CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The topography and climate of southern Karnāṭaka favoured a mixed farming regime of cattle and sheep-harding together with agriculture which was based both on the seasonal rainfall patterns and on the development of irrigation projects, principally tanks. This seems to have been the pattern from the earliest period in our region.

Since our sources primarily record grants for temples, brāhmaṇas or secular assignees they chiefly mention wet lands where paddy was the preferred crop. These lands were evidently preferred for grants. We have scant references to dry lands. In some cases the category of granted land is not specified but this cannot always be taken as evidence that they were dry lands. Apart from paddy, millets, seji and sugarcane also find mention in inscriptions. Among fruits grown we have reference to plantains, areca and coconut plantations. Flower gardens were often granted to temples for meeting ritual requirements.

Both wet lands growing paddy and garden lands (tonta, tota) required irrigation for maintaining high levels of yields. In the region under study the major source of irrigation were tanks to which we have innumerable references. Tanks together with channels and natural streams are frequently mentioned in boundary descriptions. They also helped demarcate one field from another. Tank construction was actively undertaken by the ruling elite of every level from kings, queens and feudatories down to the local landed elite such as the gāvundas and Mahājanas. We have even some references to construction of irrigation works by artisans. That tank construction was a major factor in agrarian expansion was clearly recognized. Consequently grants of land or the yield of land were made by the rulers to the individuals who constructed tanks for the maintenance of the tank. A graduated increase in taxation on newly irrigated lands seems to denote a desire on the part of the rulers to convert dry lands to wet lands which clearly had higher yields.
Tank construction was also a major factor in the spread of agricultural settlement over space and probably resulted in the emergence of new hamlets which were then considered part of the larger settlement and its subsidiaries. However, literary works associate hamlets or palli with tribal settlements. This association is not brought out in inscriptions except in one case where a palli is described as a shepherds' settlement. However the fact that the majority of the inscriptions referring to palli record their grant to an individual, or a temple or a brahmadeya might indicate a process of acculturation whereby tribals were subordinated to the ruling elite.

Agriculture and cattle and sheep-rearing do not appear to have been mutually exclusive. We have no evidence of pastoral nomads although it is possible that the Bēdas belonged to this category. However beyond their predatory cattle raids we have no evidence to support this contention. They too might have practised swidden agriculture. Among settled populations agriculture and pastoralism went hand in hand. Cattle herds were possessed by the gāvundas, the upper stratum of the peasantry, to judge from a reference to a gōsāa gāvunda and their frequent participation in cattle raids. Ownership of cattle herds was not restricted to gāvundas. Merchants and artisans too possessed cattle and trade in cattle and milk products might perhaps be posited.

From descriptions of village boundaries we gather the impression that houses were generally situated in the centre of the village. References to streets and houses are scant in our inscriptions but, in at least one case it appears that streets were aligned around temples in cardinal directions. The directional layout is also indicated in two other instances. A street also appears to have been a discrete social unit but it is not clear whether the individuals residing there shared an occupational or caste identity though it is probable given that each occupational group had access to different sources of water.

Although inscriptions give us considerable information on field layout the details are insufficient for a complete picture. Nevertheless it would seem that natural features such as hillocks and streams together with tanks and their channels were the
chief landmarks used to demarcate one field from another. We have references to open fields (bayal) within which lands were granted. It is unclear however, whether these were similar to the open fields of the medieval European agrarian system. We also appear to have a reference to an enclosed field. References to waste lands, forest lands and pastures are also available but their location vis-a-vis the cultivated fields is not specified. The grants of such lands to individual, beneficiaries would point to the erosion of common rights within the village.

As with rural settlements inscriptions give us no clue as to the physical form of urban centres. Fortifications are attested to in the case of Banavasi and Asandi and temples and houses are mentioned in most cases. But no clear street plan emerges. Literary descriptions though exaggerated may be taken as supplying this gap. Both inscriptions and literary works point to the importance of the capital, which was considered the domain of the ruler and the centre of the realm. The urban centre emerges from our sources as the administrative centre of the kingdom which gradually developed with growing trade and commerce into a centre of trade. Manufacture and artisanal activity is, in comparison, neglected by our sources. References to artisans come chiefly from rural contexts. Temples and monasteries were in addition to administration and trade, factors of importance in the growth of urban centres.

Larger politico-geographical units were known in the earlier period as visayyas and later as nāḍus. The numerical suffixes appended thereto probably signified the number of settlements included in the unit. Nāḍus appear to have been primarily agrarian units which were used by the rulers as administrative units as well. In southern Karnāṭaka we do not have much evidence for corporate bodies at the nāḍu level. Instead Nāḍu chieftaincies prevailed, with Nālgāvundas holding away over a nāḍu and participating in the political developments in their region. Pergades too have been associated by Stein with nāḍu chieftaincy but they appear to have been essentially rulers of individual settlements only.

Until the emergence of the Gaṅgas in the fourth century A.D. we do not have evidence of a state structure in Southern Karnāṭaka. Conical clan chiefdoms similar to
those of the veḻir chiefs of the peripheral areas of Tamil Nadu probably existed here during the Megalithic and Early Historic phases. Southern Karnāṭaka in this period enjoyed limited contacts with the neighbouring states in Northern Karnāṭaka and the proto-states of Tamil Nācu. It was probably due to the stimulus provided by their northern neighbours that the Gaṅgas who were possibly one of the chiefly clans of the region established a state here towards the end of the fourth century. They adopted all the trappings and insignia of royalty current in that period - a gōṭra and kula affiliation, patronage of brahmanical Hinduism and heterodox faiths for legitimation of their new-found authority and a royal court and administration modelled on those of their northern neighbours.

The Gaṅgas' earliest base appears to have been the region around Kōlār. Over the next two centuries they expanded their realm by conquest and matrimonial alliances to cover the modern districts of Kōlār, Bangalore, Tumkūr, Mysore, Manḍya, Hassan, Chikmagalūr, Coorg and the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu. Their relations with the major powers of the region fluctuated. The Paṟuvi Gaṅgas were clearly subordinate to the Pallavas but the Talakāḍ Gaṅgas who supplanted them appear to have been independent. In the seventh century, the Vatāpi Cālukyas claim to have reduced the Gaṅgas to submission. While the Gaṅgas do not acknowledge any overlord, the fact that they cooperated in Cālukyan campaigns against the Pallavas would indicate their subordinate status. At the same time, Gaṅga records present them as overlords over an array of subordinates of obscure origins. In the second phase, Gaṅga hegemony over their dominions which had come to be designated as Gaṅgavāḍi was repeatedly challenged by the Rāstrakūṭas and then by the Cōḷas. They also faced serious threats from subordinate lineages such as the Noḻambas and Bāṇas who established themselves in the Eastern division comprising Kōlār, Bangalore and Tumkūr districts and did not acknowledge Gaṅga suzerainty.

In the first phase the brāhmaṇas who were the major recipients of land grants appear to have helped to establish the administration of Gaṅgas. It was a result of their pervasive influence that the records of the first phase reflect a patriarchal brahmanical social order. A few chiefs (arasar) are also mentioned but their role, in inscriptions, appears limited to the execution of royal grants. In the second phase
although patronage of Vaidika brāhmaṇas continued, they had to share eleemosynary grants with temples and sectarian brāhmaṇa preceptors who generally acted as trustees of temple grants. They not merely administered temple affairs but exercised powers analogous to those of a lay administrator over the lands and villages granted to the temple. In this sense they formed but one section among many of landed magnates. The brāhmaṇas represented the sacred domain and provided a means for the validation of temporal power.

Unlike the first phase when we have few references to lay lords, in the second phase, these sections enjoyed a numerical preponderance over the brāhmaṇas and temple trustees. The Gaṅgas, Nālambas, Bānas and Vaiḍumbas and other lineages appear to have had enclaves within Gaṅgavādi. The wide geographical distribution of these lineages came about as a result of partition of lineage territory among members of the royal family, conquest, alliance or voluntary submission. Petty rulers of indeterminate or tribal origins formed another section of the variegated ranks of feudatories.

Service assignees who owed military service to their overlords were a major section of the landed intermediaries. Inscriptions record many instances of subordinates marching to battle at the command of their lord. They received grants as reward for meritorious service. Here, unlike in medieval Europe, service assignments were made subsequent to the performance of military service. Literary works indicate that the service assignee was obliged to fight for his lord, an obligation which is termed Jōlada pāli.

The uppermost stratum of peasant landholders, the gāvundas constituted another section of landed intermediaries. Gāvundas acted as headmen at both the village and the nādu levels. As headmen and local notables they demarcated the boundaries of grant lands and acted as witnesses. They apparently collected taxes on behalf of the ruler together with the Nālbovas. While the gāvundu could be bestowed by the King as a reward for military service, it was largely heritable by the tenth century. A gāvundu probably included a complex of rights including land, houses, water, and other rights and privileges such as enjoyment of taxes. Gāvundas
were bound to Kings by strong ties of dependence. They bore the King’s titles and owed him military service for which they received lands as reward. They appear to have participated in the factional politics of the period as some inscriptions from Shimoga bear witness. They were in fact recognized as members of the feudatory hierarchy and are named after the Mahāsāṃanta ruling a unit in most records.

While individual gāvundas ruled over the village as headmen, we also have references to corporate groups of gāvundas, who enjoyed the power to alienate waste lands to individuals and controlled the settlement of tenants in a village. They also had a militia of their own like the Mahājanaś and the mercantile corporations.

Kings thus did not enjoy monopoly of military force. While they had their own armies with warriors bound to them personally as a jōlavāḷi or a vēlevāḷi, they had perforce to draw on the support of their feudatories and corporate militias for major expeditions. The relations between the King and the vassal fluctuated and the cooperation of these subordinate groups was dependent on the existing power relations and perceived commonalty of interest between the overlord and the vassal.

The early medieval state in Southern Karnataka was feudal in nature. It was characterised by a vast class of landed intermediaries, ranging in rank from a mahāsāṃantaśadhipati to the humble dependents of heroes. These landlords extracted surplus in the form of rent, siddhāya and taxes such as kirudere, attadere, sāmantadere, pattondi and ayondi. Numerous other taxes are mentioned in the epigraphic corpus, which would point to the heavy burden placed on the cultivators. These taxes were farmed out to subordinates pointing to the process of sub-infeudation. However we do not have any actual examples of eviction of peasants as its consequence. We do have one reference to the settlement of new peasants at Kīrūpēḷnagara in the ninth century Vijayapura inscription, but this does not appear to be at the expense of the earlier tenants. The tenants (okkal) who were organized in corporate groups in many areas enjoyed inalienable rights over their holdings. They suffered from the imposition of higher graded rights over their lands by the landlords to whom they owed rent and taxes.
In addition to these exactions the peasants were required to feed the army on the march, perform forced labour and lend their bullocks for carting services and perhaps for ploughing the land of the fief-holder. We also have evidence that tenants were bound to the land for the duration of their lords' lives. Their position was made worse by the whittling away of communal rights of pasture in forest and waste lands by their grant to private individuals.

The state attempted to protect the tenants' interests by specifying the taxes to be collected by the beneficiary and even stipulating the amount. But there was little it could do to prevent abuse once the grant was made in perpetuity. The position of tenants was ameliorated to some extent by the influence wielded by corporate groups who often won tax exemptions from the local ruler.

Literary works class cultivating tenants and the vassals owing military service on par. The ethos of the period demanded dedicated service from the military retainers and the vassals to their lord in return for the subsistence received. Such ties were exemplified by the velevadicas who bound themselves to commit suicide at the death of their lord or lady. Higher ranking feudatories, however, often reneged on their commitment if the overlord was weak. Power, commonality of interest and ties of blood were as important in holding together the political structure as ties of obedience. This may have been due to the nature of service assignments in our region - a permanent grant made subsequent to service rather than conditional on the performance of service as in Europe. In this as in the absence of a seigneurial system, the social formation of our region differed from the classical West European feudal order.

We have seen earlier that the proponents of the integrative polity do not reject in toto the applicability of the feudal model to early medieval India. Their strength lies in the delineation of the political processes of the early medieval period. But they fail to elaborate on its socio-economic basis. Similarly the segmentary state hypothesis is inapplicable to our region and period, since the Gaṅgas and more emphatically the Cōlas exercised more than ritual sovereignty over Gangavāḍī. Under the latter, an organized bureaucracy controlled tax assessment and collection even in this peripheral province. Its other major features were parcellized sovereignty and lack of monopoly of force at the centre which is
characteristic of the feudal model as well. The feudal social formation thus appears to be best fitted to the evidence at our disposal.

In the field of religion, Vedic brāhmaṇism enjoyed the maximum state patronage in the first phase, which led to their emergence as a powerful group in the landed aristocracy. Their participation in administration further strengthened their privileged position. In the second phase, with decreasing patronage to Vedic brāhmaṇism it was sufficient for brāhmaṇas entering Government service to emphasise their lineage - as coming from Śrōtriya brāhmaṇa families already enjoying land in an agrahara. This was one method of adapting to decreasing patronage. Another was participation in Purāṇic forms of worship. Mahājana patronised temples of Visnu, Śiva and the mother goddesses. They even constructed shrines for heroes and acted as trustees for such temples. Jainism too enjoyed material support in the first phase. But it gained in popularity in the second phase when we have evidence of the construction of a large number of basadis. They derived support primarily from the upper echelons of the ruling class. Low ranking feudatories and small landholders seem to have preferred Śaivism.

Women of aristocratic families were prominent patrons of Jainism. This appears surprising in view of the fact that the Digambaras who held sway in this region assigned women a lower status, hoding that they could not achieve salvation in the same birth. One can only suggest that women of this period found the Jaina doctrine that the soul could be freed from its bondage by one's own efforts more attractive than the rival Kālāmukha view that humans were totally dependent on the grace of Śiva for liberation. The prominence of women among the patrons of Jainism had another consequence. The nuns in practice enjoyed a great deal of influence in this region.

Jaina shrines were by and large simpler than Śaiva temples both in their physical structure and organisation. The structure was limited to a garbhagṛha, a sukhanāsi and a navaraṅga. Subsidiary shrines of subordinate deities and friezes depicting Purāṇic legends are not attested to in this period in Jaina basadis although they had begun worshipping Yakṣis such as Jvalāmālinī and Padmāvati. These Yakṣis were the foci of
Tantric cults in the late tenth century. But the Jinas and Pañcaparamēsthins were the primary deities.

The Jainas had a strong monastic order from the very beginning. In the early medieval period they lost ascetic rigour and settled down permanently in monasteries. They were trustees of Jaina shrines, a development which appears paradoxical in view of their vow of non-possession. An important aspect of Jaina monastic organisation in this period was the reduced size of many monastic groups - a feature which gives the impression of a great deal of proliferation. Even as new groups emerged, the unit of organisation was the gaṇa or gaccha which consisted of three to four members. In these groups the preceptor became all powerful and was considered the means of deliverance of his disciple. Adoration of preceptors grew into a cult by itself with the erection of memorial shrines for the acāryas.

Śaivism had a wider social base than Jainism enjoying patronage of gāvundas and corporate groups in addition to high ranking feudatories. Partly this may be due to the fact that it was entirely a temple-based cult and the energies of the monks were directed entirely to garnering support for temple construction. For the Jainas temple construction was important but represented a deviation from their original stress on rigorous ascetic practices. The Śaivas did not suffer from such dualism although their monks too followed an ascetic regimen similar to that of Jainas. Vaiṣṇavism did not enjoy as much support as the other two since we have evidence of fewer Viṣṇu temples in this period.

Some records specify that rulers were devoted to particular deities; but when they made grants to donees of other sects they were described as votaries of those sects. This would show that sectarian differences did not have a segregative reflection on the social base. Hence husband and wife could be devoted to different deities and a devotee of Śiva could also be described as a Vaiṣṇava or a Jaina.

Yōga Narasimha among the Vaiṣṇavas and the Liṅga for the Śaivas were the most popular icons owing to their acculturative capacity. Similarly the worship of the mother goddesses was extremely popular as a result of the process of absorption of
tribal cults. Tantric practices involving blood sacrifice, mystic incantations and the worship of Yantras and Cakras are attested to in this period and can be attributed to the same cause.

Cults of the deified dead were widespread in the second phase. The erection of hero stones and festivals which perhaps involved the performance of the story of their deification were major expressions of such devotion. Āgamic Śaivism also incorporated the worship of the dead through the erection of the Śivālayas in their name. Both lay men and preceptors were thus honoured though the latter had a higher spiritual status as mumuksus. Sati was comparatively rare in this period although literary works often refer to it.

Rituals in temples of all sects involved the offering of the basic upacāras of dipa, dhūpa, gandha, naivedya and abhiśeka. Among the Jainas the āstāhnikā pūjā, an eight-day festival was the most popular rite. Abhiśeka was also very important for them. For the Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas and Śaktas, the offering of a perpetual lamp and naivedya are most often attested to. While Śaiva temples generally had Kālākāra monks as managers, Vaiṣṇava shrines had a separate managerial cadre termed the Kaṃnigaḷ in the early eleventh century.

Anghabhoga and rangabhoga were temple rituals associated with the devadāsis who were modelled after palace prostitutes. They were sexually exploited by the senior members of the temple staff and the principal patrons. In Jaina temples we do not have any evidence for these female servants of the deity.

Thus the early medieval state in Southern Karnataka under the aegis of the Gaṅgas saw the spread of settlements over most of the region. More and more social groups and tribes were drawn into the ambit of the state. In order to legitimise their power the rulers drew on numerous religious traditions.
## APPENDIX I - REFERENCES TO POLITICO - GEOGRAPHICAL UNITS

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<thead>
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<th>S.No.</th>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Paruvi viṣaya</td>
<td>Malligur grāma and within it Ponnamuri grāma.</td>
<td>5th to 6th centuries</td>
<td>S. Settar, ASMAR 1911- A study p.135, No.2.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Kerekunda - ०००</td>
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<td>8th century</td>
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