Chapter II

BELLARY: REALM AND REGION

This chapter provides a brief outline of the region's geographical location, its ethnographic demenian, agrarian structure and historical background from prehistoric times to the fall of Vijayanagara, in an effort to resituate Bellary with a holistic perspective. The nature of the economy and society of a particular region, and the political system it reflects is to a large extent dependent on its geophysical and ecological factors. Historically, Bellary is one of the driest regions in south India, falling under the category of "dry ecotypes". And as a representative of the dry ecotype, Bellary possessed traditionally "flat or loose" social structure (Robert, 1982). This less rigid and defined social and economic structure, in a most subtle means, gave way to the rise of several forest and pastoral peoples to preeminence in the power structure of the region from the medieval times, as might be witnessed in the following discussion.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND PHYSIOGRAPHY

Bellary region takes its name from its present head quarter town, but the etymology of the word is not a matter upon which it is safe to dogmatise. Several derivations have been suggested, but none of them is convincing. A local tradition, supported by an account in one of the Mackenzie manuscripts, says that the name is corrupted from Bala han, meaning "the dcalet of Bala", and that this Bala was an asura (demon) who lived here and was slain by Indra, because he harassed the devakanyas or damsels of the divine world (Francis 1916: 1-6).

Perched in the upland semi-arid zone of Karnataka - Rayalaseema plateau with a low-to-medium annual rainfall (in the range of 600 mm to 800 mm), Bellary lies between 14° 56' north latitude and 77° 11' east longitude. The district is bound on the north by the Raichur district, on the west by the Dharwar district, on the south by the Chitradurga district (all these being parts of Karnataka State) and on the east by the Anantapur and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. When the district formed part of the composite Madias State, it was the westernmost of that State and was roughly triangular in shape (Mysore State Gazetteer IV72).
The region under discussion is a peneplained country forming part of the peninsular interior known as the Deccan. It chiefly composed of a basement of the pre-cambrian Archean gneisses flanking the western outliers of the Eastern Ghats, coupled with submontane riverine zones. The western peneplained country is marked by expanses of dry deciduous forests, interspersed with thorny thicket fades. The characteristic floral cover of this region (though degraded) belongs to Anogeissus - Terminalia - Tectona series, Albizzia - Amara - Acacia series) and Hardwickia - Pterocarpus - Anogeissus series.

The liver system of Bellary is very simple. The only important rivers in the region are the Tungabhadra and its tributaries, the Hagari and the Chikka -"Magan; The Tungabhadra river forms the natural boundary dividing the region on the west from the Dharwar district and on the north from the Raichur district. The Bellary district consists of two widely differing natural divisions, an eastern and a western, separated by the Sandur hills which run right across the district from northwest to southeast.

SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY

Inscriptions show that the Bellary region was intimately connected with the fortunes of the early dynasties of the Mauryas, (Ashoka, 258 BC), The Satavahanas (2nd century AD), The Kadambas (1th century), The Chalukyas (6th century); The Rashtrakutas (7th-10th centuries), The Gangas (1Oth century); The Western Chalukyas (11th Century); The Cholas, the Kalachuryas, Hoyasala Ballalas, and Yadavas (12th century AD). It was also evident that Muslim incursions took place in this part of the region by the soliders of the Delhi sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and crushed the kampili successors of the Hoyasalas in Karnataka in around AD 1329. But not much is known of the region before the fourteenth century, when the Vijayanagara Kingdom or empire was founded on the banks of river Tungabhadra in Hampi in AD 1336 (Francis 1916: 32-44).

There are many important questions about Vijayanagara political and social matters which remain vexingly unclear even after more than a half century of scholarly attention (Krishnaswami Aiyangar 1941; Sewell 1924; Heras 1927).
Almost from the outset there has been agreement among Vijayanagara students with respect to certain important interpretations. These have tended to remain acceptable to more recent scholars. The first of these durable interpretations pertains to the success of the Vijayanagara State in limiting the expansion of Deccani Muslim power. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Vijayanagara state did stabilize the frontier between the Bahmani sultanate and its successors, and what was to remain a dominantly Hindu social and political order south of the Krishna-Tungabadra. This leads to what appears to be the second broadly agreed upon view of the Vijayanagar state: that it created the conditions for a defence of Hindu culture and institutions. This defensive role is also seen to have been self-conscious and ideological. Finally, and again a consequence of the encounter with the powerful Muslim states of the Deccan, the Vijayanagar state is seen as an essentially military state, in Nilakanta Sastri's words the nearest approach to war-state ever made by a Hindu kingdom (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 295). The military effectiveness of the empire was based on a large army, the use of new firearms and the establishment of swill cavalry units in which Vijayanagara was greatly helped by Muslim and European mercenaries and the trade with the Portuguese (Kulke and Rothermund 1991).

Some of the questions upon which there remain deep differences among scholars have been noticed in the more recently published research on Vijayanagara. Vasundara Filiozat reminds us of continuing differences among scholars about the origin of the first or Sangama dynasty of Vijayanagara (Filiozat 1973: 9-15). Older views about the origin of the dynasty as tribal peoples, Kurumba or Kadambo, have given way to two other main theories (Sewell 1924: 33). Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya have taken the position that the founders of the Vijayanagara state were clugus; others, including R. Narasimhachar, B.A. Saletoe, H. Heras, and S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, have identified the founders as Karnataka warriors. Another study of the second, or Saluva dynasty sees its founders as both, that is, as having originally moved from Karnataka to Andhra country (Sree Kama Sarma 1972: 38).

According to Saletoe, whose principal work centred upon Karnataka during the Vijayanagara period, the integrity of local institutions, or as he puts it, 'purvamariyade'
The issue of feudalism has arisen with respect to the Vijayanagara state as it has with few other pre-modern states in India. D.C. Sircar, who has condemned the use of the term 'feudalism' for all other medieval states of India, reservedly considers that the term may appropriately be applied to the Vijayanagara state because of the central feature of the amaram tenure, usually construed as a military service tenure (Sircar, 1969). N. Venkataramanayya, whose work on amaram tenure is the most complete, denies the appropriateness of the concept feudal on the basis of the complete absence of any idea of fealty and homage (Venkata Ramanayya 1935: 171-172).

At another point in his discussion, Sircar attempts to accommodate amaram tenure to his terminology in the following way:

...the amaram tenure was similar to the allotment of land to the priest, barber, washerman, and others for the services to be received from them regularly.... The Amaranayakas gave their lands to minor landlords on similar terms of military service just as the subordinate rulers had various grades of vassal chiefs under them (Shear 1964).

The weight of historiographical judgement about South Indian political history clearly opposes the idea of a Vijayanagara feudal system. Most historians of the period, while they may use terms such as 'feudatory' and 'vassal', do not seriously consider the concepts. Considering, the new elements which come into the political system from about the fourteenth century, as outlined in the introduction, they treat the Vijayanagara political system as an elaboration of that system of political relations which had existed in the southern peninsula from at least the tenth century.

This is most clearly seen in works whose scope extends beyond dynastic periods. T.V. Mahalingam perceives no basic discontinuities during the middle period of South Indian history in his South Indian Polity (Mahalingam 1967). The more critical work of Appadorai on economic history assumes essential continuity though, he does not give much attention to formal political arrangements, tending rather to accept Nilakanta Sastri's view of Choia polity and assuming its continuation during the period of Hoysala and Vijayanagara ascendancy in the southern peninsula (Appadorai 1936).
Within thirty years of the establishment of the dynasty upon the foundation of the failing loyasa house under Ballala III, the early Vijayanagara warriors brilliantly extended their lordship to the southern part of the peninsula, ending Muslim rule in Madurai in AD. 1371. The dramatic reconquest of Madurai transformed the Sangama dynasty of Vijayanagara from a powerful, if hazardously based and remote, kingdom into a worthy successor to the Chola empire (Stein 1980: 381). In this sense, the youthful founders of Vijayanagara were able to accomplish what the Hoysalas even under sometimes extraordinary leadership had failed in. And, it is perhaps ironic that one reason for the success of the Sangama warriors was the establishment in AD 1347, almost simultaneously with their own beginnings, of the Muslim Bahmani state on their northern frontier. While posing a continuous hazard to the young Vijayanagara state, it also forced the Vijayanagara rulers to establish a lateral defensive system westward and eastward across the peninsula from their principal locus of power on the Tungabhadra. Being constrained to such a licy, the Vijayanagara rulers avoided one of the salient weaknesses of their predecessors, the Hoysalas. The latter vacillated between expansion northward into what came to be called the ‘Bombay Karnatak’ and southward into the Kaveri basin, and they succeeded in neither. It may also be added that the expansion of the first of the Vijayanagara rulers laterally across the peninsula was made necessary by the success of the first rulers of the Bahmani sultanate in establishing close collaboration with Hindu warriors of Andhra country, notably the Kapaya Nayaka of Warangal (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 231).

The expansion of Vijayanagara sovereignty to lulu country in the west and Penukonda in the cast reflects this pressure from the north and created a war frontier between the states in the doab tract of Raichur. Denied expansion to the north, the Vijayanagara rulers were forced into what was to become the second element of strength and durability of their state, that is the expansion into Tamil country (Stein 1980: 3X1).

The movement of the Vijayanagara overlordship southward came in slow stages, being punctuated by a series of wars with the 232-45). In some cases at least, the victims of Vijayanagara expansion southward were Hindu chiefs. Thus, the defeat of
the Sambhuvaraya elicits of Rajagambirarajyam by Kumara Kamapana, 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. Rajagambirarajyam included a substantial part of Pondicherry (just as the Sultanate included a substantial part of Pandi-mandalam). 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 of overlordship, not direct Vijayanagara control. Great chiefs, like the Zamorin of Calicut (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 266-77) and small chiefs, like the nattar of Ponpattai in Cholamandalam (Krishnaswami 1964: 93-94) recognized the overlordship of Vijayanagara in more appropriate ways: the former by responding promptly to a command from Devaraya II for the presence at the royal court of the Persian ambassador Abdur Razzak (who recorded the event) and the latter by the acknowledgement of the right of the Vijayanagara prince Kumara Kamapana to present a gift to a temple in his territory.

During the expansion of the Vijayanagara overlordship from the earliest rulers of the first dynasty through the relatively short-lived second, or Saluva, dynasty (A.D. 1486-1505), the importance of dhamic ideology for Vijayanagara rule is revealed: the mission of the State in preserving Hindu institutions against the depredations of Muslims of the Deccan. Venkataramanayya states: 'the history of Vijayanagara may be said to be the history of a fierce struggle between the Hindus of the Deccan and the Muhammadan rulers of the Deccan' (Venkataramanayya 1935: 145), Nilakanta Sastri similarly states

... the basic nature of the historic role of Vijayanagar... was to preserve South India as the last refuge of the traditional culture of and institutions of the country.

...that great empire which, by resisting the onslaughts of Islam, championed the case of Hindu civilization and culture in the South for close to three centuries and thus preserved the ancient tradition of the country in its polity, its learning and its arts (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 261).

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 dhamic 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 came to acquire, an ideological principle which distinguishes it from previous South Indian states. It is this principle which most decisively identifies the Vijayanagara overlordship, not presumed differences in the basic structure of the state.

Vijayanagara kingship, like all medieval Hindu kingships, expressed appropriateness in terms of the maintenance of dharma, and especially varna-sramadharma. This is captured in Vijayanagara inscriptive prasastis in a very different way from Chola inscriptions even though the dharmic qualities of their kings were the same. Both kingdoms claimed to be in the hands of conquerors whose military exploits made them digvijayus; these kings were the greatest of prestators whose gifts to gods and Brahmans assured the welfare of the world.

Among the things that distinguish the Vijayanagara from the Chola overlordship is the personal character of the former or their agents as dharmic actors. Vijayanagara inscriptions of the fourteenth century onwards depict the Vijayanagara king, his son, or preceptorial agent making gifts to temples or to Brahmans, adjudicating disputes among such personages, or re-establishing temple worship long interrupted by Muslim depredations or other disorders. Here is in the Vijayanagara records an immediacy of the royal presence that is largely absent from most Chola inscriptions. In the latter, royal dharma and prestations are realized through the often impersonal and remote mediation of an unnamed ajanapati, or executor. It is this remoteness and indirection of the expression of Chola rajadharma - the elaborate set of documents and orders that connect a gift to Brahmans or gods with the Chola kings - that gave to earlier kingship its bureau-cratic, even Byzantine, tone. Vijayanagara inscriptions, by contrast, place the king, his kinsmen or guru in the arena of presentation in a very direct way (Stein 1980: 383-384).

In nothing else is the ritual focus of the kings of Vijayanagara so clear as in the Mahanavami festival, an annual royal ceremony of the fifteenth and sixteenth century occurring about 15 September to 15 October. Since Vijayanagara times, the nine day festival, followed by a tenth and final day - dasara - has been important in many parts of the macro region. Most famous in Karnataka, as Dasara, it has been continuously
celebrated at least since Raja Wodeyar sponsored it in late September, A.D. 1610 at Seringapatnam (Hayavadana Rao 1941 : V2: 68). The same festival, also called navarath is celebrated by the nayaka successors of Vijayanagara. The Mahanavami is described in vivid detail by the Portuguese sojourners of the sixteenth century, Paez and Nuniz, and also mentioned by the Italian Nicolo Conti whose report of a visit to Vijayanagara about A.D. 1420 is the earliest extant and by Abdur Razzak, the Persian ambassador ordered to Vijayanagara by the king Deva Raya II around 1442 (Sewell 1924 : 253-64). The theoretical works of Ilocart and Jonda prepare the way for the acceptance of the ritual actions of ancient Indian kings (Ilocart 1970, Gouda 1966), but it is scarcely possible to find a better medieval example than the nine days of the Mahanavami dedicated to protection and regeneration at the capital city of Vijayanagara.

Puranic sources speak of two important nine day festivals which mark the turning of the three seasons of the sub-continent: in March-April, after the harvest of the samba or rabi crop and the onset of the hot season, and in September-October, after the harvest of the khar or khanf crop and the onset of the cold season (Appendix - 2). The first of these is associated with the god Rama and the second with the goddess Devi, or Durga. Elements of both these festivals, as described in puranic works, can be seen to exist in the Mahanavami of medieval, and the Rama motif may have been as important as the Devi motif though it is the later (i.e. September-October) nine days that was celebrated at Vijayanagar (Stein 1930 : 384-385).

The most elaborate description of the festival was that of Paez, from whose account the following features may be stressed. Throughout the nine days, festivities are centred in the citadel area of Vijayanagara, belbre the palace and on two, large, permanent structures: one of which is called ‘The House of Victory’ by Paez (‘Throne Platform’ by Longhurst, the archaeologist of Vijayanagara and the mahanavami dibba according to the modern residents of Hampi) and the other ‘The King’s Audience Hall’. The ruins of both are massive granite slab platforms showing structural signs of having borne large wooden structures as described in the medieval chronicles. These were constructed by Krishnadevaraya around A.D. 1513 following his Orissan campaign and victory over the Gajapatis (Longhurst 1917 : 57-70).
Around and within these buildings were enacted the events of the festival. Here the king observed the many processions, displays, and games and here he accepted the homage and the gifts notables as he sat upon his bejewelled throne. The king sometimes shared this throne, or sat at its foot, while it has occupied by a richly decorated processional murti of a god; at other times he was alone. The god is not identified. Within the House of Victory was a special, enclosed, and again, richly decorated chamber in which the image was sheltered when it was not on display before the public participants in the festival. At several points in the proceedings, the King, sometimes with Brahmans and sometimes alone, retired to this enclosed chamber of the deity for worship. Both the Audience Hall and the Throne Platform bear bas-relief sculpture along their granite sides depicting many of the events described by Paes and Nuniz (Stein 1980: 385).

In front of the two structures which were the centre of the festival activities were constructed a number of pavilions which contributed to the aura of wealth and sumptuousness of the festival as a whole. They were elaborately decorated, in among other ways, with devices, apparently heraldic symbols, of the grandee occupants for whom the pavilions were temporary housing during the festival. Nuniz reported that there were nine major pavilions (he called them 'castles') for the most illustrious of the notables and that each military commander also had to erect one in the broad space before the palace. Razzak, as ambassador from Persia, was ensconced in one of these (Sewell 1924: 357).

Access to the guarded, central arena of festival activity was gained by passage through several gates enclosing wells of the temple precincts; Paes' description of this suggests passage through a series of gateways as the medieval pilgrim moved towards the sanctorum in the great temples of South India (Sewell 1924: 253-254). Once gained, the spacious open area before the palace, the Audience Hall, and the house of Victory was ringed about with the pavilions referred to and with shaded seating from which the great soldiers, sectarian leaders and others viewed the proceedings immediately before the house of Victory on whose higher levels the King sat.

What was viewed was a combination of a great durbar with its offerings of homage and wealth to the King and the return gifts from the King - exchanges of honour: the sacrificial reconsecration of the King's arms, his soldiers, horses, elephants.
of animals were slaughtered, **dvarshamand puja of**

the King's tutelary - the goddess - as well as his closest agnatic and affinal kinmen, and a

variety of athletic contests, dancing and singing procession involving the King's caparisoned women and temple dancers from throughout the realm, and fireworks displays. The locus of these diverse and magnificent entertainments was always the King as glorious and conquering warrior, as the possessor of vast riches lavishly displayed by him and his women (queens and their maids of honour) and distributed to his followers.

The King was fructifier and agent of prosperity of the world. Most succinctly assessed, the Mahanavami appears as a combination of the **asvamedha** (the greatest of all royal sacrifices, with its celebration and consecration of kingly military prowess as symbolized in the horse of the king) and the description of Kama's return to Ayodhya in Canto 1.10 of the final book of Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Comparing the Mahanavami of Vijayanagara with the archaic horse sacrifice may seem superficial or strained, for the Vijayanagara period knows of no such royal sacrifices; none are even alluded to as during the Chola period. Certain common features of the archaic **asvamedha** and the medieval **Mahanavami** may indeed be superficial. Both are ten day rituals and at least one of the great **asvamedhas** was celebrated on an **ahanavanu** (the March-April or Chaitra one) by Yudhisthira, hero of the *Mahabharata*.

Yet, the anointing of royal arms by priests and by royal women along with animal sacrifices are prominent features of the Vijayanagara festival:

Paes wrote of the King's women:

> They came in regular order one before the other, in all perhaps sixty women fair and strong, from sixteen to twenty years of age. Who is he that could tell of the costliness and value of what each of these women carried on her person? So great is the weight of the bracelets and jewels carried by them that many of them cannot support them, and women accompanying them assisting them by supporting their arms. In this manner and in this array they proceed three times around the King's horses, and at the end retire into the palace (Sewell 1924: 26?).

Compare this with the *Satapathabrahmana*:

> It is the wives that anoint (the horse), for they - to wit (many) wives - are a form of prosperity... the wives round (the horse)...thrice they walk round... (Eggeling 1900: 313).
An even more strikingly parallel feature of the Mahanavami is the symbolic significance of the King's horse in the consecration of his kingship. Paes describes a troop of richly caparisoned horses brought before the King at one point in the Mahanavami, and leading this troop was one bearing 'two state umbrellas of the king and grander decorations than the others'. Of this one, Paes writes:

You must know that this horse that is conducted with all this state is a horse that the king keeps, on which they sworn and received as kings, and on it must be sworn all those that shall come after them; and in case such a horse dies they put another in its place (Sewell 1924 : 262).

His suggested comparison with the archaic, Vedic asvamedha is more than anachronistic; it is also Hawed in being an apparent violation of Vedic prohibitions as well. The bright half of the lunar month of asvina (Tamil month of purattaci) when the Mahanavami festival occurs is said to be inauspicious of Vedic learning and by extension for other Vedic activities as well. These activities are enjoined as anadhyaya according to the dharamasastra of Aparaka (Kane 1953). Brahmins do figure in the Mahanavami festival as ritual performers along with the King in relation to the King's tutelary; they also are recipients of royal gifts. But, Brahmins do not dominate the ritual arena, which is very much the King's and in one description of the festival, that of Conti around A.D. 1420, Brahmins appear to have been publicly reviled (Major 185; Sewell 1924).

The association of Sri Rama with the Mahanavami is somewhat more direct. The same mood of celebration by a people of their king found in the final verses of the Valmiki Ramayana sullises the vivid descriptions of the festival of Vijayanagara. And, there is the further shared conception of regal deliverance from threatening evil. Saleatore captures this quality in his statement on the festival.

Religious in atmosphere, it is essentially political in its significance. For it commemorates the anniversary of Rama's marching against Ravana and in its twofold aspect of the worship of durga and of the ayudhas or arms, culminating in the Vijayadasami (Victorious tenth day) was particularly suited to Vijayanagara times when fatal issues loomed ominously in the political horizon (Saleitore 1934 : V2 : 372).

The god Rama appears important in yet another way. One of the major temples of the capital city under the luluva dynasty of Vijayanagara, and especially in Krishna-
dcvaraya's time was that dedicated to Ramachandra, the hero of the Ramayana and the seventh avatar of Vishnu. A separate shrine within that temple was dedicated to the Devi, consort of Rama. This temple was also called the Hazara Rama temple, and it was the only shrine within the palace precincts and thus quite proximate to the varied activities of the festival. The unidentified image in the accounts of the Mahanavami may have been the consort goddess of Sri Rama if the proximity of the Rama temple is taken as important and if the judgement of Longhurst, the archaeologist of Hampi, or Vijayanagara, is correct that the Rama shrine was the private place of worship of the Tuluva kings (Longhurst 1917: 71).

Though all historians of Vijayanagara have mentioned the Mahanavami festival, often quoting long excerpts from the accounts of Paes and Nuniz, the festival has not received analysis as a single, unified ritual event. Omitted from the detailed reports have been odd facts (e.g., 'the rents' of the nayakas are paid at this time and the Kings 'owns' all the land) and descriptions of the King, his high officials, and queens. However, this festival, like others, is perceived as a unified system of action and meaning, and should be interpreted in that light.

Two aspects of the Mahanavami tirtha immediately seize attention: its overwhelmingly royal character and its symbolically incorporative character. These aspects confirm conceptions of ritual kingship assumed in the concept of the segmentary state suggested some forty years ago by Locart and since then largely ignored by Indological scholars (Locart 1970). Locart's conception of the king as ritual performer and the primary agency for the prosperity and welfare of the realm, and his attention to the symbolically integrative character of the temple and the city are extraordinarily well-realized in the Mahanavami festival. Kingly ritual power is expressed in numerous ways: in the manifestation of wealth displayed and elaborately redistributed at many points of the nine day festival; in the various consecratory actions involving the King's arms as the means of his royal fame and protection, and also in the King's frequent and often solitary worship of (and ultimately identity with) the deity who presides with him over the festival, and in whose name and for whose propitiation the festival occurs. Certain signs of the Devi (Durga) worship are clear in this festival, and they deserve notice. According to the Devi Bhagavatam, females in procession before the goddess form an
essential element of the Navaratri or Mahanavami festival. It is also well to recall that since the Mahanavami is considered a time of danger, the protective power of the Devi and also the King are enhanced (Stein 1980:389-390).

Incorporative elements to which Locart drew attention in his work included the subordination of all gods and all chiefs to the king. This incorporation is signified by various means in the Mahanavami festival. The palace site of the festival is reached through two large gates over which towers are constructed (Sewell 1924 : 253-254). These massive gateways were apparently destroyed by the Muslim invaders of the city in the sixteenth century; gates in other parts of the Hampi ruins at some distance from citadel of Krishnadevaraya's time, confirm Paes' description of these structures which resemble the gopuram leading to the sanctuums of Hindu temples of the time (Longhurst 1917 :47-49). King and god are at least homologized, if they are not equated. The pavilions erected in the spacious, interior courtyard before the Throne Platform to house the notables of the realm are called 'castles', or dwellings of great men placed within the precincts of the palace and thus under the protection of the great king.

Gods of the King's realm are also incorporated in his city. Included here are permanent resident deities like the Gajapati Krishna of Udayagiri and Vithala (Vithoba) from distant Maharashtra (Nilakanta Sastri and Venkataramanayya 1946: V3:47). It also appears that deities from elsewhere in the realm are brought to the capital during the festival and presented to the King for his adoration (Sewell 1924 : 264). And, servants of gods throughout the King's realm come to do obeisance. This included priests, but most conspicuously it was the temple women (whom the Portuguese called 'courtesans') of shrines everywhere. These temple dancers and musicians performed before the King just as they did before the god to whom they were dedicated (Venkataramanayya 1935 : 404-405).

Following Locart's perceptive discussion, it is possible to point to the crucial place of the city—this city of victory—in the total moral order over which the Vijayanagara kings exercised sway. The city, Locart wrote, 'never stands for anything specific; it is never less than the whole world, and its parts are the parts of the world' (Locart 1970 : 250). And, persistently linked to the city and its establishment is the goddess Durga. As
Bhuvanesvari, ‘mistress of the world’, the goddess was by tradition propitiated by Vidyaranya, or Madhavacharya, who is supposed to have been the preceptor of the founders of the city in A.D. 1336 (Stein J 980:391) This connection of the great goddess and the city of the Mayas was first presented by Willia Taylor in his 1835 translation of several Tamil chronicles of later medieval times, (Taylor 1835: 102-103) and though the idea continues to be accepted by most Vijayanagara scholars, none have exploited fully the symbolic power of the relationships of goddess propitiation, the Rayas and the city.

While scholars have failed in this, the successor states of the Vijayanagara in South India, notably the Wodeyars of Mysore and the Nayaka kings of Madurai did not maintain this royal festival in their capitals in full richness (Taylor 1835: 103; Dubois 1928 : 569-71).

This continuation of tradition by successors of the Rayas in South India (and possibly also the Maratha king Sivaji) of the ruler as an active ritual ‘principal’ (to use Ilocart's term) was the result, in part at least, of the perceived threat to Hindu institutions from Muslim powers of peninsular India. Just as the expansion of the Bahmani sultanate and its successors in the Deccan acquired a special saliency in the ideological presentation of the Vijayanagara state as symbols of danger to the dharma which Hindu kings were bound to protect and nourish, Muslims of a later day continued to have a special meaning, however dubious their actual threat may have been.

Actually, those who bore the brunt of Vijayanagara military power were most often Hindu rulers, not Muslims. And, ironically perhaps, the most strategically placed military units of the Vijayanagara military formations were composed of Muslims, as is generally conceded. It is based upon evidence such as the A1). 1430 inscription of the time of Devaraya referring to 10,000 turushka (Muslim) horsemen in his service (L.C.V.3. Introduction) This factor is often elicited to explain the ultimate defeat of Vijayanagara arms in sixteenth century; it nevertheless remains clear that Muslim contingents were responsible for at least part of the great early successes of the Vijayanagara rulers against Hindu houses which they toppled. The Vijayanagara state was however not in fact dedicated to different principles of rule as might be supposed from the confrontation of Hindu and Muslim forces in the Deccan, whatever the importance of its dharmic ideology. To suppose otherwise is to transfer to an earlier time the communal politics of the twentieth century.
And, like the rule of the Cholas, Vijayanagara power was often quite remote after an initial intrusion of its forces into territories ruled by Hindu chiefs. Many parts of the deep southern peninsula continued to be ruled by members of the same families whom the Vijayanagara armies had conquered. This is particularly true of the Pandyan territory through most of the fifteenth century. In most other parts of Tamil country, the ancient territorial terminology remained, and Telugu Nayakas and Brahmans placed in positions of supralocal agents for Vijayanagara authority. Hence, to overstate the ideological element and to speak of a newly constituted basis of state power and legitimacy in the Vijayanagara period would be to distort the historical evidence which we possess of the period. Pre-Vijayanagara forms proved by and large to be both adequate and durable.

Another feature of Vijayanagara rule which also invites comparison with the impressive Chola kingship was the diversity of the peoples under each. In a technical sense, it is the rule over many and different peoples which has justified the use of 'empire' or 'imperial' in connection with the Chola and Vijayanagara states. For the Tamil Cholas based in the rich Kaveri basin, the earliest regions to be included in their expanding sovereignty were the two secondary central zones of the Tamil plain: Pandimandalam and Tondaimandalam. Just soon after, Chola sovereignty was established over places of dominantly non-Tamil population with ancient cultural traditions of their own (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 375-376). Chola influence was extended northward to Vengi and north-westward to Gangavadi well before it was fully established in the Tamil peripheral zone of Kongu (modern Coimbatore and Salem).

Similarly, the first Vijayanagara dynasty, shortly after the establishment of their sovereignty over the northern portion of what was to become the empire, moved to establish themselves in Tamil country. The process was repeated in the second dynasty as well. Whether the Vijayanagara rulers are to be regarded as essentially Kannadigas or Telugus, or whether they are to be regarded as both from the very beginning - a position taken recently by P. Sree Rama Sarma - the territorial scope of their power in eluded the entire southern peninsula (Sree Rama Sarma 1972:37).
Thus both kingships were firmly based in one part of the southern peninsula from which they drew the major resources for sustaining their military supremacy, namely their soldiery; but both also achieved overlordship in other, well-populated and wealthy parts of the macro region. Overlordship in these latter places appears to have resulted from three different kinds of processes. One was the result adventurous pillaging expeditions of small groups of Telugu warriors or by of large ‘invasions’, as Krishnaswami has labelled them, of Vijayanagara forces under royal commanders. The second process was the transformation of local elicits into nayakas, thus constituting the cement of the new overlordship and at the same time, the means of strengthening the control of local chiefs. The result of these two processes in both the Chola and Vijayanagara cases were similar. The third means of extending the Vijayanagara overlordship over the southern peninsula is different from anything seen in Chola times; this was the incorporation of the support and the followings of sectarian groupings in all parts of the southern peninsula. With respect to this, of course, the dharmic ideology of the Rayas was all-important.

Raids and invasions into territories remote from their prime bases led to permanent settlement in both cases. In the Chola period this occurred when parts of the modern district of Kolar, in Karnataka were brought under the Control of Tamils of Tondaimandalam as seen in the famous Mulbagal inscription of A.D. 1072. A variation on this expansion process in the Vijayanagara period is seen during the fifteenth century. Then, Telugu warriors, without frontally challenging the Tamil chiefs of many areas of older settlement, established themselves in more remote parts of the Tamil plain abutting on the plain at the foothills of the Eastern Ghats. The results of this latter form of expansion are recorded in modern census volumes showing a zone of Telugu speakers running from north to south and splitting some of the modern Tamil Nadu districts into a dominantly Tamil-speaking eastern side and Telugu-speaking western side (Srinivasa-raghavan 1936 : 230). In these sparsely populated interstices, Telugu migrants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries not only found scope for political control, but they found black soils with which they were familiar and for which they possessed the means of exploiting in ways superior to the older Tamil residents of these areas. It was the relatively high proportion of Telugu warriors and settlers in these peripheral parts of the
Tamil plain that explains the placement of the two subordinate 'capitals' of Vijayanagara in Tondaimandalarn: Padividu and Tiruvadi. The striking pattern of this Telugu expansion was noted by early British administrators as well as by epigraphists (A R E., 1904). But the unique record of this process is contained in the accounts of the records collected by Colin Mackenzie in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Telugu-speaking Reddis displaced Tamil-speaking local leaders as dominant cultivating groups, and this displacement brought with it changes in the language of temple inscriptions from Tamil to Telugu, as at the great Vaishnava temple of Tirupati. This movement of Telugu warriors into Tamil country was itself part of a larger pattern of movements. During the late fifteenth century, Reddis were seen to be moving into the western parts of Andhra from their home territories to the east as recorded in a Kurnool inscription of Saluva Narasimha's time (A R E. 1960-1).

Whether by the movement of small groups of Tamil warriors or by invasions of Telugu armies, these fourteenth and fifteenth century conquests did not result in an easy or firm control over Tamil country by the Vijayanagara overlordship. Tamil country had virtually to be reconquered in the late fifteenth century by Saluva Narasimha and his son, Narasa Nayaka, to seize back the formerly conquered territories in Tondaimandalam as well as Chola and Pandya countries from local chiefs (Krishnaswami 1964:106 115). Invasions of these territories subsequently by the Orissan king Kapilesvara Gajapati and his son, Kumara Hamvira in A.D. 1463-4 did nothing to strengthen the Vijayanagara hold on Tamil country. Later, the great Krishnaraya had apparently to send another Telugu army into Tamil country to refurbish, yet again, the Vijayanagara overlordship. This resulted in what Krishnaswami claims to have been a 'momentous change', namely the replacement of a system of governors (mahamandaleswars) by four military commanders, nayakas, presumably to act under the king's orders with the assistance of dependent warriors called palaiyagars. The residue and perhaps the only result of these successive invasions of Vijayanagara warriors into Tamil country was the creation of a stratum of super chiefs who were either Telugus themselves or Tamils allied to Telugus (Stein 1980 : 396).
The emergence of the new stratum of supralocal warriors became a possibility with the raids and, later, the invasions of Telugus into various parts of the macro region from the middle of the fourteenth century; the stratum became a reality when these powerful outsiders forged links to the diverse locality populations they ruled while retaining certain ties to the Telugu Kayas in Vijayanagara on the Tungabhadra (Stein 1980: 397).

Nayakas of the Vijayanagara period are seen by most scholars as warriors possessing an office conferred by the central Vijayanagara government. The term, amaranayankara, signifies an office (-kara) possessed by a military officer (nayaka) in command (amara) of a body of troops (Krishnaswami 1964: 179-80). The office of nayaka carried with it, according to the conventional scholarly understanding of the system, prebendal rights over land usually designated as amaram tenure (or amaramkani or amaramahale). The proportion of land under this tenurial form for Vijayanagara as a whole is generally regarded to be about the same (Venkataramanayya 1935: 180). Two hundred nayakas were presumed to have existed in the empire of the middle sixteenth century based upon the statement of Iernao Nuniz for the years 1535-7 (Sewell 1924: 389). However, Nuniz names only eleven of the most important of the officials and specifies the territory and revenue for which they were responsible as well as the number and composition of the troops which they were to maintain (Sewell 1924: 384).

In an exhaustive search of insessional records of the Vijayanagara period to about A.D. 1530, Krishnaswami was able to find references to a larger number of nayakas in Tamil country. Between A.D. 1371 and 1422, he finds six nayakas mentioned; between A.D. 1440 and 1459, he finds six more; between A.D. 1491 and 1508, another ten are found; and during Krishnaraya’s time, A.D. 1509 to 1530, a total of twenty-seven are mentioned in inscriptions (Krishnaswami 1964: 181-186).

The political history of the Vijayanagara state is essentially the history of great Telugu nayakas, their formidable military capabilities, their patrimonial power, and their relations to religious leaders in a new level of authority everywhere in the southern peninsula. Each of these aspects of Vijayanagara politics - except perhaps the last - have
been explored at least partially in the extant historical literature without attempting to account for their existence or their interconnections.

However assiduous the effort by Vijayanagara historians to elaborate the structure of politics of the time, the core of their discussions has pivoted on the great nayakas of the kingdom. All evidence turns upon their exploits and their conflicts, whether one considers the three genre of literary sources - Hindu, Muslim, and European - or the inscriptions of the several centuries of the Vijayanagara state, or whether one relies, as Venkataramanayya does, upon the local accounts collected by Colin Mackenzie. There have been few efforts to go beyond, or behind, these great political figures, to discover the structural framework within which they operated. Ever and again, it is to the powerful personages of the empire on whom attention is riveted: the kings themselves, of course, their close warrior kinsmen and other Telugu nayakas and commanders who, along with the peasantcaste nayakas, played the most crucial political parts in the affairs of state. That this attention from historians is warranted is simple to demonstrate in any of the four Vijayanagara dynasties. Consider the period of Achyutaraya's succession, a time when the empire was at its greatest strength following the reign of Krishnaraya.

Then, warrior kinsmen were sources of significant support to Achyuta. When his brother, the great Krishnaraya died, Achyuta's position was secured against the powerful Aliya Ramaraya a brother-in-law of the late king, by two of Achyuta's own brother-in-law: Pedda and Chinna Salakaraju. The Salakaraju brothers continued to serve Achyuta as among his most successful and reliable generals as did another brothers-in-law, Cevappa Nayaka (Venkataramanayya 1935 : 454). And, after the death of Achyutaraya, in A.D. 1542, one of the Salakarajus murdered the late king's nephew and successor, Venkata I (Nilakanta Sastri 1955 : 299). Throughout the third dynasty, the record of minor rebellions in complicity with one or several great nayakas is a dismaying chapter which is usually euphemistically discussed under the heading of 'police arrangements' (Venkataramanayya 1935 : 262-265). In Tamil country, intrigues among warriors linked to the royal house by agnatic or affinal bonds was less important than in the northern parts of the empire, but they were not absent. By the late sixteenth century the political
arena of these Telugu political giants was the entire peninsula. The Brahman commander and minister Saluva Narasimha Nayaka, or Sccllappa, who, with the Salakaraju brothers, assured the Vijayanagara throne to Achyuta n A.D. 1529, was rewarded with control of Tanjore, the richest territory in the empire. Scellappa revolted against Achyuta in A.D. 1531 in alliance with other nayakas of the South. The reasons for this revolt appear to have been the differences with Aliya Ramaraya; Sellappa had thwarted Ramaraya’s ambitions to the throne at the death of Krishnaraya and was now being made to pay for that by the still powerful Ramaraya (Krishnaswami 1964 : 200-205).

In explaining the dominating character of the powerful Telugu warriors to whom the title nayaka was affixed, two factors appear most important. One was the sheer success of arms of these warriors; the other is the significant role played by Tamil country and the acceptance of Telugu rule by its chiefs during the Vijayanagara period.

Reasons for the military success of Vijayanagara warriors against their Hindu and Muslim rivals are hardly considered in the existing literature on the Vijayanagara state. This is peculiar since all have differentiated the Vijayanagara state from others on the basis of its martial character and achievements. An unchanging dharma ideology is presumed to account for the successes of the several dynasties; yet, as is clear from the records of Vijayanagara, the major victims of Vijayanagara military power were not Muslims but Hindus, and a major factor in this success were Muslim soldiers in Vijayanagara armies (Stein 1980 : 400). Clearly, other kinds of explanations are necessary.

One that would appear to deserve serious consideration is that the success of Vijayanagara armies was direct consequences of their experience with and imitation of Muslim armies, their tactics and weapons. The founding brothers of the first dynasty had served in Muslim armies, and it was against Muslim soldiers that there was intermittent conflict for two centuries. Nor is the military importance of the Portuguese, with whom the Vijayanagara rulers maintained friendly relations, to be ignored.
A second explanation already briefly mentioned above as differentiating the process of extending the overlordship of the Chola and Vijayanagara kings, involved relationships between the latter and their Telugu agents with the leaders of Vaishnava sectarian orders (sampradayas). As this relationship was dependent upon the military capabilities of Telugu warriors, it is to this matter that attention is first given.

Two military factors appear significant; one was the improvement in cavalry warfare and the other, the use of artillery. Horse warfare is among the oldest elements of Indo-Aryan culture and a well-recognized part of armies in both the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions (Mahalingam 1967 : 250). However, the mounted warrior appears to come into his own in South India in the armies of Vijayanagara. It has been suggested that the Vijayanagara kings were as famed as 'lords of the horse' (asvapati) as the imperial Gangas of Orisa were famed as 'lords of the elephant' (gajapati) (Sircar 1957 : 275). This suggestion is supported by the Mahanavami festival already discussed.

At first glance, the importance of horses is puzzling since the Vijayanagara rulers were completely dependent upon the importation of war-horses of quality. Considerable notice has been taken of this trade in horses from Ormuz and other western Asian trade centres by foreign commentators since the time of Marco Polo (Latham 1957 : 237). According to the Portuguese visitors to Vijayanagara, and Nuniz was there as a horse trader Krishnataya purchased 13,000 Arabian (Ormuz horses and country-bred horses each year. The king kept the best of these for himself. Saluva Narasimha, before Krishnaraya, is reported to have paid a substantial sum for imported horses whether dead or alive (Sewell 1924 : 235). The establishment of Muslim powers in the Deccan and the long-standing hostility between them and the Vijayanagara state must have eliminated or curtailed the availability of horses bred in northern India or imported from Central Asia (Latham 1958 : 151). With country-bred horses of poor quality in South India (in apparent contrast to those of Maratha country so skilfully used by Sivaji and his successors somewhat later) the Vijayanagara state sought and apparently attained a monopoly of horses fit for military use.
It must also have been true that military horses were a significant political currency and source of political control by the Vijayanagara rulers. The supply of strong horses would have extended the range of effective political control of subordinates, local warriors of the time. There would thus be strong inducements on the part of local notables to assure themselves of a supply of horses and, especially, a source which remained accessible from one year to another. Horse breeding and care were notoriously poor according to foreign commentators (Mahalingam 1967: 254).

Of course, warriors with strong mounts constituted both a source of strength and danger to the Ray as of Vijayanagara. The more mobile and powerful subordinate chiefs were the more effective in the army which could be brought to the field against the formidable armies of Muslim and enemies. However, the same cavalry capability could be and was used against the Vijayanagara kings as the rebellions of Telugu nayukas instruct. This latter hazard could be reduced in several ways. One was for the rulers to monopolize access to superior military horses by paying a high price to those importing and trading in horses, even dead horses. Another means was to establish greater control over the coastal markets to which horses came; this was apparently attempted by Krishnaraya and later under the forceful Ramaraya (Krishnaswami1961: 21-16, 233-15). Finally, mobile strength could be checked in its long-term effects by strongly fortified garrisons of reliable soldiers of the sort to which reference is repeatedly made in the poem, the Anuikutamalyadath attributed to Krishnaraya.

But there is another military factor which is almost totally ignored by Vijayanagara historians, that is the use of artillery by the Vijayanagara armies. The earliest experience of artillery by Vijayanagara armies occurred in a late fourteenth century battle between Bukka I and the Bahmani Sultan Muhammad (Mahalingam 1967:262-263). But, unlike the perfection of cavalry techniques which must have been learned from Deccani Muslims, it is probable that the use of artillery was more a consequence of later contact with the Portuguese (Dikshitar 1944: 105-106). Doubts have been raised about the proficiency in the use of artillery by Hindus as compared to their Muslim opponents, but this deficiency was off-set by the use of Muslim and Portuguese soldiers by the Rayas. We have the story, well-worn by its demonstration of religious tolerance of the
Vijayanagara rulers, of Devaraya II keeping a Koran beside his throne so that his Muslim soldiers could swear allegiance properly (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 259-60). Muslim soldiers served in Vijayanagara armies from at least the early fifteenth century, and from Paes and Nuniz a century later, there are descriptions of the use of artillery as well as muskets and other weapons involving gunpowder. The Portuguese accounts of the battle of Raichur in A.D. 1520, record that the Muslim commander Salabat Khan used artillery and his 500 Portuguese mercenaries also used guns. Against these, Krishnaraya's soldiers included musketeers, but there is no reference to artillery. However, among the spoils of the Raya's victory were 400 heavy cannons and numerous smaller guns (Sewell 1921: 242-243; Saltopore 1934: 417). There is little question therefore of the development of the use of artillery and other firearms by Hindu soldiers during this time; they augmented the firepower of Muslim and Portuguese auxiliaries in Vijayanagara armies.

Changes in the form of warfare in South India must have contributed to the persistent success of the Vijayanagara rulers against their Hindu rivals. Increasingly effective cavalry and artillery also explain the strategy of royal fortresses manned by special troops and commanded by dependable officers. Dozens of important fortresses are mentioned in Vijayanagara inscriptions and in the major literary sources of the sixteenth century (Venkataramanaya 1935: 170-171). In inscriptions, the Sanskrit term durga, 'fort', also acquired the additional meaning of the territory under the influence of a fortress, and the title which is taken by Vijayanagara historians to mean 'provincial governor' literally means 'the officer (or chief) over a fort'; durga dampaik (Sircar, 1966). His designation emphasizes the importance of fortified places as well as the fact that the great officials of the Vijayanagara state were not civil, but military officials. This last point is somewhat surprising when it is noted that most of the durga dampaiks were Brahmans according to inscriptions. These references thus corroborate the literary evidence of a policy of Krishnaraya to place reliance on fortresses and to entrust them to Brahmans. The didactic poem, the Amuktamalyada, attributed to Krishnaraya, gives an almost equivalent importance to forts as to Brahman; in fact these two subjects are treated together. Repeatedly, the (royal?) poet instructs that
It is difficult to resist the temptations of comparing the fortresses of the Vijayanagar kings with the only other massive structures of the age under Brahman custodianship, Hindu temples. This is occasionally noted in the historical literature as in the case of the hill temple of Simhachalam (Visakhapatnam district) in modern Andhra-Pradesh (Sundaram, 1960: 135-136). During the eighteenth century warfare among English, French, and Muslim forces in what was then called 'the Carnatic', temples were frequently used by all combatants. Orme reported on the suitability of temples for this purpose: all pagodas on the coast of Coromandel are built on the same general plan a large area which is commonly square, is enclosed by a wall 15 to 20 feet high... and, he referred to numerous temples used as fortifications (Orme 1803: V.1:117). It would be surprising if during the Vijayanagara period, when the construction of great walled temples reached full development, they were not used or were not seen as potentially useful for military purposes by their builders, who were for the most part locality magnates.

Superior military capability based upon cavalry and artillery as well as strategically placed fortified places under the control of reliable troops and Brahmans, especially Telugu Brahmans, these were the principal components of Vijayanagara authority in the southern peninsula. Another element which is taken by scholars to be part of the foundation of Vijayanagara authority was the nayaka system, that is, the functions and relationships Telugu warriors in control of substantial territories distributed over the entire South Indian macro region and presumably responsive to directives of the Vijayanagara rulers. Is this a correct understanding of the role of the nayakas?

As already noticed, the extant historiography on the nayaka system is at least confusing, even contradictory. The exact or even approximate number of such personages and their territorial jurisdictions are unknown; these questions have never been comprehensively investigated. Nayakas are described by the Portuguese chroniclers of the sixteenth century, Paes and Nuniz, as agents of the centralized control of the Rayas. The evidence of Vijayanagara inscriptions and the later Mackenzie manuscripts present a different picture; one of territorial magnates pursuing political ends which at time at least,
collided with the aims of the Rayas as these may (indeed must) be inferred. Between these two opposed conceptions there are other views of the *nayaka* system, such as Krishnaswami’s recent presentation of the system as ‘feudalism’. In the work of Nilakanta Sastri, several views of *nayakas* may be discerned. His 1946 publication, *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, contrasts the Vijayanagara *nayakas* before and after the battle of Rakshasi-Iangadi in A.D. 1565, in the following words: ‘The *nayakas*, who were absolutely dependent upon the royal will... [until 1565] acquired a status of semi-independence’. The next chapter, dwells at length on the issue of these *nayakas* or poligars as they were called in the Ceded Districts who were the supra-local intermediaries drawn mainly from the pastoral Kuruba; and hunter-gatherer Boya/Bedar backgrounds in case of Bellary. It apparently shows the political expediency of the Vijayanagara kings, particularly of, Krishnadevaraya, to incorporate these ethnics into the authority structure owing to their martial powers. But it is also interesting to note here that this political intermediary class which was once subordinate to their overlords defied the royal authority at the time of change of dynasty at hands of the allied Bahmani forces.

Later, in his *History of South India*, Sastri implies a somewhat less strongly centralized system before A.D. 1565. In his very brief discussion of Vijayanagara political, administrative, and military organization, he states that in addition to a large standing army supported, in part, from: 

... crown lands, annual tributes from feudatories and provincial governors... military chiefs studded the whole length and the breadth of the empire, each under a *nayak* or military leader authorized to collect revenue and administer a specified area provided he maintained an agreed number of elephants, horses, and troops every ready to join the imperial forces in war.

In yet more recent work, published almost ten years after that cited immediately above, the conception of *nayakas* as officials under direct central supervision is drastically altered. Here, Sastri writes:

Vijayanagara became the focus of resurgent Hindu culture and offered a more successful resistance to Islam in this part of the country than anywhere else. So it was a long military vigil. As there was no room for weak or incompetent rulers on the throne,
nayakas\(^1\) who died defending the Kakatiya queen Rudramba's claim to the throne against Ambadeva, and equally vague references to a nayankara system.

The term 'nayaka'\(^1\) is, in fact, a very ancient Sanskrit one denoting a person of prominence and leadership, particularly military leadership. During the medieval period, in South India, nayaka refers to the bhakti relationship between god (nayaka) and devotee (nayika). It is a term upon which too much has been permitted to be borne by modern historians concerned with the analysis of the political system. When we may point to usage as diverse as that cited by Derrett and others for warriors of specific local dominance to that of Gajapati inscription of the fifteenth century in which the King, Kapilesvara, is called a nayaka, it is necessary to question the meaning generally ascribed by historians of Vijayanagara: 'one who holds land from the Vijayanagar kings on condition of offering military service'. 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 territorial magnate in his own right.

To the extent that it is possible to speak of a nayaka system, this notion has to do with the existence of a new level of intermediary authority in South India. The powerful combination of a technically superior royal army and strategically placed fortifications under Brahman commanders constitute one part of the Vijayanagara political system. The other part consisted of Telugu nayakas who, with astonishing ease, established and maintained their authority over most of the southern peninsula, especially Tamil country.

Nayaka authority in Tamil country certainly hastened or perhaps even completed the demise of those local institutions which together provided each locality segment of the Chola state with basic coherence: the local body of nattars acting corporately through their territorial assembly, the nadu, or latterly, combined with other locality bodies in the greater nadu, the periyanadu, brahmadeyas acting as the ritual and ideological cores of each locality. That these several institutions had already begun to lose their important place in Tamil country as early as the twelfth century in some cases seems clear. Their decline cannot be attributed to the Vijayanagara state, but must be seen as the result of changes in Tamil society and amongst the Tamils themselves.
there were revolutions resulting in a change of dynasty and renewal of strength. The
empire is best looked upon as a military confederacy of many chieftains cooperating under
the leadership of the biggest among them. Here is a virtual denial of anything approxi-
mating the centralized political system of which Sastri spoke in his 1946 work, except,
possibly, when an unusual warrior - a Krishna Deva Raya - occupied the throne. Here, too in
this 1964 statement of Sastri, the threat of Muslim domination is given continued
saliency as a reason for the politico-military changes of the Vijayanagara period. How-
ever, Sastri's most recent formulation of the essential character of the 'empire... as a
military confederation of many chieftains...' is an extreme position. It is a position which
goes too far in what may be seen as an effort to correct the early conception of a
centralized polity; it fails to distinguish the differential concerns and capabilities of
intransigent Telugu warriors from those of other military chieftains, and it therefore fails to
appreciate the way in which the great Telugu warriors dominate the political scene. The
Vijayanagara period is the age of Telugu military power and glory. Most of those
possessing substantial military capability were Telugus, and they comprise a new
intermediary level of authority in what continued to be a segmentary state in South India.

As to the title, nayaka, it occurs in Karnataka at least three centuries before the
establishment of the Vijayanagara state, and it is found in Andhra country at least two
centuries before the Vijayanagara state. Derrett refers of the term in inscriptions of
the late eleventh century and substitutes the English 'captain' implying a military office.
However, Derrett mentions other evidence, notably an inscription of the middle twelth
century refers to a nayaka of Hoalalkere (in modern Chitaldrg district, Karnataka)
Who recognized no overlord', suggesting not a military office, but a personage of local
power. Telugu literary works and inscriptions from Andhra of about the same time also
mention nayakas in the same ambiguous fashion. Kakatiya records of the middle and late
twelth centuries refer to nayaka of specific localities as dependants to great families of
local dominance. There are uri-nayakulu and grama nayakulu, that is 'village
nayakas', mentioned in Andhra. Later inscriptions of the Kakatiya rulers Rudramadevi
(A.D. 1259-95), the queen Rudamba (A.D. 1273), Ambadeva, and Prataparudra
(A.D. 1295-1332) are interpreted in such a manner as to palce nayakas into a formal
military organization. Thus, there is the ambiguous tradition of the 'seventy-five
as discussed in chapter six. Still, the scope for the politically integrative function of ritual authority of the segmentary state remained. Neither a Tamil state nor a Karnataka state emerged to challenge the Vijayanagara slate, to attract the recognition of indigenous locality chiefs, or to reinforce the claims of the latter to their ancient locality control. That recognition was instead extended to the Telugu nayakas whose original presence in the macro region outside Andhra country was as military agents of the Vijayanagara kings. These Telugu warriors were not, however, to remain simply agents of the Vijayanagara kings; they could not because there was no political framework through which an agency of this sort was capable of being sustained. Telugu nayakas quickly became locality figures in their own right, encouraging the settlement of other Telugus to strengthen their control over local Tamil and Karnataka chiefs as well as to buttress their relations with the distant but still intimidating power of the Rayas. With respect the Rayas, Telugu nayakas continued to express their agency position (karta). Thus ensconced, they became a new intermediary level of authority within a changed, but nonetheless recognizable, segmentary state.

The next chapter, dwells at length on the issue of these nayakas or poligars as they were called in the Ceded Districts who were the supra-local intermediaries drawn mainly from the pastoral Kuruba; and hunter-gatherer Boya/Bedar background in case of Bellary. It apparently shows the political inpediency of the rate these ethnics into the authority structure owing to their martial powers. But it is also interesting to note here is that this political intermediary class which was once subordinate to their overlords defied the royal authority at the time of change of dynasty at hands of the allied Bahmani forces.