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Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700 A.D.*

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Problem and Hypothesis

It is a commonplace of Indian social history that Indian society has lacked an overarching, hierarchical and authoritative religious organization. How then are we to account for the pervasiveness of shared religious beliefs, and the endurance of institutions predicated on such beliefs in India? Similarly, it has recently been argued that the pre-modern State, at least in South India, lacked the unitary, bureaucratized and centralized features of political systems in the medieval West and elsewhere.[1] How then are we to account for the durability, size and widespread legitimacy of political systems such as that of the Vijayanagara period in South India?

A solution to these two problems can be generated by following a single line of argument. The hypothesis of this essay is that, at least in South India in the three centuries preceding the arrival of the British, a *single* system of authoritative relations existed, which combined features that have elsewhere been divided between religious and political hierarchies. The historical components of this system can be summarized as follows: in the period between 1350 and 1700 A.D., Srī Vaiṣṇava temples in South India provided a nexus for ritual and economic transactions between warrior-kings from outside the Tamil country and Srī Vaiṣṇava sectarian leaders who belonged principally to the Tamil country. These transactions had two consequences: Telugu warrior-kings were able to establish the stable and legitimate links with core Tamil institutions required to consolidate their authority in South India, and Srī

*This essay is based on Chapter II of a doctoral dissertation on "Worship and Conflict in South India: The Case of the Srī Pārtasārati Svāmi Temple 1800-1973," University of Chicago, 1976. An earlier version of the essay was presented at the Annual Workshop of the Society for the Study of South Indian Religion, Bucknell University, June 1975. For their many helpful comments and criticisms, I am grateful to B. Stein, A.K. Ramanujan, K.K.A. Venkatachari and Carol A. Breckenridge.

[1]B. Stein, "The Segmentary State in South Indian History" in R.G. Fox (Ed.), *Realms and Regions in Pre-Modern India*, Duke University Press (forthcoming).

Vaiṣṇavism itself became divided into two sub-sects, which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, became self-conscious and antagonistic competitors for temple-control. In the essay that follows, the hypothesis of a single system of authoritative relations is supported by the historical documentation of these transactions and their consequences.

The general framework which underpinned the relationship of kings, sects and temples during this period can be described in terms of four propositions:

1. Temples were fundamental for the maintenance of kingship.
2. Dynamic sectarian leaders provided the links between kings and temples.
3. While the day-to-day management of temples was left in the hands of local (generally sectarian) groups, the responsibility for solving temple conflicts which resisted local resolutions vested clearly in the sovereign.
4. In a specific ethnosociological sense, kingly action re: temple-conflict was not *legislative* but administrative.

TEMPLES AND KINGSHIP

In classical Indian thought, generosity to Brahmans, codified as the "law of the gift" (*dānadharma*), was an important element of the role of kings.[2] It has recently been carefully demonstrated that in South India, under Pallava rule, in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, a fundamental change occurred in the conception of what constitutes sovereignty: the giving of gifts, which was previously only one element of the basic definition of kings as *sacrificers*, now became the central constituent of sovereignty.[3] This shift during Pallava rule coincides with the beginnings of temple-building associated with Purānic deities, such as Viṣnū and Sivā. During the next period of South Indian history, when the Chōla house dominated the South (ca. 900 to 1200 A.D.), this model of kingly generosity was the basis for generous royal endowment of temples, as well as for the establishment and subsidy of *brahmadēyas* (settlements of learned Brahmans, with highly favorable tax-assessments). However, in the articulation and public display of sovereignty, even in the Chōla period, it appears that temple-construction had begun to play a peculiar and powerful role.[4]

[2]Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, 1967, pp. 53-59; V.R.R. Dikshitar, *Hindu Administrative Institutions*, Madras, 1929, pp. 102-104.

[3]Nicholas B. Dirks, "Honor, Merit and Prosperity: From Ritual as Gift-Giving to Gift-Giving as Ritual in Early South Indian Kingship," June 1975 (unpublished Mss.), *passim.* but particularly p. 29.

[4]George W. Spencer, "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XII, Pt. I, January 1969, pp. 42-56; *ibid.*, "Royal Initiative under Rajaraja I," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4, December 1970, pp. 431-42.

Starting from about 1350 A.D., and during the next three centuries of Vijayanagara rule, there was a serious decline in the status of *brahmadēyas*, and a concomitant growth and expansion of temples in South India.[5] Royal endowments to temples became a major means for the redistributive activities of Vijayanagara sovereigns, which played an important role in agrarian development in this period.[6] At the same time, temple-endowment was a major technique for the extension of royal control into new areas, and transactions involving both material resources and temple "honors," permitted the absorption of new local constituencies into Vijayanagara rule. This latter process is documented in the body of this essay.

Sectarian Leaders as Mediators

Even before the commencement of the Vijayanagara period, the relationship of sovereigns to their predominantly agrarian localities was mediated by a host of powerful local personages and groups.[7] This continued to be so, although in rather different ways, in the Vijayanagara period. The relationship of kings to temples in the Vijayanagara period cannot be understood without taking into account the wide variety of local corporate groups and local leaders who were responsible for the management of temples.[8] But of all these groups and persons, increased prominence was gained by local sectarian assemblies and mobile sectarian leaders. The function of these sectarian leaders and the local sectarian constituencies which they represented, in facilitating the linkage of sovereigns to temples, is dealt with in detail later in this essay.

Local Management and Royal Intervention

Although royal figures conducted extensive and elaborate relationships with temples (by the building of new temples and the extension and enrichment of old ones), the day-to-day management of temples remained in the hands of local notables.[9] Nevertheless, it is clear that Vijayanagara kings and their

[5]Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India" in R.E. Frykenberg (Ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Madison, 1969, pp. 191-194; *Ibid.*, "Goddess Temples in Tamil Country, 1300-1750 A.D.," presented to the CSRI Workshop, University of Chicago, May 24-26, 1974, *passim*, but especially Fig. 1; K. Sundaram, *Studies in Economic and Social Conditions in Medieval Andhra* (1000-1600 A.D.), Madras, 1968, *passim*, but especially Ch V; A. Krishnaswami, *The Tamil Country under Vijayanagara*, Annamalainagar, 1964, pp. 98-105.

[6]Burton Stein, "The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XIX, 2 (1960), pp. 163-176.

[7]Dirks, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Burton Stein, "The Segmentary State in South Indian History," *op. cit.*

[8]T.V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, Madras, 1967, pp. 386-389.

[9]Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, pp. 386-389; see also B.A. Saletore, "The Sthānikas and Their

agents played an active role in the supervision of these increasingly complex religio-urban centers. This supervisory role, which is demonstrated in the increased participation of royal agents in all sorts of local decisions,[10] was activated primarily in contexts where the locality was unable to internally resolve temple-conflicts.

In analyzing these authoritative settlements of temple-disputes, it is important to notice that they are neither vertical administrative fiats nor pieces of royal legislation, but are rather administrative commands (*rāja-śāsana*) of an arbitrative sort. These publicly and communally arrived at decisions must be understood as *vyavasthās* (regulations) amongst members of local corporate groups, which were rendered authoritative by the participation of the king or his agents. In this context, the *rāja-śāsana* (royal command) was "the act by which the king sanctions a collective regulation."[11] Such *rāja-śāsanas*, which rendered local *vyavasthās* authoritative, were widespread in middle-period South India.[12]

KINGSHIP AS ADMINISTRATION, NOT LEGISLATION

This species of royal intervention presumes a model of the Hindu king as an *administrator* rather than a *legislator*, following the suggestive formulation of Robert Lingat.[13] This contrast is important in two senses. Firstly, it suggests that the commands of Hindu kings were administrative, in the sense that they were addressed to specific groups and individuals, were not of general applicability, and were subject to alteration or repeal according to the pragmatic needs of kingship.[14] On the other hand, legislative power would imply "a right attributed to a constitutionally competent authority to pronounce rules having a general application and possessing, in principle, a permanent character."[15] The most important consequence of this contrast is that royal judgements were only orders, which could not fix the law or even strictly serve as an illustration:

> Although the intervention of the king in judicial matters may be decisive,

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Historical Importance," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol. VII, July 1938, Part I, pp. 29-93.

[10]For detailed examples of royal intervention, see: *Epigraphia Carnatica*, IV, Ch. 113, p. 15; *Ibid.*, V, P. 1, Bl. 5, p. 45; *Annual Reports on South Indian Epigraphy*, 1913, para 51; *Ibid.*, 1914, pp. 96-97; B.A. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire* (2 Vols.), Vol. I, Madras, 1934, p. 371.

[11]Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, Delhi, 1973, p. 229, fn. 54.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 227.

[13]Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

[14]*Ibid.*, 224-32.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

it brings no new element to interpretation. In settling disputes between his subjects, the king merely does his duty, which is to secure order and peace in his realm. This is the office of an administrator and not a legislator.[16]

But the orders of Hindu kings in reference to temples were "administrative" only in a special ethnohistorical sense. The administrative actions of the king did not necessarily imply a centralized bureaucratic staff on the Weberian model of legal-bureaucratic authority.[17] As in the validity of royal commands, so also in the machinery of making and enforcing such decisions, context-sensitivity was the rule. In much of the inscriptional evidence describing cases of royal arbitration, the "staff" that makes and carries out the decision is a complex, and contextually variable, nesting of local individuals and corporate groups, forming a single, unique, interlocking system, linking the king, his agents, local assemblies, sectarian groups and leaders, temple functionaries, and, in some cases, local worshippers.[18] There was thus no single, centralized, permanent bureaucratic organization, but a temporary affiliation of local groups, authoritatively constituted by, or in the name of, the king, and empowered to make public decisions on specific matters.[19]

In classical Indian thought, the distinctive function of the king is expressed in the formula "*prajānām paripālanam*" (protection of his subjects)[20] or in some other variant formulaic expression of the same idea. In respect of temples in South India, the central aspect of this royal function was the responsibility of the king to maintain peace between his subjects and order in his

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 256: I am grateful to Prof. A.K. Ramanujan, University of Chicago, who in unpublished work as well as personal communications, first suggested to me the widespread importance of this kind of "context-sensitivity" in various aspects of Indian culture; these features of royal arbitration of conflicts, namely, their freedom from precedent and their particularity, explain much that is crucial in the impact of British legal institutions and ideas on the temple in the 19th and 20th centuries. This impact, which was fundamentally a product of the orientation to precedent as well as the partial legislative (i.e. generalizing) basis of British courts, is dealt with in Ch. V of my Ph.D. dissertation, *op. cit.*

[17] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (T. Parsons, Ed.), New York, 1964, pp. 329-36

[18] See n. 10, for several examples; in one such case, we are told that: "The great minister Nāgaṇṇa and various important officials like *Pradāhni* Dēvarasa, along with other *arasus* or lords, and the Jaina Mallappa summoned the elders of the three cities and the Eighteen Kampanas, and held an equiry . . " (Saletore, *Social and Political Life . . ., op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 371). Such examples could be multiplied.

[19] This is an extension of the argument in B. Stein, "The Segmentary State in South Indian History," in R.G. Fox (Ed.), *Realms and Regions in Pre-Modern India*, Duke University Press (forthcoming).

Here again, the British bureaucracy in the 19th century broke down this delicate relationship between local participation and royal authority, with important consequences for temple politics, a subject dealt with in Chs. 3 and 4 of my doctoral dissertation, *op. cit.*

[20] Lingat, *op. cit.* p 222.

realm.[21] However, given the spatial and temporal variability in the set of "staffs" through which kings did actually arbitrate temple-disputes, they could only stimulate, ratify and render authoritative reasonable local agreements. The actual day-to-day maintenance of these royally sanctioned *vyavasthās* was necessarily the responsibility of authoritative local groups. Thus, we find in the bulk of the inscriptions from temples in middle period South India, a stylized conclusion to these inscriptions, whereby the protection (*raksai*) of these *vyavasthās* was entrusted to local sectarian groups: for example, in the inscriptions of the Tirupati temple, the stylized formula is: "Śrī Vaiṣṇava Rakṣai."[22] The second aspect of the kingly role, the lavish endowment or temples, did not by itself distinguish kings, since temple-donors, in the middle-period, came from a wide cross-section of society.[23] In relation to temples, the distinctive function of royalty was the combination of generous endowment with the task of "protection" (paradigmatically: dispute-arbitration). It was this second aspect of the kingly role that formally distinguished it from other social roles, and thus we have a record of a sixteenth-century dialogue between a Paṇḍya ruler and the learned Brahmans at his court, as to which was preferable: donation or protection. They declared protection to be superior, saying: "Render thou protection which is purifying."[24]

Hindu kings in middle-period South India, thus, had two sorts of relationships to temple-deities: endowment and protection. The latter aspect of their role, however, did not connote a capacity to legislate in the modern Western sense, nor did it imply centralized bureaucratic management of temple affairs. The effective bearers of royal commands, and thus of the "protective" function were local, generally sectarian, groups and leaders. Without endowment, the king would cease to place himself in an active relationship with the redistributive powers of the deity, and thus would fail to acquire the honor constitutive of sovereignty. Without protection, i.e. the authoritative ratification of local *vyavasthās* by royal edicts (*rāja-śāsana*), the king would have abnegated his fundamental duty towards his subjects. In South India, between 1350 and 1700, this cultural model formed the basis for a dynamic set of relationships between warrior-kings, sectarian leaders and temples, which had important consequences for Vaiṣṇava sectarian development.

THE TRANSACTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Towards the middle of the fourteenth century, certain scholastic disputes

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

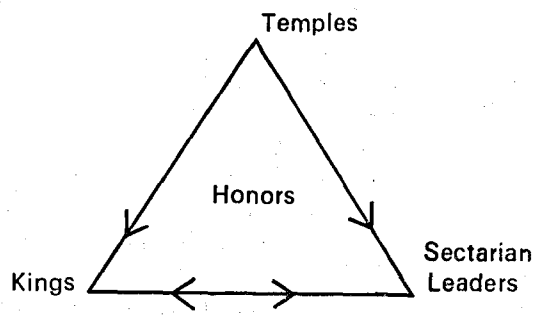
[22] *Tirumalai-Tirupati Devastanam Epigraphical Series*, 6 Vols., Madras, 1931-1937, *passim.*

[23] See, for example, *ibid.*, Vol. VI, Part 2, *Epigraphical Glossary*, Section III, "List of Donors for the Temples at Tirumalai and Tirupati."

[24] *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Trivandrum, 1930, Vol. 1, Group 6, pp. 108-9 and 113.

within the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava community in South India had divided its leadership into two schools. By the end of the seventeenth century, this rift had become the intellectual expression of a complex social phenomenon, namely, the division of the community into two antagonistic sub-sects, which were beginning to compete, pan-regionally, for control of Vaiṣṇava temples. To account for this fundamental alteration in the structure of the sect, it is necessary to appreciate a certain set of relationships which lay at the core of sectarian activity in this period The method of the following section is to schematically describe this set of relationships, then describe its empirical manifestations and transformations over the entire period, and thus account for the ultimate shape of South Indian Śrī Vaiṣṇavism at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

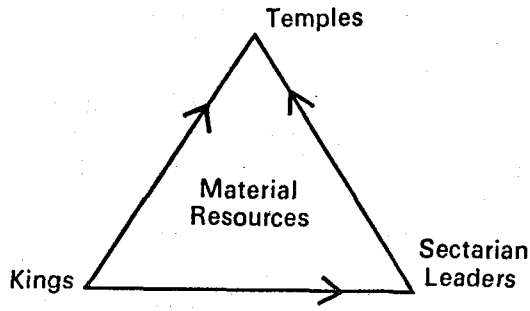
In analyzing sectarian activities (whether Vaiṣṇava or not) in this period, a three-way transactional system emerges from the evidence. This set of transactions links political rulers, sectarian leaders and temples, in a complex triangular set of exchanges. Although, in the South Indian temple, "honors" and material endowments represent two aspects of a single redistributive process,[25] it is analytically possible to separate them. So separated, it is possible to see two parallel but distinct levels of transaction that link kings, sectarian leaders and temples: one involving transfers of "honor" and the other involving transfers of endowed material resources. In the medium of "honors," it is possible to see four kinds of transaction during this period. Temples confer "honors" on political rulers; political rulers confer "honors" on sectarian leaders; temples confer "honors" on sectarian leaders; and sectarian leaders confer "honors" on political rulers. This level of transaction can be schematized as follows:



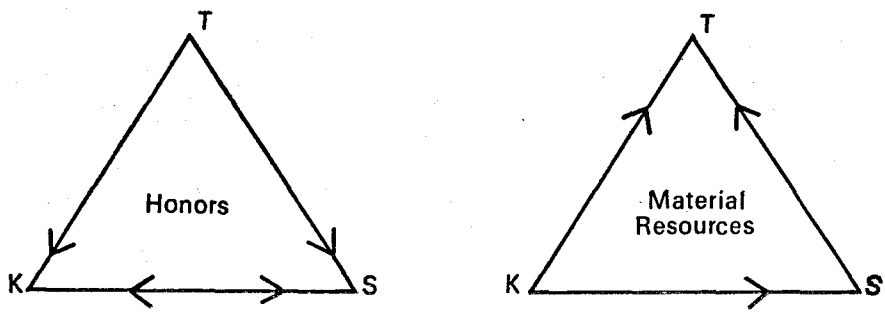
In the medium of endowed material resources, a different set of transactions obtains. Political rulers transfer material resources (most often shares in the

[25]For a detailed analysis of "honors" and the redistributive process of the temple, see Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge "The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honor and Redistribution," *Contributions to Indian Sociology: New Series*, December 1976.

agrarian produce of specified villages) to temples; political rulers also transfer such material resources to sectarian leaders; and sectarian leaders, in their own capacity, also endow temples. This transactional level can be schematized as follows:



If these two transactional levels are visually juxtaposed, the complexity of the relationships between these three loci becomes obvious:



The juxtaposition of these two diagrams raises a problem. Except in one transactional case, the relationships between any two of these units is symmetrical, and involves the exchange of "honors" for material resources. The only problematic, and seemingly gratuitous, relationship is the conferral of "honors" by political rulers on sectarian leaders. That is to say, the relationship between political rulers and sectarian leaders, conceived in terms of "honors" and material resources, is asymmetrical. Political rulers confer "honors" as well as material resources on sectarian leaders, whereas sectarian leaders seem to repay this only in part, i.e. by the conferral of "honors" on political leaders. Is this asymmetry a real one? While this question can be posed in schematic terms, it can be answered only empirically and historically. What is proposed below is a hypothesis concerning the relationship between political rulers and sectarian leaders during this period, which will give empirical flesh to the above scheme, and suggest also that sectarian leaders

did indeed repay the endowments given to them by political leaders, in a cognate medium. Specifically, it is argued below that in the socio-political context of the period from 1350 to 1700, sectarian leaders were crucial intermediaries for the introduction, extension and institutionalization of warrior-control over constituencies and regions that might otherwise have proved refractory. This intermediary role of sectarian leaders, which rendered control by conquest into appropriate (and thus stable) rule, was effected primarily in, and through, sectarian control of the redistributive capacities of temples. Thus, sectarian leaders permitted Telugu warriors to render their military expansion culturally appropriate by "gifting" activity, and its main product, temple honor. Put differently, it might be said that the ceremonial exchanges of honor between warrior-kings and sectarian leaders rendered public, stable and culturally appropriate, an exchange at the level of politics and economics. These warrior-kings bartered the control of agrarian resources gained by military prowess, for access to the redistributive processes of temples, which were controlled by sectarian leaders. Conversely, in their own struggles with each other, and their own local and regional efforts to consolidate their control over temples, sectarian leaders found the support of these warrior-kings timely and profitable. Empirically, and diachronically, this relationship between warrior-kings and sectarian leaders is neither simple nor transparent. It is a complex symbiosis in which mobile figures, of both types, augmented and sustained each other. How did this relationship come to apply to Śrī Vaiṣṇava institutions?

Śrī Vaiṣṇavism from 1137-1350 A.D.: Scholastic Fission

The activities and writings of Rāmānujā, the great synthesizer of South Indian Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, represented a complex institutional and ideological union of disparate traditions and groups: between the Sanskrit texts of the North and the Tamil devotional poetry of the Āḻvār poet-saints of South India, known as the *Prabandham*; between the largely domestic and anaconic ritual injunctions of the Vēdic tradition and the temple-centered and idol-oriented rituals of the Āgamic tradition; between the metaphysical severity of Advaita-Vēdānta and the personal, emotional intensity of popular devotionalism in South India; between the *varna* basis of the Vēdic tradition and the sectarian orientation of *bhakti* devotionalism in South India.[26] The two institutions that expressed these reconciliations were those of the *ācāryā* (sectarian leader/spiritual guide) and the organizationally complex sectarian temples, paradigmatically the great Vaiṣṇava temple at Srīrangam.[27] In Rāmānujā's own life

[26]J.B. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānujā*, Yale, 1974, Ch.2; N. Jagadeesan, "History of Sri Vaisnavism in the Tamil Country (Post-Ramanuja)," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Madras, 1967, p. 60.

[27]V.N. Hari Rao (Ed.), *Koil-Olugu*, Madras, 1961, *passim*.

and work at Srīrangam, these two institutional emphases were directly connected. After Rāmānujā's death, traditionally dated in 1137 A.D., the weak institutionalization of this gigantic mosaic became apparent.

In the two centuries that followed the death of Rāmānujā, his followers became divided into two schools, whose main intellectual difference was their respective preference for the Sanskrit tradition, represented at its peak by Rāmānujā's *Srī Bhāsya,* and the Tamil *Prabandham* poetry of the Āḻvār poet-saints.[28] This linguistic and textual division had, as its most important doctrinal consequence, divergent interpretations by the two schools of the doctrine of *prapatti* (self-surrender), as a technique for salvation.[29] The Sanskrit (or Bhāsyic) school, which gradually shifted its base from Srīrangam to Kāncipuram, accepted a more conservative view of *prapatti*, expressed in later sectarian literature in the analogy of the "monkey" whose young make active efforts to attach themselves to their mothers. The Prabandhic school, which gradually grew dominant at Srīrangam, had a more radical view of *prapatti*, later described by the analogy of the "cat," whereby the devotee, like a kitten, makes no effort to help himself, and depends wholly on divine grace.[30]

Both schools linked their views on *prapatti* to another belief: submission to a human mediator, specifically an *ācāryā*, for salvation.[31] But the Tamil school laid much greater emphasis on the idea of submission to the *ācāryā*, and also laid more explicit emphasis on the link between these two ideas.[32] It has often been remarked that the Tamil school, because of its radical interpretation of *prapatti*, and because of its reliance on the Tamil *Prabandham* rather than the Sanskrit *Vēda*, was more flexible and open to the participation of Sūdras in sectarian life.[33] This is undoubtedly true, but what was probably of greater long-term significance is that, in relating individual helplessness to the need for an absolutely authoritarian sectarian leadership, the Tamil school made a much more imaginative intellectual leap, by granting doctrinal legitimacy to the link between wider recruitment and radical sub-

[28]V. Rangachari, "The Successors of Ramanuja and the Growth of Sectarianism among the Sri-Vaishnavas," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXIV.

[29]A. Govindacharya, "The Astadasa-Bhedas . . ," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1910, pp 1103-12.

[30]A. Govindacharya and G. A. Grierson, "The Artha-Panchaka of Pillai Lokacarya," *ibid.*, p. 567.

[31]A. Govindacarya, "Tengalai and Vadagalai," *ibid.*, 1912, p. 716.

[32]T.K. Narayanaswami Naidu (Ed.), *Śrī Piḷḷai Lōkācāriyār Srīvacana Pūśanam: Manavāla Māmunikaḷ Tamil Ākkam*, Madras, 1970, *passim*, but particularly *sūtra* no. 450, p. 660; see also Govindacharya and Grierson, "The Artha.Panchaka. . .," *op. cit*, p. 567; see also K. K. A. Venkatachari, "The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Srivaiṣṇava Acāryas, 12th to 15th Centuries A.D." Doctoral Dissertation, Utrecht University, 1975, pp. 139-149.

[33]See, for example, B. Stein, "Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects," in J. Silverberg (Ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, Paris, 1968. See also K. K. A. Venkatachari. "The Maṇipravāḷa Literature. . .," *op. cit.*, pp. 36-49.

mission to sectarian leadership. Thus, while both schools, by 1350 A.D., had laid the groundwork for sectarian expansion through "discipleship" and initiation, it was the Tamil school which had placed the link between *prapatti* (self-surrender in the interests of salvation) and *ācāryābhimāna* (respect for the sectarian mediator) at the center of their teachings. It was this strategic leap in their view of the means of salvation combined with their natural advantage in the medium of religious communication, i.e. Tamil, which underlay the institutional expansion of Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism, first at Srīrangam and later throughout the Tamil country. After 1350 A.D., the division between the two schools, which had so far been primarily scholastic, exploded out of textual and rhetorical arenas to the primary political arenas of temple and royal court.[34]

Telugu Control and Temple Politics, 1350-1500 A.D.

The growth of Śrī Vaiṣṇava sectarian activity, in the century and a half after 1350 A.D., has for its context a transitional political situation. It was during this period that the Telugu warrior-founders of the Vijayanagara Empire consolidated their control of South India. The first fifty years of this period, especially in the Tamil country, illuminate the process by which this Telugu penetration was achieved. Indigenous sources, both inscriptional and sectarian, describe this process in a remarkably unified stylistic code, of which the primary elements are: (1) the defeat of the Muslim invaders of the Tamil country by Telugu warriors; (2) the "restoration," by these warriors, of temple-worship (alleged to have been interrupted or destroyed by the Muslims); and (3) the establishment of new political order by these Telugu warriors. A typical example of this stylized description is an inscription from Tirukkalākuṭi in the Ramnad district, which states that "the times were Tulukkan (Muhammedan) times and that Kampana Odeyar came on his southerly campaign, destroyed the Muhammedans, established orderly government throughout the country and appointed many nāyakkaṇmār for inspection and supervision in order that the worship in all temples might be revived and conducted regularly as of old."[35]

The first 30 years of the Sangama dynasty (the first dynasty) of Vijayanagara are characterized by a number of inscriptions, which adhere to this

[34]This is not to imply that before the 14th century, the growth of Srī Vaiṣṇavism was a quiet textual affair. It was indeed characterized by conflict, sometimes violent, but these conflicts were rooted in somewhat different issues than the ones discussed here.

[35]A.R. 34 of 1916, in para 33, *Annual Reports for South Indian Epigraphy for 1916.* (In the rest of this chapter, this numbered series of inscriptions will be prefaced by the initials A.R. The text of these reports will be referred to as *Annual Reports . . .*). For an excellent sample of the indigenous sources that adhere to this code, see V.N. Hari Rao, *A History of Trichinopoly and Srirangam*, Ph.D. Thesis, Madras, 1948, pp. 299-307.

code. Several of these inscriptions involve Kōpaṇṇa, a Brahman minister-general of Kampana Udaiyar II, of the Sangama dynasty, who seems to have been the model for Telugu penetration of Tamil country through the "restoration" of temples. The inscriptional evidence shows that Kampana's conquest of the Tamil country, and his defeat of the Muhammedans, was followed by extensive involvement in temple-endowment, in South Arcot district,[36] Trichinopoly district,[37] Chingleput district,[38] and Madura district.[39] Kōpaṇṇa, his minister-general, seems to have been one of the main agents of Kampana Udaiyar II, in this institutional penetration of the Tamil country.[40] Three inscriptions from Kāncipuram,[41] in the Kailāsanātha temple, give us an idea of the nature of this Telugu involvement in Tamil temples. The first, dated 1364 A.D., comes from the Rājasiṃhavarmēsvaran shrine, and testifies to the restoration of temple lands and worship, by the order of Kōpaṇṇa.[42] The second inscription, also dated 1364 A.D., is from the same temple but is far more detailed and interesting.[43] It describes Kōpaṇṇa's order to the temple authorities, ratifying the sale of some temple property to a community of weavers and their leaders (*mutali*), with the right to mortgage and sell this property. Along with this property, however, they were to be free to mortgage and sell their "honors" as well: their precedence (*mutalmai*) in the receipt of the betel-nut honor (*aṭaippam*), their service of the deity (*tēvar aṭimai*), and their proper place in rank (*aṭaivu*). The third inscription, dated 1369 A.D., refers to the establishment of a *maṭha* (monastery) and the allotment of some property, in return for the job of sharing in the recitation of sacred hymns before the deity, to the religious preceptor of a chieftain in a town in South Arcot.[44] This last inscription indicates that one function of allocating such temple-privileges, by these Telugu warriors, was to ease their ties with Tamil rulers. In this case, Kōpaṇṇa appears to have done this by allocating a specialized ritual role in a temple in Chingleput district to the *ācārya* of a chieftain in South Arcot. Taken together, these three inscriptions from Kāncipuram suggest that the initial penetration of Tamil country by Telugu warrior chiefs was not simply pillage. It involved inroads into some major Tamil temples, whose function was revived or extended, and whose resources were re-allocated to individuals or groups favored by these warriors. The

[36]A.R. 159 and 163 of 1904.

[37]A.R 282 of 1903.

[38]V Rangachari, "The History of the Naik Kingdom of Madura," *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 43, 1914, p. 7.

[39]A.R. 111 of 1903.

[40]E. Hultzsch, "Ranganātha Inscription of Goppanna; Saka-Samvat 1293," *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VI, pp. 322-330.

[41]A.R. 27, 28 and 29 of 1888.

[42]*See South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 120.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 122.

[44]*South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. I, pp. 123-125.

result not only was to establish constituencies beholden to these warriors (such as the weavers), but also to establish links between these warriors and indigenous chiefs. In establishing such linkages, sectarian leaders were of considerable importance.[45] This linkage can most directly be observed in the case of Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples after 1350 A D., particularly at Srīrangam. In this general atmosphere of intensification of royal involvement in temples, Vaiṣṇava sectarian leaders, particularly of the Prabandhic (Southern Tamil) school, made spectacular progress.

Telugu Warrior-Kings and Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism, 1350-1500 A.D.

The first signs of institutionalization of the Southern school are expressed in the formation of the Śrīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar *Āṭīna* (monastic organization) at Srīrangam. Although traditional hagiologies vary about the date of the establishment of this Prabandhic institution, it seems safe to assign it to the first quarter of the 14th century.[46] Kūranārāyaṇa Jīyar, the first occupant of this seat, appears to have been an outsider, but one who gained immense popularity at Srīrangam. As a response to his popular status, the temple-servants, lead by Periya Āyi,[47] installed him in this institution and also gave him several duties and privileges in the temple.[48] The honors and duties which were allocated to this *Jīyar*[49] indicate the growing power of the Prabandhic school. In the course of time, the honors allotted to the incumbent of this position increased and came to be on a par with the other prominent *ācārya-purusa* families at Srīrangam. Later incumbents of this position enhanced their power by offering discipleships to the Sūdra servants of the temple.[50] The primary index of the growing importance of this sub-sectarian institution was the nature of the honors given to its head: precedence in the receipt of *prasātam* (sacred remnants of the food consumed by the deity) in certain ritual contexts; exclusive receipt of the *prasātam* in certain physical areas of the temple; the periodical receipt of certain insignia from the temple-servants to indicate his fitness for this pontifical seat; the receipt of *tīrtam* (sacred water left over from the deity's meals or his bath), *parivaṭṭam* (a silk turban

[45]A.R. 56 of 1900 in V. Rangacharya, *A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency* (3 Vols.), Vol. I, Madras, 1919, p. 57; see also T. Gopinatha Rao, "Soraikkavur Plates of Virupāksha; Saka Samvat 1308" *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VIII, pp. 298-306.

[46]Hari Rao "A History of Trichinopoly . . ," *op cit.*, p. 295.

[47]The grandson of Mutali Aṇdān, to whom Rāmānujā had assigned the *srīkāriyam* (management) of the temple.

[48]*Koil-Olugu*, pp. 121-122.

[49]This term indicates a sectarian leader who also has a fixed role in temple-management, and goes back, according to sectarian tradition, to Rāmānujā's organizational activities all over South India.

[50]*Koil-Olugu*, p. 124

first worn by the deity), and a garland, also previously worn by the deity.[51] It appears, moreover, that the entry of this popular sectarian leaders into the redistributive process defined by temple-honors was not automatic. It was resisted by the members of the Kantāṭai family, who had been powerful in temple affairs since the time of Rāmānujā. They eventually accommodated the *Jīyar* and offered him an important share in these honors in deference to his popularity.[52] This monastic seat was subsequently to become one of the most important loci of Teṇkalai sectarianism.[53] To understand this process, however, it is necessary to take a lengthy detour, and to examine in detail the impact of Vijayanagara rule on Srīrangam in the period from 1350 to 1500 A.D.

The Srīrangam temple was a major example of the process by which Telugu warrior-chiefs "restored" Tamil temples after Muslim rule. Both Kōpaṇṇa and Sāḷuva Cuṇḍa, generals under Kampana II, were major benefactors of the temple, after 1371 A.D. But their endowments were not made directly: they were made through sectarian notables. Kōpaṇṇa, for example, is believed to have donated 52 villages to the temple through Periya Krishnarāya Uttamanambi.[54]

The rise to power of several sectarian leaders, and the involvement of Telugu warrior-kings in temple "honors" disputes is carefully recounted in the *Koil-Olugu*.[55] According to this narrative, Sāḷuva Cuṇḍa appointed a certain Uttamarkoil Srīrangarājan to be the fifth head of the Srīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar Ātīna, and established for him certain honors in the temple. The members of the Kantāṭai family took umbrage at this, seeing in it a reduction of their own status, and appealed to Kōpaṇṇa, the other Telugu general involved in the affairs of the temple But, we are told, "since that Durgātipati patronized the Jīyar, he overlooked it."[56] At this point, the Kantāṭai family appealed to Periya Krishna Uttamanambi, who was already rising in power as an agent for Vijayanagara interests in the temple. Uttamanambi is said to have proceeded to Vijayanagara in 1372 A.D to lay these problems before the Rāya (king). Although the outcome of this dispute is not known, it certainly heralds the rise of the Srīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar Ātīna, as a base for Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism, as well as the beginnings of a long and fruitful relationship between members of the Uttamanambi family and the Vijayanagara court.

The Uttamanambi family claim descent from Periya Āḻvār, who migrated to Srīrangam from Srīvilliputtūr.[57] Their rise to power began in the lifetime

[51] *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 122-25.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

[53] V.N. Hari Rao, "Vaishnavism in South India in the Modern Period" in O.P. Bhatnagar (Ed.), *Studies in Social History (Modern India)* Allahabad, 1964, pp. 129-30.

[54] *Koil-Olugu*, p. 135.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 136-38.

[56] *Koil-Olugu*, p. 136.

[57] Hari Rao, "A History of Trichinopoly . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 307.

of Periya Krishna Uttamanambi. He appears to have received cash grants from Kampana II, as well as from Kōpaṇṇa and Virupaṇṇa Udaiyar, which he converted to land grants to the temple [58] He apparently also used this cash to make various kinds of gifts to the temple such as ornaments, utensils, *maṇṭapas* (pillared halls adjoining shrines), *kōpuras* (towers on temple structures), and *vāhanas* (processional vehicles for the deity).[59] These endowments were sometimes explicitly in behalf of patron-kings,[60] but they were sometimes apparently wholly personal acts by this sectarian figure. This Uttamanambi made another trip to Vijayanagara in about 1375 A.D. and was commanded by Virupaṇṇa, one of the brothers of Kampana II, to build a special type of hall, and subsequently this chieftain came to Srīrangam and performed a special ceremony there: the *tulapurusa* ceremony.[61] According to the *Koil-Olugu*, Periya Krishnarāya Uttamanambi visited Vijayanagara several times, and obtained land-grants from a number of highly placed warriors in the Vijayanagara alliance, many of which he converted to specific ornamental and architectural additions to the temple, in the names of these warrior-chiefs.[62]

Between 1397 and 1419 A.D., fresh complications arose in the arena of temple-control and temple-honors, because of the rise to power of Vēdācārya Bhattar, a member of another *ācāryāpurusa* family, who is believed to have usurped some privileges belonging to the Kantāṭai family, which was temporarily in eclipse. This generated honors-disputes in the temple.[63] The disputes were settled by Mai-Nilai-Yiṭṭa Uttamanambi, who appears to have effected a compromise in 1418 A.D., whereby the powers of Bhattar were diminished and those of the Kantāṭai family revived. This settlement was made in the authoritative presence of an agent of the Vijayanagara ruler as well as agents of the Srīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar.[64]

During the reigns of Dēvarāya I and Dēvarāya II, (1406-1449 A.D.) two brothers of the Uttamanambi family became all powerful in the Srīrangam temple.[65] Their link with these rulers was expressed through the endowment of various lands to the temple by these rulers, whose supervision and application to specific purposes was entrusted to these sectarian leaders.[66] These land-grants permitted the Uttamanambis to associate themselves prominently

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 307-10; *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 142-43; T.N. Subramaniam (Ed.), *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. 2, Madras, 1957, p. 1300.

[60] *Koil-Olugu*, p. 143.

[61] *Ibid.*, p 138; on the role of the *tulapurusa* ceremony in the fulfilment of the sovereign function, see Mahalingam, *South Indian Policy, op. cit*, pp. 26-27.

[62] *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 142-43.

[63] *Ibid.*, p 144.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[65] Hari Rao, "A History of Trichinopoly . . . ," *op. cit.* pp. 310-315.

[66] *Ibid.*, see also *Annual Reports* . . . (1937-38), para 63; *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVI, pp. 222-23 and Vol. XVIII, p. 138 ff.

with the construction of new shrines, the installation of new deities, the building of *maṇṭapas*, and the gifting of ornaments to the deity, all activities bound to increase their share in the redistributive process of the temple.[67] For the Vijayanagara rulers, this relationship ensured the application of these resources to the proper ends, and ensured as well that they would be recognized as the benefactors of the temple. Indeed the relationship must have been a profitable one for the Vijayanagara rulers, since an inscription of Dēvarāya II states that Uttamanambi was the recipient of several royal honors such as a pearl-umbrella, a pair of *kāhalas* (musical instruments), two lamps, a golden vessel, and an ivory shield from Dēvarāya II, along with other royal emblems.[68] In this intricate set of transactions between Vijayanagara warrior-kings and the Uttamanambi family of sectarian leaders, we see the working out of a complex process: one in which the Telugu warriors linked themselves to the temple as a source of honor, through the patronage of sectarian leaders and the re-allocation of land and cash to these sectarian figures. At the same time, they associated these sectarian leaders with their own kingship by investing them with royal honors. This increased the local authority of these sect leaders at the same time as it made Vijayanagara rule locally honorable.

This fruitful and symbiotic relationship between Vijayanagara rulers and the descendants of Periya Krishna Uttamanambi continued throughout the fifteenth century: Tirumalainātha Uttamanambi had a similar relationship with Mallikarjunā (1449-1465 A.D.).[69] Similarly, Krishnarāya Uttamanambi, in 1487 A.D., mediated the endowments of Erṟamanji Timmappā Nāyakar to the temple.[70]

The last decades of the fourteenth century witnessed the breakdown of the First Dynasty of Vijayanagara and the concomitant rise of the Sāḷuva dynasty. This turbulent political shift had its effects on temple-politics at Srīrangam. The Uttamanambi family appears to have retained much of its power in this transitional period.[71] But they did have to make one major accommodation to the new rulers of Vijayanagara, by conceding considerable status to a foreign (*dēsāṇṭiri*) sectarian leader called Kantāṭai Rāmānujadāsar. This particular individual is a model of the social and geographical mobility of sectarian leaders during this period, and of their close links with kings. Kantāṭai Rāmānujadāsar is best known for his activities at Tirupati, as the agent of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha, a subject which is dealt with later in this

[67] *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 146-58; *Annual Reports . . .* (1937-38), *op. cit.*

[68] A.R. 84 of 1937-38; see *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. 2, pp. 1298-99; this inscription partly verifies the indigenous account in the *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 146-47 which describes the quasi-royal status of these brothers in Srīrangam.

[69] *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 158-61.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-63; Hari Rao, "A History of Trichinopoly . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 331.

[71] Hari Rao, *ibid.*

essay. The available evidence makes it difficult to identify this person.[72] But it seems fairly certain that he rose from obscurity to prominence by the appropriate manipulation of his "discipleship" to prominent sectarian leaders, and his trading of this credential for political currency under the Sāḷuvas at Tirupati. He arrived at Srīrangam after having established his credentials as the agent of Sāḷuva Narasimha at Tirupati between 1456 and 1489 A.D. He seems to have entered the highest levels of the sectarian hierarchy at Srīrangam by becoming the disciple (*sishya*) of Kantāṭai Aṇṇan. He then gained the privilege of the "*dēsāṇṭiri mutra*" (seal which gives certain rights to the prominent visiting sectarian figure), which seems to have been his sumptuary instrument for gaining a wedge into temple-affairs, and for appropriating certain honors, in precedence over a member of the powerful Uttamanambi family.[73] Kantāṭai Rāmānujadāsar also seems to have expanded his powers in the temple by associating himself with Narasa Nāyaka, a general of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha. Narasa Nāyaka's defeat of the provincial chief Kōnēri Rājā, the semi-independent representative of the previous dynasty in this region, signalled the establishment of Araviṭu rule in this region.[74] The *Koil-Olugu*, in fact, ascribes Narasa Nāyaka's defeat of Kōnēri Rājā, to the repeated requests of Kantāṭai Rāmānujadāsar for relief from the depredations of the latter.[75] The role of sectarian intermediary for Narasa Nāyaka at Srīrangam seems to have been as fruitful for Rāmānujadāsar as his relationship to Sāḷuva Narasiṃha had been at Tirupati. He managed Narasa Nāyaka's endowments, made some endowments himself, and as a consequence gained a significant share in temple-honors.[76] He also seems to have had a cordial relationship with the Srīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar Ātīna.[77] Kantāṭai Rāmānujadāsar's activities at Srīrangam testify to the close connection of sectarian intermediaries to warrior-rulers during this period, a connection which was pivotal to the rise of these leaders as also to the penetration by these warriors of the institutional structures of the Tamil country.

It was in this environment that Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism at Srīrangam received its institutional form under the leadership of Maṇavāḷa Māmuni (1370-1445 A.D.). During the lifetime of Maṇavāḷa Māmuni, Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism became the dominant sect of the Southern parts of the Tamil country, and made inroads as well into its Northern parts, and marginally into the Telugu and Kannaḍa countries. Maṇavāḷa Māmuni's activities involved a judicious combination of five kinds of strategies: (1) the enhancement

[72]*Ibid.*, p. 336; T.K.T. Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati*, 2 Vols, Tirupati, 1953, Vol. II, pp. 582-83.

[73]*Koil-Olugu*, pp. 165-66.

[74]Hari Rao, "A History of Trichinopoly . . . ," *op. cit.*, pp. 338-43.

[75]*Koil-Olugu*, pp. 166-67.

[76]A.R. 13 of 1939 and *Koil-Olugu*, pp. 169-70.

[77]Hari Rao, "A History of Trichinopoly. . . ," p. 342.

of the *Prabandham* as an authoritative doctrinal source, (2) the elaboration of the importance of radical submission to the *ācārya*, (3) the creation of sub-sectarian networks organized around "discipleship," which spanned most of Tamil country, (4) the use of royal patronage, on a disaggregated, local basis, to provide both material resources and royal honors for sectarian leaders, in specific localities, and (5) the specific linkage of sub-sectarian affiliations to temple-control. The interdependent and synthetic use of this fivefold strategy by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni ensured specifically Teṉkalai control over a number of temples in South India. How was this strategy historically realized?

Maṇavāḷa Māmuni was a native of Āḻvār Tirunagari (in the Tinnevelly district) which had become, by the time of his birth in 1370 A.D., the stronghold of Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism. After becoming the major Vaiṣṇava figure in Āḻvār Tirunagari, he proceeded to Srīrangam, the heart of Vaiṣṇava sectarian activities. In Srīrangam, early in the 15th century, he appears to have gained control of a *maṭha* (monastery) in Srīrangam and some share in temple honors through the Kantāṭai family.[78] He then went to Kāncipuram where he pursued Bhāsyic studies for some time, but returned to Srīrangam in 1425 A.D.[79] It was betweeen 1425 and 1432 A.D. that he seems to have become a decisive power at Srīrangam and acquired the title of "Periya Jīyar."

Maṇavāḷa Māmuni's major achievement was the conversion to discipleship of the powerful Kōyil Kantāṭai family. He also converted to discipleship the current head of the Uttamanambi family,[80] Prativāti Bhayaṇkaram Aṇṇān (a native of Kāncipuram and previously a strong adherent of the Sanskrit school), as well as Erumbi Appa, Emperumānar Jīyar, Bhaṭṭar Pirān, Appiḷḷai, Appiḷḷān. These seven individuals, along with Rāmānuja Jīyar (who had been his disciple and lieutenant originally at Āḻvār Tirunagari), came to be known as the *ashṭa-diggajās* (eight pillars of the faith). These eight individuals after the death of Māmuni carried on and consolidated the Prabandhic enterprise all over South India:[81]

> He authorized Aṇṇa and Aṇṇan to carry on his lectures in the Bhasya and Bhagavadvishaya. He sent Tōḷappa to Tirunarayanapuram to carry on his work there. He appointed Ramanuja Jiyar the guardian of his creed in the South, and Bhattar Piran Jiyar at Srirangam. He dispatched Erumbi Appa to his native place. . . . He appointed Appillai, Appillan on similar missions. All these who formed the *Ashta-diggajas* popularized the creed of their teacher, thanks to the support of stray kings and chiefs, and thus introduced

[78]V. Rangachari, "The History of Sri Vaishnavism," *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Vols. 7-8, 1916-18, pp. 197-98.

[79]*Ibid.*, p. 118.

[80]*Koil-Olugu*, pp. 150-51.

[81]V. Rangachari, "The History of Sri Vaishnavism," *op. cit.*, p. 206.

a socio-religious change which was of a revolutionary nature.

These individuals provided the institutional basis of Teṉkalai Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in South India in the centuries that followed Māmuni's death. During Maṇavāḷa Māmuni's own proselytizing period at Srīrangam, and in his travels all over South India, he seems to have benefited from the patronage of local princes to assist his own activities. He converted a local chief called Sathagōpa-dāsa and was his intermediary for the construction of various *maṇṭapas* in the Srīrangam temple.[82] He also appointed a *Jīyar* in Tirupati and converted a Tuḷuva prince under the name of Rāmānujadasar.[83] Similarly, in the Madurai/Ramnad region, he gained the discipleship of a king called Mahābalivāṇada Rāya, "who not only received the *panchasamskara* from the teacher but gave him all royal paraphernalia, lifted his palanquin and endowed the village of 'Muttarasan' or Aḷagia Maṇavāḷanallūr."[84] Finally, he managed to establish his second-in-command at the Vānamāmalai Maṭha in Tinnevelli, which is today the single most important base for Teṉkalai sectarian activity in South India.[85] After his last triumphal tour of the South, when Māmuni returned to Srīrangam, his decisive role in relating royal figures to his sect is noted in a traditional biography called the *Yatīndrapravaṇaprabhāva*, which points out that "the *Jīyar* brought with him costly jewels, umbrellas of silk, *chāmaras*, flags and colours, carpets, cushions and quilts of silk, and presented these to the deity, and how the temple authorities honoured him by escorting him in pomp to his *maṭha*."[86]

But it was not simply to the politics of conversion that Maṇavāḷa Māmuni devoted himself. He wrote a number of works, but most of these were of the nature of commentaries on the works of his predecessors.[87] The most important of these was his commentary on the *Śrīvacana-Bhūsana* of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya, which gave Māmuni further opportunity to clarify and elaborate the related Teṉkalai doctrines of *prapatti* and absolute dependence on an *ācārya*. But his most important intellectual and rhetorical act was the year-long lectures on the sacred *Prabandham* which he gave at Srīrangam between 1432 and 1444 A.D.[88] These lectures, which have a very special place in Teṉkalai historiography, were given at the peak of Maṇavāḷa Māmuni's powers, and symbolized the centrality of the *Prabandham* to all future Teṉkalai activity and affiliation.

[82]Rangachari, "The History of Sri Vaishnavism," *op. cit.*, p. 201.
[83]*Ibid.*, p. 206.
[84]*Ibid.*
[85]For a detailed description of this process and its consequences, see D. Ramaswamy Tatachar, *The Vanamamalai Temple and Mutt*, Tinnevelly, 1937.
[86]Rangachari, "The History of Sri Vaishnavism," *op. cit.*, p. 204.
[87]*Ibid.*, p. 203.
[88]*Ibid.*, p. 205.

Thus, by the time of the death of Maṇavāḷa Māmuni in 1445 A.D., Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism, through its sub-sectarian proponents, achieved considerable success, measured by royal patronage and temple-control, in Tamil country, principally at Srīrangam, but also in numerous other temple centers. It also had made some minor headway at Kāncipuram, but this was negligible. In Tirupati, representatives of the Prabandhic school had achieved some success, but by no means controlled the temple. This consolidation of much of the Tamil country by this Vaiṣṇava sub-sect was doctrinally associated with the emphasis on the Tamil *Prabandham*, and with the skilled intermediary functions of sectarian leaders who, by linking royal patronage and temple-honor, managed to become powerful religious chiefs themselves, by 1500 A.D. It is after 1500 A.D., that members of the Sanskrit school began to consolidate their own institutional bases, along similar lines and by similar strategies. But to understand this transition, it is necessary to consider the nature of sectarian politics at Tirupati, the great "Northern" (in Tamil country) center of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism.

The temple-complex at Tirupati, during the Vijayanagara period, evolved in three major ways that distinguished it from its structure in earlier periods: (1) the embellishment of the ritual calendar with a vast number of new festivals, supported by many architectural/iconic additions[89]; (2) the shift in the nature of endowments from an emphasis on things like the burning of perpetual lamps to an emphasis on food offerings: these food offerings and their redistribution as *prasātam* formed the core of temple economics in the Vijayanagara period[90]; and (3) the increased importance of the recitation of the *Vēdas* and the *Prabandham* by Brahman and non-Brahman devotees.[91] These three interlinked developments in the period from 1350 to 1650 A.D. transformed this temple-complex from a small set of shrines, dominated by the simple rituals of the Vaikhānasa priesthood,[92] to a vast socio-religious center, attracting rich endowments from rulers and merchants. This process was also reflected in the creation of numerous sectarian establishments, and the organization of numerous institutional structures, managed by sectarian leaders, for the housing and feeding of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava pilgrims from all over South India. This transformation was effected by the penetration of the temple by Tamil Śrī-Vaiṣṇava leaders and their disciples, and their fruitful mediation of royal (and non-royal) endowments to the temple.[93]

It was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Vaiṣṇava, primarily Tamil, sectarian leaders helped in the growth of popular and royal support

[89]S. Subrahmanya Sastry, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection with Illustrations*, Madras, 1930, *passim*.

[90]Burton Stein, "The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple," *op. cit.*, *passim*.

[91]Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. vi.

[92]*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 517-19.

[93]Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 519-41.

for the Tirupati complex, and used this growth to extend Vaiṣṇava sectarian activity into Telugu and Kannaḍa country. The model for the symbiotic relationship between rulers and sectarian leaders is the relationship between kantāṭai Rāmānuja Aiyengār (whose activities at Srīrangam have already been noticed) and the king Sāḷuva Narasiṃha of Vijayanagara.[94] It is worth investigating this relationship in some detail, since it casts light on matters that are pertinent to all such relationships.

Kantātai Rāmānuja Aiyengār was the agent through whom, starting in 1456 A.D.,[95] Sāḷuva Narasiṃha linked himself to the redistributive cycle of the Tirupati temple and publicly established his patronage of non-Brahman worshippers there. He did this by allocating taxes from some villages for some food offerings to the deity. He allocated the "donor's share"[96] of the *prasātam* to the *Rāmānujakūṭam*[97] established by him at Tirupati, to be managed by Rāmānuja Aiyengār. In this case, the *Rāmānujakūṭam* managed by Rāmānuja Aiyengār was for the benefit of non-Brahman Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, a group of whom were his disciples.[98] It was this non-Brahman constituency that benefited from the "donor's share" of the *prasātam*, created by Sāḷuva Narasiṃha's endowment. Between 1456 and 1473 A.D., Rāmānuja Aiyengār was the intermediary between this non Brahman constituency and the sanctified products of royal endowments,[99] as well as endowments by other land-controllers.[100]

Kantāṭai Rāmānuja Aiyengār was originally commissioned to simply oversee his royal patron's endowments and their proper redistribution to his non-Brahman disciples of the *Rāmānujakūṭam*. But he appears to have used his status to give these non-Brahmans some important roles in temple-worship and thus in temple-honors.[101] In the period between 1467 and 1476 A.D., he apparently used his influence with the Sāḷuva emperor to make crucial alterations in the redistributive cycle of the temple. He made an agreement with some Paḷḷis who had rights over some temple lands to pay them a fixed rent, and to give to his *Rāmānujakūṭam* the benefits of extra productivity created by building channels on the land.[102] On 25.4.1467, he made an agreement with the *Stānattār* (temple-managers) to create an offering to the deity, the "donor's share" of the *prasātam* being allocated to his non-Brahman constituency, by the investment of his own capital in the agrarian development of

[94]Stein, "Social Mobility . . . ," *op. cit.*, and Viraraghavacharya, *ibid.*, II, pp. 557-60.

[95]*Tirumalai-Tirupati Devastanam Epigraphical Series, op. cit.*, Vol. II: 4.

[96]Stein, "The Economic Function . . . ," discusses this term.

[97]This term designates a free feeding house for Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, often non-Brahman pilgrims and devotees, at a sacred center.

[98]Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 591.

[99]*T.T.D.E S., op. cit.*, II: 23, 31, 50.

[100]*Ibid.*, II: 64, 67, 68.

[101]*Ibid.*, II: 22, 81, 135, 31, 38, 50, 68.

[102]*Ibid.*, II: 24.

some temple land.[103] In November 1468, he persuaded the temple-managers to allot some temple-land for worship to an image of Kulasēkhara Āḻvār which he had installed in Tirupati.[104] Between 1469 and 1470 A.D., Rāmānuja Aiyengār made six arrangements with the temple-managers to develop temple land, endow additional temple ritual by the additional agrarian product so generated, and allocate the "donor's share" of the resulting *prasātam* to his non-Brahman constituency.[105] In one of these cases, he explicitly recognized his dependence on his royal patron, by describing the offering as being for "the merit of Narasiṃharāja-Uḍaiyar."[106]

The most interesting example of Rāmānuja Aiyengār's influence and his use of it to generate additional honor (in the form of *prasātam*) for his own non-Brahman following, is seen in an inscription dated 23.11.1476.[107] In this case, Rāmānuja Aiyengār seems to have been the intermediary for the endowment of a large sum of cash to the temple, by a local Śrī-Vaiṣṇava devotee. This sum was to be invested in agrarian development by the temple-managers, and from the resulting agrarian surplus, a number of ritual events was to be subsidized. But amongst these ritual events were two important innovations: the celebration of the natal stars (*tirunakṣattiram*) of all twelve *Āḻvārs* in front of the shrine of Rāmānuja, and the singing of the *Prabandham* by Brahman and non-Brahman devotees *together* in the same shrine.[108] The achievement of these innovations was made possible by embedding them in a complex scheme of allocation of resources for various items of worship, and an equally disaggregated allocation of *prasātam* honors for various temple functionaries as an inseparable part of this overall package.

Kantāṭai Rāmānuja Aiyengār served a crucial intermediary function linking outside endowers, temple officials, and local Śrī-Vaiṣṇava constituencies eager for shares in the honors represented in the leavings of the deity (*prasātam*). Such intermediaries were numerous at Tirupati, and it is precisely their large number that is an index of the wide range and large quantity of endowments (particularly land) that were gifted to the deity, transformed into *prasātam* and distributed according to the constituencies/ideas favored by the donor.

Although attempts were made by Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas of the Tamil school to give the recitation of the *Prabandham* a regular role in the ritual of Tirupati even as early as 1253 A.D.,[109] it was not until 1468 A.D., under the aegis of Rāmānuja Aiyengār, that this was achieved. From this time onwards, the recital of the

[103] *Ibid.*, II: 26.
[104] *T.T.D.E.S., op. cit.*, II: 36.
[105] *Ibid.*, II: 38, 40, 44, 45, 47.
[106] *Ibid.*, II: 45.
[107] *Ibid.*, II: 68.
[108] Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati, op. cit.*, discusses the potential resistance on the part of the Vaikhānasa priests in Vol. I, pp. 241-45 and Vol. II, pp. 590-91.
[109] Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1016.

Prabandham hymns began increasingly to attract donors, who allocated a share of their *prasātam* to the reciters of the *Prabandham*.[110] In the first quarter of the fifteenth century, the increasing popularity of *Prabandham* recital among donors led to rivalry among the various sectarian leaders of the two schools at Tirupati, for the management and control of this aspect of temple-ritual.[111] Starting in 1516 A.D.,[112] one of the major leaders of Sanskrit persuasion, the *jīyar* of the Van Saṭakōpan Maṭha, made endowments in which there was a conspicuous absence of any part in the "donor's share" of the *prasātam* for the *Prabandham* reciters. Between 1520 and 1528 A.D., some inscriptions reveal a change in the relationship between this *jīyar* and the Kōyil Kēḷvi *jīyar*s, who were of the Prabandhic school.[113] During this decade, the individuals to whom these sectarian leaders allotted their shares in the *prasātam* were increasingly united by their common sub-sectarian preferences.[114] By 1530 A.D., therefore, it is possible to infer that the increasing prestige of Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism at Tirupati had hardened the divisions between sectarian leaders of the two schools, and provided the motive for at least one set of leaders of the Sanskrit school, the *jīyars* of the Ahōbila Maṭha, to seek opportunities for their own sub-sectarian beliefs elsewhere (see below).

On the whole, by the early part of the fifteenth century, the activities of sectarian leaders of the Prabandhic school, given an organizational and ideological basis by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni and his network of disciples, had ensured that most of the Vaiṣṇava temples in the Tamil country, with the exception of some in the Chingleput district, were controlled by sectarian leaders of the Tamil school.

Warrior-Kings and the Sanskrit School, 1500-1700 A.D.

Sectarian leaders of the Sanskrit school were involved in temple-related activities before 1500 A.D. But it was only after A.D. 1500 that they created a counter-structure of an institutional sort, by linking themselves to Vijayanagara kings. Given the establishment, by this time, of Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism in most of the Tamil country, it is not surprising that these leaders looked for new areas in which to promulgate and institutionalize their beliefs. They succeeded in setting up bases in Kannaḍa and Telugu areas, and in some temple-centers in the northernmost parts of the Tamil country. Three sets of sectarian leaders were responsible for the major part of this activity: the *jīyars* of the Ahōbila Maṭha in the Kurnool district; members of the Tātācārya family

[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 1031-46.
[111] *Ibid.*, pp. 1046-55.
[112] *T.T.D.E.S., op. cit.*, III: 110, 114.
[113] *Ibid.* III: 143, 173, 178; Viraraghavacharya, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 1055-57.
[114] Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati, op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 1055-57.

of *ācāryāpurusas*, who spread through the Telugu districts in the sixteenth century; and the *matādipatis* (monastic heads) of the Brahmatantra Parakāla Tantra Svāmi Maṭha in Mysore. Let us consider briefly these three institutional bases of Sanskrit school activity.

The heads of the Ahōbila Maṭha in Kurnool district were the successors of the *jīyars* of the Van Saṭakōpan Maṭha at Tirupati, where they conducted intermediary functions for some Telugu chiefs, even after the headquarters of the *maṭha* had shifted to Kurnool.[115] As we have already noticed, there is some evidence that the shift of this set of Sanskrit school sectarian leaders to Kurnool from Tirupati was probably linked to the increasing prestige of Prabandhic Vaiṣṇavism at Tirupati. In the period between 1554 and 1584 A.D., the heads of this *maṭha* established in Kurnool a complex set of temple-centered relationships with Vijayanagara chiefs.[116] By this time, these sectarian leaders must have gained sufficient control of the local Narasiṃhasvāmi temple, for their transactions with representatives of the Vijayanagara kingdom show them to have been at the center of various land transactions involving these chiefs, linked directly to temple-ritual as well as to agrarian development.[117] For example, in 1544-55 A.D., an inscription reports that "the Vaishnava teacher Parāṇkusa-Van-Sathagōpa Jiyamgāru, the trustee of the Ahobala temple and the agent of Aḷiya Rāmapayyadēva-Mahārāja, granted a *dasavanda-mānya* to Avubalarāja, son of Kōnēṭi Rājayya and grandson of Rāmarāja-Peda-Kondayadēva-Maharājā of Atrēya gōtra and the lunar race, for having built at Alamuru, which was a village of the temple (*tiruvaḷayāṭu*), the tank Kōnasamudram, otherwise called Nārāyaṇasamudram."[118] Also, these sectarian leaders re-allocated land originally granted to them by Telugu warrior-chiefs, to specific ritual purposes in the local temple: an inscription of 1563 A.D. reveals that "a gift of land in the village China-Komerḷa in the Ghaṇḍikōṭaṣīma, by Vaṇ Saṭhagōpa-Jiyyamgāru, to Ahōbalēsvara for providing offerings of rice-cakes on specified festivals in the maṇṭapa in front of the *maṭha* which he had constructed. . . . The village China-Komerḷa was a gift made to the Jīyyamgāru by the chief Krishṇamarāja, son of Nadēla China-Obaṇṇamgāru."[119] At the same time, these sectarian leaders cooperated with warrior-chiefs in the management of royal endowments.[120] In the period 1578-1584 A.D., these sectarian leaders appear to have invited Vijayanagara aid in ousting hostile Muslim forces from the locality and, subsequently, they granted temple-honors to the warriors responsible for this victory.[121] Thus,

[115] *T.T.D.E.S.*, *op. cit.*, II: 101.

[116] V. Rangacharya, *A Topographical List. . . , op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 970-74.

[117] A.R. Nos. 65, 69 and 79 of 1915 in *ibid.*

[118] A.R. 65 of 1916, in Rangacharya, *A Topographical List. . . , op. cit.*, II, p. 971.

[119] A.R. 82 of 1915, in *ibid.*, p. 975.

[120] A.R. 76 of 1915, in *ibid.*, p. 974.

[121] A.R. 70 of 1915, in *ibid.*, pp. 972-73; see also, "Ahobalam Inscription of Sri Rangarāya," in V. R. R. Dikshitar (Ed.), *Selected South Indian Inscriptions*, Madras, 1952, pp. 327-31.

by the end of the sixteenth century, the Ahōbila Maṭha became a major base for the sectarian activities of the Sanskrit school in Telugu country.

The second set of leaders of the Sanskrit school was provided by the Tātācārya family of *ācāryāpurusas* who, in the second half of the fourteenth century, settled in Eṭṭūr (Kistna District) and appear to have spread their activities through large parts of the Telugu country, as well as in the northern most parts of the Tamil country.[122] Sectarian tradition links them with the Vijayanagara court, and its increasing preference for Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, starting during the reign of Vīrupākṣa I (1354-1378 A.D.).[123] Pancamatabhanjanam Tātācārya was the *rājaguru* (royal preceptor) of Sadāsiva Rāya and his minister Aḷiya Rāmarāya.[124] It is also interesting that this Tātācārya was the nephew of Parāṇkusa Vaṇ Saṭagōpa Jīyar, the sixth head of the Ahōbila Maṭha, thus indicating kin-based connections within the leadership of the Sanskrit school.[125] But it was during the rule of the Araviṭu dynasty of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century that the royal patronage of the Tātācāryas reached its zenith, and was displayed in the massive control of temples by them. Lakshmikumāra Tātācārya, the adopted son of Pancamatabhanjanam Tātācārya, achieved great influence over his patron, Venkata I of the Araviṭu dynasty: both sectarian sources as well as inscriptions lay great emphasis on the coronation of Venkata I by a Tātācārya, although there is some question as to which of these two individuals was the sectarian leader in question.[126] Although inscriptions suggest that Lakshmikumāra Tātācārya was in charge of all the temples in the kingdom, he seems to have concentrated his activities in the Chingleput district, to some extent in the Srīperumbudūr and Tiruppukuḻi temples, but primarily in the Varadarāja Svāmi temple in Kāncīpuram.[127] In this last temple, it is clear that the power of Lakshmikumāra Tātācārya was great over land, ritual and the functionaries involved in the transformation of the one into the other.[128] In the 1660s, reflecting the decline of the Vijayanagara empire, and the growth of independent kingships all over South India, Venkata Varadācārya, Lakshmikumāra Tātācārya's son, migrated to Mysore and associated himself with the growing sovereignty of the Woḍeyār kings of Mysore.[129]

[122]S. Vijayaraghavachari, "A Few Inscriptions of Laksmikumara Tatacharya" in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXV, Pt. 1, April 1947, pp. 121-31; see also Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati, op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 760-61 for a genealogy of this family.

[123]Vijayaraghavachari, "A Few Inscriptions. . .," *op. cit.*, p. 124; see also T.A. Gopinatha Rao, "Dalavāy-Agrahāram Plates of Venkatāpatidēva Mahārāya I: Saka-Samvat 1508," *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, pp. 162-63.

[124]H. Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, Madras, 1927, pp. 301-6.

[125]Rangacharya, *A Topographical List. . ., op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 971.

[126]Heras, *op. cit.*, p. 302 and Vijayaraghavachari, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27.

[127]Heras, *op. cit.*, p. 305; Vijayaraghavachari, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-31; *Annual Reports. . ., op. cit.*, 1920, pp. 115-16.

[128]A.R. 383 of 1919; *Annual Reports. . . , op. cit.*, p. 115.

[129]C. Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, Bangalore, 1943, Vol. I, p. 247.

It was probably at this very time in Mysore, during the reign of Dēvarāja Woḍeyār (1659-1673 A.D.) that the nucleus of the third base of Sanskrit school leadership, the Brahmatantra Parakāla Tantra Svāmi Maṭha, was laid.[130] This *maṭha* was founded in Kāncipuram in the fourteenth century, by a disciple of Vēdānta Dēsika, the revered figure of the Vaṭakalai tradition, through the support of an unknown royal patron.[131] The *maṭha* subsequently shifted to Tirupati, where its heads appear to have been intermediaries for the benefactions of the Mysore chiefs.[132] During the reign of Dēvarāja Woḍeyār, the then head of the *maṭha* shifted its headquarters to Mysore.[133] This was not unnatural, since the rulers of Mysore, from early in the seventeenth century, publicly displayed their commitment to Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism: by taking the rites of initiation from the *Svāmis* of the Parakāla Maṭha, by using the *varāha-mudre* (boar-seal) in their documents,[134] and by the building and endowment of Vaiṣṇava temples.[135] The foundation of this relationship of mutual benefaction between this *maṭha* and the Mysore royal court was probably laid during the headship of Periya Parakāla Svāmi (1677-1738 A.D.).[136] This enterprising leader, probably responsible for the beginnings of the pan-regional Vaṭakalai movement for temple-control, seems to have had the support of his royal patrons for his scheme.

A Kannaḍa *nirūpa* (order), probably dated in 1709 A.D., during the reign of Kāntirāva Narasarāja Woḍeyār, King of Mysore, contains a royal edict to the effect that "the practice of using *tanian* [invocatory verse] Rāmānuja Dayāpātra in sacred places like the Tirunārāyaṇasvāmi temple at Mēlukōte on the occasion of reciting Prabandhas which was in vogue from the time of Rāja Woḍeyār, King of Mysore, up to the reign of Kāntirava Narasarāja Vodeyar, shall continue in the future also in the same manner."[137]

This royal order represents the beginnings of self-conscious pan-regional conflict for temple-control between the two schools of South Indian Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to some extent in the twentieth century, attempts were made by individuals and groups of the Sanskrit school to penetrate temples controlled by the Tamil school or to extend their rights in temples where they shared control with members of the Prabandhic school. In every such case, the introduction of the "Rāmānuja

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] A.R. 574 of 1919; see also N Desikacarya, *The Origin and Growth of Brahmatantra Parakala Mutt*, Bangalore, 1949, pp. xii-xv.

[132] Desikacarya, *ibid.*, p. 8.

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[134] Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 169, 170-71, 224, 232.

[135] *Ibid.*, pp. 363-65, 166-68, 375-77.

[136] Desikacarya, *The Origin and Growth. . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[137] *Archaeological Survey of Mysore: Annual Report 1938;* also see Desikacarya, *op. cit.*, Appendix VI.

Dayāpātra. . ." invocatory verse[138] was the first stage in these battles for temple-control, wherein the Sanskrit school was united and inspired by the three sets of sectarian leaders previously described.[139] The examination of these post-medieval conflicts, however, lies beyond the scope of this analysis.

Conclusion

The hypothesis which this paper began can be reviewed as follows: in South India, in the three centuries that preceded British rule, a *single* system of authoritative relations united religious and political interests, and wedded them into a flexible and dynamic pan-regional network. The key components of this system were: (1) the growing number of temples which served as redistributive centers, where gifts to deities enabled the continuous transformation of material resources into status and authority;[140] (2) the shared orientation of political and religious figures to these myriad economic/religious centers; (3) the resulting willingness of religious and political leaders to transact with each other and share authority in a symbiotic, rather than in a mutually exclusive, fashion. If this hypothesis is taken as valid, or even as suggestive, the following questions need further investigation: (1) How did the role of Saivite, Mādhvā or other religious institutions complicate or coexist with this system? (2) What were the economic/technological changes at the end of the Chōla period that made possible the growth of this system? (3) Were there structural weaknesses in this system that hastened its breakdown in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

[138]For a discussion of the place of this verse in Śrī Vaiṣṇava temple-ritual, and for a Teṉkalai account of the circumstances of its origin, see P.B Annangarachariar, *Rāmānujā Dayāpātrā*, Kancipuram, 1954.

[139]V.N. Hari Rao, "Vaishnavism in South India in the Modern Period," *op. cit.*, pp. 120-25; N. Jagadeesan, "History of Sri Vaishnavism. . . ," *op. cit.*, pp. 252-58; K.S. Rangaswami Aiyengar, *A Second Collection of Papers Relating to Sri Ranganadhasvami Temple, Its Management etc.*, Trichinopoly, 1894.

[140]For a nineteenth century view of the immense complexity of the relationship between endowed material resources and ritual, at a single temple, see Carol A. Breckenridge, "The Śrī Mīnāksi Sundarēsvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India, 1833 to 1925," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1976.