CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Part I - Weaving in Antiquity

Weaving is probably the oldest profession in the world because the need for clothing is as basic as the need for food. In India this industry has a long history going back to the pre-historic times. Evidence of what appear to have been spindles have been found in several archaeological sites like Harappa and Atranji Khera\(^1\) in the North and Paiyampalli\(^2\) in the South. These were usually made either of arecanut beads or were circular pot sherds pierced with a hole.\(^3\) That weaving existed as early as 2300 B.C. can be seen by the impressions of cloth on terracotta seals and on potteries especially in the neolithic sites. Surprisingly, even actual evidence of cloth have survived in a few

\(^1\) In Etah district, U.P. See R.C. Gaur's report - Trial Trenching at Atranji Khera - 1961-62.

\(^2\) Tirupattur Taluq, North Arcot dist. Ancient India, 1964-65 and Indian Archaeology - A Review - 1964-65 and 1967-68. Also, K.S. Ramachandran, Archeology of South India, Tamil Nadu (Delhi, 1980) p.36-37, etc.

\(^3\) Such evidence has been found in most of the major archaeological sites reported in Ancient India and Indian Archaeology - A Review
archaeological sites like Harappa$^4$ and Adichchanallur$^5$ and in the Nilgiri hill excavations.$^6$

The earliest cloth was, however, made not of cotton but of bark fibres (vibalka) and the hairs of animals (rankava). In the Samhitās and Brahmanas there is no clear evidence of the weaving of cotton cloth. Even in the epics the reference is to kshauma (flax or linen) and kambala (sheep hair) rather than to karpāsa or cotton. The earliest mention of karpāsa or cotton cloth comes from Asavalāyana Grihya Sūtra and Latyayana Srauta Sūtra in connection with the material of the sacred thread of the brahmins during Śomayagna. The earliest mention of karpāsa or cotton cloth comes from Asavalāyana Grihya Sūtra and Latyayana Srauta Sūtra in connection with the material of the sacred thread of the brahmins during Śomayagna. From the third century B.C. onwards numerous instances

4. The material is a shroud or grave cloth.

5. In Tirunelvelī district. The site was excavated around 1900. I am very grateful to Mr.K.S.Ramachandran of the Archaeological Survey of India (New Delhi) for providing me with this evidence. The evidence can be dated between 2nd century B.C. and 1st century A.D.

6. Evidence of cloth wrapped around pottery is discussed in Brecks J.W., An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilgiris (London, 1837). This evidence, however, pertains to around 4th century A.D.


are available in Buddhist, Jain, Tamil and other literary texts of the weaving of several types of cloth, including cotton cloth. The Vinayapitaka (fourth century B.C.) mentions kshauma (linen), Karpāsa (cotton), Kauseya (tasar or wild silk), kambala (wool) and Sarna (of san hemp) and bhangā (of cannalis hemp).  

The various processes involved in weaving and the weaver’s loom are subjects that hold a prominent place in the texts of an early period. The Atharva Veda uses the loom as a powerful poetic imagery and says day and night spread light and darkness over the earth as weavers throw a shuttle on the loom.¹⁰ The Buddhist text Milindapanho (2nd century B.C.) refers to the various processes involved in the production of cloth "Sa ayam pinjītam, sa ayam kāntitam, sa ayam vāyītam."¹¹ The verse says that the cotton was picked, made into yarn, beaten, cleaned, combed, spun and woven.

The word pinjītam for loosening of the cotton is interesting because the term for the cotton carder’s bow is pinjana.¹² Positive evidence for the use of the carder’s bow is provided by the Atharva Veda.¹³

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10. Atharva Veda 10/7/42 cited in Moti Chandra, op. cit. p. 15.

bow comes from the Sangam texts Agananūru and Narrinai.

(between first and third centuries A.D.) The fluffy clouds in the sky after the rains are said to resemble cotton well beaten by the carder's bow. After the cotton was made soft it was spun into thread. The process of spinning seems to have been done primarily by women, especially widows. There are also several references to weaving in ancient literature. The Pāñchavimśa Brahmana describes an instance where the weaving seems to have been


14. Narrinai (ed.) A. Narayanaswami (Madras, 1967) stanza 247, line 4. This overwhelming evidence for the existence of the carder's bow during the early Christian era is to be contrasted with the opinion of Irfan Habib that the bow did not come into existence till the 12th - 13th century - Notes on Indian Textile Industry in S.C. Sarkar Felicitation, Volume, (New Delhi, 1976).

15. Cited in Wilhelm Rau, op.cit. p.16 Also the Puranānūru (ed.) U.V. Swaminathan (Madras, 1971), 125:6, 326:5, etc. Kantilya in his Arthashastra make similar injunctions: "He should get yarn spun out of wool, bark fibres, cotton, silk cotton, hemp and flax through widows, crippled women, women who have left their homes, through old female slaves of the king and through female slaves of temples whose service of the gods has ceased" - Arthashastra, (ed.) R.P. Kangle, 2 Vols. (Bombay, 1963) section 40.
The loom was both horizontal and vertical. The possible description of a horizontal loom occurs in the Rig Veda: "The sacrifice which has been covered on all sides by threads which have been stretched out ... these Gods weave they sit at the side of the threads and recite, weave to and fro ..." A clear description comes from the Atharva Veda, "the threads are stretched over six wooden pegs (mayukkam)" The unmistakable reference to the vertical loom also occurs in the Atharva Veda: "A man (Pumānis) weaves it, ties it up; a man hath borne it upon the firmament. (naka). These pegs propped up the sky; the chants they made shuttles (tasarah) for weaving."

The process of starching of the yarn and also the bleaching of the cloth comes from early literary texts of the Sangam age. Numerous vegetable dyes like kusumba, palasa and kunkuma are referred to in the Arthashastra. Another dye kampila is mentioned in the Sanskrit dictionary, Amarakosha. Silk cloth was dyed with either kusumba or pattranga. While palasa is an

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16. Panchavimsa Brahmana, 1, 8, 9 cited in Wihelm Rau, op.cit., p.16
17. Rig Veda, 10, 130, 1, quoted in Wihelm Rau, op.cit. p.17
18. Atharva Veda, 10, 7, 42 in Ibid., p.18
19. Ibid., 10, 7, 43 cd + 44 ab quoted in Ibid. p.19
yellow dye, even turmeric was used for obtaining the yellow colour. Indigo or nili was, of course, used for obtaining blue. Cloth dyed with indigo is referred to as nilakkachchai in the Puranānūru. In fact in South India huge brick vats used for dyeing cloth pertaining to the first second centuries A.D. have been unearthed from Arikamedu and Uraiyyū. South India was famous for the quality and variety of its fabrics from very early times. Sangam texts refer to the picking up fine cotton. One finds descriptions of "beautiful cloth so fine that the eye cannot follow


25. Puranānūru, op. cit., verse: 274


28. Puranānūru, 299. Also 125 and 326, etc.
the course of the yarn and cloth bearing such designs as to make it look like the slough of a snake." Some are described as being as soft as fresh blossoms and some as light as smoke. Fine woven cloth is said to be as delicate and transparent as the vapours of milk. Silk cloth is referred to as Pattādai in the Sangam texts. Garments were woven with borders or with embroidery on them. The sale of silk thread, cotton thread and cloth of many fibres is alluded to in the Silappadikāram.

There were separate streets for the weavers called kārugār vidi and aruvai vidi at Pūmpuhār or Kaviripūmpattinam (in Tanjavur dist.). Madurai also boasted of equally prosperous and skilled weavers. Even Kautilya in the Arthashāstra refers to the fine cloth of Madurai.

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29. Porunārarruppadai in Pattupattu, 383
30. Ibid. 393
31. Perumānārarruppadai in Pattupattu, 469
32. Porunārarruppadai, 155
33. Ibid., 155
34. Ibid., 392, especially lines 14-15 and 383 line 12.
36. Ibid., Canto V, stanzas 16-17
37. Ibid., Canto XIV, lines 205
The highly specialised nature of the textile industry even in the second or third century A.D. can be seen by the reference to the aruvai-vēnigār vīdi or the street of the cloth merchants where several kinds of bundles were piled up, each of a hundred cloths woven of cotton thread, hair or silk-thread.40 The existence of cloth merchants is also confirmed by an early Brahmi inscription from Alaganmalai of the second century A.D. which refers to the aruvai-vēnigār.41 An important poet of the Sangam age was known by the name of Madurai Aruvai Vēnigār - Elavēṭṭanār42 indicating that he must have been a cloth merchant of considerable importance. It is very interesting that Ilango adigal in his Silappadikāram refers to the weavers of Pūmpuhār dealing in fine fabrics of silk, fur and cotton.43 From this it appears that apart from the cloth merchants, the weavers also directly sold their own cloth. This point can be explained by the existence of wholesale shops as well as "streets of petty shops",44 the latter perhaps being the place where the weavers spread out their goods and sold them.

40. **Silappadikāram**, Canto XVI, lines 205-218
41. I. Mahadevan, 'Corpus of Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions', p.60, No.64 contained in R. Nagasamy (ed.) **Seminar on Inscriptions** (Madras, 1968)
42. His poetry figures in **Narminai Nañūru**, verse 344
43. **Silappadikāram**, Canto **XV**, 205-18
44. **Ibid.**
The importance of stitched garments in antiquity is clear from the evidence of contemporary sculptures and literary texts. The reference to süchi or needle and the use of a special wax to prevent the needle from rusting is referred to in the Chullavāgg. It also refers to sathak, i.e., scissors, katinha, a sort of embroidery frame as well as a device (thimble?) worn as finger gloves to prevent the hurting of the finger by the needle, made of gold or silver in the case of rich people and in the case of ordinary people, of shell or wood. The wearing of shirts is referred to in the Jātakas when the Bodhisattva is described as wearing a kanchuk. Many sculptures depict the weaving of the

45. Chullavāgg, 50.11.2, cited in Dr. Moti Chandra, op. cit., p. 42
46. The Abidāna Chintāmani, op. cit., verse 575 also refers to süchi-sūtra
47. Chullavāgg, 5.11.1 cited in Moti Chandra, op. cit, p. 43
48. Ibid, 5.11.3 cited in Ibid, p. 44
49. Ibid, 5.11.5 cited in Ibid, p. 44
50. Jātakas, 181, 261 in Ibid, p. 41
blouse or waistcoat (kanchuk) and trousers.  The common misunderstanding about the absence of stitched garments in ancient India is understandable on one account. Blouses or stitched garments were seldom worn by the upper classes or the royalty. Nor or they depicted on Gods and Goddesses. It is invariably the lower strata of professionals - Common soldiers, menials, elephant mahouts, palace attendants and singers and musicians who are shown wearing trousers and waistcoats. Very clear references to tailors are to be found in the Sangam literature of South India. The Silappadikāram refers to the bodyguards of the king as wearing shirt and a turban on the head. It also refers to the Tunṇakkārar or tailors. The reference to Tunṇār and


52. See the articles of Irfan Habib on History of Indian Technology. Especially 'The Historical Background of the popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th-17th centuries, Seminar on Ideas, Medieval India, Nov. 1965 (mimeo), p.8

53. *Silappadikāram*, Canto V, stanzas 32-33

tunnnavinajnar and also comes from the *Manimēkalai*. 55

The weavers from very early times were organised in guilds. The *Jātaṅga* refer to the eighteen professional divisions among whom the weavers are included. 56 The Nasik cave inscription of the early second century A.D. refers to an endowment of money made by *Usavaddita* to two guilds of weavers at Govardhana near Nasik 57 and from this we may infer the rise of guilds of merchants elsewhere as well. The Mandasor inscription of Malwa dated A.D. 437 refers to a community of silk weavers who built a temple to the sun god. 58 An excellent account of the organisation of the weaving industry itself can be gleaned from the ancient *Manusmṛiti* and more so from Kautilya's *Arthashāstra*. It appears from the *Arthashāstra* that under the Māuryas weaving was considered such an important industry that it was state-controlled. A special superintendent was appointed for yarns and textiles. A previous agreement was made with the weavers as regards the amount of work,

55. *Manimēkalai*, 28:39
57. *E.I.* Vol.VIII, pp.81-85
58. J.F. Fleet, Gupta Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, III Inscription No.18. The silk weavers to whom the record refers to as 'Pattavāyakās' are identified with the Pattunālūkāran weavers.
time and wage.59 After finding out the amount of yarn the weavers were to be supplied with oil and myrobalan unguents.60 The system of advancing of the material is very interesting. The Arthashastra says: "Employees of artisans capable of making good an article, those good at entrusting material and artisans working with their own capital should accept entrusted material with the guarantee of the guild. In case of death, the guild shall be responsible for the entrusted material."61 This statement indicates the existence of independent artisans as well as master-weavers. Wages were fixed according to the quality of cloth woven. Wages were reduced for exceeding the time limit, for shortness in measure and deficiency in quality.62 For most costly garments the wage was 1 panam for medium quality 1/2 panam and for lowest quality 1/4 panam. Double the amount was paid for dyed garments.63 The Arthashastra is the only ancient text which provides such detailed information on the organisation of the weaving industry. There is no parallel information for South India in this period.

60. Ibid, op.cit. Vol.II, Book 2, Chap.23, stanza 6
61. Ibid, Book IV, Chap.II, Sec.12, stanza 2.
62. Ibid, Book IV, Chap.II, Sec.12, stanza 5
63. Ibid., Book IV, Chap.II, Sec.12, stanza 22
It is interesting that while in India the cotton industry was in a flourishing state, in Europe, cotton was still virtually unknown. Herodotus, the famous Greek traveller and historian (5th century B.C.) thought that cotton was a kind of animal hair like sheep hair. Herodotus, VII, 65 cited in D. Schlingloff, 'Cotton manufacture in Ancient India', J.E.S.H.D., Vol. 17, 1974, p. 81.

Arrian, Indica, Ch. 16, cited in Ibid, p. 81


Pliny says that on the lowest computation India took away from Rome about £600,000 yearly. A very similar statement was made by the Roman emperor Tiberius - Warmington, Ibid, p. 41, More than 1007 coins of Tiberius have been unearthed in South India alone!
the Erythraean Sea refers to Paithāna (Pratisthāna) and to Dhanayakataka (Dharaikotta on the Krishna river, just above Amaravati) as important centres of textile industry and trade.69 The districts of Tiruchchirāppalli and Tanjavūr sent 'Argaritic' muslins to Egypt and Rome.70 Argaru was the Roman name for Uraiyr (in Trichchirāppalli, capital of the Sangam Chōlās). This was also the Argairou of Ptolemy.71 The Silappadikāram provides sufficient evidence of the importance of Kaveripatīṭinam and Madurai as textile centres and textiles were being exported from this region, from Colchi, (the Korkai of Silappadikāram or Comara, i.e., Kaveripumattinam). Ptolemy calls the latter Khaberis.73 The Arthashāstra also comments on the excellence of the textiles from Madurai.74 The Silappadikāram refers to Korkai as a flourishing port where 'beacon-lights guided the ships on the sea'.75 Apart from Comara, Sopatma and Poduca76 were two other

69. Periplus, op.cit., 62, p.195
70. Periplus: 59
72. Periplus : 60
73. Ptolemy, VII. 1.15
74. Arthashāstra, op.cit., Book II, Chap.II, Sec.29, line 115
75. Silappadikāram, Canto VI, 128-144 (ed.) Dikshitar (Madras, 1939), p.127
76. Periplus : 60
or ports on the East coast. Sopatma corresponds to konam and Poduca to Pondicherry. The importance of dicherry as an entrepot of textile exports to Rome is sufficiently proved by the excavations at Arikamegu where huge dyeing vats have been unearthed as well as several Roman coins and pottery. Ptolemy mentions two great marts - Salūr (that is Saliyūr) and Nicama gapaṭṭinam. Both these figure as textile centres ports of cloth trade even in the seventeenth century. the North Coromandel, Masulipatnam, the 'Masulia' the Periplus and the Kaisoloi of Ptolemy was the port for the export of muslins. It was connected road with Dhanyakataka and Paithana, the capital of the Andhras which were in turn connected with ara (Ter) and Barygaza (Broach). Ptolemy also

R.E.M. Wheeler, Arikamedu, 'An Indo-Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India, op.cit., p.34


Foster, Mills and Millward at Pulicat to Batavia, 6 Jan 1622, refer to Saliyūr as best place for painted cloth. For references to Nāgapattinam and Nagore, See Chapters IV and VI of this thesis.

Periplus: 62

81. Ptolemy, VII, 1.15 in Warmington, op.cit. p.115

82. Ptolemy, VII, 1.15 described at some length in Haripada Chakraborty, Trade and Commerce of Ancient India, op.cit.
mentions the ports of Kontakasella (modern Ghantasala) and Allosygne as ports on the North Coromandel from where ships departed for Chryse(?).  

On the western coast the major ports were Tyndis, Muziris and Nelcynda. Tyndis has been equated with Tanur and Muziris with Cranganore. Pliny, however, says of Muziris that it was not a very desirable place for disembarkation on account of the pirates who frequented its vicinity where they occupied a place called Nitras and also because it did not have many articles of merchandise. The Periplus says of Nelcynda that raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth were exported from here.

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83. Even in the 12th century Terdat (Bijapur) was a leading textile centre and reference to its prosperous guild of textile merchants and the sale of cotton, yearn and the weaving of novel designed cloth is found in an inscription (Indian Antiquary, Vol.XIV, p.19 and p.21).

84. Ptolemy, VII, 1.15 in Haripada Chakraborty, op.cit. p.137

85. Ptolemy, Ibid.

86. Periplus : 56 and 64


88. Periplus : 56 and 64
Nelcynda is located in the Cochin backwaters. Much of the silk exported from here and Tanur were the re-export of Chinese silk. In fact, Chinamsuk and Cina-patta were often referred to in the ancient sanskrit texts. Chinese silk was exported from all these ports to the Byzantine empire. Later indigenous silk produced in the Karnataka region was also shipped to Egypt and Rome where they became as popular as Chinese silk.

As this brief survey based on archaeological and literary evidence shows, South Indian textiles occupied a position of unrivalled superiority by the second-third centuries A.D. Thus in St. Jerome's fourth century Latin translation of the Bible, Job is made to say that wisdom is more enduring than dyed colours of India! How Indian textiles passed into Roman vocabulary can be seen by the fact that as early as 200 B.C. the Romans used a Sanskrit word for cotton, that is carbasina derived from the Sanskrit Karpasa.

90. S. Gururajachar, Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life in Karnataka (Prasaranga, 1974), pp.70-71
Research on the socio-economic history of India especially South India, is even today, inspite of some forty years of pioneering work, a venture into a largely untrodden field. An effort to combine historical sociology with economic history presents innumerable obstacles to the researcher. Data is extremely difficult to obtain and information scattered and not always reliable. This is perhaps because the details of everyday existence did not so much concern the governments of the medieval days as in the present times. The inscriptions so laboriously engraved tell of the genealogy of kings, their conquests and their numerous charities. But it is only rarely that these inscriptions afford a glimpse into the social structure. Moreover, while the state recorded its taxes, it did not record with equal interest the nature of prices or the living standards of the various classes. These lacunae are not really filled by the other type of sources available to the scholar - either popular literature or travellers' accounts. These limitations only serve to make research on any aspect of the socio-economic history of medieval South India a worthwhile challenge.

The purpose of the present doctorate thesis - The Weaver Communities of Medieval South India is to demonstrate the effective linkage that exists between
economic power and social dominance. The theme of the thesis is that at any point of time in history, the social stature of a professional caste group was determined not by its ritual or theoretical status in the varna system but by the extent of the economic power which it enjoyed in that particular society. Here, the vicissitudes of the weaver communities have been analysed in the light of the changing fortunes of the cotton textile industry in South India. Thus this thesis is far from being merely a study in historical sociology. The concentration is as much on textiles, their varieties and trade and production-organisation, as on the weaving communities, their status and role in society.

The span of time covered in the thesis is an unusually long one - from the tenth to the seventeenth century. This was necessitated not only by the limitations of the source material but by a desire to demonstrate the co-relation between economic power and social dominance within a fairly large spatial and chronological framework. But merely to think of this study as a series of facts stretched over seven hundred years would be totally misleading since the changes in the textile industry and in the condition of weavers have been analysed in terms of three distinct and crucial historic blocks or phases rather than an aimless setting forth of information over a vast period. These historical blocks can roughly be
described as - (1) The Chola-Pandya phase ending in the thirteenth century with the decline of the Chola empire; (2) The phase of the Vijayanagar empire till 1600 from when it ceased to be an effective political factor and (3) The competition phase of the East India Companies ending in 1700. It must, however, be made clear that there is no sanctity about this periodisation from the point of view of political history because for the first phase the inscriptions of dynasties other than the Cholas have also been studied. Moreover, there is dynastic overlapping and the late Pandyas continue to find mention even in the Vijayanagar period. The Vijayanagar kings themselves continued right down into the middle of the seventeenth century. Therefore, even if terms like 'Chola-Pandya' or 'Vijayanagar' are used in the course of this thesis it should be understood that they are used more as a matter of convenience and to emphasise the period rather than the dynasty.

92. This phrase is Gramsci's. See Gramsci, Prison Notebook, (New York, 1971), pp.137, 168, 360, 366, etc. He uses it to emphasise the unity between structure and superstructure in contrast to what he calls historical economism (vulgar marxism ?) To quote him on the historic bloc, "That is to say, the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures in the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production". Here of course, the term is being used in a simple sense without the finer connotations of philosophical speculation.
Within the framework of these three historical phases have been studied the spatial limits of the weaving communities including aspects of their migration, the nature and varieties of cloth woven, textile technology, cloth trade with special reference to the merchant guilds and the social relations involved in textile trade, production organisation and the nature of taxation on the weavers. The thesis is equally concerned with the position of the weavers in the medieval social structure - their social and ritual status vis-a-vis other social groups, their participation in the Idangai-Valangai conflicts and schisms and their role in the Bhakti movement. The seventeenth century is a period of special interest since it is ideal for studying the dynamics of change in the textile industry. By dividing it into various phases one can see the impact on the weavers and the handloom industry of - (1) The monopolistic phase of the Portuguese which virtually ended in the first decade of the seventeenth century; (2) The highly competitive struggle between the Dutch and the English till the mid-seventeenth century, the phase which marked the craze for calicoes in England and Europe and (3) Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the growth of the British linen industry and the first efforts to check the flow of the Indian textiles into Britain. This was also the period which marked the beginning of the British monopoly of the
textile trade in South India. However, in the thesis the various phases of change have not been analysed in detail because the concern here is more with the medieval period than with the transitional phase of the textile industry. Yet, it has been considered appropriate to include a discussion outlining the dynamics of change in the seventeenth century thus providing a sequel to the main discussion.

The chapters of the thesis have been arranged in such a way as to alternate the analysis of textile production, organisation and trade in a particular phase with the social structure and the position of the weavers in the same phase followed by a description of the economic structure of the next phase and so on. Chapters II, IV and VI deal with the economic aspects and III, V and VII with the social aspects of the subject.

The sources can be divided into four broad categories - (1) Inscriptions (2) Literary Evidence, (3) Travellers' accounts and (4) Company records.

The inscriptions and literary evidence especially community folklore have been used side by side as complementary sources. This might seem to be surprising in view of the fact that while inscriptions are looked upon as irrefutable evidence, undated literary sources what have been termed 'oral tradition' are regarded with
suspicion and distrust as being unreliable. Thus the value of caste and community legends is often totally discounted by research scholars as spurious evidence. But in fact, although their chronology is untrustworthy and their facts interspersed with myths and fancies, these accounts are invaluable as substantive evidence, especially in a field where paucity of material is so marked. Inscriptional evidence on the contrary is reliable and accurate but brief to the point of being cryptic. Thus just as literary accounts have to be bolstered by actual inscriptions, so the skeletal statements made in the inscriptions have to be interpreted in terms of the extensive and rambling information provided in the community traditions, and and other literary accounts. To illustrate this point, one comes across a number of inscriptions referring to Arumholideva-terinja-Kaikkolar, Samarakesari-terinja-Kaikkolar and Rajaraja-terinja Kaikkolar as constituting troops under the Chola kings. The word 'terinja' means trusted and hence the inscriptions show that the Kaikkolas formed the personal bodyguard of the king. But this bare outline of fact becomes significant when taken together with the evidence in the Itti Elupatu of the twelfth century poet Ottakkuttar,

93. A.R.E., 144 of 1927-28, 278 of 1911 and 627 of 1909. The inscriptions referring to the terinja Kaikkolar and Kaikkola Senapati have been cited in detail in Chap. II.

the undated Pillai-Tamil of Gyana Prakasa Swamigal and the Vira Narayana Vijayam.\textsuperscript{95} This work is also undated but as Vira Narayana is one of the names of Parantaka Chola I (10th century) it is possible that this work belongs to this period.\textsuperscript{95} These works make frequent and detailed references to the Kaikkola regiments in the Chola period. It is significant that both the literary sources and the inscriptions refer to Kaikkolas only as soldiers and not as weavers during the Chola period. In the Vijayanagar period, however, the Kaikkolas are mentioned exclusively as weavers. This historical fact of the change of profession by the Kaikkolas is found in the inscriptions and this finds interesting reflection in the community legend which says that the divine lieutenant of Lord Kartikeya, Virabahu and his Kaikkola troops fell from divine favour and were cursed to take up the lowly weaving profession.\textsuperscript{96} Historically, the change in profession must have been due to the disbandment of the huge caste based Chola army in the thirteenth century. This community legends including mythological origins and stories of self-glorification often reflect the socio-economic milieu of the period.

\textsuperscript{95} Contained in Sengunta Prabanda Tirattu (ed.) Sabapati Mudaliyar, (Madras, 1926).

\textsuperscript{96} I am grateful to Kavignar N. Kandasami of Rasipuram for this piece of oral evidence.
In a well phrased justification of the use of oral tradition A.A. Goldenweiser says "Poor evidence is poor evidence but it is evidence". In this thesis various categories of oral tradition have been used extensively as corroborative evidence forming an important methodological base of the research. The researcher can classify epigraphy, historical records and archaeological evidence as "hard" material since they give reliable and definite information while oral traditions have to be regarded as "soft" material since they lead us only to probabilities.

Titles and caste names of persons have been used in this thesis to define the status of those persons in society. The prefix 'terinja' Kaikkolar or the suffix


98. In the classification oral tradition the methodology provided by Jan Vansina has been adopted. His classification has been set forth in a special table on The Typology of Oral Traditions - Jan Vansina, op.cit., Table III, p.144. On this basis, the oral traditions used in this thesis fall mainly into three categories - (a) Formulae: Under which have been studied, titles, didactic formulae (like proverbs, riddles, etc.) and ritual formulae; (b) Poetry: which can be classified further as Historical, panegyric or religious poetry and (c) Tables: under which fall all general, local and family histories; didactic tables pertaining to etiological myths and personal tables, that is, memoirs.

99. A.P.E. 278 of 1911, 228 of 1911, 144 of 1927-28, etc. Refer Chapter II for details on this point.
Kaikkola 'Senapati'\textsuperscript{100} are clear indications of a high military status being enjoyed by this weaver caste under the Cholas since 'terinja' was the term used for the personal bodyguards of the king while 'senapati' refers to a military commander. The prefix 'Muttuvalperra'\textsuperscript{101} attached to the names of some Kaikkolas is a further indication of their military prowess since this again signifies an honour bestowed in recognition of military prowess. Again the suffix 'kizhan'\textsuperscript{102} after the name of a person is an indication of land-ownership and the suffix 'chetty' or 'nayakar'\textsuperscript{103} after a name indicates a merchant. Apart from the interpretation of titles, use has also been made although marginally of both proverbs and epignams relating to the weaver castes.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{100} S.I., Vol.VII, No.451

\textsuperscript{101} A.R.E. 584 of 1920 and 581 of 1920. Refers to 'Muttuvalperra' Kaikkola regiment at Chidambaram (South Arcot dt.)

\textsuperscript{102} S.I.I. Vol.VII. No.425, A.R.E., 212 of 1901 - Refers to Senguntha Kilan Nelvai Nambinayakar making a donation to the Pridigangisvara temple at Kanchipuram (Chingleput dt.).

\textsuperscript{103} A.R.E., 303 of 1913 and 460 of 1919, etc.


\textsuperscript{105} These have been used at several places in this thesis but more specially in Chaps. II and IV for general information on foot treadles (loom technology) and weaving-organisation. The proverbs relating to the Samashtras (Pattunulkaran) can be found in Chap. VII.
A problem with this sort of oral tradition is that since proverbs cannot be dated with any accuracy, they can only give generalised information about the past. Ritual formulae have, however, been used more frequently because they are fairly accurate traditions and provide some invaluable information on social and ritual attitudes.106 The tradition of the Bhoulas107 among the Pattunulkaran caste of weavers and the Uram Aruthar Chadangal108 and the celebration of the Sūra Samhāra109 festival by the Kaikkōla caste of weavers are illustrations of this sort of evidence. While the Bhoulas are the only source to provide information on the migratory pattern of the Pattunulkaran the Kaikkōla ritual functions are symbolic of their actual and apparent status in society.

Penegyrics and historical poetry have been used in the reconstruction of the social milieu of the medieval times. One such historical poem is the Itti Eluvatu while the Viranārayana Vijayam and the

106. Jan Vansina, op.cit., p.146
107. Refer Chap. VII of this thesis.
108. I am grateful to Pulavar C. Raju of Erode for this oral evidence. The ritual signifies re-enactment of soldierly activities by the weaver castes in memory of a militant past.
109. Refer to Chaps. II and III of this thesis. At the Sūra Samhāra festival the Kaikkōla weavers dress up as the 9 warriors of Virabahu the lieutenant of Lord Kārtikeya and enact the killing of the demon.
Vellanai Venrathu are caste panegyrics glorifying the Kaikkolas. Other instances of poems indulging in caste glorification are 'the Sengunthar Tugil Vidu Tutu', 'Traivan Maichiya Kaitari' etc. Both poems are obscured by padding, metaphors and stereo type poetic phrases and it is difficult to place their chronology with accuracy. But the works give extremely useful information on weaver guild practices, social divisions like the left-hand - right-hand castes, textile varieties and even production organisation. An account of historical genealogy used as an important substantive evidence in this thesis is The Cholan Purva Pattayam which fortunately can also be placed historically.

The third category of sources used in this thesis is the accounts of foreign travellers. The travelogues of Marco-Polo, Abdur Razzaq, Barbosa, Paes and Nuniz

110. Both Vira Narayana Vijayam and Vellanai Venrathu are to be found in the Senguntha Prabanda Tirattu, \textit{op. cit.} and Sengunthar Kula Prakasikai (ed.) Narayanaswami Mudaliyar (Madras, 1908).

111. 'Sengunthar Tugil Vidu Tutu' contained in the \textit{Tutu Tirattu (ed.) T. Chandrasekharan, Oriental Manuscripts Series, No.58} (Madras, 1957). The Sengunthar Kummi a folk dance set to music also gives similar information \textit{Sengunthar Kummi - author Ramaswami Kavimayar, (Tiruchchengodu, 1925)}.


Tavernier and Thomas Bowry as also the official diaries of William Hodges and Streynsham Masters have been used for the information they provide on textile varieties, the nature of textile trade, the role of merchant middlemen, famines and their effect on cotton and cloth and the relations between the East India Companies and the merchants and weavers. The accounts of foreign travellers, however, suffer from certain limitations. The travellers were not sufficiently acquainted with the indigenous system and always viewed the local institutions in terms of the institutions of their own country. An institution almost universally misunderstood by foreigners was the caste system. Another lacuna in the foreign notices of South India is the limited scope of the observer, which was to some extent inevitable, and the exaggerated nature of the information supplied by them which was more often bazar gossip than anything else. However, the travellers were invariably both knowledgeable and accurate in their special fields of interest, Tavernier and his account of diamonds and mining operations being a case in point. The Christian missionaries supply some very interesting information on the social customs of the age but their accounts are at times distorted by the missionary's poor opinion of heathen practices. The

114. See Dr. Arokiasvami, 'The Cholan Purva Pattayam: Its historical value', J.I.H., Vol.XXXII, 1954, pp. 5-10. The work is ascribed to the period of Kulottunga III.
like William Methwold treynsham Masters and tic and accurate in their er from official bias. orders can also be seen and Barbosa. Foreign accounts handled with full awareness of their limitations are an invaluable source of information especially on aspects of trade since many of the travellers, the Arabs, the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch, basically came for purposes of trade. Foreign accounts have been used in this thesis for an analysis of the production and trade structure of the textile industry between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, described in Chapters II and IV.

All available published records of the English East India Company have been used for the final chapters on the condition of textiles and weavers in the seventeenth century. These were in the form of dispatches from and to England, letters from and to Fort St. George, the Diary and Consultation reports of Fort St. George, etc. The available unpublished records of the Cuddalore and Porto-Novo Consultation acquired by the National Archives from the India office in 1980 have also been consulted. The records have been supplemented by official diaries and travel accounts. Where information from Dutch sources has been used in this thesis it is entirely from secondary
sources. The available evidence for the seventeenth century suffers from one grave inherent drawback. All the available records are the ones maintained by the East India Company. Even most of the travellers who recorded their observations were attached to the Dutch, the English or the French companies though there were a few private merchants like Thomas Bowry. Thus where political relationships arising out of trade contacts or commercial disputes with the middlemen for cloth are referred to, the account is entirely one sided. This is a handicap the researcher can only be conscious of, since it cannot be remedied. Inscriptions virtually cease to be available in the seventeenth century. The literary accounts seldom deal with concrete realities in terms of facts or show an awareness of commercial tensions. It is again the non-availability of indigenous source material that leads to a major gap in the data concerning trade. While a very clear picture of international trade emerges from the accounts of the Company records, no parallel data is forthcoming for a knowledge of domestic trade in textile and more specially the extent of participation of indigenous merchants in foreign trade. The Companies were only interested in country trade and even here the East India Company eventually had to give up country trade as a source of finance for investment in the textile trade because of the interlopers and
inadequate returns. As regards the role and participation of native merchants, the Companies allude to their rivalry in vague terms usually employing the generic term 'Moors'\textsuperscript{115} for them. There are of course some scattered references to the 'Chulias'\textsuperscript{116} and 'Klings' who figure so prominently in the textile trade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries\textsuperscript{117} and also to the 'weaver-merchants' who were able to mobilise the cooperation of the local weavers and competed so keenly for the foreign market.\textsuperscript{118} But such references are few and far between. Therefore, it must be made clear here that Chapter VI deals primarily with international trade and textiles and only marginally with the activities of indigenous merchants. Foreign trade or Company's trade in textiles was, after all, the predominant feature of the age.


\textsuperscript{116} Letters from Fort St. George, 20th March 1687, p.7. Hiring of ships by the Company from the 'Chuler' merchants of Porto Novo, etc. Also, Diary and Consultation, 25th March 1686, p.29 etc.

\textsuperscript{117} For a detailed discussion of the role of the Chulias and Klings in Coromandel textile trade in the period from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries See Chap. IV of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{118} Refer Diary and Consultation, 5th Nov. 1694, p.121 For details see Chap. VI of this thesis.
The activities of the East India Companies in relation to the Coromandel trade in textiles has necessarily to be viewed in terms of the prevailing economic climate in England. The volte-face of the English East India Company, from staunch mercantilism in the first half of the seventeenth century to a vigorous advocacy of free trade towards the close of it will make sense only in the context of the theories of the political economists of the age like Mun, Malynes, Leins, Roberts, Digges and Robinson. Most of them, especially Mun, the Director of the East India Company, advocated the exportation of money because the Indian calico was more valuable than specie since it ultimately contributed by its re-export value to the increase of England's wealth rather than the contrary. Secondly they vigorously advocated state, protection and the supervision of all rival companies and private traders or interlopers. At the international level, all commercial rivals of the English East India Company like the Dutch and the French were not to be allowed to maintain more than a fixed number of men of war and were to be made to reduce their ships within proper limits.

119. Thomas Mun, Discourse of Trade to East Indies and England's treasure by foreign trade' in McCulloch (ed.) Early English Tracts on Commerce, (Cambridge, 1970). Also see the anonymous tract in the same collection 'Considerations on the East India Trade'

120. For the views of these political economists, see Shafaat Ahmad Khan, The East India Trade in the 17th century in its political and economic aspects (London, 1923), pp.80-81, ff and Passim.
Again all the subjects of the king (i.e., the East India merchants) 'if wronged there' (East Indies) were to be righted by the state.\textsuperscript{121} It must be made clear that the mercantilists of the seventeenth century by no means subscribed to the simplistic theory of the balance of trade - the gospel of bullionism that is usually attributed to them.\textsuperscript{122} Their advocacy of mercantilism rather signified the economic aspect of nationalism. Its crux was that for the nation state to be powerful, the wealth of the country had to be multiplied and this could be done only by state protection of the trading companies through royal charters, granting of monopoly trade rights, navigation laws and commercial wars.

After 1680, there was a complete change in the attitude the East India Company had adopted from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The increasing trade of the East India Company in Indian calicoes resulted in their posing a serious threat to the English manufacturers\textsuperscript{123} which primarily meant the woollen

\textsuperscript{121.} Shafaat Ahmad Khan, \textit{Ibid}, p.81

\textsuperscript{122.} For an excellent analysis of the economic and ideological foundation of the English East India trade, see P.J. Thomas, \textit{Mercantilism and the East India trade}, (London, 1923, reprint, 1963). The book discusses the question of protectionism versus free trade in England with regard to the importation of Indian calico and concludes with the triumph of protectionism achieved between 1700 and 1719.

\textsuperscript{123.} For a description of this aspect, see Shafaat Ahmad Khan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.279 to 290 ff. Also P.J. Thomas, \textit{op.cit.}, Chapter III, pp.48 to 61
industry leading to the Spitalfields riots. Indian calicoes were to an even greater extent a threat to the growing linen industry in England although the immediate threat appeared to be only to the wool industry. When Indian calico threatened to destroy the English manufacturers the same mercantilists whom the East India Company had done its best to nurture attacked their policy. Politically, the Parliament which had established its virtual supramacy after the revolution of 1688, was a supporter of protectionism. Hence, during the last decades of the seventeenth century, the East India Company was compelled to reverse its position completely and to advocate free trade and the importation of Indian calico with the same vigour with which it had at one time advocated mercantilism. The close of the century saw the triumph of protectionist interests and the first of the bans was passed against the importation of Indian calicoes in 1700 followed by another act in 1720.

Chapter VI of this thesis deals with textile trade in the seventeenth century against this background of the shifting nature of the dominant economic interests and theories of the times without which any account of the East India Company trade would be incomplete.

125. For the growth of the linen industry, see the brief history given in P.J. Thomas, Chapter VI.
126. It is extremely interesting that the linen drapers defended the policy of free trade as also the dyers because they improved upon the imported Indian (contd.)
Chapter VII, that is the concluding chapter deals with the position the weavers vis-a-vis the society and the East India company in the seventeenth century.

A special glossary of textile terms in the seventeenth century as well as a list of textile and trade centres in the seventeenth century are provided at the end of the sixth chapter. For the earlier period, a detailed map showing the weaving centres as based on inscriptive evidence, is given. Two other maps have been attached showing the medieval seaports as well as the direction of the export trade in textiles during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. With regard to the underlining of native terms it must be made clear that textile terms or the names of dye stuffs are not being underlined because they are innumerable and occur too often and the terms have been specially defined in the glossary. The same is true of the terms of taxation and coinage terms. Currency equivalents is given in the Appendix to the thesis.

(126 continued..)

calicoes and sold them at great profit. For the petitions of linen drapers see P.J. Thomas, op.cit. pp.82-85 and Shafaat Ahmad Khan, op.cit. pp.286-287, ff.