

Influences from Sultanate Courts¹

Dodda Sankanna Nayaka, one of Ikkeri's early kings, one day resolved to go on a pilgrimage. As the chronicle *Keḷadi arasara vaṃśāvaḷi* relates, he appointed his brother Chikka Sankanna to reign in his absence, dressed as a poor, wandering holy man, and brought along just his royal sword and four servants. He first went south, visiting sacred towns and bathing in holy rivers. Then, he turned north and traversed the Deccan sultanates. Finally, he arrived at the ancient north Indian sultanate capital of Delhi and headed for the sultan's palace.² As the chronicle (in its translated version) continues, in minute detail:

... on entering the gate of the palace, he [Dodda Sankanna] found a sword fixed up by the king's order. On enquiring the cause, he was informed by the guards that no one being equal hitherto to engage with a Vazeer [*wazīr*, minister] named Ankoos Cawn [Ankush Khan] in single combat, this sword was hung up as defiance to all the world to take it down. When he heard these words, he said he wished to behold for once so able & great a warrior & therefore requested them to unsheathe it, which they complied with & asked him: "Who are you? Whence came you? & of what nation & caste are you?" He replied that he was a Jungum [Jangam]³ by caste, that a traveller had no country, changing his residence every night.

A messenger then went & related this to the Padshah [*Bādshāh*, great king, the Delhi sultan], who was surprised & sent for him into his presence, & having enquired about his condition he assigned him a proper house for a lodging & ordered his servants to defray all his expense & to furnish him with whatever he required. The Padshah ... sent for the Vazeer Ankoos Cawn to come into his presence. On passing the gate, he [Ankush Khan] missed his sword [and] coming into the hall of audience in wrath demanded to know who had unsheathed his sword. When perceiving Sankana-Naik [Dodda Sankanna Nayaka]

¹ A slightly different version of parts of this chapter appeared in Lennart Bes, "Sultan among Dutchmen? Royal Dress at Court Audiences in South India, as Portrayed in Local Works of Art and Dutch Embassy Reports, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries," *Modern Asian Studies* 50, 6 (2016).

² BL/AAS, MG, no. 6, pt. 11: "Historical account of Beedoonoor or Caladee Samstanum" (*Keḷadi arasara vaṃśāvaḷi*), ff. 67v-8.

³ For Jangams, followers of the Lingayat sect or religious beggars, see Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. II, 450-1.

with his sword in his hand, he took another sword to fight him, but the officers attending on the king requested them to suspend the combat until they had taken food.

They accordingly went to take victuals & returned to the hall richly habited. The Vazeer Ankoos Cawn, holding a highly tempered sword in his hands, stood before the Padshah, prepared to encounter his antagonist, but Sankana-Naik stood over against him without any weapons. The Padshah then called for an excellent sword & presented it to him. When he had received this sword, he drew it out & flourishing it in the manner of swordsmen the blade snapped & broke. The king was surprised & calling for another, gave it into his hand & this also in like manner was soon broken. Then the Padshah told him that he would send for his own sword, but he [Dodda Sankanna] respectfully replied to the king that it was not proper to give his sword into any other person's hands, but that he would use his own sword. He then took his own blade, called Naugaremara [*nāgarāmuri*], & examining it attentively he took it once & flourished it before his opponent, challenging him to stand out boldly & fight him.

They then engaged in a combat with swords, which lasted till a quarter part of the day was past, exhibiting their address & skill in the various modes of fencing & swordsmanship, till the fortune of the Vazeer Ankoos Cawn decreased hour by hour before the skill of Sankana-Naik. The Padshah, observing that the Vazeer Ankoos Cawn was wounded in several parts of his body tho' he had boasted that his antagonist should not escape ... & that not the least mark appeared on Sankana-Naik, he adjudged the superiority in skill & bravery to Sankana-Naik to whom no one could be esteemed equal. In this combat Sankana Naik cut his enemy's sword into two with one stroke. He wounded him in the loin & in several parts of his body with such rapidity that the spectators could not distinguish the blows, so that he was over-eyed as a dead body.

The spectators in the public hall were in doubt whether Sankana-Naik had not killed him outright, & the Padshah, observing that he was dead, in order to have the death of the Vazeer made apparent to all the people, enquired of Sankana Naik why he stood still & whether he was tired? He replied: "With whom must I fight further?" The Padshah said: "You must kill your adversary who stands before you," to which he replied: "Of what use is it to fight with a dead corpse?" & then immediately touching the body on the breast with his sword, it fell down to the great surprize of the spectators in the hall.

One of the king's officers then enquired further about him of his condition, when he gave a full & complete account of himself from beginning to end. The Padshah having attentively heard the narrative of Sankana Naik embraced him with much kindness & said: "It was not right in you to conceal your caste & rank." He then treated him with every mark of distinction & honor, presented him with betel, & requested him to signify his wishes & that whatever they were, they should be complied with. He [Dodda Sankanna] replied that if he [the sultan] solemnly promised to comply without fail with what he asked, in that case he would make his wishes known. The Padshah complied with it & took a solemn oath. Then Sankana-Naik represented to the king that he proposed to go to Benares to fulfill his vows,

which were: before his return to his native country to build a handsome Mattum [*maṭha*, monastery] in all the holy places of his country & to endow them with Jagheers [*jāgīr*, land estate] for their support, that he next proposed to return to his country & he therefore requested his aid to fulfill these vows, which the Padshah immediately consented to ...⁴

The *Keladi arasara vaṃśāvaḷi* goes on to describe how Dodda Sankanna then travelled around north India, erecting prayer halls, setting up *līngams* (phallic symbols of Shiva), endowing sacred places, and worshipping in temples. Finally, he returned to Ikkeri and resumed reign over his kingdom.⁵ More or less similar accounts are given in the dynasty's chronicles *Keladinṛpa vijayam* and *Śivatattva ratnākara*.⁶ Another text states that the Delhi sultan presented Dodda Sankanna with a sword and the title of "Keladi Padshah," or "great king of Keladi," referring to Ikkeri's first capital.⁷

About a century later, another contest between a Nayaka king and the Delhi court is said to have taken place. As a summary of one version of this event goes:

During the reign of Madurai's Muttu Virappa Nayaka III (here referred to as Ranga Krishna), the *Bādshāh* (here probably the Mughal emperor) delegated one of his slippers to every subordinate ruler. When the slipper—travelling by elephant with great pomp and circumstance and accompanied by high courtiers, attendants, musicians, and thousands of troops—arrived at the border of a vassal kingdom, its king welcomed the slipper, acknowledged its supremacy, took it to his palace to put it on his own throne, and presented his tribute.

But at the border of Madurai, the *Bādshāh's* slipper was not received by Muttu Virappa, who claimed he was unaware of the required procedures and not fit enough to come to the border anyway. He let the *Bādshāh's* men know that if they would bring the slipper to the Kollidam (Coleroon) River, within Madurai's boundaries, he would await it there. The slipper's entourage grudgingly transferred it to the proposed spot, but Muttu Virappa again failed to show up, letting his messengers ask the *Bādshāh's* troops to continue to the gates of the capital

⁴ BL/AAS, MG, no. 6, pt. 11: "Historical account of Beedoonoor or Caladee Samstanum," ff. 68-9. This episode is still being told as a folktale in the Kannada-speaking region. In that version, the sultan of Delhi is the Mughal Emperor Akbar. He disliked vain people, including his own warrior Ankush Khan, and was happy to see him defeated. Dodda Sankanna is here said to have left Ikkeri because he became tired of being king and wished to build monasteries. See Praphulladatta Goswami (ed.), "The Monk Who Dueled," in Richard M. Dorson (ed.), *Folktales Told around the World* (Chicago/London, 1975), 193-6.

⁵ BL/AAS, MG, no. 6, pt. 11: "Historical account of Beedoonoor or Caladee Samstanum," ff. 69v-70.

⁶ Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, 337-8; Krishnamurthy, *Sivatattva Ratnākara of Keladi Basavaraja*, 107; Chitnis, *Keladi Polity*, 13-14; Naraharayya, "Keladi Dynasty" [pt. 1], 379-80; K.G. Vasantha Madhava, "The Mughals and the Keladi Nayakas," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 37 (1976), 260.

⁷ BL/AAS, MG, no. 25, pt. 27: "Memoir of Barkoor," f. 209.

Tiruchirappalli. On their arrival there, the Nayaka once more did not appear, instead inviting the slipper and its company into his fort. While the *Bādshāh's* representatives grew more and more angry, Muttu Virappa pretended he was falling increasingly ill and thus, step by step, had the slipper moved into his palace, then alighted from the elephant, and finally brought by palanquin into his audience hall. Here, sitting on his throne in great state, the Nayaka refused to pay homage to the slipper and forced the *Bādshāh's* courtiers to put it on the floor. Muttu Virappa then placed one of his feet in it and asked why the *Bādshāh* had not thought of sending two slippers. Next, the slipper's retinue was beaten up and driven out of Madurai. Informed of this incident, the *Bādshāh* feared other rulers might follow the Nayaka's example and never delegated his slipper again.⁸

No doubt related to tensions between Madurai and the Mughals during Muttu Virappa's reign (1682-91),⁹ this story circulated in various versions. One of these claims that the Mughal emperor in fact sent his shoe to test the wisdom of his fellow rulers, the Madurai Nayaka proving to stand out among them:

... the king of Delhi, curious to know which of his contemporaries was the wisest & bravest, ordered cabinets to be brought & depositing in each of them an odd shoe forwarded them at once to every king or governor on the southern part of this continent. Some kings with great respect went to meet the people that brought the cabinets & paid hommages to the shoes therein contained. Some kissed these shoes; some prostrated before them; some, putting them on their heads, danced in an extacy of joy; & some received them with a concert of music and loud acclamations.

But Ranga Krishna Mootoo Veerapah Naik [Muttu Virappa Nayaka], without shewing any manner of ceremony, let them bring the cabinet into his presence and seeing an odd shoe into it, he thrustured one of his feet into that shoe & asked the bearer what was become of its fellow [shoe]. Being confounded at this, the bearer stood dumb and Ranga Krishna Mootoo Veerapah Naik lashed him and sent him back with disgrace to the king of Delhi, who, admiring his wisdom and bravery, sent him valuable presents with two untameable horses. These our hero received kindly & in return loaded the Dilhean [Delhi] people with rich[es], & before their departure from his presence, he rode one of their horses & after having galloped at full speed till that animal was out of wind, he alighted. A few minutes afterwards the horse fell down & died, and he presented [gifts to] the man that told him this news. He then caused 1,000 men of his kindred to wear the Marata fashioned robes

⁸ Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 205-8. See also: Rangachari, "The History of the Naik Kingdom of Madura," *Indian Antiquary* XLVI, 122-4; Nelson, *The Madura Country*, vol. III, 210-12. These events were allegedly recorded by Jesuits as well. See S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, "Mysore and the Decline of the Vijayanagar Empire," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* XIII, 4 (1923), 753.

⁹ See also Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 480-1 (n. 264).

and turbans instead of long caps & cloths, giving them stile of Ravoots [*rāvuttans*],¹⁰ or (probably) “Muslim trooper”].¹¹

These accounts of the visit of Ikkeri’s Dodda Sankanna to Delhi and the reception of the Mughal’s footwear by Madurai’s Muttu Virappa suggest the Nayaka dynasties had an ambivalent perception of north India’s mighty rulers. The sultans of Delhi and their Mughal successors appear to have served as a reference point against which south Indian kings measured their own power and prestige. The frequent mentioning of the *Bādshāh* seems to indicate that these rulers set a certain standard in dynastic hierarchy. At the same time, this standard apparently had to be challenged, surpassed, and denigrated. Thus, Dodda Sankanna duelled with Delhi’s greatest warrior and, with the help of his unbreakable ancestral sword,¹² defeated him. This episode, described in great detail, insinuates that the Nayaka’s power and standing equalled or even exceeded that of the sultan. Yet, he also seemed to seek Delhi’s recognition of his status as a prominent king or indeed, in one text, as a *Bādshāh* himself.

In the same vein, Madurai’s Muttu Virappa humiliated the *Bādshāh*, but, as one text adds, thereby won his admiration, apparently considered an important matter. Continuing this ambiguity, Madurai’s Nayaka received two ungovernable horses from Delhi’s impressed ruler, which he accepted gratefully but rode effortlessly—in the presence of Delhi’s representative to be sure—after which one horse died of exhaustion. Again, this proved the Nayaka’s greatness, supposedly even outdoing the *Bādshāh*.

Further, as the last quoted text goes, Muttu Virappa had his men replace their clothing of long tunics and high caps with Maratha-fashioned robes and turbans. Since the former style most likely points to attire deriving from sultanate courts,

¹⁰ *Rāvuttan* (also *irāvuttan*) or “rowther,” from *irauttar* (horseman, trooper), was used as a (military) title by various Tamil-speaking Muslim groups and possibly other communities. See: Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 98; Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. VI, 247; Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*, 343; Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 314 (n. 211).

¹¹ BL/AAS, MG, no. 4, pt. 4: “Mootiah’s chronological & historical account of the modern kings of Madura,” ff. 68-9. A Persian text also deals with a slipper sent from Delhi to south India. Here, its recipient is Krishna Raya of Vijayanagara, who tells the Delhi courtier accompanying the slipper he will only pay the demanded tribute if a second slipper is presented to him. In the English manuscript translation of this work, it is unclear who emerges victorious from this showdown, but both parties deem each other’s behaviour highly insulting. See BL/AAS, MT, class I, no. 18: “The Keefeyet of Panoocondah,” ff. 48-9.

¹² For this magical sword, called *nāgaramuri* (or *nāgaramari*) and miraculously acquired by the dynasty’s founder Chaudappa, see: Lewis Rice, *Mysore: A Gazetteer Compiled for Government*, vol. II, 458; Chitnis, *Keḷadi Polity*, 9; Shama Shastry, “Malnad Chiefs,” 47; Mahalingam, *Mackenzie Manuscripts*, vol. II, 404. See also Ikkeri’s foundation story in Chapter 1.

this change seems to have denoted another way of decrying Delhi's rulers. Perhaps, it represents a switch to a new reference point for Madurai, namely the west Indian Marathas, who had come to dominate large parts of south India around this time. But even though the Marathas adhered to Hinduism, Muttu Virappa's men are said now to have looked like *rāvuttans*. This was a military title used by Tamil-speaking Muslims, so the dress of the Nayaka's troops was probably still associated with Muslim-style clothing. Although the author of this text—a literary man called Teruvercadu Mutiah, possibly active in intellectual circles at Madras around 1800—declared to have based his work on local written and oral accounts, its reliability has been questioned.¹³ Nevertheless, this passage implies that, according to tradition, Madurai's court dress had shifted over time to combine Maratha and what may have been Islamic elements.

These references to Delhi as a standard for Vijayanagara's heirs are not isolated instances. To begin with, Vijayanagara itself looked to Delhi as an epicentre of political power. As discussed in Chapter 1, some of the empire's origin myths sought to legitimise its authority by portraying its founders Harihara and Bukka as servants of the Delhi sultan, appointed by him as governors and subsequently asserting autonomy. Another example is found in the chronicle of Tanjavur's Bhonsles, the *Bhonsale vaṃśa caritra*. It states that Sambhaji Bhonsle—nephew of the dynasty's founder Ekoji and son of the Maratha King Shivaji—was captured by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who wished to convert him to Islam. When Sambhaji asked for the hand of the Mughal's daughter in return, the emperor had him killed. Thereupon, Aurangzeb's daughter went into mourning, for Sambhaji would have been the ideal man and husband. Thus, he is portrayed as outshining all Muslim marital candidates but, at the same time, willing to become part of the Mughal dynasty. And indeed, Sambhaji's son Shahu was raised by the emperor's daughter as her own.¹⁴

Likewise, the *Śāhendra vilāsa*, praising Tanjavur's Shahaji I, challenges the Mughals by declaring: "In his forest hide-out, the cowardly king of Delhi hears the drums of our king's victory-parade."¹⁵ Finally, various versions of Ariyalur's dynastic chronicle claim that one of its rulers gifted an elephant to Delhi's *Bādshāh*

¹³ TBL/AAS, MG, pt. 4, no. 4: "Mootiah's chronological & historical account of the modern kings of Madura," f. 41; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 76–7 (n. 42); Teruvercadu Mutiah, "An Account of the Life of Teruvercadu Mutiah, a Learned Hindū, a Native of the Carnatic ...," in *The Asiatic Annual Register, or, a View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce and Literature of Asia, for the Year 1801* (London, 1802), section "Characters," 14–15; Cotton, Charpentier, and Johnston, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages*, vol. I, pt. II, 49–50; Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India*, 91–2.

¹⁴ BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 87: "The historycal account of the Tonjore" (*Bhonsale vaṃśa caritra*), ff. 86–90v; Srinivasachari and Gopalan, *Bhonsle Vamsa Charitra*, viii.

¹⁵ Quoted in Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 318. See also: idem, 13; Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 60–9; Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 189–90, 197.

("Paudashaw of Deely"), thereby helping the *Bādshāh*'s desperate brother or brother-in-law. The latter had been forced to pawn his right-side whiskers—perhaps symbolising his masculinity—in an attempt to purchase an elephant, which he owed to the *Bādshāh* after losing a bet or chess game.¹⁶

The role of Delhi in Vijayanagara's foundation stories was part of a broad range of influences from sultanate courts on the empire's political culture. These affected matters like diplomacy, warfare, administration, law, architecture, art, court dress, and royal titling.¹⁷ This chapter is concerned with the extent to which Vijayanagara's adoption of politico-cultural practices from Muslim-ruled polities continued among its heirs. Did the successor states—as the stories above suggest—take over Islamic elements from Vijayanagara, and also from contemporary sultanates? How did the heirs differ from each other in this respect? Did these adaptations develop over time? And how was all this connected to wider political developments? The references in Mutiah's chronicle to Madurai's changing court dress may have reflected a broader pattern among the successors of earlier borrowings from sultanate courts being replaced or supplemented by new adjustments.

Scholars have paid little attention to such influences on court politics in Vijayanagara's heirs, with the exception of Ramnad. Notions absorbed by the empire itself have been studied in more detail, specifically with regard to dynastic titles and royal dress. That research suggests that sultanate influences manifested themselves foremost in the public domain, whereas local customs remained dominant in the domestic sphere.¹⁸ In order to compare Vijayanagara with its heirs, this chapter also focuses on titles and dress, to conclude that in some of the successor states these associations with the public and domestic realms gradually disappeared.¹⁹

¹⁶ BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 35: "Kyfeyeat of the Paulagars of Aureyaloor Paulaput," ff. 111v-12; Hemingway, *Trichinopoly*, vol. I, 344-5. For another Kannada Nayaka house defeating a Delhi warrior, see Ota, "Beḍa Nāyakas and Their Historical Narratives," 177-8. For (imaginary, rejected) marital relations between south Indian dynasties and Delhi's rulers, see Richard H. Davis, "A Muslim Princess in the Temples of Viṣṇu," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 8, 1-3 (2004), 144-5.

¹⁷ See, for example, Wagoner, "Harihara, Bukka, and the Sultan." This process had already been going on for a long time, in both south and north India. See, for instance: Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, ch. 1; idem, *India in the Persianate Age*, chs 1-2; Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton/Woodstock, 2009).

¹⁸ See in particular Wagoner, "'Sultan among Hindu Kings'."

¹⁹ Falling outside this study's scope, much research has been done on Islamic influences on architecture and art in Vijayanagara and its heirs. See: George Michell, *The Vijayanagara Courtly Style: Incorporation and Synthesis in the Royal Architecture of Southern India, 15th-17th Centuries* (New Delhi, 1992), 48-55, 70; idem, "Courtly Architecture at Gingee under the Nayakas," *South Asian Studies* 7 (1991), 159; idem, "Migrations and Cultural Transmissions in the Deccan: Evidence of Monuments at Vijayanagara," in Laura E. Parodi (ed.), *The Visual World of Muslim India: The Art, Culture and Society*

Below, we first consider the sources for dynastic titles and royal dress. The chapter's central sections begin with a general description of Vijayanagara's adoption of practices from sultanate courts, the reasons behind it, and the various forms it took. Then follow surveys of titles and clothing used by the succeeding dynasties. The overviews of titles not only examine Islamic terms but also designations that claim imperial status and thus suggest their bearers no longer saw themselves as subordinates of Vijayanagara. The section on Ramnad is larger than the other sections since the variety of sources on royal dress here requires an extensive discussion. The chapter ends with an overall comparison and analysis of influences from sultanate courts on the titles and dress of the successor dynasties.

Dynastic titles are found in a range of texts, most notably inscriptions issued by or on behalf of rulers, but also literary works.²⁰ Besides such largely public communications, addressed to Indian audiences, titles are occasionally also included in the much less public correspondence and treaties between the courts and European powers, adding to the diversity of sources. However, despite this variety, it is hardly possible to gather a representative set of titles for each royal house. Much epigraphic material of Vijayanagara's heirs has not been published or translated in full, and is available only in summaries from which titles have often been omitted. Some inscriptions have not been published at all, in whatever form.²¹ Besides, epigraphic sources become scarce from the late sixteenth century onward.²² For some dynasties, one therefore has to rely on a limited number of examples.

of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era (London/New York, 2014); John M. Fritz, George Michell, and M.S. Nagaraja Rao, *Where Kings and Gods Meet: The Royal Centre at Vijayanagara, India* (Tucson, 1985), ch. 7; Catherine B. Asher, "Islamic Influence and the Architecture of Vijayanagara," in Anna Libera Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemand (eds), *Vijayanagara – City and Empire: New Currents of Research* (Wiesbaden, 1985), vol. 1; B.S. Subhadra, "Impact of Indo-Islamic Art on Keladi Architecture," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 59 (1998); Kanekar, "Two Temples of the Ikkeri Nayakas," 137-43, 150-7; idem, "Stylistic Origins and Change in the Temples of the Ikkeri Nayakas," 358; Anila Verghese, "Aghoreśvara Temple at Ikkeri: A Synthesis of Architectural Styles," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai* 81 (2007), 125, 131; *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department for the Year 1936* (Bangalore, 1938), 43. For a short note about Persian influence on south Indian music, see T.K. Venkatasubramanian, *Music as History in Tamilnadu* (Delhi, 2010), 48.

²⁰ I thank Herman Tieken, Emma Flatt, Subah Dayal, Gijs Kruijtzter, and André Wink for helping me make sense of some titles discussed in this chapter. None of them, however, is responsible for the findings presented here.

²¹ See for instance: Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice*, v, 19, 261 (n. 2); K. Gunda Jois, "Unpublished Inscriptions of Keladi Rulers," in A.V. Narasimha Murthy and K.V. Ramesh (eds), *Giridharaśrī: Essays on Indology* (Delhi, 1987); idem, "Keladi Inscriptions on Gold Sandals and Pinnacles," 64. For a discussion and overview of Ikkeri's body of inscriptions, see Bridges White, "Beyond Empire," 85-91, 237-47.

²² Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 89, 338; Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice*, 18, 28; Branfoot, "Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple," 34; Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 2; Ludden, *Peasant History in South India*, 70-1.

Further, it has been argued that the Nayaka dynasties—at least those in the Tamil region—used comparatively few titles, and that these generally lacked claims to full sovereignty. This would have been caused by the fact that the direct successor dynasties not only originated as provincial governors but always formally remained so, being appointed by and in theory forever subjected to the emperors. Even after Vijayanagara's power waned under the Aravidu house and vanished around the mid-seventeenth century, these successors allegedly never officially asserted independence.²³ Thus, the direct heirs kept using modest titles until the end, devoid of aspirations to the supreme status of emperors and sultans, who claimed universal kingship. Therefore, below we also look for Islamic terms that denoted less exalted ranks and ambitions, possibly reflecting the specific positions of Vijayanagara's heirs.

Portrayals of royal dress are also found in various sources, although very few images survive in the palaces themselves. It has been suggested that palace locations constituted strongly “political” settings and that especially in public spaces like audience halls kings were eager to be shown in clothing styles borrowed from sultanate courts. More depictions of royal attire remain in temples, which, it has been argued, formed part of a more “sacred” environment.²⁴ Such representations may therefore have had different connotations from those in palaces. Temple sculpture portraying the Nayakas of Madurai, for instance, is thought to be an expression of their relationship with Hindu deities. This connection was in turn meant to be viewed by worshippers—rather than a royal display directly aimed at the general public, including the Indo-Islamic world.²⁵ Nonetheless, this chapter also examines depictions of royal clothing in temples to see how these relate to other sources.

In addition, reports of VOC embassies to Vijayanagara's heirs occasionally include descriptions of the attire of rulers. This dress was sometimes labelled “heathen” or “Moorish.” In India, the Dutch used the term “heathen” (*heijden, jentief*) to denote Hindus (or more generally non-Muslim and non-Christian Indians) and things associated with them, as opposed to Muslims and Islamic matters, which were

²³ Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 45–6; Francis, *Madura Gazetteer*, 41; Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 10; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 43–4, 218; Robert Caldwell, *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely, in the Presidency of Madras, from the Earliest Period to Its Cession to the English Government in A.D. 1801* (Madras, 1881), 61.

²⁴ Anna Lise Seastrand, “Praise, Politics, and Language: South Indian Murals, 1500–1800” (unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, 2013), 73; Branfoot, “Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple,” 13. I also thank Anna Dallapiccola and George Michell for discussing this distinction, although again I am responsible for the ideas presented here.

²⁵ Branfoot, “Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple,” passim, especially 29; idem, “In a Land of Kings: Donors, Elites, and Temple Sculpture,” in Anila Verghese and Anna Libera Dallapiccola (eds), *South India under Vijayanagara: Art and Archaeology* (New Delhi, 2011), 255–6.

referred to as “Moorish” (*moors*).²⁶ It is hard to ascertain what these terms exactly meant in each individual case. But by the time its earliest surviving descriptions were produced, the Company had been active in south India for more than half a century and many of its employees spent years living and working in the region. The Dutch would therefore not use these labels for clothing randomly, although, as this chapter concludes, they may have missed certain nuances in royal dress styles.

Vijayanagara

From the empire’s very foundation, its rulers adopted political and cultural practices from courts of sultanates. This, it has been proposed, was a strategy to participate and be understood in the Islamic world of West, Central and South Asia. In that area—which included the Delhi sultanates and the subsequent Mughal empire as well as the Bahmani sultanate with its successors in the Deccan—such customs belonged to a widely appreciated political idiom. Conforming to this idiom was an effort to increase one’s legitimacy and authority. Absorbed by way of diplomacy, trade, warfare, and the like, these practices pertained to, for instance, political and social organisation, judicial conventions, art and architecture, military recruitment and technology, royal titles, and court dress and etiquette.

To differentiate such cultural and political elements of the Islamic world from its more religious aspects, the term “Islamicate” has been employed. Vijayanagara’s politico-cultural borrowings from sultanate courts could thus be classified as Islamicate.²⁷ Another proposed term is “Persianate,” indicating that these politico-cultural practices were largely absorbed from or via Persia or the Persian language, without referring to a particular religion.²⁸ This term is used in the present study.

The process of Persianisation in south India did not wholly replace the region’s traditional local or “Indic” political and cultural notions. Rather, it has been argued,

²⁶ See also: Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 15, 285-6; Van Meersbergen, “Ethnography and Encounter,” 75-7.

²⁷ Wagoner, “‘Sultan among Hindu Kings,’” 853-5. See also Richard M. Eaton, “The Articulation of Islamic Space in the Medieval Deccan,” in Meenakshi Khanna (ed.), *Cultural History of Medieval India* (New Delhi, 2007), 127-30. For a rejection of the term “Islamicate,” also in the context of Vijayanagara, see Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton/Oxford, 2016), 157-75, 446-7.

²⁸ Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*, 4, 20-32; Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, passim, especially ch. 4. For recent discussions of the terms “Islamicate” and “Persianate,” see: Truschke, *The Language of History*, 10-12; Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, pp. 17-24. See also Stewart Gordon, “In the Aura of the King: Trans-Asian, Trans-Regional, and Deccani Royal Symbolism,” *South Asian Studies* 32, 1 (2016), passim, especially 49.

Persianate practices were chiefly employed at events with a public character, whereas Indic customs remained in use on occasions of a domestic nature. This division between domestic and public situations bears resemblance to the differentiation in south India between interior and exterior spheres, for example in literature and architecture. Both classifications refer to distinct but complementary and at times partly overlapping social domains, each connected to certain types of activities, company, representation, etc. Related to the domestic or interior realm were, for instance, close family members, leisure, and residential sections of buildings such as palaces. Linked to the public or exterior realm were, for example, one's extended family and caste, society at large, warfare, and diplomatic encounters.²⁹

Various sources suggest that court dress codes in Vijayanagara and its heirs reflected this distinction between the public and domestic domains and the Persianate influences in the latter. For Vijayanagara, those sources include temple paintings and sculptures as well as travel accounts from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These often portray emperors and courtiers as wearing a long white tunic, known as *kabāyi*, worked with gold—or other attire largely covering the body—and a high conical cap, called *kullāyi*. Those two types of garment are thought to have been of Arab and Persian origin respectively. *Kabāyis* and *kullāyis* are for instance depicted on a mural in the sixteenth-century Virabhadra Temple at Lepakshi, where the caps moreover are decorated with what appear to be Persianate designs (see illustration 14).³⁰ Indeed, the Italian traveller Ludovico di Varthema, visiting Vijayanagara in 1504, wrote that prominent men here used headgear of the “Moorish” or Muslim fashion. Notably, when sources refer to rulers and courtiers wearing such dress, these men were usually involved in public activities like military processions, temple worship, and receiving ambassadors.

Additionally, a south Indian cloth painting (*kalamkāri*) from around the seventeenth century shows a Nayaka ruler—probably from Tanjavur or Madurai—in a public courtyard, heading a military procession in a *kabāyi*-like garment, although this tunic is coloured rather than white and the king wears a turban instead of a *kullāyi*. Other sections of this painting portray the Nayaka engaging in domestic activities, like musical entertainment and amorous pleasures. There, he is dressed in just a local *dhoti* (cloth wrapped around the waist and legs) and a piece of cloth over his shoulders, leaving his chest and arms exposed in a manner considered

²⁹ This argument is most explicitly put forward in Wagoner, “‘Sultan among Hindu Kings’,” 853–5, 861–71, but see also: Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, chs 1–4; Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 227–8; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, ch. 4.

³⁰ For this mural, see Anna L. Dallapiccola, Brigitte Khan Majlis, George Michell, and John M. Fritz, *Lepakshi: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting* (New Delhi, 2019), 156–7, 244, 247, 265. For online images of all this temple's paintings, see: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/lepakshi-virabhadraswamy-temple.



Illustration 14: Mural showing Vijayanagara courtiers, Virabhadra Temple, Lepakshi, 16th century (photo by C. Ganesan, courtesy John and Fausta Eskenazi, source: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/lepakshi-virabhadraswamy-temple).

traditionally south Indian. Hence, it has been concluded that this kind of dress was generally reserved for domestic situations, while Persianate attire was worn on public occasions. That should not surprise us, because public events allowed rulers to demonstrate their connection with the Indo-Islamic world. Waging war, conducting diplomacy, touring the kingdom: these were instances of political exposure to other parties, requiring a broadly understood presentation.³¹

³¹ Wagoner, “Sultan among Hindu Kings,” 856-61, 868-71; Ludovico di Varthema, *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508*, trans. John Winter Jones, ed. Richard Carnac Temple (London, 1928), 53; Sivaramamurti, *Vijayanagara Paintings*, 32-3, 69 (plate IX); Vincent Lefèvre, “À propos d’une célèbre toile peinte (kalamkari) de la collection Riboud au musée Guimet,” in Henri Chambert-Loir and Bruno Dagens (eds), *Anamorphoses: Hommage à Jacques Dumarçay* (Paris, 2006). See also: Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 250-2; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 69, 73-4, 95; Mattiabelle Gittinger, *Master Dyers to the World: Technique and Trade in Early Dyed Cotton Textiles* (Washington, 1982), 120-7, 133. Other seventeenth-century cloth paintings (*kalamkārīs*) thought to portray the Tanjavur or Madurai court seem to point to the same association of Indic and Persianate dress with domestic and public occasions, respectively. See: Rosemary Crill, “South Indian Court Scenes,” *Hali* 203 (2020), 64-7, figs 2-3; John Guy, “A Ruler and His Courtesans Celebrate Vasantotsava: Courtly and Divine Love in a Nayaka *Kalamkari*,” in Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (eds), *Sultans of the South: Arts of India’s Deccan Courts, 1323–1687* (New York, 2011), passim, figs 1-4. For other depictions of Indic and Persianate dress at the Vijayanagara court, see: Anila Verghese, “Court Attire of Vijayanagara (from a Study of Monuments),” *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* LXXXII, 1-2 (1991), 46-58; Anna Libera Dallapiccola, “Sculptures on the Great Platform of Vijayanagara,” in Anila Verghese and Anna Libera Dallapiccola (eds), *South India under*

The adoption of Persianate dress by south Indian Hindu kings, in Vijayanagara probably from the mid-fifteenth century on, was closely linked to the use of Persianate royal titles. All of Vijayanagara's four dynasties mostly bore Indic imperial designations, like "king of great kings" (*mahārājādhirāja*), "supreme lord" (*rājaparamēśvara*), and "glory of heroes" (*vīrapratāpa*), found for instance in inscriptions and coin legends.³²

These also occur in documents that emperors of the Aravidu house sent to European powers. VOC records contain phrases such as "the fortunate, lord of the lords, god of the lords, and famous as a very brave soldier" (*den geluckigen, heere der heeren, godt der heeren, ende vermaert voor een seer cloeckmoedich soldaet*), used by Sriranga III and probably a translation of *śrīmat rājādhirāja rājaparamēśvara vīrapratāpa*. Similar titles appear in letters by him to the English—translated as "Zree Seringo Raylo, king of kings, a god in his kingdom, in armes invincible" or "the king over all kings, the holiest, and amongst all cavalliers the greatest, Zree Renga Raya, the mighty king god"—and by Venkata I to the Portuguese, rendered as "king of the kings, great lord, great knight, King Vencatapati, very great king."³³

In addition, Vijayanagara's first Sangama rulers already included transliterations of the Islamic term *sultān* in inscriptions. Except for the Saluva period, this practice continued under the subsequent dynasties until the seventeenth century. Used on its own or in composites like "sultan among Indian [or Hindu] kings" (*hindurāya suratrāṇa*) and "sultan of the world" (*gola suratrāṇa*), these titles were adopted for the same purpose as Persianate clothing. It signified the eagerness of Vijayanagara's rulers to distinguish themselves from other Hindu kings and be accepted by and participate in the Indo-Islamic political culture.

The use of these latter titles may in fact have caused the introduction of Persianate clothing. Presenting oneself as a sultan meant dressing like one and thus, on public occasions, forfeiting traditional local ideas on attire. The south Indian way of clothing, which revealed and accentuated the body, was deemed inappropriate or even dishonourable in the Islamic world, where dress should fully cover the body. The use of Persianate garments at the Vijayanagara court was probably further encouraged by the *khil'at* ritual (discussed in the previous

Vijayanagara: Art and Archaeology (New Delhi, 2011), 111-12; Nalini Rao, *Royal Imagery & Networks of Power at Vijayanagara: A Study of Kingship in South India* (Delhi, 2010), 28-34, plates 21, 23, 25-6, 34-9.

³² For examples, see two notes below.

³³ For Aravidu titles in Dutch documents, see for example: Colenbrander *et al.*, *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia ... anno 1641-1642* (The Hague, 1900), 262, 289, *idem*, *anno 1643-1644*, 271; Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 1, 230, 403-4. For English and Portuguese references, see: Foster, *The English Factories in India 1642-1645*, 285, 305; Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. I, 67; Henry Heras, "The Jesuit Influence in the Court of Vijayanagar," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* XIV, 2 (1924), 138.

chapter), also borrowed from the Islamic world and centred on dress gifting.³⁴ In sum, Vijayanagara's rulers partially adapted titles, dress, court etiquette, and other aspects of court culture to Persianate conventions in order to enhance their status in the dominant Indo-Islamic world.

Successor States

The following sections all begin with an overview of titles used by the successor dynasties and then discuss their dress. By and large, titles mentioned in local sources are dealt with first, followed by designations found in documents exchanged with European powers. With respect to royal attire, each section first discusses references in Dutch embassy reports before considering paintings and statues in palaces and temples.

³⁴ Wagoner, "Sultan among Hindu Kings," 861-7; Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, 42-3, 101; Truschke, *The Language of History*, 68-70; Verghese, "Court Attire of Vijayanagara," 50-2, 57; Kulke, "Mahārājas, Mahants and Historians," 125; Venkata Raghotham, "Empire and Historiography in Late Medieval South India: A Study of the Early Vijayanagara State," in R. Champakalakshmy, Kesavan Veluthat, and T.R. Venugopalan (eds), *State and Society in Pre-Modern South India* (Thrissur, 2002), 140; Filiozat, *l'Épigraphie de Vijayanagar*, for example xvi, 23-4; Narasimhaswami, *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. XVI, i-ii, viii; Vijayaraghavacharya, *Inscriptions of Krishnaraya's Time*, 124-85, 270, 328-52; idem (ed.), *Inscriptions of Achyutaraya's Time from 1530 A.D. to 1542 A.D.* (Madras, 1936), passim; idem (ed.), *Inscriptions of Sadasivaraya's Time from 1541 A.D. to 1574 A.D.* (Madras, 1937), passim; idem, *Inscriptions of Venkatapatiraya's Time*, 17-145; Ritti and Gopal, *Inscriptions of the Vijayanagara Rulers*, vol. I, *Inscriptions of the Rulers of the Sangama Dynasty*, pts 1-5, passim; Y. Subbarayalu and S. Rajavelu (eds), *Inscriptions of the Vijayanagara Rulers*, vol. V, pt. I (Tamil Inscriptions) (Delhi, 2014), 65, 72, 113, 158, 164, 166-7, 192-3, 232, 459, 472, 476; S. Subrahmanya Sastry (ed.), *Early Inscriptions* (Madras, 1931), 182-3, 189-90, 193-4, 202-4, 224-5; Srinivasan and Reiniche, *Tiruvannamalai*, vol. 1.2, *Inscriptions* (Pondicherry, 1990), 436-546, 585, 615, 619; Katti, "Some Important Epigraphs of the Sangama Dynasty," 143; Butterworth and Venugopaul Chetty, *A Collection of the Inscriptions on Copper-Plates and Stones in the Nellore District*, pt. I, 15, 19, 33, 41, 76, 84, 152, 157, 196-8, 200, 203-4, 217-18, 238, 246, 255, 264, 269, 312, 315-16, 319, 363, 448, 453-4; Ramesan, "The Krāku Grant of Harihara II," 75; Venkataramanayya, "Pedda Cheppalli Plates of Dēvarāya II," 40; idem (ed.), "A Note on the Gaya Inscription of Kṛishṇadēvarāya," in idem (ed.), *Epigraphia Andhrica*, vol. I (Hyderabad, 1969), 56; A.V. Ramabrahman (ed.), "A New Copperplate Inscription of Vijayanagara King Achyuta Raya," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 21 (1958); Allasani Peddana, *The Story of Manu*, 11; BL/AAS, MG, no. 3, pt. 6: "Facsimile of the seal of Ram Raja," following f. 195 (transcription in Cotton, Charpentier, and Johnston, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages*, vol. I, pt. II, 39); Patil, *Court Life under the Vijayanagar Rulers*, 54; Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire*, vol. II, 262; Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt. I, *Karnataka – Andhra* (London, 1998), 153-213; A.V. Narasimhamurthy, *Coins and Currency System in Vijayanagara Empire* (Varanasi, 1991), 15-16, 23, ch. 5; K. Ganesh and Girijapathy, *The Coins of the Vijayanagar Empire* (Bangalore, 1997), 29-133.

Nayakas of Ikkeri

Besides Persianate conventions that Ikkeri adopted indirectly through Vijayanagara, it was probably also directly affected by the Bijapur sultanate,³⁵ the Mughal empire, and Hyderabad, its successive Muslim-ruled neighbours. However, there are few unambiguous references to Persianate influences in Ikkeri. Local sources for the Nayakas' titles include a sizeable corpus of fully published inscriptions and some literary texts, both in Sanskrit and Kannada. Many designations, often combined in extensive strings, point to military feats or religious activities. An instance of the former is "disturber of forts" (*kōṭe kōlāhala*), acquired by Sadashiva Nayaka upon defeating Vijayanagara's opponents and passed on to his successors. Among the religious titles are "devoted to the faith in Shiva [and?] the guru" (*śivagurubhakti parāyaṇa*), and "establisher of the pure Vaidika Advaita doctrine" (*viśuddhavaidikādvaita siddhānta pratiṣṭhāpaka*), likely indicating the dynasty's ties with the Shaivite monastery at Sringeri. Another common designation is *eḍavamurāri*, probably honouring the voluntary death of the servants Yadava and Murari of the first Nayaka, Chaudappa, enabling him to obtain a treasure.

Less regular titles mention benevolent rule, patronage of arts, and amorous achievements. Further, references are occasionally made to conflicts with what was probably Bijapur or perhaps the Mughal empire, for instance designating the Nayakas as "a boundary mountain to stop the great ocean of the *mlēcchās* [barbarians or Muslims] ever seeking to overflow the south in victorious expeditions."³⁶ A rare case of a Persianate title, mentioned in this chapter's introduction, is "*bādshāh* [great king] of Keladi," supposedly received by Dodda Sankanna Nayaka from the sultan of Delhi.³⁷

³⁵ For a recent discussion of relations between Ikkeri and Bijapur, see Subah Dayal, "Vernacular Conquest? A Persian Patron and His Image in the Seventeenth-Century Deccan," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, 3 (2017), 558-64. See also Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkēri*, 23-4, 37, 68, 73-5, 94-5, 104, 106-8, 110, 121.

³⁶ *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department for the Year 1915-16*, 65, 68, *idem*, for the Year 1927 (Bangalore, 1928), 135, *idem*, for the Year 1928 (Bangalore, 1929), 62, *idem*, for the Year 1943 (Mysore, 1944), 105-6, 108-11; *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. VIII, 158, 194, 290, 306, 321, and many other references; B. Lewis Rice (ed.), *Mysore Inscriptions, Translated for Government* (Bangalore, 1879), 250; M.M. Bhat (ed.), *Selected Kannada Inscriptions* (Madras, 1952), 167; Chitnis, *Keladi Polity*, 11, 13, 16-17; Lewis Rice, *Mysore and Coorg*, 156; Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkēri*, 22, 24, 26-7, 33, 91; Lakshminarayan Rao, "The Nayakas of Keladi," 256-8, 267; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 179; K.V. Ramesh, "Notes on the Territorial History of the Keladi Kingdom," in G.S. Dikshit (ed.), *Studies in Keladi History (Seminar Papers)* (Bangalore, 1981), 82; Naraharayya, "Keladi Dynasty" [pt. 1], 373, 377; Nilakanta Sastri and Venkataramanayya, *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, vol. III, 191-2; BL/AAS, MG, no. 6, pt. 11: "Historical account of Beedoonoor or Caladee Samstanum," f. 66v.

³⁷ BL/AAS, MG, no. 25, pt. 27: "Memoir of Barkoor," f. 209.

Some inscriptions contain no or very few titles. There, the ruler's individual name is only accompanied by terms like *śrīmat* (glorious, illustrious), *keḷadi* (the dynasty's first capital), and of course *nāyaka* (originally military leader), sometimes with a pedigree, which usually goes back to Sadashiva. Legends on Ikkeri's coins are even more modest, often comprising just the honorific prefix *śrī* and Sadashiva's name or adding words like *rāja* (king) and *keḷadi* to a ruler's personal name.³⁸

Only these latter, simpler terms generally appear in letters and treaties the Nayakas exchanged and concluded with the Dutch and the Portuguese. VOC records from the mid-seventeenth century on contain translations or corruptions of words the kings used to sign documents, such as: "fortunate [*geluckigen*] Sivapaneijck, born of Quelldij [*keḷadi*]" (by Shivappa I), "Srijmadoe [*śrīmat*] Quelladij Soma Sanqhera Naijqueroe," and "exalted [*verheeven*] King Queladi Somma Sanquera Naij Quero" (both Somashekara II). *Geluckigen* and *verheeven* are likely Dutch translations of *śrīmat*, while "Naijqueroe" and similar phrases are probably corruptions of *nāyaka* followed by *ayyavāru*, the latter a combination of the honorific suffixes *ayyan* and *vāru*.³⁹ In seventeenth-century Portuguese documents, terms used by the Nayakas are equally modest and comprise the same words time and again: "I, the King [*eu el-rey*] Virapá Naique, of the house [*casa*] of Queldy" (by Virabhadra), "I, Quelady Somaxecar Naique" (Somashekara I), and "I, Quellady Bassopá Naique" (Basavappa, signing as formal ruler during the reign of his adoptive mother Chennammaji).⁴⁰

³⁸ *Annual Report of the Mysore Archæological Department for the Year 1927* (Bangalore, 1928), 134-5; Lewis Rice, *Mysore Inscriptions*, 249; N. Lakshminarayan Rao (ed.), "Kap Copper-Plate of Keladi Sadasiva-Nayaka: Saka 1479," *Epigraphia Indica and Record of the Archæological Survey of India*, vol. XX (Delhi, 1929-30), 93, 95; Sundara, *The Keḷadi Nāyakas*, 35-7; Gunda Jois, "Keladi Inscriptions on Gold Sandals and Pinnacles," 65, 67-8; Pushpa Prasad (ed.), "Two Stone Slab Inscriptions of Keladi Dynasty," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 35 (1974); BL/AAS, MT, class XIII (Inscriptions), no. 73: "Translation of a Neeroopam (or order) of Somaseker Naik (a king of Beedoonore)," f. 46; Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt. I, 217-18; and many examples in *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. VIII, including 73, 88, 131, 171, 247. See also Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 317.

³⁹ Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 2, 109-10; NA, VOC, no. 1231, f. 515; no. 1268, f. 1117; no. 1694, ff. 54, 62, 66-7; no. 2187, f. 219; no. 2228, ff. 951-iv, 954v-5, 1055v-6, 1059; no. 2232, f. 3592; no. 2354, f. 1617; no. 2414, f. 124; no. 2435, f. 2272; no. 2446, ff. 283, 1152: documents from 1659, 1668, 1703, 1731-2, 1735-6, 1738; DNA, DCGC, no. 3396, ff. 1-2: document from 1662; TNA, DR, no. 404, ff. 91, 155: documents from 1745, 1751.

⁴⁰ Julio Firmino Judice Biker (ed.), *Collecção de tratados e concertos de pazes que o Estado da Índia Portuguesa fez com os Reis e Senhores com quem teve relações nas partes da Ásia e África Oriental ...*, vol. I (Lisbon, 1881), 275-6, 302, 304, vol. IV (Lisbon, 1884), 192, 212, vol. V (Lisbon, 1884), 288-9.

With regard to royal dress in Ikkeri, there are very few references in Dutch records. The most substantial observation was made by Corijn Stevens in the account of his embassy to Somashekara Nayaka II in February 1735.⁴¹ The following excerpt relates Stevens' appearance before the Nayaka during the welcoming audience:

... without shoes, I approached the king, who was sitting in a raised armchair of three steps, covered high with some Souratse [Surat] golden cloths, keeping between his legs a sword of which the sheath was gilded, being dressed in Souratse cloths, on his head a turban set with gold, wearing around his neck a few pearls and golden necklaces, and on his fingers some rings encrusted with diamonds, standing behind him a crowd of servants, and on both sides sat several state lords and highly ranked persons ...⁴²

This passage is striking for the precise description of Somashekara's dress, headgear, and jewellery, although they are not classified as "heathen" (Hindu) or "Moorish" (Islamic). The word "Surat" likely refers here to textiles produced or traded at the Mughal port of that name in north-west India, rather than to a Mughal or Persianate dress style. Besides, Somashekara wore an exquisite turban and expensive jewellery, and held a sword. All these elements of royal display were apparently required at what was clearly a public audience, attended as it was by many courtiers and servants.

The other Dutch references to Ikkeri's royal dress concern Somashekara too, but are less specific. Two of these also pertain to Stevens' embassy. The envoy met the Nayaka twice in front of his lodging, when the latter happened to pass by. On both occasions, Somashekara was dressed in white garments (*in het wit gekleed* and *uitgedost in witte klederen*).⁴³ Further, the report of a mission to the same ruler in October-December 1731 states that at the first audience Somashekara sat outside his palace in "his entire garment and clothing" (*sijn gantsche gewaed en cleding*), surrounded by courtiers and facing a crowd. At the final audience, he appeared in similar dress.⁴⁴

Again, these were all public events, at which Somashekara wore attire that at least twice was white and in most cases seems to have been rather elaborate, considering the use of plural forms, repetition, and terms implying full clothing in the envoys' accounts. These descriptions resemble those of the Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle, who visited Ikkeri in the 1620s and wrote that several courtiers were dressed in long, white, coloured, and even what he termed "Persian-style" clothes.⁴⁵

⁴¹ For documents concerning this mission, see NA, VOC, no. 2354, ff. 1491-632.

⁴² NA, VOC, no. 2354, ff. 1541-2: diary of mission to Ikkeri, Feb. 1735 (translation mine).

⁴³ NA, VOC, no. 2354, ff. 1553-4, 1560-1: diary of mission to Ikkeri, Feb. 1735.

⁴⁴ NA, VOC, no. 2232, ff. 3596, 3597v: diary of mission to Ikkeri, Nov.-Dec. 1731.

⁴⁵ Della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, vol. II, 248-9.

Local images of royal dress, found in temples, largely underscore Dutch observations. For example, statues at the Sadashiva Temple in Varadamula and the Rameshvara Temple in Keladi respectively portray the second and last Nayakas—Sadashiva and Somashekara III, the latter ruling under Queen Virammaji's regency—with long tunics, turbans, jewels, and, in the former case, what may be a *kamar-band* (waist belt), perhaps of Persian origin.⁴⁶ Notably, Somashekara's clothing here has been labelled as “Mughal-Maratha” fashion (see illustration 23 in the Epilogue). One of Ikkeri's most powerful rulers, Shivappa I, is presented largely in the same way in a mural at the Puttige *maṭha* (monastery) in Tirthahalli. But a statue at the Virabhadra Temple in Keladi of what is probably also one of the Nayakas, perhaps Virabhadra or Basavappa II, shows him with a bare chest and a short, ribbed, conical cap, whereas his two attendants wear long coats.⁴⁷

Altogether, the sources on royal titles and dress in Ikkeri seem ambivalent. With one minor exception, neither local texts nor European documents suggest the Nayakas' titles included Persianate elements. As for royal attire, however, various portrayals point to influences from sultanate courts. Dutch references say that on public occasions the kings were dressed in long, often white clothes, hinting at Persianate rather than Indic garments. Further, they usually wore a turban (instead of a *kullāyi* cap) and jewellery, and kept a sword. Several temple statues also indicate that Persianate dress was in vogue at this court.

Nayakas of Tanjavur

Sources for the titles and dress of Tanjavur's Nayakas are limited. A number of Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions of Shevappa Nayaka, Achyutappa Nayaka, and Raghunatha Nayaka published in full mention only the rulers' names with brief designations like *nāyaka*, *rājaśrī* (illustrious king), *śrīmat* (glorious), or *mānya* (chief, respectable man), and the honorific suffix *ayyan*. A Telugu silver-plate grant

⁴⁶ The term *kamar-band* derives from Persian. See: Van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, vol. 2.1 (The Hague, 1931), 818; Dunlop, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, vol. I, 797; Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 279-80.

⁴⁷ Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkeri*, 238; R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Art of the Vijayanagara-Nāyakas: Architecture & Iconography* (Delhi, 2006), vol. I, 147, vol. II, plate 329; Chitnis, *Keladi Polity*, facing title page; *Annual Report of the Mysore Archæological Department for the Year 1932* (Bangalore, 1935), 48, plate XIV, no. 2; Subhadra, “Art and Architecture of the Keladi Nāyakas,” 455-6. See also Kanekar, “Two Temples of the Ikkeri Nayakas,” 159 (n. 22). The statue thought to portray Somashekara III, together with Queen Virammaji, is regarded by some as a depiction of Rajarama, son of the Maratha King Shivaji, with Queen Chennammaji. See Keladi Gundajois, *The Glorious Keladi (History and Culture)* (Mysore, 2011), 76, 132.



Illustration 15: Detail of a gold-foil letter of April 1620 by Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjavur to the king of Denmark, showing the Nayaka's name and titles in Tamil in the top line, *Rigsarkivet*, Copenhagen, *Udenrigsministeriet, Traktatsamling, Traktater E1, Forholdet til udlandet 1454-1699*, no. 20 (photo by P.S. Ramanujam, courtesy *Rigsarkivet*).

issued by Vijayaraghava Nayaka to the Dutch in 1658 also contains few titles, adding to the elements above little more than the name Achyuta (perhaps signifying his grandfather) and the honorific suffix *vāru*. A Tamil-Telugu gold-foil letter of Raghunatha to the king of Denmark from 1620 even contains nothing but *śrīmat* and *nāyaka* besides the king's name (see illustration 15). This modesty is found on the dynasty's coins as well, whose legends include just the rulers' names, sometimes with the honorific prefix *śrī*, or instead refer to Vijayanagara's emperors.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ G. Venkoba Rao (ed.), "Kumbakonam Inscription of Sevvappa-Nayaka," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XIX (Calcutta, 1927-8), 216-17; E. Hultzsck, V. Venkayya, and H. Krishna Sastri (eds), *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. II, *Tamil Inscriptions in the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjavur and Other Miscellaneous Records of the Chola, Pallava, Pandya and Vijayanagara Dynasties* (Madras, 1916), 499; Srinivasan and Reiniche, *Tiruvannamalai*, vol. 1.2, 549-61; Nagaswamy, *Studies in Ancient Tamil Law and Society*, 116-21; Nilakanta Sastri, "Two Negapatam Grants," 40-4; RA, *Udenrigsministeriet, Traktatsamling, Traktater E1, Forholdet til udlandet 1454-1699* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Treaty collection, Treaties E1, Related to foreign countries 1454-1699), nos 20-1: letter from Raghunatha Nayaka to the king of Denmark, Apr. 1620, with translation; Ramanujam, *Unheard Voices*, ch. 1 (fig. 1.5); www.tharangampadi.dk/goldfoil.html (by P.S. Ramanujam); Esther Fihl, "The South Indian Setting: Kingship, Trade and Architecture" in idem (ed.), *The Governor's Residence in Tranquebar: The House and the Daily Life of Its People, 1770-1845* (Copenhagen, 2017), 32-3; Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 189-90; Venkata Rao, *The Southern School in Telugu Literature*, 145-9; Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt.

The few letters and treaties in the VOC archives authored by Tanjavur's Nayakas contain Dutch renderings of what appear to be the same terms. Examples are "Estriamata Atchijta Visia Ragoe Naijkijawarou" (*śrīmat Achyuta Vijayaraghava Nayaka ayyavāru*) and "Aetchieda Visia Singamale Neijck," the latter denoting the dynasty's last scion, Chengamaladasa. The only designation found in a treaty in Portuguese that Raghunatha concluded with the Danes is *nāyaka* ("Nayquo").⁴⁹ Other titles, in local literary works and inscriptions, chiefly concern governmental matters, patronage of scholars, and religious activities. As an example of the last type, a copper-plate grant of Raghunatha calls him "he who is ever delighted in listening to the nectar-like story of Rama" (*anavarata rāmakathāmṛta sevaka*).⁵⁰

No Dutch reports or other European accounts describing these Nayakas' dress seem to have survived, except for a reference by the Jesuit Balthazar da Costa to Vijayaraghava being clothed in (probably) a white robe and a white turban. But some temple statues portray these rulers with bare chests, both caps and turbans, jewels, and arms. A statue of Raghunatha in the Ramasvami Temple at Kumbakonam, for instance, depicts him bare-chested, wearing a rounded, medium-sized cap and jewellery, and carrying a curved sword and a dagger.⁵¹

All in all, these few sources show no evidence of Islamic influences on this dynasty's titles, while little can be concluded about royal dress. Most notable seem the observations that turbans were used alongside rounded caps, and that the latter were not always worn together with long tunics, as happened in Vijayanagara. This is also found with some statues at the Bhu-Varaha Temple in Srirangam portraying kings—probably the Nayakas of Senji—with bare chests and *kuḷḷāyi* caps or other tall headdress at the same time, in addition to jewels and weapons.⁵²

II, *Tamilnadu – Kerala*, 204-7. See also Venkatesha, "The Kumbhakonam Plates of Vijayaraghava, Saka 1578," *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India [Bharatiya Purabhilekha Patrika]* XI (1984), 35.

⁴⁹ NA, VOC, no. 1231, ff. 152, 259v, 771v-2; no. 1302, ff. 614, 615v: documents from 1658, 1674; Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 2, 138-9, 190, 334; Ramanujam, *Unheard Voices*, ch. 1 (fig. 1.3).

⁵⁰ Vriddhagirisani, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 111; Chithra Madhavan, *History and Culture of Tamil Nadu: As Gleaned from the Sanskrit Inscriptions*, vol. 2 (New Delhi, 2007), 79-80, 136-40; Venkatesha, "The Kumbhakonam Plates of Vijayaraghava," 35.

⁵¹ Saulière, "The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks" [pt. 1], p. 96; Rajarajan, *Art of the Vijayanagara-Nāyakas*, vol. I, 147, vol. II, plate 22; Vivek Nanda, Anna Dallapiccola, and George Michell, "The Ramasvami Temple, Kumbakonam," *South Asian Studies* 13, 1 (1997), 8-9 (fig. 7); Aravamuthan, *Portrait Sculpture in South India*, 51-2 (figs 29-30).

⁵² Branfoot, "Dynastic Genealogies," 323-30, 340-4 (figs 5-12).

Bhonsles of Tanjavur

As Tanjavur's next royal family, the Bhonsle house, was not a direct heir to Vijayanagara, the empire's Persianate practices may have influenced it only indirectly. Also, since its founder Ekoji and his ancestors served as military commanders under various Deccan sultanates, this dynasty could have adopted such customs from those kingdoms. At any rate, sources for the Bhonsles' titles and dress are more numerous than for their Nayaka predecessors. With regard to titles, inscriptions refer to various rulers from Ekoji to Tuljaji II as "king of kings" (*rājādhirāja*) and other imperial designations.⁵³

Such terms are however not yet found on a Tamil silver-plate granted by Ekoji to the Dutch in 1676, immediately after he took Tanjavur. This suggests that at that time Ekoji still acknowledged the Bijapur sultan (called "Padshah Sahib") as his overlord, styling himself less ambitiously as "illustrious king" (*śrīmat rājāśrī*) and "great king" (*mahārājā*). Also seeming to point to this subordinate status, an inscription of 1679 labels Ekoji as *mahāmaṇḍalēśvaran*, a title often used for provincial governors rather than sovereign rulers. In contrast with the various Nayaka houses, the term *mahārājā* became a common legend on the Bhonsle dynasty's coins.⁵⁴

Further, the widely used honorific title *sāheba* ("sahib," master), of Arabic origin, figures frequently in the dynasty's chronicle *Bhonsale vaṃśa caritra* from early on, and also appears in a grant issued by Ekoji shortly before he conquered Tanjavur. The chronicle demonstrates that *sāheba* was used by female members of the family as well, like Queen Sujana Bai (as in "Soojawnahboysaib").⁵⁵ Besides, a Persian inscription of Pratapasimha at an Islamic shrine includes the designation *ʿumdat al-mulk* ("pillar of the state" or "chief of dominions")—referring to himself or Ekoji—a rather generic title originally employed for high officials at Muslim-ruled courts. Additionally, two of the house's regularly occurring personal names, Sarabhoji and Shahaji, are thought to have derived from the Persian terms "Sharif" and "Shah" respectively. None of these references, nor European sources for that

⁵³ Sewell, *List of Inscriptions*, 2; P.R. Srinivasan (ed.), *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. XXVI, *Inscriptions Collected during the Year 1908-09* (New Delhi, 1990), 1.

⁵⁴ Nilakanta Sastri, "Two Negapatam Grants," 48; Menon, "Colonial Linguistics and the Spoken Language," 79; S. Suresh, *The Tanjavur Marathas: Art, Architecture and Culture* (New Delhi, 2015), 137, 188-9; Srinivasan, "Some Interesting Aspects of the Maratha Rule," 42; Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt. II, 207-8. See also: Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life*, 33-4; Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, 79.

⁵⁵ BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 87: "The historycal account of the Tonjore," ff. 81, 94v-100, 111, 119v-20; MG, no. 19, pt. 32: "Translation of a Maratta Sunnud of Yeckojee Rajah," f. 156 (probably granted in 1670, see Cotton, Charpentier, and Johnston, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages*, vol. I, pt. II, 244, 254).

matter, contain claims by the Bhonsles to the high status of “king of kings” and the like.⁵⁶

Titles like *rājasrī* and *mahārājā* were regularly used in communication with Europeans. The Dutch rendered these as, for example, “Ragia Estrie Sahagie Magharagia” (Shahaji I), and “Maharaasja Rasjaasri Pratappa Singaji Raasji” (Pratapasingha). VOC documents further include corruptions of *mānya* (see above), such as “mannia.” Besides, in two treaties with the Dutch, Shahaji I was referred to as “Chola king” (“Chiole Ragia”), a practice seemingly not followed by other rulers. Danish archives contain Marathi letters from the Bhonsles with largely the same words, for instance in a document signed with *mahārājā rājasrī tulajā rāje* (Tulaji II). Finally, many European sources also contain the title *sāheba*.⁵⁷

Sources for the Bhonsles’ clothing are somewhat limited in number. Reports of VOC embassies contain only two relevant passages, both concerning public occasions. In November 1735, Dutch envoys Arnoldus Oosterharen and Wouter de Jongh were dispatched to Ekoji II and soon welcomed at the palace.⁵⁸ Escorted through nine gates, they reached a courtyard where they took off their shoes, and:

... proceeding this way, [we] came into the hall and before the said King Ekogie Ragie, seated under a canopy on a bed hanging from four silver chains one foot above the ground, being continually and gently swung by eight fresh youngsters. The king, a well-formed man, twenty-eight years old, was dressed in a long coat [rock] of white fine muslin and on his head likewise a turban, on which stood a toeraaij [*turra*, turban jewel] wrought with gold, encrusted with many precious stones as a sign of his regal highness, with a staff in

⁵⁶ Ziyaud-Din A. Desai (ed.), *A Topographical List of Arabic, Persian and Urdu Inscriptions of South India* (New Delhi, 1989), 121 (no. 1250); Śrīdhara Venkatēśa, *Śāhendra Vilāsa*, ii (in notes section); Guha, “The Frontiers of Memory,” 278; Moulvi Abdul Haq, “The Influence of Persian on Mahrathi,” *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review* X, 4 (1936), 601. See also Ramakrishna Kavi Pandit, *Pratapasinghendra Vijaya Prabandha*, in which such exalted claims appear to be lacking as well.

⁵⁷ NA, VOC, no. 1351, f. 2255; no. 1518, ff. 884, 885; no. 2386, f. 169; no. 2427, f. 441v; no. 2539, f. 2485; no. 2665, f. 1987; no. 2764, f. 435; no. 3108, f. 25; documents from 1677, 1692, 1735, 1738, 1741, 1746, 1750, 1764; Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 3, 34-5, 39, 447, 560, vol. 5, 317-18, 354, 501-3, vol. 6 (The Hague, 1955), 353-60; Strandberg, *The Moḡl Documents from Tanjore in Danish Collections*, 88-9, 92-3, 112-13, 124-5, 284, 286, 295, 300. See also Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 781-2. Besides the discussed titles, both Indian and European sources include (corruptions of) the words *ajā rakhtakhāne*, which often precede and may seem part of the titles, but these mean “from the treasury of.” See Strandberg, *The Moḡl Documents from Tanjore in Danish Collections*, 88-9, 92-3, 96-7, 204-7, 248-9, 284, 286, 288, 330-1, 345.

⁵⁸ For papers regarding this embassy, see NA, VOC, no. 2386, ff. 64-72, 163-8: Nagapattinam proceedings (*resoluties*), with mission report and correspondence inserted, Nov. 1735.

the right hand, and a bunch of golden chains and coral strings around the neck, and rings around the arms ...⁵⁹

The account of an earlier mission, though not mentioning royal dress, is also significant as it details the items presented to the Dutch ambassadors during a *khil'at* ceremony.⁶⁰ In December 1676 Thomas van Rhee and Pieter Outshoorn Sonnevelt were sent to Ekoji I and quickly granted an audience. They found Ekoji accompanied by his three sons and several courtiers. The meeting was concluded when the king:

... had the tasserijven [*tashrif*s, marks of honour] installed, and let me [envoy Van Rhee] and the council's Secretary Sonnevelt be dressed in a cottoned silken coat and tied with a turban around the head and commerbant [*kamar-band*, waist belt] around the body, and this way we were guided outside the court ...⁶¹

As for local portrayals of the Bhonsles' attire, few or no temple images are known for certain to predate the nineteenth century. But some moveable paintings of a possibly earlier date portray the rulers—for instance Ekoji I and Pratapasimha—with long clothes, jewels, and elaborate turbans, or in one case a tall hat. A bronze statue thought to date from the eighteenth century that likely depicts Shahaji I shows him dressed in a similar way.⁶²

The sources suggest that the Bhonsle's titles and clothing both included Persianate elements. This is clear in some of the dynasty's designations (and perhaps personal names) but is less obvious for its dress codes. As with Ikkeri, VOC envoys never labelled royal attire in Tanjavur as "Moorish" or "heathen," and it is therefore hard to classify. Even so, together the sources imply that royal dress at the Bhonsle court was rather similar to such attire in Ikkeri: long tunics and turbans. Besides, several

⁵⁹ NA, VOC, no. 2386, f. 165: report of mission to Tanjavur, Nov. 1735 (translation mine). For "toeraaij," see also NA, VOC, no. 2538, f. 251: Nagapattinam proceedings, Jan. 1741. For a somewhat similar description of Tuljaji Bhonsle II in 1769, see Ramanujam, *Unheard Voices*, ch. 9.

⁶⁰ For documents concerning this embassy, see NA, VOC, no. 1329, ff. 1164v-79: instructions and report concerning mission to Tanjavur, Dec. 1676-Jan. 1677.

⁶¹ NA, VOC, no. 1329, f. 1174: report of mission to Tanjavur, Dec. 1676 (translation mine).

⁶² Appasamy, *Tanjavur Painting of the Maratha Period*, 47-8, plate 14 (between 44-5); Peterson, "Portraiture at the Tanjore Maratha Court," 47 (fig. 2); Krishna, *Painted Manuscripts of the Sarasvati Mahal Library*, 6 (fig. 2), 11 (fig. 3); Tejpal Singh and Sanjib Kumar Singh, *Ecstasy of Classical Art: Indian Bronze: National Museum Collection* (New Delhi, 2016), 53 (fig. 11). The last work suggests the bronze statue shows Sarabhoji I, but a Tamil inscription on its base reads *cākīmākārāca* (or *sāhī mākārāja*) (personal observation, Jan. 2017), so Shahaji I seems a more probable identification.

objects used in the *khil'at* ritual were described with Arabic and Persian terms: *tashrif* and *kamar-band*.⁶³ Hence, it seems that Persianate notions on titles, clothing, and etiquette were followed to some degree at this court.

Nayakas of Madurai

For royal titles and dress in Madurai there are relatively many sources, both local and external. Telugu, Tamil, and Sanskrit inscriptions and chronicles contain several designations used throughout the Nayakas' reign, including variations on "lord of the Pandya realm" and "lord of the southern throne," conferred by Vijayanagara. Other regular terms are *mahārājā*, *mānya*, *rājasrī*, *ayyan*, and the like (discussed under Tanjavur), and the name of the dynasty's founder Vishvanatha, generally used by his successors before their own names.⁶⁴ The latter also often figures in Dutch documents, together with what are likely translations of *śrīmat*, shown by renderings as "the fortunate [*wel geluckige*] Wisuanaden-Naick Renga Kistna Moutou Wirappa-Neyck" (Ranga Krishna Muttu Virappa Nayaka III).⁶⁵

Another common title was *karttākkaḷ* (agents, executors), denoting the Nayakas' continuing formal subordination to Vijayanagara, also under later rulers.⁶⁶ In

⁶³ *Tashrif* (mark of honour or act of honouring) is of Arabic origin. See: Coolhaas *et al.*, *Generale Missiven*, vol. III, 100 (n. 1); Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 902. For *kamar-band*, see the section on Ikkeri.

⁶⁴ S.V. Viswanatha (ed.), "The Jambukesvaram Grant of Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka: Saka 1630," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XVI (Calcutta, 1921-2), 89, 94, 96; T.A. Gopinatha Rao and T. Raghaviah (eds), "Krishnapuram Plates of Sadasivaraya: Saka Samvat 1489," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. IX (Calcutta, 1907-8), 330, 341; T.A. Gopinatha Rao (ed.), "Dalavay-Agraharam Plates of Venkatapatideva-Maharaya I: Saka-Samvat 1508," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XII (Calcutta, 1913-14), 187; V. Natesa Aiyar (ed.), "Padmaneri Grant of Venkata I: Saka-Samvat 1520," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XVI, 297; T.A. Gopinatha Rao (ed.), "Vellangudi Plates of Venkatapati-Deva-Maharaya I: Saka-Samvat 1520," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XVI, 320; H. Krishna Sastri (ed.), "Kuniyur Plates of the Time of Venkata II: Saka-Samvat 1556," *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. III (Calcutta, 1894-5), 254-5; H.K. Narasimhaswami (ed.), *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. XXIV, *Inscriptions of the Ranganathaswami Temple, Srirangam* (Madras, 1982), 524-5, 533-4; Burgess and Naṭeśa Śāstrī, *Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 111; *Travancore Archæological Series*, vol. V, pt. III, 191-210, 229-35; Venkata Rao, *The Southern School in Telugu Literature*, 36, 149-57; Aseem Banu, "Polity under the Nayaks of Madurai," 26-7; Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire*, vol. II, 263; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 350-3, 355, 357-9, 362-5; Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 13; Nelson, *The Madura Country*, vol. III, 92, 101, 121; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 131-2, 171; Sewell, *List of Inscriptions*, 27; Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 184, 240. See also Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 197.

⁶⁵ Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 1, 455-6, vol. 3, 507; Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 377, 379.

⁶⁶ Caldwell, *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely*, 62; A.J. Stuart, *Manual of the Tinnevely District in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1879), 42; Aseem Banu, "Polity under the Nayaks

contrast, Chokkanatha Nayaka apparently harboured loftier ambitions, calling himself “emperor of Karnataka” (*karnāṭaka cakravartī*).⁶⁷ Thereby, he seemingly appropriated the status of Madurai’s former imperial overlords, “Karnataka” being the contemporary local name of Vijayanagara. However, this claim was probably not made by other kings. The overall relative modesty of the dynasty’s titles also transpires from the legends on its coins. The Nayakas are here usually referred to just by their main name—often shortened—with the honorific prefix *śrī*, as in *śrī chokka* (Chokkanatha) and *śrī mangammā* (Mangammal). In addition, various titles of individual Nayakas mention religious achievements, wise rule, and support of scholars.⁶⁸

Turning to royal dress in Madurai, both local and VOC sources provide detailed portrayals. The earliest Dutch account concerns a mission in June–September 1689 to Muttu Virappa Nayaka III,⁶⁹ already mentioned in this chapter’s introduction as the ruler who ordered his men to replace their long clothes and caps with Maratha-style attire. As envoy Nicolaes Welter wrote about his first audience, a well-attended, public occasion:

... I was brought with all our stuff and gift animals before His Highness. I found said ruler in a room open in front, sitting on a small alcatijff [*al-katif*, carpet], wearing a white Moorish dress [*wit Moors gewaedt*] and pearl necklace (each one of them the size of a white pea) around the neck ... To the left and behind said ruler sat several court notables, while some servants were standing on both sides ...⁷⁰

As it turned out, not only the Nayaka was supposed to wear such clothing.

... His Highness gifted me with a silver linen coat made in Moorish fashion [*op zijn Moors gemaect*] and a gold-wrought toock [headgear or cloth].⁷¹ The ruler stated that, since I had come to his lands as envoy of the Hon[ourable] Company ... to gift and greet him, he honoured me after their customs. In turn [as the king said], Your Honours [Welter’s

of Madurai,” 20; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 45–6, 105; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 33; BL/MMC, AM, no. 18021, “History of Kurtakull.”

⁶⁷ Sewell, *The Historical Inscriptions of Southern India*, 286.

⁶⁸ Sai Sravan, “Coinage of Madurai Nayakas,” 124–31; Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt. II, 210–17; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 281–2; Madhavan, *History and Culture of Tamil Nadu*, vol. 2, 77.

⁶⁹ Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 381–422.

⁷⁰ Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 452, 539 (translation by Vink). For *al-katif*, see Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 11.

⁷¹ For “tөөk,” see the section on the Bhonsles of Tanjavur in Chapter 4.

superiors] could treat and gift his visiting ambassadors in their [Your Honours'] manner. His Highness requested me to wear said coat and to put the toock on my head on the way to the residence, in which I obliged him ... Thus, I returned outside, having paid my reverence, and departed, rigged out in Moorish fashion [*op zijn Moors toegetaekeld zijnde*], to our lodging ...⁷²

Welter, seemingly uncomfortable with what must have been a *khil'at* ceremony, was spared this ritual during the next audience, when only some courtesies were exchanged:

... [I was] escorted before His Highness. He was three to four rooms deeper inside the palace, where I found him the same way as the first time, though without any jewels or gold ware and without any of his councillors ...⁷³

At this quiet, more intimate event in the palace's interior, Muttu Virappa seems to have worn the same "Moorish" attire as during the first meeting, but apparently without jewellery.

In June 1711 the Dutch reported on royal clothing again. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka was touring his kingdom and stayed in Melur on the outskirts of the VOC port Tuticorin, while a few days later he encamped at Athur, some fifteen miles south. In both places, the Dutch envoy Swen Anderson had an audience with the king. At each meeting lots of people were present, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha being surrounded by courtiers and, at some distance, many commoners. On both occasions, Anderson noted that the Nayaka was wearing "Moorish" clothing—described respectively as red damask in a "Moorish" manner and as "the Moorish garb" (*'t Moorsch habijt*)—as well as pearls and heavy gold necklaces.⁷⁴

The last relevant observation in the VOC records dates from June 1720, when the same king travelled to the coast again. Upon Vijayaranga Chokkanatha's arrival in Melur, the local Dutch chief, Joannes Jenner, was requested to visit the king in his camp. In the VOC's diary kept at Tuticorin, Jenner's appearance before the Nayaka was recorded as follows:

... the chief [Jenner], alighting his palanquin, walked through the crowd to the tent of His Highness, finding just inside the tent the great land regent Coemaren Swamie Modliar [Kumara Svami Mudaliyar], who, having welcomed the chief, conducted him before His

⁷² Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 454, 540 (translation by Vink and myself).

⁷³ Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 466, 550 (translation by Vink and myself).

⁷⁴ DNA, DCGCC, no. 3355 (unpaginated, entries of 2 and 5 June): diary of mission to Madurai representatives at Tuticorin, Jan.-June 1711.

Highness, being dressed in a Moorish way [*op zijn Moors gekleed*], decked with costly jewels encrusted with gemstones ...⁷⁵

At the end of the meeting, Jenner was honoured with some presents, including a “Moorish” turban with golden bands that was tied around his head. This was another public audience, with several courtiers attending and other people crowding around the Nayaka’s tent.⁷⁶

The similarities between the above accounts, dating from a period of over thirty years, indicate that “Moorish”—or some kind of Persianate—clothing was in use among Madurai’s Nayakas at public audiences well into the eighteenth century, at least as VOC envoys saw it. This is underscored by the fact that both ambassador Welter and chief Jenner were made to wear such attire as well, pointing to *khil’at* etiquette. In at least one case, this included a turban in “Moorish” fashion, suggesting that in Madurai the high conical *kullāyi* caps of the Vijayanagara court had been replaced by Persianate turbans.⁷⁷

In addition, as in Ikkeri and Tanjavur, jewellery was an important element of royal display when the Nayakas granted public audiences to Dutchmen, but much less so (or not at all) at the one audience with a more intimate character, Welter’s second meeting with Muttu Virappa. In Madurai, like elsewhere in India, jewels were associated with royalty, were used by rulers to distinguish themselves from other dynasties, and had to be worn whenever one appeared at court.⁷⁸ Welter’s report seems to underline that the role of jewellery was generally similar to that of Persianate dress: to be displayed on public rather than domestic occasions. Accounts of meetings with Queen Mangammal in 1705 and Vijayaranga Chokkanatha in 1717, near Tuticorin during tours of the kingdom, further emphasise the importance of jewellery at public events. While these reports are silent about clothing, they specifically mention the large quantities of gold and jewels the monarchs were wearing.⁷⁹

Local sources have much to add. To begin with, audiences are depicted in the Narumpunadasvami Temple at Tiruppudaimarudur, in Madurai’s far south-west. Scholars disagree on the period these images were produced but mostly date them

⁷⁵ NA, VOC, no. 1941, f. 935: Tuticorin diary extract, June 1720 (translation mine).

⁷⁶ NA, VOC, no. 1941, ff. 919-21v, 935, 937-7v: letter from Tuticorin to Colombo, June 1720, Tuticorin diary extract, June 1720.

⁷⁷ For a description of the Madurai Nayaka’s clothing in the 1640s by a Jesuit, mentioning a white dress, a white turban, and elaborate jewellery, see Saulière, “The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks” [pt. 1], 95-6.

⁷⁸ Jean-François Hurpré, “The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka of Madurai (1623-1659),” in Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Jewels of India* (Bombay, 1995); Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life*, 163-7.

⁷⁹ NA, VOC, no. 1706, f. 1045; no. 1893, f. 1048v: Tuticorin diary extract, July 1705, letter from Tuticorin to Colombo, July 1717.



Illustration 16: Mural showing a south Indian king receiving a European visitor, Narumpunadasvami Temple, Tirupudaimarudur, 16th century? (courtesy *École française d'Extrême-Orient*).

to the sixteenth century at the earliest.⁸⁰ They may therefore have been made under Madurai's Nayakas, although this has not been firmly established. Anyhow, several images show kings (perhaps the Nayakas) meeting Indian dignitaries and European visitors. In one mural, a king sits on his throne and leans on a cushion as he receives what is probably a Portuguese merchant or soldier, accompanied by horses (see illustration 16). The monarch is bare-chested and wears a medium-sized, rounded cap and profuse jewellery. A wood carving in this temple depicts a king in the same position, watching two Europeans training a horse. Now the ruler wears a body-covering garment, together with jewels, and sports a high conical cap.⁸¹ It is not really clear what occasions are represented here, but the first scene in particular seems to be a public event. Therefore, the Indic dress in this picture might surprise us, the more so since the second image suggests that long tunics and what look like *kullāyi* caps—both considered Persianate dress—were also in fashion at this court.

⁸⁰ Seastrand, "Praise, Politics, and Language," viii-ix, 114 (n. 35). For online images of all the temple's murals, see: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/tirupudaimarudur-narumpunatha-temple.

⁸¹ Jean Deloche, *A Study in Nayaka-Period Social Life: Tirupudaimarudur Paintings and Carvings* (Pondicherry, 2011), 62-4 (figs 92, 95).



Illustration 17: Mural showing a south Indian king receiving Indian officials, Narumpunadasvami Temple, Tirupudaimarudur, 16th century? (courtesy *École française d'Extrême-Orient*).

Another painting in this temple shows a royal audience granted to Indian officials (see illustration 17). Here the king sits on the throne with a bare chest and a medium-sized rounded cap again, whereas three standing officials wear *kulāyi* caps and colourful tunics reaching their ankles.⁸² The temple paintings include many other examples of bare-chested kings and courtiers with different types of caps (high and conical, curved and pointed, or short and rounded) and turbans, all worn on various kinds of occasions.⁸³ Thus, the associations of the public and domestic domains with Persianate and Indic clothing respectively do not seem to apply to these images. Indeed, it has been concluded that here kings generally wear *kulāyi*-like headgear at religious events, and use lower caps with rounded, curved tops when executive authority is exercised.⁸⁴ This combination of connotations implies a dress code different from or even partly contradicting earlier scholarly ideas.

These associations are not supported by other images. Several temple paintings and statues in Madurai imply that particular clothing styles were not always limited to the same occasions or social domains. For example, the Nayaka sculptures in the Putu Mandapa festival hall (see Chapter 2) present some rulers with tall headwear, including *kulāyi* caps, but others with small turbans, while all are fully

⁸² Deloche, *A Study in Nayaka-Period Social Life*, 31, 33 (fig. 42).

⁸³ Deloche, *A Study in Nayaka-Period Social Life*, 19-36 (figs 23-51)

⁸⁴ Deloche, *A Study in Nayaka-Period Social Life*, 19-21.

or largely bare-chested, armed, and jewelled. Based on these images, it has been suggested that the turn of the seventeenth century saw a change from *kullāyi* caps to more rounded headgear, possibly signifying Madurai's striving for autonomy from Vijayanagara, where the former headdress remained in use.⁸⁵

A south Indian cloth painting (*kalamkāri*), probably dating from the early seventeenth century but of unknown provenance, seems to underscore this assumption. It depicts meetings at several Asian courts, including what is perhaps that of Madurai's Nayakas (see cover illustration). Here, both the ruler and the courtiers sport small turbans and some of them are bare-chested.⁸⁶ Further, a mural in the Minakshi Sundaresvara Temple of Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka—whom the Dutch in 1711 and 1720 described as wearing “Moorish” clothing—shows him in dress that has been interpreted as Mughal-style, consisting of a long, coloured tunic and a white turban.⁸⁷

Together, the sources on royal titles and attire in Madurai give an ambiguous impression. While the titles appear to contain no Persianate elements whatsoever, royal dress was repeatedly classified by Dutch envoys as “Moorish.” At the same time, temple images suggest such clothing cannot be simply labelled as either Persianate or Indic, considering the varying combinations of different types of caps and turbans with both long tunics and bare chests. Apparently, dress styles that might be regarded as Persianate or Indic could blend and be shown in various kinds of scenes, a custom not reflected in the Nayakas' titles, however.

⁸⁵ Branfoot, “Dynastic Genealogies,” 330-6, 353-9 (figs 22-35); Hurpré, “The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka,” passim, especially 66, 68; Aravamuthan, *Portrait Sculpture in South India*, 48-51 (figs 25-8); Heras, “The Statues of the Nayaks of Madura”; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 13; Branfoot, “Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple,” 21-2; idem, “In a Land of Kings,” 250-1, 254-9 (figs 20.5-6); idem, “Heroic Rulers and Devoted Servants,” 173; Archana Venkatesan and Crispin Branfoot, *In Andal's Garden: Art, Ornament and Devotion in Srivilliputtur* (Mumbai, 2015), 116-23 (figs 5.12-16, 5.18, 5.22). See also N.S. Ramaswami, “Portrait Sculptures,” *South Indian Studies* II (1979), 81.

⁸⁶ Rachel Morris, “Enter the Royal Encampment: Re-examining the Brooklyn Museum's *Kalamkari* Hanging,” *Arts of Asia* 34, 6 (2004). See also: Jos Gommans, “Cosmopolitanism and Imagination in Nayaka South India: Decoding the Brooklyn *Kalamkari*,” *Archives of Asian Art* 70, 1 (2020); Gittinger (with Nina Gwatkin), *Master Dyers to the World*, 89-108; Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 255.

⁸⁷ Hurpré, “The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka,” 66 (fig. 3), 68. See also R. Nagaswamy (?), “Nayak Paintings of Kailasanatha Temple at Nattam-Kovilpatti,” *South Indian Studies* III (1983), 30-1, 34. For an online image of the temple mural, see: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/madurai-minakshi-sundaresvara-temple.

Setupatis of Ramnad

The Ramnad court may have adopted Persianate conventions in various ways. One theory proposes that such notions were borrowed from the Deccan sultanates and the Mughal empire, albeit indirectly via Madurai and Tanjavur, which were tributary to or received military assistance from those states. This would have led to the arrival of painters and other artists with a Persianate background.⁸⁸ It has also been argued that the growing power of nearby Arcot—an offshoot of the Mughals—stimulated the use of Persianate dress in Ramnad.⁸⁹ Another study points to influences from Muslim merchants in Ramnad itself. Their strong presence at court helped it assume certain Persianate overtones (here referred to as “sultanist”), particularly with respect to political and military organisation.⁹⁰ These different explanations do not exclude each other, nor do they contradict the idea that Vijayanagara passed its adopted Persianate conventions onto its heirs, including Ramnad.

A substantial and diverse corpus of sources deals with the titles and clothing of Ramnad’s Setupatis. Many titles are found in a set of Tamil inscriptions, mostly in the Ramanathasvami Temple on Rameshvaram island, published in full.⁹¹ Dating from the dynasty’s foundation in the early 1600s until the nineteenth century, these texts contain long strings of frequently occurring titles, which make grandiose statements. Also figuring in Ramnad’s origin myths,⁹² some titles claim a past dominance over areas outside the kingdom. The Setupatis are labelled “establishers [*sthāpanācārya*] of the Pandya and Chola mandalams” (Madurai and Tanjavur), who “destroyed Ila and Yalpana” (Ceylon and Jaffna). Also, they “protect the dignity of Madurai” and are *aśvapati*, *gajapati*, *narapati*, and *cētipati* (Setupati) all in one. The first three of those titles—meaning lord of horses, elephants, and men—were associated with the rulers of Delhi, Orissa, and Vijayanagara respectively.⁹³

That the Setupatis developed a taste for prestigious designations from early on, is suggested by a Dutch comment from 1675, when the dynasty was supposedly still subordinate to the Nayakas of Madurai:

⁸⁸ Nagaswamy, “Mughal Cultural Influence,” 208-10.

⁸⁹ Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 245.

⁹⁰ Shulman and Subrahmanyam, “Prince of Poets and Ports,” *passim*, in particular 505.

⁹¹ Burgess and Naṭeśa Śāstrī, *Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 56-111. For Tamil transcriptions of all or most copper-plate inscriptions issued by the Setupatis, see S. Raju (ed.), *Cētipati Ceppēṭukaḷ* (Tanjavur, 1994).

⁹² BL/AAS, MG, no. 4, pt. 8: “A general history of the kings of Rama Naad or the Satoo-Putty Samastanum,” ff. 174-5, 182-3, 185. See also Seshadri, “The Sētipatis of Ramnad,” 229-30, and Chapter 1.

⁹³ For these three titles, see for instance: Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 60-3, 110, 116, 122; Sinopoli, “From the Lion Throne,” 380-1; Narasimhaswami, *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. XVI, vii-iii; and Chapter 6.

... [the Setupati has] arrogated the highest honorary titles [*hoogste eertitulen*] of the great Neijck of Madure, who has taken this to heart so much that the Madurese Neijck ... has laid down all the same honorary titles, resolving with sworn intentions not to accept those again before he will have forced the Teuver [Setupati] to lay those down again ...⁹⁴

The inscriptions also demonstrate the Setupatis' ambitions in more direct terms, such as "emperor of the great world," "king of kings," "lord of the four seas," and "supreme king." Some designations reflect conflicts with Muslim-ruled states, as in "destroyer of the army of the Tulukkas [Turks]" and "putting down the pride and prosperity of the valorous and inimical Yavana [Muslim] kings." Other Setupati titles consist of standard honorific elements used by other dynasties as well—like *śrīmat*, *ayyan*, and *vāru*—or denote military achievements, religious endowments, benevolent governance, patronage of artists and scholars, material possessions, sexual capacities, and so on. A particularly lyrical instance of the two latter qualities is the title "he who is of such a fair face that to his garden, which contains rich goldmines not deficient in their produce to the great and charitable mountain Meru, come young females with beautiful foreheads to write love poems."⁹⁵

In treaties and letters exchanged with the Dutch, too, the Setupatis' designations stand out for their length, although the terms commonly found in these documents for most dynasties are lacking here, apart from *śrīmat*. An example is a letter from Kattaya Tevar, whose names and titles the Dutch rendered as "Irenia Kitpe Aresie Rawikoele Seegere Coemare Moettoe Wieseje Regoenaden Sedoepadie Katta Theuver."⁹⁶ The first three words are likely corruptions of the Tamil terms *yiraṇiya kerpayāṭi*, better known in their Sanskrit form *hiraṇyagarbhayāṭi*, signifying the royal ceremony of symbolic rebirth through a golden cow womb. Increasingly often used by the Setupatis in both their correspondence and their inscriptions, this was

⁹⁴ NA, HRB, no. 542 (unpaginated, 1st document, c. halfway, section "Teuverslant"): description of Ceylon, Madurai, south Coromandel, Malabar, and Kanara by Rijcklof van Goens, Sept. 1675 (translation mine). See also Vink, "Encounters on the Opposite Coast," 294.

⁹⁵ For examples, see: Burgess and Naṭeśa Śāstrī, *Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 64, 66, 70-2, 74, 77, 80, 82-3, 85, 91-2, 94, 97, 99-100, 102, 104-5; *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol. V, pt. I, ed. A.S. Ramanatha Ayyar (Trivandrum, 1924), 7-18; Seshadri, "The Sēṭupatis of Ramnad," 38, 40, 45, 47, 55, 71, 228-36; S.D. Nellai Nedumaran and S. Ramachandran, "Ancient Tamil Monarchy and the Sēṭupati Kings," *Studies in Indian Epigraphy (Bhāratiya Purābhilēkha Patrikā)* XXVI (2000); Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 357; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 348-9; Sewell, *List of Inscriptions*, 4. Long or ambitious titles appear to be lacking on Setupati coins, which generally just mention the dynasty's or kingdom's name. See: Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, pt. II, 224-5; Tracy, "On the Coins of the Sethupatis [Sethupati Coins]," 9-10.

⁹⁶ NA, VOC, no. 2308, f. 2076: document from 1734.

apparently considered a very important title.⁹⁷ The words “Rawikoele Seegere” are no doubt a Dutch corruption of *ravikulāśēkharan*, a common Setupati designation, meaning “crest jewel of the solar race.” While the next four elements are regal names used by most of Ramnad’s rulers—Kumara, Muttu, Vijaya, Raghunatha—the last three terms refer to the main dynastic and caste titles, *cētopati* (Setupati), *kāṭṭa* (protector), and *tēvar* (god).⁹⁸

The Setupatis’ clothing can be relatively well studied in VOC records since three embassy reports contain relevant details. During the first of these missions, in November 1736, Wouter Trek was delegated to Sivakumara Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati.⁹⁹ Having arrived at the palace gate for his first audience, Trek was brought inside. As he wrote:

... [I] was guided before the young king, who sat, dressed in a Moorish way [*op zijn Moors gekleed*] and decked with some jewels, on a large outspread alcatijf [*carpet*], accompanied by his courtiers. As I approached, I greeted His Excellency in the Hollanders’ manner, who responded to me in the Moorish way [*op de Moorse wijze*] and signalled with the hand to sit down ...¹⁰⁰

At the end of this public meeting, Trek was covered with a cloak (“sadre”)¹⁰¹ woven of silk and gold. Considering this ritual and the king’s greeting, in Ramnad etiquette

⁹⁷ For a reference to the ceremony in Ramnad’s palace murals, see Verghese, “King and Courtly Life,” 481.

⁹⁸ NA, VOC, no. 1274, f. 206; no. 1302, f. 613; no. 1865, ff. 869, 877, 882, 894; no. 2046, f. 762; no. 2185, f. 1053v; no. 2224, ff. 1629-9v; no. 2337, f. 1580; no. 2621, f. 2196; documents from 1670, 1674, 1715, 1725, 1731, 1735, 1744; Heeres and Stapel, *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, vol. 2, 161, 518, vol. 3, 370, vol. 4, 146, 149, 328, 333, vol. 5, 505, vol. 6, 239-40, 310; *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol. V, pt. I, 8. See also Nagaswamy, “Mughal Cultural Influence,” 203. For the Setupatis’ performance and title of *hiranyagarbha*, see also: Seshadri, “The Sētopatis of Ramnad,” 45, 47, 72, 82, 233-4; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 355-6, 358, 361, 365-7, 369; Jayanta Bhattacharya, “The Rite of Hiranyagarbha: Ritual Rebirth for Social Acceptance” (unpublished paper, n.d. [c. 2021?]), 13. For its celebration by the Nayakas of Tanjavur, see: Saulier, “Madurai and Tanjore,” 787; Bhattacharya, “The Rite of Hiranyagarbha,” 13, 22; Chandler, *History of the Jesuit Mission in Madura*, 6. See also the account in Niccolao Manucci’s *Storia do Mogor*, vol. III, 274-5, which may concern Tanjavur—rather than Travancore, as the work’s editor suggests—considering the fact the ceremony’s performer is called “the victorious,” possibly a translation of Vijayaraghava, the Nayaka of Tanjavur at that time. For analyses of the ceremony, see Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 66-8; Bhattacharya, “The Rite of Hiranyagarbha.”

⁹⁹ For documents concerning this mission, see NA, VOC, no. 2374, ff. 2041-76v.

¹⁰⁰ NA, VOC, no. 2374, f. 2056; diary of mission to Ramnad, Nov. 1736 (translation mine).

¹⁰¹ This may be a corruption of *cāḍor* (mantle). See Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 217-18.

as well as dress was influenced by Persianate—or what was called “Moorish”—conventions in this period.¹⁰²

In June–July 1743, the VOC sent another embassy to this ruler.¹⁰³ For their first audience, envoys Johannes Krijtsman and Francois Danens were received at the palace gates by courtiers and escorted inside the complex, where they, according to the mission’s diary:

... were brought before the young king, who was dressed in a heathen way [*op zijn heijdens gekleet*], having a white turban on the head and further a white muslin [*“bethieljes”*] cloth with golden borders hanging over the shoulders, having a large sword [*houwer*] clasped with gold lying before him, being seated on an old outspread alcatijff [carpet], surrounded by some bodyguards ... [and] prominent princes and court notables ...¹⁰⁴

This passage might surprise us. Only seven years after Trek’s embassy to the same Setupati, then appearing in “Moorish” attire, this ruler now wore “heathen” clothes at a public audience. Although “heathen” is a somewhat ambiguous term, it seems the Dutch envoys indicated that the king was dressed in traditional local garments, apparently not following Persianate conventions. The reference to the cloth around the Setupati’s shoulders further suggests he was bare-chested. At the following audience, the envoys’ observations were largely similar:

... the king, whom we found sitting in that same appearance [*postuur*] as the first time, having a large, round, and long white cushion lying behind his back, that was certainly grubby and dirty [*morsig en vuijl*] but not in the least regal ...¹⁰⁵

Whether the scene really lacked royal dignity or not, this description implies that the Setupati’s dress style at the first meeting was not a one-time event. During both public audiences in 1743 Sivakumara Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha appeared in what the Dutch considered “heathen” attire, together with a large, costly sword.

Finally, in June–July 1759 Joan Richard François and Johan Hendrik Medeler were delegated to the Setupati Sella Tevar.¹⁰⁶ Being welcomed at the palace by courtiers, the ambassadors entered a square where in a pavilion:

¹⁰² NA, VOC, no. 2374, ff. 2058v–9, 2066–70v; diary of mission to Ramnad, Nov. 1736.

¹⁰³ For papers regarding this embassy, see NA, VOC, no. 2599, ff. 2107–62v.

¹⁰⁴ NA, VOC, no. 2599, ff. 2135v–6: diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1743 (translation mine).

¹⁰⁵ NA, VOC, no. 2599, f. 2152v: diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1743 (translation mine).

¹⁰⁶ For documents concerning this mission, see NA, VOC, no. 2956, ff. 1198–269.

... sat the Theuver [Tear, the Setupati], leaning with the back on a round thick cushion, the head covered with a turban in the Marruasse [Maravar] way, and hanging around the shoulders a fine muslin [*neteldoek*] with golden borders, his largest jewel being two costly pendants in the ears, and just flaunting a large golden betel box [?] and similar spittoons [*quispidors*] ...¹⁰⁷

Although the term “heathen” was not used now, it seems Sella appeared in public in the same kind of dress as his predecessor sixteen years before. Again, a piece of muslin lay around his shoulders, probably leaving parts of his chest and arms exposed, while his turban was allegedly tied in “Maravar” fashion, referring to the Setupatis’ caste and thus denoting a local style. Jewels and golden objects also were part of the king’s display once more.

The next evening, invited to watch fireworks, the envoys met the Setupati again. His clothing style at this public event, with thousands of people, is harder to typify, since he was:

... graciously dressed up in a Pattanijs [Pathan] robe, the head covered with a beautiful turban of golden cloth, two singular pendants hung in the ears, being two pompous emeralds of reasonable size, and decorated around the neck and arms with broad, flat, and heavy gold necklaces. Beside lay a costly golden sword and belly-dagger [*buiksteker* (*katāra?*)], the latter encrusted with gemstones, which he, one after the other, took in his hand to show all the better a costly large ring on the little finger of his right hand, which he turned around several times ...¹⁰⁸

It is uncertain what kind of turban Sella was wearing now, but his robe is described as Pathan, a term one would associate with Afghan or more generally Persianate dress.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ NA, VOC, no. 2956, ff. 1234v-5: diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1759 (translation mine).

¹⁰⁸ NA, VOC, no. 2956, f. 1241v: diary of mission to Ramnad, July 1759 (translation mine).

¹⁰⁹ The VOC often referred to Pathans, or Afghans in general, as “Patanders,” while “Pattanijs,” usually indicated textiles or other matters related to the north Indian town of Patna. See Gommans, Bes, and Kruijtzter, *Dutch Sources on South Asia*, vol. 1, 398, 402. “Pattanijs” may also have denoted cloths destined for Pattani on the Malay peninsula or deriving from Patan in Gujarat (for which suggestions I thank an anonymous reviewer and Anna Seastrand). But following this mention of “Pattanijs,” the diary’s next page speaks of a “distinguished Pattanij armed with shield and sword,” sitting close the king (see Chapter 4). This almost certainly refers to an Afghan or at least a north Indian Muslim, so I believe that here the term “Pattanijs” used for the Setupati’s robe has an Islamic connotation. In many other sources, words like “Patanes” were also used to denote Afghans. See Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 746-7.

These various Dutch descriptions, over a period of almost twenty-five years, suggest certain developments. On public occasions, the Setupatis initially used what seem to have been Persianate garments and etiquette, albeit sporting turbans instead of *kullāyi* caps. In the following decades, the dress style changed into what the Dutch labelled as “heathen” clothing and Maravar-style turbans. Nevertheless, it appears that Persianate dress was not entirely abandoned, the Setupatis still wearing such attire during public festivities. At the same time, other aspects of royal representation remained important, including expensive jewellery and valuable weaponry, which were prominently displayed.

Local portrayals of the Setupatis’ clothing are found both in their palace and in temples. The latter depictions have much in common with temple sculptures of the Nayakas of Madurai and Tanjavur. Thus, Setupati statues, for instance in the Ramanathasvami Temple at Rameshvaram, include long tunics, bare chests, turbans, jewels, and weapons, all in various combinations. Only caps appear to be entirely non-existent in this dynasty’s case.¹¹⁰

Great variety is also encountered among paintings in the palace complex at Ramanathapuram, probably constructed from the mid-seventeenth century onward.¹¹¹ The palace’s building that includes the audience hall contains a remarkable collection of murals. Known as the Ramalinga Vilasam, this structure was likely built in the late seventeenth century by the Setupati Kilavan Tevar. His successor Tiru Udaya Tevar—better known under his regal name Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha—is credited with commissioning the paintings that adorn the inner walls and ceilings. Arranged in different sections, these show military and political events, Hindu deities, and court life. Murals were executed in several south-east Indian palaces, but those in Ramnad may be the only surviving paintings at such a location that predate the nineteenth century.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Sethuraman, *Ramesvaram Temple*, 190-2; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 76 (fig. 34), 84; T.G. Aravamuthan, *South Indian Portraits in Stone and Metal* (London, 1930), 80; Branfoot, “Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple,” 32-3 (fig. 21); idem, “Heroic Rulers and Devoted Servants,” 180-1 (fig. 7.5); R. Nagaswamy and N.S. Ramaswami, *Ramanathapuram District: An Archaeological Guide* (Ramanathapuram, 1979), between 92-3. See also Ramaswami, “Portrait Sculptures,” 80.

¹¹¹ For a description of the palace complex in 1772 by a Dutchman visiting it while Ramnad was occupied by Arcot and the Nawab’s son stayed in the palace, see NA, VOC, no. 3349, ff. 733v-4: diary of mission to Arcot-occupied Ramnad, Dec. 1772. For a British map of Ramanathapuram and the palace complex from the same year, see BL/AAS, OOV, no. 333, pt. 34: “Plan of Ramanadaparam stormed June 2nd 1772 by the army under General Smith,” f. 138.

¹¹² Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 83, 92-3; Nagaswamy, “Mughal Cultural Influence,” 203-4; Branfoot, “Heroic Rulers and Devoted Servants,” 177-9; Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 220, 244, 274. For online images of the Ramalinga Vilasam’s murals, see: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/ramanathapuram. In addition, the audience hall of Tanjavur’s Bhonsles

Upon entering the Ramalinga Vilasam's first and largest hall, the murals come into view. On the left-hand (south-eastern and southern) side, a group of painted battle scenes indicate when the images were made, as a Tamil text underneath declares the depicted battle was fought between the Setupati Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha and Tanjavur's King Sarabhoji Bhonsle.¹¹³ Therefore, the paintings probably represent a war waged between Ramnad and Tanjavur in 1715. Even though the latter kingdom was supported by the Danes, the Setupati claimed to be victorious, writing to the VOC that he had slaughtered Tanjavur's commanders—a feat certainly worthy of commemoration on the palace walls.¹¹⁴ If the murals indeed show this battle, they date from between 1715 and 1725, the period between the war and Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha's death.¹¹⁵

A few steps further along the Ramalinga Vilasam's south wall is another set of murals. These depict audiences granted by the Setupati, probably Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha as well, to courtiers and other dignitaries (see illustration 13 in Chapter 4).¹¹⁶ In one of the paintings, the king, with a queen behind him, sits on a chair and converses with three European officers, likely envoys of a European power present in the region (see illustration 18). As in the other murals in this group,

contains several statues depicting court scenes (including Europeans), believed to date from the start of Shahaji I's reign (mid-1680s). See Josefine Baark, "Decorum: Courtly Posturing in the Visual Economy of Indo-Danish Diplomacy," in Annamaria Motrescu-Mayes and Marcus Banks (eds), *Visual Histories of South Asia* (New Delhi, 2018).

¹¹³ Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 93-5, 176, 184-5; Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence," 204. The latter reference includes a translation of the text. For reproductions of the battle scenes, see Howes, plates 3-11 (between 112-13).

¹¹⁴ For Dutch documents concerning this war, see NA, VOC, no. 1865, ff. 867-97v, in particular f. 878.

¹¹⁵ It has earlier been concluded that the paintings depict a war around 1720 and were created shortly afterwards. See: Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence," 204; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 93-5. But as explained in Chapter 2, the war this conclusion refers to—which enthroned Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha's successor Bhavani Sankara after the former's passing—actually took place in 1725. Since Bhavani Sankara had already contested Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha's accession to the throne in 1710, it is unlikely he commissioned paintings showing his competitor when he had finally become king himself. Moreover, having secured the throne with the help of Tanjavur, Bhavani Sankara would not regard this assistance as a war and depict it as such in the palace. For these reasons, the suggestion that the murals mentioning Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha were painted soon after his death is improbable too. For references dating the Ramnad-Tanjavur war before Bhavani Sankara's enthronement to 1720, see: Seshadri, "The Sētopatis of Ramnad," 82, 87-8; Kadhivrel, *A History of the Maravas*, 55-9; Subramanian, *The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore*, 37.

¹¹⁶ Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 96, 176; Vergheze, "King and Courtly Life," 478. For reproductions of some of the murals depicting audiences, see: Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 98 and plate 12 (between 112-13); Vergheze, "King and Courtly Life," 478 (fig. 34.2); Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence," 210 (fig. 13).



Illustration 18: Mural depicting Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati of Ramnad receiving European envoys, Ramalinga Vilasam (main hall, south wall), Ramanathapuram, c. 1720 (photo by the author).

the Setupati wears a long, whitish garment fully covering his body and seemingly worked with gold, an elaborate turban, some sort of shawl, and profuse jewellery. In his left hand, he probably holds a jewelled *katāra* (Indian dagger with the hilt attached crosswise to the blade). The object in his right hand may be a sceptre (*cenkōl*) in the form of a stylised bouquet.¹¹⁷ The queen carries a small human figure (clothed in a long garment and a turban too) that likely represents an infant prince.¹¹⁸

Seated to the Setupati's right (left on the image), the Europeans are dressed in European clothes: single-colour, hip-length buttoned coats with braiding, white trousers, black hats, and black closed shoes. The middle envoy holds an object in his right hand that is not clearly visible due to the mural's weathering. All adults sit on European-style chairs, with the royal couple's feet resting on cushions.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See Hurpré, "The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka," 69.

¹¹⁸ A small human figure depicted elsewhere in the Ramalinga Vilasam is thought to represent the crown prince. See Seastrand, "Praise, Politics, and Language," 73, 300 (fig. 45), 350 (fig. 117).

¹¹⁹ I thank Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, Jennifer Howes, Phillip Wagoner, Jos Gommans, Marie Favereau, Liesbeth Gevers, Kim Ragetli, and Gijs Kruijtzter for helping me interpret the murals discussed here and below. Notwithstanding, I alone remain responsible for the assumptions presented here. This particular mural is also reproduced in Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, fig. 16 (facing 173), where it is said to represent a negotiation over a pearl fishery (the source of which is not given). For an entirely different interpretation of this painting, see J.L.W., "Chronicles of the Marava Country," 128.

The Setupati's dress in this mural is largely similar to the Persianate attire of the Nayaka in the textile painting discussed in this chapter's Vijayanagara section. Both monarchs wear long tunics and turbans, although the Setupati's clothes are white instead of coloured, while his turban is tied in a different way, somewhat similar to a style associated with the Marathas.¹²⁰ Thus, the Setupati here adhered at least partially to a Persianate dress code, like his former overlord, the Nayaka of Madurai.¹²¹ That is consistent with the idea that Persianate clothing was expected on public occasions, like a meeting with foreign ambassadors, even if these were Europeans.

Further into the Ramalinga Vilasam's main hall are murals depicting Hindu deities, followed by a few steps leading to a much smaller second room with more Hindu images.¹²² Next, a middle-sized, again slightly raised third space—the lower floor's back room—is filled with columns joined by painted arches. These show the Setupati involved in court duties and leisure activities, and include a Tamil text that identifies him as Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha again and another figure as Madurai's contemporary ruler, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka. Both kings wear what looks like Persianate dress.¹²³

Located near the Ramalinga Vilasam's back wall, at the furthest possible distance from the building's entrance, one arch painting depicts the Setupati once more as he receives three European envoys (see illustration 19). Yet, this image is strikingly different from the mural in the first room that also shows a meeting with Europeans. Rather than sitting in a chair, the king is seated cross-legged on a small platform raised a few inches above the ground and covered with cloth. Leaning against a large cushion, with his left hand the Setupati probably greets his visitors or signals them to speak. In his right hand, he carries what is likely a jewelled *katāra* again. Behind him stand two courtiers, one of whom appears to hold a sword in its sheath, while the other keeps an object that is difficult to identify but may be a medium for text, perhaps a book, tablet, or copper plate. To the Setupati's left (right on the image), the Europeans stand rather than sit, the first two bowing slightly forward. The envoy in front has taken off his hat and salutes the king, while the second one seems to present him a gift.

¹²⁰ I thank Indira Peterson for discussing this resemblance. For pictures of Maratha turbans in Bhonsle Tanjavur, see: Jaya Appasamy, *Tanjavur Painting of the Maratha Period* (New Delhi, 1980), plate 14 (between 44-5); Peterson, "Portraiture at the Tanjore Maratha Court," 47 (fig. 2); Nanditha Krishna, *Painted Manuscripts of the Sarasvati Mahal Library* (Tanjavur, 2011), 11 (fig. 3).

¹²¹ See also: Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 96; Verghese, "King and Courtly Life," 478.

¹²² Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 96-106.

¹²³ Verghese, "King and Courtly Life," 480-2 (fig. 34.6); Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 106 and fig. 46 (between 100-1); Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence," 204. The last reference gives a transliteration and translation of the Tamil text. See also Chapter 6.



Illustration 19: Mural depicting Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati of Ramnad receiving European envoys, Ramalinga Vilasam (back room, arches), Ramanathapuram, c. 1720 (photo by the author).

In terms of dress, the difference between the murals is also remarkable. Instead of long garments, the Setupati, and his courtiers, wear white *dhotis* (cloths wrapped around the waist and legs) with ornamental bands or red borders—together with small black turbans and jewels—leaving their chests, arms, shoulders, and lower legs exposed. A multi-stranded thread is loosely wrapped around the king's torso, probably representing the *upavita* (consecrated cord worn by adult male members of higher castes).

The clothing of the Europeans also greatly differs from their attire in the first image. They are all dressed in knee-length, multi-coloured tunics with floral patterns, coloured trousers, and coloured open shoes, and the first two wear short-sleeved clothes over long-sleeved ones. Only the black hats are similar to those in the other mural. Further, most men, Indian and European, sport beards in various stages of growth. In contrast, although hard to see, none of the men in the first painting shows any trace of a beard.

Judging from the Indic dress portrayed here, this scene depicts an occasion associated with the domestic rather than the public domain. This may surprise us, considering the idea that public events, such as diplomatic meetings, required Persianate clothing. While the first audience mural in the Ramalinga Vilasam fits that notion, this second painting, in the same building, shows the Setupati granting an audience in traditional dress. How can this disparity be explained? Were the murals executed in different periods? Do their separate locations mean they are unrelated and should not be compared? Were they created by artists with different ideas about royal representation?

These questions do not seem to provide more insight. Each mural belongs to a clearly demarcated and internally related section of images. Based on textual evidence, both these sections are linked to the reign of Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha,

so it is unlikely that the murals were created more than about a decade apart. Moreover, the various groups of paintings are thought to be closely related. They have been arranged in a specific sequence so as to present a thematic progression, suggesting all murals are part of a single programme. Therefore, the dissimilarities between the two audience images were caused neither by a difference in time nor by independently operating painters.

The fact the murals are found in separate locations does not yield a wholly satisfactory explanation either. The paintings are organised in themes representing multiple facets of south Indian kingship and associated with various degrees of “interiority” or “exteriority.” As explained, these two complementary social realms, observed in literature and architecture, were related to the distinction between domestic and public occasions. In the Ramalinga Vilasam, the groups of paintings depicting exterior or public events—for instance battles and audiences—are situated in the large, first room, near the entrance, obviously the structure’s most exterior and public section. If one moves further into the building, the spaces become progressively more interior and domestic, as do the scenes in the murals. Eventually, one reaches the sole room on the upper floor where paintings show the Setupati engaged in erotic pleasures, clearly the Ramalinga Vilasam’s most interior and domestic section.¹²⁴

The audience hosted by the king in traditional, Indic dress is depicted near the back wall of the lower floor’s third room—a relatively interior, domestic section of the building or at least a kind of transitional zone between the two social spheres. While images of Hindu deities adorn this room’s walls, several paintings on the two dozen arches show domestic scenes, including courtesans, amorous encounters, the Setupati meeting his tutelary goddess Rajarajeshvari, and him listening to the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic. Some arches portray the ruler in Indic style. Hence, it makes sense that in the audience mural in this room the Setupati wears Indic clothing too. But then other arch paintings here present him in Persianate attire, making one wonder why this audience mural does not show him in such dress.¹²⁵

The question thus remains of why a supposedly public event like the reception of foreign envoys was depicted in a comparatively interior space, with the king foregoing the Persianate dress code for diplomatic events—especially because another image depicting a similar scene was placed in a very public location, with the king appropriately dressed for the occasion. Perhaps a clue to the answer lies in the identity of the envoys in the images.

¹²⁴ Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, ch. 4; Verghese, “King and Courtly Life,” 481-2.

¹²⁵ Nagaswamy, “Mughal Cultural Influence,” 204-7, 210; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 102-7; Verghese, “King and Courtly Life,” 482; and personal observation (Apr. 2012).

It is impossible to say whom the artists had in mind when they painted those European figures. The texts accompanying the murals are silent on this and there are no other contemporary sources on the paintings. But it seems logical that the painters modelled these foreigners on the nearest available examples. It has variously been suggested that the Europeans represent Jesuits, or perhaps Frenchmen or Dutchmen.¹²⁶ However, during the rule of Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha, when the paintings were produced, only the VOC maintained a permanent presence in Ramnad. By the time this Setupati ascended the throne in 1710, the Dutch had been the only resident Europeans in the kingdom for two decades.¹²⁷ Since 1690 they had been living in Kilakkarai, only a few hours' travel from the capital.¹²⁸ Therefore, when the murals were created, the Dutch—unlike other Europeans—had long been familiar faces, staying near the court and appearing there regularly on diplomatic missions.

The court's close links with the Dutch are also suggested by another European figure depicted in the Ramalinga Vilasam. The scenes of the battle between Ramnad and Tanjavur (see illustration 20) include a European soldier, dressed in a green-blue suit, black footwear, and a white hat, fighting on the Setupati's side and manning a cannon on wheels. It has been proposed that he is Dutch because Ramnad often asked the VOC for military assistance, although usually in vain.¹²⁹ Like Madurai, it was impressed by Dutch military skills, defence works, and

¹²⁶ Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence," 208; Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 245; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 96; Verghese, "King and Courtly Life," 476-8.

¹²⁷ The Portuguese were expelled by the Dutch around 1658, and the French probably never settled in Ramnad, certainly not during Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha's reign. Jesuit presence seems to have been marginal in this period. In 1693, the Setupati Kilavan Tevar banished their order and had one Jesuit, John de Britto, beheaded after their mission made converts even within the royal family. Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha grew hostile towards them, too, making it unlikely he had them portrayed in his audience hall. Published Jesuit letters from the eighteenth century's early decades also suggest their activities were limited then, containing few references other than to the Setupati's oppression of Christians. The Danes, although based in neighbouring Tanjavur, never resided in Ramnad either, and the British only became active in the kingdom in the late 1750s. Further, Dutch sources from Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha's period do not mention a substantial presence of other Europeans in Ramnad, which they certainly would have done had these competitors gained a foothold here. See also: Arasaratnam, "Commercial Policies of the Sethupathis of Ramanathapuram," 251-2; Schwartzberg, *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, 50; Seshadri, "The Sētopathis of Ramnad," 63-9, 74-5, 83-4, 106; Kadhivel, *A History of the Maravas*, 39-44; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 398-403; *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, vols X-XV, *Mémoires des Indes* (Paris, 1781), vol. X, 3-35, vol. XII, 372-87.

¹²⁸ Bes, "The Setupathis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits," 550-1.

¹²⁹ Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 95. The soldier has also been identified as British, which seems unlikely as the British appeared in Ramnad only several decades later. See Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 245.



Illustration 20: Mural showing a battle between Ramnad and Tanjavur, including a European soldier, Ramalinga Vilasam (main hall, south-east wall), Ramanathapuram, c. 1720 (photo by the author).

weaponry.¹³⁰ Indeed, during a VOC mission to Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha himself in 1724, he asked the envoys whether their soldiers were capable of manning cannon.¹³¹ It is therefore likely that the European portrayed in the battle scene is a Dutchman.¹³²

Considering the long-lasting, strong, and unrivalled Dutch presence in Ramnad and the probable identity of the European soldier in the battle mural, the Europeans in the audience paintings probably represent envoys of the VOC. Consequently, we

¹³⁰ There are many instances of requests by Ramnad and Madurai for Dutch military support and of their admiration for Dutch military skills and equipment. See: NA, VOC, no. 1324, ff. 212-12v; no. 1491, f. 596; no. 1508, ff. 214v-15; no. 1865, ff. 869-70, 879, 883, 897v; no. 1941, ff. 941-1v; no. 2374, ff. 2056-6v; no. 2599, ff. 2137-7v; no. 2956, ff. 1261-1v: correspondence, muster rolls, mission reports, and diary extracts concerning the reception of courtiers, 1677, 1691-2, 1715, 1720, 1736, 1743, 1759; Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 68-9, 215-16; idem, "Encounters on the Opposite Coast," 265; Arasaratnam, "The Politics of Commerce," 9-10. For such requests by Bhonsle-ruled Tanjavur, see NA, VOC, no. 1633, f. 128; no. 2387, f. 93; no. 2764, ff. 62-3: letters from Nagapattinam to Pulicat and Batavia, Oct. 1700, Sept. 1736, Nagapattinam proceedings, Oct. 1749. For a similar request by Mysore, see NA, VOC, no. 8985, f. 116: report of mission to Mysore, Feb. 1681. For Ikkeri's interest in Dutch military skills, see NA, VOC, no. 2354, ff. 1545-6: diary of mission to Ikkeri, Feb. 1735.

¹³¹ NA, VOC, no. 2015, ff. 671-2: diary of mission to Ramnad, Apr. 1724.

¹³² Another factor brought up to underscore the soldier's likely Dutch identity is his light hair. See Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 95. If hair colour may serve as a means of identification, this underscores the assumption that the Europeans depicted on the audience murals are Dutch too. In the first mural (illustration 18), the envoys' hair colour is nondescript or at best greyish. But the second mural (illustration 19) clearly portrays them with blond or reddish hair, which might favour a Dutch background over a Portuguese or French one.

may ask whether the Dutch themselves wrote about audiences with the Setupati of a “domestic” or private rather than public character. The VOC archives contain only one report of an embassy to Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha, the ruler responsible for the murals’ execution.¹³³ This mission lasted from February to May 1724, when the king held court in the northern frontier town Arantangi, probably to defend himself against the imminent Tanjavur-backed invasion by his competitor Bhavani Shankara. But the following April, still or again residing at Arantangi, the Setupati passed away.¹³⁴ It is unlikely he commissioned the Ramalinga Vilasam paintings in the period of less than a year between the Dutch embassy and his death, during which he seems to have been largely absent from the capital. The murals were most probably painted before 1724 and therefore this VOC report appears to be irrelevant. Moreover, this account does not refer to any meeting with the Setupati of a private, intimate nature.

The previous Dutch embassy to Ramnad was dispatched from May to July 1709, when Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha’s predecessor Kilavan Tevar still reigned.¹³⁵ While that seems too early, one of the mission’s audiences was rather unusual, as a summary of the report shows:

On 28 May, Cornelis Taaij and Barent Gast arrived in the capital Ramanathapuram, instructed to complain about recent violations of the Dutch-Ramnad treaty.¹³⁶ The following morning, consulting with courtiers about an appropriate moment for the first audience with Kilavan Tevar, the envoys received news that the seventy-year old and apparently blind and demented Setupati was more or less permanently drunk. Still, the next day Taaij and Gast were invited for an audience, and although they feared this would prove useless, they proceeded to the palace. On the way, six or seven messengers from the court, one after another, came to see the envoys, announcing the Setupati’s desire and impatience to meet them. But upon their arrival, they found Kilavan outside in the hot sun, blind drunk and causing great commotion, while nothing had been prepared to receive them. Exchanging courtesies and presenting gifts was virtually impossible, leaving the ambassadors with no choice but to return to their lodging. The subsequent days were also fruitless as more reports about the Setupati’s incessant drinking poured in and negotiations with Ramnad’s courtiers, said to control the court, led to nothing.¹³⁷

¹³³ See NA, VOC, no. 2015, ff. 544-702.

¹³⁴ See the Ramnad section in Chapter 2.

¹³⁵ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1470-595v.

¹³⁶ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1451-69: instructions for mission to Ramnad, May 1709. For examples of such violations, see Shulman and Subrahmanyam, “Prince of Poets and Ports,” 501-19, 534-5.

¹³⁷ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1491-500v: diary of mission to Ramnad, May-June 1709. Among the Dutch, Kilavan Tevar had a reputation for heavy drinking since at least the late 1670s. See NA, VOC, no. 1333, f. 28v: letter from Colombo to Batavia, June 1678.

In the early morning of 2 June, however, the envoys received a message from Kilavan, requesting them to come see him at that very moment. Taaij and Gast knew it was quiet in the palace at that hour, so this presented a rare opportunity to have a more private conversation with the king, without courtiers intervening. As the mission's diary goes, the envoys straightaway hurried to the court, and:

... having arrived there, His Excellency [Kilavan] let us [Taaij and Gast] know that we, without any retinue and only with the two of us, besides the interpreter, would stand inside, that from his side there would be nobody around either, which exceptionally good occasion we employed immediately and with just the both of us and the interpreter we went in front of His Excellency, who now sat inside a mandoetje [small "mandu," pavilion?] and was accompanied by no one but two of his children besides two, three wives ...¹³⁸

But Taaij and Gast had hardly sat down in front of Kilavan, who was sober now, when courtiers rushed in and took over the discussion. The remainder of the audience—and of the mission for that matter—was dominated by further cumbersome, unsatisfactory negotiations with the court, and the final audience was endlessly postponed.

But amidst their frustrations, the envoys received help from an unexpected corner. The son of a courtier called "Oeria Theuver" (as the Dutch spelled it) sent them some food gifts as well as advice on how to deal with the court and speed up the negotiations. As Taaij and Gast wrote, "Oeria Theuver" was a close blood relative of Kilavan, and his son was considered the Setupati's likely successor.¹³⁹ Taking the recommendations of the son of "Oeria Theuver" to heart, the envoys finally secured a second audience on 17 June—under the watchful eyes of dozens of courtiers—and returned home the same afternoon.¹⁴⁰

Kilavan died the following year and was succeeded by Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha, under whom the Ramalinga Vilasam's murals were produced. "Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha" being his regal name, before his accession to the throne he must have been known under his personal name, Tiru Udaya Tevar. Therefore, it seems that the local ally of the VOC envoys during their mission in 1709 was none other than Tiru Udaya Tevar alias Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati, the successor of Kilavan. As said, the envoys wrote that the son of "Oeria Theuver" was likely to be Kilavan's successor, since he and his father were close blood relatives of the Setupati. "Oeria

¹³⁸ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1500v-1: diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1709 (translation mine).

¹³⁹ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1480, 1529, 1531v, 1536v, 1563: report and diary of mission to Ramnad, July 1709, letter from Dutch envoys in Ramnad to Colombo, June 1709.

¹⁴⁰ NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1500v-35: diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1709.

Theuver” is obviously a Dutch corruption of “Udaya Tevar,”¹⁴¹ while *tiru* is a general honorific title in Tamil. Thus, the son of “Oeria Theuver”—who may well have borne a similar name—was most probably the same person as Tiru Udaya Tevar, the future King Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha.¹⁴² He was indeed closely related to Kilavan, being in all probability his nephew, and, as the Dutch reported, married one of his daughters moments before the old Setupati passed away.¹⁴³

In short, the somewhat confusing but most likely scenario is as follows. The “Oeria Theuver” mentioned by the Dutch was in fact named (Tiru) Udaya Tevar, and so was his son. Udaya junior, who supported the VOC envoys in 1709, was a nephew of Kilavan, as his father Udaya senior was Kilavan’s brother-in-law. Upon Kilavan’s death in 1710, Udaya junior became the new Setupati under his regal name Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha.

If this identification is correct, the king who commissioned the murals portraying the Dutch had already favoured them during their embassy in the last regnal year of his predecessor. This assumption is supported by the fact that during the mission to Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha himself in 1724, he complained to the Dutch ambassadors about their limited powers, saying the previous envoys, Taaij and Gast, had been more qualified, which suggests he clearly recalled their visit fifteen years earlier.¹⁴⁴ In any case, as an important courtier, Tiru Udaya Tevar alias Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha is likely to have been present when Taaij and Gast had their early morning private audience with Kilavan. Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha may well have been one of the Setupati’s attending “children” mentioned in the VOC report of 1709. Alternatively, he could have been one of the courtiers who soon rushed in.

Thus, Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha would have remembered this intimate (not to say “domestic”) meeting between the Setupati family and the VOC envoys, however brief. To commemorate this exceptional occasion, he may have wished to depict it in the back room in the Ramalinga Vilasam’s interior. It is then not illogical that the Setupati in that image (perhaps an amalgam of Kilavan and Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha) was represented in Indic attire. After all, this mural was probably

¹⁴¹ The letter combination of “oe” in Dutch sounds similar to letters transliterated as “u” in Tamil and other Indian languages.

¹⁴² The Dutch sources are slightly confusing in this respect. They declare that the son of “Oeria Theuver” would in all probability succeed Kilavan Tevar, but also state that when the latter fell ill soon after the Dutch mission in 1709, “Oeria Theuver” was rumoured to have been summoned to the court and nominated to ascend the throne himself. This seems to imply that the son of “Oeria Theuver” bore the same name as his father, but it may also be that “Oeria Theuver” senior was selected as the new Setupati at that particular moment. See respectively NA, VOC, no. 1771, ff. 1563, 1536v; letter from envoys in Ramnad to Colombo, diary of mission to Ramnad, June 1709.

¹⁴³ See the Ramnad section in Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁴ NA, VOC, no. 2015, f. 639; diary of mission to Ramnad, Apr. 1724.

not meant to show a public event or be seen by people from beyond the king's domestic domain. To refer to the public audiences normally granted to the Dutch, and adhering to the convention of portraying kings in Persianate dress on such occasions, Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha may have had the other audience mural placed in a public, exterior location near the building's entrance.

Obviously, one can merely guess why an audience with the Setupati in Indic dress was included in the Ramalinga Vilasam's murals. But there might be a connection between that image, the small-scale, family-style audience granted by Kilavan to the Dutch, and the role of the future Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha during that mission. However, such a link does not easily explain all there is to see in the audience paintings. To begin with, the mural in the back room depicts the Setupati in traditional clothing while he is escorted by courtiers carrying a weapon and writing material. One would associate these objects with warfare and administration rather than close relatives, leisure, and residential areas. But these men of the sword and the pen may have signified that even though this audience started as a private occasion, political and mercantile matters would be discussed, too. Also, the audience mural in the Ramalinga Vilasam's most public area portrays the Setupati in Persianate dress while he is accompanied by a spouse and a son. This aspect of the image appears to be a family affair par excellence, which would belong to the building's interior. But in this case, depicting a queen and a prince perhaps served to convince the public of a secure continuation of the Setupati dynasty.¹⁴⁵

Further, the difference between the clothing styles of the Europeans in the two murals might be explained in quite a mundane way. The garments in the second painting seem to underscore the account of envoys Taaij and Gast saying they immediately left their lodging when requested to appear without delay for a private audience with the king. The regulations of the VOC stipulated that in public its employees were not to wear what was called "Moorish" attire but should appear in European clothes.¹⁴⁶ Such a specific ban implies that in unofficial settings they regularly dressed in Muslim-style clothing, covering the body and still suitable to the climate. Therefore, Taaij and Gast probably wore such dress when soon after dawn the Setupati's hurried call came in and they had no time to change into European garments. The audience's impromptu character and early hour perhaps also account for the bearded appearance of all the portrayed. Finally, this mural's depiction of the Europeans wearing short-sleeved tunics over long-sleeved ones may refer to the *khil'at* ceremony, regularly practised at the Ramnad court.

¹⁴⁵ It has also been suggested that the presence of a queen was auspicious. See Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 142-3.

¹⁴⁶ Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer and Gijs Kruijtzer, "Camping with the Mughal Emperor: A Golkonda Artist Portrays a Dutch Ambassador in 1689," *Arts of Asia* 35, 3 (2005), 58.

Together, the various sources—inscriptions, literary works, temple statues, palace murals, and Dutch records—suggest that in Ramnad influences from sultanate courts were limited to certain aspects. The Setupatis' titles seem to have been entirely devoid of Persianate terms. Their clothing, including turbans rather than *kullāyi* caps, could combine Persianate and Indic elements, which by the eighteenth century were apparently no longer strictly associated with public and domestic occasions respectively.

Conclusions

Comparing all courts, this section first discusses titles and next considers clothing. We start with the political or possibly even imperial ambitions titles represented. While Vijayanagara's heirs never seem to have formally asserted their independence from the empire, some titles refer to dominance over other rulers. These include rather inventive and poetic phrases like "he whose feet are illuminated by the jewels in the crowns of prostrated kings" (Ikkeri), and "champion over those who say they have such and such titles" (Mysore).¹⁴⁷ But it is doubtful if such expressions signified real imperial aspirations rather than competition with other houses.¹⁴⁸ The surveys above underscore that the Nayakas in the Tamil area (Tanjavur and Madurai) bore few titles, which were usually limited to honorary terms, designations granted by Vijayanagara, and administrative, religious, and scholarly claims. Ikkeri's Nayakas regularly used long strings of titles, but none of these point to imperial ambitions either.

Some inscriptions of Tanjavur's Bhonsles suggest they did harbour such aspirations, but literary works and their correspondence with European powers do not underline this. Ramnad's Setupatis made even more ambitious claims, even though they likely had the least exalted status among these dynasties. Not only did they use the largest number of titles, throughout their existence they were most outspoken in their imperial claims. This ties in with the image conveyed in their origin stories: a royal house that once had enjoyed a supreme status and now reclaimed its rightful place.

Only one other successor dynasty surpassed the Setupatis in this respect: the Wodeyars of Mysore. From at least the early seventeenth century onward—while Vijayanagara's power was waning—they were regularly designated as "supreme

¹⁴⁷ Bhat, *Selected Kannada Inscriptions*, 167; Chitnis, *Keladi Polity*, 17; Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 35, 94-5, 507; Satyanarayana, *History of the Wodeyars*, 14, 72. The latter title, *birud antembara gaṇḍa*, has also been translated as "master of title holders."

¹⁴⁸ For other examples, see Chapter 6.

lord of kings of great kings” (*mahārājādhirāja rājaparamesvara*), “emperor of Karnataka” (*karnāṭaka cakravarti*, *karnāṭaka cakreśvara*), and similar phrases.¹⁴⁹ Their imperial ambitions also transpire from one of the very few letters the Wodeyars sent to the VOC. Written by Chikkadevaraja in 1681, this document was signed with, as the Dutch translated, “the most illustrious and most splendid king of the kings, god of the kings, the most learned, most fortunate, and bravest king of all” (*den doorlugtigsten en alderschoonsten coninck der coningen, godt der coningen, den aldergeleersten, voorspoedigsten en dappersten coninck*).¹⁵⁰ Such ambitious titles are found for no other successor house in the VOC records, but as we have seen, they often appear in documents the Company received from Vijayanagara’s rulers.

Given these similarities, it seems that the powerful Wodeyars, unlike Ramnad’s more marginal Setupatis, really aspired to imperial rule, perhaps even trying to assume Vijayanagara’s legacy. It can therefore be concluded that, with the exception of Mysore, the titles of Vijayanagara’s direct successors do not reflect claims to imperial status, whereas those of the indirect successors do suggest such ambitions.

With regard to Persianate designations, apart from one reference to Ikkeri’s Dodda Sankanna Nayaka as “Keladi Padshah,” no such terms are found among the titles of the Nayakas of Ikkeri, Tanjavur, and Madurai. Persian ranks corresponding to the high but formally subordinate status of Vijayanagara’s direct heirs—like *nawāb* or *sūbadār*—are also entirely absent.¹⁵¹ The Setupatis of Ramnad regularly called themselves *aśvapati* or “lord of horses,” a phrase usually associated with the sultans of Delhi, but here it was part of a wider, universalist claim involving several other titles ending with *pati*, and this Sanskrit term was not of Persian or Islamic origin anyway. Some Persianate influence is found only with Tanjavur’s Bhonsles. Besides a few personal names probably of Persian origin, they used an Islamic title in a Persian inscription and regularly added *sāheba* to their names. As several sources suggest, the latter designation stemmed from the period when the Bhonsles were military commanders under the Deccan sultanates. It functioned as a common honorific title, borne by various ranks of nobility all over India.

But again, Mysore occupied a special position among Vijayanagara’s successors in this respect. Just as the Wodeyars unequivocally claimed imperial rule, from the mid-seventeenth century on they also regularly used the very designation “sultan

¹⁴⁹ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 94-5, 184, 223-4, 232, 290, 507-8; Satyanarayana, *History of the Wodeyars*, 72, 99, 129; K.C. Prashanth, “Inheritance and Legitimacy: The Construction of the Vijayanagar Legacy by the Maratha and Mysore Historians,” *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* XCVII, 4 (2006), 98.

¹⁵⁰ NA, VOC, no. 1355, f. 437: letter from Mysore to Cochin, Feb. 1681.

¹⁵¹ Demonstrating the Persianate influence on the political organisation of Bhonsle-ruled Tanjavur, however, the term *sūbadār* was used there for provincial governors. See Chapter 3.

among Indian kings,” directly adopted from Vijayanagara and thereby reinforcing their claim as the empire’s sole heirs.¹⁵² Thus, with respect to both imperial and Persianate titles, Mysore was rather exceptional.

In sum, Vijayanagara’s adoption of Persianate titles was generally not or hardly continued by its successors. It is unclear why most successors did not use such designations whereas Persianate dress was certainly in vogue there. Probably deeming the title of *sultān* inappropriate because of its sovereign connotations, these kings may have found lower Persian rankings unattractive, and these might have suggested a status below that of the Deccan sultans or the Mughals. Also, such titles would perhaps have made the successors’ wish to link themselves to sultanate court culture too explicit, while dress was possibly a more informal way of connecting with the Indo-Islamic world.¹⁵³

Next, we turn to Persianate influences on royal attire, particularly at audiences. To start with, both Ramnad’s palace murals and reports of Dutch missions to Madurai and Ramnad indicate that audiences were not always public events, but could be of a more intimate, perhaps domestic, nature. Portrayals of such private meetings in these various sources have much in common. One of the Dutch envoy’s audiences with Madurai’s Nayaka in 1689 took place “three to four rooms deeper inside the palace” and “without any of his councillors.” The former quote brings to mind the interior location of the second audience mural in Ramnad’s palace, while the latter passage could well apply to the small-scale meeting of Dutch envoys with Ramnad’s Setupati in 1709. The Telugu work *Rāyavācakamu*, probably composed at the Madurai court, also suggests there were different types of audiences as it distinguishes between gatherings with the full court and meetings with only some courtiers.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, both Ramnad’s murals and the report of the VOC embassy to Madurai in 1689 indicate that royal display at intimate meetings differed from that at public audiences. At the latter events, both the Madurai Nayaka and the Setupati were portrayed—in the Dutch account and the palace paintings respectively—as dressed in a kind of Persianate attire. On more private occasions, the Nayaka was reported to wear no jewellery and the Setupati was depicted in Indic clothing. Thus, the proposition that Persianate dress was connected to the public sphere, whereas the domestic domain called for a different display, holds true to some extent, at least in Madurai and Ramnad until the early eighteenth century. In brief,

¹⁵² Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 224, 290, 508; Satyanarayana, *History of the Wodeyars*, 72.

¹⁵³ I thank Phillip Wagoner and Anna Seastrand for discussing this issue with me. The suggestions here are fully my responsibility, however.

¹⁵⁴ Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 183 (n. 10).

audiences at the courts of Vijayanagara's heirs could be of various kinds, reflected in location, company, and presentation. This diversity seems to bear resemblance to the distinction between domestic and public spheres.

But the use of Persianate dress at the courts apparently changed over time, both with regard to the style's source and its associated occasions. These developments are ambiguous, however, as all sources—VOC accounts, palace murals, temple images, and Mutiah's chronicle of Madurai (discussed at this chapter's outset)—give ambivalent impressions of royal clothing. On the whole, all courts stuck to a form of Persianate dress to some degree. Dutch reports speak of "Moorish" attire until the mid-eighteenth century, palace and temple images show long tunics, and Mutiah's text seems to refer to a clothing style resembling that of Muslims. Elaborate jewellery and weaponry also remained important elements of royal display at every court.¹⁵⁵

At the same time, certain elements of Persianate dress were adjusted from its initial manifestation at Vijayanagara. *Kullāyi* caps fell out of fashion, as is suggested by various sources. Madurai's Nayakas were increasingly seldom portrayed with caps, while the relatively late Setupati dynasty was never depicted with such headgear. Neither do Dutch accounts ever mention caps for any of the courts. Instead, these sources, and modern historiography, point to a wide range of turban styles, including Nayaka, Maravar, "Moorish," Mughal, and Maratha types.¹⁵⁶ Further, while long tunics continued to be worn,¹⁵⁷ their style changed. VOC records often refer to white cloths, usually worked with gold, reminding one of the *kaḇāyi* used in Vijayanagara. But pictorial evidence—including temple, palace, and textile paintings—shows that these garments were not invariably white. In fact, the coloured cloaks in those images resemble the Mughal *jāmā* (long coat) rather than the Arab *kaḇāyi*.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ As for jewellery at "private" audiences, there may have been a difference between Madurai and Ramnad. While ambassador Welter wrote in his report of 1689 that the Madurai Nayaka did not wear any jewels during their private meeting, the mural in the Ramalinga Vilasam's back room (illustration 19) depicts the Setupati with profuse jewellery (and two weapons), even though this appears to have been some sort of private audience too.

¹⁵⁶ In addition to earlier references, see: Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 13, 96; Hurpré, "The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka," 66-9; Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, 245. It may be noted that the small black turbans of the Setupati and his courtiers in the Ramalinga Vilasam's second audience mural (illustration 19) bear some resemblance to those used in Madurai, where they have been classified as Nayaka or Madurai style. See: Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 13; Hurpré, "The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka," figs 1-2, 4-8, 12-13.

¹⁵⁷ For references by Jesuits to largely similar clothing (and jewellery) worn by the Nayakas of Senji in 1599 and around 1645, see: Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 315-16; Saulière, "The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks" [pt. 1], 96.

¹⁵⁸ Nagaswamy, "Mughal Cultural Influence"; Hurpré, "The Royal Jewels of Tirumala Nayaka," 68-9. For reproductions of Ramalinga Vilasam murals and some Madurai temple paintings depicting rulers and courtiers in what is termed Mughal-style clothing, see: Nagaswamy, figs 1, 4, 7, 13; Hurpré, fig. 3.

Given the *kullāyī*'s disappearance, the *kabāyī*'s decreasing presence, and the emergence of Mughal-style tunics and turbans, it appears that the main source for Persianate dress in south India shifted from Persia and Arabia in the Vijayanagara period to the Mughal empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That is not surprising, since the Mughals and their local representatives, for example in Arcot, dominated the region from the late seventeenth century onward. If local kings still wished to be part of the Indo-Islamic world, it would therefore pay to follow the dress style of the most powerful Indo-Islamic court, that of the Mughal empire. This focus on the Mughals also transpires from the literary works discussed at this chapter's beginning referring to Delhi and its *Bādshāh* or Mughal emperor.

But while Mughal clothing seemingly replaced earlier Persianate attire as an inspiration, its influence was not unequivocal. Sources give various examples of royal garments that appeared to be of a Maratha style—which in turn had Islamic connotations, too. In his Madurai chronicle, Mutiah stated that in the late seventeenth century the Nayakas changed from long tunics and tall caps to Maratha-fashioned robes and turbans, making them look like what probably were Tamil Muslims. Further, royal dress in late Ikkeri, as depicted in the temple statue of probably its last Nayaka, has been labelled as an amalgam of Maratha and Mughal clothing. Also, the Setupati's turban in one of Ramnad's palace murals resembles Maratha turbans, while the overall appearance of his attire seems Persianate. It thus appears that, first, by the turn of the eighteenth century Maratha dress was strongly affecting the courts of Vijayanagara's heirs, and second, this style was itself influenced by Persianate or specifically Mughal fashion. It may therefore be that what Dutch envoys called "Moorish" clothing was in fact modelled on Persianate attire worn by Marathas.

At any rate, just as the influence of Mughal dress reflected political dominance, so did the impact of Maratha clothing. The Marathas had served various Deccan sultans and been in close contact with the Mughals, thus adopting politico-cultural conventions from them. From the mid-seventeenth century onward, they campaigned in south India, subjugating or conquering most of Vijayanagara's successor states. Consequently, the same mechanism that drove Vijayanagara's eagerness to be part of the Indo-Islamic world must have operated between the empire's heirs, the Marathas, the Deccan sultanates, and the Mughals.

This was not a simple, linear process. Several dynamics were at work consecutively or simultaneously, as the successor states variously bordered the sultanates or Mughal provinces, became tributary to them, underwent Maratha invasions, and obviously maintained legacies of Vijayanagara. As a result, their court attire could include elements from all these polities, and these styles often blended and became blurred. The designations "Persianate" and "Indic" thus appear too broad and strict to encompass the diversity of royal dress here. Both categories comprised nuances,

were combined, and partly overlapped. Also, clothing styles were no longer clearly associated with the public or domestic domains, as shown by various sources.

Besides this variety and intermingling of styles, Vijayanagara's heirs seem to have differed from one another. Temple sculpture and paintings as well as VOC reports suggest that Ikkeri's Nayakas and Tanjavur's Bhonsles continued to wear long tunics on public occasions, following some sort of Persianate convention, albeit possibly in a Maratha form. Dutch records indicate the same for Madurai's Nayakas, although here temple images give a somewhat different impression. But particularly Ramnad's Setupatis appear to have become less faithful to this practice. Only for this court do VOC accounts from the 1740s onward refer to attire largely devoid of Persianate elements. Indeed, employing the terms "heathen" and "Maravar," these reports suggest Indic dress was in use at public audiences, where one might expect Persianate clothing. Yet, the Setupatis wore Persianate attire at other public events. Thus, they did not forsake the latter style, but rather the associated dress code. They differed from other dynasties in that their clothing on public occasions grew more diverse.

The discrepancy between Ramnad and other states may be attributed to several factors, one of which was possibly was the close, direct connection of Ikkeri and Madurai with Vijayanagara. Both kingdoms had been founded by men installed by the "sultans among Indian kings" themselves, and their courts were directly influenced by Vijayanagara's Persianate political culture. The Setupatis, only indirectly linked to the empire, were probably less affected by this legacy and at times chose to present themselves, as it were, as "Indic king" among the "sultans" surrounding them. Tanjavur's Bhonsles formed a special case, too, being affected by their Maratha and sultanate backgrounds and thus even less connected to Vijayanagara.

The Setupatis' exceptional position was likely reinforced by more practical factors, such as the influence of Muslim- and Maratha-ruled courts in the region. While other kingdoms became tributary to Bijapur and the Mughals in the seventeenth century, and some were later subjugated by Maratha forces, Ramnad seems to have remained relatively autonomous until far into the eighteenth century—in particular after Madurai's Nayaka dynasty came to an end in the late 1730s.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the wish to partake in the Indo-Islamic world (now including the Marathas) and the

¹⁵⁹ Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkeri*, 68; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 204-5; Kadhivel, *A History of the Maravas*, 80-1, 89, 94-5; Schwartzberg, *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, 46, 54; *Beknopte historie*, 87-8, 94, 96-8, 101; NA, VOC, no. 1191, f. 782v; no. 1224, f. 74; no. 1464, f. 49; no. 1546, ff. 229v-30, 245; diary of Commissioner Dircq Steur's mission to Coromandel, June 1651-Mar. 1652, report on "Canara," July 1657, letters from Cochin to Gentlemen XVII, from Nagapattinam to Batavia, Jan. 1689, May 1694. See also NA, VOC, no. 2317, f. 326: final report (*memorie van overgave*) of Coromandel Governor Adriaan Pla, Feb. 1734.

adoption of Persianate practices may have become less relevant to Ramnad than to other heirs of Vijayanagara.

All in all, terms like “Persianate,” “Indic,” “public,” and “domestic” are not specific enough to cover the varieties of royal dress in Vijayanagara’s successor states and the occasions that were—or were not—associated with them. Dualistic classifications can obscure the diversity of dynastic self-fashioning, such as clothing styles. Clearly, the way dynasties presented themselves was related to political developments. Just as such processes were frequently evolving and influencing one another, so were royal dress styles. Fitting the resultant nuances and ongoing modifications within binary models could lead to simplification. Indeed, this seems to have happened when Dutch envoys described south Indian royal attire as “Moorish” or “heathen.” Ambassadors who did not use these qualifications may have been more accurate, as both dress and dress codes at the courts of the successors were often blurred.

After this discussion of connections between Vijayanagara’s heirs and Muslim-ruled polities, the next—and final—chapter focuses on relations among the successors themselves.