CHAPTER SIX

SOME CONCLUSIONS

One of the pitfalls inherent in a historical enquiry is that the sheer mass of empirical detail may obscure a lack of analytical clarity and rigour. Consequently, it is advisable to review the material a second time more concisely, after which some characterizations of the Vijayanagara state may be taken up for consideration.

I

We argued that the vast majority of the historians writing on medieval South India, with the important exception of the historians of the Steinian tradition, concentrated exclusively on political and dynastic history, making no attempt to integrate such details into the broader social and economic conditions of the time. These 'events', we said too, were merely the external manifestations of the structural features of society -- and it is in this sense that Benedetto Croce argued that "any single event... contains in embryo the entire history of mankind." ¹

Indeed, with their great apathy towards any form of theorisation these historians ignored all notions of structures and of societal change and concerned themselves with the cataloging of socio-economic data in a completely anarchic and haphazard manner.

One of the reasons for the significance attached to political history by the traditional historians was that the most important among them - S. Krishnaswami Aiyyangar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, T.V. Mahalingam, N. Venkataramanayya - were formed in the fiery crucible of the anti-colonial struggle. As a result they were primarily occupied with the discovery of the glories of the Indian civilization - glory being largely defined as the existence of large territorial empires, construction and maintenance of enormous temple complexes, etc., - in an attempt to show that this country possessed an ancient and honourable culture and that our colonial masters were, in historical terms, petty upstarts.

The national movement contained some dubious elements, the most noteworthy of which was an emphasis on communalism and this element was very prominent in their historical works where, for instance, the Vijayanagara Empire was viewed purely as a Hindu response to Muslim pressure from the north. This view was also occasioned by the fact that there was constant warfare
between the Empire and the sultanates of the Deccan. However, such wars were, at least till the dramatic confrontation at Rakshasi - Taṅgaḍī, limited mainly to the control of the fertile Raicūr doāb, an area which was also valuable for its minerals - iron, gold and diamonds. Further, there are numerous references to alliances between the Empire and some Sultans against other Sultans and between some Sultans and some Hindu rulers against the Empire. We also hear of the employment of Muslim soldiers by the Empire, of toleration towards Muslims, of trade between the Empire and the Sultanates and of the fact that other Hindu rulers bore the brunt of the consequences of the territorial expansion of the Empire.

Burton Stein represents a major exception to the generalisations made above since he attempts to integrate the different sectoral histories into a coherent whole. Indeed, while we have many points of contention with his analysis - chiefly methodological and conceptual -- we consider him by far the best historian of the period. The most important of our criticisms on the methods employed by Stein are his inadequate attention to empirical detail, his uncritical application of the categories of the capitalist economy to that of medieval South India and his failure, or refusal, to get behind the formal meanings of the inscriptions to the actual motives of
the donors of grants to temples.

Having thus reviewed the secondary works, we attempted to define our area of study - Jayakonḍacōla-
maṇḍalam - and discovered that the northern boundary of this region coincided with the northern limits of the Tamil country, the Veṅkaṭam hill. Tonḍai-nādu which was the original name of Jayakonḍacōlamaṇḍalam extended to the south to the Peṅṇai river. Further, during the reign of Rājarāja Čōla I, with a change in nomenclature to Jayakonḍacōlamaṇḍalam, the area covered by the territory was extended to include Nellūr in the north-east. However, the southern boundary shrank to a point about forty miles to the north of the Peṅṇai river. Later, by the time of the Vijayanagara Empire Pulinādu and Perumbānapādi were removed from Jayakonḍacōlamaṇḍalam while parts of Naḍuvil-
ādu were added to it. At this time our region was bounded on the north-west by the Penugonda Mārjavādi-gīma, to the south of which were Perumbānapādi, Mulavāyil-rājya and other parts of Nigirilicōlamaṇḍalam.

But what was the reason for the persistence of this term for almost a millenium? To answer this question we turned to the historical patterns of human settlement in this territory and saw that while the earliest settle-
ments in the Tamil country were in this area, the domi-
nance of sedentary peasant societies was established
relatively late. The reason for this phenomena was perhaps because while the raw material for the making of tools of the Stone Ages were available here in ample quantities, there was a scarcity of reliable and adequate supplies of water. Jayankonda-colamandalam, we noted too, contained both a region of relatively high rainfall and an area which was semi-arid, though both of them received rain for only a couple of months in a year. Due to the lack of an adequate technology of water management, sedentary agricultural populations tended to occupy the banks of the major rivers and hill ranges where the supply of water was more evenly spread out through the year. Moreover, the availability of minerals and thick forestation made Jayankonda-colamandalam an area favourable to occupation by the pre-peasant tribesmen and the history of the Tamil country is studded with instances of conflict between these people and the peasant societies.

The dominance of peasant society in the region was perhaps established under the reign of the Pallava-s and was probably facilitated by an alliance between the brāhmaṇa-s and the peasants. This alliance was likely to have been mutually beneficial to both the parties as the doctrines of the brahmanical religion provided the peasants with a coherent ideology to unify all the sections
of the peasant society; to assimilate new peoples; and to preserve the ascendancy of the leading cultivators. At the same time the alliance with the peasants was essential to the brähmana-s to counteract the influence of the Buddhists and Jaina-s and it was essential also to the temple-based worship which had evolved by that time.

In this context, it appears that the mandalam-s were 'ecotypic' regions and we saw from modern studies that the limits of these units correspond closely to the agro-climatic areas of the Tamil country. Variations in this correspondence which are marginal - can be explained by the nature of the process of colonization, political control et cetera. The mandalam-s were also perhaps cultural regions and this may explain why Nellūr-nādu was included within Jayankońdacōlamanḍalam. This nādu was not under the suzerainty of the Pallava-s though it was a Tamil speaking region. However, the Cōla-s exercised their sovereignty over it and during the administrative reorganization that apparently took place in the eleventh century, Toṇḍaimanḍalam was renamed Jayankońdacōlamanḍalam and Nellūr-nādu was included within it.

Another important form of territorial classification was the division of Toṇḍaimanḍalam -- but not of other parts of Jayankońdacōlamanḍalam, let alone the
rest of the Tamil country - into kōṭṭam-s. A late tradition recorded in the Mackenzie Manuscripts mentions that the Kurumba-s -- said to be the earliest inhabitants of Tondai-
mandalam - divided the region into twenty-four kōṭṭam-s and built a fort in each of these kōṭṭam-s. In our attempt to plot these kōṭṭam-s on a map we could identify only twenty of them which were mentioned in the inscriptions. Etymologically, the word is perhaps derived from Kōta meaning fort. However, the basis for this division was perhaps soil-fertility as the size of the kōṭṭam-s increases and the density of settlements within them decreases as one moves away from the fertile areas on the coast and along the rivers. Perhaps too, the more fertile kōṭṭam-s were the first to be colonised by peasants. If the kōṭṭam-s were indeed demarcated on the basis of soil fertility and other agro-climatic factors, it would explain too, why they retained their validity after the establishment of the dominance of peasant societies.

Perhaps the most important territorial units were the nādu-s or 'micro-circulatory regions'. Subbarayalu had rightly suggested that the term referred both to an agricultural region and to an assembly. It denoted an agricultural region since its boundaries did not coincide with 'natural borders' like rivers, and we had hypothesised
that the *mandalam*-s were perhaps a conglomeration of *nādu*-s which were all broadly similar in agricultural conditions. *Nādu* also indicated an assembly in which the control over local resources was vested as there are references to committees of the *nādu* charged with the maintenance of tanks and other similar functions and by the references to gift of taxes by the *nattār*. Stein pointed out too, that the introduction of *brahmādeva*-s into the *nādu*-s -- which were depicted as tribal territories ruled over by a chief in the *Cānkam* literature -- fundamentally altered their character. Other changes during this period was the introduction of temple-based worship and the emphasis on status differentiation. Stein also contended that the *nādu*-s were 'ethnic territorialities' as the texts of the period 'recognise' cross-cousin marriages and as the inscriptions of the period concerning non-*brahmāna*-s mention only the name and village of such persons for identification purposes. And we registered our dissent with this formulation since the texts were prescriptive rather than descriptive and as it seems to us that conclusions he derives from the identification of non-*brāhmana*-s in inscriptions were unwarranted by the evidence. As a result, we cannot obviously agree with him when he maintained that the Telugu migrations into the Tamil country
led to the demise of the 'ethnic territoriality' of the 

During the Vijayanagara period, while there were a few references to the gift of taxes by the nāṭṭār, and of the consent of the nāṭṭār to the gift of taxes by the Rāya, the nādu assemblies unmistakeably declined. This decline is denoted by the increasing mention of other groups, most notably the nāṭṭār of the parru who were the single largest collective to make grants of land and taxes to the temples, and by the donations by ṣravār and sahārayār of individual villages without reference to the other constituent units of the nādu. Further, there were increasing references to the nāṭṭār of the mandalam in inscriptions and in poems of the Śatakam genre.

A discussion of the decline of the nādu-s must necessarily involve a consideration of the methods of territorial integration adopted by the rulers of the medieval South Indian empires since the demise of the autonomy of the 'micro-localities' entails new forms of agrarian integration. The most prominent among the strategies for territorial integration evolved by the Pallava-s and the Cōla-s were the patronage of temples and places of pilgrimage and the support given by them to the brāhmaṇa-s.
By patronising the temples, the monarchs of the period attempted to legitimise their rule by association with the autochthonous cults and thereby capitalising on the intense devotionalism that was prevalent. These temples also played a crucial role in the maintenance of the internal resource base of the Pallava-Cōla state by investing the resources granted to them by persons of the ruling class. These religious institutions continued to function in a similar manner under the Vijayanagara Rāya-s though their role was considerably enlarged by that time due to their role in the management of water resources, as we shall see in a moment.

The importance accorded to the brāhmaṇa-s may be attributed to the prestige attached to religious functions, the direct control exercised by them over land, the absence of ksatriya lineages and the nature of the alliance between the peasants and the brāhmaṇa-s. In such a situation any legitimization of rule was perhaps only possible through association with the brāhmaṇa-s. Further, while the spread of peasant settlements denoted a potentially greater resource base for the Pallava-s and the Cōla-s, it also threatened the integrity of their weakly centralised states. As a consequence of this, the monarchs of these two dynasties granted a number of villages to
the brahmana-s as brahmadēya-s to be managed by assem-
blies of their most learned members, the sabha-s. 
These villages were necessarily located in fertile areas
as they contained a large proportion of 'non-productive'
people, and they provided an ideological base for the
rule of the emperors. This ideological base extended
far beyond the areas where the brahmadēya-s were con-
centrated as these villages maintained educational ins-
titutions which educated brahma-pā-s living in the arid
and semi-arid regions of the Tamil country. However, these
brahmadēya-s also declined in importance by the time
of the Vijayanagara Empire as is indicated by the following
facts: the management of temples was transferred from the
sabha-s to bodies of management of the temples; the evi-
dences that have come down to us of the inability of the
sabha-s to pay taxes and to repay loans to the temples;
the instances during the Vijayanagara period of officers
representing nayaka-s dictating decisions to the sabha-s;
and the growth of new forms of supra-local integration.

The decline of the nādu-s and the brahmadēya-s
was also noted by Stein who reasoned that this was due to
the growth of supra-local institutions. This was because
of his conception of the citramēli-periyanādu-s as
large peasant-dominated territorial assemblies which arose
as a response to the needs for cooperation between the nāṭṭār of the various nāḍu-s and the itinerant merchant guilds - the tīsai āvirattu ainnūrruvār or the pāṇādēśī-s. These links led to the emergence, according to him, of a supra-local elite, which contributed in turn to the collapse of the Cōḷa state by disrupting its internal organisation. Another important form of supra-local integration was the dual division of castes into vālaṅgai and idāṅgai castes. This latter organisation, he observed too, was not corporate or continuous in character and arose as the growth of urbanization provided the basis for cooperation among artisans on a level larger than that of the nāḍu. Urbanisation was also a factor in the decline of the brahmādeva-s as the towns replaced the latter to a large extent in secular matters - provision of employment to artisans, for instance.

This view of the decline of the institutions of localised management of resources, the nāḍu-s and the brahmādeva-s, we argued required major modifications. First, no evidence has yet been adduced to show that the citramēli-periyānāḍu-s had any administrative powers apart from the right to grant taxes (and even here, it is possible that they may have had to make good the taxes thus lost by the state by contributions from amongst themselves). Therefore, these bodies can in no
sense be called 'large territorial' assemblies'. Further, as Stein himself contended, the Cōla-s did not possess a strong centralised administrative machinery. Consequently, we suggested, these organisations may more appropriately be conceived of, as agencies for the collection of taxes from peasants and composed of their own leading members (i.e., those who are likely to have dealings with persons outside the confines of the nāḍu-s). And we cautioned that the periyānāḍu-s should not be considered as groupings similar to the itinerant trade guilds with which they have a superficial resemblance. This was due to the nature of production in the peasant family farm — the peasants not being concentrated in a single place of work, the seasonal nature of agricultural operations rendering them incapable of sustained actions of protest and the value attached to land and independence making them liable to punitive measures by those who possess superior military power.

The towns certainly played a role in creating a basis for supra-local cooperation among artisans and merchants and perhaps led to the vālaṅgai-idāṅgai division. The urban centres also had a role to play in the decline of the brahmādeya-s as they replaced the latter to a great extent in secular functions. However, a far more
significant factor which contributed to the decline of the nādu-s and the brahmādēya-s was the spread of agriculture into the interior regions of the Tamil country from the twelfth century A.D. Such extensions of agriculture required heavy investments in irrigation projects as these areas were relatively arid. While the kings and the chief officers of state welcomed the extension of agriculture and the attendant increase in revenue, they were not perhaps favourably inclined to maintain the irrigation works as that would have involved incurring additional outlays of money by way of overhead costs. The brahmādēya-s could also not undertake the task of constructing and maintaining these facilities as they had a relatively large 'non-producing' population and hence required a large surplus which was difficult to extort from arid lands. In these interior regions, the prosperous nāṭṭār and the periyanāṭṭār were also likely to have been absent due to the relatively lower level of surplus and to the fact that it is possible that agricultural technology spread without a concomitant migration of peasant peoples. In this context, the temples were perhaps the only agencies capable of constructing and maintaining the irrigation projects as they had a widespread network all over the Tamil country and they could also mobilise
large resources through donations. As a result, we see that from the twelfth century onwards the importance of the temples increased greatly.

The spread of irrigation networks also encouraged supra-local cooperation as there were perhaps many canals leading out from a single river. The disputes concerning water resources, moreover, were normally arbitrated by the State represented by the nayaka-s or Imperial officials during the Vijayanagara period, though at times the adjudication was done by the temples. While we have not consulted records on disputes regarding water supplies during the Cōla period, it may be suggested that since the state machinery was then weakly-centralised, the temples may have played a significant role in the settlement of such disputes at that time.

Another cause for the decline of the nādu-s brahmādeya-s and periyanādu-s may have been the fact that the fall of the Cōla-s was followed by a period of political instability which lasted for about a hundred years. During this time we have numerous accounts, epigraphical and literary, on the devastations wrought on the countryside by wars and these were likely to have had a greater effect in the relatively fertile areas where the nādu-s, brahmādeya-s and periyanādu-s were largely located.
Further, the fall of the Cōla-s led to the rise of many small principalities which led to greater resource mobilisation by the state as even during their heyday the nāḍu-s never enjoyed much autonomy in the core of the Cōla domains - the central Kāvēri plain - where the exercise of royal authority was much more effective.

In about a hundred years after the fall of the Cōla-s, a new form of agrarian integration crystallised in the Tamil country. The most significant feature of this form was perhaps the nayāṅkara system. Stein had argued, in his most consistent formulation, that the nayaka-s were migrant Telugu warriors who had fled from the Deccan due to Muslim persecution and who had seized the former nuclear areas of the Cōla period. They were able to seize these areas due to their superior military capability, to the support extended to them by the Telugu and Kannada migrants and to the alliances forged by them with peasant groups who had held an inferior status under the nāṭṭār. And, he went on to say that the Vijayanagara rulers merely recognised the de facto control over the localities exercised by these warriors and that the amaram-s were not really granted by the former to the latter.

The most persuasive evidence against this conception of the nayaka-s is perhaps the constant references
that have been made of the military campaigns and conquests of the Imperial forces in the Tamil country. Further, inscriptive references also run counter to Stein's theory of the emperor merely validating the seizure of tracts of land by the nayaka-s. Thus, we hear of the grant of villages by the Rāya to the nayaka-s, specifying the obligations of the latter to the former. Other inscriptions refer to the grant of villages by the emperor on the request of Imperial officials who had in turn been approached by lower officers; to the fact that when the income from a village stopped the nayaka appealed to the emperor to renew the grant; and to the fact that the nayaka-s paid money to the rāya and received offices and service inam-s. Further, both contemporary visitors from abroad and native writers of South India refer to the obligations of the nayaka-s to provide men and money to the emperor. Indeed, how are we to explain the fact that emperors gifted lands and villages all over the empire, if they exercised only nominal control over most of the areas within the empire as Stein would have us believe? Or the fact that the emperors ordered the imperial officials, nayaka-s and brāhmaṇa-s in the Tamil country to stop their extortions from the peasants and artisans?

In support of our contention that the emperors exercised considerable control over the territories
within the empire, we may also refer to the division of the empire into rājya-s governed by an imperial governor. There were also administrative units known as the parru-s. These were clearly revenue divisions as indicated by the following: Most of the grants of villages mentioned the parru-s in which they were located; the inhabitants of the parru-s were the single largest collective group of people to grant revenues to temples, and Appadorai had suggested that they had to make good the revenues thus lost by the state, through contributions among themselves; the assignment of taxes from the parru-s to temples and individuals by the rāva; and by the naming of some parru-s, not after the most important villages, but according to the area covered by them. We may also mention in this regard that it is not necessary to assume that the areas covered by a parru was always assessed at a uniform rate for the levy of taxes. This is because a few inscriptions refer to a uniform rate of taxes for the dēvadāna, brahmadeya and other villages within a nādu. The nādu and the parru boundaries did not however coincide as a rule. This phenomena may be explained as due to the fact that the nādu-s were ecological divisions and since the conditions of agricultural production in all the villages in a nādu were broadly similar, they were
perhaps assessed at a uniform rate. However, for adminis-
trative convenience the Empire was divided into revenue
divisions or παττυ-s which were not identical with the
areas of the nādu-s.

Having clarified some basic conceptual matters
in this manner, we attempted to analyse the internal
dynamics of the agrarian system of Jayākondacōḷamāṇḍalām
between A.D. 1360 and 1565 with the help of a model and,
using by and large epigraphical sources, interspersed
here and there with references to travellers' accounts.
The model we constructed was composed of the following
elements: (a) the most important activity was agri-
culture; (b) there was an absence of the concept of owner-
ship of land and what was significant was the notion of
differing rights (which were transferable) to land
and its produce; (c) the forces of agricultural production
was divided between peasant farms, large landed estates
and the temple; (d) an institutional barrier to social
mobility in the form of the caste system was prevalent;
(e) the cultivators had an obligation to pay taxes in
money and in grain, in addition to yielding the major
share of the produce to the state or to its nominees;
(f) the existence of wage-labour (as a simple category);
(g) industrial and artisanal activities were carried out
mainly in connection with the temples; (h) there was an absence of juridical restrictions on the liberty of the brāhmaṇa-s and the nayaka-s in the economic arena; (i) there was a strong tendency on the part of the ruling classes towards luxury consumption; (j) more economically advanced regions at distances accessible by the available means of transportation existed; (k) the state constantly intervened in economic life; (l) centres of political power were located outside the region; (m) the navaṅkara system; (n) the frequent occurrence of wars; and (o) ideological expression was in a religious idiom.

And we embarked our endeavour with an examination of the inscriptions granting land and money to the Tirupati temple, in an attempt to go beyond the language and content of these records to the actual working of the system. We saw then that the money granted to the temple was invested in irrigation projects which led to an increase in production, which in turn provided a constant income to be used for the offerings stipulated by the donor of the grant. Since these investments were normally made in the tiruvidaiyāṭṭam villages and as the villages granted to the temple were also liable to taxation, we suggested that the temples probably held the mēlvāram rights in these villages. The irrigation projects also
benefited the cultivators since an increase in production implied an increase in the kīlvaṟam. The cultivators were also perhaps employed in the construction of these tanks and canals. However, we did not get an inkling as to how an estimate of the increase in production due to the construction of irrigation works was made.

We also noted that at Īrupati, there was a marked preference on the part of the donors, for making money grants rather than village endowments. There were many reasons for the donations made to temples. Firstly, the prestige of the temple would increase by the number and magnificence of the festivals conducted therein and this would in turn attract a large number of pilgrims who would provide a market for goods and services besides promoting territorial integration. Endowments to temples also increased the status and prestige of the donors. Moreover, festivals may perhaps have acted as an outlet for tensions as we have no indication of widespread social discontent from areas in the immediate vicinity of the major temples. Pilgrim traffic also entailed that large quantities of food and other articles had to be transported to the temples and this led to the augmentation of the revenues of the state and the nayaka-s (by their levy of taxes) and it also provided opportunities to merchants and artisans. The growth of pilgrimage and
the prevalent religious ideology led to an enormous demand for consecrated food (prasādam) and thus gave it an economic value and material significance. We noted too that the merchants in their donative inscriptions stipulated that relatively more expensive articles be offered — and this may perhaps have been a means both to provide a captive market for themselves, and to gain goodwill.

Religious donors, in addition to some of the factors listed above, may also have made donations to the temple as they had followings of their own and the temple acted as a conduit in the transfer of resources. One of the reasons which led to the donations by the artisans and peasants was perhaps what has been called 'the cognitive orientation of a Limited Good.' This refers to the fact that in peasant societies, it is often felt that an increase in prosperity of an individual must always be at the expense of another since all good things in life are limited. Consequently, in order to avoid social tensions, those who prosper often spend their money by conspicuous consumption — such as feasts — or donate sizeable amounts to the temple.

In addition to these reasons which were applicable to both money and village endowments, there were some other advantages which accrued to donors of money
grants. Firstly, it was easier for the ṣṭhānattār to administer a single village which, with the investment of endowed funds in irrigation tanks and channels, could support two or more services, than to administer villages situated all over the Empire. Further, irrigation projects by increasing agricultural productivity enlarged tax revenues because of the growth of the kīlvāraṁ. The enlargement of the kīlvāraṁ also resulted in the expansion of the market for the wares of the artisans and for the goods sold by the merchants.

An increase in the tax revenues and of the size of the mēlvāraṁ may have been the only feasible strategy to maintain their high consumption levels open to the nāyaka-s in view of the obligations to constantly provide men and money for the wars of the Rāya. In times of internal political crises, the nāyaka-s were perhaps obliged to deposit money at Tirupati as a symbol of their political loyalty to the Emperors at Vijayanagara, who considered the deity there as their personal favourite. Apart from being a symbolic gesture, such grants could have also been utilised to enhance royal revenues. Since the temples required large quantities of various goods for the numerous offerings to be conducted daily and periodically and since it is likely that the peasant plots were not able to supply these goods, in all their variety, it was perhaps
possible that the estates of the large landowners and the nayaka-s supplied a part of these goods. Hence, the temples probably provided them a captive market and in an epoch in which the avenues for investment were severely limited, grants to temple may have been the only economical way of investing monetary resources.

Moreover, the references to the number of villages in the area around Tirupati, perhaps indicates that there was a relative density of population. In such a situation, it would have made the acquisition of land by members of the non-ruling strata extremely difficult and expensive and thus endowments to temples may possibly be the only way in which monetary resources could have been invested.

Apart from these factors, religious convictions obviously was an important consideration in the making of grants to temples. However, it is clearly a distortion of historical reality to stress only on the religious beliefs while accounting for the numerous grants of land and money to the temples in medieval South India, as has been done so often by historians in the past. Indeed, we would even say that it was likely to have been only a minor reason.

An examination of the pattern of donations of money to the Tirupati temple during the period A.D.
1378-1566 revealed that the endowments made in the first 156 years (1378-1533) accounted for 39.81% in the next 13 years (1534-47) for 57.38% and in the next 18 years for 281%. A similar trend was seen in the grants of villages where the one village on an average was gifted every 1.46 years in the period A.D. 1428-1534, while 4.31 villages were gifted annually between A.D. 1534-1547 and 2.61 villages per annum between A.D. 1547 and 1566.

Stein had observed the lack of endowments during the regnal period of the first Vijayanagara dynasty (A.D. 1336-1486) and had attributed that to the preoccupation of the rulers with the extension of the territories under their rule. More important than this reason was, we argued, perhaps the fact that as these rulers were constantly engaged in battles, they did not have the time and resources necessary to compel the navaka-s to fulfil their obligations of providing men and money. Further, the evidences that have come down to us of protests against the arbitrary exactions by the Imperial officials and the navaka-s indicate that the latter first attempted to increase their revenues by an intensification of the rate of exploitation. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that they first hit upon the idea of temple endowments to increase their revenues. Further, the
widespread destruction that followed the decline of the Gōla-s indicated that a period of time was needed for the reconstruction of the economy as is shown by the fact that there was not a single endowment to the Tirupati temple during the time of the first Vijayanagara dynasty by the merchants.

In the third period denoted above there was a drastic decline in the endowments to the temple at Tirupati, and we suggested that this was perhaps due to the fact that it was a period of acute political crisis. In such times of civil strife, we argued, it would have been foolish on the part of donors to invest in temple endowments as the irrigation projects et cetera were liable to be destroyed. Further, it would have been imperative on the upper sections of society to lower their levels of consumption. In such situations there would have been a decline of trade as reflected by the fact that there were no endowments of money by merchants during this period. In times of war and civil commotion, there would also have been a fall in pilgrim traffic with its attendant consequences to an economy built around the temples.

This discussion indicates that a revival of trade took place after the decline of commerce which
set in with the fall of the Coḷa-s. The palingenesis of extensive commercial intercourse led to the increase of the importance attached to the artisans, especially the kaikkōla-s as is reflected in their movement upwards on the social scale, to the numerous references to taxes paid by them and to the records of desolation of villages from which they migrated. Stein also argued that privileges were granted to artisans because of the attempts by the nayaka-s to achieve a greater control of the resources of the areas under their control and because of the requirements of defense and 'style emulation'. In support of this contention, we also noted that as the headquarters of the major political divisions were not located in the most important of the centres of pilgrimage, it was relatively easy for artisans to migrate with reasonable hopes of bettering their conditions. We also saw that there was some opposition from other artisanal communities to the grant of privileges to the kaikkōla-s. It was seen, too, that the artisans were organised into corporate guilds to regulate conditions of production and to protect their privileges.

While the temples and the activities connected with them were clearly the major indicators of the 'commercial ethos' of the period, we have other references
to trade, particularly to foreign trade. In this connection we observed that Jayaṅkondaḻolamaṇḍalam maintained trading links with China, Malacca, Pegu, Sumatra, Malabar, Bengal, Cambay and the Deccan. In addition to this, the trade between the Tamils of the east coast of India and the Arabs grew considerably in the first half of the sixteenth century as the Portuguese displaced the latter to a large extent from the west coast. However, we have very little information about the internal trade within the Vijayanagara Empire and particularly within Jayaṅkondaḻolamaṇḍalam, apart from stray inscriptions referring to the taxes on movements of goods to temple-towns and to the establishment of weekly markets at various places.

Stein had argued that the establishment of the navaka system had led to the decline of the trade guilds as the navaka-s were antagonistic towards these organisations which had the potential to become rival centres of power. Consequently the navaka-s, promoted local traders at the expense of these more extensive and older guilds and long distance trade during the Vijayanagara period was thereby restricted to essential commodities and luxury goods. While it is true that the navaka-s would have been inimical to the development of rival centres of power, we suggested that there were
other, and more significant, factors responsible for
the decline of the large itinerant trade guilds that
were so prominent in the age of the Cōla-s. Some of
these factors — the political instability following
the fall of the Cōla-s, the restrictions imposed by the
Chinese on the trade in items of luxury consumption,
the end of the period of political stability in Ceylon
and the growth of the Arab trade with the Indonesian
archipelago and other places in the East — had already
been mentioned by Indrapala. In this context we said
that the political instability which beset the Tamil
country in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth
centuries perhaps led to a very severe collapse of the
trade network, as is reflected in the pattern of endow­
ments made by merchants to the Tirupati temple examined
a moment ago. During the period necessary for the
revival of trade, other social groups, most notably the
artisans who formed guilds of their own, were not
immobile and it is likely that they opposed the growth
of strong guilds of merchants. Further, the division of
castes into the valaṅgaś and Ṇaṅgaś groups may
have also contributed to the decline of corporate
organisations based on occupations.
Perhaps the best evidence against Stein's views on long-distance trade during the Vijayanagara period comes from the references we have on the growth of commercialization and of simple commodity production. The growth of commercialization and commodity production is indicated by the numerous epigraphical references to the sales and leases of land, to the sales of the right of cultivation, and to taxes in money levied on land. It is shown too in the endowments of land made to temples where the donor reserves the right of cultivation and to the nature of temple endowments, which we said were possibly made to provide a captive market to large land owners, among other reasons. Further, we also noted the practice of the sale of prasad, of the right of worship and of the accountancy rights in temples. And we saw that weekly markets were established. We were informed too by Appadorai that Bills of Exchange were in use during the period under consideration. Finally, we may add that the prevalence and widespread use of a uniform currency system goes against Stein's argument of the restriction of trade under the Vijayanagar rulers.
Let us now, having examined some aspects of the working of the agrarian system of Jayakoṇḍacōḷamāṇḍalam under Vijayanagara rule, consider some of the characterisations of the state at that time. We shall here concern ourselves with only two of the attempts made by historians — those of A. Krishnaswami and of Burton Stein.

Krishnaswami is taken up for discussion here because his account is perhaps the best attempt discussing the 'feudal' nature of the Vijayanagara state, even though this characterisation pervades the works of most traditional historians. He says that there was a 'highly centralised feudalism' in the Tamil country during the Vijayanagara period and he arrives at this conclusion because of the obligations of the nayaka-s to supply men and money to the Imperial court and because all land in the empire was owned by the king as evidenced by the grant of amaram-s.

---

2 A. Krishnaswami, The Tamil Country under Vijayanagara, Annamalai University Historical Series No. 20, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1964, p. 103.

3 Ibid., pp. 176-80, 186-91.

4 Ibid., pp. 179-80.
Protesting against the attempts to characterise the Vijayanagara state as a feudal one, Venkataramanayya and Stein observed that the obligations of the nayaka-s to the Emperor were not the same as those of feudal lords to the king in feudal Europe as the relations of homage and fealty and sub-infeudation were absent. Moreover, we have seen above that it is clearly erroneous to assert that all land was owned by the king, and that the grant of amaram-s entailed only the grant of the mélvāram right or the right to collect taxes or both by the state.

Stein, argued too, that Krishnaswami uses the concept of 'feudalism' without examining it sufficiently. However, Stein's use of the term is rather restrictive. If feudalism is taken to refer merely to political relations and military service it obviously ignores a large segment of social reality. On the other hand, there are

5 N. Venkataramanayya, Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara, Madras University Historical Series No. 11, University of Madras, Madras, 1935, pp. 171-2; B. Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, p. 376.

6 Supra., p. 376.

7 Stein, op. cit., p. 378.
certain difficulties in the application of feudalism as a 'mode of production' to the Vijayanagara state. The most important of these difficulties is the fact that the concept has yet to be clarified at the same level of abstractness as capitalism. Witold Kula, for instance, characterises feudalism as an economic system wherein the requirements of consumption determines the level of production. However, this is as much a characteristic of peasant economies (and perhaps also of slave societies) as of feudalism.

Moreover, the concept of capitalism was capable of extension on a global scale due to the nature of capitalist production especially the operation of the theory of value and the capitalist world-market. No such unificatory factors have yet been discerned in the 'feudal' mode of production. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to apply a common term to all medieval societies. Perhaps, it can be contended with some force that


capitalism is the first world-system and that all pre-capitalist social formations were extremely limited in their terrain.

In opposition to the feudal characterization of the Vijayanagara state, Stein argued that it was a variation of the segmentary state of the Cōla-s.¹⁰ He noted the following features in such a state:

1) In a segmentary state sovereignty is dual. It consists of actual political sovereignty or control, and what South-all terms 'ritual hegemony' or 'ritual sovereignty'. These correspond in Indian usage to kṣatra and rājadharmā respectively.

2) In a segmentary state there may be numerous 'centres' of which one has primacy as a source of ritual sovereignty, but all exercise actual political control over a part, or segment, of the political system encompassed by the state.

3) The 'specialised administrative staff' - what in some unitary states would be called 'the bureaucracy' - is not an exclusive feature of the primary centre, but is found operating at and within the segments of which the state consists.

4) Subordinate levels, or 'zones' of the segmentary state may be distinguished and the organization of these is 'pyramidal'. That is, the relationship between the centre and the peripheral units of any single segment is the same - in the reduced form - as the relationship between the prime centre and all peripheral focuses of power. There is a contrast here with hierarchical forms of political organization in which, at successively subordinate levels of a system there are different kinds of executive authority whereas in the segmentary state, executive authority is the same at the prime centre and

¹⁰ Stein, op. cit., p. 380 ff.
at any subordinate segmental centre except that it is exercised over fewer people.\textsuperscript{11}

This conception of the segmentary state applied to the Vijayanagara polity would obviously rest on Stein's view that the nayaka-s were \textit{de facto} independent of the Rāya - a view that is unwarranted by the evidence as we have seen. From this it follows that the concept of the segmentary state must necessarily fall as we have numerous indications of the vigorous assertion of royal power.

Perhaps even more significant is a methodological point that we would urge against Stein here - that he characterises the state without reference to the social and economic forces from which it arose and drew sustenance. This is clearly exemplified in his first formulation of the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire where, as we have already seen, he argued that a reorganisation of the agrarian structure was necessitated by changes "in the military and political structure of the South", rather than \textit{vice-versa}. Indeed, it is these economic and social conditions - the availability of adequate supplies of food, the size and relative social distribution of population, the ability to exercise mastery

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 274, Emphasis in original.
over nature, et cetera— which mark the limits of what man can achieve. They are the inflexible boundaries marking the possibilities and impossibilities of human existence.

We have seen then that the extension of the peasant society with the attendant growth of supra-local ties and a prolonged period of political instability led to the decline of the most important institutions of the Cōla society. We saw too, that after the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire new institutions developed— especially the navaṅkara system and an imperial bureaucracy— and the role of some of the older institutions, particularly that of the temple, was considerably enlarged. And, it was seen that there were differing rights to the produce of land and that the forces of agricultural production were divided between the peasant households, the large estates and the temple. The temple, too, was a focus of the 'commercial ethos' of the time employing large numbers of artisans and other non-food producers and encouraging the growth of pilgrim traffic and thereby increasing commercial intercourse to a significant degree. These religious institutions also perhaps provided one of the few channels of economic investment. Further, productive activities were largely determined in this predominantly agrarian,
pre-capitalist epoch by the requirements of consumption.

A discussion of the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire is conspicuously absent in this study as we have confined our analysis to Jayankondacolamaṇḍalam. However, after the assimilation of our region into the Empire, the most important features of the political structure was the continued patronage of brāhmaṇa-s and temples as a strategy for territorial integration, the navaṅkara system and a relatively well-structured Imperial system of provincial administration. 1

We can only characterise this social formation as the agrarian system of Jayankondacolamaṇḍalam under Vijayanagara rule because of some of the limitations of the present study. The most significant of these limitations are the following: (i) a study of Jayankondacolamaṇḍalam during this period without reference to other parts of the Empire is likely to have produced at least a few important distortions; (ii) we have also not been able to plot the long-term economic trends within Jayankondacolamaṇḍalam and have as a result had to rely excessively on the evidence from the Tirupati temple; and (iii) the socio-economic data that we have been able to glean from our all too inadequate study of primary sources has been too meagre to warrant a bolder characterisation.
We would perhaps be reproached most often for not having given a hearing to traditional history that is to say, to political history and to have confined our study only to the structures. We would be accused too, of thereby ignoring the role of the human agency, of individuals in history and of adopting a deterministic position. To this we can only reply that we are fully aware of this drawback and may we plead that we chose not to include an analysis of the events mainly because this study is highly tentative in nature and is intended to serve as a foundation to more detailed investigations?