Disciples do own unto masters only a temporary belief and a suspension of their own judgement until they be fully instructed, and not an absolute resignation or perpetual captivity. So let great authors have their due, as time, which is the author of authors, be not deprived of his due, which is further and further to discover truth.

Francis Bacon

Historical studies on the Vijayanagar Empire began with the publication of Robert Sewell's work, aptly titled *A Forgotten Empire*, in 1924. Since that time systematic investigations of the epoch has resulted in the accumulation of an appreciable amount of empirical information and as Burton Stein has recently said our task today is to formulate fresh conceptions for the study of Vijayanagara history rather than to adduce more factual evidence. Such an endeavour must perforce begin with an examination of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, not always explicit, in the studies on Vijayanagara history. An attempt is therefore made in this chapter to study the major ideological strands

present in the previous historical investigations on the state and society of the Vijayanagara period.

We shall divide our study into two distinct parts: the first shall examine the work of the traditional historians - that is, primarily the work of historians like Sewell, Nilakanta Sastri, N. Venkataramanayya, A. Appadorai, T.V. Mahalingam, B.A. Saleatore, and others; and in the latter half of this chapter

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5 A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000-1500 A.D.),* Madras University Historical Series No. 12, University of Madras, Madras, 1936, 2 Vols.


8 While it is practically impossible to catalogue the long list of all the followers of the main proponents of this school of historiography, a mention may be made of the works of two of the

F.N. continues....
we shall direct our attention to the work of Burton Stein. It is perhaps necessary to add that we have considered Stein worthy of special treatment because he represents in many ways a decisive break with the old, antiquated ways of historical research and because we have derived our points of departure for the present work, largely from his stimulating research.

I

The traditional histories of the Vijayanagara period have by and large concentrated upon political and dynastic history and have made no attempt to integrate these events to the broad social and economic movements of the time. And even when, as in the case of Appadorai, attention was directed primarily to the economic conditions of the time, these conditions were not related to the political organization of the state and to the

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pioneers of South Indian History - H. Heras, Beginnings of Vijayanagara History, Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay, 1929, and S. Srikantaiya, Founders of Vijayanagara, Mythic Society Bangalore, 1938 and of a recent member of this school, A. Krishnaswamy, The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagara, Annamalai University Historical Series No. 20, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1964.
structure of the society. Similarly the works of Mahalingam and Saletore described facets of social and administrative organization without attempting a comprehensive study of the interaction of these elements. Moreover, Appadorai completely ignores the notion of change in South India during the five centuries that was under review in his _magnum opus_ while Mahalingam does not even work within a defensible chronological framework. It may further be argued that these traditional histories concentrate upon events - political, dynastic, economic, technological, artistic, literary - ignoring the structures without which they are deprived of much of their meaning and that these histories may well be

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9 The same points were made with reference to the works of Nilakanta Sastri, T.V. Mahalingam and A. Appadorai by Stein in his critique of the historiography of the Cōla period. See Burton Stein, 'The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historical Critique', in Burton Stein (Ed.), _Essays on South India_, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1976, pp. 64-91.

10 Also noted in B. Stein, _Peasant State and Society_, p. 248.

11 See also, B. Stein, 'The State and the Agrarian Order', pp. 67-8.
called *L'histoire événementielle.* 12

We would contend that history can no more be divided into autonomous spheres — economic, social, political, artistic, technological — than can our actual lives be placed in similar water-tight compartments. It may, of course, legitimately be argued that these are merely modes of exposition of a history that is fundamentally one. An integration of such modes of exposition would then require constant movements back and forth between these different layers of life and it is this

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12 Fernand Braudel, once said, "At first sight, the past consists of this mass of petty details, some striking, others obscure but constantly repeated; and it is they that today form the chief quarry of microsociology and sociometry — (note, too, that there is also microhistory). But this mass of detail does not constitute the whole reality of history in all its density, i.e. the material that scientific reflection can properly use. Social science virtually abhors the event. Not without reason: the short term is the most capricious and deceptive form of time." F. Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences', in F. Burke (Ed.) *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe: Essays from Annales*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972, pp. 14-15. He adds, "The main interest of such enquiries, as far as the enquiry itself is concerned, lies, at the very most, in the accumulation of the facts; and even they will not all be ipso facto valid for future work. Let us beware of art's sake." Ibid., p. 24. See also E.P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory or An Orrery of Errors', in E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Merlin Press, London, 1978, esp. pp. 262-3.
integrated motion that is crucially absent in most historical works on pre-industrial South India, with of course the noteworthy exception of the works of Stein, Spencer and a few others.

This artificial division of history is the result of a particular conception of our subject, a conception which argues that the task of the historian is merely to collect all the facts to fill up the 'gaps' in historical knowledge and that this will result in a truly universal history, valid for all time. But what are these 'facts' but interpretations? It is the historian who decides which 'fact' should be emphasized and which 'fact' should be neglected, and these selections depend on his theoretical perceptions and

13 "Professional sensationalists like to multiply 'events.' 'Historical facts' are all the rage on a day of lunar landings or barricades. It may be objected: exactly, the theorist has to choose. But choose what? The housewife who cannot or will not pay ten francs a kilo for beans, or the one who does buy, the conscript who joins his draft, or the one who refuses? They are all acting 'historically'. Conjunctures depend on them, they are reinforcing or undermining structures. However imperfect its interpretation may still be, it is the objectification of the subjective through statistics which alone makes materialist history possible the history of the masses, that is, both of massive infrastructural facts, and of those human 'masses' which theory has to 'penetrate'
ideological orientations. It is of course true that to a certain extent the 'facts' that are available to the historian from his sources are themselves highly biased. This, however, is surely obvious and historians have long realized the need to exercise their critical faculties to evaluate their source material.

Such histories, too, are based on a conception of history which argues that the historian should be concerned only with the biographies of great men, that history per se is the study of the policies and actions of kings and emperors, of conquests and losses of territories, forgetting that man is to be seen not as a self-sufficient individual, but as a social being and

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if it is to become an effective force.”
Pierre Vilar, "Marxist History, A History in the Making: Towards a Dialogue with Althusser", New Left Review, Vol. 80, July-August 1973, p. 73. And Gareth Stedman Jones wrote polemically. "History was an objective thing. It was physically recorded in myriad bundles of archives from the Public Record Office to the local parish church. The task of the historian was to write it up. Theory would come like steam from a kettle when it reached boiling point. The initial illusion is evident. Those who tried to create theory out of facts, never understood that it was only theory that could constitute them as facts in the first place. Similarly those who focused history upon the

F.N. continues....
each man should be considered "no longer as a particular incarnation of abstract humanity, but as a more or less autonomous point of emergence of a particular collective humanity, of a society.... Thus, the young Marx wrote with the exaggeration of a neophyte: "It is society which thinks in me."14 The great man, as has been shown repeatedly in recent studies,15 is merely the

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event, failed to realize that events are only meaningful in terms of a structure which will establish them as such." Gareth Stedman Jones, 'History : The Poverty of Empiricism', in Robin Blackburn (ed.), Ideology in Social Science : Readings in Critical Social Theory, Fontana/ Collins, 1978, p. 113; See also E.H. Carr, What is History? Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977, pp. 7-30.


articulation of social forces. This is of course not to deny absolutely the role of the individual in history, but to argue that the role of the individual is severely circumscribed by the material and social conditions of his time. Thus true history like real life recognises no boundaries, definitions that limit its subject matter. 16

It has been suggested that Indian historians have concerned themselves almost exclusively with political and dynastic history mainly due to the nature of their source material. While it is true that there is

16 "Definitions are they not a kind of bullying? 'Careful, old chap, you are stepping outside history. Re-read my definition, it is very clear'. If you are a historian, don't set foot here, this is the field of the sociologist. Or there that is the psychologist's part. To the right? Don't dare go there, that's the geographer's area... and to the left, the ethnologist's domain'. It is a nightmare, madness, wilful mutilation'. Down with all barriers and labels'. At the frontiers, astride the frontiers, with one foot on each side, that is where the historian has to work, freely, usefully." Lucien Febvre, Revue de métaphysique et de monde, vol. lviii, 1940, reprinted in combat pour l'histoire, Paris, 1955, Tr. by K. Folca as 'A new kind of history', in Peter Burke(ed.), A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, p. 31.
nothing on the early centuries of the second millenium. A.D. and earlier in India which could even remotely compare with the manorial, judicial, bureaucratic and ecclesiastical records of Europe of the same period, it is also true that Indian historians have not even adequately utilised the sources that do exist. In fact, as Burton Stein pertinently remarks: "The same inscriptions upon which the political historian depends afford the best information to one concerned with economic relations."¹⁷ Perhaps, the neglect of socio-economic history by professional historians is best reflected in the Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy, published by the Government of India on behalf of the Department of Archaeology. This authoritative journal systematically ignores socio-economic data, especially those of a quantitative nature, in its section entitled 'Summaries of Inscriptions'. Moreover, in situations where there is an inadequacy of source material, historians necessarily have to resort, bearing in mind the obvious dangers, to comparative history, "the illumination of unknown or unverifiable features of one society by the known aspects of another, provided those societies

ⁱ⁷ Burton Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order", p. 66.
belong to the same social formation, even if separated by time and space." We would also maintain that Indian historians have to devise new tools of analysis as many of the methods of their West European counterparts are inapplicable to India due to the nature of the source material.

It is perhaps more fruitful to locate the origins of these historiographical practices within the social and political conditions which prevailed when these historical works were written. The emphasis on the collection of 'facts' without regard to a 'theory', which was expected to follow as the night the day and the rigid and superficial division of historical reality was advocated by the liberal school of historical writing which exercised a dominant influence in England during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and which consequently shaped a large part of Indian historical thinking. Indeed, it is the English system of education, introduced for

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19 Carr, op. cit.; Jones, op. cit.
the purposes of colonial administration, which gave birth to the modern conceptions of historical research in India.

The first decades of the twentieth century, during which the first books on Indian history were written by Indian historians, also witnessed an enormous growth in the movement to free the country from the yoke of colonialism and it is not surprising that the Indian historians were also imbued by the nationalistic zeal that had stirred the imagination of their compatriots. And the Indian historians by ably attempting to show that India was once a proud and ancient civilization and that by logical extension the European colonisers were in historical terms, petty upstarts, converted history into an important ideological vehicle of the nationalist movement. Given these perceptions, it is perhaps understandable that the emphasis of historical writings at this time was on the wars and conquests of the rulers of ancient and medieval India rather than on the structures of ancient and medieval Indian societies.

A very valuable result of this type of historical research was that it provided a clear chronological framework within which to study Indian history, and in the case of South Indian history, this is most clearly in evidence in the work of Nilakanta Sastri. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the painstaking and meticu-
luous research that led to the creation of a definite chronological framework for the study of India's past. Indeed, the purpose of this survey of South Indian historiography is primarily a plea to build on these foundations, so nobly laid by our predecessors, and to ask new questions of our sources rather than to continue in the same old traditions of scholarship. And this is the best tribute that we can pay to the work of our illustrious forebears.

One of the more dubious trends in the Indian National Movement was the strong overtones of communalism and it is unfortunate that communalism is one of the strongest ideological currents in the traditional accounts of historical records in the Vijayanagara period. The

20 "We can take the view that we will keep on studying history in the exact manner our forefathers did. We will keep on filling the 'gaps' of medieval Indian history which means one monograph for each king, and what has not been written on is the 'gap' which is easily identified. The chapters are ready-made; the first is ancestry, birth and early childhood; the second is accession and the problems of accession; the third is wars and conquests; the fourth is minor wars and rebellions; the fifth is administration; and the sixth is society and culture during the age. I am not attempting to denigrate the importance of such studies. If that had not been done we would not be sitting together and talking of newer problems. Today we can talk and I am saying it with all humility

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communalist ideology of the major historians on the
Vijayanagara Empire may be seen from some representa-
tive samples of their writings. Thus, Robert Sewell,
sees the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire as —

the natural result of the persistent efforts made by
the Muhammadans to conquer all India. When these
dreaded invaders reached the Krishna River the Hindus
to their South, stricken with terror, combined, and
gathered in haste to the new standard which alone
seemed to offer some hope of protection. The decayed
old states crumbled away into nothingness, and the
fighting kings of Vijayanagar became the saviours of
the South for two and a half centuries.

This analysis of the origin of the Vijayanagar Empire,
purely as a Hindu response to Muslim onslaughts has
been accepted by every historian of the Empire. S.
Srikantaiya, hence, wrote in 1938:

The origin of Vijayanagara may not have been a miracle.
It may have been the result of a supreme Hindu effort,

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of a radically new way of research because
of the excellent work already done by our
predecessors. But are we for ever and ever
going to write history on the old pattern
and fill in the gaps of this type?" S. Nurul
Hasan, Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in
India, People's Publishing House, New Delhi,

21 The quotations provided below are merely a
sample and the list could be expanded subs-
tantially.

in order to protect their religion, their dharma and their country and to provide a bulwark against the devastating Muhammadan hordes from the north of India. 23

And, hear K.A. Nilakanta Sastri:

Starting on its career a decade earlier than the Bahmani kingdom, that of Vijayanagara became the focus of a resurgent Hindu culture which offered a more successful resistance to Islam in this part of the country than anywhere else. 24

He also says that the Empire -

by resisting the onslaughts of Islam, championed the cause of Hindu civilisation and culture in the South for close upon three centuries and thus preserved the ancient tradition of the country in its polity, its learning and its arts. The history of Vijayanagar is the last glorious chapter in the history of independent Hindu South India. 25

Listen, too, to another major historian of the period, T.V. Mahalingam, who maintains that -

The Empire itself was founded by a band of five brothers in the second quarter of the fourteenth century to crush

23 Srikantaiya, op. cit., p. 3.
25 Ibid., p. 254. (emphasis added - R.A.P.)
the onrush of aggressive Islam into South India. The invasions of Muhammad bin Tughlak and the subsequent Muslim threats to the Hindus of South India led to much unrest and the rise of a feeling of political unity among them ultimately resulting in the birth of the Vijayanagar Empire, which came to symbolise Hindu resistance to the onslaught of Islam.26

As will be evident from the above quotations, it has been accepted by convention that the Vijayanagara Empire was a Hindu State founded to defend the Hindu South and its cultural traditions against the Islamic North. Indeed, the force of this conception of the Vijayanagara State is so strong that even though Burton Stein, who is usually so critical of the work of such historians, recognises the powerful communalistic element in such interpretations27 and even shows its inadequacies,28 he often slips into an at least partial acceptance of such analysis as when he says,

There can be no question that the existence of the highly militarized power of the Vijayanagara State south of the Krishna - Godavari had the effect of stemming Muslim expansion. However, the dharmic posture of the Vijayanagara rulers as protectors of Hindu culture is above all, ideologically significant. Vijayanagara kingship and the Vijayanagara state were constituted upon, or soon after to acquire, an ideological principle which distinguishes it from previous

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27 Stein, Pea-sant State and Society, p. 369.
28 Ibid., pp. 372-3.
South Indian states. It is this principle which most decisively identifies the Vijayanagara overlordship, not presumed differences in the basic structure of the state. 29

In his discussion of Nilakanta Sastri's characterization of the Empire. 30 In this connection, it is surely significant to note that no Muslim historian has yet written a major work on Vijayanagara history. 31

Perhaps the most important cause for the conceptualization of the Vijayanagara Empire as the bulwark of Hinduism in the South against the Islamic hordes from the North is the persistence of the warfare between the Empire on the one hand and the Sultans of the Bâhmi kingdom and its successor Sultanates on the other. 32 However, an examination of most of these campaigns would show that they were limited primarily to the struggle for the control of the Raichur doab and did not involve large scale annexations of the territory of the vanquished.

29 Ibid., p. 383.
30 Ibid., pp. 382-3.
31 For an analysis of communalistic history in India, see R. Thapar H. Mukhia, and B. Chandra, Communalism and the Writings of Indian History, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977.
32 For the best account of these wars see K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., pp. 218-99.
This region had enormous significance as it contained deposits of "iron ore which showed evidence of having been worked by Vijayanagar kings" \(^33\) and gold \(^34\) besides being very fertile. There is also considerable evidence regarding the presence of diamond mines in the area. Thus we are told by Nicolo Conti that diamonds were produced at Raichur \(^35\) and Ludovico di Varthema and Duarte Barbosa mention diamond mines in the Bijapur Sultanate though they did not specify the location of these mines. \(^36\) However, at the time when these writers recorded their observations, the Raichur doab was controlled by the rulers of Bijapur. \(^37\)


\(^34\) Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 13.


fns. \(^36\) & \(^37\) next page
Moreover, the Bijapur chronicler Rafi-ud-Din Shirazi who served at the court at Bijapur from 1560 to the early part of the seventeenth century wrote in his Tazkirat-ul-Muluk that the diamond mines near Raichur were controlled by the Sultans at Bijapur in 1606. This was confirmed also by an English diamond merchant in 1677 who also mentioned at least two such diamond mines in the doab close to the place where the Tungabhadra and the Krishna rivers meet. Further, beyond the doab near Kurnool and Adoni lies the Ramallkota diamond mine.

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37 Joshi, op. cit., p. 10.

which was the most important of the Bijapur group of mines. Tavernier says that this mine was discovered 200 years before his visit there in 1642. These mines came into the hands of the Sultans at Bijapur however only after 1565 though Ibrahim Adil Shah I had unsuccessfully tried to capture the Adoni fort from Rāma Rāya in 1537.

Further if the wars between the Empire and the Sultanates of the Deccan are to be interpreted as the struggle between the brahmanical religion and Islam, it is strange that there were frequent alliances against Vijayanagara by the Sultans and other Hindu rulers and also alliances between the empire and one Muslim Ruler against another Muslim Sultan. Indeed, as Burton Stein argues, other Hindu rulers bore the brunt of the


40 Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

41 e.g. In 1415 when Anadeva, a Telugu Choda chief was attacked by Devarāya II and his brother-in-law Kātaylora, the Reddi chief of RājamahendraVarman, he was assisted by Firuz Shah Bāhmani. At the battle of Kondavīdu in 1419-20, the Valamas of Rajakoṇḍā deserted the Bāhmani forces to help Devarāya win.

42 e.g. In 1548 Rāmarāya helped Burhan Nizam Shah, Sultan of Ahmadnagar to capture the Kalyāṇi fort from the Sultan of Bīdar. In 1560, when Husain Nizam Shah invaded Bījapur he was repulsed by the armies of Vijayanagara, Bījapur and Golconda.
military campaigns of the Empire rather than the Muslim monarchs. Stein also argues that it may also be added that the expansion of the first Vijayanagara rulers laterally across the peninsula was made necessary by the first rulers of the Bāhmani sultanate in establishing close collaboration with Hindu warriors of Andhra Country, notably the Kapaya Nayaka of Warangal.

It is paradoxical, too, to read in the works of the pioneers of modern historical writing on Medieval South India that the Vijayanagara state employed Muslim soldiers in their wars to defend the 'Hindu Civilization of South India' against the 'marauding hordes of Islam'. The Kaññiyat of Pāñem Pālaivapaṭi also records the names of Muhammadan officers serving under Devarāya in Śalivahana Śaka 1305, Rudhirōdgārin. It also says that Śabat Huk who governed at the fort at Pāñem from Śaka 1315 to Ś. 1335 was succeeded by another Muhammadan, Khānā Khānā Voḍeyar

43 Stein, op. cit., p. 392; "The dharmic ideology of the Vijayanagara state, however, did little to affect state military policy. Hindu chiefs and kings of the southern portion of peninsular India were more often the victims of Vijayanagara power than were the Muslims." A Historical Atlas of South India, Joseph E. Schwartzberg (Ed.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 198.

44 Ibid., p. 381.

45 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., pp. 238, 259-60, Stein, op. cit., pp. 392, 402-3; see also infra.
who ruled from Saka 1336 to Saka 1366. He was succeeded by his son Bultāni Vodeyar who ruled till Saka 1406 and was followed, in turn, by his son Rājakhān who governed from Saka 1407 to Saka 1419. When Nilakanta Sastri attempts to defend his communalistic interpretation in the face of such empirical information by saying

The exigencies of the Struggle compelled the rulers of Vijayanagara to resort to the employment of foreigners and even Muslims in the artillery and cavalry sections of their armies to make them adequate for the defence of their country and religion.

We can only wonder at him.

The toleration shown by the Vijayanagara rulers towards the followers of Islam has also been often noted. Thus, for instance, Barbosa says that the Vijayanagara king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance and without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen.

We are also told that Devarāya II built a mosque for


47 Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

the Muslim soldiers in his capital\(^4^9\) and that both Devaraya\(^5^0\) and Ramaraya\(^5^1\) placed copies of the Koran besides the throne so that the Muslim soldiers can pay proper allegiance. There is also an interesting story which goes on to state that

On one occasion, when the Muhammadans sacrificed cows in a mosque in the Turukavada of the city the nobles and officers became so excited over the matter, that led by Tirumala, a brother of Ramaraja, they made very strong representatives to Ramaraja exhorting him to prohibit the Muhammadans from slaughtering the cows. Ramaraja, however, did not yield to them, but told them that he was the master of the bodies of his soldiers and not of their souls. Further, he pointed out that it would not be wise to interfere with their religious practices.\(^5^2\)

There is no reason, too, to suppose that this religious toleration was extended only to Muslim mercenaries employed in the army of the Empire. This is because even though it has been recorded that a massacre of the Arab and Moorish traders at 'Batecal' (Bhatkal) was ordered by the Vijayanagara ruler Virupaksha II in

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\(^5^0\) Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 259-60, Stein, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 403.

\(^5^1\) Venkataramanayya, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 318.

A.D. 1469, when it is reported that 10,000 'Musalmans' lost their lives,\textsuperscript{53} we also hear of the existence of flourishing Muslim mercantile communities at Hanar in South India and Mantotte on the north-west coast of Sri Lanka,\textsuperscript{54} and of the existence of a Muslim quarter in the city of Vijayanagara itself, among other places.\textsuperscript{55}

There is also ample evidence to suggest that there was extensive trade between the Empire and the Deccan Sultanates, except perhaps in those articles which could be used for belligerent purposes. Indeed, some sources even indicate that elephants were exported from Ceylon through Vijayanagara Empire to the Bahmani Kingdom. Thus according to Srinatha's \textit{Haravilāsamu}.

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which was dedicated to Tippayya Ceṭṭi of Siṁhavikramapaṭṭaṇa (Nellore) a merchant prince, "Tippayya Ceṭṭi and his brothers Tīrumala Ceṭṭi and Sāmi Ceṭṭi imported valuable articles by both land and sea and supplied them to Harihara of Vijayanagar, Kumāragiri of Koṇḍavīḍu, Feroz Shah Bāḥmaṇi and the Gajāpati ruler of Orissa. Among the goods imported by them were camphor, plants from the Punjab, gold (plates or dust) from Jalanogi, elephants from Ceylon, fine horses from Hurumanji (Ormuz), musk from Goa, pearls from āpaca (sea) musk (Kaś-tūrī Katarikam) from Coṭaṅgi (Chautang) and fine silks from China."56

In the face of such evidence, it is obvious that a communalistic interpretation of Vijayanagara Empire is clearly erroneous.

56 S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, Sources of Vijayanagara History, Madras University Historical Series No. 1, University of Madras, Madras, 1924, pp. 51-58; T. V. Mahalingam, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 156. However, at another place, Mahalingam states, "Though elephants were available in North-India the reason why the Vijayanagar Kings imported them largely from Ceylon is not clear. Perhaps there were two reasons for it: for one thing, the Ceylonese elephants were of a better breed; and for another, the existence of the Bāḥmaṇi Sultāns who were on inimical terms with the Vijayanagar Kings......" Ibid., pp. 126-7.
The monumental significance of the work of Burton Stein on medieval South Indian history arises from the fact that he is the first historian to attempt to integrate the different sectoral histories to provide an explanation of the development of South Indian society in the 'Middle Ages'. Thus, for instance he does not view gifts to temples merely as the expression of faith in a deeply religious age, nor trade as the activities of a few merchants selling pepper, diamonds, pearls and exotic oriental wares here and buying horses there, or use the appreciable amount of socio-economic data that has come down to us about trade in Ancient and Medieval South India merely as conventional and unimportant chapters to wind up lengthy books on political history. To him, each of these elements have their own reality, certainly, but such realities are not established for their own sake, rather, they are significant only in so far as they contribute to the reconstruction of historical reality.

Consequently it is proposed here to give in brief, Stein's analysis of the Vijayanagara period and then endeavour to discern the major theoretical postulates
and the methods of historical investigation which permeate his work. The examination of specific points that arise in a study of such an explanation—as for example, in his conceptualization of the citrarama-periya-nādu and of his characterization of the Vijayanagara state—as a specific form of the 'segmentary state'—will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

The major reason for adopting this form of presentation is that Stein's interpretation of the Vijayanagara empire is, as we have said, the first and only attempt to integrate all the different sectoral histories to provide a unified explanation of one of the most important states of Medieval India. Therefore, it is felt, that especially since our own train of thought received much of its impetus from his writings, it is appropriate to show at the outset of this study, how Stein endeavours to link the different facets of historical reality in his scheme of analysis.

One of the difficulties encountered in an attempt to provide a summary of Stein's interpretation of Vijayanagara history results from the publication of his recent book *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*. In this work, where he tries to trace the history of South India, from the age of the Pallava-s to the time of the Vijayanagara Empire, he often makes contradictory observations and offers explanations
which differ in many important aspects from those contained in his earlier articles without once either stating the reasons for contradicting his earlier opinions or indicating why changes in emphasis, or in the attribution of causes have been made in his latest book. We shall, therefore, first summarize his original analysis of the Empire and then indicate the positions adopted in his recent book which are at variance with them.

The agrarian system of the Tamil country, Stein views, as 'a patch work of two basic types' - the nuclear areas of village-based agriculture which were consolidated into larger political units, like the empire of the Cōla-s, and the settlements in the hilly tracts. The relation between these differing types of agrarian settlements was a history of almost

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uninterrupted hostility. The nuclear areas themselves were composed of villages granted to brāhmanas the brahmādēya-s, which had a 'high degree of internal organization and of the villages of the lower caste peasants governed by the assemblies called āṟ or āṟom'. These two types of villages were linked together by administrative, religious, social and economic ties, and most importantly by assemblies known as Citramēli-perivanādu-s, which by its very name reflects its concern with agriculture (mēli in Tamil means plowshare). The large number of inscriptions of the Citramēli-s found in many places in the Tamil country mention primarily grants of taxes in grain and in money to temples by these bodies, often in association with groups of merchants, and he goes on to say;

These assemblies were made up of those who produced many of the commodities and consumed the largest part

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59 B. Stein, 'Coromandel Trade', p. 54.

of the goods bought. Merchant groups, large and small, engaging in local or wider trade, were part of the changing agrarian order of Coromandel; their fate depended much upon the kind of development this agrarian order was passing through the medieval period. Hence the decline and virtual disappearance of these great trade organisations after the thirteenth century points to accompanying changes in the agrarian order. Profound changes in the agrarian order did in fact take place from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and the nature of these changes provides a reasonable explanation for the decline of the great trade organisations.

Stein thus sees the Vijayanagara period as denoting an epoch in which a reorganisation of the agrarian structure were necessitated by changes "in the military and political structure of the South". The causes for this change in the agrarian system were perceived as due to two factors: First, the Cōla state

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B. Stein, 'Coromandel Trade', p. 56. "The question of what became of the great trade associations after the fourteenth century may be answered when it is understood that the nexus of their trade network were the scattered, well-developed agricultural territories of the sort in which the Periyāṇāṉu assemblies existed. The fate of the trade associations was linked with that of the peasant dominated assemblies, and after the fourteenth century these assemblies disappeared owing to changes in the agrarian order of South India. The particular characteristics of agrarian integration after the fourteenth century no longer permitted the existence of politically and militarily powerful trade associations". B. Stein, 'The Integration of the Agrarian Order', pp. 177-87.
which derived the major portion of its resources by plundering the neighbouring countries began experiencing from the 13th century onwards increasing resistance from these areas and ultimately the tables were turned against the Cōlas, who themselves became the victims of the aggression of the Pāṇḍyan and Sinhalese warriors. Second, the expansion of the Muslim power to the northern boundaries of the Cōla territory in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries caused a threat to the institutions of the nuclear areas which could not be met by the defensive organisations of these areas and hence a reorganisation of defence was necessitated. The Muslim domination of the central peninsula also caused the flight of Hindu warriors into the South where they constituted the basis of a new defensive organisation.62

The most important result of these two factors was that from the fourteenth century onwards the nuclear areas of the Cōla period were converted "into areas of private jurisdiction (amaram) of the warrior dominated regime."63 Stein further contends that

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62 Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian Structure". B. Stein, 'Coromandel Trade', pp. 57-80.
63 B. Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian Structure', p. 191.
amaram is not to be interpreted as 'fief' because the former did not "possess the relatively consistent set of privileges and responsibilities of the European fief." 64 Indeed he holds that the Vijayanagara rulers did not grant the amaram-s but merely recognised and validated the seizure of settled territories by warriors fleeing from the Muslim domination of the central peninsula, or that the amaram-s represented the recognition of new settlements by the Vijayanagara Emperor.

The establishment of the new warrior regimes had two important consequences. In the first place the powers of the local institutions declined. This is indicated by the fact that though the number of mahā-sabha-s of the brahmadēya-s may have increased "an officer representing the major warrior of the territory, took an active part in the deliberations of the assembly and apparently often simply dictated decisions." 65 Secondly, as "the warrior overlord" would not tolerate interference from the periyanādu-s or assemblies of the nuclear areas dominated by the agriculturists, these bodies simply disappeared. Another factor in

64 Loc. cit.
65 Ibid., p. 192.
the disappearance of these assemblies was the rapid expansion of the territories under the control of the warriors. Such expansions included large number of tribesmen and the agriculturists could not represent these people adequately. The decline of the peasant-dominated assemblies also caused the decline of the powerful itinerant trade guilds.

The political power that had been distributed earlier among these main corporate bodies was not distributed among a group of warriors in a territory, the chief of whom was the nayaka. This resulted in a more direct management of the agrarian resources and produced a greater integration (i.e. over a larger area) than was the case under the earlier nuclear areas. The surplus which had previously been managed "within the nuclear area were now expropriated by a local leader subordinate to and dependent upon the nayaka. Part of this surplus was utilized to support the local leader and a body of soldiers and a part of it was transmitted as a tribute to the nayaka. The nayaka on his part, was obliged to share a portion of his tribute with the great overlords at Vijayanagar."66

The new warrior-regime also promoted urbanization due to the need to emulate the 'great overlords'

66 Ibid., p. 193.
and for the purposes of defence. The new urbanization also endeavoured to attract artisans and thereby achieve greater control over resources. The attempts made by the warriors to isolate their amram-s as more or less self-sufficient economic units enhanced the 'status and scope of trade by local merchant groups at the expense of the formerly prestigeful itinerant traders'. The greater localisation of trade did not 'eliminate the older diffuse trade network'; the latter was however confined to the supply of essential commodities (e.g. salt, iron, horses) and luxury goods (e.g. fine textiles, precious stones). Another strategy adopted

67 'In comparing the Cōla and Vijayanagar inscriptions one cannot avoid noting the change in the idea of "important place". During the earlier period "place" was coterminous with the nuclear area and its constituent institutions; during the Vijaynagara period, 'important place' was the headquarters of a warrior; be he the navaka or a subordinate, and territorial names were frequently the same as the major headquarters town'. Ibid. See also Stein, Peasant State and Society, p. 481.

68 B. Stein, 'Coromandel trade', p. 58.
by the warriors to maximise their control over the resources in their areas was the encouragement given to centres of pilgrimage.

This form of territorial integration was not very stable as 'there was constant competition among local warriors to expand the areas under their control at the expense of a neighbouring warrior'. The Vijayanagara rulers were generally not able to stem these aggressions. However, this unstable system did lead to 'a wider integration of settled agricultural villages' and it also strengthened the military organisation of South India for over two hundred years.69

In his *Peasant State and Society* Stein continues to see the Vijayanagara state as being different from the state of the Cōla-s in many significant aspects, even though both display certain continuities. The most significant of these continuities according to him are as follows: First, both the Cōla and Vijayanagara States continued to be classified as segmentary States where, the locality units of the political system were not merely self-governing-linked to imperial centres

69 B. Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian Structure', p. 195.
neither by resource flows nor command — but were reduced images of the two centres.70

Further, he notes that the central place in both these societies were occupied by religious institutions.71 It is also observed that in these two empires an important role was played by migrations and conquest with the difference that in the period of the Gōla-s the main migrants were the Tamils while in the latter period it was the Telugus72 — and that such migrations were not limited to warriors but also included the lower social groups.73

While these two empires of medieval South India shared these similarities, Stein realises that there were also significant 'discontinuities' between them — the chief among which was the nayaṅkara system of the latter state.74 We are not altogether clear on what he means by the nayaṅkara system — so many things are said at different places in the same text and some of them are so contradictory. Let us, then, try to

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70 B. Stein, Peasant State and Society, p. 367. The two centres referred to are the capital cities of the two Empires — Taṅjavūr and Vijayanagara.

71 Ibid., pp. 367-8.

72 Ibid., pp. 50, 368, 396-7, 442-3.

73 Ibid., pp. 368, 394-6.

74 Ibid., pp. 369-70.
unravel, at least in part, these complex and difficult perceptions, presented to us by Stein on this system.

In keeping with his earlier views, Stein says that Muslim pressure from the north led to the migration of Telugu warriors into the Tamil Country. Thus,

In the succeeding period of agrarian organization when Muslim pressure upon the northern edges of the Coromandel plain created the conditions for the expansion of the highly martial Telugu warriors of the Vijayanagara period, religion again served to provide an essential cohesion to different fundamental relationships in South Indian society.75

However, the decline of the Cōla State and consequently the reasons for the success of these warriors in establishing their control over the Tamil Country are now perceived differently. Hence he says that

Significant structural changes occurred during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries causing instability to the agrarian order consolidated during the reign of the Rājarāja I. These changes include (a) The emergence of assemblies called the Periyamānu acting over an enlarged locality and signalling diminished isolation among previous nuclear regions, or nādu-s and at the same time, augmenting power in the hands of supra-local leaders of the enlarged locality; (b) the integration of portions of the macro region which had previously been marginal in settlement and importance, but which now emerged as mature agrarian regions including much of the interior area of modern South Arcot which had earlier separated Tondaimandalam

75 Ibid., pp. 87-8.
and Cōlamanḍalām and the upland tract of Kongu comprising modern Salem and Coimbatore; and (c) the emergence of a new tier of centres of civilization—towns—which served to integrate the enlarged localities of the period and displaced the earlier civilized centres, brahmadeva-s, in both sacred and secular functions. These changes—essentially a new ordering of the elements of the earlier period of agrarian integration—provide the clearest explanation of the decline of the Cōla state and the establishment of the political culture of the Vijayanagara period. 76

And Stein goes on to say that the establishment of the nayankara system completed, or rather hastened, the decline of the local institutions—the nādu-s, the sabha-s of the brahmadeva-s, the nagaram-s, the ūr-s of the vellanyagai villages—even though the actual reasons for the decline of these institutions were due to the changes in Tamil society given above and indeed their eclipse was a precondition to, and not the result of, the establishment of the nayaka system. 77

Another factor which facilitated the establishment of the nayaka system, and which was a second major discontinuity between the Cōla and Vijayanagara societies, according to Burton Stein was

76 Ibid., p. 216.
77 Ibid., pp. 408, 443.
the increased military capacity of the latter due to technological advances leading to the use of 'firearms, fortifications and superior cavalry mounts'. This led to a dissemination of military power and resulted, almost inevitably in conflicts between the Rāya and the nayaka-s and these tensions were replicated downwards from the nayaka-s, with their alliances with local groups who had been subservient to the ancient nāttār.79

This led, in its turn, to the last of the three main discontinuities between the two societies in Stein's perception—the employment of the brāhmaṇa-s by the emperors at Vijayanagara to check the fissiparous designs of nayaka-s. He says, for example, that

Apart from the maintenance of royal forts in all parts of the macro region, there appears to have been only one governing task for which Brahmans were responsible; that is, checking the fissiparous designs of the nayaka-s. There are few reigns in the dynasties of Vijayanagara in which it is not possible to identify Brahmans as major agents of Rāya rule, and the central if not sole requirement for these prestigious persons in their secular, political functions was to defuse the explosive potentialities inherent in the Vijayanagara segmentary state with its powerful, intermediary level of nayāṅkara-s.80

78 Ibid., pp. 370-71, 408-10, 440. See also Ibid., pp. 392, 400.
79 Ibid., pp. 442-3.
80 Ibid., p. 371, see also ibid., pp. 410-13.
In this part of his recent interpretation of the Vijayanagara society, it is interesting to note that Stein has considerably broadened his explanatory framework and that this illustrates an advance over his earlier positions. Thus, for example, the decline of the Cōla State is no longer seen purely as the result of external factors and the changes within Tamil Society—though one may differ on the details of his version here—are also considered. Further, he no longer holds that the local institutions of the Cōla period were suppressed by the navaka-s (without adducing any evidence in support of this claim) and argues rightly, that these institutions had, by and large, declined before the establishment of the navaṅkara system.

But what are we to do when we read elsewhere in the same chapter of his book that 'the notion of a "navaka" system can scarcely be considered indigenous' as 'there is little either in the Vijayanagara inscriptions or literary evidence to support the ordered political relationship' chronicled by the Portuguese travellers, Domingos Paes and Fernao Nuniz. He contends, however, that the persons called navaka-s in the inscriptions of the period were the vital 'connecting elements in the Vijayanagara segmentary state' as they
'forged links to the diverse locality populations they ruled while retaining certain ties to the Telugu Rāya-s in Vijayanagara....'81

Does he mean by this that no such thing as the navaṅkara system existed at all, even though as we have just seen he also says that such a system was one of the major elements differentiating the Vijayanagara society from the Cōla society? Or, does it mean that the term 'system' or even 'structure', can strictly be applied only when the ordering of such a system is clearly mentioned in contemporary indigenous sources and that he uses such terms merely as a convenient short-hand description of a situation in which there is an intermediary level of authority represented by locality leaders called nayaka between the society at large and the emperor at Vijayanagara? And if this latter interpretation holds, it would be tantamount to saying that most of the social, economic and political structures discerned by social scientists the world over are just so much useless verbiage - a position that we are altogether unwilling to accept for obvious reasons.

81 Ibid., pp. 396-7.
These contradictory views on the existence of the *nayaka* system in Stein's book stem largely from the use of two widely differing interpretations of the term *nayaka*. We have already seen that he argues that one of the primary continuities between the Cōla and Vijayanagara societies was that there were no links between the locality units either in terms of resources or of command in both the societies. He has also said too, that the Telugu warriors—who were the highly martial locality leaders or *nayaka*-s 82—had seized control over the nuclear areas and due to the dissemination of superior military power among them, made possible by technological advances, the Vijayanagara empire was constantly faced with fissiparous tendencies. Moreover, it was asserted that *brāhma*-s were employed by the Rāya to check such tendencies. But if the locality units were not linked together either by command or by flow of resources how could there be a check on fissi-

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82 *Supra.* It is also said, "The more prudent reading of the term *nayaka* is the generalized designation of a powerful warrior who was at times associated with the military enterprises of kings, but who at all times was a territorial magnate in his own rights." Stein, op. cit., p. 408. Further, it is stated, "The title *nayaka* appears to have been freely adopted and widely used by local magnates with no apparent connection with Vijayanagara armies." *Ibid.*, p. 434.
parous tendencies as any notion of such a check must at least include the existence of either one or both of these links between the locality units?

The revered professor sows further confusion in our minds when he asserts that,

Vijayanagara nayaka-s were creatures of the State, created by the military superiority and purposes of the Raya-s and therefore, necessarily involved in and vulnerable to the hazardous imperical politics of this militaristic state. Notwithstanding several kinds of divergent interests, nayaka-s and Raya-s shared one fundamental interest: that of preventing new regional kingships from coming into existence. When this threatened nayaka-s and Raya-s together could and did co-operate in repressing such incipient states. But apart from this shared interest, there was little that clove the great nayaka-s, or the many minor chiefs who assumed the title, to the Raya-s and there was much that divided them from these kings.83

Here, then, is a diametrically opposed conception of nayaka-s — as 'creatures of the state created by the military superiority and purposes of the Raya-s' — as opposed to the one originally propounded by him, i.e., that nayaka-s are locality leaders who had 'no apparent connection' with the Vijayanagara Empire.

Much of this confusion, we would venture to suggest, results from the inadequate attention that Stein pays to empirical detail. We have seen that

83 Ibid., pp. 440-1.
in his earlier articles he argued that the navaka-s had seized control of the nuclear areas of the Cola period and that the amaram-s were not so much granted to them by the Emperor, but that the latter merely validated their seizure of the locality units. This argument flies in the face of all evidence as we have seen Stein himself argued for the lateral expansion of the Vijayanagara empire and not of the Telugu warriors in the face of pressure from the Bahmani Sultanate. 84 He however also maintains that, the defeat of the Sambuvarāya chiefs of Rājagambirarājyam by Kumāra Kampana, the son of the Vijayanagara King Bukka I, around A.D. 1363, was as impressive a victory as his conquest of the Madurai Sultanate, a few years later. Rājagambirarājyam included a substantial portion of Tondaimandalam.... But such conquests were an exceptional manifestation of the expanding Vijayanagara overlordship. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries what more characteristically 'expanded' was a successful claim to overlordship not direct Vijayanagara control. 85

This appears to be a rather weak defence of his concept of the segmentary state since, except in the case of the Zamorin of Calicut and perhaps a few petty chiefs, we have no evidence of the rulers of other areas submitting to Vijayanagara overlordship

84 Supra, p. 21
85 Stein, op. cit., p. 382.
without having been first defeated in battle. Even though Stein appears to have modified his earlier arguments, here and there, it continues to be a major element in his interpretation of the Vijayanagara society in that he still perceives the Vijayanagara ruler as being largely a nominal overlord exercising effective power only in the areas near the capital city. This is perhaps conditioned by his view that the only account that has come down to us about the flow of resources from the nayaka-s to the Rāya are the observations recorded by Nuniz. But this is simply not true. Venkataramanayya, for instance, cites several passages in the Rayavacaka to show the flow of resources from the nayaka-s to the Rāya.

86 Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit.

87 "In none of these records, nor in any other Vijayanagara inscriptions are there references to payments by nayaka-s to the emperor or his officials; except for the account of Nuniz (Paes does not refer to these arrangements), there is no corroboration of what have been regarded as the 'feudal' obligations of the nayaka-s." B. Stein, op. cit., p. 398.

88 N. Venkataramanayya, op. cit., pp. 106, 122-3, 171, See also infra. pp. 2:3-4
One of the more important reasons for the lack of empirical controls in the Steinian corpus appears to be the fact that he concentrates on the reinterpretation of the history of large entities - e.g. the Cōla or the Vijayanagara State - and consequently neglects to study intensively the smaller units territorial, social, political - and is hence reduced, by and large to reinterpreting the information given in secondary sources. It is of course not our intention to argue for 'micro-history' as against 'macro-history'. We are merely pleading for the more intensive study of small units to attain a more rigorous treatment of evidence, primarily of inscriptive sources. This is because while we agree entirely with Stein when he contends that it is more essential to provide new conceptual frameworks for the study of medieval South India than to adduce additional bits of information, we also see the need for studies of the latter type. This is not to be taken to be a criticism of Stein, but rather as an indication of the dilemmas faced by a researcher.

One of the most questionable methodological postulates that permeate Stein's work is that he holds the categories of the contemporary capitalist economy
to be applicable to medieval South India and this may be illustrated by his treatment of offerings to the Tirupati Temple. Here he considers the costs of some of the offerings which compose a typical service as the interest yielded to the donor of a money grant.

This conception was perhaps best expressed by Goodfellow in 1939 when he said, "The position that there should be more than one body of economic theory is absurd. If modern economic analysis, with its instrumental concepts, cannot cope equally with the Aborigines and with the Londoner, not only economic theory but the whole of the social sciences may be considerably discredited. For the phenomena of social science are nothing if not universal.... When it is asked indeed, whether modern economic theory can be taken as applying to primitive life, we can only answer that if it does not apply to the whole of humanity then it is meaningless. For there is no gulf between the civilized and the primitive; one cultural level shades imperceptibly into another, and more than one level is frequently found within a single community. If economic theory does not apply to all levels, then it must be so difficult to say where its usefulness ends that we might be driven to assert that it has no usefulness at all." Goodfellow, Principles of Economic Sociology, London, 1939, pp. 4-5, quoted in M. Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, tr. by Brian Pearce, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972, p. 281.
and tries to determine the rate of interest. He finds that the rates of interest were higher in 1535 and 1536 than in the 1540s though the number of endowments were lower in the 1540s than in the 1530s. Since "normal 'market' expectations" do not explain this phenomenon, the reasons are found in:

1) the actual earning potential of the fields which underwent improvement based upon the fertility of the soil, the size and perhaps other factors; and

2) the division of income from the land as between the temple as the holder of the right to the major share of income and the tenants or cultivators as the minor share holders.

Thus, he argues that 'the rate of interest' was higher in the 1530s than in the 1540s because of an increase in agricultural productivity and due to changes in the divisions of income from the land. He says, in other words, that all lands which benefitted from agricultural...
improvement schemes in the 1540s were less fertile than those irrigated in the 1530s and that the class position of the actual cultivators had improved vis-a-vis the temple in the 1540s, without of course citing any evidence in support of his assertions.

Stein is led to adopt these positions because he mechanically extends the categories of modern capitalist economics to medieval Tirupati, without realising that modern economic theory is a structure in which the categories—price, money, market, interest, rent, profit, wages—are all closely inter-linked. It follows therefore, that if any one of these categories changes its content then the entire structure must perforce change. Now consider for example a peasant family farm where the peasant and members of his family labour to produce a gross product, a part of which is to be sold in the market to obtain some goods not produced on the farm. In such a case the gross product minus that part which is set apart for production in the next production period forms the net product of the peasant family farm. It cannot be divided into wages, rent et cetera. Hence we have the category of the single indivisible labour product.93 It has also

been clearly shown that economic activity on a peasant family farm is determined by the subjective valuation between the satisfaction obtaining from the fulfilment of a need and the drudgery resulting from the efforts in satisfying the need. Hence, if the internal composition of the peasant family changes, by the addition of another member for instance, maintenance of the level of equilibrium between drudgery and satisfaction of needs would require increased self-exploitation.

The peculiarities of the 'peasant family labour farm' would stand out if we consider as an illustration a densely populated region like Tirupati, where the pressure of population does not allow the peasant production unit to expand its land holdings. Whereas for capitalist economic units the optimum size of the economic organisation is an absolute norm, in

94 Ibid., p. 6. A parallel may be drawn to R.F. Salisbury's study of the Siane tribe of New Guinea whose subsistence activities which required 80 per cent of the labour-time of men utilizing stone axes required only 50 per cent of the labour-time after the introduction of steel axes. The time thus 'gained' was interestingly enough used for 'extra-economic activities' - wars, travel, festivals, etc., and not for 'productive activity'. Cited in Godelier, op. cit., p. 273.
peasant farms greatly short of land, on the other hand, the concern to meet the year's needs forces the family to turn to an intensification with lower profitability. They have to purchase the increase of the total year's labour product at the price of a fall in income per labour unit.95

It follows that the peasant would rent or buy land if that would result in the raising of the standard of living of the family or in reducing the level of self-exploitation by enabling the family to use previously unemployed labour-power. In such cases, "the increase in payment per labour unit, with the resultant rise in the level of prosperity can be so important that it enables the family unit to pay for the lease or purchase, a large part of the gross product obtained from the newly acquired plot."96 In a system where peasant farms pre-dominate therefore, the price of land depends not only on the price of agricultural products but also on the increase or decrease of population, on the age composition of the people and on the subjective equilibrium between drudgery and satisfaction obtaining at a

95 Chayanov, op. cit., p. 7.
96 Ibid., p. 9.
given moment of time. In a peasant family farm system, the rate of interest is determined likewise. Hence there would be no general rate of interest, but a series of rates of interest at any one time.

Another major defect in Stein's analysis of the Vijayanagara period is that he does not attempt to locate his discussion of the economy of the epoch within its cultural context. Thus, he argues that though the

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., p. 10.
99 Witold Kula's seminal work on Polish Feudalism also shows that the methods of calculating profits and losses in capitalist firms cannot be applied to feudal enterprises as all the elements that enter into the production process in the capitalist system have a cost - but this was not the case under feudalism. Further in the latter system it should also be examined whether that portion of the estate's resources which were destroyed were capable of being put to alternative uses - e.g. if the industrial activities centered around the estate destroyed a portion of the forests it would be necessary to see whether the wood could have been put to alternative uses. W. Kula, An Economic Theory of the Feudal System: Towards a Model of the Polish Economy, 1500-1800, Tr. by Lawrence Garner, New Left Books, London, 1976, See also Jairus Banaji, "Modes of Production and the Materialist Conception of History", Capital and Class, 3, Feb. 1977. The citations here will be from a cyclostyled copy of the article circulated by the author in New Delhi, February 1978.
temple carried on irrigation programmes in the absence of a state department of irrigation, it is not necessary that the Vijayanagara state was helping to provide for agricultural development. In other words, he holds that while the latent function of these endowments was to provide irrigation facilities, the manifest function was to provide religious merit to the donors or to their nominees. Since he dismisses the possibility that the donors acted on 'economic grounds' he is forced to attribute the support given to the Tirupati temple to two factors: first, the Vijayanagara rulers, especially Sāluva Narasimha, Krishnadevarāya and Acyutadēvarāya held Śri Venkaṭēśvara at Tirupati as their personal deity; and second, "the character of Hindu kingship and special Vijayanagara 'mission' of protecting Hindu religion and

100  "Land development was an obvious consequence or function of state endowments. Yet, land development may not have been a motive. It was perhaps enough for the Vijayanagara State to support the temples simply in order to maintain Hindu institutions. State support to temples in order to promote land development is nowhere suggested in the sources, nor is this reason required to explain the support which the State provided to the medieval South Indian temples." B. Stein, "The State, the Temple and Agricultural Development", p. 184.
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civilisation." And he explains the lack of interference in temple affairs by the rulers of the first dynasty of Vijayanagara as being due to their preoccupation with extending their control into the southern parts of the peninsula.

This analysis, we shall argue, is based on Stein's inability to get behind the formal meanings of the words of the inscriptions. He is unable to realise that behind the words of the inscriptions, which had already assumed a set form by the 15th century, lies the ideology of the ruling classes of the time, an ideology which promoted their interests much as the principle of laissez-faire promoted the interests of the bourgeoisie in a latter epoch. Indeed, when dealing with his sources, the historian often has to work in the manner of a linguist who studies the logical structures of a language which are frequently not discerned by the native speaker.

102 Ibid., p. 47.

fn. continues....
Modern anthropological and historical studies have shown that important leaders indulge in conspicuous consumption in order to attain important secular ends. Consider, for instance, Witold Kula's analysis of the activities of Prince Radziwill of Poland, who while "distributing wine to his retinue and clients in the streets of Nieszowiez, achieved an important aim by his apparent unconcern with the amount of wine that was being spilled and lost down the gutter; by so doing he impressed them with his richness, inspired their belief in his unlimited possibilities and ultimately, won their obedience to his will." However no society or group can continue to waste its resources endlessly and hope to survive.

Previous fn.


105 Kula, "On the Typology of Economic Systems, p. 120.
Stein also has a tendency to use improper analogies in his explanations. Thus for example, he contends:

A possible explanation of this puzzling phenomenon (i.e. the adoption of the idângâi name) is that the utility of the idângâi title as a well-established symbol of identity out-weighed for its users any stigma which might have attached to the title from an earlier time. It is after all not only in labels which are affixed upon or chosen by a group that basic significance inheres, for new myths can be made to offset older meanings. The proud adoption of the label 'Slav' (from 'slave') in nineteenth century Europe and the more recent use of 'black' in American society remind us of this property of ethnic labels and labelling. The capacity of ethnic labels to serve as symbols of identity and mobilisation - whatever the origin of the labels and their possible once derogatory connotations - explains as well as any reason why the title 'left' or 'left-hand' continued to be used by a substantial number of South Indians even after the twelfth century when those using the title found impressive new opportunities and importance.106

The difficulty with such an argument by analogy is simply that the analogy does not hold. This is because the terms 'Slav' and 'Black' when adopted by some nineteenth century Europeans and by some twentieth century Americans and Africans respectively, were so adopted as a mark of rebellion and the fact of their adoption led to these terms losing their derogatory meanings. This was surely not the case in medieval South India

106 Stein, Peasant State and Society, pp. 203-04.
where the *idângai* or left-hand never lost its stigma and hence the analogy advocated by Stein is not applicable in this case.

In spite of these criticisms Stein is unquestionably the greatest historian of medieval South India. Indeed it is because his work represents a quantum leap in historical research on the 'Middle Ages' of Peninsular India that we are even able to make these observations on the Steinian corpus. May we add too, that however much one may differ with Stein on the interpretation of Vijayanagara history, it is impossible to ignore him.