CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this thesis is to present in detail the political history of the district of South Kanara, forming a part of the Mysore State, from the earliest traceable historical times to the fall of Vijayanagara in 1565 A.D. As a natural corollary, brief chapters on the administrative, social, economic and religious conditions which prevailed during the long period under study have been included.

The thesis is, by necessity, chiefly based on the information contained in the numerous lithic and copper plate inscriptions hailing from the district and its adjacent territory. Geographically, the South Kanara region is separated from the rest of the South Indian peninsula by the formidable heights of the Western Ghats. Having had to lead, for most of its known historical period, a life of political and, to a lesser degree, cultural and linguistic isolation, largely owing to this geographical barrier, the region has, naturally enough, received very occasional and scanty notices in the literary works of the period in question. At the same time no literary works of the period produced in South Kanara itself and capable of adding to our knowledge of the region's history have so far been brought to light. The Sāhyādri-kaṇṭa, which has come to be considered as an appendix to the ancient Skandapurāṇa and the Grāmapaddhati, a compilation of local traditions and legends, though they purport to delineate the history of South Kanara and though they lay claims to
antiquity, betray, by their very contents, their recent origin. While I could not secure direct access to the pages of the Grāmapaddhati and had to depend entirely on the scholarly dissertation of Saletore on its unhistoricity, I had the opportunity to personally examine the Sahyādri-kāṇḍa and found it to be as unreliable as the other work. Nevertheless, wherever their statements have been found to agree with the known details of the region's history, they have been accepted and utilised in this thesis. Such instances are, of course, very few.

More than five hundred inscriptions, from South Kanara alone, have been studied in detail as a prelude to the preparation of this thesis. These records, covering, with a rather remarkable chronological continuity, the long period from the middle of the seventh century to 1565 A.D., fall into three distinct groups. The first group of inscriptions belongs to the period of the early Āḷupas, from the middle of the 7th century to the middle of the 10th century. These handful of records are all undated and are, as a rule, brief and contain meagre information for the history of the region. Three factors have been taken into consideration in fixing their dates: (1) palaeography (2) historical information contained in them (3) similar information contained in other contemporaneous records. The

2 Sahyādri-kāṇḍa edited by Grerson de Cunha.
second group belongs to the period of the medieval and later
Ajupas and also the Hoysalas and has been found in larger num-
bers than in the former case. Covering a period from 968 A.D.
to the end of the 14th century, these records are more helpful
in the task of reconstructing the history of the region. These
records, as also the earlier ones, are of purely local interest
and contain very few references to political powers outside South
Kanara.

The third group of inscriptions belongs to the period
of Vijayanagara. Starting from at least A.D. 1345, the dis-
trict of South Kanara formed an integral part of the great em-
pire right until, and even after, A.D. 1565. To this period
belong a large number of inscriptions on stones, many of them
helping the student of history with detailed information on the
political, social, economic as well as religious developments
in the region during the period. Copper plate charters, which
are totally absent in the earlier period, make their appearance
under the Vijayanagara rulers.

To these is to be added a few copper plate and stone ins-
criptions found outside the bounds of South Kanara but having a
bearing on that region's history. It is from these records that
the relationship of the local rulers of South Kanara with the
regions and royal houses outside have to be known.

The region, whose history this thesis attempts to recon-
struct, is referred to in the following pages either as the dis-
trict of South Kanara or as the Tu1u country or Tu1uva. The pre-
sent name of the region is South Kanara District and has been so
since A.D. 1860 when it was given its present territorial shape by the British administration. The region is referred to as Tulu-nādu in Aganāniru, a Saṅgam work of the early centuries of the Christian era and as Tulu-vishaya in the Bārakuṟṟu inscription of the 11th century of the reign of Bānkindēva I. During the Vijayanagara period, South Kanara is also referred to in the inscriptions as Tulu-rājya and Tulu-desa. Tulu-kheḍa, a name given to this region by some outside inscriptions, is rarely used in this thesis to denote the South Kanara district mainly because no inscription from the Tulu country itself calls the region by this name.

We may now turn our attention to the geography of this territory. The anonymous author of a late medieval Kannada inscription from Mūḍabidure, Karkala Taluk, South Kanara District, sings, in very general terms -

kāsar-ādigalim Tuḷu-dēsam
kāḷu-ravyam-āṇud-ā Bharatad-olam

"In that land of Bharata was the Tulu country, rendered extremely beautiful by its ponds, etc." This uncommitting location of the Tulu country follows a conventional dissertation in verse in the course of which the author reveals that this land of Bharata lay sprawled to the south of the Golden Mountain in

3 Madras District Manuals - South Kanara, p.3.
4 Agam, 15.
5 SII., Vol. VII, No. 323
6 Ibid., No. 202
the Jambu-dvīpa which is like a lotus in the centre of the salty ocean. While Jambu-dvīpa is one of the seven continents of conventional Indian geography, the Golden Mountain, referred to by the poet as Pumbejja and Surasiri, is the mythical Māru mountain which has been identified with the highland of Tartary north of the Himalayas. While this narrative does not seriously violate the sound theories of modern geography, authors of a few inscriptions of about the same period from the districts of South and North Kanara make the faulty claim that the Tulu country was situated in the Ārya-khaḍa which formed a part of Bhārata. The number of sources which place Ārya-khaḍa, more often termed Āryāvarta, between the Himalayas and the Vindhyan range is by far overwhelming.

South Kanara forms the southern of the two coastal districts of Mysore State. The Western or the Arabian Sea is its natural boundary on the west. The coast line is almost straight, broken, however, at numerous points by rivers, rivulets, creaks and bays. The length of the coast line for South Kanara as it obtains today is just a little over eighty miles as against a distance of over one hundred and ten miles between two farthest points of the district. While the Western Sea receives scanty reference in Kṣupa inscriptions, after the introduction of Vijaya-

7 *Ind. Ant.,* Vol. V (1876), p. 333
9 *vide* verse 22 of Chapter 2 of *Mannasmyiti* (Nirmayasagar edn.) which gives the lead to most of the later definitions.
MAP OF SOUTH KANARA

DISTRICT BOUNDARY

BOUNDARY OF THE TULU COUNTRY
FOR PURPOSES OF THIS THESIS
nagara authority, the many port towns in the district assumed
great importance for even the very safety of the empire through
the import of war-horses from foreign lands. Thus from the
middle of the fourteenth century, the life of Tuluva came to
hinge to a great extent on the maritime trade carried out from
these ports.

Unlike the coast-line, the course of the Western Ghats,
South Kanara's natural barrier on the east, is irregular. With
quite a number of peaks measuring to more than 4000 feet above
mean sea level, three of them rising above 6000 feet, with the
average altitude of the range being as much as 2000 feet and with
the wild growth of dense and unfriendly forests all over, the
western mountain range has served in the past to effectively iso­
late South Kanara from any easy and large-scale contacts with
the regions to its east. Yet, it will be a historical error to
hold that such isolation was complete, except perhaps in pre­
historic times. In the north, the Western Ghats are, in the
Coondapur Taluk, nowhere more than 25 miles from the sea and at
one point they have only six miles of plain land between them­
selves. It is at this point that the northern boundary for South
Kanara, separating it from the district of North Canara, lies.

In the south, till the 1st November, 1956, when the States
were reorganised, the Kasargode Taluk was the southern most di-
vision of the South Kanara district. This Taluk, which is now
in Kerala State, exemplifies as to how effectively and completely
a natural barrier could separate peoples of differing linguistic
and cultural strains. For, the Chandragiri river, which cuts this
Taluk into two parts, has for long been the most effective barrier between the Tuju-speaking northerners and the Malayalam speaking southerners of the Taluk. Epigraphical discoveries in the Kasargode Taluk have been few and far between. Even the handful of records so far noticed from this tract add very little to our knowledge of the history of the period with which the present thesis is concerned. For purposes of this work, therefore, the Chandragiri River offers itself as the most reasonable boundary in the south.

Thus, moving from the north southwards, the present day district of South Kanara is bounded by the North Kanara, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Hassan and Coorg districts of Mysore State and the Cannanore district of Kerala State. It is divided into the Coondapur, Udipi, Karkala, Mangalore, Belthangadi, Bantwal and Puttur Taluks.

We have pointed out above that though the Tuju country was isolated from the rest of South India, such isolation was not complete. It will be seen from Chapter II below that in the early centuries of the Christian era, Nannan, an early ruler of the Tuju country, successfully carried his arms into the north-western parts of the Tamil country through Kerala, the northern extremes of which State were under his sway. Again, as shown in Chapter III, when the Kelupas make their appearance in the middle of the seventh century, they are found in possession of the famous and ancient division called Banavāsī-12000 which comprised portions of the North Kanara, Dharwar and Shi-
moga districts. Besides this, the early Āḷupas also held sway over the Pombuchcha region which comprised of portions of the Shimoga and Chikmagalur districts. Evidently, the Kollūr, Hosangadi, Āgumbe, Shiradi, Bisli and Sampāji Gaths, which provide access into South Kanara at present, were made use of from early times by the Tuluva people to maintain their lean contacts with the rest of South India.

During the Medieval Āḷupa period, however, the territorial limits of the Tulu country had shrunk to practically the present day bounds of the district. It will be seen from Chapter IV that this period, ranging from the middle of the 10th to the middle of the 14th centuries, marked a period of political isolation for the Āḷupas and their kingdom when they were mostly left to themselves by the greater powers of the Deccan. The Pombuchcha region which had formed an integral part of the early Āḷupa possessions became the independent kingdom of the Santaras and was known as Santalige-1000 from about the beginning of the 10th century.

In the fourth decade of the fourteenth century, however, the Tulu country was shaken once for all from out of its isolation. From at least A.D. 1333, the district of South Kanara came under Hoysala sway and became a permanent part of the Vijayanagar empire as early as in A.D. 1345. It was during the Vijayanagara period that the territorial picture of the Tulu country underwent profound changes. With the disappearance

of the Alupas, who lingered on as an autonomous ruling house till the end of the fourteenth century, a number of tiny principalities make their appearance, most of them under rulers professing the Jaina faith. The more powerful among them possessed territories which were beyond the bounds of the Tulu country. The HaguvaJ.}! and Nagire chiefs of North Kanara held their sway also over the northern extremes of the South Kanara District. The powerful Jaina rulers of Karkala were also the rulers of the KaJasa region in the Chikmagalur district beyond the Ghats. Even some of the governors appointed by the Vijayanagara emperors to administer the Barakuru-rājya served simultaneously as administrators of the neighbouring divisions. These facts find detailed elucidation in Chapter VI below. Thus, the introduction of Vijayanagara authority in South Kanara heralded the end of the region's political and territorial isolation, and, of course, independence. Nevertheless, inscriptions of this period clearly illustrate the fact that the district did not lose its distinct territorial identity in itself.

As early as in the middle of the 2nd century A.D., Ptolemy, the Greek geographer referred to this region by its own name of Olokhoira = AJuva-khōja. To the Tamil poets of the Sangam Age (early centuries of the Christian era), it was known as TuJu-nādu. These points are discussed in detail in Chapter II below. From the dawn of datable history in the middle of the seventh century, the end of the fourteenth century, the region was under its own local ruling house, that of the Alupas. During this period, the kingdom bore the names of TuJu-vishaya and Alu-vakhōja-6000. Even when, under the aegis of the Vijayanagar
rulers, the territorial bounds of South Kanara had come to be readjusted, the region itself was called by such names of Tulu-dēsa and Tulu-rājya. While this persistent characteristic of territorial distinctness by itself justifies a separate study of the region's history, such an approach stands further vindicated by the fact that the region is important also as an important linguistic compartment of the Dravidian family. It is the land of one of the five major Dravidian dialects, namely Tulu. The fact that the Tulu dialect belongs to the Dravidian stock and that it, at the same time, differs widely from its sister dialects Kannāda, Tamil and Malayālam bear testimony to the early separation of the Tulu speaking man from his other Dravidian brethren and to the long duration of his isolation in which he built up his own linguistic, cultural and even political set up.

This leads us to the question — how long ago did man first appear in the coastal district of South Kanara? This question can not be answered with chronological certainty. It is accepted on all hands that the earliest man in the western coastal belt was preceded by many generations elsewhere in the Deccan. It the remote past, more than now, the coastal tract, as also the mountain range to its east, were densely covered with impenetrable forests. Robert Bruce Fosse says 'the settlement of man on the heavily forested mountain was not possible till he had obtained the use of iron axes, wherewith to fell the huge trees he had to clear away, before he could accomplish the
agricultural work on a large scale. If we take into account the long years of industry and suffering in which the iron-age men would have been involved before finally clearing the forests and settling down to an agricultural life on the coastal tract, the association of Parasurāma, who, as his very name suggests, had the axe for his weapon, with the creation of Tuḷuva and, for that matter, the whole of the western coastal tract, significantly called Parasurāma kshātra, comes to bear a new significance. Perhaps, the faint recollections of what had happened in the remote past induced later generations to coin this legend, the antiquity and popularity of which is illustrated by its mention in the Mahābhārata and Kālidāsa's Rāghuvamsa. The dating of the earliest man in South Kanara to the Iron Age will, however, have to stand the test of a thorough Archaeological exploration which has not so far been conducted in that region.

As for the ethnic stock to which the first settlers in South Kanara belonged, on the strength of the Dravidian dialect of Tuḷu which is the oldest known dialect in the district, it may be surmised that they belonged to the Dravidian group. We suppose that at a very early period in the history of India, the whole of the sub-continent was inhabited by Dravidian tribes;

11 Indian Prehistoric and Proto-historic Antiquities, Notes, on Ages and Distribution, p. 48.
12 Mahābhārata (BOR, Institute, Poona, 1949), Sānti-parva-Rājadharmaparva, vv. 58-59
13 Rāghuvamsa, Chapter 4, vv. 53-58
when subsequently the Āryan hordes invaded the north of India, the Dravidian tribes living in those areas were forced to seek some other home. The majority of them fled towards the south as a result of which the Deccan plateau became overcrowded. People were obliged to go in search of less populated or uninhabited areas and, in course of time, permanent settlements were established along the coastal tracts, including South Kanara. In this task, the migrating Dravidian must have been greatly helped by the iron axe.

The Tulu dialect differs widely from Tamil and Telugu and, at the same time, betrays considerable relationship to Kannāḍa. It also displays striking similarities with the dialect of Koḍagu or Coorg. It is, therefore, reasonable to surmise that the Dravidian migrants who settled in South Kanara must have belonged to those tribes who lived in the western parts of the Deccan where today the Kannāḍa language flourishes. While the migrants were crossing the formidable Ghats, a portion of the migrating population may have settled down in the Koḍagu region while the rest wended their way down to the coastal tract across the ranges. The grim prospects of crossing the huge heights must have left these people in comparative isolation, thus resulting in the development of Tulu, 'a peculiar and very interesting language which looks as if it had been cultivated for its own sake.'

15 vide p.35 of Introduction to 'A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages' by
We may now briefly discuss the origin and etymology of the word Tulu which has to-day come to signify the dialect, the people who speak it and the land where it is spoken. Many suggestions have been made by way of explanation. The explanations given in legendary works, seeking to derive the word Tulu from Tulapurnaka dana and the mythical name of Tulubhan 

Perumal are convincingly refuted by Saletore and, hence, are not dealt with here for fear of mere repetition. Saletore himself is of the view that Tulu owes its origin to the old Kannada word tulu meaning 'to attack'. He also speaks at length about the war-like qualities of the Tulu man in support of his theory. It has, however, been pointed out above that, on the strength of the available epigraphical evidence, the name Tulu must be deemed as originally having been given the region of South Kanara by outsiders i.e. by the inhabitants of the Kannada and Tamil countries who, incidentally, were not less war-like in their qualities than the people of Tuluva.

It has also been suggested that the word Tulu is to be derived from the original Dravidian form of Tulu standing for cattle and that the Tuluvas in ancient times belonged to the profession of cattle-breeders. On the one hand, the change

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16 Ancient Karnataka, Vol. I, History of Tuluva, pp.1-4
17 Ibid., pp. 4 ff.
18 P. Gururaja Bhat: Tulu-nadu, pp. 27 ff.
of A into I, as envisaged in the Tulu > Tulu theory, cannot be philologically justified. On the other hand, while numerous inscriptions from Karnata proper record the death of heroes in cattle raids, thus illustrating the importance of cattle in everyday life, not one such record has been found in South Kanara and, what is more, any visitor to the region will find even today that cattle in the Tulu country are undersized and that good cattle have to be brought from beyond the Ghats.

A view which has been dismissed, without much thought being bestowed upon it, is that the word Tulu itself, in its original form, signifies mildness, softness or meekness. In the Tulu language as spoken today, when this word qualifies certain fruits, it stands for the softness of the fruit; e.g. Tuluva palakkaye (soft Jack fruit); Tuluva kuka (soft mango). In ancient days too, the region of South Kanara must have been famous for the variety of soft fruits and may have, therefore, come to be called Tulu-nadu outside its own bounds as a mark of distinction. The word Tulu thus appears to be a synonym of the Tamil word tulir which stands for a young leaf or tender foliage. As a prop to this theory may be quoted the name of an ancient division in the Dharwar region, namely Palaski or Halasige-12000, evidently named after the Palasa tree (Butea frondosa) which must have grown in abundance in that region.

The present thesis has been spread over ten chapters of which Chapter I contains the introductory statements made above. Chapters II, III, IV, V and VI deal with the political

19 Madras District Manuals - South Kanara, p.2.
history of the district from the earliest beginnings to the fall of Vijayanagara. Of these, Chapter IV on the medieval Ajupas commences with the reign of Kundavarma, whose Kaṭḍiri inscription of A.D. 968, though a little early to be called medieval, nevertheless marks a new beginning in the epigraphical history of the region by giving, for the first time, the date of its writing. Chapter VII on South Kanara during Vijayanagara times, has grown lengthy. This has been to a great extent unavoidable chiefly because the history of the many local ruling families had to be narrated as and when their records appeared in the chronological sequence.

It may be felt that the reign periods of the Ajupas, in particular of the earlier rulers, have been fixed in a rather arbitrary way. The fact, however, is that dated references to their reigns have been either totally lacking or few and far between. Nevertheless, the scientific method of assigning dates on palaeographical grounds has been strictly followed in such cases. Having been closely acquainted with the nature and contents of the early records from South Kanara, the present writer feels that future discoveries are not likely to effect drastic changes in the chronological and genealogical tabulations arrived at in this thesis.

Studies on the Art and Architecture and the Cultural aspects of South Kanara have not been included in this thesis, though enough source material is available on these topics. They have been left out chiefly because much of the allotted time for this thesis has been taken away by the Chapters on the region's political history.