The title of this thesis should actually read:

Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India. The formal change in the title could not be made due partly to official red tape and partly to my own ignorance of academic procedure. Hence I am compelled to preface this thesis with an explanation if not an apologia - Contrary to what the present title might suggest, the thesis is as vitally concerned with textiles, loom technology, domestic and foreign trade in cloth and production organisation as with the sociological aspects - the status and role of the weaver communities in medieval society.

Clarification is again due with regard to the period taken up for study in this thesis. Bernard Shaw says somewhere in 'The Apple Cart', "Centuries count for but little in the lifetime of great nations". This remark far from being frivolous is in fact a profound one. When a theme in history is best studied in terms of epochs or phases, to straight-lace it in pure chronology would be poor methodology. The seven hundred years covered in this study of textiles and weavers, have been divided into three clear and distinct phases, what Gramsci has termed 'historical blocks' for purposes of analysis. This technique provides an insight into the dynamics of
handloom industry and weavers over a period of time. The first period roughly covers the later Cholas and is taken from the tenth to the middle of the fourteenth century. The second block is from the middle of the fourteenth to the sixteenth century which coincides with the period of the Vijayanagar empire. The last block is the seventeenth century which can itself be sub-divided into three phases in terms of the changes that took place in the course of this century. It is for this reason that sub-titles have been provided in this thesis only for the chapter on the seventeenth century. This makes the demarcation into three phases more clear.