣhā Paraṇayam of Raṅgajamma and the Viṣevarāghava Vamsāvalī of Cheṅgalvaṅī Kāḷakavī are original works in Telugu which refer to the story of Nayak achievements. They have been called 'the documents of the kingdom', for their authors enjoyed the full liberty and advantage of knowing things at first hand.  

The language and literature undergo further change with the advent of the Marāṭḥas of Thanjavur and they had Marathi as the court language. While Telugu had not lost its earlier influence, Sanskrit retained its position to as the scholar's language. Tamil continued to be spoken by the subject population. The Marāṭḥa period is illuminated by a few Sanskrit works: Sarabhōji Charitram, Kāmakalānīdhi and Dharmakula along with Śiva Bhārata by the poet Paramānanda as well as the Rādhāmādhava Vilāsā Champu by Jayarama Pandita.

There are two Tamil works of note of the 18th century which, though not directly and frankly historical, are indirectly helpful in giving quasi-historical information on the Marāṭṭa period of the history of Thanjavur. One is the Karnāṭaka Dēṣa Rājakkal Savistāra Charita by one Narāyaṇa Kone who seems to have been 'an indigenous 18th century South Indian annalist'. The other is the Diary in Tamil of Dubash Ananda Ramas Pillai the pepys of French India. The former work is avowedly a chronicle while the latter being a diary contains day to day impressions of the diarist, some of them on trivial matters and others on important state matters but uniformly credible and hence valuable.

The 18th century saw the spread of Persian influence in literature in South India and the history of Thanjavur gets its share of historical mention in such Persian records as Tuzak-i-Nalajahi. This work was compiled by Burhanuddin, a courtier of Nawab Mohammed Ali of Arcot.

Legends, native chronicles of anonymous authorship, and semi-historical oral traditions wherever they obtain are not as reliable as better authenticated sources mentioned above. The difficulty with such sources is that they are incapable of any system of chronology.

8. Tuzak-i-Nalajahi of Burhar Iba Hasan, Translated by S. Muhammad Husayn Mainar, pp. 58, 95.
Traveller's Accounts:

The accounts of the foreign travellers are also very useful. They refer to the contemporary situations and so may be counted as authentic. Their observations may appear to be coloured a little; this is probably due to their native prejudices and lack of comprehension of alien social values. Except for this defect, the travelogues may be depended on as fairly authentic. They communicate well observed facts without distortion born of involvement in local situations. The hearsay information which such visitors pass on will however be conditioned by the veracity of their sources.

The Chinese inspector of foreign trade, Chau-Ju-Kua who visited South India in 1225 A.D. gives some valuable information. The social customs of the people and the relation between the Chola State and China are very well narrated by this author. The description of the Chola country by the Arab Geographer, Dimishqi of the 14th century (C.1325), may be cited as another important work. He refers to Karur, Gangaikondacholapuram, Madurai and Nagapattinam as important flourishing cities of South India.

9. Hinth and Rockhill (Tr) Chau-Ju-Kua: His work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries, entitled Chu-fau-chi, Academy of Science, St.Petersburg, 1912

10. M.H. Nainar, Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India, pp. 32, 44, 50, 53,
The accounts of the Portuguese chronicler, Domingoes Paes, throw some welcome light on the political condition of the Vijayanagar Empire and its material prosperity. Travellers like Ferre Nuniz, Manuel Marrades, Varthema and Nicolo-dei Conti have explained the various social customs of the people of South India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The conflicting cultural phase of the Maratta period is illuminated by the detailed accounts of the Jesuit Missionaries, who visited Southern India to propagate their religion. In the Memoirs of Francois Martin there is a very valuable account of the Carnatic expedition of Shivaji. Bishop Heber, Lord Valentin and Buchanan, who were among the Jesuit Missionaries who visi

11. "Narrative of Domingoes Paes (written probably in A.D. 1520-22) of the things which I saw and contrived to learn concerning the kingdom of Narasinha etc., in Robert Sewell's A Forgotten Empire, pp. 236-90.


17. F. Buchanan, Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, 1807.
Thanjavur in the 17th century refer to the splendour of the Narāṭṭa Court. Rev. C.F. Schwartz's 18 indispensable accounts draw a very vivid picture of the administration of the Thanjavur kingdom under Tuljäji, Amar Singh and Jerfōji.

**Government Records:**

The 18th century witnessed the rise of European influence in the Carnatic. From that time onwards the Company Records and Correspondence, and Despatches and Reports, most of which are preserved in the Archives, become important sources of historical information. The merit of this mass of correspondence is that they are contemporary official records. By their very nature we could expect them to record factually, though it must be conceded that their point of view will depend upon the official, political policy of the government which holds the correspondence. For political and diplomatic purposes and for purposes of self-justification to a higher authority, the Company authorities in Fort St. George, for example, might have committed the errors of omission and commission by suppressing the truth to some extent and also furnishing false information. But there would have been serious limitation on

18. Pearson, *Memoirs of Schwartz*: His memoirs consisting of letters and journals
this attempt because of the compulsions of the logic of events from day to day. It is not different from the contents of a diary written day after day wherein the daily entries cannot be manipulated with an eye to the future. This advantage will certainly outweigh all the disadvantages and suspicions regarding the truth or even the fairness of the statements contained in the official Despatches. Normally we would expect other contemporary Despatches, Correspondence etc., if any, to correct the bias and prejudice of this source. Unfortunately we get very little of this kind of correcting evidence. Inscriptions practically cease to have any importance for this period. The historian can gather his material from such side lights as contemporary literature could provide.

Indigenous sources are singularly silent in the matter of recording contemporary political events. But incidental utterances in contemporary non-historical literature have a value which cannot be underestimated. They can help to corroborate or correct as the case may be.

Secondary Sources:

Works of recent origin, based on the original sources, are also useful. The history of Thanjavur practically begins with the rise of the Imperial Cholas and their history has been adequately treated in The Cholas by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, and
in Kirikkalaccolar Caritram by T.V. Sadasiva Pandarattar.

Y. Subbarayalu's *The Political Geography of the Chola Country* is another important work in which the administrative function of various political units is discussed. The occupation of the Thanjavur region by the Pandyas is narrated in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's *The Pandyan Kingdom*. K.R. Venkataraman's *Hoysalas in the Tamil Country* is particularly devoted to the occupation of the Hoysalas of this region.

Apart from these important political narratives, A. Appadorai's *Economic Conditions of Southern India (1000-1500 A.D.)* is another useful work, which gives a detailed account of the various economic activities of the different kingdoms. Another piece of good work is *The History of Tamilnadu* by N. Subrahmaniam. In this work he has questioned some of the theories hitherto accepted by historians.

The Muhammadan invasion and the expansion into the Tamil country are dealt in detail by S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar in his *South India and her Muhammadan Invaders* and by N. Venkataramanyya's *The Early Muslim Expansion in South India*. B.A. Seltoor's *Social and Political life in the Vijayanagar Empire* and T.V. Mahalingam's *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar* are two best authenticated works, portraying the political and social conditions of the people. Another well informed work is T.V. Mahalingam's *The Economic Life of the Vijayanagar Empire*. 
elaborately discussing the economics of the Vijayanagar people, The Nayak rule in Thanjavur has received attention from V. Vridhagirirasan, in his The Nayaks of Tanjore. The Varatta Rajas of Tanjore by K.R. Subramanian and Varatta Rule in the Carnatic by C.R. Srinivasan are two important works which refer succinctly to the rule of the Varattas in Thanjavur. The History of Gingee by C.S. Srinivasa Chari is another important work.

Post-Varatta Thanjavur period has, however, not been treated as a separate historical unit. The manuals and Gazetteers, prepared under Government patronage, are not only main but highly reliable of information. In this, T. Venkasami Rao's Tanjore Manual and Hemmingway's Tanjore Gazetteer are two important works of merit. K.R. Venkatarama Iyer's A Manual of Pudukkottai State and Hemmingway's Manual of Trichinopoly District are also useful to understand the advent of the British in this region.

Articles published by learned scholars are also very useful in writing this thesis. The political feuds and wars of the Chola period have been studied by a fairly good number of Scholars. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's 'Rajendra's expedition to Ganges' in J.O.R., vol. VIII, p. 199.
and K.S. Vaidyanathan's 'Kalinga Wars of Kulothunga I'.\textsuperscript{20} and 'The growth and independence of Kadambara'.\textsuperscript{21} are worthy of mention. S. Krishnaswami Aiyanger's 'The Cola Rajaraja I and the Eastern Chalukya Alliance'.\textsuperscript{22} is an excellent piece which describes an important aspect of the great alliance. 'The origin of the left and right hand castes division'\textsuperscript{23} by C.S. Srinivasasachari throws light on an important phase of the Tamil Society. C.R. Subramaniyan's 'Evolution of Tamil art and culture in Pudukottai'.\textsuperscript{24} is yet another important piece of work. Natana Kasinathan's 'Kaval System in Tamil Nadu from 300 A.D. to 1600 A.D.'.\textsuperscript{25} narrates the police administration.

\textsuperscript{20} K.S. Vaidyanathan, 'The Kalinga Wars of the reign of Kulottunga I', in \textit{Q.J.E.S.}, Vol. 28, pp. 244-259.


\textsuperscript{23} C.S. Srinivasasachari, 'The origin of the left and right hand castes division' in \textit{J.A.H.R.S.}, Vol. IV, pp. 77-85.

\textsuperscript{24} C.R. Subramaniyan, 'Evolution of Tamil art and culture in Pudukottai' in \textit{Q.J.M.S.}, Vol. 49, pp. 92-93.

Z.S. Vaidyanathan's 'Some ancient territorial division', T.B. Ranganatha Davey's 'The historical geography of the Cavery delta with special reference to the Thanjore district' and S. Natesan and C.K. Ramachandran Chettiar's 'A study of the place names in Tanjore District' are very useful works. These informative contributions help as for an easy understanding of the ecology and ethos of the land and the people of Thanjavur.

Conclusion:

Thus it is seen that the History of Thanjavur through the ages calls for an extensive critical, scientific and artistic study, "for the art of letters goes to the heart of things whereas the factual report merely collects details"—Aristotle. This has been woven "out of monuments, names, words, proverbs, fragments of stories, passages of books and the like, we do save and recover some what from the deluge of time"—Bacon.

The utilisation of the material from some of these sources has to be judicious, guarded and discriminatory.

Archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics and monuments furnish data for the earlier and mediavel periods. Though literature covers the entire period, it has many limitations. The diary leaves of Inanda Ranga Pillai, impressions of foreign travellers like the Chinese inspector 1225, the Arab Geographer 1325, the Portuguese chronicler, Jesuit missionaries of the 15th and 16th centuries, Rev. C.F. Schwartz invaluable accounts, contemporary officer Government Records of the East India Company, the British Despatches and Reports, the connected recent erudite authentic publications of books and articles have served as the main sources for this thesis.