

CHAPTER 6

Mutual Relations

By the empire of Vijayanagara, at the time of Narasimha's son Krishna Raya, around the year 1520, land was leased to the kings of Senji, Tanjavur, and Madurai, who at the Vijayanagara king's coronation had to perform the duty of their ancestors as spittoon, fan, and betel [leaf] box bearer.

— *Beknopte historie, van Mogolsche keyzerryk en de zuydelyke aangrensende ryken*
(anonymous Dutch history of India), 1758.¹

Beneath his [Krishna Raya of Vijayanagara] throne stood a concourse of Rajas [kings] with their hands in an obsequious manner. He allotted the tribute – of Mysore to his chief favourite Gangiappa, a guard [“Taliar”], of Senji to his cup-bearer Sivamadappa Nayaka, of Tanjavur to his betel-bearer Raghunatha Nayaka, of Madurai, to Nagama Nayaka, an overseer of his royal oxen.

— “Mootiah's chronological & historical account of the modern kings of Madura.”²

The Raya [Krishna Raya of Vijayanagara] having divided and granted his country to his household officers, on that occasion he granted – Senji to Virappa Nayaka, who served in the duty of carpet-spreader, Mysore he granted to Chennadeva Raja of the treasury, Bijapur he granted to Muhammad Sahib, who served in the office of the falconer, Golkonda he granted to Qutb Sahib, who was dog-holder, Tanjavur was granted to Shevappa Nayaka, who was in the office of betel-bearer.

— “The Cheritee or actions of the Vadaka-Rajahs of Tanjore, Trichinopully & Madura.”³

¹ *Beknopte historie*, 1-2 (translation mine). This and the following quotes have been slightly rephrased.

² BL/AAS, MG, no. 4, pt. 4, f. 43.

³ BL/AAS, MG, no. 1, pt. 8, f. 71.

In the reign of this king [Rama Raya of Vijayanagara], several considerable Rajas used to
attend him in the duties of the following offices:

the king of Kamboja Desam presented him with the “callinjee” [possibly a plant, seed,
flower, or nut],

the Pandya Raja held his bag of betel nut,

the king of Senji carried his fly-whisk [“choury”],

the Raja of Kerala district carried his water goblet,

the Raja of Anga Desam presented him betel as his servant,

the Raja of “Mucha” [Matsya?] country’s office was to dress him,

the Raja of “Goul” carried the umbrella.

— “History of the kings of Beejanagur & Anagoondy.”⁴

At that time, Ali Adil Shah [of Bijapur], Qutb Shah [of Golkonda], and Nizam Shah [of
Ahmadnagar]—who were cousins—were personal attendants of Rama Raya. He made –

Ali Adil Shah steward of the law court,

Nizam Shah steward of the gift menagerie,

and Qutb Shah [steward] of the beverages.

They appointed deputies for their tasks and stayed constantly
in attendance on the Raja.

— “Anego[n]dici kefiyat.”⁵

This emperor [Rama Raya] gave his principal provinces to his servants and slaves.

Bijapur was given to one of his slaves called Yusuf,
carver at his table, a Georgian by race.

Golkonda he gave to Ibrahim Malik, of the same race,
who was the emperor’s chief huntsman.

Daulatabad went to another slave of the Abyssinian race, his chamber-servant,
and Burhanpur to the head carpet-spreader, of the same race.

In this way he distributed all the provinces in his kingdom.

— *Storia do Mogor*, by Niccolao Manucci, Venetian traveller,
late seventeenth–early eighteenth century.⁶

⁴ BL/AAS, MG, no. 11, pt. 3b, f. 19 (see also Mackenzie, “History of the Kings of Veejanagur,” 27). I thank Arjun Bali, Bhaswati Bhattacharya, Caleb Simmons, and Amol Bankar for suggesting the meaning of “callinjee.”

⁵ Guha, “The Frontiers of Memory,” 280-1.

⁶ Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, vol. III, 98.

[Emperor Venkata at Chandragiri reigned over about fifty-six domains (“polliams,”
pāḷaiyams), including:]

Golkonda (“Cootub-Shah-Polliam”),
 Ahmadnagar (“Nizam-Shah-Polliam”),
 Bijapur (?) (“Hyder-Shah-Polliam”),
 Maratha lands (“Maratta-Shahajee-Rajah-Polliam”),
 Senji (“Chenjee-Wurdapa-Naid-Polliam”),
 Tanjavur (“Tanjavoorur-Polliam”),
 Madurai (“Madura-Vooror-Polliam”),
 Bidar (?) (“Culbarga-War-Polliam”),
 Portuguese lands (?) (“Farafs [farangi?]-War-Polliam”),
 Dutch lands (“Volanda-War-Polliam”),
 English lands (“Ingreze-War-Polliam”),
 Ikkeri (“Ickery-War-Polliam”),
 Mysore (“Mysore-War-Polliam”).

— “Historical memoir of Chundrageery.”⁷

The rulers [of the “Tamils”] were the following:

King Raghunatha Nayaka ruled the kingdom of Cholanmandalam [Tanjavur].

The king of Tiruchirappalli [Madurai] was Muttu Virappa Nayaka.

The previous king in the kingdom of Senji was Senji Varadappa Nayaka.

The name of the king of Ikkeri was Basavappa Nayaka.

The name of the king of Mysore was Srirangadeva.

All of them were kings without a crown.

— Tamil scholars in Tanjavur, 1712.⁸

Madakari Nayaka of Chitradurga, having established a friendly connection with and received the title of “son to the Mysore Rajas,” began to invade and harass Ikkeri [“Naggur country”]. Dassappa Nayaka [chief of Harapanahalli], incited by his natural arrogance and his enmity, also looked out for some support and for that purpose made proposals of amity to the king [“Polligar”] of Ikkeri, who was much pleased therewith.

⁷ BL/AAS, MG, no. 25, pt. 17, ff. 127-8 (text compiled in 1808 from various accounts, provided by “Kistna-Raja Pilla, ancient Stalla Curnum of Chundrageery [Chandragiri],” translated from Telugu to Marathi, and next to English by “Sooba Row Br.,” see f. 121). For a discussion of a related text, see Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges*, 86-9.

⁸ Jeyaraj and Young, *Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures*, 258-9.

He therefore presented Dassappa with an elephant, standards, horses, and several other valuable gifts and gave him the appellation of his son.

— “Kyfyat of Harponelly.”⁹

Tirumalai Nayaka [of Madurai] was so exceedingly pleased with the bravery of [Raghunatha] Setupati [of Ramnad] in having so faithfully preserved him and the kingdom from falling into the hands of the Mysoreans, that he was at a loss as to how to reward him. He then commended him in public for the service so ably rendered to him, loaded him with valuable presents, gave him his own palanquin, elephants, camels, and horses, as well as several trophies, and having denominated him after his own name with the title of “Tirumalai Setupati,” declared that he would thenceforth esteem him as his son.

— “History of the former Gentoo Rajahs who ruled over the Pandyan Mandalom.”¹⁰

The chief [“Poligar”] of Shivagangai, named Udaya Tevar, was dog-holder to the Setupati [of Ramnad].

— “The present Maratta Rajas who are managing the country of Tanja-Nagaram.”¹¹

This [Setupati] appointed the eldest son of the Pandya [of Madurai] as his *dalavāy* [general], and the second son to be superintendent; he appointed the third son to manage the political affairs of the country, and having thus appointed those three brothers under his own order or authority, he himself reigned over the kingdom of the Pandyas.

— “History of the Satoo-Putty of the Maravun Vumshum.”¹²

The king [Sriranga III of Vijayanagara] received the Nayakas [of the Tamil zone] with every mark of honour, and did not allow them to throw themselves at his feet, as was their desire and duty, but gave them a seat close to himself, where each one performed his respective office: one offered him betel, the second fanned him, and the third held his spittoon. However, the king did not allow them to perform these mean duties in person, but through their favourites.

— report by the Jesuit Balthazar da Costa, 1646.¹³

⁹ BL/AAS, MG, no. 11, pt. 15a, f. 126. “Naggur” or (Hyder)Nagara is the name Ikkeri’s capital acquired after its conquest by Haidar Ali Khan of Mysore in 1763.

¹⁰ BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 25, f. 31v. For another version, see Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 33.

¹¹ BL/AAS, MG, no. 1, pt. 7D, f. 66.

¹² BL/AAS, MG, no. 1, pt. 7C, f. 62.

¹³ Saulière, “The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks” [pt. 1], 104.

Despite the varying levels of historical accuracy in the above quotes, both these local texts and foreign observations suggest that south Indian kings placed themselves and other rulers within some dynastic hierarchy.¹⁴ The well-known tradition that the Nayakas of Madurai, Tanjavur, and Senji served as the spittoon-, betel-, and fan-bearer of the Vijayanagara emperor, was just one of many visions on inter-dynastic relations in early modern south India.¹⁵ According to one quote, the Nayakas of Senji and Madurai actually started as the emperor's carpet-spreader and overseer of the imperial oxen. The Wodeyars of Mysore were also labelled as descendants of an assistant of the emperor, a guard or the treasurer, although this dynasty in fact had not been dispatched from the central court but was of local origin.

One text states that Vijayanagara's Generalissimo Rama Raya regarded kings from all over India as age-old personal servants, including rulers of some of the sixteen *Mahājanapadas* ("great realms")—such as Kamboja, Anga, and maybe Matsya—north Indian states that flourished around 500 BCE.¹⁶ Some quotes also list the Deccan sultans among the emperor's assistants, declaring they originally functioned as Krishna Raya's falconer and dog-holder or Rama Raya's personal attendants. Another text mentions even the Dutch, the English, and possibly the Portuguese as chiefs subordinated to Emperor Venkata.

The Telugu *Rāyavācakamu* presents a dynastic constellation positioning Vijayanagara in relation to both the Deccan sultans and kings in north and east India. It refers to the rulers of Vijayanagara, Orissa, and the Delhi sultanate (the last including the Mughal empire) as *narapati*, *gajapati*, and *aśvapati*, the lords of men, elephants, and horses, respectively.¹⁷ These kings, of which the *narapati* was most prominent, each occupied a lion throne—reserved for the most exalted monarchs—and ruled over vast, prosperous realms guarded by great deities. In this arrangement, the Deccan sultans were merely denoted as "lords of the three clans," those of Bijapur, Golkonda, and Ahmadnagar. Their lands were smaller, lay in marginal areas, and

¹⁴ See also Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 184-6; Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India"; Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, ch. 1.

¹⁵ For other instances in south Indian sources, see BL/AAS, MG, no. 10, pt. 4b: "Bijanagar," f. 69; MM, no. 110, pt. 7: "The Charythy of the Vadoka Raja of Tonjore, Trinchunnapully & Madura," ff. 2-3. For more Dutch examples, see: Baldaeus, *Naauwkeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel*, 1st pt., 160; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 105-6; and the quotes in Chapter 1.

¹⁶ For similar claims in inscriptions of Vijayanagara's rulers Krishna Raya, Achyuta Raya and Venkata, see: Vijayaraghavacharya, *Inscriptions of Krishnaraya's Time*, 156; Butterworth and Venugopaul Chetty, *A Collection of the Inscriptions on Copper-Plates and Stones in the Nellore District*, pt. I, 34, 41, 77, 84.

¹⁷ The idea of three great Indian rulers, of whom Vijayanagara's emperor was the greatest, is also found in the sixteenth-century Telugu *Manucaritramu* of Allasani Peddana, court poet under Krishna Raya. See Allasani Peddana, *The Story of Manu*, 13, 37.

enjoyed no divine protection. Indeed, this view perceived the Deccan sultans not as assistants but as demons, who opposed the gods and thus were enemies.¹⁸

The Vijayanagara successors states not only cultivated ties of service with their superiors, but also situated other rulers in, often fictional, subordinate positions, usually as their personal servants or symbolically adopted sons. In the quotes above, the kings of Ikkeri and Mysore recognised less prominent but powerful Nayaka chiefs as their sons, as did Madurai's Nayakas with Ramnad's Setupatis. No doubt, these adoptees were supposed to acknowledge their subordinate positions and be loyal. In their turn, the Setupatis allegedly regarded the rulers of Shivagangai as their dog-holders and their foundation stories declared that the erstwhile mighty Pandyas of Madurai had once served them as well.

That such hierarchies were not always mere fancies is indicated by the last quote, of a contemporary Jesuit missionary, saying that even during the weak reign of Vijayanagara's last emperor Sriranga III, the Nayakas acted out the services their ancestors had traditionally performed for their overlords. Obviously, all sorts of symbolic hierarchies and loyalties—acknowledged or not—existed among these dynasties, besides the many wars they waged against each other.

The relations the heirs of Vijayanagara maintained among themselves and with their imperial overlords are the subject of this chapter. While Chapters 1 to 5 treat all courts separately and conclude by comparing them, the present chapter deals with the states collectively. On the basis of both literary texts and more basic accounts of political developments, it analyses connections between the courts, both perceived or imagined—as in the quotes above—and in day-to-day practice. No systematic research appears to have been conducted on relations between Vijayanagara's heirs. Without, therefore, engaging in any debate, the present study puts forward that the successors' coexistence was typified by ambivalence and fluctuations, as their mutual contacts frequently shifted between—or even merged—amity and enmity.

Indian discourses on statecraft devote much attention to relations between states, emphasising the roles of allies as well as enemies. Best-known is perhaps the concept of *rājamaṇḍala* or “circle of kings,” as for instance described in the *Manusmṛiti* (VII 154-8) and Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* (VI 2:14-40; VII 5:49, 18:1-44). In brief, this notion holds that for any king the rulers of adjacent kingdoms are his rivals. In turn, the neighbours of those rulers are his rivals' rivals and therefore his friends. This pattern of alternating circles of allies and opponents may expand endlessly.

¹⁸ Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 60-9, 109-10; Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 4 (1995), 708-10; Narasimhaswami, *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. XVI, 181-2 (no. 175); Inden, “Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India,” 103, 105; Sinopoli, “From the Lion Throne,” 380-1.

According to the *Mahābhārata*, however, there exist neither eternal friends nor eternal enemies, and surrounding polities near and far might always shift between these positions, depending on changing circumstances and interests (II 50:22; XII 136:13, 132-5). Allies (*mitra*) are deemed so important that they constitute the last of the kingdom's seven limbs or essential elements, discussed in Chapter 3. But perhaps recognising the thin line between friend and foe, a few texts mention an eighth limb: the enemy itself (*ari*, *amitra*). Apparently, some thinkers considered rival states a fundamental aspect of polities.

Not surprisingly, treatises also advise on how to deal with allies and opponents. One early modern south Indian example is the early eighteenth-century *Śivatattva ratnākara* of Ikkeri's King Basavappa Nayaka, which draws extensively on older discourses. Besides explaining the *rājamaṇḍala* theory (V 14:31-6), Basavappa presents his view on the ancient model of the six *guṇas* (general policy actions), concerning the various methods to approach foreign states: treaties, hostile attitude, military action, neutrality, alliance, and "duplicity" or two-sided, contradictory policy (V 11:30-102, 12:2-42). To handle rival kingdoms, Basavappa further refers to four *upāyas* (political means), another classical notion, comprising conciliation, dissension, gifts, and punishment (V 12:43-122).

Showing the wide repute of such traditional concepts in early modern south India, the *guṇas* and *upāyas* are also mentioned in the sixteenth-century Sanskrit *Acyutarāyābhyudaya* (IV 48-52) by the court poet Rajanatha Dindima III—describing the rule of Vijayanagara's Achyuta Raya—and in the Sanskrit *Sāmrājyalakṣmīpīṭhikā* (70:56-8), thought to be linked to Vijayanagara's Tuluva court as well. Other works from this period, like Krishna Raya's *Āmuktamālyada* (IV 225-70) and Shukracharya's *Śukranīti* (I 313-14; IV:I 1-40, 99-111; IV:II 7-38; IV:V 3-11; IV:VII 7, 14-15, 222-3, 229-48, 277-89, 335-400; V 1-17), consider the enemy at length, too. Like earlier texts, both advocate a careful and practical approach, moving between graciousness and animosity, based on what a particular situation requires.¹⁹

¹⁹ Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, 28 (n. 18), 202-12; Doniger and Smith, *The Laws of Manu*, 143-4; Kautilya, *The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, pt. II, 368-71, 391, 439-44; Vyasa, *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, book 2, *The Book of the Assembly Hall* (Chicago/London, 1975), 122, vol. 7, book 12 (pt. 1), *The Book of Peace*, 513, 518-19; Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, 12-17; Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 149-50; Saletore, *Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions*, 294-5, 474-7; Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life*, 33, 73-4; Krishnamurthy, *Sivatattva Ratnākara of Keladi Basavaraja*, 41-56; Chitnis, "Sivatattvaratnakara with Special Reference to Polity"; Sridhara Babu, "Kingship: State and Religion in South India," 91; Sarangi, *A Treasure of Tāntric Ideas*, 308-10; Thite, "Sāmrājyalakṣmīpīṭhikā of Ākāśabhairavakalpa," 51; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, "A New Imperial Idiom," 94-104; Krishna(deva) Raya, *Sri Krishna Deva Raya: Āmuktamālyada*, 318-31; Shukracharya, *The Śukranīti*, 86, 271-8, 291-3, 297-302, 395-7, 471, 473, 517, 519-23, 529-32, 543-57, 565-9; Nagar, *Kingship in the Śukra-Nīti*, 85-93; Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, 254-5, 302-3.

Nearly all these ideas were somehow put into practice among Vijayanagara's heirs. Not all aspects of their mutual relations can be discussed here in detail, but several elements stand out. To begin with, these contacts appear to have been more often than not discordant, or at least competitive. Just as courts were arenas where kings and courtiers continuously vied for power and status, so was early modern south India as a whole an arena where kingdoms endlessly struggled with each other for dominance and expansion.

To give an idea of what the region's "circle of kings" looked like in this period: Ikkeri was involved in an almost eternal conflict with its southern neighbour Mysore, which also fought many a war against Madurai, to the south-east. Madurai was at the same time part of a triangle of ever-shifting alliances and disputes with adjacent Ramnad and Tanjavur, the latter under both the Nayakas and the Bhonsles. As the English described part of this constellation in 1643: "This countrey hath byn, and still is at present, all in broyles, one Nague [Nayaka] against another, and most against the king [of Vijayanagara], which makes all trade at a stand."²⁰ In 1677, the Dutch portrayed the political situation as follows:

... [the] heathen Neycken [Nayakas] of Madure, Masoer, and others—not understanding their own interest—are at each other's throats so bitterly, without noticing that they, ruining one another in this way, let the Moors [Muslims] become masters over them and their lands, ... the lands of Tansjoer [Tanjavur] having entirely changed their lord thrice in the time of five years ...²¹

Other polities in the area—like Senji, Shivagangai, Pudukkottai, Udaiyarpalayam, Ariyalur, Arcot, Bijapur, Golkonda, and the Marathas—also participated in what appears to have been a semi-permanent state of lukewarm war. It seems no two kingdoms were ever on good terms for a long time. Allies always could, and inevitably would, turn into rivals, and sooner rather than later.²² Dutch records abound with references to confrontations between constantly changing coalitions of south Indian states. Secondary literature based on other sources sketches a similar picture. One example concerns the VOC's registration of the region's political developments between mid-1680 and mid-1681 at Batavia, based on reports from various local Dutch settlements. Covering a period of only slightly longer than one year, an overview of these incidents is found in table 13.

²⁰ Foster, *The English Factories in India 1642–1645*, 115.

²¹ Coolhaas et al., *Generale Missiven*, vol. IV, 178 (translation mine).

²² See also: Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 220–1; Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, 55–7.

Table 13: Alliances and conflicts between Vijayanagara successor states from mid-1680 to mid-1681, as recorded by the Dutch.

1680, Apr.-May	Discord has arisen between Tanjavur and Madurai; the latter is supported by Ramnad.
1680, May	Mysore has invaded Madurai.
1680, Aug.	Madurai is still fighting Mysore; Madurai has been invaded by Ramnad.
1680, Oct.	Mysore, Madurai, and Ramnad have allied against Tanjavur.
1680, Nov.	Madurai and Tanjavur have concluded peace with each other.
1681, June	Mysore has invaded Madurai; the latter is supported by Ramnad.
1681, July	Tanjavur has allied with Madurai and Ramnad against Mysore.

Source: Colenbrander *et al.*, *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia ... anno 1680* (Batavia/The Hague, 1912), 152, 234, 281, 538, 646-7, 727-8, *idem*, *anno 1681*, 315, 383, 430

Additionally, in those months there were clashes between Mysore, Ikkeri, and the Marathas.²³ Even if these developments were exceptional, they demonstrate that relations could easily oscillate between friendship and enmity. Nearly all bilateral relations changed at least once during this brief period, and some even did so twice. Quite in line with the ideas in the *Mahābhārata*, shifting conditions and practical assessments rather than fixed loyalties and old resentments apparently determined which of the *Śivatattva ratnākara*'s six *guṇas* and four *upāyas* would be employed.

An important factor in the competition and hostilities between Vijayanagara's heirs was their growing autonomy from the empire, allowing them to determine their own foreign policy. This increasing independence was a slow process that in most cases would never be fully completed.²⁴ Among the direct successors, only the Wodeyars of Mysore openly stopped recognising the Vijayanagara rulers as their overlords, considering the imperial claims in their titles. The other houses very rarely put their autonomy in such unmistakable terms, but for all practical purposes they too, step by step, attained independence. Manifestations of this gradual secession included failure to send military assistance to the empire, refusal to pay tribute, efforts to subjugate other imperial vassals, omission of references to the emperors in inscriptions and other texts, and actual hostility towards the

²³ Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkeri*, 119; Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 290-4; Satyanarayana, *History of the Wodeyars*, 89-91. For a list of the many military conflicts in the Tamil region between 1590 and 1650, see Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, 56 (n. 6).

²⁴ Thus, during the zenith of Vijayanagara's power, under Krishna Raya (r. c. 1509-29), and even in the subsequent decades, one can hardly already speak of actual "successor states," let alone independent ones. Consequently, the paradox discussed in Stein, *Vijayanagara*, 121, appears to be non-existent.

empire, directly or by supporting other aggressors. The following sections discuss this process in individual successor states.

Under the Nayakas of Ikkeri, an early sign of this development is found in a Portuguese letter saying that Chikka Sankanna Nayaka (r. c. 1570-80) was formerly a subject of Vijayanagara but now attempted to subdue nearby rulers himself. Other sources say that this expansionism already started under Doddra Sankanna Nayaka (r. c. 1565-70?). It is uncertain if this was related to the recent attack on Vijayanagara's capital by the Deccan sultanates in 1565 and the subsequent takeover of the imperial throne by the Aravidu dynasty. Titles and images on Ikkeri's coins from this period suggest the kingdom still strongly identified itself with Vijayanagara.

But Ikkeri's military campaigns against its neighbours intensified in the following decades. Venkatappa Nayaka (r. c. 1585-1629) is thought to have stopped acknowledging the Aravidus as his overlords in the late sixteenth century. Notably, the traveller Pietro Della Valle, visiting Ikkeri in the 1620s, described Venkatappa as a former vassal of Vijayanagara, who since its downfall had become an "absolute prince." Still, about a decade later, Virabhadra Nayaka (r. c. 1629-44) dispatched troops to assist Vijayanagara against an attack from Bijapur.

But whatever remained of the empire's authority over Ikkeri during the reign of Shivappa Nayaka (c. 1644-60) almost completely vanished when in the late 1640s the last emperor, Sriranga III, was expelled from his capital, again by the Deccan sultans. In the late 1650s Shivappa offered the fugitive Sriranga protection and assistance to regain his throne, but as much as this may have been a sign of loyalty, it also demonstrated Ikkeri's great power. No doubt, the emperor's plight also provided Shivappa with an opportunity to increase his own influence.²⁵ Thus, while Sadashiva Nayaka (r. c. 1530-65?) had been one of Vijayanagara's most trusted and celebrated generals, about a century later his great-grandson Shivappa embodied the nearly reversed positions of overlord and vassal.

With regard to the Nayakas of Tanjavur, epigraphic records, literary works, and coins indicate that both Shevappa Nayaka (r. c. 1530s-70s) and Achyutappa Nayaka (r. c. 1570s-97?) remained largely faithful to Vijayanagara. This apparently included the period after the Aravidus replaced the Tuluvas, to whom Shevappa was related by marriage. Achyutappa is thought to have provided military aid to the empire and defended it against assaults from the less loyal Nayakas of Madurai and Senji.

²⁵ Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkēri*, 37-8, 41, 90-2; Chitnis, *Keladi Polity*, 14-19; Mears, "Symbols of Coins of the Vijayanagara Empire," 79-80; Della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, vol. I, 190-1; Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire*, vol. I, 301-2.

But Jesuit letters and some inscriptions imply that Tanjavur sometimes declined to send tribute to Vijayanagara and at one point even rebelled against its overlord because it, together with Madurai and Senji, no longer recognised a ruler who, as it was phrased, had deposed the lawful emperor—perhaps denoting the Aravidus' overthrow of the Tuluvas.

Under Raghunatha Nayaka (r. c. 1597?-1626), Tanjavur is again said to have stood out for its loyalty. It was the only one of the three Nayaka kingdoms in the Tamil region that chose the side of the Aravidu rulers in the long, violent succession struggle following the death of Emperor Venkata in 1614. While Raghunatha thus helped the main Aravidu line keep the throne, several literary works state that this Nayaka himself installed Venkata's grandnephew Ramadeva as the new emperor. According to the poem *Sāhitya ratnākara*, this even happened on Tanjavur territory, at the town of Kumbakonam. Whether Raghunatha actually crowned Vijayanagara's ruler or not, this seems another case of the line between overlord and vassal becoming very thin, at least as Tanjavur's own texts have it.

Finally, Vijayaraghava Nayaka (r. 1631-73), although by some historians depicted as a faithful servant of the Aravidus, appears to have acted rather autonomously. First, he failed to dispatch troops to Emperor Sriranga III against the Deccan sultanates, perhaps to not risk his own position. Further, in 1643 the Dutch noted that he had not paid tribute to the empire, while two years later, both Jesuits and the VOC reported that Tanjavur had temporarily joined Senji and Madurai in their alliance against Vijayanagara. The Jesuit Antony de Proença wrote that when Sriranga, having eventually lost his empire, sought refuge in Tanjavur around 1647, the Nayaka initially received him with gifts and a daily grant. But after a year or so, possibly again fearing for his own security, Vijayaraghava started to revoke these honours, making the emperor dwell in a forest for a few months before he approached Mysore for support.²⁶ All in all, under the Tanjavur Nayakas a progression took place similar to that under the Nayakas of Ikkeri: increasing independence, which was however never fully asserted.

This process seems to have been a bit more pronounced in Madurai. While the first few Nayakas here may have been generally obedient to Vijayanagara, some local

²⁶ Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 28-31, 36-43, 46-50, 67-72, 82-90, 130-40; C. Somasundara Rao, "The Loyalty of the Nāyaks of Tanjore to the Vijayanagara Empire," in A.V. Narasimha Murthy and K.V. Ramesh (eds), *Giridharaśrī: Essays on Indology* (Delhi, 1987); Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, 255, 274; Mears, "Symbols of Coins of the Vijayanagara Empire," 79-80; Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*, 245; Saulière, "The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks" [pt. 2], 164; Colenbrander *et al.*, *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia ... anno 1643-1644*, 276, *idem*, *anno 1644-1645*, 351, 356; Mac Leod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie*, vol. II, 188-90; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 308.

source material insinuates that Virappa Nayaka (r. c. 1572-95) fought a war against the Aravidu emperor, supposedly over his refusal to pay tribute. Virappa's alleged self-willed behaviour is perhaps underscored by the fact that after about 1580 he no longer referred to the Aravidus in his inscriptions. Scholars disagree about the level of loyalty under the four subsequent, short-lasting kings, but the following decades again saw confrontations between the Nayakas and their overlords, caused by Madurai's arrears in tribute and expansionist politics.

Especially during the reigns of the brothers Muttu Virappa Nayaka (c. 1606-23) and Tirumalai Nayaka (c. 1623-59), the dynasty openly strove for more independence. In the empire's succession struggle around 1614, Muttu Virappa backed the court faction that opposed the main Aravidu branch. Furthermore, mentions of the emperors in the Nayakas' inscriptions were increasingly seldom. Also, around this time the *Rāyavācakamu* was composed at Madurai's court, a work tracing the Nayakas' legitimacy back to the now extinct Tuluva emperors and the first Vijayanagara capital while entirely ignoring the Aravidus.

Tirumalai is often regarded as the ruler who achieved real autonomy from Vijayanagara. The emperors were occasionally still mentioned in inscriptions, but more to provide regnal dates than to acknowledge their overlordship. Further, the payment of tribute became rare and seems to have ended in the 1630s, when it was reportedly replaced with the occasional sending of gifts. The Dutch wrote in 1643 that the Nayaka owed two million *pardaos* to the empire. According to the Jesuit Balthazar da Costa, in the mid-1640s Emperor Sriranga III grew so offended that he let Tirumalai know he would not rest until he had flayed him alive and used his skin for a drum to be beaten as a warning against other traitors. Sriranga subsequently declared war on Madurai, Tanjavur, and Senji in a last effort to stem their separatism. But this resulted only in greater independence for Tirumalai, who allied himself with Bijapur and Golkonda—his enemy's enemies, as political treatises would phrase it.

The tables had almost completely turned when in 1646 Sriranga fled his besieged capital. As Da Costa wrote, Tirumalai honoured the fugitive emperor with gifts, fireworks, and even the performance of his ancestral duty as imperial spittoon-bearer, albeit—on Sriranga's request—not personally. But in September 1647, about a year after his arrival in Madurai, he returned to Tanjavur as no real support from Tirumalai materialised. Despite inscriptional references by later Nayakas to the last emperor and his descendants, this event marked the practical end of the hierarchical relationship between the Vijayanagara and Madurai houses.²⁷

²⁷ Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 72-4, 80-1, 87, 95-6, 98-102, 115-19, 126-35, 143-4; Saulière, "The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks" [pt. 1], 90-101, 104-5, [pt. 2], 163-4; Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 7-12, 23-33; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 45-7; Mahalingam, *Readings in South Indian History*,

Yet more explicit was the break-away of Mysore's Wodeyars from the empire. It is thought that this dynasty was basically loyal until the reign of Raja Wodeyar (1578-1617). Around the mid-1580s he started contesting the position of the imperial governor in the Kannada-speaking area, Tirumala Raja, residing at Srirangapatnam. According to the early eighteenth-century Kannada *Maisūru dhoregaḷa pūrvābhyudaya vivara* and other chronicles, Raja Wodeyar seized lands from neighbouring principalities, refused to pay tribute, fortified Mysore town and other places, and demanded exclusive honours when he visited the imperial governor.

Further, the Kannada *Chikkadēvarāya vaṃśāvali* (late 1670s) has it that a dispute arose between Raja Wodeyar and Tirumala Raja over the right to use the title "champion over those who say they have such and such titles" (*birud antembara gaṇḍa*). In the 1590s these confrontations escalated into military clashes, but Tirumala Raja was unable to subdue the Mysore ruler. Eventually, in early 1610, Raja Wodeyar took Srirangapatnam from the Vijayanagara governor, who according to several texts no longer enjoyed the support of Emperor Venkata.

Raja Wodeyar now moved his capital from Mysore town to Srirangapatnam and thus in a sense took over the imperial governor's seat, referred to as the southern throne. But Mysore chronicles claim the emperor welcomed this change and even sent gifts including jewels and robes. Judging from his titles, the Wodeyar still considered himself a vassal of Vijayanagara for some more time. Yet, until his death in 1617 he kept attacking neighbouring kingdoms and expanding his realm, a policy continued by his successors Chamaraja Wodeyar V (r. 1617-37) and Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar (r. 1638-59). While these rulers formally recognised Vijayanagara's overlordship in their inscriptions, they also started bearing titles that expressed imperial ambitions and sometimes were directly borrowed from the emperors, such as "supreme lord of kings of great kings" (*mahārājādhirāja rājaprameśvara*) and "emperor of Karnataka" (*karnāṭaka cakreśvara*). With the short-lasting exception of Madurai's Chokkanatha Nayaka, no other direct successors used such designations.

Notwithstanding, like the other heirs of Vijayanagara, around 1650 Kanthirava Narasaraja temporarily offered shelter and military aid to Emperor Sriranga III after the empire's fall, yet another instance of the reversed positions of vassal and overlord. With Vijayanagara more or less vanished, the titles of subsequent Mysore kings, including (Dodda) Devaraja Wodeyar (r. 1659-73) and Chikkadevaraja

170-4; K.K. Pillay, "The Pudukkottai Plates of Srivallabha and Varatungarāma," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 18 (1955); Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 39-46; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 342-3, 348-50, 358-62; Mac Leod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie*, vol. II, 182. See also: Branfoot, "Heroic Rulers and Devoted Servants," 174-5; Mears, "Symbols of Coins of the Vijayanagara Empire," 79-80.

Wodeyar (r. 1673-1704), displayed ever stronger claims to universal reign. By this time, Mysore had also begun to use the imperial boar seal and welcomed Vijayanagara's former royal preceptors at its court.²⁸ All this suggests the Wodeyars attempted to appropriate the imperial position of Vijayanagara's Aravidus, even though they still occasionally referred to their formal overlords.²⁹

As for the empire's indirect heirs, Tanjavur's Bhonsles never maintained formal hierarchical relations with Vijayanagara or its offshoots, but the Setupatis of Ramnad started as local chiefs under Madurai's Nayakas. After their instalment around 1605, the Setupatis behaved increasingly autonomously in the course of the following century, the process of which involved largely the same elements as described above. According to Portuguese sources, Ramnad's second ruler, Kuttan Tevar (r. c. 1622-36), revolted against Madurai as early as 1629. His successors Dalavay Setupati (r. c. 1636-40, 1640-5) and Tambi (r. c. 1640) also had conflicts with the Nayakas, revolving around Ramnad's territorial expansion, arrears in tribute, and successions to the throne.

²⁸ Some sources claim that Vijayanagara's lion throne was acquired by the Wodeyars as well, via the imperial governor at Srirangapatnam. See: B. Puttaya, "A Note on the Mysore Throne," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* XI, 3 (1921); Seshadri and Sundararaghavan, *It Happened along the Kaveri*, 58. See also Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 61, 321 (n. 178). The emblem of the double-headed eagle (*gaṇḍabheruṇḍa*) may have been adopted by Mysore from Vijayanagara in the same way. See R. Narasimhachar, "The Mysore Royal Insignia," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* X, 3 (1920), 273.

²⁹ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 36, 39, 46-67, 81, 93-6, 131-2, 144-6, 184, 223-5, 231-3, 279, 290, 507-8; Caleb Simmons, "The Goddess and Vaiṣṇavism in Search for Regional Supremacy: Wodeyar Devotional Traditions during the Reign of Rāja Wodeyar (1578-1617 CE)," *Indian History* 1 (2014), 33-5, 40; idem, *Devotional Sovereignty*, 5-8; idem, "The Goddess and the King," ch. 3; Satyanarayana, *History of the Wodeyars*, 14, 16-25, 35-40, 51-3, 60-4, 72, 84, 100; BL/AAS, MG, no. 3, pt. 8a: "Mysoor Aroosoogaloo Poorvaabyoodayagaloo" [1st pt.], ff. 201-7 (translated from a Kannada text found in the Srirangapatnam palace in 1799; see Cotton, Charpentier, and Johnston, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages*, vol. I, pt. II, 39-40); no. 3, pt. 8b: "Mysoor Aroosoogaloo Poorvaabyoodayagaloo" [2nd pt.], ff. 217-18; no. 3, pt. 11: "Mysore Nagurda Poorbotara," ff. 259-60 (for a note on this work, see Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 8, n. 11); K.C. Prashanth, "Mysore's Claim over the Vijayanagara Tradition: A Historiographical Construct," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* XCIII, 3-4 (2002); idem, "Inheritance and Legitimacy," 95-100; Surendra Rao, "State Formation in Mysore," 174-6; Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 67-8; Krishnaswami Iyengar, "Mysore and the Decline of the Vijayanagar Empire," 743-4, 746-51; Rāma Sharma, *The History of the Vijayanagar Empire*, vol. II, 14-15, 81-2, 87-8; Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, vol. I, 290-3, 411-16, 419-23; idem, "Venkatapatiraya I and the Portuguese," 314-15; Rubiés, "The Jesuit Discovery of Hinduism," 224. For another Mackenzie manuscript translation concerning the evolving tension between the Wodeyars and Tirumala Raja, see BL/AAS, MG, no. 3, pt. 12: "Account of the Rajahs of Mysore from the Persic," f. 264 and next folios (translated from a Persian text, itself translated from Kannada by order of Tipu Sultan; see Cotton, Charpentier, and Johnston, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages*, vol. I, pt. II, 41-2).

Raghunatha Setupati (r. c. 1645-73) is generally considered to have been loyal to Madurai, in particular because in the 1650s he prevented it from being invaded by Mysore. Besides revoking Ramnad's obligation to pay tribute, Madurai's grateful Tirumalai Nayaka presented Raghunatha with gifts and privileges that all seem to have been aimed at strengthening the bond between overlord and vassal. The Setupati was given the Nayakas' own royal palanquin, accepted into Madurai's exclusive *kumāravarkkam*—the order of the “king's sons,” comprising important chiefs ritually adopted into the Nayaka family—and bestowed with Tirumalai's personal name, so that he became known as Tirumalai Setupati. These steps were certainly meant to honour the Ramnad ruler, but also served to morally bind him to the Nayaka house and incorporate him firmly into the Madurai kingdom.

If anything, however, the Setupatis' new status reinforced their striving for autonomy. In 1663 the Dutch governor of Ceylon, Rijcklof van Goens, wrote that ever since Raghunatha had concluded a treaty with the VOC in 1658, his respect for his Madurai overlord had diminished. A campaign launched by the latter around 1664 to punish the Setupati for his expansionist actions was largely a failure. As the Dutch were informed by Governor Kumara Svami Mudaliyar of Tirunelveli in 1671, Madurai's Chokkanatha Nayaka had become so frustrated with Raghunatha's behaviour that he grew his beard long enough to tie it into knots, swearing to shave it off only after he had taken revenge.

This may have happened in 1673, when Chokkanatha demonstrated his ongoing claim over Ramnad by assassinating two consecutive Setupatis. But Madurai proved incapable of controlling their successor Kilavan Tevar (r. 1673-1710). Just two years after Kilavan's accession to the throne, Van Goens remarked that the Setupati had surpassed the Nayaka in “greatness” (*grootheijt*). In 1682, he assisted Madurai one more time by helping depose the courtier Rustam Khan, who had usurped power at the Nayaka court.

But later on, when Madurai faced other threats, Kilavan refused to send troops and he even attacked the Nayakas on various occasions, confiscating parts of their territory. Madurai's subsequent punitive expeditions against Ramnad's now fortified capital were mostly fruitless and just showed that the Setupatis had become independent for all practical purposes. Fittingly, in 1702 the Dutch stated that Kilavan had originally served merely as one of Madurai's seventy-two chieftains (“visiadoor”) but now reigned over his “district” by himself (*op sig selfs*).³⁰

³⁰ Seshadri, “The Sētopatis of Ramnad,” 19, 23, 26-32, 37-42, 45, 50-1, 54-9, 81, 87-8; Kadhirlvel, *A History of the Maravas*, 21-6, 33-50; BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 25: “History of the former Gentoo Rajahs who ruled over the Pandyan Mandalom,” ff. 31v-2v; Jeyaseela Stephen, *Expanding Portuguese Empire and the Tamil Economy*, 118; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 50, 105-6; Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India*, 29-32; Bes, “The Setupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits,” 548-9; Howes, *The Courts*



Illustration 21: Mural depicting Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati of Ramnad being coronated by Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka of Madurai, Ramalinga Vilasam (back room, arches), Ramanathapuram, c. 1720 (courtesy Purnima Srikrishna).

Literally illustrating that Ramnad's relationship with Madurai combined formal vassalage with factual autonomy, two murals in the Setupati palace, the Ramalinga Vilasam, portray Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha (r. 1710-25) while he is installed as king. One of these depicts Madurai's Nayaka, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha, performing a coronation by adorning the Setupati with gems, suggesting that the Nayaka's official overlordship was acknowledged (see illustration 21). The other painting shows the Ramnad ruler as he receives the royal sceptre from the Setupatis' tutelary goddess Rajarajeshvari, seemingly denoting that his real authority derived from his family deity (see illustration 22).³¹

The political developments described above make clear that Vijayanagara's heirs all became practically autonomous but differed in how they expressed this.

of Pre-Colonial South India, 85-6, 106-7; Saulier, "Madurai and Tanjore," 785-7; NA, VOC, no. 1280, ff. 13v-14v; no. 1664, ff. 175-6: Colombo secret proceedings, Mar. 1671, letter from Nagapattinam to Batavia, May 1702; HRB, no. 542 (unpaginated, 1st document, c. halfway, section "Teuverslant"): description of Ceylon, Madurai, south Coromandel, Malabar, and Kanara by Rijckloff van Goens, Sept. 1675; Vink, "Encounters on the Opposite Coast," 294; Rijckloff van Goens, *Memoirs of Ryckloff van Goens, Governor of Ceylon, Delivered to His Successors Jacob Hustaart on December 26, 1663, and Ryckloff van Goens the Younger on April 12, 1675*, ed. E. Reimers (Colombo, 1932), 5; Schreuder, *Memoir of Jan Schreuder*, 35-6, 41.

³¹ Verghese, "King and Courtly Life," 480-2 (figs 34.4, 34.6). For online images of most of the palace's murals, see: southindianpaintings.art/monuments/ramanathapuram.



Illustration 22: Mural depicting Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati of Ramnad receiving a sceptre from the tutelary goddess Rajarajeshvari, Ramalinga Vilasam (back room, arches), Ramanathapuram, c. 1720 (photo by the author).

The Nayakas of Ikkeri and Tanjavur seem to have been relatively restrained in this regard. While they sought to extend their kingdom at the expense of other Vijayanagara vassals or stopped paying tribute, they continued to support the empire with military aid and to recognise the emperors, making no exalted claims in their titles. Madurai's Nayakas were more assertive, waging wars against Vijayanagara, backing the emperor's opponents, ignoring the Aravidu dynasty in texts, and reducing their prominence in inscriptions. The Wodeyars of Mysore were most outspoken in their pursuit of independence, formally taking over the empire's provincial governorship of the Kannada region, regularly using imperial titles and symbols, and seemingly claiming to be Vijayanagara's main or even sole heir.³²

Ramnad's Setupatis employed nearly all these tactics to attain autonomy from Madurai—withholding tribute and assistance, expanding their territory, fighting their overlord, bearing ambitious titles—but never fully severed their ties with their parental dynasty. Thus, with the possible exception of Mysore, independence was never wholly or formally realised but rather asserted in varying degrees by the different successors.³³ Apparently, while the line between friend and enemy was thin and could be crossed swiftly and repeatedly, the path from vassalage to autonomy was long and slow for Vijayanagara's heirs and lacked a clearly demarcated end point.

³² It is unclear to me what caused Mysore to stand out among the Vijayanagara successor states in this regard.

³³ See also Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 45, 47.

Returning to the relations between the successor dynasties, these could take forms other than plain warfare, although such contacts were often antagonistic or degrading, too. Several examples are found in literary works produced at the Madurai court. Besides the *Rāyavācakamu*—subtly disregarding the Aravidu emperors by not mentioning them—there are texts that seemingly aimed at humiliating other successor states and did so in a less delicate manner. Some of these describe the activities of Madurai's Muttu Virappa Nayaka III, also known as Ranga Krishna Nayaka (r. 1682-91). Chapter 5 discusses how he disgraced the Mughal emperor, refusing to treat his slipper with the proper respect. Another story indicates how he regarded neighbouring kings:

One evening, secretly and on his own, Muttu Virappa Nayaka rode on horseback from his capital Tiruchirappalli to Tanjavur town. Not recognised in the dark, he passed the town gate and went to the bazaar. Telling a shopkeeper that he came from "Kolvakodi"—a fictitious place name meaning something like "ten million sceptres"—he borrowed one *pagoda* from him, providing his royal signet ring as security. Later that night, Muttu Virappa dressed himself as a soldier and silently entered the royal palace. Arriving at the audience hall, he sat down close to the Tanjavur king and for a while listened to the deliberations of the court. He next inspected the rest of the palace and wrote on the door between the audience hall and the domestic quarters that he, the Nayaka of Madurai, had been here and heard all the consultations.

He then quietly left and the following morning returned to Tiruchirappalli. Back home, he informed Tanjavur's ambassador about his incognito visit, asking him to urge his king to take better care of his safety and pay the shopkeeper so that Madurai's signet ring could be collected. Receiving this news from his ambassador, the astonished Tanjavur king found Muttu Virappa's message on the door of his domestic quarters, quickly sent back the Nayaka's ring, and placed guards at the gates of both his palace and his capital.³⁴

Although it is specifically stated that Muttu Virappa told the Tanjavur ambassador his action was not meant to be hostile, this text appears to demonstrate the perceived superiority of Madurai's ruler over the Tanjavur king—supposedly Ekoji or Shahaji of the Bhonsle house. Evidently, the powerful, fearless, and smart Nayaka, ruling from the town of ten million royal sceptres, could easily access the political and even familial headquarters of the Bhonsles. Further, he left a symbol of his dynastic might, Madurai's signet ring, in the Bhonsle capital and then had its king pay to retrieve it and return it to him. Thus, the Tanjavur king had to be reminded by Madurai's Nayaka of his most important royal duties: the protection of his realm, his court, and his family.

³⁴ Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 208-10. See also Rangachari, "The History of the Naik Kingdom of Madura," *Indian Antiquary* XLVI, 105.

Another text claims Muttu Virappa also visited other nearby courts in disguise, overhearing deliberations and leaving his ring in a niche. The next day he would ask for his ring back, warning the amazed kings of their carelessness, and obviously showing his supremacy over them.³⁵ One vassal state unmistakably shown its place in Madurai's court literature was the principality of Ariyalur:

One day, Muttu Virappa took his horse and departed from his capital without telling anyone. His destination was the court of Ariyalur because four very valuable things were kept there: a camel, a sword, an elephant, and a white horse, each of them unequalled in the world. Madurai's Nayakas had long wished to acquire these, but Ariyalur's chiefs had never voluntarily offered them. On his arrival, Muttu Virappa entered the Ariyalur palace without permission and met the surprised ruler, who honoured him with jewels.

Meanwhile, upon the discovery that the Nayaka had left his capital, Madurai's vast army came after him. As the troops neared Ariyalur, the principality's people became scared and its ruler begged Muttu Virappa to tell him what this all meant. While Madurai's forces paused, the Nayaka explained he desired to obtain the unparalleled camel, sword, elephant, and white horse. Thereupon, the Ariyalur ruler donated the items to Muttu Virappa, but said that the elephant was presently enraged and could not be transported. Having taken the other three things, the Nayaka then mounted his horse, approached the elephant, and skilfully conducted it to his capital Tiruchirappalli.³⁶

Demonstrating Muttu Virappa's physical skills and Madurai's armed power, this story glorifies kingly heroism and martial prowess. Ariyalur's four valued objects—camel, sword, elephant, and white horse—also seem related to both royalty and warfare. Therefore, the text is probably meant to show the Nayakas' military superiority over Ariyalur's chiefs. The latter had never been willing to hand over their precious assets to Madurai, possibly symbolising Ariyalur's refusal to fully submit to the Nayakas. But when Muttu Virappa forced his way in and Madurai's troops were waiting nearby, the Ariyalur ruler had no choice but to yield. Even the furious elephant, which the chief was not capable of handling, proved no match for the Nayaka.

As explained in Chapter 1, in the period of Muttu Virappa's reign, Ariyalur established commercial and diplomatic ties with the Dutch, maybe a sign that around this time its rulers, traditionally one of Madurai's Palaiyakkarars,³⁷ aspired

³⁵ BL/AAS, MG, no. 4, pt. 4: "Mootiah's chronological & historical account of the modern kings of Madura," f. 68.

³⁶ Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 210-13. See also Rangachari, "The History of the Naik Kingdom of Madura," *Indian Antiquary* XLVI, 105.

³⁷ BL/AAS, MG, no. 1, pt. 3: "An account of the Pandia Rajahs who reigned at Madurapuri," f. 18; Srinivasachari, *Ananda Ranga Pillai*, 201 (n. 22); Soundarapandian, "Palayappattu Vivaram," 14.

to greater autonomy. The story of the Nayaka's visit to Ariyalur perhaps served as a warning against those ambitions. In any case, the text clearly indicates how Madurai perceived its relationship with its vassal.

Texts downgrading neighbouring kings were also produced at other courts. The Tanjavur poem *Śāhendra vilāsa* relates that when the Setupati of Ramnad asked Shahaji Bhonsle for help against Madurai, the Tanjavur army quickly marched to Ramnad, expelled Madurai's forces, and restored the grateful Setupati (VI 47-55; VII 1-75; VIII 28-33). This episode thus effectively showed Shahaji's great power over both Ramnad and Madurai. Also, Tanjavur's chronicle *Bhomsale vaṃśa caritra* declares that during a pilgrimage of Pratapasimha Bhonsle to Rameshvaram in Ramnad, the Setupati honoured him by carrying his palanquin for two miles. Further, according to a tradition in Mysore, Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar travelled incognito to the Nayaka court at Tiruchirappalli and in a contest killed Madurai's strongest warrior, yet another literary claim to military supremacy. Less poetically, Ikkeri's chronicle *Keḷadinṛpa vijayam* simply says that Sadashiva Nayaka was mightier than Senji's ruler Krishnappa Nayaka.³⁸

Mysore's competition with Madurai was also expressed in some of the Wodeyars' titles. Kanthirava Narasaraja bore the designation "sickle to the bunch, the four-fold army of Tirumala Nayaka," showing Mysore's alleged power to cut down the forces of Madurai's Tirumalai. Other titles likened Kanthirava Narasaraja and Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar to an elephant herd, a thunderbolt, and a trident menacing the "Andhra rulers," referring to the Telugu-speaking Nayaka kings in the Tamil region. Two inscriptions of 1663 mention (Dodda) Devaraja Wodeyar as having defeated the "Pandya king," denoting the Nayakas of Madurai. An inscription of 1679 describes Chikkadevaraja as "having conquered the Pandya King Chokka in battle," claiming triumph over Madurai's Chokkanatha Nayaka.³⁹ These labels clearly aimed at humiliating the Nayakas of Tanjavur, Senji, and especially Madurai.

Most other successor dynasties praised themselves in their titles as slayers of enemies, but these designations include few or no references to particular royal houses. As discussed in Chapter 5, only Ramnad's Setupatis also mentioned specific dynasties in their titles. They were called "establisher" of the "Pandya throne" and the "Chola country," and labelled *narapati*, *gajapati*, and *aśvapati* (lords of men, elephants, and horses)—respectively the rulers of Vijayanagara, Orissa, and Delhi—in

³⁸ Śrīdhara Venkatēśa, *Śāhendra Vilāsa*, 12-15; BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 87: "The historical account of the Tonjore," f. 103v; Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, vol. I, 57-8; Nilakanta Sastri and Venkataramanayya, *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, vol. III, 192.

³⁹ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 184, 508; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 357 (nos 161-2), 360 (no. 186).

addition to Setupati (lord of the bridge), or placed themselves on a par with these lords.⁴⁰ But these titles denote rulers distant from Ramnad's kings, in time or in space, and appear much less degrading than those used by the Wodeyars, who were seemingly exceptional in this regard.

Notably, one designation used by the Setupati Kattaya Tevar in the years 1730-1, recorded in Dutch documents, seems to actually glorify a neighbouring ruler, now to show submission instead of supremacy. When Kattaya's reign was still unstable because of his conflict with Shivagangai's Sasivarna Tevar and he depended on Tanjavur's Tukkoji Bhonsle for his survival, he started mentioning the name of his protector before his own. This possibly was a way of showing loyalty to the Tanjavur king and enlisting his support. But in the course of 1731 Kattaya stopped referring to Tukkoji and indeed, by this time, his position was growing more secure.⁴¹

In addition to confronting one another on battle fields and in texts, on rare occasions rulers of Vijayanagara's successor states met in person. Probably the most detailed account of such an encounter was compiled by the Jesuit Balthazar da Costa in 1646. Describing the ongoing struggle between Madurai's Tirumalai Nayaka and Vijayanagara's last ruler Sriranga III, Da Costa relates that at one point Tirumalai invited the Nayakas of Senji and Tanjavur for a personal gathering to propose an alliance against Vijayanagara. This extraordinary meeting, in August 1645, involved three kings with an equal position. Therefore, the Madurai ruler had three palaces built—each at half a mile from the others—at the spot where the boundaries of the three Nayaka kingdoms met. Tirumalai then went to the palace constructed for him, bringing 30,000 troops and elephants, which encamped at the building's side farthest from the common border. The Nayaka of Tanjavur, Vijayaraghava, arrived at his palace with an equally large army, while Senji's Nayaka, Krishnappa, came with just 10,000 men because his other forces had to guard his northern border with Vijayanagara.

At the actual meeting, all three Nayakas arrived on richly decorated elephants, wearing exquisite clothing and jewellery, accompanied by courtiers, musicians, and soldiers. Having thus come face to face, the kings spent half an hour together without dismounting their elephants, before they returned to their palaces. The following evening, Tirumalai honoured the Tanjavur and Senji Nayakas with a banquet and dance performances. Vijayaraghava intended to host a similar event

⁴⁰ Seshadri, "The Sētopatis of Ramnad," 229-30; Burgess and Naṭeśa Śāstrī, *Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 64, 82-3, 85, 91, 94, 104-5; Sewell, *List of Inscriptions*, 4 (nos 22-3).

⁴¹ NA, VOC, no. 2158, f. 955v; no. 2185, ff. 1053v, 1170; no. 2186, f. 1288; no. 2224, f. 1629; letter from Tuticorin to Colombo, Feb. 1730, letters from Kattaya Tevar to Colombo and to subjects indebted to the Dutch, Feb., Aug., Nov. 1731, report of mission to Ramnad, Feb. 1731. One example, corrupted by the Dutch, runs as follows: "Toekosie [Tukkoji] Maha Rasa Coemaroe Moetoewiseija Regoenade Chedoe Padij Cata Theuver." See also Bes, "The Setupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits," 555.

on the next day but since his palace caught fire, the three kings were forced to move to Tanjavur for further deliberations.⁴²

The ceremonial of this encounter was clearly aimed at respecting the equal status of the three Nayakas. They met at the crossroads of their realms, which must have been regarded as a neutral location where none of them was a guest within the territory of one of the others and thus placed in a hierarchical or dependent relationship. They all stayed in their own purpose-built palace, each equidistant from the others. All Nayakas brought vast numbers of soldiers, who no doubt served to demonstrate military power but were kept away from the neutral area in between the palaces. And during the Nayakas' personal meeting, they all remained seated on their elephants, perhaps because none of them wanted to be the first to alight and thus submit himself before the others. Da Costa's account therefore suggests that the Nayakas of Madurai, Tanjavur, and Senji considered themselves to occupy the same rank in the region's "circle of kings," despite the many conflicts between them over time.

Apart from this Jesuit letter, there are very few descriptions of meetings between rulers of Vijayanagara's successor states. Dutch records briefly refer to two personal encounters between the houses of Madurai and Ramnad. A document of 1688 says that a son of the Setupati Kilavan Tevar had appeared before Muttu Virappa Nayaka III at Tiruchirappalli, was "stately entertained" (*deftig onthaalt*) by him, and had been provided with a residence. A report of 1708 states that Madurai's Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka would soon travel from Tiruchirappalli to Madurai town to receive the royal sceptre and thus be ceremonially installed as king. The Setupati or his son would attend this occasion to meet the Nayaka face to face.⁴³

Judging from these notes, in the years around 1700 relations between the Setupatis and Madurai's Nayakas could be cordial on a personal level, even though this period saw regular military clashes between the kingdoms, Ramnad having become practically independent from Madurai. Further, the Setupati's presence at the Nayaka's inauguration recalls the attendance of the Nayakas of Senji, Tanjavur, and Madurai at the coronations of Vijayanagara's emperors. Quite possibly, even in the early 1700s, the Setupatis still participated in the installation ceremonies of their formal Nayaka overlords.

There were many other links between Vijayanagara's heirs. Marital ties between dynasties, for instance, were quite common. As explained in Chapter 1, Shevappa, founder of Tanjavur's Nayaka house, was a brother-in-law of Vijayanagara's Achyuta Raya as their wives were sisters. Even closer connections were established when

⁴² Saulière, "The Revolt of the Southern Nayaks" [pt. 1], 94-6.

⁴³ NA, VOC, no. 1454, f. 1015; no. 1756, f. 1219v: reports of local VOC envoys to Tanjavur and Ramnad, Aug. 1688, Oct. 1708.

princesses married into other dynasties. The Nayakas of Madurai and Tanjavur regularly exchanged daughters and sisters. According to the *Raghunāthābhyudayamu*, composed in Tanjavur, Senji's Krishnappa Nayaka offered his daughter's hand to Tanjavur's Raghunatha Nayaka after the latter convinced Vijayanagara's emperor to release him from prison.

As between the Nayakas, marriages also were concluded among dynasties belonging to the Maravar and Kallar castes, ruling polities like Ramnad, Shivagangai, Pudukkottai, Ariyalur, and Udaiyarpalayam. In fact, Pudukkottai's very foundation in the late seventeenth century was initiated when Ramnad's Kilavan Tevar, of the Maravar caste, installed a brave subordinate Kallar as chief of the Pudukkottai region and took his sister as his second wife. A Dutch source of the late 1670s suggests that Ariyalur's ruler was a son-in-law of Udaiyarpalayam's ruler, both of them Kallars. And Sasivarna Tevar, Shivagangai's first king (r. c. 1730-9), was married to an illegitimate daughter of Ramnad's Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati, all of them Maravars.⁴⁴

Apparently, two clusters of dynasties intermarried among themselves: the Nayakas in the Tamil region and several Maravar and Kallar houses. The kings of Ceylon's Kandy kingdom also belonged to the former group. Both before and after the establishment of Kandy's Nayaka dynasty in 1739, Kandyan rulers approached the Nayakas of Madurai and Tanjavur for brides, albeit not always successfully.⁴⁵ It seems that only seldom was a marital link forged between the two clusters, like when, as some local texts have it, a Shivagangai princess was wedded to Madurai's last Nayaka, Vijayakumara.⁴⁶ On the whole, however, inter-dynastic marriages appear to have served as bonds between specific houses sharing similar origins. This stands in contrast to Vijayanagara's dynasties, which allegedly did not object to marrying their princesses into the Deccan's sultanate houses or even the royal family of Portugal. Despite the very different backgrounds of those Islamic and Christian dynasties, Vijayanagara's rulers apparently regarded them as holding a high enough royal status.

⁴⁴ Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, 286; Vriddhagirisana, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 48; Srinivasachari, *A History of Gingee*, 93, 107; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 159-61; Seshadri, "The Setupatis of Ramnad," 59-62, 81; NA, VOC, no. 1333, f. 104: letter from Nagapattinam to Batavia, Oct. 1678.

⁴⁵ Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom*, 33-8, 40-2; Obeyesekere, "Between the Portuguese and the Nāyakas," 167-8; and see the Madurai section in Chapter 4 and the Tanjavur Nayakas section in the Epilogue.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, vol. II, 47; BL/AAS, MT, class III, no. 25: "History of the former Gentoo Rajahs who ruled over the Pandyan Mandalom," f. 39; class III, no. 82: "Account of the Rajas who held the government of Madura," f. 118v.

Finally, we return to the competition between Vijayanagara's heirs. Besides regular wars, some clashes involved creating dissension at rival courts. Chapter 2 mentions various instances of kings assisting pretenders to the thrones of adjacent kingdoms or otherwise interfering in their neighbours' court politics. Between the 1630s and 1670s, Madurai's Nayakas backed or deposed no fewer than four of Ramnad's Setupatis. In the 1680s and 1690s, Mysore's Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar gave shelter to Shivappa II and his brother Sadashiva, members of the collateral branch of Ikkeri's Nayakas who opposed Queen Chennammaji. And from the 1710s to the 1730s, Tanjavur's Sarabhoji and Tukkoji Bhonsle supported a whole series of rivaling pretenders to the Ramnad throne—first Bhavani Shankara, next Kattaya Tevar and Sasivarna Tevar together, and then Bhavani Shankara again—contributing to the creation of the Shivagangai kingdom in the process.

As discussed in the Epilogue, some rulers even attempted to dethrone or reinstall other houses. The most obvious example is the extermination of Tanjavur's Nayaka dynasty by Madurai's Chokkanatha. In 1732 Tanjavur's Tukkoji, too, tried to annihilate a royal family. Both Dutch and Jesuit sources say that in May of that year, Tukkoji's son Anna Sahib and one Khan Sahib ("Canoe Saaijboe," perhaps Arcot's General Chanda Sahib) had invaded Ramnad to place the former on the Setupati throne. But an alliance of Ramnad with Shivagangai, Pudukkottai, some Palaiyakkarars, and perhaps Madurai prevented this.⁴⁷ On the whole, however, efforts to topple other dynasties were rare.

Indeed, endeavours to re-establish dethroned houses were more common. The Epilogue considers several such cases. The rulers of Ikkeri, Mysore, and Madurai each made attempts—in vain—to reinstall the fugitive last emperor of Vijayanagara, Sriranga III. Around the 1660s, Madurai allegedly launched an unsuccessful campaign to revive Senji's Nayaka dynasty.⁴⁸ Among other kingdoms, Mysore, Ikkeri, Ramnad, Ariyalur, and even Madurai were all involved in failed ventures to help Tanjavur's Nayakas regain their throne. In the end, only Ramnad and Shivagangai ever managed to re-establish a fallen house, the Nayakas of Madurai, albeit for a very short period.

All in all, it appears that Vijayanagara's heirs aspired to dominate rather than overthrow one another. In fact, they regularly tried to reinstall those dynasties that had formed the initial dynastic constellation under Vijayanagara: the imperial and Nayaka houses. No doubt, these were efforts to gain influence through such re-appointed rulers, but courts apparently felt their interests would be best served by maintaining the original *rājamaṇḍala* or "circle of kings."

⁴⁷ NA, VOC, no. 8958, ff. 746-50: letters from Tuticorin to Colombo, May-June 1732; Seshradri, "The Sētipatis of Ramnad," 94.

⁴⁸ Nelson, *The Madura Country*, vol. III, 183; Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 155.

All discussed aspects of the relations between the heirs of Vijayanagara suggest that these contacts were ambivalent. The thin line between ally and enemy, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, manifested itself among the successor states in many forms. There was permanent competition and tension between the courts, expressed in literary texts, royal titles, battles, and even dethronements. At the same time, the dynasties frequently formed alliances, exchanged princesses, recognised each other's status at personal encounters, and tried to reinstall other houses. Dynastic hierarchies were both violently contested and ceremonially acknowledged. All Vijayanagara's direct heirs sought autonomy from the empire, and Ramnad strived for practical independence from Madurai. Yet, the rulers of these kingdoms continued to refer to their overlords in inscriptions and paintings, and—if European observations are to be believed—partook in court rituals confirming their masters' formal supremacy.

Indeed, there may actually have been no line at all between friend and foe. The successor states were seemingly allies and enemies simultaneously rather than alternately. Illustrating this ambiguity, in 1627 Dutch officials wrote that “the 3 Neijcken [Nayakas], namely of Mandril [Madurai], Sensier [Senji], and Tansjour [Tanjavur], are in friendship, yet do not trust each other.”⁴⁹ Phrased differently, the kingdoms' seventh and eighth limbs—ally and enemy—were one. This ambivalence appears to have been especially prevalent among Vijayanagara's heirs. Sultanates like Bijapur and Golkonda, Arcot and other Mughal authorities, Malabar polities such as Travancore and Kannur, and the Marathas were all part of south India's *rājamaṇḍala*, but in some respects the Vijayanagara successor states comprised a separate group.

Conflicts and alliances came and went among all these kingdoms, of course, and hierarchies certainly existed between Muslim-ruled polities and the successor states, as the latter became tributary to the former. Yet, Vijayanagara's heirs established no or few marital ties with those other dynasties, seem not to have participated in their coronations, seldom mentioned them in texts or titles—apart from general references like *Bādshāh* and *Tuḷukkas* (“Turks” or Muslims)—and never made efforts to reinstall dethroned sultanate, Malabar, or Maratha houses. Only Tanjavur's Bhonsles differed from the more direct heirs to some extent, given their connections with both the Deccan sultans and the Marathas in west India.

To return to one of the questions asked in the Introduction, if we consider the diverse and ambivalent relations between the Vijayanagara successor states—merging amity and enmity on both practical and symbolic levels—it seems that particularly the empire's direct heirs formed a collective of courts and dynasties seeing itself as somewhat distinct from other kingdoms. Perhaps it is no coincidence

⁴⁹ NA, VOC, no. 1094, f. 104: letter from Pulicat to Batavia, Oct. 1627.

that a text from Mysore, the *Kaṇṭhīrava narasarāja vijayam*, which describes a festival celebrated by Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar in 1647, specifically refers to the presence of envoys from Ikkeri, Tanjavur, Madurai, and Senji. Apart from some of Mysore's subordinate chiefs, no other foreign power is separately mentioned.⁵⁰

As explained in the Introduction, the five main successors were also regarded as a special cluster by some Tamil scholars in early eighteenth-century Tanjavur, who declared to German Pietist missionaries that the kings of the “Tamils” in the previous decades were the rulers of Tanjavur, Madurai, Senji, Ikkeri, and Mysore. In all likelihood implicitly emphasising their common, specific past as vassals of Vijayanagara, the scholars further stated these were all kings without crown.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, vol. I, 187-8.

⁵¹ Jeyaraj and Young, *Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures*, 258-61.