

## Problems of Identification and Classification of Some Nilagiri Tribes

Irulas-Ūrālis, Kāṭṭu Nāyakas/Jēnu Kuṛumbas, Šōlegas

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**Abstract.** – *The ethnolinguistic diversity of the region of the Nilagiri Mountains (South India) is a well-known fact. There may still be areas, particularly in the northwest (towards Wynaad), which may contain some "undiscovered" tribes and tribal languages. Until about 1970–75, only two or three Nilagiri area tribes (Todas, Kotas, Badagas) were the object of anthropological and linguistic investigation (e. g., Thurston, Rivers, Emeneau, Mandelbaum). After 1970–75, a more modern generation of Dravidianists (Hockings, Diffloth, Kapf, Zvelebil) turned their attention to the Nilagiri tribes, casting some important light on the picture. The present paper describes the labours of one of these scholars, extending over the decade 1968–1978, during which time the various dialects and forms of the language of the Irulas were the center of his attention. The article identifies 16 different tribal languages of the area; it attempts a linguistic classification within the South-Dravidian sub-family; and it describes a few of them in some detail, viz., the four dialects of Irula, and the language of the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas and the Šōlegas. It also sets out to delineate the main features of an areal Nilagiri linguistics, and to propose the main desiderata in the study of the Nilagiri tribal communities and languages.*

### Introduction

The Western scholarly knowledge of the Nilagiri Mountains of Tamilnadu State (South India) may be said to begin with ethnographic and linguistic papers written for learned journals from 1831 onwards (cf. Hockings 1972: 3). In a class by itself is Father Jacome Finicio's report of 1602/03 which describes

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the interrelationship between the Toda and Badaga tribes<sup>1</sup>. No other reference to the Nilagiri peoples seems to have been published after Finicio's report until Buchanan's comment on the Badagas and some jungle tribes in 1807.

The different tribes of the Nilagiri area have received various degrees of attention. Whereas some of the tribes, particularly the Todas and the Kotas, have been the object of both non-scholarly interest and keen scientific attention, other tribes were almost completely ignored, remained virtually unknown, and became the focus of only one activity: greedy exploitation (Iṛulas, Kuṛumbas, Šōlegas, Paṇiyas). Complete confusion prevailed, and to a great degree still prevails, with regard to such tribes as, e.g., the Ūrālis of the hills on the northern side of the Moyar Canyon and Bhavani river: we have at the most thirteen articles concerning 'Urali' – and these pertain to several ethnolinguistically widely differing tribes (cf. note 11). In Madras, at the head-office of the Government of Tamilnadu Harijan and Tribal Welfare Department, they knew as little about the Ūrālis I was after as the administrative officers of the Nilagiri District. Although one single Roman Catholic parish (at Gundri) counts at least 900 Catholic (and ± 300 non-Catholic) Ūrālis, the official List of Communities (Periodical 7C/72 dated 31-5-1972) does not include any Ūrālis among the List of Scheduled Tribes. Officially, these people do not exist<sup>2</sup>. Linguistically, the situation was equally inadequate: such languages as Ūrāli Iṛula, Paṇiya or Šōlega, Jēnu Kuṛumba or Ūrāli Kuṛumba, were not only completely undescribed, but about some of them there was either grave doubt as to their status (language, or dialect, or a "crude mixture of" say, Tamil and Kannaḍa?), or even about their very existence (do the Ūrālis of Biligiri-Rangan Hills speak their own language or 'something else'?). Hence the urgent need for further fieldwork; hence the present paper, which attempts to contribute a more precise knowledge about the problems outlined, and bring some order into the prevailing confusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Two Mss. on the Mission of Todamalā. In A Collection of Annual Reports Relative to the State of Portuguese Jesuit Missions in the East Indies; of Various Dates, from 1601 to 1659. British Museum Additional Ms. 9853, pp. 464–65, Ms. 25–26, and p. 479, Ms. 40 Vol. Published several times in the Portuguese original; in English translation by A. de Alberti in William Halse Rivers (1906: 719–30).

<sup>2</sup> Whether or not a community is included into an official list of scheduled communities is *not* a question of idle curiosity or purely theoretical importance, but of grave *practical* consequences: it pertains to the allotting of funds, starting of development schemes, proportionate allotment of places in educational institutions and welfare benefit schemes, etc. The Ūrālis of Gundri were a sharply self-conscious tribe, well-informed about their tribal independence and aware of their own identity; they considered it a grave injustice that they were not included in the official list.

### 1. Geographic Background, Ecological Units, Demography

While speaking of the Nilgiris or Nilagiris 'Blue Mountains'<sup>3</sup> one must distinguish at least between two different contexts<sup>4</sup>: the Nilagiri area, and the Nilagiri District. The first refers to the physiographic unit, a section of South India, possessing certain characteristic geomorphic, climatic, ecological, anthropological, ethnolinguistic, and cultural features: I will mostly use the term 'the Nilagiris' in this sense, which will enable me to include, in the description of my research, those ethnolinguistic communities which do not live under the jurisdiction of the Nilagiri District (living either completely outside of it as do the Ūrāli-Iṛulas, or only partly within its limits, like the Šōlegas) and yet belong, ethnolinguistically and culturally, to the area. The other context of the term 'the Nilagiris' refers to the Nilagiri District, the administrative unit of Tamilnadu state bordering on Kerala and Karnataka.

The Nilagiri Area (cf. Map 1) covers a surface of approximately 24,000 km<sup>2</sup>, its dimensions being about 130 km by 180 km. Vertically the area ranges from almost the sea level to 2636 m (Dodabetta), with about 20% of its surface above 1000 m, and 6-8% above 1800 m (40% in the case of the Nilagiri mountains).

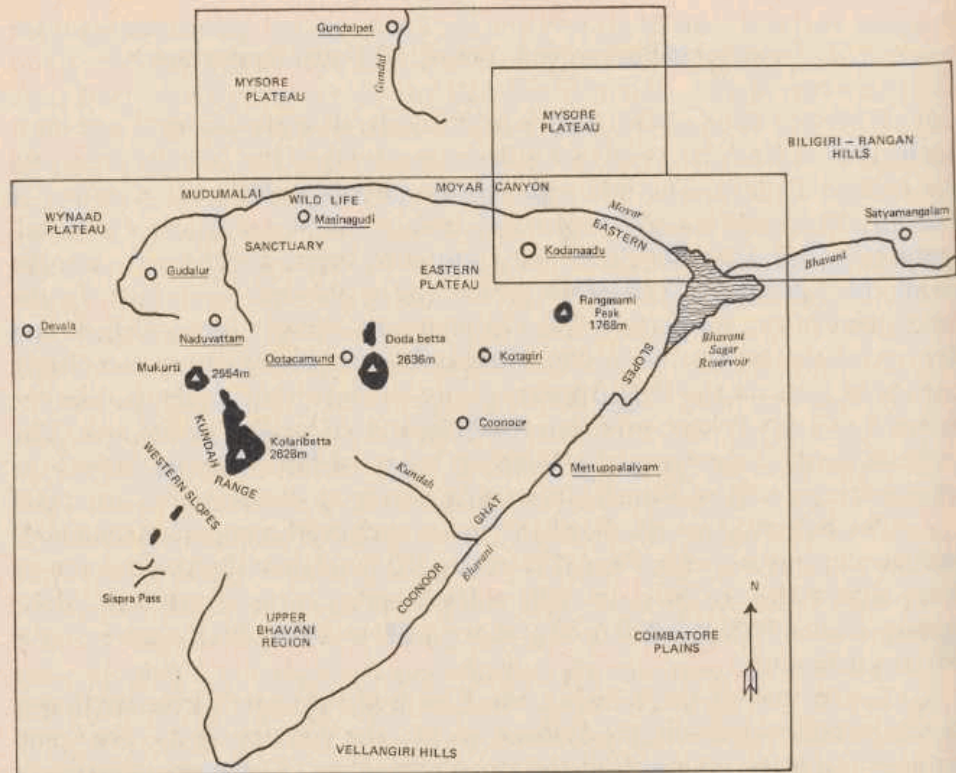
To the west of the Nilgiris, the Kerala plains stretch from northwest to southwest, bounded by the Arabian sea and the Western Ghats. The Coimbatore<sup>5</sup> plains, to the south of the mountains, have an average elevation of 300-400 m, with their major rivers, particularly the Bhavani, Noyil, and Amaravati all being the tributaries of the Kaveri.

North of the mountains lies the Mysore plateau, its higher elevation being 800-1000 m. Its southwestern extension is the Wynad (or Wynaad, i.e., Vayalnāṭu, Bayalnāṭu 'land of swamps') which may still conceal some undisclosed anthropological and ethnolinguistic secrets in its hot jungles. The Moyar river which cuts a deep (300 m) canyon into the Mysore plateau, joins the Bhavani just east of the Nilgiris. To the northeast, the still rather wild region of the Dimbham and Biligiri-Rangan Hills is the home of the Šōlegas and the Ūrālis.

<sup>3</sup> The name was mentioned as early as 1117 A. D. There are two current explanations of its etymology: "the blue haze which envelops the range in common with most distant hills of considerable size" (thus Francis 1908: 91f.); or the blue colour of the blossoms of the *kuriñci* 'conehead' (*Strobilanthes*) which is said to flower once in 8, 9, or 12 years (cf. Dharmalingam 1970). Many variations of the name's spelling are current (Nilgerry, Neelgheery, Nilgherry, Neilgherries, Neelgieries, etc.). The most commonly used term is the Nilgiris. I prefer the more precise form Nilagiri, Nilagiris, cf. Sanskrit Nilagiri, Tamil Nilakiri.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, von Lengerke (1977: 5) distinguishes four different contexts in which it is possible (and proper) to use "the name Nilgiris": Nilgiris Area, Nilgiris District, Nilgiris (proper) - the physiographic unit centrally located within the area, and Nilgiris Plateau.

<sup>5</sup> Coimbatore - according to local lore founded by an Iṛula chieftain by name of Kōyan - developed into the leading town in the larger Nilagiri Area (356,000 inhabitants in 1971).



Map 1. The Nilagiri Area

One of the most striking features of the Nilagiris is their massive appearance<sup>6</sup>. In every direction the sides of the hills leading up to the plateau are steep and often precipitous. To the southeast, east, and northeast there is a rapid fall of about 5000 feet to the Coimbatore plains. On the northwest the slope is more gradual, but to the north there is a steep fall of about 4000 feet. The steep sides leading up to the plateau were until a few decades ago, and, to a great extent still are (particularly in the west, northwest and north) covered with thick, almost impenetrable jungle and precipitous rocks, inhabited by the tribal complexes of the Kurumbas and the Irulas.

The Western slopes rise to the beautiful, impressive, massive, towering Kundah Range culminating in the Kolaribetta (2628 m), "first gradually, then with increasing gradients and finally in perpendicular, sometimes even overhanging walls so characteristic of the horse-shoe shaped recess south of Mukurti Peak (2554 m)" (Lengerke 1977: 11). In the deep valleys of this area are small settlements of Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Irulas and different Kurumba communities.

<sup>6</sup> As Lengerke says, they present themselves as an invincible 'bastion,' whether approached from the Malabar plains, the Coimbatore plains, or the Mysore plateau (1977: 11).

The Bhavani river<sup>7</sup> flows along the foot of the southeastern slopes towards the Kaveri, and forms the southern boundary of the Nilagiris separating them from the Vellangiri Hills and the Coimbatore plains above which the Coonoor Ghat and the Eastern slopes rise up to 1500–1800 m. On these slopes live in their villages the Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas, and different Kuṛumba-speaking tribes. The area around Kodanaadu in the northeastern corner of the mountains is typically the country of Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas (with their most sacred mountain, the Rangasami Peak [1768 m] towering the Nilagiris Eastern slopes over the Bhavanisagar water storage reservoir: water spread area 80 km<sup>2</sup>). In the canyon of the Moyar<sup>8</sup> river, and on the northern and north-western slopes, one finds Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas and Kasabas (Kasavas) – a tribelet speaking a somewhat divergent Iṛula dialect. In the search for Jēnu Kuṛumbas (alias Kāṭṭu [Kāḍu] Nāyakas) and Šōlegas, one has to descend to the Northern plateau (the Gudalur-Masinagudi area), whereas for the Ūrāli Iṛulas one has to leave the Nilagiris proper, cross the rivers and move northeast beyond the Moyar canyon, to the Biligiri-Rangan Hills.

The Nilagiri District covers an area of 2549 km<sup>2</sup> at an average elevation of 6,500 feet. It consists of three Taluks, namely Ootacamund, Coonoor, and Gudalur, and four Panchayat Unions, i.e., Ootacamund, Coonoor, Kotagiri, and Gudalur.

According to the 1971 Census, the total population of the District was 494,015 (compared with 490,308 in the 1961 Census). Out of this number, the tribal population accounts for 19,869 (as against 12,948 in 1961). There has been an increase of 6921 in the tribal population over a period of 10 years. The growthrate is thus a little over 5% per year. The present tribal population is distributed among the three Taluks as follows:

Ootacamund – 3191	Coonoor – 6709	Gudalur – 9972
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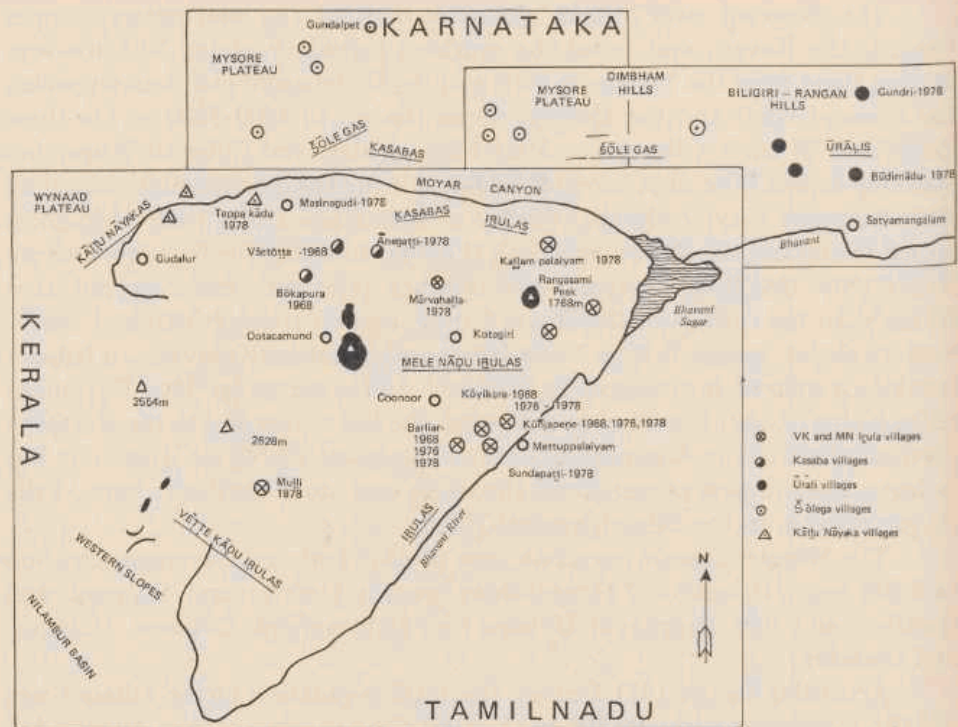
In these numbers, the Badagas were *not* included. Their economic and social status has changed so drastically during the past two decades that they do object to being considered 'tribal'; and, indeed, it probably has never been quite justified to classify them as a 'tribe' of the same kind and category as, e.g., the Todas or Iṛulas<sup>9</sup>.

The tribal population is not distributed with equal density in the three Taluks of the Nilagiri District. There is a concentration of about 50% of the tribes in Gudalur Taluk (mainly Paṇiyas, Šōlegas, Kāṭṭu Nāyakas, and some other Kuṛumba communities); next comes Coonoor Taluk with 34% of tribal

<sup>7</sup> In many tribal languages of the area, the Bhavani river is *the* river par excellence, so that its name (in full or shortened form) is used as a general term for 'river,' cf. Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, *vā'ni* '(large) river.'

<sup>8</sup> The spelling varies: Moyar, Mayaru, Moyaru. The second part of the name is of course *āru* 'river.' The first part is etymologically uncertain: explained as *māyā*, *māya* 'magic,' hence, 'The Magic River'; or, as *mō-y-āru* 'the river which carries' (cf. DED 4211).

<sup>9</sup> Doubts about the classification of the Badagas as a tribe were expressed from time to time; cf. P. E. Hockings (1968) who is one of the best-informed scholars with regard to the Badaga community.



Map 2. The Nilagiri Area, showing some of the tribal habitations.  
The dates indicate the years when fieldresearch was performed by the author.

population (chiefly Irulas, Kuṛumbas, and Kotas). The official and confidential *Draft Report Project* (Govt. of Tamilnadu) gives a list of 209 tribal settlements (61 in Ootacamund Taluk, 31 in Coonoor Taluk, the rest in Gudalur Taluk).

The 1971 Census does not break up the total tribal population of approximately 20.000 into separate figures for each ethnic group. However, the following estimate as to different tribal groups can be made:

Todas:	ca. 1200	Kuṛumbas:	ca. 4700
Kotas:	ca. 1300	Kāṭṭu Nāyakas:	ca. 1300
Irulas:	ca. 5800	Paṇiyas:	ca. 5700

These numbers are quoted according to the Government 'Report' mentioned above: some of them seem to me to be off the mark (the number of the Kotas, e.g., may be too high); the 'Report' does not include tribes like the Šolegas who definitely live partly in the Gudalur Taluk of the District; it classifies Kāṭṭu Nāyakas separately though they are identical (without any doubt) with Jēnu Kuṛumbas and hence should be classified as one of the tribes of the Kuṛumba complex (though they speak a different *language* than, e.g., the Pālu Kuṛumbas).

On the following pages, I shall not limit my observations to the Nilagiri District, but to the larger Nilagiri *Area*, that is, roughly, to the space delimited

approximately as follows (cf. Map 2): In the north, by the Moyar Canyon and the hills rising north of it (Dimbham Hills, Kambatarayan Hills, Gundri-Susapura Hills, Biligiri-Rangan Hills); in the northwest, by the southern portions of the Wynaad Plateau; in the west, by the Western Slopes rising over the Nilambur basin; in the south and southeast, by the valley of the Bhavani river; in the east, by Bhavanisagar water-reservoir and the highroad to Satyamangalam and beyond.

This expansion is necessary simply because the ethnolinguistic distribution of the tribal population does not restrict itself according to administrative boundaries of Taluks and Districts, and because, physiographically, demographically, linguistically, and culturally, an area is differently delimited than an administrative unit.

Within this area, then, the following *sixteen* tribes live according to the present state of our knowledge:

- |   |                       |  |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Todas                                | 6. Bēṭṭa Kuṟumbas     | 12. Ūrālis or Ūrāli Iṟulas   |
| 2. Kotas                                | 7. Muḷḷu Kuṟumbas     | 13. Kasabas alias Kasavas, Kasubas<br>(more precisely Kasaba Iṟulas) |
| 3. Pālu Kuṟumbas                        | 8. Ūrāli Kuṟumbas     | 14. Paṇiyas  |
| 4. Ālu Kuṟumbas                         | 9. Muḍugas            | 15. Šōlegas  |
| 5. Jēnu Kuṟumbas<br>alias Kāṭṭu Nāyakas | 10. Mele Nāḍu Iṟulas  | 16. Badagas <sup>10</sup> .  |
|   | 11. Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas |  |

The simplified geographic localization of some of these communities is roughly indicated on map 2 (cf. also p. 472).

I shall deal, in this paper, with my personal search for the Ūrāli Iṟulas, and with the classification of the Iṟula tribal complex; also, with my quest for the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas alias Jēnu Kuṟumbas and the Šōlegas; a few words will be said about the Kuṟumbas.

The other tribes of the area will be, in this paper, completely ignored: some of them – like the Todas and Kotas – because we fortunately know (relatively) enough about them and because they have been investigated by others, and well; some of them, on the contrary, because we do not know almost anything reliable yet about them (Paṇiyas). The Badagas, too, will be ignored in this paper, first, because indeed their classification as a ‘tribe’ is today a matter of dispute; second, because they are the object of intensive and reliable research (P. E. Hockings).

## 2. The Prevailing Picture: Inadequate and Slanted

The prevailing picture of the distribution, identification and classification of the Nilagiri tribes – particularly as regards their ethnolinguistic classification and relationship – is inadequate and slanted; often, quite incor-

<sup>10</sup> The inclusion of the Badagas among the Nilagiri tribes is problematic. However, for *linguistic* reasons (at this moment, a Nilagiri areal linguistics is about to be developed, with a comparative dictionary of the Nilagiri tribal languages), their language, Badugu, must be included; and hence the speakers of Badugu, too, are enumerated here as part of the tribal complex of the area.

rect. This is true of anthropologists as well as of government agencies and administrative offices. Till about 1965-68, the only communities of the Nilagiris which received more adequate (in some cases, even lively and passionate) attention of anthropologists, linguists, and members of the administrative apparatus were the Todas, the Kotas, and the Badagas. Vague data were available on the Irulas, Kurumbas, and Paniyas. However, these data were mostly secondary, and almost without exception derived from quite early and antiquated sources (like Harkness 1831; Shortt 1864, 1865, 1869; Hayavadana Rao 1909, 1911, 1914-15; and of course Thurston 1897, 1903, 1909). In contrast, the Todas and the Kotas received excellent ethnographic, anthropological, and linguistic treatment by a few outstanding scholars (Rivers 1906; Emeneau since 1937; Mandelbaum since 1938). The Badagas, though much less the centre of attention than, e.g., the Todas, were still treated with fair interest in scholarly literature (Jagor 1879; but especially Hockings since about 1963), certainly with greater attention than the Irulas, Kurumbas, Šolegas, and Paniyas.

The inadequate and slanted view of the tribes of the Nilagiris prevails until this day. Thus the Draft Project Report for the Development of Primitive Tribes in the Nilgiris (n.d.), circulated as confidential and "for official use only" by the Government of Tamilnadu's Department of Harijan and Tribal Welfare, quotes the following 'main tribal communities' found in the Nilagiri District: "Todas, Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas, Kattunaickens, and Paniyas" (p. 2). In contrast, the comparative dictionary of the Nilagiri tribal languages which is under preparation by D. B. Kapp and myself, recognizes sixteen distinct tribal communities in the same area, in seven large tribal complexes. The same official Draft Project Report (on p. 3) says: "Among Irulas, there are also subsects [sic!] known as Kasabas and Scholagars [sic!]. Similarly among Kurumbas, there are distinct groups such as Mullikurambas [!], Oorali Kurumbas, Jenu Kurumbas and Kurumbas proper." Quite a collection of misstatements: First, the Šolegas are no "subsect" of the Irulas but an entirely independent tribe, distinct linguistically, anthropologically, socially, and culturally. Second, the Kurumba tribal complex should be probably subdivided as follows: Pālu Kurumba, Ālu Kurumba, Jēnu Kurumba, Bēṭṭa Kurumba, Muḷlu Kurumba, Ūrāli Kurumba, and Muḍuga. What is meant by "Kurumbas proper"? Presumably the Pālu and Ālu Kurumbas.

It is not only the factual errors and inadequacies, but also the tendencies and the prejudices which still marr even official publications. Thus, in the above-mentioned report, we read that the Todas are "a some what lazy lot" (p. 42) who have shunned agriculture *because* "they are not known for hard physical labour" (sic!); they are also described as being, by physical appearance "a little aggressive" (!), but in spite of that, "offences like physical violence or murder are almost rare among them" (p. 42). The tribals, it is maintained, "do not realise the value of time," but this attitude "can and must be changed" (p. 50), and they should benefit through "constant contact with the urban population and other advanced communities particularly the Badagas" (p. 25). It is a sad truth that the tribal communities were forced to allow those "other

advanced communities" (particularly the Moplas, Chetties, Badagas) to usurp their tribal lands. It is good to read that proposals have been sent to the Government to enact a legislation on enabling restoration of all the tribal lands to the rightful tribal owners (p. 41).

Before roughly 1965-68, only the languages of the following two Nilagiri tribes were either well-described or the object of intensive current research: Kota (Emeneau 1944-46) and Toda (Emeneau 1958, and his current work on the Toda language). Of the other fourteen languages, completely inadequate, fragmentary descriptions appeared in scattered articles on Iṛula, on some Kuṛumba languages, on Kasava (a divergent Iṛula dialect). Some further tribal languages remained completely undescribed, in fact, hardly ever mentioned (Ūrāli Iṛula, Jēnu Kuṛumba, Šōlega, Paṇiya). Some tribes were (and still are) virtually unidentified and/or unrecognized as tribal communities, and their classification was either non-existent, or they were classified completely inadequately and wrongly (like the Ūrālis of the larger Nilagiri Area, the Šōlegas, the Paṇiyas, some of the Kuṛumba tribes).

By about 1965, but chiefly in 1968, the situation began to change. Around that time and somewhat later, about half a dozen linguists and anthropologists became interested in such communities as the Iṛulas (four different Iṛula dialects, two of them rather divergent), Kuṛumbas (seven different Kuṛumba speech-forms, some of them almost certainly to be considered 'independent' languages), Badagas (and their Badugu language): G. F. Diffloth, P. Hockings, D. B. Kapp, K. V. Srinivasan, S. Swaminathan, R. Perialwar and possibly a few others, including myself, made field-trips to the Nilagiri region, and in a few years a number of anthropological and linguistic works appeared in print (or in prepublication form, xeroxed): Diffloth 1968, 1969; Zvelebil 1968, 1971, 1973; Hockings 1963 and his path-breaking Bibliography 1972; Srinivasan 1971; Swaminathan 1971, etc. After my own three field-trips (1968, 1976, 1978) and after the intensive research performed by D. B. Kapp in 1974-76, the picture became much clearer, though a lot is still to be done, in particular in the Wynaad area. Many doubts and uncertainties concerning the identification and classification of some Nilagiri tribes and their languages could be cleared. Fair description of, or data for fairly complete description of the following languages are at hand: Ālu Kuṛumba, Pālu Kuṛumba, Muḍuga, Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula, Ūrāli Iṛula. Basic descriptions of linguistic orientation of the following languages are being prepared: Šōlega, Jēnu Kuṛumba, Bēṭṭa Kuṛumba, Kasaba. The rest of the tribal communities and languages (Paṇiya, Mullu Kuṛumba, Ūraḷi Kuṛumba - as far as we can say) still remain to be attacked by scholarly endeavour. A comparative dictionary of sixteen Nilagiri languages, arranged according to the dual principle of etymology and semantic clusters, is under preparation. The overall identification and classification of the sixteen tribes and their speech-forms is fairly clear. Problems, of course, remain. It is well nigh possible that additional communities and hitherto unknown speech-forms will still be added by future research, particularly from the regions to the north and northwest of the Nilagiri plateau.

The present paper deals with my personal quest for the Ūrālis, Šōlegas, and Jēnu Kuṛumbas (alias Kāṭṭu Nāyakas), as well as with the classification of the four Iṛula dialects and the four Iṛula tribes. Problems will be outlined concerning their identification, and classificatory solutions will be stated. Brief descriptions will be given, too, of the diagnostic features of the languages and dialects in question.

### 3. Personal Quest

My interest in the Ūrālis was, I believe, for the first time aroused when I studied Gérard F. Diffloth's dissertation on the Iṛula language (1968); in this very valuable thesis, Diffloth suggests vaguely some linguistic relationship between the Iṛulas of the Nilagiri Mountains and the Ūrālis who live "near Sattiyamangalam."

Thurston and Rangachari give their brief, impressionistic but valuable account of the 'Urālis' of the 'jungles of Dimbhum' (1909*b*: 250-257). On pp. 242-49 of the same volume, the 'other' Ūrālis are very shortly discussed (of the Trichinopoly district, of Travancore, etc.) which shows that the term 'Urāli' or 'Ūrāli' is a synonym with many tribal, demitribal, and even caste communities in the Tamil and Malayalam speaking areas of South India.

My personal search was concerned with the Ūrālis of the larger Nilagiri Area. From the scanty, imprecise data<sup>11</sup> at hand I knew that there should be some tribal communities in the area calling themselves Ūrālis and speaking either Iṛula or Kuṛumba or both, or a language of their own which will presumably be closely related to Iṛula and/or one of the Kuṛumba speech-forms; which will in any case be South Dravidian, either Tamil-like or Kannaḍa-like.

I must be grateful to two scholars who sent me (via their writings) on the right track: to Thurston in the above-mentioned chapter (1909*b*), and to Diffloth (1968). It was in the Iṛula low country, between the sacred Rangaswamy Peak and the Kāraimaḍai temple, on both banks of the Moyar and Bhavani rivers that I hoped to find the Ūrālis. Linguistically, they were a *complete* enigma.

Above all, of course, I must be and I am grateful to Sister Sophie of St. Mary's convent in Kotagiri who sent me straight to the heart of the Ūrāli country in Gundri (Kuṅṅri), with a sweet and direct simplicity so typical of her (see later). However, thanks to Thurston and Diffloth, I knew at least the direction where to go and vaguely the area where to look for the Ūrālis.

Thurston gives roughly the following account of the Ūrālis "of Dimbhum": They consider themselves the children of *Billayya*, while the Šōlegas are

<sup>11</sup> The literature on the Ūrālis (including the 'other' Ūrālis of Travancore etc.): Aiyappan (1948: 128 ff.: "Sholagas and Uralis"); Chatterjee and Kumar (1956); Gnanambal (1954, 1955*a*, 1955*b*); Irudayanath (1962: 99-104); Luiz (1962*a*: 244-48); Mughherjee (1955*a*, 1955*b*); Rivers (1903); Subbarayan (1948: 109-12); Thurston (1903); Thurston and Rangachari (1909*b*: 242-49, 250-57).

supposed to be the descendants of *Karayya*<sup>12</sup>. They call themselves *Ūrālis* or *Iṛulas* (a mental exclamation mark at this point! K. Z.), and, when questioned, say that, as *Billayya* and *Karayya* are brothers, they may also be called *Šōlegas*<sup>13</sup>. But there is no intermarriage between the *Ūrālis* and the *Šōlegas*. According to another legend, the *Ūrālis* and the *Šōlegas* are both descended from *Kārayya*, and the Sivacharis (Lingayats) from *Billayya* or *Mādhēswaran* (1909b: 250–51).

My own investigation of the *Ūrāri* myth and the language has – as I hope to show below – thrown some light on these questions. However, it was clear to Thurston and Rangachari (in 1909b and, in fact, earlier, in 1903) that a special and close relationship exists between the *Iṛulas* of the Nilagiris, the *Ūrālis* of Dimbham, and the *Šōlegas* of the larger Nilagiri Area. Nevertheless, they did not go beyond this vague notion, and did not at all investigate the nature of the linguistic relationship among these tribes. No scholar after Thurston and Rangachari (apart from a few sentences of Diffloth in his dissertation, 1968) did, either. In fact, we find, in Thurston and Rangachari (p. 251) a statement (so typical for the ethnographers of that era) that the *Ūrālis* “speak a patois of mixed Tamil and Canarese.” This is of course incorrect: my investigation has proved beyond doubt that the *Ūrālis* of the larger Nilagiri area (Dimbham, Kambatarāyan, Gundri Hills) speak one of the four dialects of *Iṛula* which may be designated *Ūrāli Iṛula*, and has a few diagnostic features of its own. In fact, *linguistically*, the *Ūrālis* of this area *are Iṛulas*.

According to Thurston and Rangachari (1909b: 250), the *Ūrālis* are “acquainted with the civilized world” because they carry loads to the plains and “run down to market at the town of Sathyamangalam which is only 17 miles distant from Dimbhum.” Indeed, until this day, Sathyamangalam (or Satti, as it is familiarly called) is the market-center for the *Ūrālis*, and the nearest focus of ‘civilization’ for them.

According to Thurston again, they earn their livelihood by collecting minor forest produce; some of them cultivate various kinds of food-grains and own sheep and cattle. According to Thurston, they are divided into seven *kulams*. Thurston then describes some customs (puberty, marriage, tribal disputes, burial of the dead). I was able to gather some new data and partly confirm, partly supply and correct his data as regards the division of the tribe,

<sup>12</sup> The origin myth – if they will have any, I thought, reading this – connects once more the *Ūrālis* and *Šōlegas*. Given the connection between the *Iṛulas* of the Nilagiris and the *Šōlegas* which appears in the *Iṛula* creation myth, and my hunch that these *Ūrālis* “of Dimbhum” might speak an *Iṛula*-like language, and Diffloth’s remark pointing in that direction, I was quite excited by the guess and the hope that here I might find another dialect of *Iṛula*, or a tribal language, hitherto unknown and undescribed, which would connect *Iṛula* and *Šōlega*. All that remained was to find the *Ūrālis* and prove that my hunch was right.

<sup>13</sup> The situation becomes more and more entangled and complex. Since virtually nothing certain (ethnolinguistically) is known about the *Šōlegas* either, one may suspect that, after all, *Iṛulas*, *Ūrālis*, and *Šōlegas* are one and the same tribe – or ‘almost’! I made up my mind to ‘clear up this mess’ and to solve ‘the mystery’ of these identifications.

the marriage ceremonies, the informal man-woman union; but my investigation was primarily concerned *a)* with the ethnolinguistic classification of the Ūrāli tribe; *b)* with their language; *c)* with their mythology.

I began my personal search amidst labours devoted to the Nilagiri Iṛulas (investigated by me before, in 1968 and 1976). In the first talk I held in Ootacamund on Jan. 30 with administrative officials and members of the Tribal Welfare group, the existence of any Ūrālis in the area was denied: whenever anyone mentioned the word 'Ūrāli' they had in mind, as they maintained, one of the (five!) subdivisions of the Kuṛumbas! Other than that, I was told, some 'Ūrālis' lived in the Tirunelveli District. It was not at all encouraging.

Next day I met Dr. S. Narasimhan of the Adivasi Welfare Association, the well-known physician who has devoted, with so much understanding, self-denial and affection, the best years of his life to the tribals of the Nilagiris. This was, for me, an unforgettable (and fortunately not final) meeting. However, according to the opinion of Dr. Narasimhan, too, a subdivision of the Kuṛumbas called themselves Ūrālis. In the Gudalur Taluk, these Ūrāli Kuṛumbas live on a pre-agricultural stage of development, often employed as forest guards, mahouts, etc., and probably speak a Kuṛumba dialect. Apart from that there are, according to Dr. Narasimhan's information, other Ūrālis who may speak a language related to Iṛula, but they live in the Kanyakumari area as plantation-workers or agriculturalists, and have strongly pronounced Proto-Australoid and/or Negrito features. The problem, of course, was complicated by the fact that the Kuṛumbas designate the Iṛulas as Ūrāyi<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, even Dr. Narasimhan who knew the Nilagiri area very well, denied the existence of any Iṛula-speaking Ūrālis anywhere in the region.

For almost two weeks I was unable to unearth any concrete, reliable, firsthand information about the Ūrālis. Their existence – apart from the *Ūrāli Kuṛumbas* of the Gudalur region – was either denied, or they were said to live much further south, in the former Travancore state, or in the Kanyakumari area, or in the Tirunelveli District.

However, I possessed two valuable bits of information which sustained my hope: one was Thurston (1909*b*: 250) who locates clearly "the Urālis" in the jungles "of Dimbhūm in the Coimbatore district." Another was Diffloth (1968: 12, also 15) who speaks about Ūrālis "near Sattyamangaḷam" and suggests some linguistic ties with the Iṛulas. I convinced myself that – unless Diffloth was quite wrong, and unless the Ūrālis of Thurston have in the meantime died out – I must find some Iṛula-speaking Ūrālis somewhere in the region to the northeast of the Nilagiri mountains proper.

The bomb-shell exploded on February 10 – however, it was a very quiet and unobtrusive 'explosion.' At the breakfast-table, Sister Sophie, a Franciscan nun of St. Mary's convent, hearing patiently my complaints that I was unable to locate any Ūrālis anywhere, said quietly, in a very as-a-matter-of-fact voice:

<sup>14</sup> Noticed already by G. Diffloth who remarks (1968: 12) that in the language of the Pālu Kuṛumbas, "the word designating Nilgiri Iṛulas is /u.ra.y/." He correctly reconstructs *u.ra:y* < \**u.ra.ḷi*.

"There are plenty of Ūrālis near Satyamangalam in Susapuram. We have a small Franciscan convent there. It's a mountain village. They were considered previously a 'criminal' tribe. They live or lived in a rather primitive state." I was stunned – and delighted. As it turned out, Sister Sophie had lived amidst Ūrālis for years, in Susapuram and in Gundri, in the mountains north of Satti. She advised me to contact the proper places in the Catholic administrative apparatus, to arrange for a visit to Gundri and Susapuram. Since that moment, I collected bits of information about the two places<sup>15</sup>, and finally, thanks largely to the generosity of Mother Provincial of the F.M.M. Order at Ootacamund, and to the help and hospitality extended to us at Gundri by the sisters of the Order, and by the parish priest, Father Nouet, I could make a short but extremely fruitful field-trip to Gundri which brought to light a mass of valuable linguistic and ethnographic material<sup>16</sup>.

My first contact with the Ūrālis took place on 28.2. in a hamlet which they called Būdimāḍu, about two miles to the north of the main road from Satyamangalam to Bhavanisagar, towards the Kambatarāyanmalai-Dimbham Hills. The hamlet was rather primitive. About 30–40 Ūrāli families lived in it, making their livelihood by selling fire-wood. They were friendly and curious. They complained of exploitation, and of wild elephants. Some of the men were almost naked, some dressed in rather poor rags, women dressed either in the traditional Iṛula way, or in saris. Children were naked or almost naked. The people were very dark, with quite prominent Proto-Australoid and/or Negrito features, platyrrhinc, with high cheek-bones, slightly slanted eyes, not too thick lips, wavy to curly hair. However, the Negrito features were rather in minority. On the whole, these Ūrālis were less handsome than the Iṛulas of the Nilagiris. Somatically, 'racially,' they were very different, in fact, from the Iṛulas of the mountains. However, their language was obviously only a slightly divergent Iṛula dialect; the phonology and the morphology showed a few specific features; so did the vocabulary.

They called themselves quite clearly Ūrāli – which made me very happy. Once a year, they said, they go to a great feast on Raṅgaboṭṭu (i. e., Ranga-sami Peak, visible shimmering in great distance from their village, in the southwestern direction). Some of them had old and interesting Iṛula names (Raṅga, Macaṇa, etc.). They told me that there was a Raṅganātha temple on Kambatarāyan Hills. And that Ūrālis are also to be found in a place called Giḍḍapaṭṭi.

<sup>15</sup> Another long talk with Sister Sophie on 13.2. resulted in valuable information on Gundri, a place about 50 km north of Satti, with a convent and 'a French Father,' F. Nouet; it was reachable by lorry or jeep, after a long drive through elephant-infested jungles, and the settlement was inhabited by hundreds of Catholic and non-Catholic Ūrālis.

<sup>16</sup> Very humbly and very gladly I express my warm thanks here to Sister Sophie, F. M. M. of St. Mary's Convent, Kotagiri; to Sister Siria Therese of the Arokia Madha Maddam (Convent) at Gundri (and all other sisters of Gundri whose hospitality made the field-trip a beautiful, unforgettable holiday for us); to Rev. Father Jean Nouet for his valuable information, encouragement and help; and to the Mother Superior and the sisters in the convent of the same Order at Satyamangalam for their kind hospitality.

We visited the same village after a few days, with a tape-recorded message from my unforgettable informant, Rāyappan of Gundri; we were enthusiastically received.

Next day (March 1), towards noon, we reached – after a long drive in the jeep through typical elephant-country – the upland of Gundri (ca. 1000 m). This is a place in the Gobi Taluk of Coimbatore District (Kuttiyalathur P. O.), surrounded by jungly hills – a large clearance on an open upland, with a multi-tribal village in the midst, a Roman Catholic church, and a monastery (recently rebuilt). Father Jean Nouet who has been with these Ūrālis for decades, and all the seven sisters (with their superior, Sr. Siria Therese of Madurai) proved most enthusiastic, helpful, and hospitable. What was striking at once was the welfare appearance, the obviously greatly improved conditions in which these Ūrālis lived, compared to the maltreated, poor, lonely Ūrālis of Būdimāḍu, suffering from exploitation and malnutrition. The Ūrālis of Gundri were proud, well-fed, handsome, clean, well-dressed, and, above all, self-conscious and self-controlled, well aware of their identity as a separate community in possession of their own language which they called *ērula*, i. e., Iṛula. When this point was discussed at some length, most of them admitted a clear distinction between the three tribes: Šōlegas (*co-lega*), Iṛulas (*ērular*), and themselves (*ura'li*).

After a short stay devoted to intensive fieldwork, directed mainly towards gathering linguistic and mythological material, we departed from Gundri and returned to Satti – again via Būdimāḍu. There a ceremony was arranged for us including worship and dance, and we were accepted or incorporated into the Ūrāli community<sup>17</sup>.

I shall now give in some detail the results of my fieldresearch based on data gathered at Būdimāḍu and Gundri.

While in Gundri I went once more carefully through my notes obtained from published sources (chiefly Thurston 1909*b*; Luiz 1962; Iyer 1968; Fuchs 1973), and compared them with my own observation. Identification and demography had to be considered first.

Ūrāli is also very common as a community name in South India, but I found that the Ūrālis living near Sattiyamangalām have the same proper names for designating

<sup>17</sup> We were anointed with coconut-oil, saffron was applied to our foreheads, and flower-garlands hung around our necks. *Pūjā* was performed to the following deities: *Kamba toga*, *Māri*, *Pericāmi*, *Perumāḷu*, *Aiyappa*, and the ant-nest. The anointing ceremony by which we were adopted as members of the Ūrāli *jāti* (this happened after the tribal dance), consisted of first placing us to face the *Kamba toga* (East), with our backs to *Māri*. Then a girl came, carrying a flask with coconut-oil, and a box with cosmetic powder. First oil was poured into our right hands and we were requested to pour it over our heads. Then our faces were covered with the *pouḍre*; then we were adorned with *kuṅkum*, then garlanded with flowers. Before leaving the village, two girls came with two plates (*taḷḷu*). Then the girl who had anointed us before applied a little coconut-oil on our foreheads, whereupon she performed circulatory movements with the plate containing a black solution, put a drop of the black liquid on our foreheads, poured the rest out on the ground at our feet; the same was repeated with the other plate containing a turmeric solution. We were told that this last rite was performed to protect us against evil eye (a rite corresponding to the Hindu *dr̥ṣṭiparihāra*).

the numerous caste subdivisions as do the Nilagiri Irulas. These external data pointing to a relationship between the two groups are confirmed by linguistic evidence (Diffloth 1968: 12).

According to p. 15, the "Ūrālis near Sattyamangaḷam" share a number of linguistic features (not found in other known dialects of the Tamil-Malayalam group) with other Iṟula dialects.

It was obvious that the Ūrālis mentioned by Diffloth (1968) were identical with the Ūrālis of my data (1978), i. e., one of the subdivision of the Iṟulas. I consider, as the most important contribution of my investigation of the Ūrālis, the two following facts: *a*) that I can prove beyond any doubt on overwhelming linguistic evidence that the speech of the Ūrālis in the larger Nilagiri area is one of the four (known) dialects of Iṟula; and that I can set up the basic phonological, morphological, lexicosyntactic, and lexicosemantic isoglosses separating Ūrāli Iṟula from other Iṟula dialects; *b*) that I was lucky enough to tape-record a largely expanded version of the Ūrāli ancestor myth, mentioned by Thurston and Rangachari in 1909 as a Šōlega origin story.

Luiz (1962a: 244) uses the term "Uraly" and gives a very detailed list of their habitations in the Ernakulam and Kottayam Districts of Kerala, adding that they "are not seen in their original abodes at Thodiyur and Mattakanam within the Periyar game sanctuary," and that they "are confined to the high elevations of the Travancore area of Kerala." The physical description does not closely resemble the Ūrālis of my 1978 research; particularly the 'backwards' direction of the skull, the 'low vault' of the head, and the 'hairy bodies' are in direct contrast to the physical appearance of most of the Ūrālis of Gundri. Also, Luiz gives a steady decline of their population – 3609 (1901), 5758 (1911), 3086 (1921), 916 (1931) – but says "an estimate of their population would be three thousand" (1962a), while a government report quoting the 1971 Census gives the incredibly low number of 46 as "Uraly." Luiz also gives some legendary accounts, customs, and social system of his "Uralies," most of which are quite 'Kerala-bound,' and certainly totally different from those of the Ūrāli Iṟulas. According to Luiz, they speak "a dialect of Tamil and Malayalam which when spoken among themselves, is unintelligible" – a common incorrect characterization of an independent tribal language by linguistically untrained ethnographers. The term for the headman (*vēlan*, i. e., 'spear-man') is interesting and suggestive. Taken all these data into consideration (1962a: 244–48; including black magic, burial rites, marriage customs, etc.), it is quite obvious that the "Uralies" of Luiz, i. e., the Ūrālis of Ernakulam and Kottayam, are an entirely different tribe from the Ūrālis of the larger Nilagiri area, who are a subdivision of the Iṟulas.

The Uralis are found chiefly in the Alleppey, Kottayam, Quilon, and Trivandrum Districts of Kerala. They are clever huntsmen, and passionately attached to their hunting dogs ... (Fuchs 1973: 271).

...[but the] Uralis (2597) claim to be related to the Sholagar, though they do not intermarry with them. They earn their livelihood by collection of jungle produce; some cultivate fields; others own and tend sheep and cattle. The food-collecting Uralis are known for building their huts fifty feet or so above the ground (270f.)

Two short paragraphs. The description partly fits the Ūrālis of my investigation, and the number probably also corresponds. I suspect that Fuchs' data are a contamination of various sources; certainly he owes the second paragraph to Thurston (1909b). The Census of Travancore gives the following numbers: 1901 – 3609 (1807 ♂, 1802 ♀), 1911 – 5758, 1921 – 3086, 1931 – 916, 1941 – 82. I already mentioned the incredibly low number of the 1971 Census (46). These numbers probably refer to the Ūrālis of Travancore (Periyar Range in Devikulam Taluk) whose population is steadily declining, if at all the numbers may be trusted.

These "Uralis" must be different from the "Uralies" quoted by Fuchs (1973) numbering 2597 (presumably in 1961). My estimate of the Ūrālis (Ūrāli Iṟulas) of the larger Nilagiri area is  $\pm$  3000 in 1978. Taking into consideration all these (and a few other) available data in the meagre literature on the Ūrālis, and my own investigation (1978), the following identification and demographic picture emerges:

1. Ūrāli is indeed a common term as a community name in South India. This is only natural since its meaning may fit a number of communities (*ūr* 'village, town, city', DED 643, plus *āli* 'one who rules, controls, dominates, manages,' DED 341).

2. There are different groups of tribal or semitribal communities which call themselves Ūrālis in the Tamil-Malayalam speaking region of South India. In the area of Western Tamilnadu and of Kerala, we have to distinguish at least three groups of Ūrālis: a) the Ūrāli Iṟulas of the Tamilnadu-Karnataka borderland (ca. 3000, so far almost completely ignored in anthropological, ethnographic, and linguistic literature); b) the Ūrālis of central Kerala (ca. 2500); c) the Ūrālis of the Travancore area, whose number is dwindling.

The Ūrāli Iṟulas of the Tamilnadu-Karnataka border areas (the larger Nilagiri area) are an independent endogamous tribe, linguistically very closely related to the Iṟulas of the Nilagiris with whom they form a large Iṟula tribal complex, and anthropologically as well as culturally (folklore, myths) related intimately to the Šōlegas. Outsiders call them Ūrāli (the Tamil name), Ūrvi (Badaga name), Ūrāli (Kota name), Ūrāyi (Kurumba name) and Erl (Toda name). They call themselves Īṟularu (i. e., Iṟulas) or Ūrāli. They call their language *namma va'ttā* or *namma na'ya* 'our tongue'<sup>18</sup>.

The endogamous tribe is divided into 7 exogamous patrilineal clans called *kula's* (*ō'lu kula*). *Kula* divisions (restrictions) and some additional restrictive rules are observed in marriages<sup>19</sup>. The Ūrālis of Gundri are medium-size (between 165–170 cm), well-built (and well-fed), of rich brown colour of the skin, with wavy to curly hair, medium thick lips, high and pronounced

<sup>18</sup> For *va'ttā*, cf. Tamil *vāttai* 'word, utterance' (ultimately, Indo-Aryan); for *na'ya*, cf. Iṟula term *na'ya* 'language; particularly the Iṟula language,' Ālu Kurumba *na'ya*<sup>2</sup> id., Kota *na'ym* 'dispute etc.,' Toda *no'ym* 'dispute, tribal council.' Ultimately derived from Indo-Aryan (Prakrit *ṇāya-*, *nāya-*, Sanskrit and *nyāya-*: Tamil *nāyam*, etc. 'debate, argument'). – Cf. Emeneau and Burrow 1962, item 182: 36.

<sup>19</sup> The details about the organisation of the tribe will be given elsewhere; I also have detailed data on marriage rites and customs of the Ūrālis. – Cf. note 21.

cheek-bones, handsome. They live in houses (*ku're*) of reddish mud (sometimes decorated), covered with *añcipillu* (dry grass) roofs. The walls are made of bamboo plastered with rosy-reddish-brown mud. In front of the house is the *dine* 'veranda.' The house proper, always divided inside to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of its inner space by a mud wall, may be shut by a wicker-work door (*padilu*), leading into the larger partition ('living room' *ko'neku're*). The smaller partition serves as kitchen (it has a hole for smoke in the front wall) with two fire-places: one for baking and frying (*o'vole*), one for boiling water (*ole*). Inside the house is an elevated platform for storing various things (usually in the kitchen-portion) called in Ūrāli *atti* (Nilagiri Iṛula *cappara*). In front of the house may be a *ko'yiku'du* 'hen-house.'

Every village has three important dignitaries: *paṭṭaka'rā*, the headman, who should (or must) belong to the Koḍuvā clan; *maṇaiyaka'rā*, his assistant (belonging to the Po-rigā clan); and the *pūjāri* who is called *ko'luka'rā* and belongs to the Kalkaṭṭi clan.

According to F. J. Nouet, until about 10 years ago (say until 1965), the prevailing economy in the Gundri area was 'pure barter': the Ūrālis exchanged forest-products (honey, wax, bamboo, etc.) and *rāgi* (*Eleusine coracana*) for salt, tobacco, betel-leaf, chillies, and other products. Fire was made almost exclusively by means of flint, steel, and tinder box. The whole 'apparatus' is termed *caḥkummukki*; the flint-stone is called *vēlumicaṅkallu*, the steel portion simply *irumbu*. Some of the older Ūrālis still carry this device around, wrapped in a piece of cloth and tucked in the folds of their *dhotis*.

My Ūrāli informants talked about 'those days' (*a' ka'latti*) as *macyaka-lattili* 'in the primitive, innocent times'; they remembered living in *bo'ligali* 'hills and dales,' eating honey (*te'nu*) and game obtained in hunting (*vē'damu*). The Šōlegas (Co'lagar), I was told, came and taught the Ūrālis to use digging sticks (*pa're*) and dig out tubers (*kaṅgu*); also, to take dry gourds (*core*) and fill them with water. The first tubers which the Ūrālis dug out were *nu'rekaṅgu* and *ri'ēkaṅgu* (or *ri'yaṅkaṅgu*)<sup>20</sup>. "It was very tasteful, living on those," I was told. Also, they used various *coppuda'gu* "green leaves" (vegetables): *ci'ṅge*, *maṅige*, *munne*, *muṣṭe*, and *va'cale*. They lived in the following settlements: Ci'ṅgeme'lu'ru, Bu'diguḍḍa u'ru, Ajja'nu'ru, Me'lepa'liyu'ru, and Bu'dika'ḍu. Then, the Šōlegas taught them to cultivate *ca'me* (*Panicum miliare*) and *pa'ṇḍi* (*Panicum italicum*).

<sup>20</sup> This corresponds exactly to the lore of the Nilagiri Iṛulas. According to their myths and legends, these were the first two roots they dug out and ate. The botanical identification of most of the tubers and vegetables is rather difficult. Some of them could be identified, though: *nu'rekaṅgu* (cf. Mele Nāḍu Iṛula *nu'rekaṅgu*) is the 'Fiji yam' (*Dioscorea pentaphylla*), in Tamil called *nūyai*; *ri'ēkaṅgu* (in Vēṭṭe Kāḍu and Mele Nāḍu Iṛula also *riā-*, *riē-*, and *ri'ya[n]kaṅgu*, *-he:ca:ṅgu*) is a kind of edible root which I could not identify. Among the 'leaves and vegetables,' it was easy to identify *munne* (Tamil *muṇṇai*, *miṇṇai*), a tree the leaves of which are used as pot-herbs (*Premna integrifolia*) and *va:cale* (cf. Tamil *pacaḷai* etc.; *vacalai*), purslane (*Portulaca quadrifida*), or spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*); *muṣṭe* could be the 'elephant creeper' or the *Rivea* (Tamil *mucuttai*, Kannaḍa *musuṭe*); it is difficult to identify the rest.

Some of the Ūrālis have still ancient names like Ma'rā, Raṅgā, Maca'ṅā, A'lumelā, Kuruḷā, Bommā, Jēḍiyā (for males), Ma'ri, Ma'damma', Ma'davi, Vi'ramma', Malli (for females); but Hinduization leaves its traces in modern 'fancy' names like Ra'maca'mi or Kaṅṅamma' <sup>21</sup>.

The Ūrālis possess a rich folklore of verbal nature (songs, riddles, stories). Among the few texts which one could gather during a relatively very short field-trip the most fascinating was the ancestor-myth which was – to my astonishment and delight – a greatly expanded version of the Šōlega (Shōlaga) ancestor story given by Thurston (1909a: 379ff.). I shall deal in detail with this thrilling, complex story in a paper concerning origin, creation, and ancestor stories of the Iṛula-speaking tribes; here I can give it only in briefest outline (recorded on 2.3.1978 at Gundri).

A deity called *Mādēśūrsāmi* wanted to incarnate in order to destroy the evil demon *Savana* who enslaved gods and men. He chose a queen's womb, but she had an abortion and gave birth to a still-born baby-boy. He then chose goddess *Puḷḷammādēvi* ('The Mother-Goddess of the Ant-Hill') who was a virgin; and he was born as a baby from her split back, thus causing her death. He had no mother; and no one to give him a name. As a lad, he went, searching, to many forests, till he encountered a person called *Aynūru*, who lived with twelve young disciples in a cave. *Mādēśūrsāmi* joined them in service and worship of their master. However, whereas the other twelve disciples placed only various leaves at the master's feet in worship, *Mādēśūrsāmi* brought always the choicest flowers. This worried *Aynūru*, so he went and spied on the youngster. To his amazement he saw that *Mādēśūrsāmi* was catching snakes, frogs, scorpions, and other horrid creatures, killed them, and when he immersed them in water and washed them, they became the most beautiful flowers. This magic trick convinced *Aynūru* that his new disciple was not a mortal, but a god. He wanted to place him on a throne and worship him, but *Mādēśūrsāmi* resolutely refused, and a fight arose on that issue between the two. During the quarrel, *Aynūru* shouted: "All right, since you are like that, go away, you tricky *Ma(hā)deva* (*uccu ma'de'va*)!" This was heard as (*uccu*) *Mādēya*, and since that day, *Mādēśūrsāmi* was known as *Mādayya* or *Mādappa* <sup>22</sup>. He left *Aynūru* in search of other gods. As he went, he encountered the ancestor-pair of the Ūrālis: the woman was called *Nīla Cōlagatti*, and the man *Nijagante* <sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> A collection of Iṛula texts is under preparation. The book will contain a detailed introduction dealing with the culture of all Iṛula-speaking tribes where these matters will be discussed and analysed item by item.

<sup>22</sup> The connection of *Ma(hā)deva* 'great God,' *Mādēya* (of the same meaning, rapid pronunciation), *Mādayya*, and *Mādappa* is of course very tenuous. But the purport of these puns is to establish a connection of the name of the deity, *Mādēśūrsāmi* (probably the same *Mādheśvarasvāmi*) with the caste of the shoemakers, the Mādigas/Mādagas, the great leather-working community of the Kannaḍa-Telugu speaking areas (cf. DED 3942, Kannaḍa *mādiga* 'cobbler, chuckler, outcaste,' Tuḷu *mādige* 'id.,' Telugu *mādiga* 'id.,' cf. Sanskrit *mātaṅga* 'a Caṅḍāla, a man of the lowest rank'), see Thurston (1909a: 292ff.) and the Tamil *mātāri* 'shoemaker, cobbler.'

<sup>23</sup> *Nīla Cōlagatti*, 'the Šōlega woman of the Nīla (giris).' *Nijagante*, the name of the

They had no children. *Mādappa* promised them two children, *Kāraya* and *Billaya*, if they would give him their first-born, to which they agreed. After some time, *Nīla Cōlagatti* gave birth to two boys. When they grew up, they went to see the gods, just like *Mādappa* did before. In order to find the gods, they had to go to the wicked demon *Savana* who held the gods in slavery, making them work very hard for him. *Mādappa* was spotted by *Savana* who asked who he was. The gods answered: "*Mādēśūrsāmi*. He is *Mādappa*." "So he is a shoemaker?" exclaimed the demon. When *Mādappa* did not deny being a *mādavi* (shoemaker), *Savana* demanded that he should make for him a pair of sandals. *Mādappa* agreed, if he would be given three months to "assemble" the sandals. Then he went to the Lac Mountain and took some red lac, and to the Red Bead Mountain and took some red beads, and while he was collecting these materials, the first *Mādiga* (member of the low shoemaker caste) was born from the sweat of his left hand, and the first Pariah from the sweat of his right hand. Seeing that the *Mādiga* was alone, *Mādēśūrsāmi* took his rib-bone and made out of it a woman which he gave him for his wife. Then he asked them (since they were the shoemaker-caste!) to assemble the sandals for him. As there was no leather available, *Mādappa* told the *Mādiga* to skin his wife and to make the sandals out of her skin, the beads, and the lac. When the sandals were made, *Mādēśūrsāmi* took them, thanked his friend the *Mādiga*, and made his wife very beautiful. Then he left them and went to Wind whom he asked to blow clean a rock. Subsequently, he asked Fire to heat the rock. Then he went to *Savana* and invited him (and all the gods) to try out the new sandals. He took *Savana* to the rock, *Savana* stepped on it in his new sandals, and burnt his feet terribly. Then water came onto the rock (due to further intervention by Lord Fire), and the rock became very slippery. *Savana*, whose feet were burnt, attacked *Mādappa*, but slipped all the time. Nevertheless *Mādappa* almost lost the struggle. In the last moment he thought of *Māyavar*<sup>24</sup>, the Supreme Lord, who had promised him help formerly, and *Māyavar* crushed *Savana* with his foot. At that very moment, all the gods became stones and are worshipped as such atop of different mountains. *Mādappa* then went in search of *Kāraya*, the first-born son of the *Ūrālis*. But instead of *Kāraya* the parents sent *Billaya*, concealing *Kāraya* for themselves. An endless hide-

man, was also heard pronounced as *Nijagampe*. That these "Šōlegas" are considered to be the parents of the *Ūrāli* ancestor and culture-hero *Kāraya* points again to a close and ancient relationship between the *Ūrālis* and the *Šōlegas*. According to Thurston (1909a: 379-81) both *Ūrālis* and *Šōlegas* are descended from *Kāraya*. The locus of the myth was, according to Thurston, the Geddesala hills; according to my version, the final act of the drama (the quest by *Kāraya* of the honey for *Mādappa*) began at a place called *Gaḍḍecāmi*. My text says: "It was a tree. A dead tree hollowed out by *Kāraya*, with protrusions coming out, hollowed to contain the *mucuru*-honey. Even now *pujā* is done for it."

<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to say who exactly was *Māyavar*. In the Thurston version, god *Krishnamurti* (i. e., *Viṣṇu-Krṣṇa*) helps *Madheswara* to destroy *Savana*. *Māyavar*, *Māyōṇ* is an old Tamil name, signifying one of the two most important ancient Tamil deities, 'The Dark One,' identified with *Viṣṇu-Krṣṇa*. Hence, it is possible that the *Māyavar* of this *Ūrāli* myth refers to this ancient Tamil deity of the wooded pasture-lands. On the other hand, a connection with *māyai*, Sanskrit *māyā*- 'illusion, magic' is not ruled out.

and-see game followed: *Mādēšūrsāmi* did not want *Billaya* to accompany him, but *Billaya* was persistent. Finally, *Mādappa* went to the *Ūrālis* and took *Kāraya*, brought him to a place with wild buffaloes, caught one of them, tamed it, and established *Kāraya* there. Then he left for the celestial world, and *Kāraya* grazed and milked the buffalo. After some time, *Mādēšūrsāmi* came back to earth and sent *Kāraya* for honey. In the meantime, he hid himself, but *Kāraya* found him and followed him with a dog's faithfulness. It became uncomfortable to *Mādappa*, so he sent *Kāraya* to fetch him honey from a rock; he gave him a bamboo-ladder (*māl*) to climb the rock, tied one end of the ladder to his thigh, and sent *Kāraya* down the rock. *Kāraya* cut off some honey of the wild bees, filled a gourd with it, and as he was descending the ladder, he cut another honey-comb for the deities of that rock and let it fall down for them to catch it and eat it. Some honey slid along his hand and he licked it off. *Mādappa* saw it and was furious, since the honey was now polluted. So he loosened the ladder and let it fall. But *Kāraya* was caught by the grateful deities of the rock and saved. When he explained to them what had happened, and that *Mādappa* accused him of polluting his honey unjustly, the rock-deities granted him the boon of superhuman strength. *Kāraya* arose, took a sword, and followed *Mādēšūrsāmi* who hid himself in a hill. When he found him, they argued, but *Mādappa* again disappeared, and hid in an ant-hill. *Kāraya* was now very angry, but he could not find *Mādappa*. However, he saw that a cow was milking itself over the ant-hill, and he guessed why. So he went and found some shepherds with herds of sheep, and made the sheep pollute the ant-hill by urinating and dropping excreta on it. This *Mādēšūrsāmi* could not stand, so he came out, and *Kāraya* gave him a blow with the sword over the head. But *Mādēšūrsāmi* begged his forgiveness and promised him that the first *pūjā* (worship) will always be his, *Kāraya*'s, whenever people bring offerings, and only the following worship will belong to *Mādappa*. Finally, the two made peace and lived in friendship.

This is of course not the place to analyse, or even to comment in detail on this all-important myth. I cannot however restrain myself from drawing the attention of the reader to at least a few most relevant facts. First, the myth tries to function as an 'all-comprehensive' myth accounting for a number of various phenomena: the worship of *Kāraya* having precedence over every other worship; the connection between *Ūrālis* (descendants of *Kāraya*) and *Šōlegas* (descendants of *Billaya*); since they are both children of *Nīla Cōlagatti* and *Nijagante*<sup>25</sup>, they are brothers, and hence *Ūrālis* and *Šōlegas* are brothers, too. Further, the myth accounts for the origin of the two lowest communities of the Hindu society around, and connects them with the tribes of the *Šōlegas* and *Ūrālis*: the Pariahs and the *Mādigas* are born from the sweat

<sup>25</sup> In independent sources, i. e., interviews of other *Ūrāli* informants from the same region, these two primeval parents of the two brothers (*Billaya* and *Kāraya*) were called also *Nīlecōlagan* and *Nīlecōlegitti*. However, there were also informants who maintained (rather in agreement with the *Iṛula* tradition) that the 'father' of the *Ūrālis* was god *Raṅga* and the 'mother' goddess *Masaṇi*.

of *Mādēšūrsāmi*<sup>26</sup>. Also, the myth attempts to account for the worship of gods and goddesses in the shape of stones on tops of hills – a typical Ūrāli form of worship. Further, the myth explains the origin of the custom to collect honey of wild bees from rocks with the help of a ladder made of split bamboo (*māl*). And so on and so forth.

Second, the myth is the Ūrāli version of the perennial Hindu myth about the eternal struggle of two opposing forces, the gods and the demons. This basic motif is constantly recurring in Hindu mythology: there is a primordial conflict between gods and demons; at one critical point, gods (and men) are enslaved and/or near the danger of ultimate destruction; at this moment, the Highest Divinity intervenes by providing a Deliverer; the Absolute Sovereign himself does not intervene, but the Deliverer (or Deliverers) rescues the gods and men, though the triumph of the Devas over the Asuras is only temporary<sup>27</sup>. The evil, demonic forces are represented by *Savana*; the deliverer is of course *Mādēšūrsāmi* alias *Mādappa* (originally probably a tribal deity of the Šōlegas-Ūrālis); the Highest Divinity is most probably the enigmatic *Māyavar*, 'The Dark One.' Thus this myth combines two typical, basic topics in the tribal lore: first, the theme of the origin and ancestorship of the Ūrālis; second, the theme of the origin of their worship of *Kāraya* and *Mādēšūrsāmi* (*Mādappa*). No wonder that it is of primary importance for the Ūrālis.

I feel I must mention the circumstances in which this ancestor-myth was told. From the beginning, there was some reluctance as to who should tell the story. When finally the story was being told, the informant, in the course of the narration, got possessed by the goddess (*Puttammādēvi*, identified by some with the all-powerful goddess *Masaṇi*) and she spoke through him, asking why indeed he was telling all these things<sup>28</sup>. The session had to be

<sup>26</sup> The Pariahs (Holeyas in the Kannaḍa-speaking territory) are considered 'right-hand' caste while the Mādigas belong to the 'left-hand' castes. Our myth 'correctly' accounts for this all-important division. The main occupation of the Mādigas is the curing and tanning of hides, but they are also known as skillfull sandal-makers (cf. Thurston 1909b: 309: "The Mādiga's sandals are strong, comfortable and sometimes highly ornamental").

<sup>27</sup> This is the pattern of the *Skanda-Subrahmanya-Kumāra* myth, of the final version of the Tamil *Skanda-Muruga* myth, of the ancient myth of the churning of the ocean (cf. Bruce Long 1976: 171–207).

<sup>28</sup> The name of the possessed man was Cellappa, aged 55–60; he got possessed while a group of informants discussed old tribal history based on the ancestor-myth, and the tribal division into clans. The person in question was sitting on a chair and listening; suddenly his breathing became quick and forced, his head shook vigorously, he ejaculated a few inarticulate noises, the eye-balls turned up, and then, in a very different, vigorous, throaty voice he said: "*a dinde relaffi ni colluriyaḍa*, '*-n-idilirunduk'ir' annu vara po'gudu!*" After this utterance he fell from the chair on the floor, apparently in a swoon out of which he came after about half-a-minute, was helped back onto the chair, sat quietly as if nothing had happened and remembered nothing. During the event, the other Ūrālis present remained in awed silence, and for a while after that they whispered. Then the most friendly and bold among them, a very intelligent informant named Rāyappan, offered an explanation. It was the goddess *Gānjanūru Masaṇi* (identical with *Puttammādēvi*?) who had spoken through the man. The content of the message was in Ūrāli but not quite intelligible. Literally, "original (= ancient) situation -unitelligible [rel-] + time suffix-affi

therefore repeated next day and, again after some reluctance and hesitation, was successfully completed. It is therefore obvious that the Ūrālis of Gundri consider their myths as living tradition (though many of them are recently converted Catholics) and take them 'seriously' as genuine sacred texts; in other words, when listening to the Ūrāli myth, we indeed enter the 'sphere of the sacred'; the sphere of the profane is left behind, and we listen to the voice of ancient tribal pre-Hindu religiosity, still very much alive.

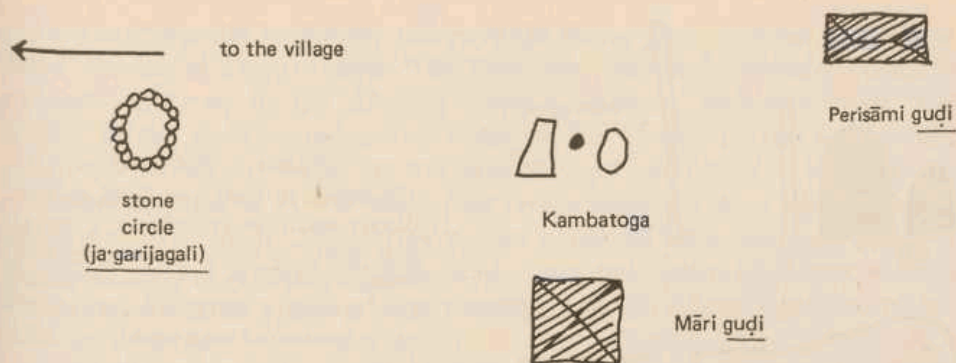
According to Thurston, the Ūrālis worship a variety of minor deities, and on mountains they sacrifice sheep and goats to *Pālayan*. According to my informants, there are various rather divergent groups of deities: probably in highest esteem is the divine pair of god *Raṅga*<sup>29</sup> and goddess *Masaṇi*<sup>30</sup>, considered as the divine parents of the Ūrālis. Of almost equally high order is *Mādēśūrsāmi* (*Mādappa*), providing a link with the Šōlegas. They also worship their 'human' ancestor and culture-hero *Kāraya* (and his brother *Billaya*). Then there is the dark, primeval 'Mother Goddess of the Ant-Hill,' *Puttammādēvi* (identified by some with *Masaṇi*). Probably hierarchically lower are the deities of hills and rocks (the male and female deities of rocks must be propitiated during the honey-gathering expedition, since together with *Mādappa*, they protect the honey-gatherer against the sting of wild bees).

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you tell, sirrah! Out of this (?) what is going to come?" The gloss offered by Rāyappan: *Pa'yaka'lattili naḍavaḷakke collugayi, adene e'dukka'ga collugayi, adili ninaḥ'enna varugudu, ippu maṇikka va'nda!* "You speak about events of ancient times, why do you say that, what comes to you out of it, you should not speak now!" [The entire event is fully recorded on my tape of 2. 3. 1978.] Notwithstanding this warning of the goddess, the same informant, prompted and assisted by Rāyappan, related next day the complex ancestor-myth.

<sup>29</sup> *Raṅga*, *Raṅgan*, alias *Raṅganādaru* or *Nilagiritoga*, is the name under which this deity, whose proper seat is the Rangaswamy Peak (1786 m, in the Nilagiris Eastern Slopes, its massif towering over the Bhavanisagar reservoir), is known among the Iṛulas; most of them regard him as their highest god. Since *Raṅganātha* ("lord of the *raṅga*," i. e., assembly hall of a temple) is the name of a representation of *Viṣṇu* in South India, the Iṛulas were designated as Vaiṣṇava. That is of course incorrect. Their religion is tribal, and the connection with Vaiṣṇavism is extremely tenuous. According to Iṛula mythology, *Raṅganādar* is the elder brother or brother-in-law of *Naṅjappa*; they quarreled on account of what they had eaten; *Raṅga* ate meat, *Naṅjappa* milk and fruit. When vomiting the food as test, *Raṅga* vomited vegetarian food, whereas *Naṅjappa* vomited mutton curry. That is why *Naṅjappa* went down to Naṅjaṅgōḍe in Mysore and is worshipped there while *Raṅga* is worshipped as the highest god on the top of Raṅgasāmi Boṭṭu. There is an expanded version, slightly different, of this basic Iṛula myth; however, in both cases, the issue is that of vegetarian versus non-vegetarian food. It is not important what kind of food they ate; what is important is what kind of food they vomited: the basic contrast of 'raw' against 'cooked' (= digested and vomited) is well illustrated here. The elder brother, who has eaten meat, vomits vegetarian food (the divine trick transforms, in the process of 'cooking,' the non-vegetarian food into vegetarian), and becomes the more prestigious one: he is worshipped as *Nilagiriraṅga*. The younger brother who has eaten milk and fruit but vomited meat, is revealed as a non-vegetarian, and must go down, to be worshipped at Naṅjaṅgōḍe (or, according to another version, at Kāraimaḍai).

<sup>30</sup> Goddess *Masaṇi* (alias *Maciṇa*, *Masiṇa*, *Masiṇi*) is one of the most powerful female deities of the entire Nilagiri Area. Her small but important temple at Masinaguḍi (Gudalur Taluk) is the center of lively cult and large pilgrimages.

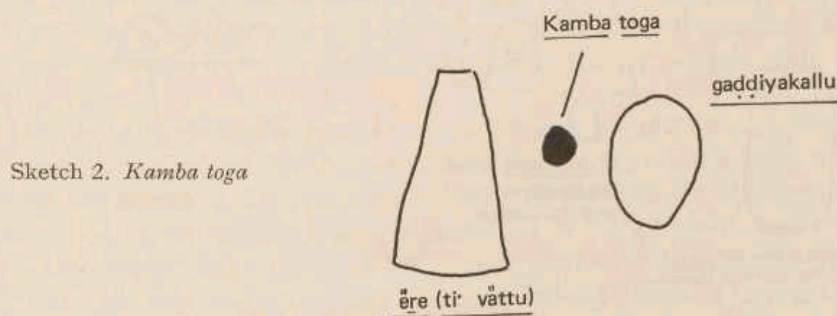


Sketch 1. The situation of the shrines at Būdimāḍu

These gods of the hills are called *togaboṭṭu*, lit. 'divine hills.' Round Gundri there was a chain of four hills, all of them being considered deities: *Paccamele bo'li*, lit. 'The Green-Mountain Hill,' *Ēkk'are bo'li*<sup>31</sup>; *Bw'davere* 'The Rocky Slope of the Ghost', and *Bo'kka're*, lit. (?) 'The Wild Cat Rock.'

In Būdimāḍu, a place was preserved for worship in the eastern quarters of the village. The place of worship consisted of four parts: a stone-circle; a place with a stone *toga* 'deity' around which dance was performed; and two shrines (*guḍi*), cf. Sketch 1.

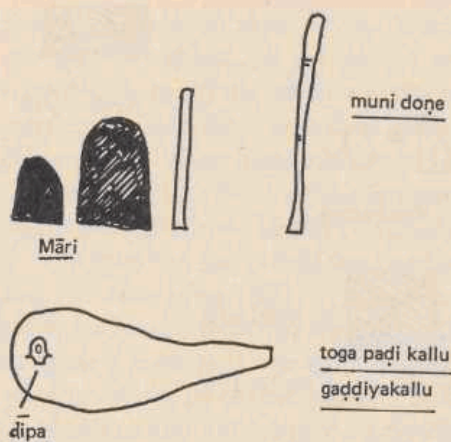
1. The stone-circle, ca. 1,5 m. in diameter, delimited a clean-swept place in which items for *pūjā* were washed, cleaned, prepared, broken (e. g., coconuts) - in short, a sort of ritual "kitchen." It was termed *ja'garijagali*.



Sketch 2. *Kamba toga*

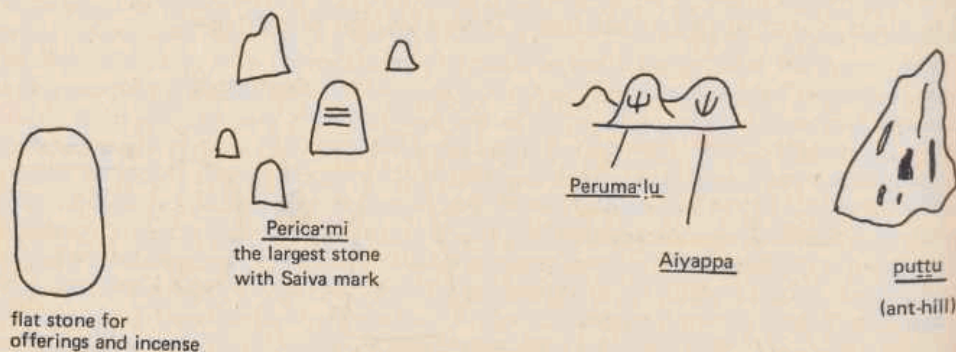
2. A few meters from the stone-circle was a stone-god called *Kamba toga* (cf. Sketch 2). It consisted of three stones: a large flat rock used for burning fire, incense, etc.; the *toga*-stone itself; and a flat stone (called *gaddiyakallu*) on which were placed broken coconuts, flowers, and other offerings. In times of feasts and festivals, the Ūrālis dance around this *toga*. When we were honoured and annointed with coconut oil (see above, and note 17) we were placed to face this *toga*, and a dance was performed for us around it.

<sup>31</sup> Difficult etymology; but may be connected with DED 697: Tamil *erukku Calotropis gigantea*, Kannaḍa *ehka, erke* gigantic swallow-wort or manure-leaf. Cf. Sanskrit *arka-*

Sketch 3. *Māri guḍi*

Whenever, in Irula and Ūrāḷi shrines, bloody sacrifices are offered, a 'surrogate' deity in the shape of a smaller stone stands next to the main stone; this 'surrogate' deity, termed *ga'vutoga*, is besmeared with blood.

3. The temple of *Māri* – *Ma'ri guḍi* (cf. Sketch 3) – was a shed (with roof of dry grass and palm leaves) containing two stones representing *Māri*, the female *ammā*-type deity, a stick to hang flowers on, a wooden club, and a *gaḍḍiyakallu*. The goddess is represented by two rough stones, one higher, one smaller. Next to it stands a wooden stick on which flowers (*pu*) are hung or strung. Next a wooden club, with a few carvings, called *muni doṇe*, the staff of the *muni*<sup>32</sup>. In front of these is a large flat stone used for placing offerings etc., with a simple earthen *dīpa* (lamp).

Sketch 4. *Pericāmi guḍi*

4. Most complex was the shrine of *Pericāmi* – *Pericāmi guḍi* (cf. Sketch 4). This was again a (somewhat larger) shed with thatched roof, containing several ant-hills and five stones of different size representing *Pericāmi* 'The Great God' plus two stones representing *Perumālu* and *Aiyappa*. An indiscriminate blend of primitive, tribal religion and Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, so typical for Irulas, was evident here.

<sup>32</sup> In the Sanskrit tradition, *muni* designates a 'saint, sage, seer.' In the tribal tradition of the Nilagiris, the term *muni* or *mūni* ranges from designating a low-rank deity (often protective, often dangerous) to a demon, a men-devouring monster. It plays great role in Irula and Kurumba stories.

The *Perumālu* (= *Viṣṇu*) and *Aiyappa* stones were adorned with *tumbā patrā* 'the leaf of *Leucas indica*.' The *Perumālu* stone had a *tenkalai* Vaiṣṇava *nāmam* (mark) on it, the *Aiyappa* stone a *vaṭakalai* Vaiṣṇava mark. The largest of the stones representing *Pericāmi* had the Śaiva mark. The best preserved and largest *puttu* 'ant-hill' was obviously an object of worship, too – namely of a snake. It was termed *na-garaṭṭa-mbu*. We were assured that a cobra was living in it. This shrine typically manifested a complete blend of pre-Hindu tribal worship (stones, snake, ant-hill) with Hinduism – both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava; parts of the worship may have been added as recent 'fashion' (*Aiyappa*).

The *language* spoken by the Ūrālis of the Karnataka-Tamilnadu border-area is a dialect of Iṟula. This is an unconditional statement. However, Ūrāli Iṟula manifests certain diagnostic features which are not shared by any other Iṟula speech-form. These features – a few of them striking – remove Ūrāli somewhat further from the core of Iṟula speech (the two main Nilagiri dialects of Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas) than one would expect, but not further than the other divergent dialect, namely Kasaba.

There are two striking phonological features to be noticed; one concerns the preservation of a phonological contrast, another represents a phonological development.

1. In the speech of the Nilagiri Iṟulas, there is no marked distinction between post-dental to dento-alveolar *-nd-* < \**-nt-* and *-nd-* < \**-nr-*: *pandi* < \**panri* 'pig.' In striking contrast, in the speech of the Ūrālis, there is a marked difference between post-dental to dento-alveolar *-nd-* < \**-nt-*, e. g., *vandiri* 'you pl. came,' and the alveolar apical *-nd-* < \**-nr-*, e. g., *pāndi* 'pig' < \**panḍi*<sup>33</sup>, or *kāṇḍu* 'calf' < \**kaṇru*. Thus we get the threefold contrast of *-nd-*: *nd-*: *-nd-* in Ūrāli Iṟula: *vandu* 'having come, coming': *kāṇḍu* 'calf': *vāṇḍu* 'beetle, wasp.'

2. The phonological development of \**-rnt-* > \**-rnd-* > *r(d)d-* has important consequences (see below). In the consonantal sequence *rnd*, the nasal of the cluster *nd* has been lost, and the result is a sequence *r(d)d*. In Kannaḍa, one should notice, a characteristic spread occurred of *-d-* (derived mainly from \**-nd-*) throughout large parts of the verbal system (Emeneau 1967). Kota and Toda, as well as Nilagiri Iṟula proper, belong to the Tamil-like system which is that of South Dravidian minus Kannaḍa. However, the one divergent dialect is Ūrāli Iṟula which either by idiosyncratic development of its own or by diffusion from Kannaḍa manifests, in some verb-stems, the spread of *-d-* derived from \**-nd-* of the past tense. At least one highly frequented root, namely *iru* 'be' shows this development regularly in its past stem, cf., e. g., *ir(d)deṁmu* 'we were'<sup>34</sup>. Hence also, the ablative suffix *-il-iruntu* which

<sup>33</sup> In the group \**-nr-* > *-nd-* followed by *-i-*, the second component is 'palatalized,' so that the actual pronunciation approaches [ˈpæñd̪i]; *a* and *ā* are phonemically contrastive in Iṟula.

<sup>34</sup> E. g., *a'ha'lattile indil-irḍāḍemu* (tape of 1. 3. 1978, Gundri) 'at that time we were Hindus.' The cluster *-rdd-* is often simplified to *-rd-* in fast speech. The 'prenasalization' is completely eliminated.

in Iṛula 'proper' is *-(i)lirundu*, *-(i)lirndu*, develops into *-(i)lir(d)du* in Ūrāḷi, cf., e. g., *kuvelirādu* 'from the house.'

In the sphere of morphology, there are at least five characteristic Ūrāḷi features which do not occur in the two core-dialects of Iṛula 'proper' or in Kasaba.

1. The above-discussed phonological development of *\*-rnd->-r(d)d-* has its consequence in a typical morphemic divergence of Ūrāḷi, viz., the high frequency ablative suffix *\*-iliruntu*, Iṛula 'proper' *-(i)lirundu*, *-(i)lirndu* appears in Ūrāḷi regularly and without exception as *-(i)lir(d)du*, *-(i)lirudu*, e. g., *paraḍilir(d)du* 'from the jungle,' *agyaṅnattilirdu* 'from ignorance,' *kuvelirudu* 'from the house.'

2. The same phonological development results in the regular form of the past stem *ird-*, *irdd-* 'was, were,' e. g., *ir(d)deṃmu* 'we were,' *ir(d)diriya* 'were you pl. ?'

3. In contrast to Iṛula 'proper' 2nd pers. sg. suff. *-a*, Ūrāḷi has quite clearly and regularly *-ay*, e. g., *collugay* 'you sg. say,' *vanday* 'you sg. came.'

4. While Iṛula 'proper' has in the plural pronoun of the neuter a form identical with the singular, Ūrāḷi has a special plural form *avega* 'they - neut.' e. g., *avega vargina* 'they came' (referring to animals).

5. Apart from the regular genitive suffix *-tu/-ḍu*<sup>35</sup>, there is an additional possessive-genitive suffix found regularly with kinship terms, viz., *-elaN*, where *-N* stands for the assimilated nasal: *avelaṅ ku're* 'mother's house,' *appelaṅ ku're* 'father's house,' *tambelan diṅe* 'younger brother's veranda,' *taṅgela(m)maduve* 'younger sister's wedding.'

There are many lexical isoglosses separating Ūrāḷi from the rest of the Iṛula dialects. I will mention here more than a dozen or so of the most typical lexical features of Ūrāḷi:

Iṛula 'proper' of the Nilagiri mountains	Ūrāḷi Iṛula	Gloss
<i>co'le, cō'le</i>	<i>paraḍu, paraḍu</i>	forest, jungle
<i>mele</i>	<i>bo'li</i>	mountain, hill
<i>na'ya</i>	<i>va'ttā</i>	speech, language
<i>cappara</i>	<i>aṭṭi</i>	part of the inner of the house
<i>pēde</i>	<i>pude</i>	girl, daughter
<i>ettappa</i>	<i>edda</i>	grandfather
<i>ette</i>	<i>edde</i>	grandmother
Mele Nāḍu <i>mettinā</i> ,	<i>ba'meida</i>	husband of younger sister
Vētte Kāḍu <i>maccā</i>		
Mele Nāḍu <i>mōyiru</i> ,	<i>maṅḍe</i>	hair
Vētte Kāḍu <i>megaru</i>		
<i>meguru</i>		
<i>pa'kka</i>	<i>magulu</i>	side of body
<i>poṅḍi</i>	<i>po'ccu</i>	vagina
<i>alugaḍodu</i>	<i>alluḅoḍe</i>	evening

<sup>35</sup> E. g., *a' pudeḍu avve* 'that girl's mother,' *i' maḅaḷḍu maduve* 'the wedding of this daughter,' *va'ja'ṅṅu magan maduve* 'the wedding of the king's son.'

<i>ra'vā</i>	<i>ka'ndravā</i>	morning
<i>kollā</i> , e.g., <i>kollāma'ḍu</i>	<i>noggan(a)</i> , e.g., <i>noggana-</i> <i>ma'ḍu</i> , <i>noggan'a'na</i>	much, many, e.g., a flock of cows, a herd of elephants
<i>ariye</i> , <i>ariye</i>	<i>haṇḍale</i> (i.e., * <i>haṇḍu ale</i> )	don't know
<i>mudiya'ḍu</i>	<i>ta'ra'</i>	is not possible, cannot

In conclusion, one more remark: It seems that the preservation of the phonological contrast of *-nd-*: *-ṇḍ-* ("feature 1" discussed above) is part of a larger phenomenon – the preservation of the original Dravidian contrast between apico-alveolar and post-dental consonants (cf. Zvelebil 1970: 94–103): I recorded such very clear instances of the apico-alveolar pronunciation as *ēre* 'rock' (DED 271; Tamil *arai*) and *ka'ttu* 'wind' (DED 1240; Tamil *kārru*).

For the exact position of the Ūrāḷis and of Ūrāḷi Iṛula dialect cf. chapter 5 of this paper.

#### 4. The Sixteen Tribes Known To Date

It has been the experience of ethnologists in India that no summary accounts of communities hitherto published can be trusted. Even the best of them, such as the various *Castes and Tribes* volumes, are highly untrustworthy (Emeneau 1941 [1967]: 252).

This is unfortunately true even as concerns the numbers of speakers of different tribal languages; sometimes the figures differ widely, due to the fact that two or more different communities are designated by the same term (e.g., Kuṛumbas, Ūrāḷis). Apart from some well-defined, spatially rather limited, and relatively well-described communities like the Todas and Kotas, the population figures in the following lines must be taken with utmost caution, rather as estimates than as precise numbers.

4.1 The following sixteen 'tribal' communities of the larger Nilagiri area are known to date <sup>36</sup>:

Todas: estimated in 1977 at 1200 total (645 males, 555 females) <sup>37</sup>

Kotas: est. 1977 at 1300 total (664 males, 636 females) <sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> We are probably not entitled to speak of 'tribes' when referring to all communities and ethnolinguistic groups which are enumerated here: certainly the Badagas should be rather referred to as a 'caste'; even some of the 'proper' tribes (like the Todas) have caste characteristics; some communities are – socioeconomically speaking – only 'demitribal' (like the Kotas); this is true even of some 'tribelets' like the Kasavas. However, it is, ultimately, a question of terminology and convenience: *all* communities which are enumerated here, with the exception of the Badagas, differ significantly in social structure, culture, and religion from the Hindu caste society surrounding them. For convenience's sake, we refer to all of them as tribes. The proviso 'known to date' refers to the end of 1978. This is necessary in view of the fact that very probably future fieldresearch in the Wynaad region will unearth some additional tribal communities and languages.

<sup>37</sup> The 1961 Census: 706; another figure of 1961: 765; the two figures given in 1951: 716 and 879. The figure 1200 seems to me to be slightly on the higher side.

<sup>38</sup> The figure 1300 is very probably an overestimation. 1951 Census gave 1250, 1961 Census 832 according to one count, 922 according to another count.

Badagas: 1961 Census gives 85.463 <sup>39</sup>

Pālu Kuṛumbas: est. of Dieter Kapp, 1977: 800

Ālu Kuṛumbas: est. of Dieter Kapp, 1977: 1000 <sup>40</sup>

Jēnu Kuṛumbas (alias Kāṭṭu Nāyakas): est. 1977 at 1300 total (656 males, 644 females) <sup>41</sup>

Bēṭṭa Kuṛumbas: no figures available

Mullu Kuṛumbas: no figures available

Ūrāli Kuṛumbas: no figures available

Muḍugas: no figures available

Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas: est. 1977 at 5800 (2950 males, 2850 females) <sup>42</sup>

Ūrāli Iṛulas: my estimate (1978): ca. 3000 <sup>43</sup>

Kasabas (alias Kasavas, Kasubas): my estimate (1978): ca. 1000 <sup>44</sup>

Paṇiyas: est. 1977 at 5700 (2883 males, 2877 females) [the 1961 Census gave 4777]

Šōlegas: 8310 in 1971 <sup>45</sup>.

The sixteen communities do not, of course, live isolated; they form different infrastructures which interact, and even interfere with each other. We may, 'structurally,' distinguish between an 'inner core,' a caste-like system

<sup>39</sup> In terms of numbers, Badagas are vastly superior to any other tribe inhabiting the area. I do not have any other numbers at my disposal since the Badagas are not included as 'tribals' in recent government reports. Given the prosperity and population explosion, however, I would estimate the number of Badagas to have reached at least 100.000.

<sup>40</sup> No figures are available concerning any of the seven tribes which are summarily designated as Kuṛumbas. The 1961 Census gave 1174 as the total of all Kuṛumbas, which is obviously too low. The 1977 government estimate gives 4700 as the total number of Kuṛumbas (2364 males, 2336 females). When most reports mention the Kuṛumbas, they have in fact in mind the two tribes of Pālu and Ālu Kuṛumbas, plus Bēṭṭa and Mullu Kuṛumbas, but almost never Muḍugas and Jēnu Kuṛumbas, or Ūrāli Kuṛumbas. Even in ethnographic literature, the term "Kuṛumba" (as used, e. g., by M. B. Emeneau) obviously refers mainly to the two 'central' tribes of Pālu and Ālu Kuṛumbas.

<sup>41</sup> The 1961 Census: 612. However, another source gives 10.375 (!). After my very brief but very productive 1978 field-investigation there can be no more doubt that the Jēnu Kuṛumbas and the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas ('Kattunaickens') are one and the same community.

<sup>42</sup> The two figures given in 1961 were 4617 and 4124 as total.

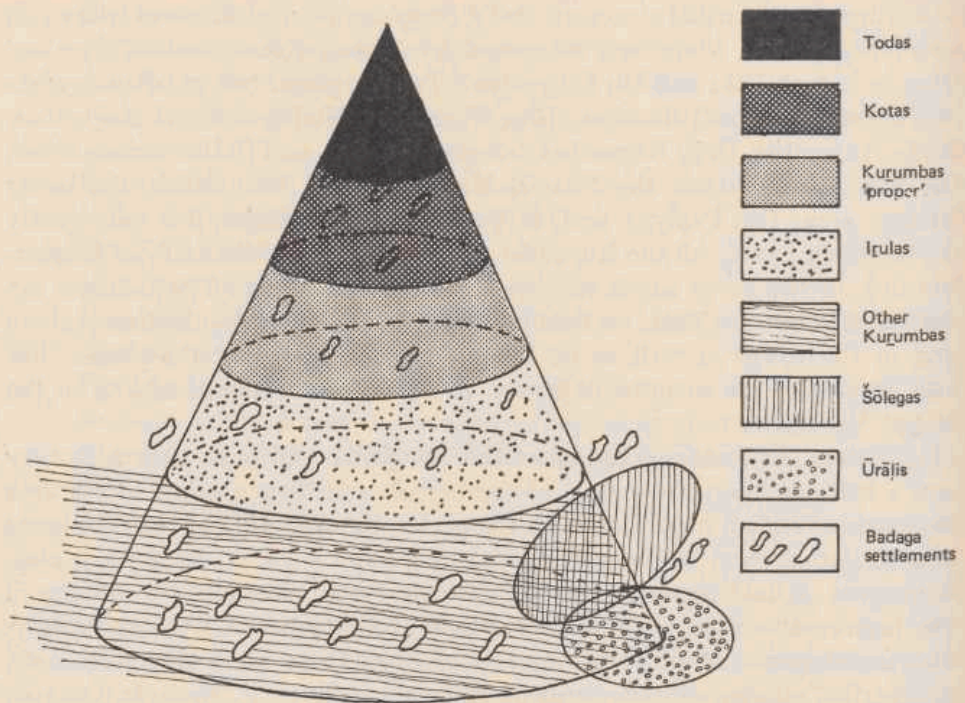
<sup>43</sup> Otherwise no data available, since *these* Iṛula-speaking Ūrālis of the Biligiri-Rangan region are not included in any official report as an independent community. My estimate concerns, I repeat, only the Ūrālis speaking a dialect of Iṛula and living in the hills of the Karnataka-Tamilnadu borderland.

<sup>44</sup> In 1961, the figure 800 (approximate) was given; this small tribelet of Iṛula-speaking peoples lives on the northern slopes of the Nilagiris proper, and in the Wynaad area.

<sup>45</sup> From 1961, I have two widely differing figures: 6138 and 1931, referring either to two different tribes, or to only parts of the same tribe according to the administrative boundaries of their habitat. In the larger Nilagiri area, the number of the Šōlegas is not too high, according to my opinion. The greatest concentration of the Šōlegas is in the southern areas of the Mysore plateau (the book *Tribal Welfare in Mysore*, 1967, speaks of about 10.000 Šōlegas in the Karnataka State); the 1961 Census figure of 1931 refers to the Šōlegas of the Biligiri-Rangan Hills of Karnataka.

of a Nilagiri inner tribal structure, and a peripheral, 'outer' circle of tribes and communities. The inner core is formed by Todas, Kotas, and 'Kuṛumbas' (that is, in fact, Pālu and Ālu Kuṛumbas). The peripheral belt of tribes consists of the Irulas 'proper,' Kasabas, Jēnu Kuṛumbas, Muḍugas, Bēṭṭa Kuṛumbas, Muḷlu Kuṛumbas, Ūrāli Kuṛumbas, Šōlegas, Paṇiyas, and Ūrālis. Among these, the Ūrālis live outside the Nilagiri Mountains, but well within the larger Nilagiri area. The Paṇiyas, and, in particular, the Šōlegas, live only partly in the Nilagiri area. All the Kuṛumba tribes apart from Pālu and Ālu Kuṛumbas live on the lower slopes and on the Wynaad plateau. The Badagas are spread 'all over' the area, vertically and horizontally: on the highest plateau and in the towns as well as in the valleys of the mountains proper, but also outside of the mountains proper, in places like Tengumarahada in the Moyar Valley.

Before the social disruption of the Nilagiris began more than a century and a half ago upon the arrival of the British and their opening of the area to extensive Indian migration from the plains, the Nilagiri area was the home of a miniature local 'caste system' of four groups – Todas, Badagas, Kotas, Kuṛumbas. It had many of the typical caste-system features – a ranking of the four communities, economic relations of the jajmani type, endogamy, and maintenance of differences and distance. There were no multi-caste, multi-tribal villages or settlements (as there are today) e. g., Barliyār (Coonor Taluk) inhabited by Irulas and Kuṛumbas, or Ambalamūla (Gudalur Taluk) inhabited by Jēnu Kuṛumbas and Paṇiyas. The Kotas had seven villages scattered over the hilly area, each in the center of its own agricultural tract and, while maintaining scrupulously distance from all other groups, they supplied to the Todas and Badagas in the neighbouring area pottery, iron tools, funeral music, etc. The Badagas – relative newcomers to the area and suffering a population explosion – had and have many villages in the agricultural tracts, constantly expanding, and pushing out the others. The Todas, originally using the entire area except for parts occupied by the Kotas, as pasture-lands for their buffalo herds, lived in clusters of three to four houses on the pastures, each cluster belonging to one lineage in a patrilineal clan; they also practised a seasonal nomadism (transhumance) for better utilization of the pastures. As of the last century, the Todas had suffered diminution of the pasture areas by alienation to the British need for urban development and, more importantly, to the pressure of the Badaga need for agriculture. The Todas are now definitely in the process of being squeezed out. The Kuṛumbas have always lived in small settlements or even isolated huts in the marginal jungles on the lower-lying Nilagiri periphery, occupying themselves in large part with collecting jungle products and hunting (account based closely on Emeneau 1974: 115f.). The Todas were already in the Nilagiris in A. D. 1117, according to a Kannaḍa inscription, safely dated, which mentions them but no other Nilagiri tribe (cf. Rice 1898/4: inscr. 83 in Chāmarājnagar Taluk, Mysore State). As Emeneau says, for how long before that date they were in the Nilagiris, "is anybody's guess." The three tribes of the Todas, Kotas, and (Ālu, Pālu) Kuṛumbas regard themselves as being the aboriginal inhabitants

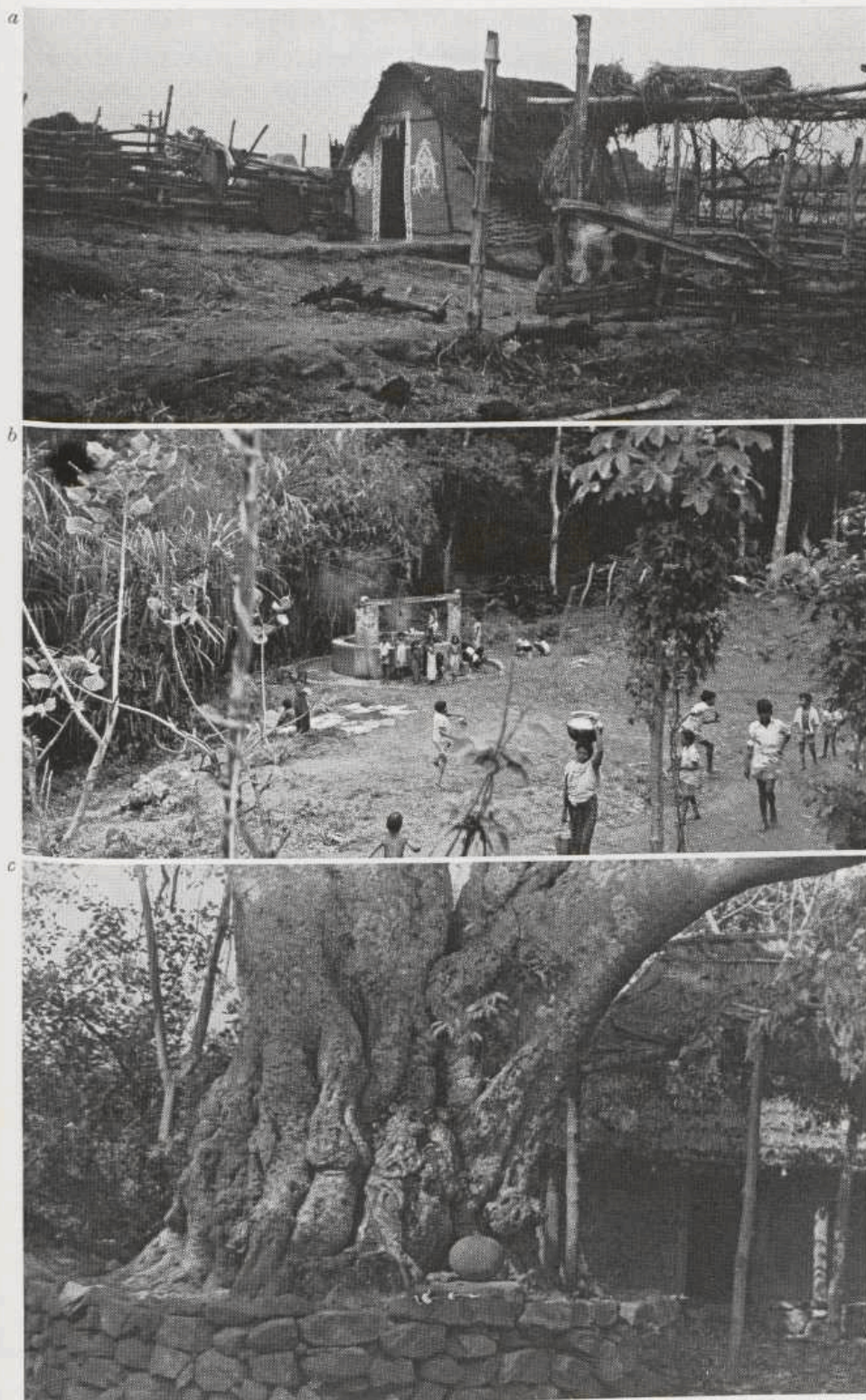


Sketch 5. Simplified schematic diagram of the Nilagiri tribal structure

of the Nilagiri mountains, and as having been created there together (cf. Emeneau 1938: 101). The three tribes of the Todas, Kotas, and Kuṛumbas, along with the Badaga community, formed the *internal Nilagiri system*, the inner circle or *inner infrastructure*, at least since the beginning of the 17th century, till about a hundred years ago. The *core* of this system was the tribal interrelationship of the 'original' Nilagiri tribes, Todas, Kotas, and Kuṛumbas, who regarded themselves as autochthonous in the area, and have lived in the mountains together for maybe the past 2000 years or more.

Around these communities spreads the *peripheral tribal ring*: the Iṛulas proper in two moieties, Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas, in the more marginal jungles of the lower slopes and valleys; and, in the southern Wynaad area, as well as on the lower western and southwestern slopes, the tribes of the Iṛula-speaking Kasabas; the Jēnu Kuṛumbas, Bēṭṭa Kuṛumbas, Muḷḷu Kuṛumbas, Ūrāli Kuṛumbas; Paṇiyas, and Šōlegas. The Ūrāli Iṛulas live north of the mountains proper.

4.2 All languages of the sixteen Nilagiri area communities belong to the South Dravidian (SDr.) sub-family of Dravidian. Since they manifest certain areal features characteristic only for them and not for any other SDr. language, it is legitimate to speak of a *Nilagiri linguistic area*, and we are entitled to work within the framework of a *Nilagiri areal linguistics* (cf. Zvelebil 1979b).



- a) Ornamented Ūrāli house at Gundri  
b) Common well in Mele Nāḍu Irula village of Kūñjapeṇe, Coonoor Taluk  
c) Sacred banyan tree with a stone circle (*cuṭṭukallu*), round grinding stone (*gunḍukallu*) and a jungle-temple (*gudi*) of Mele Nadu Irulas at Kūñjapeṇe





- a) Üräli musicians, Būdimāḍu, near Satyamangalam  
 b) Mele Nāḍu Irula drummers, Kōyikere, Coonoor Taluk  
 c) Jēnu Kurumba (Kāṭṭu Nāyaka) girl, Teppakāḍu, Gudalur Taluk  
 d) Mele Nāḍu Irula girl, Kūñjapepe, Coonoor Taluk (cf. the different ways of the traditional tying of the female dress on *c* and *d*)

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Within the Nilagiri areal group of SDr. languages, a threefold division, based on bundles of phonological, morphological, and lexical isoglosses seems to be recognizable, at least at this stage of our knowledge: one subgroup is the Toda-Kota subgroup which may go back, ultimately, to a Proto-Toda-Kota stage; another subgroup are the Tamil-like or 'Tamiloid' languages; and a third subgroup represents the Kannaḍa-like or 'Kannaḍoid' languages of the area. This division is relatively neatly illustrated by DED 1645 (a): 'ear,' and DED 1214: 'ear.'

The Toda-Kota subgroup	'Tamiloid'	'Kannaḍoid'
Toda <i>hīfy</i>	Mele Nāḍu Iṟula <i>ka'du</i>	Ālu Kuṟumba <i>kevi</i>
Kota <i>hevu, kev</i>	Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟula <i>ka'du</i>	Jēnu Kuṟumba <i>kimi</i>
(cf. Tamil/Malayalam <i>cevi</i> )	Ūrāḷi Iṟula <i>ka'du</i>	Šōlega <i>kimi</i>
	Pālu Kuṟumba <i>ka'du</i>	(cf. Kannaḍa <i>kivi, kimi</i> )
	Muḍuga <i>ka'du</i>	
	(cf. Tamil/Malayalam <i>kātu</i> )	

The fact that Toda and Kota agree – as far as *this* item is concerned – with the Kannaḍa-like group might seem to point in the direction of classifying these two languages as 'Kannaḍoid.' And, indeed, Toda was early grouped with Kannaḍa. However, the item, quoted above, could be misleading. Thanks to M. B. Emeneau it is quite obvious that the group Toda-Kota is an offshot of pre-Tamil which separated, as 'pre-Toda-Kota,' in the pre-Tamil period (before the well-known Tamil palatalization spread all over the Tamil area). These two languages share certain features in common which must be considered as their proper innovations, and these shared innovations set them apart as an independent subgroup (cf. Emeneau 1967).

Among the 16 Nilagiri languages enumerated above, the threefold subdivision runs – as far as we can say at the present moment – as follows:

Toda-Kota subgroup	'Tamiloid' subgroup	'Kannaḍoid' subgroup
Toda	Mele Nāḍu Iṟula	Ālu Kuṟumba
Kota	Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟula	Šōlega
	Ūrāḷi Iṟula	Badaga
	Kasaba Iṟula	Jēnu Kuṟumba
	Pālu Kuṟumba	Bēṭṭa Kuṟumba
	Muḍuga	
	Paṟiya	

About Ūrāḷi Kuṟumba and Muḷḷu Kuṟumba, no data are available. The shifted position of certain languages above indicates that although the overall characteristics (as far as we can say) place them under the appropriate heading on the top, they manifest some features which connect them with the other subgroup.

I will not discuss Toda and Kota at all; it has been done, and will be done, by much more competent scholars.

Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟula are typically Tamil-like, in almost all features of their phonology and grammar: those Kannaḍa-like features they

possess are probably due to borrowing from Badaga <sup>46</sup>. Ūrāli Iṛula, too, is a 'Tamiloid' language with possibly somewhat more pronounced influence of Kannaḍa owing to diffusion because of its geographical position (borderland between Tamil-speaking Tamilnadu and Kannaḍa-speaking Karnataka). In Kasaba or North Iṛula, the Kannaḍa-like features are even more pronounced: there are obviously many Kannaḍa and/or Badaga loanwords, and certain of them are so important that – together with some divergent phonological and grammatical features – they entitle us to shift Kasaba somewhat 'to the right,' towards the 'Kannaḍoid' subgroup <sup>47</sup>.

Pālu Kuṛumba and Muḍuga are basically Tamil-like, compared to Ālu Kuṛumba and Jēnu Kuṛumba; cf. the following items: DED 1214, DED 1645, DED 3288.

Pālu Ku. *kaḍu* (like Tamil/Malayalam) 'ear': Ālu Ku. *kevi*, Jēnu Ku. *kimi*, cf. also Bēṭṭa Ku. *kiviye* (like Kannaḍa) 'ear.'

Pālu Ku. *ṣallu*, Muḍuga *ṣallu* (like Tamil/Malayalam) 'tooth': Ālu Ku. *allu*, Jēnu Ku. *allu* (like Modern Kannaḍa *hallu*) 'tooth'.

Pālu Kuṛumba and Muḍuga share with Tamil and Malayalam the innovation of the initial palatalization of \**k-*, whereas Ālu Kuṛumba does not palatalize, cf. Pālu Ku., Muḍuga *cenni* 'temple (of head)': Ālu Ku. *kenni* (DED 1655). Pālu Ku. and Muḍuga preserved the initial \**p-* whereas Ālu, Jēnu, and Bēṭṭa Kuṛumba have lost it, e. g., Pālu Ku., Muḍuga *ṣallu*: Ālu Ku., Jēnu Ku., Bēṭṭa Ku. *allu* 'tooth.' However, the areal feature of \**v->b-*, typical for all Kannaḍa-like languages, is also shared by Pālu Ku. and Muḍuga, cf. all dialects of Iṛula *va'yi*: Ālu and Pālu Ku., Muḍuga *ba'yi*, Jēnu Ku. *ba'y*, *ba'yi* 'mouth' (DED 4385). On the other hand, important lexical items show close correspondence of Pālu Ku. and Muḍuga with the 'Tamiloid' subgroup, whereas Ālu Ku. goes with the Kannaḍa-like languages; cf. the word for 'belly, stomach':

**'Tamiloid' (DED 4299)**

Iṛula *vō'ru*  
Pālu Ku. *bē'ru*  
Muḍuga *bē'ru*  
cf. Tamil *vayiru*, Malayalam *vayaru*

**'Kannaḍoid' (DED 3677)**

Ālu Ku. *oṭṭe*  
Jēnu Ku. *oṭṭe*  
Bēṭṭa Ku. *poṭṭe*  
Šōlega *oṭṭa*  
Badugu *xoṭṭe*  
cf. Kannaḍa *poṭṭe*

This is an important item for several reasons: first, it shows the 'shift' to the 'right' of Pālu Ku. and Muḍuga when compared to the unambiguous position of all Iṛula dialects; the word for 'belly,' in Pālu Ku. and Muḍuga,

<sup>46</sup> Thus, e. g., in Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, side by side with *ve'le* 'work,' we have *keḷca* [keḷsa] 'work,' cf. Toda *keḷc* 'outdoor work,' Kannaḍa *keḷasa* 'work' etc., DED 1639. The genuine Iṛula word for 'panther' is *ḍōkēṇe* (Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula); in Mele Nāḍu Iṛula we have *kurba*, Kasaba *kurba/kuruba*, cf. Kannaḍa *kiraba*, *kiruba*, *kuruba*. The most widely spread Kasaba word is *giruba*.

<sup>47</sup> E. g., the frequent use of the 'verbs' *ada*, *ida* 'it is,' cf. spoken Kannaḍa *ide*, *ayti* 'it is'; the occurrence of such adverbs as *aṣṭu* 'that much.'

is the cognate of the Tamil/Malayalam item (DED 4299), but the phonological development of *\*v- > b-* is shared with the Kannaḍa-like languages. Second, this item shows the somewhat ambiguous position of Bēṭṭa Kuṟumba (as far as we can say): though it seems to be basically 'Kannaḍoid,' it has some features which go rather with the Tamil/Malayalam subgroup. Thus, in some items, there is the loss of *\*p-*, cf. Bēṭṭa Ku. *ēna* 'corpse' (DED 3420: Tamil *piṇam*), but in *poṭṭe* 'belly,' the original *\*p-* is preserved.

Paniya seems to be clearly a Tamil-Malayalam language: cf. items like *covuṭi* 'deaf woman' (DED 1645b: Tamil *ceviṭi*, in contrast to Kannaḍa *kivuḍi*), *poṇṇu* 'gold' (DED 3732: Modern Kannaḍa *honnu*), *puyu* 'worm' (DED 3537: Tamil *pulu*, Iṟula *pu* in contrast with Jēnu Ku. *ulu*, Badugu *hū*).

Among the 'Kannaḍoid' languages, Ālu Kuṟumba, Šōlega, and Badugu are undoubtedly that: Since, as Emeneau (1967: 368) says, Kannaḍa is alone in its development of *\*p-* to *h-*<sup>48</sup>, Šōlega is definitely closely related to Kannaḍa because in Šōlega the loss of initial *\*p-* is as regular and as complete as in Kannaḍa. Also, some important features of verbal morphology, and of the lexicon, characterize Šōlega as a typical 'Kannaḍoid' language of the area (see for details below). Badaga or Badugu is probably to be classified as a Kannaḍa dialect (Emeneau 1967: 367). Ālu Kuṟumba, too, looks very much like a 'Kannaḍoid' speech, both in its phonology, and in its lexical material: cf. Ālu Ku. *eluvu* 'bone' (Kannaḍa *eluvu*, *elubu*); Pālu Ku. *elumbu* 'bone' (Tamil *elumbu*); Ālu Ku. *gi'vu* 'pus' (Kannaḍa *kī*, *kīvu*); Pālu Ku. *ci* 'pus' (Tamil *cī*). The position of Jēnu and Bēṭṭa Kuṟumba is more ambiguous. My Jēnu Kuṟumba data show a language which is basically Kannaḍa-like (e. g., *\*p- > h-*, as in *hēṇḍi* 'pig,' DED 3326: Tamil *panṇi*, or complete loss, as in *ulu* 'worm,' DED 3537: Tamil *pulu*; no palatalization, e. g., *kimi* 'ear,' DED 1645: Tamil *cevi*, Kannaḍa *kimi*); on the other hand, its grammatical structure manifests many non-Kannaḍa features (for details, see below). The data on Bēṭṭa Kuṟumba are too meagre to allow any but extremely tentative conclusion: it seems to be fundamentally a Kannaḍoid language.

Thanks to the thorough research performed by D. B. Kapp in the Nilagiris (1974-76), we are or shall soon be informed about the Pālu and Ālu Kuṟumbas and their language to an extent completely undreamt of a few years ago. According to Kapp, the Pālu and the Ālu Kuṟumbas are 'sister tribes'; it appears that both tribal groups must once have formed one uniform community: these are the Kuṟumbas of the traditional Toda accounts, and the Kuṟumbas of the earlier ethnographic and anthropological literature. According to Kapp, the Pālu Kuṟumba language has to be classified as a member of the Tamil-Malayalam subgroup of South Dravidian, with numerous archaic features, and strong Kannaḍa influence. Muḍuga is a language of the 'Tamiloid' type, too. Ālu-Kuṟumba, according to Kapp, should be grouped between the two sub-families, the Kannaḍa and the Tamil-Malayalam.

<sup>48</sup> Toda and Kota words in which Proto Dravidian *\*p-* is missing are, according to Emeneau, borrowings from or contaminations with Badaga words with initial *h-* (<*\*p-*).

Concerning the Kuṛumbas, I cannot but quote Kapp who says: "Bis vor einigen Jahren wurden alle Kuṛumba-Stämme, die im Nilgiris-Distrikt siedeln, als ein Stamm betrachtet, aufgeteilt nach J. F. Metz 1864: 106, in drei 'classes'..." etc. Kapp then gives his own division based on the extensive fieldwork performed on the spot between May 1974 and May 1976, and adds: "Die genannten Stämme sind allesamt eigenständige ethnische Gruppen, die sich voneinander unterscheiden in Sprache, Kultur, Religion und Gebräuchen" (1978a: 110). He also agrees with C. von Fürer-Haimendorf:

Kurumba is one of those tribal names which have done so much to obscure the ethnic picture of many Indian regions.... Kurumba is applied to a number of tribes which have little in common but the accident of residence in an area extending to both sides of the border between Madras and Western Mysore.... The elimination of the word 'Kurumba' from anthropological literature would certainly prevent future misunderstandings, but such a course is impracticable because some of the Kurumba tribes have for themselves no other designation (1952-53: 19).

The division of the Kuṛumba tribal complex according to the state of our knowledge at this moment (end of 1978) is as follows:

1. Ālu Kuṛumbas (on the southwest, south, southeast, and east slopes and in the ravines of the mountains); a 'sister-tribe' of the Pālu Kuṛumbas; linguistically between the 'Tamiloid' and the 'Kannaḍoid' Nilagiri groups of South Dravidian.

2. Pālu Kuṛumbas (a tribelet living in nine villages located along the upper course of the Bhavani river in the southwestern uplands of the mountains); linguistically a 'Tamiloid' language of the Nilagiri group of South Dravidian with numerous archaic features.

3. Muḍugas (a tribelet on the lower southwestern slopes of the mountains); linguistically a 'Tamiloid' language, closely akin to Pālu Kuṛumba.

4. Bēṭṭa Kuṛumbas (lower northwest and northern slopes of the Nilagiris); linguistically very probably a 'Kannaḍoid' speech, with some features, however, pointing toward the Tamil-Malayalam group.

5. Jēnu Kuṛumbas alias Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (lower northern slopes of the mountains); linguistically, a speech with Kannaḍa-like base, but many Tamil-Malayalam features.

6. Muḷlu Kuṛumbas (living on the lower western slopes); no linguistic data available.

7. Ūrāli Kuṛumbas (living on the western and northwestern slopes); no linguistic data available<sup>49</sup>.

Pālu Kuṛumbas, Ālu Kuṛumbas, and Muḍugas are mutually exogamous and intermarry. It seems to me that the relationship between Pālu and Ālu Kuṛumbas is quite analogous to the relationship between Vēṭṭe Kāḍu and Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas – the two Iṛula communities which also mutually intermarry and are in close contact; it is indeed possible that these two Iṛula

<sup>49</sup> I am grateful to D. B. Kapp for letting me have the prepublication copies of the following articles of his: 1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1980.

'castes' were once one undifferentiated community; 'once' indicates several centuries ago (see below).

On the following pages, I shall first deal with the exact relationship among the four subgroups of the Iṛula tribal complex (chapter 5) and then with the evaluation of my data on the Jēnu Kuṛumba (chapter 6) and Šōlega (chapter 7) languages, gathered in 1978.

### 5. Classification of the Iṛula Tribal Complex

When we discuss any ethnolinguistic problem, and, in particular, the ethnolinguistic problem of the Iṛulas of the Nilagiri area, we should never for a moment forget a basic rule which warns us: *Ethnicity and language are not necessarily identical*; in other words, a tribal unit (including the tribe's designation) and a language-unit (including the designation of the language) are not necessarily identical. A corollary of this rule states: a tribal division and a linguistic division often run along different lines. Edward Sapir, in one of the best books ever written about the nature of language, warned us as early as in 1921: race and language need not correspond; cultural and linguistic boundaries are not identical. And he called "naïve" the tendency to consider linguistic, racial, and cultural groupings as congruent. And yet, this naïve (to put it mildly) tendency to confuse 'language' and 'race' reappears again and again in both popular and 'scholarly' literature.

The Iṛula situation illustrates this: we have *four* distinct *dialects* of *one* tribal *language* (Iṛula, Ēṛla) spoken by *three* quite distinct *tribes*.

The three distinct tribes are: 1. The dually organized Nilagiri Iṛulas (alias Iṛulas 'proper' or Southern Iṛulas); 2. The Kasabas (alias Northern Iṛulas); 3. the Ūṛālis.

The four distinct *dialects* are: 1. Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula; 2. Mele Nāḍu Iṛula; 3. Kasaba Iṛula 4. Ūṛāli Iṛula.

The one *language*, spoken by some 8.000 speakers, is called Iṛula (Ēṛla na:ya)<sup>50</sup>.

**5.1 Southern Iṛulas or Nilagiri Iṛulas 'proper'.** – This tribe has so-called dual organization: it has two distinct divisions (moieties) which speak their own dialect and inhabit their respective territories. There is intermarriage between these two endogamous moieties. The intermarriage is quite frequent, particu-

<sup>50</sup> Let me at once emphatically stress that I am concerned here only with the Iṛula tribes and Iṛula language of the *larger Nilagiri area*. Hence, I do not take into consideration the Iṛuligas of the Mysore plateau, the Iṛulas of Kerala, the Iṛulas of North Arcot, etc. If all South Indian tribes which call themselves, or are called, Iṛulas would be taken into consideration, the number would reach more than 100.000 (cf. 1961 Census: 82.077, Fuchs 1973: 91.289; 1921 Census of the then Madras Presidency: 99.874). I believe that a solid and sober demographic estimate of the number of the "Nilagiri Iṛulas" as defined above is about 8000–8500; not more than 10.000.

larly in mixed settlements (e. g., Barliar) or in villages which are situated near important roads, communication centers, or markets (e. g., Kōyikere or Kūñ-japene). The moieties are divided into patrilineal exogamous clans (*kula*) (more details of social organization will be found in Zvelebil 1982).

The Iṛulas were typically a tribe of food-gatherers and hunters who practiced rather extensive shifting cultivation (swidden agriculture)<sup>51</sup>. The most important type of food they used to gather was honey (*te'nu*) and edible tubers (*ka'ngu*, *keca'ngu*, *keca'ñku*). Additional income was raised by gathering and bartering or selling other forest products (like wax, medical herbs, etc.). This type of economy is fast changing, particularly in more accessible Iṛula habitations near the growing towns and important roads (see Zvelebil 1982).

5.1.1 The Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas inhabit rather well-defined territory in the borderland between the Nilagiri District of Tamilnadu and the Nilambur and Palghat Districts of Kerala State. Some of their villages are situated in Kerala (e. g., Mulli), some in the Coonoor Taluk of Nilagiri District (e. g., Anapallam); some Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas live in mixed settlements: a typical polytribal settlement is Barliar (Burliar, Barliyār) inhabited by Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas, Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas, and Pālu and Ālu Kurumbas (near the railway line from Mettupalaiyam to Ootacamund). On the whole, Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas, as suggested also by this community's name<sup>52</sup>, live in lower altitudes than Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas, and, as far as I can say, nearer to 'civilization,' and hence most of them are, socioeconomically, in a further stage of tribal disintegration, and more 'civilized'<sup>53</sup> than their cotribals of the Mele Nāḍu Iṛula community. Linguistically, however, the Vēṭṭe Kāḍu dialect shows less 'phonological reduction, less 'advanced' stages in evolutionary processes; on the other hand, it is more Tamil-like and Malayalam-like; whereas the 'Upper,' Mele Nāḍu dialect of South Iṛula shows strong vowel-contraction, far-advanced phonological reduction, a more 'advanced' state of linguistic evolution, is less Tamil-like and more of a Nilagiri-type language (like Toda-Kota).

Typical examples of different phonological developments (in Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula, 'less' contraction and reduction, in Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, more advanced vowel contraction and reduction, resulting in differences in phonological shape of etymologically identical items):

<sup>51</sup> Also termed slash-and-burn agriculture or cut-and-burn farming (German Brandwirtschaft, Wanderfeldbau; French écobuage, essertage, culture itinérante, nomade; Dutch zwerfbouw).

<sup>52</sup> Two possible etymologies: either connected with Tamil *veṭṭai* 'heat, hot dry land'; hence, 'the Iṛulas [inhabiting] the hot, dry forest' or 'hot, dry jungle'; or with Tamil *veṭṭa* 'open, plain.' Another etymological connection is possible: with Tamil *vayram* 'dryness,' particularly if we take into consideration G. Diffloth's (1968: 11) writing of the name as Vattekkāḍa Iṛulas. In any case, their name refers to the hot, dry, relatively low lying jungles surrounding most of their villages.

<sup>53</sup> I have to write 'civilized' since, particularly in the case of Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas who live in Kerala, the 'blessings' of civilization are very doubtful (alcoholism, hooliganism, crime on the increase, violent political agitation due to the activities of various ultra-left groups, etc.).

Tamil form	Vēṭṭe Kāḍu	Mele Nāḍu	Gloss
<i>kaṭaṅku</i>	<i>kecaṅgu</i> <i>kacaṅgu</i> <i>keca'ṅku</i>	<i>kaṅgu</i>	root, tuber
<i>kuṭal</i>	<i>kogalu</i>	<i>koalu, kwālu</i>	oboe
<i>maṭai</i>	<i>mage</i>	<i>mae, mā</i>	rain
<i>puḷu</i>	<i>puḡu</i>	<i>pu</i>	worm

There are some very striking differences in the lexicon; sometimes it is obviously Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟula which has preserved what looks like an ancient indigenous item, like Vēṭṭe Kāḍu *ḍōkēne, ḍēkkane* 'panther,' where Mele Nāḍu has a Kannaḍa loanword (*krba*); sometimes it is the other way round: thus Mele Nāḍu has preserved a 'Nilagiri' word, *o'raḱa, o'vara-kaṅku, o'rakaṅku* 'tomorrow,' while Vēṭṭe Kāḍu uses a Tamil word (*na'leke*).

There are differences, albeit very slight, in dress, ornaments, certain customs and manners between the two communities. There are also differences in mythology and tribal lore. There are important differences in religious terminology. Whereas the special protective deity of Mele Nāḍu Iṟulas is termed *toga*<sup>54</sup>, the guardian deity of Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas is called *peca'du, pe'ca'du*<sup>55</sup>. It is invisible, resides in every house, and is represented by an earthen pot (*kumbā*). There are also some differences in the terminology designating such basic objects as 'house, hut': the 'old word' for 'hut' in Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟula is *ca'le*; the 'new' word is *ku're* (like in Mele Nāḍu Iṟula)<sup>56</sup>.

I have investigated Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas twice, in 1976 and 1978, mainly in Barliyār, but especially in the valley of the Kundah (alias Manāru, Muḷḷiy-āru) river on the border between Kerala and Tamilnadu (villages of Muḷḷi, Mēle Muḷḷi, Guṇḍūr, and Suranḍi) (see Zvelebil 1982). All informants were aware of their independent tribal origin and their special tribal identity: "The name of our tribal caste is Vēṭṭāka'ḍu Ēṟular," I was told. "The name of our language is Vēṭṭāka'ḍu Ēṟula *na'ya*<sup>57</sup>." My question as to who were the Mele Nāḍu people, was answered: "They, too, are Iṟulas, called Melena'ḍar, who live at *me'ytele*", i. e., "up there."

5.1.2 The Mele Nāḍu or 'Upper Country' Iṟulas live mainly in three clusters of villages, mostly uni-ethnic, in which members of different clans live in households (*kuḍumbā*); some of these Mele Nāḍu Iṟula villages are far advanced in 'civilization,' having tribal schools (Kallampalayam, Kuñjapeṇe), dispensaries and mini-hospitals (Kōyikere), well-maintained public wells

<sup>54</sup> Etymology unknown, but may be connected with DED 2904: Tamil *toḷukai* 'worship.'

<sup>56</sup> Very probably to be connected (ultimately) with Sanskrit *piśāca* via Tamil or Malayalam.

<sup>55</sup> The two words require different verbs: 'to build a house': *ca le vāhkanom* (lit. 'a house should be placed, erected') but *ku're kēṭṭanom* (lit., 'a house should be tied together, bound together').

<sup>57</sup> *Nama a'diva'ci ja'tiku pe'ru vēṭṭāka'ḍu ērular. ematu na'ya pe'ru vēṭṭāka'ḍu ērula na'ya.*

(Kūñjapeṇe), and other facilities. The northernmost cluster consists of several settlements on the southern bank of the Moyar river, in a rather hot, dry jungle; the two important villages here are Allimāyāṛu (Hallimoyar) and Kaḷḷampalli (Kallampalayam). The central cluster consists of some obviously very ancient settlements on the eastern slopes round or near the sacred Rangaswamy Peak, e. g., Arakkōḍu (Aracode). The southernmost cluster of Mele Nāḍu Iṛula settlements is formed by socioeconomically advanced and well-accessible villages along the Coonoor-Mettupalaiyam road, like Kōyikere (Kolikarai), Kūñjapeṇe (KunJapanai), and Sundapaṭṭi (Sundapatti). My fieldresearch of Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas and their speech was conducted mainly at Kūñjapeṇe (1968, 1976, 1978), Kōyikere (1968, 1976, 1978), Sundapaṭṭi (1978), Kaḷḷampalli (1978), Mārvahalla (1978), and the area of Rangaswamy Peak (1978).

Apart from phonological and lexical differences, Mele Nāḍu Iṛula differs from Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula in some rather important morphological features. Thus the locative suffix is *-(i)di* in Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula but *-(i)li* in Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, cf. *urdi* (VK Iṛula): *urili* (MN Iṛula) 'in the village,' *vēyidi* (VK Ir.): *vuyili* (MN Ir.) 'on the road'; consequently, the ablative is different, too, e. g., *ēredirundu* (VK Ir.): *ērelirundu* (MN Ir.) 'from the rock.' A major bundle of isoglosses divides VK Ir. from MN Ir. with regard to the pronominal system. The VK Ir. system seems to be more retentive, more 'archaic,' since it has preserved, *a*) the distinction between inclusive and exclusive plural in the oblique cases of the 1st pers. (cf. *emuttu* 'our-excl.': *namuttu* 'our-incl. '), *b*) an old plural of the non-personal 3rd pers. pronoun (*ave* 'they, those-things'), *c*) two forms of the 2nd pers. pl., one 'simple' (*ni'viri* 'you-more than one person'), another 'polite' (*ni'mu* 'you-polite').

In spite of differences of vocabulary, and a few differences in morphology, Vēṭṭe Kāḍu and Mele Nāḍu Iṛula are perfectly mutually intelligible, and must be regarded as two dialects of one language – Iṛula.

5.2 The Madras Census Report of 1891 does not mention the tribelet of the Kasabas<sup>58</sup>. The Report for 1901 remarks that the Kasabas are a 'sub-tribe of the Iṛulas.' 316 persons returned 'Kasuva' as their parent-tongue in 1891.

Since then, their number increased to about 800. The linguistic classification of Kasaba is still a matter of dispute. I am convinced, on the basis of fieldwork performed in 1968, that Kasaba is a somewhat divergent dialect of Iṛula; it could also be termed, in contrast to Vēṭṭe Kāḍu and Mele Nāḍu Iṛula, Northern Iṛula.

<sup>58</sup> There are several versions of the name of this small tribe: Kasuvās, Kasavās, Kasubās. The forms with *-v-* are used by the Tamils and by some Kasabas; but the people themselves tend to use rather the forms with *-b-* (i. e., the Kannaḍa-like forms): Kasaba – though a dialect of Iṛula, and hence a language belonging to the Tamil-Malayalam group of South Dravidian – is strongly 'Kannaḍized' in its lexicon, and also in some phonological features, like the *-v- > -b-* development (though this is by no means regular).

The Kasabas inhabit a level strip of jungle between the base of the north-western slopes of the mountains and the Moyar river, Masiṅgudi (correct: Masiṅgudi) being the extreme south of the western limit of their habitation. Sporadically, they are also found in the Gundalpet, Chamarajanagar, and Yelandur Taluks of Southern Karnataka.

They call themselves Kasuba or Kasaba, or even Ilru/Irlu, i. e., Iṛulas. According to C. Hayavadana Rao (1909)<sup>59</sup>, they have marital relations with the Iṛulas of the Satyamangalam forests of Coimbatore District. But the Iṛulas of the eastern/southeastern slopes of the Nilagiris repudiated all connection with the Kasabas. On the other hand, the Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas of the northern region of the Nilagiris (see above, and Map 2) even intermarry with the Kasabas, though only occasionally.

The Kasabas are divided, according to C. H. Rao (1909) into numerous totemistic (?) clans; this author maintains that indeed their totemism is their most remarkable feature. It is interesting to note that some of the names of the Kasaba clans are identical with the clan-names of the Ālu Kuṛumbas. The most important Kasaba villages are Bōkapura, Ānegaṭṭi (Anaikatti), Siriyūr, and Vātōṭṭa or Vāetōṭṭa (Valaithottam).

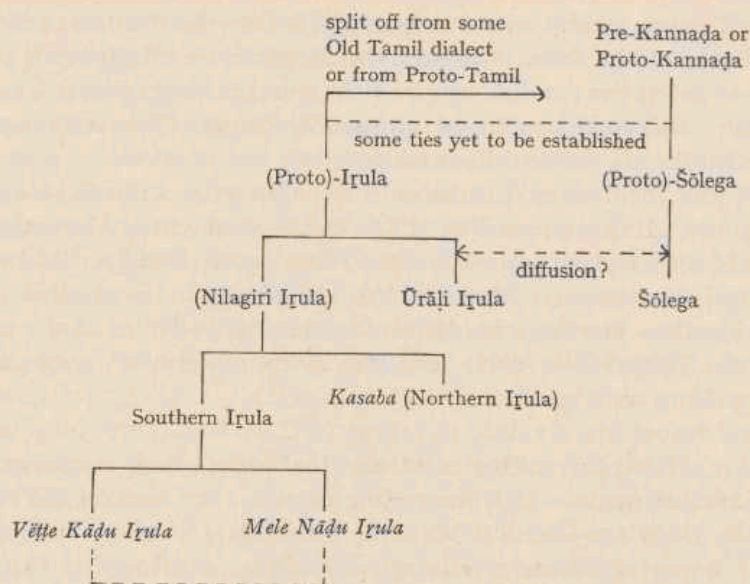
The most important differences between Southern Iṛula (i. e. Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula) and Northern Iṛula (i. e., Kasaba) are in the field of morphology and lexicon. Thus, the Southern Iṛula sociative suffix is *-oḍe* 'with'; in Kasaba, we find as sociative suffixes *-tokke*, *-dokko*, *-dokka*, *-dotṭikki*. Or: 3rd pers. sg. fem. suffix is *-a* in Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula, while in Kasaba we have a free (?) variation between *-a|a* and *-alu* (e. g., *ava eḍukkaḷu* 'she takes, uplifts'). As stated above, there are some striking differences in the vocabulary: South Iṛula *poḍo*: Kasaba *caḷu* [*saḷu*] 'is sufficient, enough'; South Iṛula *ē-* (*ēg-*): Kasaba *oḷu-|oḷ-* (*oḷg-*) 'to weep, cry'; South Iṛula *agve*, *oggwe*, *avve*: Kasaba *auve* 'mother'; South Iṛula *vēṇḍo*: Kasaba *bēḷu* 'is necessary.'

On the whole, however, though Kasaba is further removed from Mele Nāḍu and Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛula than the two southern dialects from one another, I still prefer to think of it as an Iṛula dialect with many Kannaḍa (or Badugu) loanwords and Kannaḍoid features, than as an 'independent' tribal language.

5.3 The Ūrāḷis were discussed above. In anthropometric measurements, blood-group composition, and other features of physical anthropology, the Iṛulas form one group together with the Ūrāḷis, Šōlegas, and Yenādis<sup>60</sup>. Taking into consideration, primarily, the linguistic evidence of the data available at our disposal at the moment, as well as some other less precise, and more tentative data derived from cultural anthropology (myths) and physical anthro-

<sup>59</sup> The very meagre literature on the Kasabas: Chidambarantha 1971, 1972, 1973; C. Hayavadana Rao 1909; Irudayanath 1969.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Aiyappan (1948: 157): "Anthropometric measurement shows a definite commonness among the Sholega, the Iṛula of Nilgiris, Yenadu, Iṛulas of east coast and Urali."



Sketch 6. The Iṛula stemma

pology, we may perhaps express the relationship between the different Iṛula-speaking tribes, and the Šōlegas, by a 'stemma'-like diagram (cf. Sketch 6).

The possible – indeed very probable (cf. the myths!) – ties between the Šōlegas on the one hand and the Iṛula tribes on the other hand remain to be investigated and established. About the close ties connecting the Iṛulas of the Nilagiris – Iṛulas 'proper' – with the Kasabas and the Ūrālis, there can be no doubt whatsoever. They all speak dialects of one language – Iṛula. The precise linguistic relationships between these four dialects are at present being worked out; sufficient data are available.

Two more problems remain to be attacked: the relationship between the Iṛula tribal set and the Kuṛumbas. King (1870) expressed the opinion that these two tribes or tribal sets were "originally one." I indeed very much doubt that this was so. However, there are far-reaching similarities among many features concerning the Iṛula and the Kuṛumba customs, rites, myths, etc. which remain to be worked out within the framework of Nilagiri areal studies.

Another problem is historical. From ancient Tamil texts we may derive certain information on the mountain tribes – the Kāṇavar and Kuṛavar – who lived "in the protection of the jungle"<sup>61</sup>. Though we do not have too detailed data on these peoples, it would still be profitable to collect and classify those that we have, and evaluate them in terms of cultural anthropology, comparing them with the information we have about such typical forest-tribes as Iṛulas and Kuṛumbas.

<sup>61</sup> *Malaiṇṇaṭṭaṭṭam* 279: *kāṇukāttu uṇaiyum kāṇavar*. Other allusions to forest hill-tribes are found in *Malaiṇṇaṭṭaṭṭam*: 318, 320, *Perumpāṇṇāṇṇaṭṭaṭṭam*: 91 ff., and other old Tamil

## Specimens of linguistic differences among the four Irula dialects

	Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Irula	Mele Nāḍu Irula	Kasaba	Ūrāḷi	Gloss
1.	<i>na'ya</i>	<i>pe'ccu</i>	<i>ba'se</i>	<i>va'ttā</i>	utterance; speech; language
2.	<i>ve'le</i>	<i>ve'le</i>	<i>kelca</i>	<i>ve'le</i>	work
3.	<i>cō'le</i>	<i>co'le, cō'le</i>	<i>co'le</i>	<i>para'du, paradu</i>	forest
4.	<i>kēṇaru</i>	<i>ba'vi</i>	<i>ba'vi</i>	<i>ba'vi</i>	well
5.	<i>ka'ttu</i>	<i>ga'ḷi</i>	<i>ga'ḷi</i>	<i>ka'ttu</i>	wind
6.	<i>ratta</i>	<i>kanape</i>	<i>latta</i>	<i>ceṅga</i>	red
7.	<i>ra'vu</i>	<i>ja'ma</i>	(not available)	<i>ra'ppodu</i>	night
8.	<i>mele; guḍḍe</i>	<i>mele</i>	<i>mele; bo'ḷi</i>	<i>mele; bo'ḷi, bo'li</i>	hill; mountain; mountains
9.	<i>co'li [tso:lī]</i>	<i>co'ḷi [tfo:lī]</i>	(not available)	<i>to'lukurūvi</i>	bat
10.	<i>ubbe, ubbetanṇi; agḡiratannṇi</i>	<i>urini'ru, ūrini'ru</i>	<i>be'vuru, be'varu; ve'vuru</i>	<i>ubbe</i>	sweat
11.	<i>ēḍa</i>	<i>ēḍa</i>	<i>ja'ga</i>	<i>ēḍa</i>	place
12.	<i>nagalu</i>	<i>nōyḷu</i>	<i>nōḷalu</i>	(not available)	shade
13.	<i>kogalu, kogā'lu</i>	<i>koalu, koā'lu</i>	<i>ko'lu</i>	<i>kogā'lu (A), ko'lu (B)</i>	oboe
14.	<i>ca'le; ku're</i>	<i>ku're</i>	<i>mane; haḡḡi, oḡḡi</i>	<i>ca'le, ku're</i>	house; hut
15.	<i>paḍilu</i>	<i>paḍil</i>	<i>ba'gal</i>	<i>pa'dalu</i>	door

Ethnically ('racially,' in physical anthropology), one may possibly posit – still very tentatively – an old *pre-Dravidian*-speaking Irula-Ūrāḷi-Šōlega "race" spread over the territories South/South-East/East-North-East of the Nilagiris. There may be a few linguistic residua from this ethnic substratum like *kunni, künni* 'bee,' *maḷḷu, makkya* 'to urinate,' or *o'rakā* 'tomorrow.' This ethnos (markedly Proto-Australoid cum some Negrito features) was linguistically superimposed by Dravidian speakers, in case of the Irulas/Ūrāḷis by a possibly Proto-Tamil or early Old Tamil dialect, in the case of the Šōlegas by an old Kannaḍa or Proto-Kannaḍa dialect. The 'original' prehistoric ties between Irulas, Kasabas, Ūrāḷis, and Šōlegas are still reflected as a faint but undeniable echo in their mythology.

The four resulting Irula-speaking groups manifest not only ethnolinguistic differences, but also slight differences in their somatic features:

1. Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Irulas: over-all impression – most handsome of all; complexion rich brown to dark to very dark; stature short but well-proportioned, hair wavy to curled, rich, noses flat but also straight; negrito features almost absent; 'very much' Proto-Australoid.

texts of the first few centuries A. D. According to these meagre but obviously important data, these forest hill-tribes lived on the honey of wild bees and on tubers, apart from being engaged in some kind of primitive agriculture (the texts mention millet *-tiṇai-* on the little fields). Honey-combs on steep rocks are frequently mentioned. The women of the hunter-tribes (*eyiṇṇiyar*) dug the ground with iron-capped (*irumpūtalai*) spades. Tubers, roots (*kilāṅku*) as the staple food of these tribals is mentioned, too, a few times in ancient Tamil texts.

2. Mele Nāḍu Iṟulas: over-all impression: less handsome; stature short but relatively well-proportioned, complexion rich brown to very dark, noses flat, flatter than Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas, but also straight, hair wavy to curled, rich; Negrito features almost absent.

3. Kasabas: over-all impression: least handsome of all; stature short to middle, complexion yellowish brown to brown, almost never too dark, noses flat to very flat, broad, rarely straight, hair curled to wavy, rich.

4. Ūrāḷis: over-all impression: rather mixed features; some of them very handsome; tallish; however, stature mostly very short but well-proportioned, strongly muscular; complexion from almost black to very dark, noses sometimes very broad but also (rarely) straight, hair wavy to curled. Spare hair on body and face, often completely absent. Slow physical development (a child of fifteen looks like a child of eight). Diagnostic features: high cheekbones.

#### 6. Kāṭṭu Nāyakas alias Jēnu Kuṟumbas

G. Diffloth (1968: 14) writes quite correctly: "... In fact, the whole Wynad area is still linguistic terra incognita." At least five unclassified and undescribed South Dravidian tribal languages are spoken in Wynaad (Vayalnāḍu): Paṇiya (belonging most probably to the Tamil-Malayalam group), Šōlega (very much Kannaḍa-like), Bēṭṭa Kuṟumba, Muḷḷu Kuṟumba, and Jēnu Kuṟumba (= Kāṭṭu Nāyaka). Moreover, there are reports of tribals living deep in the Wynaad jungles who have not yet been "discovered."

The Paṇiyas are said to be the most homogenous Negroid population of India<sup>62</sup>, and one of the most backward and most exploited tribes of India. The language may preserve treasures of ancient Proto-Tamil or Pre-Tamil features, and, may be, even some substratum-items.

There is a very meagre ethnographic literature on Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (= Jēnu Kuṟumbas)<sup>63</sup>; nothing at all has been published on their language, with the exception of a few notes by U. P. Upadhyaya, who, incorrectly, regards "Jenu Kuruba" as a dialect of Kannaḍa. Hence, what follows below is the first tentative characterization of the Kāṭṭu Nāyaka language, and the critical evaluation of the anthropological and ethnographic reports on the Kāṭṭu Nāyaka tribe.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Lopicque 1905. – I could only speak to one Paṇiya informant, Chemban, aged about 45–50, born in the Gudalur area and employed for about 30 years in the Mudumalai Wild Life Sanctuary at Masinaguḍi. He most definitely had pronounced Negroid features.

<sup>63</sup> In the *Draft Project Report for the Development of Primitive Tribes in the Nilgiris*, Govt. of Tamilnadu Confidential Report, s. d. (but presumably 1977), there is *passim* some very meagre and superficial information on Kāṭṭu Nāyakas. Further bibliography: Irudayanath 1965: 34–43; Luiz 1962b: 86–90; Raghavan 1929; Sakthivel 1971: 10–14; Upadhyaya 1968.

6.1 The first problem to be solved is the mutual relation of the two terms: Kāṭṭu Nāyaka and Jēnu Kuṟumba. Already Thurston (1909a: 165) quoting the Malabar Gazetteer, says: "Jēn or Tēn (honey) Kurumbans, also called Kāḍu or Shōla Nāyakkans (or Jēnu Koyyo Shōla Nāyakas, i. e., honey-cutting lords of the woods)." This statement is partly correct, partly wrong. It correctly identifies Kāṭṭu Nāyakas 'lords of the forest' with Jēnu Kuṟumbas, 'honey-Kuṟumbas'; but the "Shōla Nāyakkans" (see below) are a different people.

The one author who emphatically states the identity of the 'Kattunayakan' and 'Jenu Kurumban' is A. A. D. Luiz (1962b: 86). Indeed, according to this author, Kāṭṭu Nāyakas are "also known as... Shola Nayakans and Jenu or Teen Kurumans." The Census Reports of Madras and Mysore of 1891 and that of Madras in 1901 confirm that there is no difference between Jēnu Kuṟumbas and Jēnu Kuṟubas. The former name is – as an alternative of Kāṭṭu Nāyakas – current in the Tamil-Malayalam speaking area, the latter in the Kannaḍa-Telugu speaking territories.

The uncertainty, hesitation, and misunderstandings concerning the identification of this tribe was caused to some extent by the fact that the names Jēnu Kuṟumban (and "Shōla Nāyakkan") did not appear in the official list of scheduled tribes maintained by the Union, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu governments, but the name 'Kattunayakan' (and its various versions) did.

The correct form of the name as used by the members of the tribe themselves is *Kāḍu Nāyika*. It should be stated once and for all that Kāḍu Nāyikas (alternative forms Kattunayakans, Kāṭṭu Nāyakas, Kattunaicker, etc.) are identical with Jēnu Kuṟumbas (alternately called Jēnu Kuṟumas, Jēnu Kuṟubas, Tēn Kuṟumbas, etc.); in other words, that *these two names refer to one and the same tribe*. All my Kāṭṭu Nāyaka (or Jēnu Kuṟumba) informants were adamant in their assertion that they *were* Jēnu Kuṟumbas. They considered as ridiculous the suggestion that Jēnu Kuṟumbas and Kāṭṭu Nāyakas were two different communities. An attempt to persuade them that this was so was met with a mixture of hilariousness, ridicule, and contempt. The identity of Jēnu Kuṟumba and Kāṭṭu Nāyaka was confirmed independently by Paṇiya and Šōlega informants.

The Kāṭṭu Nāyakas of Teppakāḍu (Mudumalai Wild Life Sanctuary) who are employed there as *mahouts*, enumerate four tribal groups of their own region as "superior," as "their," as "belonging there," whereby the (hierarchical?) order of enumeration is invariably the same:

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Kasuvar (or Kasuba) | 3. Kāḍunāyikar = Jēnu Kuṟumbar |
| 2. Ūraḷi               | 4. Iṟularu <sup>64</sup> .     |

In addition to these four groups, they recognize one more community, mentioned as standing somewhat "apart" and being somewhat "inferior," namely the (5) Šōlegaru or Šōlanāyikar.

<sup>64</sup> The tribes' names are given in the forms quoted by Jēnu Kuṟumba (= Kāṭṭu Nāyaka) informants.

Again, my Paṇiya informant, and my Šōlega informant, too, confirmed the identity of the two terms Šōlega and Šōlanāyikas. According to the Paṇiya Chemban, "there are two *jātis* known as Nāyakkas: the Šōlanāyakkar living for example at Ānegatti, called also Shōlagar; and the Kāṭṭunāyakkar, who are mahouts and elephant-trainers and live at Teppakkāḍu. These two are two different communities. They speak two different languages, and I don't understand either of the two" (20.3.1978). This statement was confirmed by the Šōlega informant. It is therefore wrong to identify (as Thurston and Luiz did) Šōlanāyikas and Kāṭṭu Nāyakas. Šōlanāyikas is another term for Šōlegas, an altogether different tribe. The Šōlegas (alias Šōlanāyikas) are also locally (in the Masinaguḍi area) known as Buṇḍāšōlegar(u).

The ethnolinguistic and the social relationships of Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (= Jēnu Kuṟumbas) to *other* Kuṟumbas of the larger Nilagiri area and Wynaad remain yet to be investigated and described. My brief 1978 fieldresearch, however, has yielded a few positive, striking, and important results regarding the *linguistic* classification of the Kāṭṭu Nāyaka (i. e., Jēnu Kuṟumba *language*, see below) <sup>65</sup>.

The Kāṭṭu Nāyakas were enumerated independently in 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, and 1941 as 1418, 1085, 2486, 2475, 4017, 1581, and 1520 respectively. The 1961 census mentions the surprisingly low figure of 612. A rough present estimate for the Gudalur Taluk of the Nilagiri District is about 1300. In Kerala state, there may be about 4000 Jēnu Kuṟumbas. Hence, the total population of the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (= Jēnu Kuṟumbas) may be ± 5300.

6.2 At the beginning of our century (F. W. F. Fletcher quoted by Thurston 1909a: 176), the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas were considered "forest nomads, living on honey, jungle fruits and the tuberous roots of certain jungle creepers." They were, according to data collected some seven to eight decades ago, typical food-gatherers and hunters, "living and worshipping" mostly deep in the Wynaad jungles, having relatively little contact with the external world, but considering themselves to be far superior to other tribes of the region. Some Kāṭṭu Nāyakas were credited with the power of changing themselves at will into tigers and wreaking vengeance on their enemies in that shape. The Kuṟumbas held the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas in as much awe as the other tribals held the Kuṟumbas. My own experience – too short and fleeting, though (first in 1968, then in 1976, and finally in 1978) – with Kāṭṭu Nāyaka elephant mahouts showed the men of this tribe friendly but possessing a certain amount of dignity, pride, and reticence which I did not find, e. g., with the Kasabas or with most of the other Iṟulas (with the exception of some Ūrāḷis of Gundri).

<sup>65</sup> Which, of course, is not a dialect consisting "of words and phrases drawn from all the Dravidian languages" as Luiz naïvely says (1962b: 87). Neither is Kāṭṭu Nāyaka a dialect of Kannaḍa or Tamil. This kind of reasoning, based on one or two words, badly recorded, amounts to, say, a classification of Dutch as either a dialect of German or French, because, for the concept of 'present, gift,' Dutch has either the word *geschenk* or the word *cadeau*.

The Kāṭṭu Nāyakas live nowadays in isolated settlements in the Gudalur Taluk; many of the men work as forest guards and *mahouts*; some of them as farm labourers; a few cultivate their own lands assigned to them by the government. The women possess basket-making skills. Hunting (wild boar) and collecting minor forest produce is still practiced. The crops raised by them are paddy, ginger, tapioca, coffee. The bulbous roots (*nūve*) dug out in the forest, about a yard in length and 6 to 9" in diameter, provide starchy food; it is maintained that one such tuber, either cooked in water or baked on fire, will provide enough food for a family of five or six. There is limited rearing of poultry, pigs, and goods. Their huts – some of them still rather primitive and deep in the forest – are long, low, the floor level with the ground, the walls made of flattened bamboo, roof covered with grass or straw. They worship mountains and hills, steep rocks, large trees, snakes, wild animals. Magic and sorcery is in practice. One of the main deities seems to be *Mala deyva*, 'The Mountain-God'; Sun and Moon are also worshipped, as well as spirits of dead ancestors. Goat and fowl sacrifices are still practiced. *Śiva* is worshipped as *Bairava*.

They call themselves Kāṭṭu Nāyakar or Jēnu Kuṟumbar; others than Jēnu Kuṟumbas are termed *bē-re jana* 'other people.' Physical anthropology: The Kāṭṭu Nāyakas belong to the tall, long-armed, and dark to very dark-skinned among the Wynaad tribes. The hair is curly or wavy. Both sexes wear ear-rings. The females (Nāyikatti, Mupatti) wear long cloth of dark colour (red, indigo, green) and knot it over their right shoulder<sup>66</sup>.

6.3 The Kāṭṭu Nāyakas call their language which we designate by the term Jēnu Kuṟumba *naṇa ma-tu* 'our speech,' *ma-tu* being the term for 'speech, language' (cf. DED 3960: Toda *mo-t* 'words, speech (in songs),' Kannaḍa *mātu* 'word, language,' Telugu *māṭa*)<sup>67</sup>. The language of the Jēnu Kuṟumbas is an independent South Dravidian tribal speech, possibly closely related to Ālu and Pālu Kuṟumba, rather Kannaḍa-like, however, less 'Kannaḍoid' than Šōlega.

<sup>66</sup> One way how to identify the tribals of the area is by the manner of the female dress: Iṟula women (Iṟulatti, Iṟulacci, *ērlcci*) knot a coloured (dark red, yellow, blue, indigo) cloth above the breasts; shoulders and arms remain naked. Muḷḷu Kuṟumba women (Kuṟumbatti) wound a long cloth round the body and tie it over left shoulder. Ūrāḷi Kuṟumba women knot a coloured cloth over the breasts and put another, preferably white cloth, to cover the upper part of the chest, back and shoulders. Jēnu Kuṟumba women knot a long cloth over the right shoulder. Muḍuga women (Mupatti) knot the cloth above both breasts like the Iṟulattis. Paṇiya women (Paṇiyacci) wear short (not long) *dhoti*-like cloth, and another cloth to cover their breasts (in the Iṟula fashion). Legs are naked above knees.

<sup>67</sup> Different Nilagiri tribes use different terms for the concept of 'language, speech': The Ālu and Pālu Kuṟumbas as well as the Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṟulas use a term derived from Prakrit *nāya-*, *nāya-*, Sanskrit *nyāya-*, cf. Toda *no-ym* 'dispute, tribal council,' Kota *na-ym* 'dispute': VK Iṟula *na-ya*. MN Iṟula use the term *pe-ccu* 'speech.' Ūrāḷis say *va-ttā* (ultimately, Sanskrit *vārttā-*, cf. Tamil *vārttai* 'word, speech'). The Kasabas use the pan-Indian, Aryan-derived *ba-ṣe* (Sanskrit *bhāṣā-*).

The circumstances under which I performed my brief fieldresearch into the Kāṭṭu Nāyaka (Jēnu Kuṟumba) language were rather unfortunate and quite adverse<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, I have on my tapes enough material to enable me to roughly identify and characterize the speech as to its basic phonological and lexical features. My main informant for the highly interesting language was Mādan, son of Bomman, aged about 50 (he did not know his exact age), born at Teppakāḍu [Tēppōka:ḍu]; he called himself Kāḍu Nāyikanu (or, alternatively Kāḍu Kuṟumba).

The phonological features of Jēnu Kuṟumba manifest a few specific developments, but on the whole characterize the language rather as Kannaḍa-like, with some typical "Nilagiri" traits.

Among these traits, the most prominent is strong centralization of vowels which Jēnu Kuṟumba shares with Iṟula, e. g., *ākki* 'paddy,' *kā-ri-yā-wu* 'a kind of snake,' *giṇan* 'parrot,' *ciṇṇa* 'small,' *ēṇnu* 'woman,' *ēru* 'ant,' *kēre* 'pond,' *bē-re* 'different,' *pūli* 'panther,' *ikūṭṭi* 'hiccough,' *gōlu* 'roof/ceiling.'

In a few items, Jēnu Kuṟumba has a nasalized *ā/ā̃*, always in the neighbourhood of *-w-*, cf. *ā-we* 'tortoise,' *kā-ri-yā-wu* 'a kind of snake,' *mā-wumara* 'mango-tree,' *ji-wā* 'life, soul' (for *-w-*, see below).

Kannaḍa-like is the development of *\*v->b-* which Jēnu Kuṟumba shares with Šōlega, Kannaḍa, Koḍagu, and Tuḷu: cf. *bara* 'next,' *billu* 'bow,' *bē-ṭṭe* 'hunting,' *bale* 'net,' *biculu* 'heat,' *ba-le* 'plantain,' *bēḷḷuḷi* 'garlic,' *bē-re* 'different,' etc. In only one item, *v-* has remained – and this may be, probably is, a borrowing from Tamil: *vara* 'week.'

Kannaḍa is alone among the larger South Dravidian languages in its development of *\*p-* to *h-*: in this feature, Jēnu Kuṟumba seems to be "on the middle of the road": many items (certainly not borrowings!) show *\*p->h-*; in about equal number of items, *h-* has disappeared altogether; however, there is also a number of words in which *p-* has remained, and it is doubtful that these would be loans from Tamil or Malayalam.

*\*p->h-*: *haji* 'hunger,' *haḷe* 'old,' *hani* 'drizzling rain,' *huy-d-* 'to rain,' *hoḷe* 'river'<sup>69</sup>.

*\*h->ø-*: *acu* [asu] 'cow,' *aṇa* 'money,' *ani* 'dew,' *alli* 'house-lizard,' *uḷu* [wūḷu] 'worm,' *uttu* 'ant-nest,' *o-* – 'to go'<sup>70</sup>.

*p* remains, e. g., in *pa-ne* 'clay-pot,' *pūli* 'panther,' *pu-cce* 'cat,' *poḍice* [poḍife] 'bush.'

<sup>68</sup> I wish to express deep gratitude to my assistant Saskia C. Kersenboom whose energetic perseverance, initiative, loyalty, and care were great encouragement in the adversities of those few difficult days.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. DED 3165 (a): Tamil *paci*, Toda *osf* 'hunger'; 3296: Tamil *pala* 'old'; 3322: Tamil *paṇi* 'dew; rain, mist'; 3610: Tamil *pey*, Kota *oy-* 'to rain'; 3543: Malayalam *pūḷa*, Kannaḍa *poḷe* > *hoḷe* 'river.'

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Tamil *pacu* (Sanskrit *paśu-*) 'cow,' Tamil *paṇam* (cf. Sanskrit *paṇa-* 'a weight of copper used as coin,' Emeneau and Burrow 1962, item 250), DED 3322: Tamil *paṇi* 'dew,' 3294: Tamil *palli* 'house-lizard,' 3537: Tamil *pūḷu* 'worm,' 3556: Tamil *puṟṟu* 'white ant-hill,' 3734: Tamil *pō* 'to go.'

In some items, initial *h-* is heard more or less strongly, particularly in emphasis, e.g., *ēṇṇu* 'woman, female' is often pronounced [hēṇṇu] beside [yēṇṇu].

Original \**k-* before front vowel is preserved in *kennay* 'Canis dukhunensis,' so-called 'red dog' (cf. DED 1607: Tamil *cennāy*, Toda *keno:y*) and *kemmu* 'coughing, cough' (DED 1634: Tamil *cerumu*, Kannaḍa *kemmu*). In this feature, Jēnu Kuṟumba is again rather like Kannaḍa and the rest than like Tamil-Malayalam.

Very interesting, and, as far as I can say, specific Jēnu Kuṟumba features in phonology are the existence of a bilabial nasalized semivowel fricative, which is semivoiced, and occurs with nasalized *ā*, *ā̃*; it is a sound 'between' [m] and [w]; and the result of various developments; and the development of \**-d-* > *-r-*. Cf. \**pāmpu*: Jēnu Kuṟumba *ā̃:wu* 'snake' (e.g., *kā:riyā̃:wu* 'a kind of snake,' *accā̃:wu* 'green snake'); \**māmara* or \**māvumara*: Jēnu Ku. *mā̃:wumara* 'mango-tree'; \**āmay*: Jēnu Ku. *ā̃:we* 'tortoise'; \**jīva-*: Jēnu Ku. *jī̃:wā* 'life, soul'; \**nām-* Jēnu Ku. *nā̃:wu* 'we (incl.)'.

The development of \**-t-* > \**-d-* > *-r-*: *nõ:r-* 'to see,' e.g., *nõ:rdenu* 'I see; saw'; *gõ:re* 'wall'<sup>71</sup>. Not all *-d-* > *-r-*, e.g., *mõ:ḍa* 'cloud; sky.'

*-d-*, *-dd-* and *-nn-*, before front vowels, are strongly palatalized: *õ:denu* [ʷõ:dʒenu] or [ʷõ:dʲenu] 'I go; I went'; *nõ:rdenu* [nõ:rdʒenu] or [nõ:rdʲenu] 'I see; I saw'; *leddi* [ledʒdʒi] 'elephant-dung'; *bannenu* [bannjenu] or [baññenu] 'I come, came.'

*-ñ-* is phonemic at least in one item: *mañan*/*mañanu* 'son'; Jēnu Ku. shares this form with some other Kuṟumba speech-forms and with Iṟula.

In the sphere of derivational morphology, the most striking feature is the highly productive derivation-suffix *-an*, cf. *kuṟan* [ku:rən] 'mouse-deer' (cf. Ma. *kūran* 'hog-deer'), *giñan* 'parrot' (DED 1318), *akkan* 'elder sister'<sup>72</sup>, *ca:regan* 'roe; gazelle,' *tamman* 'younger brother' (DED 2513: Kannaḍa *tamma*, Koḍagu *tammaṇē*), *noṇan* 'kind of fly,' *muccan* 'black-faced monkey.' None of these items is a loanword.

In inflectional morphology, Jēnu Ku. manifests some highly interesting features, and stands about midway between the Tamil-Malayalam and the Kannaḍa groups of South Dravidian. This is the pronominal system:

Singular	Plural
1. <i>nã:nu</i>	1. incl. <i>nā̃:wu</i> excl. <i>nã:ṅa</i>
2. <i>nī̃:nu</i>	2. <i>nī̃:ṅa</i>
3. m. <i>avanu</i> / <i>avan</i> f. <i>ava</i> n. <i>adu</i>	3. m. + f. <i>avaru</i> n. <i>adu</i>

<sup>71</sup> Cf. DED 3144: Tamil *nōṭṭam* 'scrutiny, examination,' etc., Kannaḍa *nōḍu* 'to look' etc. Kota *nõ:f-* 'to look at.' For *gõ:re*, cf. DED 1833: Kota *gõ:r*, Kannaḍa *gōḍe* 'wall.'

<sup>72</sup> The final *-n* occurs in Old and Inscriptional Tamil (*akkan*), Kota (*akn*), and Toda (*okn*) (cf. DED 24). The *-an* suffix in Jēnu Ku. looks like an archaic retention.

Among the pronouns, the 1st pers. sg., 2nd pers. sg., 3rd pers. sg. m. and n. are identical with the pronouns of modern literary Kannaḍa (*nānu*, *nīnu*, *avanu*, *adu*); however, the feminine *ava* is like Iṟula or spoken Tamil (whereas Kannaḍa has *avaḷu*; this form denied vehemently as Jēnu Ku. form). More striking is, though, the plural; first, Jēnu Ku. manifests the inclusive: exclusive distinction; surprisingly, the inclusive plural is almost identical with the 1st pers. pl. Kannaḍa form (Jēnu Ku. *nā'vu*: Kannaḍa *nāvu*, Old Kannaḍa *nām*)<sup>73</sup>, while the exclusive plural is identical with the 1st pers. pl. spoken Tamil exclusive (Jēnu Ku. *na'nga*: Colloquial Tamil *nānga*, Lit. Tamil *nāṅkaḷ*). Now we would expect 2nd pers. pl. *\*nīvu* or *\*nīmu* (cf. Iṟula *nīmu*, Kannaḍa *nīm*, *nīvu*), but instead we have again full agreement with spoken Tamil (Jēnu Ku. *nī'nga*, Colloquial Tamil *nīnga*, Lit. Tamil *nīṅkaḷ*). 3rd pers. pl. m. f. corresponds to Kannaḍa (*avaru*).

Similar situation is seen among the case-terminations: Accusative, like in Iṟula, has two allomorphs, *-e* and *-ne*, cf. *ku'ran-e no'rdenu* 'I see a mouse-deer'; *a-ne-ne no'rdenu* 'I see an elephant' (ultimately, Tamil-Malayalam *\*-ay*). Dative *-gu* and *-ku* (e. g., *ka'ḍugu* 'to the forest,' *u'tiku* 'to Ooty') is again rather like Tamil-Malayalam (Kannaḍa has *-ge*). Loc. *-(i)le* is like Spoken Tamil (Jēnu Ku. *ka'ḍile* 'in the forest'). However, ablative is formed like the Kannaḍa ablative-instrumental in *-imda*, cf. Jēnu Ku. *ka'ḍinda* 'from the forest,' *maneyinda/maninda* 'from the house' with Kannaḍa *mōḍa-dimda* 'from the cloud.'

It is of course difficult to give a relatively precise characterization of the Jēnu Ku. grammatical structure without a very thorough study of the data at hand. However, it seems to me that the basic grammatical structure is about in the middle between Kannaḍa and Tamil, perhaps somewhat nearer to Kannaḍa than to Tamil. Even when there is Tamil-like structure, the phonological shape is more Kannaḍa-like, cf. *o'da va'ra w'fik'o'y bannenu* 'last week I went to Ooty', *na'nu ninag'ana koḍte'nu* 'I will give you money.' This last example shows the most striking feature of Jēnu Kuṟumba verbal morphology: the past-stem<sup>74</sup> was extended so as to form the bases for both the past tense and the non-past tense. In this important matter Jēnu Ku. agrees with Toda and Kota. Is the extension of S<sup>2</sup> as basis for the past and non-past tenses a typical innovation of an entire group of the Nilagiri languages, and hence a Nilagiri areal feature – or perhaps, to be more precise, a feature covering the 'true,' 'autochthonous,' 'indigenous' Nilagiri language-groups (Toda, Kota, Kuṟumba)?<sup>75</sup> Examples: *no'r-* 'to see': stem (originally S<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>73</sup> The Jēnu Ku. form – nasalized *ā* followed by the demivoiced bilabial nasalized fricative *w* – quite strikingly preserves what may be the transitional shape of this form 'half way between' Old Kannaḍa *nām* and Modern Kannaḍa *nāvu*.

<sup>74</sup> Or should we rather say the S<sup>2</sup> stem in agreement with M. B. Emeneau 1958 and, especially, 1967: 366f.?

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Emeneau 1967. – When he wrote this paper, he argued that this extension of S<sup>2</sup> was an innovation shared in common by Toda and Kota, and by these two languages only, and hence this trait was evidence for classing them as a "Nilgiris subgroup." The

extended to both non-past and past base) *noṛ-d-*; *o-* 'to go': stem *o-d-*; *koḍ-* 'to give': stem *koḍ-t-*; *ba-/ba-* 'to come': stem *ba-nn-* /*ba-nd-*; *ir-* 'to be': stem *idd-* (*iddenu* 'I am, I was'). Cf. *nenne na'n' ninag' aṇa koḍte'nu* 'I gave you-sg. money yesterday': *na' na'lega ninag' aṇa koḍte'nu* 'I'll give you money tomorrow'; *bara va'ra wruḡu o'denu* 'I'll go home coming week': *o'da va'ra wruḡu o'denu* 'I went home last week'; *nanagu i'ga ta' nondadu* 'I have pains right now'; *na'n' kaṇḍiṇa bannenu* 'I'll certainly come.'

Seeing my surprise and delight, my informant added with a smile, *ella oṇḍu ta'* 'it's all the same,' referring to the identity of verb-forms. He was very intelligent, and at once grasped what I was so eagerly investigating. The extension of the past stem (S<sup>2</sup>) to both past and non-past tenses in Jēnu Kuṛumba cannot be doubted; it is a striking feature, but, as shown by Toda and Kota, not an isolated phenomenon <sup>76</sup>.

Another important feature is an inclusive: exclusive distinction between the suffixes of the 1st pers. plural: *bannewu* 'we-incl. came; come': *bannemu* 'we-excl. came; come.' Cf. *na'ṅga tinbade o'demu* 'we-excl. are going to eat' <sup>77</sup>.

There is no polite form of the imperative; there are only two imperative forms: sg. imp. equals simple stem; the pl. imp. suffix is *-nu*, cf. *ba'* 'come!,' *ba'nu* 'come-pl.!', *tinnu* 'eat!,' *tinnunu* 'eat-pl.!' <sup>78</sup>

A thorough investigation and description of the Jēnu Kuṛumba language of the Kāṭṭu Nāyakas must only be commenced. However, even a simple sketch like the one outlined above shows that it is a tribal speech of its own, and that its investigation may play an important role not only in Nilagiri areal linguistics, but also in the historical and comparative studies of Tamil and Kannaḍa, and of South Dravidian in general <sup>79</sup>.

fact that Jēnu Ku. undoubtedly shares the same innovation alters somewhat the picture; I suspect that at least some Kuṛumba languages will have to be included in the particular subgroup. Not so Iṛula: the various dialects of Iṛula all manifest two stems – S<sup>1</sup> and S<sup>2</sup>, i. e., non-past and past.

<sup>76</sup> That my informants did not furnish me with imprecise or distorted information ('to please me!') may be seen from the fact that I noticed down scraps of their own proper conversation in the course of which one of them said *i'ga ta' na' tinbade o'denu* 'now I'm going to eat,' and the other then said to us *na'ṅga tinbade o'demu* 'we-excl. are going to eat.' The S<sup>2</sup> stem was quite clearly used to indicate a future event; *o-* corresponds etymologically to DED 3734: Tamil *pō* 'to go,' Kannaḍa *ōgu*. The S<sup>2</sup> morph *-d-* is odd, but when compared with Old Tamil *pōtuv-* it becomes less so. Cf. also the past tense *hōd-* of the Kannaḍa verb *hōgu* 'to go'.

<sup>77</sup> The exclusive: inclusive dimension in the 1st pers. pl. of the verb is confirmed by the same feature found in Iṛula, cf. Zvelebil 1973: 24.

<sup>78</sup> To test the absence of polite imperative the informant was asked to utter such sentences as 'Grandfather, come!' and 'Sir, come!' In both cases, he used the sg. imp. *ba'*, cf. *ettan, ba'* and *dore, ba'*. For pl. cf. *ella dore ni'ṅg' ella ce'ri ba'nu* 'all sirs, you all sirs come to the village!'

<sup>79</sup> A list of several hundred Jēnu Kuṛumba lexical items will be published separately. A quick glance at the list shows beyond any doubt that Jēnu Ku. cannot be regarded as a Kannaḍa dialect: cf., e. g., Jēnu Ku. *kaṇaya* 'well' (Tamil *kiṇayu*; Kannaḍa *bāvi*); *nari* [nəri], also *doḍḍanari* 'tiger' (Tamil *nari* 'tiger, jackal'; Kannaḍa *nari* 'jackal, fox'); *akkan* 'elder sister' (only in inscriptional Tamil, Kota and Toda; Kannaḍa *akka*).

### 7. Šōlegas

My interest in the Šōlegas was first aroused when I heard a version of the Iṛula origin story (in 1976) in which the Šōlegas had a prominent place: they were created almost simultaneously with the first Iṛulas by *Rāma* and *Sītā*, but they were regarded by the Iṛulas as being so ugly that the Iṛulas did not want to live in their immediate neighbourhood. Nevertheless, according to this myth, there must have been a close relationship between the Šōlegas and the Iṛulas since these two peoples were created by the gods as the first (human) tribes whereas all the other tribes and peoples originated later, and their origin was human generation, not divine creation.

In the great ancestor myth of the Iṛula-speaking Ūrālis, the Šōlegas figure even more prominently: being the descendants of *Billaya*, the younger brother of *Kāraya* who is the ancestor of the Ūrālis, they are like 'brothers' to the Ūrālis. In fact, the Ūrālis seem to have a particular 'love-hate' relationship with the Šōlegas: on the one hand, according to their accounts they owe to the Šōlegas much of their skill and knowledge (recognizing certain tubers as edible, rudimentary forms of slash-and-burn agriculture, etc.), on the other hand they repeatedly assert themselves as *not* being Šōlegas but an independent people, having their own distinct identity – that of the Iṛula-speaking Ūrāli.

According to the mythology and the other traditional accounts of the Iṛulas of the Nilagiris and of the Ūrālis of the Kambatarāyan and Biligiri Hills, then, a close relationship should exist between the three tribes of Nilagiri Iṛulas, Ūrālis, and Šōlegas.

The nature of this presumably close relationship, however, was completely unknown. My main objective was, therefore, to try to find out the nature and the degree of the mutual relationship among the Nilagiri Iṛulas, the Ūrālis, and the Šōlegas. After a brief but very fruitful fieldwork in Gundri and Būdi-māḍu, I was able to recognize and to conclude that – without any doubt – the Ūrālis of that area belonged to the large Iṛula-speaking tribal complex; that they were a separate, strictly endogamous tribe of Ūrālis but that their language was, clearly, only an Iṛula dialect. That also explains why many other tribes of the larger Nilagiri area designate the Iṛulas as \*Ūrālis (cf. Kota *wra'li*, Kuṛumba *wra'yi*, Badugu *wrvi*).

The relationship of the Iṛula-speaking tribes with the Šōlegas, however, is a much more complex matter, ridden with problems.

On 20.3.1978, I was able, in the Mudumalai Wild Life Sanctuary (Gudalur Taluk), at Masinaguḍi, to gather my first information on the Šōlegas. Chemban, a Paṇiya born some 45 years ago in the Gudalur area and employed in the Wild Life Sanctuary at Masinaguḍi, assured me that there exists a tribe in the region, called Šōlegas alias Šōlanāyikas (they lived, according to him, e. g., at Ānegatṭi). An energetic search for a Šōlega informant followed. My assistant, Mr. J. D. Rajiah, to whom I am greatly indebted, discovered a willing informant, a young man called Kariyan, who was a member of the Šōlegaru tribe.

7.1 The literature on the Šōlegas does not comprise even a dozen items<sup>80</sup>. The best is Thurston (1903*a*), Thurston and Rangachari (1909*a*), and Nanjundayya and Iyer (1931). However, all these data are antiquated, unreliable, meagre, and inexact.

The Šōlegas (also termed Sholiga, Sholaga) inhabit scattered settlements, many of them still in the interior of the forest, in the borderland between Karnataka and Tamilnadu, in particular the area of the slopes of the Biligiri-Rangan hills on the southeastern border of Karnataka. There is a vague tradition that their 'original' home was the Ānamala forest.

According to some tribal ancestor myths, they are the descendants of *Kāraya*, according to other accounts of his brother *Billaya*<sup>81</sup>. There is variously stated and interpreted relationship between the god *Mādēśvara* (*Madheswara*, *Mādēśura*), (Biligiri) *Raṅgan*, and *Kāray(y)a* and *Billay(y)a*. It will be the task of future research into tribal mythology of the area – particularly the mythology of the Nilagiri Iṛulas, Kasabas, Ūrālis, and Šōlegas – to investigate this complex relationship. Here I can only mention the meagre data I possess on this matter.

Biligiri *Raṅgan* is a 'Vaiṣṇava' god worshipped by the Šōlegas, just like the Iṛulas worship another *Raṅga*, residing on Rangaswamy Peak. Apart from this (supreme?) god, there are two guardian tribal deities, namely *Mādēśvara* and *Kārayya* – again, in agreement with the Ūrālis. *Kārayya* is, at the same time, the culture-hero of the Šōlegas, being the son of a Šōlega woman, *Sonkamma*, and of *Mādēśvara* (cf. the outline of the myth, note 81).

According to another version, it was Biligiri *Raṅgan* who married one of their women and hence the Šōlegas regard the god as their brother-in-law.

Various authors agree that the Šōlegas also worship (or worshipped) tiger and even its footprints, and they are credited with the power of charming tigers. When commencing an agricultural operation, they place the plough near an ant-hill and burn incense for it. Possession and religious frenzy is a

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Aiyappan 1948: 128ff.; Gopalakrishnan 1963: 116; Gurubasave Gowda 1968: 13–18; Irudayanath 1970: 108–122; Nanjundayya and Iyer 1931: 502ff.; Rivers 1903: 3–18; Rao, K. L. N. 1951/II: 164–169; Thurston 1903: 202–213; Thurston and Rangachari 1909/6: 369–386.

<sup>81</sup> A Šōlega ancestor story tells us that god *Mādēśvara* once went to see *Niri Šōlegayya* at his home but did not find him. Therefore he requested the Šōlega's wife *Sonkamma* to give him some food. She replied that as she had no dress to put on she was ashamed to appear before him naked. *Mādēśvara* made for her a dress from plantain fibres and placed it at the door of the hut. She dressed herself and gave him food. He was satisfied and blessed her that she would have children; but made her promise that her first-born would be his. As the result of this encounter *Sonkamma* conceived and became big with child; she gave birth to a son whose name was *Kārayya*. She handed the child to *Mādēśvara* as promised. *Kārayya* thereafter entrusted him with the task of looking after the jungle buffaloes, supporting himself with the milk of the animals. After some time, *Kārayya* went in search of his father, and found him in the jungle. *Niri Šōlegayya* was well pleased with the boy. Then *Mādēśvara* placed *Kārayya* on the top of a tapering stone and deified him. *Kārayya* remained a bachelor, and became the culture-hero of the Šōlegas since he had several children who were the Šōlegas' ancestors.

frequent phenomenon; god is believed to be talking through the *pūjāri*. Snakes, too, are worshipped, as well as low-caste Hindu mother-goddesses and *grāmadevatā*.

My Šōlega informant maintained that a few decades ago, his ancestors still lived exclusively in *sholas* (i. e., dry jungles at about 1000 m elevation), in caves and tree-tops, and ate roots, tubers, fruits, honey, and small game. Honey-gathering is still important. Where the hive is of a smaller variety (so called *kiri jēnu* 'small honey'), they merely remove the comb but they smoke out the bees before they carry the hive. When the hive is in an inaccessible place or on a precipitous rock, they either erect a scaffold or let down a ladder from the rock. It is believed that a man in pollution will be attacked by the bees if he attempts to collect the honey. The month of June-July is favourable for the collection of honey, especially of the larger type (*doḍḍa jēnu*). However, the 'small honey' is considered superior in taste and in medicinal virtue.<sup>82</sup>

Recently, the Šōlegas – so *Kariyan* maintained – moved out of the jungles, but did not take to agriculture; according to his knowledge, they are neither farmers nor pastoralists, but labourers. They own no property, no lands, no houses. They work as cowherds, as estate-labourers, and for the forest department, collecting wood and forest-produce, and as watchmen. They also maintain that deep in the jungle there still are people who live "with animals and like animals," and who run away from anyone they see, hiding deeper in the interior of the forest.

7.2 The Šōlegas call themselves *šo'legā* or *šo'lagā*, pl. *šo'legaru*, *šo'lagaru*; their language *šo'lagaru maṭṭu*. It has been characterized by Nanjundayya and Iyer (1931: 592) as a "dialect of Tamil with occasionally a few of Canarese or Telugu words intermixed," "but their accent" being "different from that of Madras." This is of course an entirely incorrect statement. However, Gurubasave Gowda's (1968) characterization of "Sholiga" as a "dialect of Kannada" is also off the mark. The *šo'lagaru maṭṭu* – like all tribal speeches of the area – is an 'independent' tribal language, closely akin to Kannada, particularly to Old Kannada.

Here are the main characteristic features of its phonology.

1. No palatalization of initial \**k*- before front vowels, cf. *kimi* 'ear' (DED 1645a); *kenna*, *kekke* 'cheek' (prob. DED 1189: Kannada *kanna* 'the upper cheek'); *kempu* 'red' (DED 1607); *kembulu* 'cough' (DED 1634).

2. \**p*->\**h*-> zero: *allu* 'tooth' (DED 3288); *aḷa*, *aliya* 'old' (DED 3299); *asuru* 'green, light blue' (DED 3161); *aṣi* 'hunger' (DED 3165a); *andi* 'pig' (DED 3326); *uli* 'tiger' (DED 3532); *uḷi* 'sour' (DED 3546), *u* 'flower' (DED 3564); *erugu* 'be born' (DED 3622); *okkulu* 'navel' (DED 3652). In a few instances, the intermediate *h*- is preserved: *hālu* 'milk' (DED 3370).

<sup>82</sup> Some Šōlega terms: *je'nu* or *je'nutuppu* 'honey'; *je'nu ṛṭṭu* 'pollen'; *je'nukunni* 'honey-bee'; *tudejēnu* 'honey inside the tree'; *alimāri* 'larva of bees.'

3. Šōlega shares with Kannaḍa the development \*v-> b-, cf. *ba'y* 'mouth' (DED 4385); *ba'liyēṇṇu* 'banana' (Tamil *vālai-p-palam*, DED 4403 + DED 3299); *bellu* 'finger' (Tamil *viral*, Kannaḍa *beral*, DED 4436); *belli* 'white' (DED 4524); *be'ra* 'other' (DED 4564).

4. With the other Nilagiri languages, Šōlega shares the centralized vowels: *ēle* 'hair (on head)'<sup>83</sup>, *bēggiri* 'rib,' *kōṭṭu* 'neck,' *mōyiru* 'hair (in general)' *mōyi* 'body' (in compounds, *mi-*).

5. Like Jēnu Kuṟumba, it has nasalized vowels: *ji'vā* 'life,' *goṇā* 'phlegm,' *aūsti* 'medicine,' *mōyi* 'body.'

6. Apart from *c* [tʃ], Šōlega also possesses at least two sibilants, *s* [s] and *ś* [ʃ], cf. *cakkala* [tʃ-] 'skin,' *ceruga* [tʃ-] 'brass pot,' *santo'sa* 'pleasure,' *asta* 'foot,' *aūsti* 'medicine,' *mansuru* 'people,' *mili's* 'soft' (cf. Tamil *mellicu*, DED 4167); *arśṇa* 'yellow'<sup>84</sup>, *šo'legā* 'Šōlega man,' *aśi* 'hunger' (cf. Tamil *paci*).

7. The formative morpheme \*-ay which corresponds to Literary Tamil -ai, Spoken Tamil -e, Iṟula -e, has in Šōlega regular correspondence -a: *aga* [ʷaga] 'smoke' (Tamil *pukai*, Spoken Tamil *poge*, Kannaḍa *poge*), *ela* 'leaf,' *eṇṇa* 'oil,' *ola* 'fireplace,' *kara* 'tank,' *tala* 'head,' *mana* 'house,' *ma'la* 'garland,' etc.

These features, on the one hand, characterize Šōlega as being very close to Kannaḍa (particularly features 1, 2, and 3), on the other hand they show that Šōlega is *not* a Kannaḍa dialect; the phonemic centralized vowels or the final -a (cf. \**manay* 'house': Tamil *maṇai*; Kannaḍa *mane*, Koḍagu *mane*, Tuḷu *manē*, Šōlega *mana*, Malayalam *mana*, Kota Toda *man*, DED 3911; or \**karay* 'shore, bank': Tamil *karai*, Iṟula *kere*, Kannaḍa, Koḍagu *kare*, Tuḷu *karē*, Spoken Tamil *kare*, Šōlega Malayalam Telugu *kara*, Kota Toda *kar*, DED 1087) very clearly point to fundamental differences in sound-developments between Šōlega and Kannaḍa.

A striking feature of the Šōlega lexicon is a relatively high number of loanwords from Indo-Aryan, even for rather basic items, cf. *asta* 'foot'<sup>85</sup>, *aūsti* 'medicine' (via Spoken Kannaḍa *avsti* 'medicine'), *cakra* 'wheel,' *jara* 'fever'<sup>86</sup>, *ji'vā* 'life,' *di'pa* 'lamp,' *nidda* 'sleep' (cf. Kannaḍa *nidde* 'sleep'), *pa'tra* 'vessel,' etc.

Notes on morphology: In contrast to Jēnu Kuṟumba, Šōlega has relatively rich overt plural markers. A statement is possible on the basis of the available data.

All neuter nouns except those ending in -ā take -ga as the plural suffix: *eruḍu maraga* 'two tress,' *ella alluga* 'all teeth' (zero allomorph occurs, too: *ella mara* 'all trees'). All nouns ending in -ā except *šo'legā* 'Šōlega man' and

<sup>83</sup> To be connected with DED 429: Tamil *ilai* 'yarn, single-twisted thread,' Malayalam *ila* 'a single thread; long hair,' Kota *el*, Old Kannaḍa *ele*.

<sup>84</sup> To be connected with DED 183: Tamil *aricinam* 'turmeric,' Kota *arcn* 'saffron (i. e., turmeric),' Toda *arsn* 'saffron, yellow,' Kannaḍa *arisina*, *arsiṇa*, etc. 'turmeric.' *Curcuma longa*. Cf. Sanskrit *haridrā*.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Sanskrit *hasta* '-hand,' *hastapāda* 'hands and feet, limbs of the body.'

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Spoken Kannaḍa *jora*, *jvara*, Lit. Kannaḍa *jvara* 'fever,' Sanskrit *jvara*.

*huḍgā* 'boy' take *-diru* as the pl. suffix: *akkā* (< \**akkan*, cf. Jēnu Ku.: pl. *akkadīru* 'elder sisters'; *jīvā*: pl. *jīvadīru* 'lives, souls'). All other nouns take *-ru* as the pl. suffix, cf. *avve* 'mother,' pl. *avveru*; *šo'legā*, pl. *šo'legaru*.

The case-system suffixes are Kannaḍa-like, but not identical with the Kannaḍa forms: thus, whereas the standard Kannaḍa dative suffix is *-ge/-ke*, in Šōlega we have *-ga/-ka*, *-iga/-aka*, e. g., *managa* 'to the house,' *nanaga* 'to me,' *ulika* 'to the tiger,' *bidir-iga* 'to the bamboo,' *av-aka* 'to them.'

Specific Šōlega feature: numerals 1-8 end in *-o*, cf. *oṇḍo*, *eruḍo*, *mu'ro*, *na'ko*, *ayido*, *a'ro*, *ē'lo*, *ēṇḷo*. 'Nine' is *ombattu*, 'ten' *attu*, 'twenty' *iḷḷattu*.

The system of personal pronouns is very much like in modern Kannaḍa:

Singular	Plural
1. <i>na'nu</i>	<i>nā'vu</i>
2. <i>ni'nu</i>	<i>nī'vu</i>
3. <i>avā</i>	
<i>ava</i> / <i>avūḷu</i>	<i>avuru</i>
<i>adu</i>	<i>avu</i>

The verb-system is most interesting. The tense-dichotomy is non-past: past, like, e. g., in Iṟula or Old Tamil. The non-past tense is formed somewhat like in Kannaḍa, the past tense somewhat like in Tamil; however – and in this particular feature the fact is very much obvious – it is a system *sui generis*, and it is indeed a grave error to see in Šōlega a 'mixture of' or a 'transition between' Tamil and Kannaḍa. A comparison of the Tamil, Kannaḍa and Šōlega systems proves beyond doubt the relative systemic 'independence' of the Šōlega paradigm.

Spoken Tamil		Spoken Kannaḍa		Šōlega	
('Standard')		(Southern Dialect, Mysore)		Non-Past Tense	
Present Tense		Present-Future Tense		Non-Past Tense	
Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.
1. <i>sey-r-ē</i>	<i>sey-r-ō</i>	1. <i>māḍ-t-īni</i>	<i>māḍ-t-īvi</i>	1. <i>ma'ḍ-t-ini</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-t-imi</i>
2. <i>sey-r-e</i>	<i>sey-r-i'nga</i>	2. <i>māḍ-t-ī</i>	<i>māḍ-d-īri</i>	2. <i>ma'ḍ-t-i</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-t-iri</i>
3.m. <i>sey-r-ā</i>	<i>sey-r-a'nga</i>	3.m. <i>māḍ-t-āne</i>	<i>māḍ-t-āre</i>	3.m. <i>ma'ḍ-t-anā</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-t-ara</i>
f. <i>sey-r-a</i>		f. <i>māḍ-t-āḷe</i>		f. <i>ma'ḍ-t-aḷa</i>	
n. <i>sey-r-adu</i>	<i>sey-r-adu</i>	n. <i>māḍ-t-ade</i>	<i>māḍ-t-āve</i>	n. <i>ma'ḍ-t-ada</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-t-ava</i>
Past Tense		Past Tense		Past Tense	
Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.
1. <i>seyē-d-ē</i>	<i>sey-d-ō</i>	1. <i>māḍ-id-e</i>	<i>māḍ-id-vu</i> , <i>-id-vi</i>	1. <i>ma'ḍ-d-ē</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-d-ō</i> / <i>ma'ḍ-in-ē</i>
2. <i>sey-d-e</i>	<i>sey-d-i'nga</i>	2. <i>māḍ-id-ī</i>	<i>māḍ-id-ri</i>	2. <i>ma'ḍ-d-e</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-d-iri</i> / <i>ma'ḍ-in-e</i>
3.m. <i>sey-d-ā</i>	<i>sey-d-a'nga</i>	3.m. <i>māḍ-id-a</i>	<i>māḍ-id-ru</i>	3.m. <i>ma'ḍ-in-ā</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-d-arū</i> / <i>ma'ḍ-id-arū</i>
f. <i>sey-d-a</i>		f. <i>māḍ-id-ḷu</i>		f. <i>ma'ḍ-d-a</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-id-arū</i>
n. <i>sey-d-adu</i>	<i>sey-d-adu</i>	n. <i>māḍ-tu</i>	<i>māḍ-id-vu</i>	n. <i>ma'ḍ-d-attu</i>	<i>ma'ḍ-d-o</i>

Instances: *i'g'ta aṇṇa ma'dtini* 'today indeed we prepare food'; *na'aku aṇṇa ma'dtini* 'I shall cook tomorrow'; *nenadisa aṇṇa ma'ddō* 'we cooked yesterday'; *ivotu (ivotuku) o'ytini* 'now I go'; *ba'liyeṇ' tintini* 'I eat a banana'; *nā'vu suḍtini* 'we fry'; *nanaga nidda battada* 'I'm sleepy (i. e., 'sleep comes to me)'; *kayi tolatimi* 'we wash [our] hands'; *ni'r mi'timi* 'we take bath'; *aṇṇa uṇṭimi* 'we eat (the main meal)'; *aṇṇa uṇḍō* 'we ate (the main meal)'; *nā'vu suṭṭō* 'we fried'; *kuḍittō* 'we drank.'

Imperative has two forms, sing. and plur., cf. *ma'ḍu* 'do-sg.!', *ma'ḍi* 'do-pl.!', *o'gu* 'go!', *o'gi* 'go-pl.!',

Gerund: *ma'ḍi* 'having done (past)', *ma'ḍte* 'doing (non-past)', *ma'ḍade* 'without doing (neg.).'

Relative participle: *ma'ḍida* 'who did (past)', *ma'ḍa* 'who does (non-past)', *ma'ḍada* 'who does/did not (neg.).'

Permissive: *ma'ḍaō* 'may do', *no'ḍaō* 'may see.'

Verbum existentiae: *ada, ada'* (emph.) 'is, exists,' e. g., *no'ḍu, alli na'y ada* 'look, there's a dog there!', *marattili kēpi ada* 'there's a monkey in the tree.'

In future investigation, one should compare the Šōlega verb forms primarily with the forms of Old Kannaḍa: thus, e. g., it seems that the 3rd pers. n. pl. past tense *ma'ḍ-d-o* 'they (neut.) did' can be profitably compared with the older and literary Kannaḍa forms *māḍ-id-avu*/*māḍ-id-uvu*, and the 'surprising' *-o* explained as a development of *\*-uvu*/*\*-avu* > *-o*. However, this paper cannot serve as platform for such historical and comparative excursions. What has been outlined above the language of the Šōlegas is sufficient to characterize this tribal speech as to its most striking affinities, and to classify it rather with the Kannaḍoid than with the Tamiloid speech-forms of the larger Nilagiri area. The connection with the Iṛula tribal complex is rather tenuous; the one Iṛula-speaking tribe with whom the Šōlegas seem to be somehow deeply and closely connected are the Ūrāḷis. This connection however does emphatically not concern the language-ties. Šōlega seems rather to go with such more or less Kannaḍa-like languages as Ālu Kuṛumba, Bēṭṭa Kuṛumba, or Jēnu Kuṛumba. In contrast, we have in the Nilagiri area clearly a Tamil-like group of tribal languages, which have close ties to Tamil and Malayalam: Iṛula dialects, Paṇiya, Pālu Kuṛumba, and the Kota-Toda subgroup.

We have, I hope, been able to elucidate to some extent the complex problems of identification and classification, concerning some of the tribes living nowadays in the larger Nilagiri region – particularly problems concerning the Iṛulas proper, Kasabas and Ūrāḷis, the Kuṛumbas, the Kāḍu Nāyikas, and the Šōlegas. Concluding, I would like to suggest a very tentative hypothesis concerning the \*Iṛavuḷar (DED 442) 'nation'. More than some 2000 years ago, these 'hill people' formed a large aboriginal 'nation,' i. e., a tribal complex of possibly more than a hundred thousand souls (or possibly even several hundreds of thousands), fragmented into a number of tribes and tribelets, each with its own boundaries, its own dialect, its own set of specializations and peculiarities of custom. Racially, anthropologically, this 'nation' was composed of basic Negrito and Proto-Australoid elements; the Negrito ele-

ments were largely absorbed by the Proto-Australoids, but they managed to survive in a few features in some of the tribes and tribelets of the \*Iṛavuḷar 'nation.' This 'nation' was linguistically and culturally completely Dravidianized, although there may be a few possible survivals in culture (behaviour patterns, myths, religion, etc.), and – who knows – even in language (though that is doubtful). However, deep in the tribal memory – in the collective memory expressed in ancient (ancestor and origin) myths transgressing the limits of individual tribes, this unity is still remembered: there are the common 'ancestors' and culture-heroes<sup>87</sup>; there are the common motifs<sup>88</sup>, common deities<sup>89</sup>, certain common forms of worship (snake in ant-hill, ant-hill as such, etc.), and, perhaps, a few common linguistic features, like the centralization of vowels. Those 'original' pre-Dravidian Negrito-cum-Proto-Australoid \*Iṛavuḷar may be identified with neolithic hunters and food-gatherers who practiced, too, sporadic swidden cultivation. Later, after the process of Dravidianization began, this tribal complex split, in and round the Nilagiri area, into the tribes of Iṛulas proper, Ūrāḷis, Kasabas, and Šōlegas<sup>90</sup>.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 Owing mainly to fieldwork performed by D. B. Kapp and myself between 1968–1978, we are in the position to conclude that, in the larger Nilagiri area of South India, there live – apart from the well-known and well-defined communities of the Todas, Kotas, and Badagas – four Iṛula communities (the Iṛula tribal set), seven Kuṛumba communities, one tribe of the Šōlegas and one tribe of the Paṇiyas.

8.2 The sixteen tribal or semitribal groups known to date to live in the larger Nilagiri area are:

- |                  |                      |                       |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Todas         | 6. Muḍugas           | 12. Vēṭṭe Kāḍu Iṛulas |
| 2. Kotas         | 7. Jēnu Kuṛumbas     | 13. Ūrāḷi Iṛulas      |
| 3. Badagas       | 8. Bēṭṭa Kuṛumbas    | 14. Kasabas           |
| 4. Pālu Kuṛumbas | 9. Muḷḷu Kuṛumbas    | 15. Paṇiyas           |
| 5. Ālu Kuṛumbas  | 10. Ūrāḷi Kuṛumbas   | 16. Šōlegas           |
|                  | 11. Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas |                       |

<sup>87</sup> Like *Kāray(y)a* and *Billay(y)a*, common to Šōlegas and Ūrāḷis, and, may be, reflected in the two brothers of the Iṛula *Raṅgasāmi* myth.

<sup>88</sup> The motif of *Mādappa* (= *Mādēšvara*) being a 'shoemaker' and making shoes for the evil demon *Savana* (*Sauṇḍa*, *Cavanan*, etc.), in order to kill him: this motif is common to Mele Nāḍu Iṛulas, Ūrāḷis, and Šōlegas.

<sup>89</sup> E. g., the Iṛula Nilagiri *Raṅga* and the Šōlega Biligiri *Raṅga*; or *Madheswara* (i. e., *Mādēšvara*, *Mallešvara*, *Mādēšūrsāmi* etc.) who is in this or that form common to the Iṛulas, Ūrāḷis, and Šōlegas.

<sup>90</sup> The very ancient connection between Šōlegas and Iṛulas is evident also from the fact that, sometimes, the Šōlegas call themselves Kaḍu Ēṛaligaru (quoted by Nanjundayya and Iyer as "Cād Eraligaru"), i. e., 'Forest Iṛulas.'

As for the term \*Iṛavuḷar > Tamil Iṛuḷar, it does not occur in the earliest Tamil texts, but it occurs in the early medieval dictionary *Tivākaram* (prob. before ca. 850 A. D.)

8.3 It was only during the research in the field performed in 1978 that I was able to establish three important and hitherto unknown (or disputed) facts:

a) that the Ūrālis of Gobi and Satyamangalam Taluks (Coimbatore District) are a tribal group belonging to the Iṛula tribal set, their language being a dialect of Iṛula;

b) that the Jēnu Kuṛumbas and the Kāḍu Nāyikas are one and the same tribe; sometimes, they also call themselves Kāḍu Kuṛumbar;

c) that the Šōlegas are also known as Šōlanāyikar or (locally) Buṇḍā-šōlegar.

For the first time, the fieldresearch of 1978 resulted in gathering basic linguistic data on the Ūrāli dialect of Iṛula, and on the two hitherto undescribed languages of Kāṭṭu Nāyakas (Jēnu Kuṛumba) and Šōlegas of the Gūḍalūr-Masiṇaguḍi area.

This picture is much more precise than any presented thus far; however, it may and undoubtedly will be refined in the future.

As one looks at the linguistic map of the larger Nilagiri area and the surrounding linguistics space and considers the type and character of the languages involved one finds on the one hand the relatively sharply delimited large literary languages Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannaḍa, and on the other hand a number of tongues spoken by smaller, non-literate communities. Most of these – with the exception of Badugu (most likely a Kannaḍa *dialect*), Toda, and Kota – have the character of ‘mixed’ languages in the sense that they share various phonological, grammatical, and lexical features with Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannaḍa in an almost ‘non-systematic’ manner which points towards much borrowing and diffusion of features (in addition to specific later innovations, and a few typical and specific Nilagiri areal traits). This leads us to the assumption that such languages as Iṛula, Šōlega, Kuṛumba, or Paṇiya are not to be considered direct ‘descendants,’ ‘branched-off’ dialects of Proto-Tamil, or Proto-Kannaḍa, or Proto-Malayalam, but rather speech-forms which were evolved by the tribal communities – originally linguistically *non-Dravidian* – from “mixtures” of various pre-Tamil, pre-Kannaḍa, pre-Malayalam dialects which were, some 2500–2000 years ago, superimposed on these (Negrito-cum-Proto-Australoid) tribals by the conquering Dravidians<sup>91</sup>.

in the meaning of “the inhabitants of the mountain-tract(s)” (*kuṛiñci nilamākkal*). We believe with G. Diffloth that the Iṛula name of their tribe and language, *ēṛla*, *ēṛḷa*, is derived from this old Tamil form *iṛavūlar*.

<sup>91</sup> I presume the process of the Dravidian linguistic superimposition to have taken place at that prehistoric period when the crystallization of different branches of South-Dravidian (i. e., Tamil, Kannaḍa, and Later Malayalam) had not yet been accomplished, in other words, when the conquering Dravidians were still speaking a ‘unified’ though dialectically variegated South-Dravidian speech showing trends which later developed into Tamil-Malayalam and Kannaḍa features. (Later, of course, additional borrowing and diffusion of Kannaḍa and Tamil-Malayalam features occurred and influenced characteristically the tribal speeches.) Also, I presume the process of the linguistic Dravidianization of the tribes to have taken place not in the Nilagiri area proper but very probably in the plains or low countries North, East, and South of the Nilagiris whence – already

The result are tribal languages belonging undoubtedly to the South Dravidian sub-family, which are 'more or less' "Tamiloid," or "Kannaḍoid," or Malyalam-"like" (showing a few retentions of older stages of these large languages) and manifest a few typical innovations of their own and a few features which are typical only for the Nilagiri area. They may also have preserved a few (lexical) substratum (pre-Dravidian) forms.

It will be precisely one of the main tasks of our future linguistic work to prove this hypothesis of the superimposition of various ('mixed') dialects of Proto-South Dravidian upon the originally non-Dravidian tribes of the area.

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Dravidianized as to their speech – they were driven into the jungles on the slopes of the mountains, and, precisely because they landed in a political periphery and in remote mountainous and jungly areas, they preserved their 'mixed' languages whereas in the plains the conquering 'South Dravidians' developed – in agreement with economic, administrative, and cultural needs – full-fledged literary languages of Tamil, Kannaḍa, and (Later) Malayalam. It is striking – in this connection – that both the Kurumbas and the Irulas have more or less vague memories of their (more prestigious) ancient existence in the plains, and some vague traditions in their lore of a movement or movements from the plains to the hills.

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