

The Heirs of Vijayanagara *Court Politics in Early Modern South India*

LENNART BES



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Lennart Bes

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Cover illustration: Detail of a textile hanging (one of seven related panels), probably produced in south-east India around the early seventeenth century, depicting a south Indian court, Brooklyn Museum, Museum Expedition 1913-1914, Museum Collection Fund, no. 14.719.7 (courtesy Brooklyn Museum).

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The rulers ... were the following:

King Raghunatha Nayaka ruled the kingdom of Cholamandalam [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 [sic].

All of them were kings without a crown.

— Tamil scholars in Tanjavur listing the kings who ruled the “Tamils,” in response to a question posed by German Pietist missionaries in 1712

(Daniel Jeyaraj and Richard Fox Young (eds), *Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures: “Malabarian Correspondence” between German Pietist Missionaries and South Indian Hindus (1712–1714)* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 258–9)

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Acknowledgements

This book, my first monograph, is based on my doctoral dissertation, submitted to the Radboud University Nijmegen in 2018. I largely wrote it within the framework of the Eurasian Empires programme (2011-16), while based at Leiden University with the other participants in this project. Funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), the Eurasian Empires programme was devoted to the study of imperial dynasties, courts, and states in late medieval and early modern Asia and Europe from both comparative and connective perspectives.

The origins of my research, however, go back much further. It all started when I first wandered around south India as a backpacker and was struck by the great beauty and power embodied in the architectural remains of the region's past. Inspired and curious, I enrolled as an Indology student at Leiden University's Kern Institute, where I read the seminal work on south-east India's early modern Nayaka states by Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam: *Symbols of Substance* (1992). I was especially intrigued by the plea made on the book's very last pages to use the unexplored records of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to study these kingdoms.

Ironically, although Dutch myself, I was hardly aware that these documents were important sources for Indian history. My subsequent forays into the VOC archives for my MA thesis on the Ramnad kingdom indeed showed their great relevance, especially when used together with south Indian sources. Inspired by the abovementioned plea, I have been working with these records ever since. The result is the present book, rather fittingly appearing in the series *Colonial and Global History through Dutch Sources*, which promotes historical research of non-European regions that combines local and Dutch source materials.

For getting here, I first of all wish to thank my two former supervisors, Peter Rietbergen of the Radboud University Nijmegen and Jos Gommans of Leiden University, both of whom were already involved in my research before the Eurasian Empires programme commenced. To Jos Gommans I owe my entry into academia in the first place. If it was not for his constant encouragement, constructive criticism, and generous friendship over the decades—and our various joint activities, such as the series *Dutch Sources on South Asia*—I would never have graduated,

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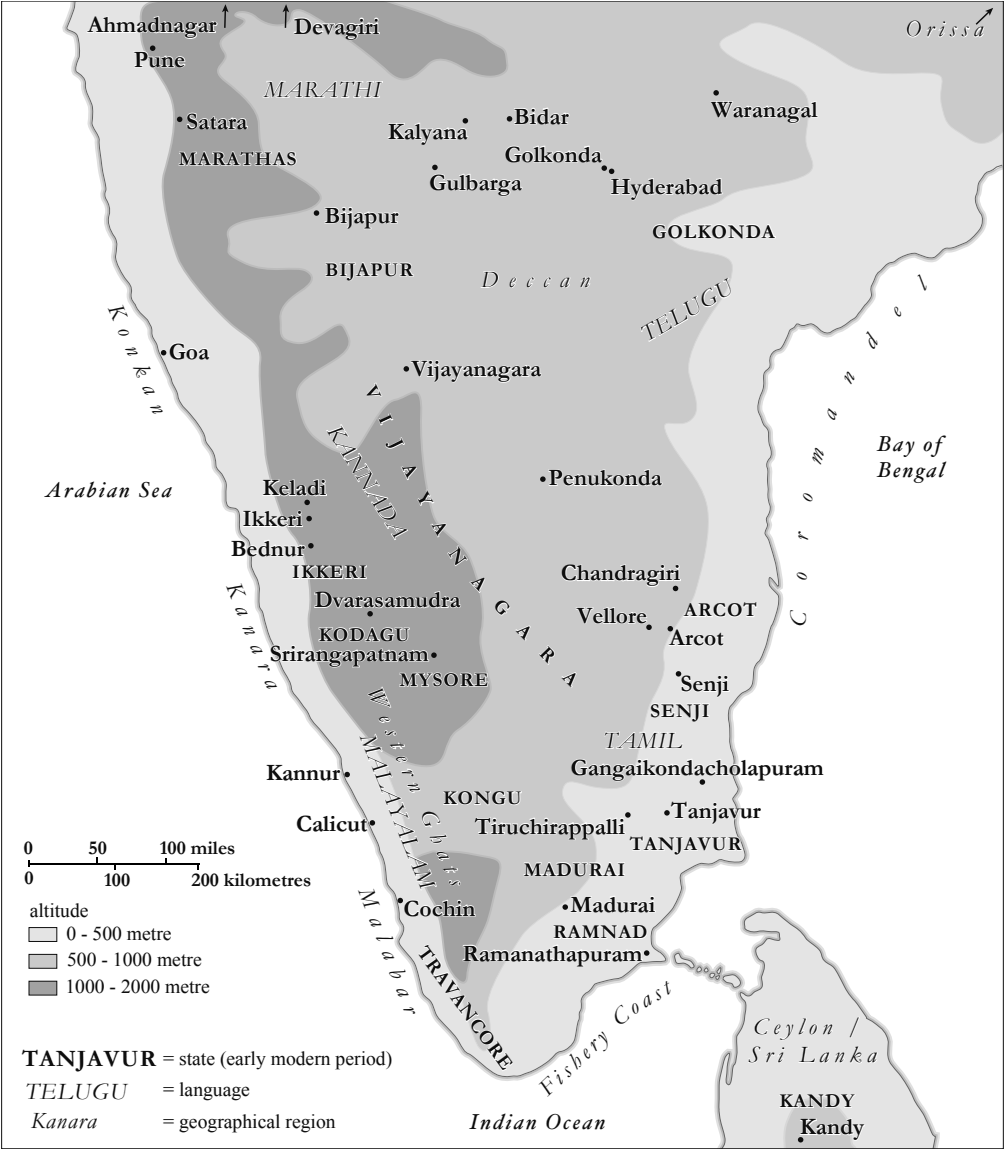
AAS	Asian & African Studies department (in BL, formerly Oriental & India Office Collections, or OIOC).
AM	Additional Manuscripts (in BL/MMC).
ANRI	<i>Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia</i> (National Archives Republic Indonesia), Jakarta.
BC	<i>Buitenland</i> collection (“foreign countries”) (in ANRI).
BL	British Library, London.
DCGCC	Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon (in DNA).
DNA	Department of National Archives, Colombo.
DR	Dutch Records (in TNA).
HRB	<i>Hoge Regering Batavia</i> collection (Batavia High Government) (in NA).
MG	Mackenzie General collection (in BL/AAS).
MM	Mackenzie Miscellaneous collection (in BL/AAS).
MMC	Manuscript and Map Collections (in BL).
MT	Mackenzie Translations collection (in BL/AAS).
NA	<i>Nationaal Archief</i> (National Archives), The Hague.
OI	Orme Collection: India (in BL/AAS).
OOV	Orme Collection: O.V. (in BL/AAS).
RA	<i>Rigsarkivet</i> (State Archives), Copenhagen.
TNA	Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai.
VOC	(Archives of the) <i>Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</i> (Dutch East India Company) (in NA).

Notes on Spelling and Citation

As this study concerns at least nine dynasties in five states, it includes terms and names from several Indian languages, principally Kannada, Marathi, Persian, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu. From the accompanying five to six scripts, names of people, deities, castes and other groups, buildings, and geographic locations have been transliterated without diacritical marks with the aim to both approximate correct pronunciation and follow common spelling. Thus, for example, the ruler of Ramnad is referred to with the more familiar spelling “Setupati,” rather than the exact transliteration of the Tamil original, *cēṭupati*.

Other non-English terms unknown to a broad readership—which besides the abovementioned Indian languages derive from Dutch and Portuguese—as well as titles of Indian literary texts have been transliterated with diacritical marks when applicable and are italicised. It has however proved impossible to ascertain the correct spelling in each and every case, for instance when it is unclear to which language words belong, different versions are found in secondary literature and even in primary sources, or words occur in several languages with slight variations.

This work contains a number of extensive literal quotations and detailed summaries of primary sources. These summaries are set in a slightly smaller font than the main text, while literal quotations have the same small font and are moreover indented. In literal quotes, punctuation marks have been added, long sentences broken into shorter ones, and lengthy passages divided into paragraphs so as to improve intelligibility. Citations from Dutch texts have generally been translated as literally as English grammar and readability allow. Both in such translations and in quotes from English texts in the Mackenzie collections, original spellings of names and Indian terms have usually been retained, whether cited in full or summarised.



Major political centres and geographic and linguistic regions in late medieval and early modern south India.



Towns, rivers, and waters in south India mentioned in this study.

