

MAHĀRĀJAS, MAHANTS AND HISTORIANS. REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF EARLY VIJAYANAGARA AND SRINGERI*

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I

The early history of Vijayanagara is well known and seems to be firmly established. Good examples are in chronological order: R. Sewell's *A forgotten empire*,¹ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's textbook on the *History of South India*,² and the relevant chapter in India's monumental national history, *The history and culture of the Indian people*, edited by R.C. Majumdar.³ Here, we find the widely accepted and often quoted version of the origin of Vijayanagara which may be summarized as follows: Harihara and Bukka and three other brothers were sons of the Saṅgama family. In their youth they served at Warangal in the eastern Deccan, but they had to flee to Kampili when Warangal was conquered by the troops of the future Delhi Sultan Muhammad Tughluq in the year 1323. When Kampili, a stronghold in the neighbourhood of the future Vijayanagara, also fell in 1327 they were taken as prisoners to Delhi where they were converted to Islam. After a few years, during the period of a widespread Hindu uprising in Central India and in the lower Deccan, the Sultan of Delhi sent Harihara and Bukka to put down the revolt. But in the great surge of anti-Islamic movements they soon began

"to kindle in their minds a longing to serve their country and their ancestral religion in the old way. Their meeting with Vidyāranya ('Forest of Learning') thus probably furnished them with the best and perhaps only means of following the promptings of their hearts; it needed a spiritual leader of his eminence to receive them back from Islam to Hinduism and to render the act generally acceptable to Hindu society. Thus it happened that the trusted Muslim agents of the sultan of Delhi who were sent to restore his power in the Deccan, turned out to be the founders of one of the greatest Hindu states of history ... After establishing their sway over Kampili at first for the sultan ... the two Saṅgama brothers returned to the Hindu fold, proclaimed their independence, and founded a new city ... to which they gave the significant names Vijayanagara ('City of Victory') and Vidyānagara ('City of Learning'), the second name commemorating the role of Vidyāranya in these momentous events. Here in the presence of God Virūpākṣha, Harihara I celebrated his coronation in proper Hindu style on 18. April 1336."⁴

During the following years, Harihara and Bukka expanded their sway over large parts of the weakened Hoysala kingdom which they "overran and annexed" completely after the death of Ballāḷa III, the last great Hoysala king.

"... in 1346, the entire family of five brothers and their chief relatives and lieutenants could meet at Śringeri, the seat of the Hindu pontiff, to celebrate the conquest of dominions extending from sea to sea by holding a great festival (*viḷayotsava*) in the presence of the most eminent spiritual leader of the Hindu community."⁵

The many repetitions of this story in most of the conventional writings on Indian history give the wrong impression that it is generally accepted. However, for more than five decades, scholarly circles have fallen apart into two groups with very conflicting ideas about, firstly, the origin of the royal founders of Vijayanagara, Harihara and Bukka; secondly, about their relationship with the disintegrating Hoysala dynasty, and thirdly, about the role allegedly played by the saint Vidyāranya in the foundation of Vijayanagara. Nearly all details of the above-mentioned traditional description of Vijayanagara's foundation have meanwhile been rejected or, at least, become issues of heated and most controversial discussions, e.g. the 'Telugu' or Warangal origin of the Saṅgama brothers, their capture in Kampili, their conversion to Islam in Delhi and re-conversion to Hinduism under the influence of Vidyāranya, the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336 and, finally, their struggle against the Hoysala dynasty. The only point of this story which still remains uncontradicted is the great 'victory festival' (*vi.jayotsava*) held by the five brothers in Sringeri in the year 1346. But, as will be shown later on in this paper, particularly this event raises several hitherto unsettled problems which are of crucial importance for the history of Sringeri and its relations with the early rulers of Vijayanagara.

II

A major problem is the origin of the Saṅgama brothers as it touches the very question of the origin of Vijayanagara. If one follows the above-mentioned Telugu version and its protagonists,⁶ one has to regard Vijayanagara - the kingdom as well as its capital - as a completely new foundation which rose like a phoenix from the ashes of former Hindu kingdoms which had been destroyed by several Muslim inroads into South India. This great exploit was performed by two outsiders, i.e. Harihara and Bukka. They were reconverted from Islam by the sage Vidyāranya and established their new capital under the latter's advice near Hampi and gave it the name Vijayanagara or Vidyānagara. It is evident that the assumption of a Telugu origin of the Saṅgama dynasty and particularly the alleged contemporary conversion of the founder-kings to Islam necessitates the supposition that Vidyāranya played a decisive if not dominant role in the foundation of Vijayanagara, because "it needed a spiritual leader of his eminence to receive them back from Islam into Hinduism and to render the act generally acceptable to Hindu society".⁷ And, furthermore, it is consistent that any theory of Vijayanagara's foundation by outsiders in the year 1336, almost ten years before the death of the last Hoysala king, quite naturally led to the assumption of a military conflict between the new rulers of Vijayanagara and the Hoysala dynasty. According to this theory, these newcomers forcibly expanded their realm at the cost of the Hoysalas and finally they even dealt a death-blow to them.

Against this interpretation of Vijayanagara's early history a group of historians, mainly from Karnataka itself, argue in favour of an indigenous origin of Saṅgama and his sons.⁸ And what is even more important in this connection, these scholars emphasize the continuity between the Hoysala dynasty under their last kings Ballāḷa III and

Ballāla IV and their former feudatory chiefs, Harihara and Bukka, who had already been in their service in order to defend the northern frontiers. The adherents of this theory strongly deny the foundation of the capital of Vijayanagara in the year 1336 and refer instead to the epigraphical evidence which shows that Vijayanagara existed already since the times of Ballāla III under different names, e.g. Hosapaṭṭaṇa (see *infra*, p. 126).

As a new capital, Vijayanagara was founded only several decades later, after Harihara and his brothers had already firmly established themselves as the new Hindu rulers of the South. It follows that, according to this theory, Vidyāraṇya played only an inferior role, if any, during the early years of the struggle of the Saṅgama brothers for dominance over the South. The famous *viḷḷayotsava* at Sringeri, which, no doubt, took place in the year 1346, was thus not a 'festival of victory' over the Hoysaḷas after the death of Ballāla IV in the same year.⁹ It was instead organized in order to lend the victorious Saṅgama brothers an appropriate solemnity which allowed them to carry on the work of the Hoysaḷas and to defend the Hindus of the South.

This interpretation of the *viḷḷayotsava* is also based on the fact that Kikkāyitai, the dowager queen of the late Ballāla III, not only participated in this ceremony but also donated land to the sage Bhāratitīrtha of Sringeri in the same way as done by the five Saṅgama brothers. The supporters of this 'Kannada version' of the origin of Vijayanagara point out that it is preposterous to assume that the widow of the Hoysaḷa king Ballāla III was compelled by force to join the Saṅgama brothers at their alleged 'festival of victory' over the Hoysaḷas. According to the theory of the Telugu origin of the Saṅgama brothers and their warfare against the Hoysaḷas,¹⁰ this rather strange assumption, however, is indeed the only way to explain Kikkāyitai's presence in Sringeri. In addition, the 'Kannada version' is supported by the fact that a year after this *viḷḷayotsava* at Sringeri, Kikkāyitai is mentioned again in a donative inscription. This time, her name is even placed before that of king Harihara I "which implies that she was not Harihara's subordinate but on the contrary, Harihara had a great respect for the vanishing royal family".¹¹

Another major point of the controversy are a number of important inscriptions whose authenticity was contested by H. Heras already more than fifty years ago. The two lectures which he delivered at the University of Mysore in 1928 and which were published in the following year under the title *Beginnings of Vijayanagara history*¹² were indeed the most important event in the modern historiography of Vijayanagara after the publication of Sewell's *A forgotten empire* in the year 1900. In these lectures, Heras not only evolved for the first time an elaborate theory of an indigenous (Kannada) origin of the Saṅgama dynasty and their "loyalty to the Hoysaḷa Emperors". He also came forward with strong arguments against the genuineness of all those inscriptions which speak of an early foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336 and which praise Vidyāraṇya as the "guiding star of its royal founders". Heras concluded that all inscriptions which mention the name of Vidyānagara instead of Vijayanagara were fabricated at Sringeri in the 16th century, particularly under its *mahant* and *jaḷadguru* Rāmacandra Bhārati (1508-1560).¹³

This happened because during this time the two most powerful rulers of Vijayanagara, i.e. Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya and Acyutadeva Rāya became strong-minded Vaiṣṇavas and shifted their royal patronage from the Śaiva *maṭha* of Sringeri to the Vaiṣṇava god Śrī Veṅkateśvara at Tirupati. In order to counteract this severe setback, Sringeri began to rewrite Vijayanagara's early history, proving Vidyāraṇya's pivotal role in the foundation of 'Vidyānagara'.

It is quite understandable that the "shocking finding of Father Heras [was] a rude shock that practically uprooted the belief" that Vidyāraṇya was responsible for the establishment of Vijayanagara.¹⁴ This shock still seems to have persisted in the year 1961 when it caused the exclamation of a concerned reader: "Has there been no ascetic or research scholar till now, for the last thirty years to crucify this false, disgusting statement of this 'padre'!"¹⁵ But it is astonishing to observe that although H. Heras is rarely quoted in this connection, his theory about the forgery of all those inscriptions which refer to the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336, seems to have been widely accepted by historians and epigraphists, particularly, of course, by the supporters of the 'Kannāḍa version' of the origin of the Saṅgama dynasty. The *Annual report of the Mysore Archaeological Department for the year 1934* mentions among the 'contemporary' inscriptions of the 14th century which refer to Vidyāraṇya four copper plates which "are generally believed to be spurious".¹⁶ Among them are those two inscriptions which date the foundation of 'Vidyānagara' in the year 1336 A.D. In 1934, too, B.A. Saletore's Ph.D. thesis on the *Social and political life in the Vijayanagara empire* was published. It contains a detailed survey of the epigraphical evidence which verifies and substantiates the hitherto rather hypothetical findings of H. Heras.¹⁷ But even scholars who are above suspicion of belonging to the quarrelling parties seem to accept the theory that all those inscriptions are spurious which mention the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336. P.V. Kane, for instance, criticizes in his *History of the Dharmasāstra* the "grand generalization" of Father Heras but, at the same time, he states that "the earliest inscription [of the kings of Vijayanagara] is that of Harihara I dated *śaka* 1262 (1339-40 A.D.) wherein Harihara is said to be a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara".¹⁸ Kane thus tacitly agrees with Heras' and Saletore's evaluation of the crucial inscriptions of the year 1336.

In the year 1936, the Karnatak Historical Research Society published the *Vijayanagara Sexcentenary Commemoration Volume*.¹⁹ One would expect that this programmatic volume contains articles proving that the foundation of Vijayanagara took place in the year 1336. But, strangely enough, even in the introductory article by S. Krishnaswami we read that "tradition ascribes the foundation to the date A.D. 1336 although as yet we have no definite evidence that the fort was either founded or completed in that year."²⁰ And B.A. Saletore, for obvious reasons, avoids to refute directly the celebrated date 1336. Yet he speaks of 1347 as the "year after the foundation of the Kingdom of Vijayanagara"²¹. Furthermore Saletore elaborates in detail his theory of the 'Kannāḍa' origin of the Saṅgama dynasty. And he concludes that "if in spite of all this evidence one believes in the story of Vidyāraṇya Śrīpāda having helped Harihara Rāya I to build the capital, one merely exchanges fact for fiction".²² A 'sexcentenary vol-

ume' published in the year 1936 which tacitly rejects the year 1336 as the date of Vijayanagara's foundation, certainly has to be regarded as a strange paradox. But this paradox seems to be the consequence of the attempt by the Karnatak Historical Research Society to stick to the early traditional date and, at the same time, to argue in favour of the 'indigenous' origin of the Saṅgama dynasty. This, however, is impossible. As has already been pointed out, the theory of the Kannada origin of the Saṅgama brothers and their loyalty to the Hoysaḷas admits a foundation of the new Vijayanagara empire only a f t e r the final downfall of the Hoysaḷas in 1346.

Yet this is not the only paradox in modern Vijayanagara historiography. In 1946, exactly 600 years after Vijayanagara was founded - according to the Kannada version - K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya published their monumental work *Further sources of Vijayanagara history*.²³ This work contains a number of traditional accounts which date the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336. None of these texts, however, dates back to this period. The most famous collection of these accounts, the *Vidyāraṇya kālajñāna* which tradition ascribes (as "prophecies", i.e. *kālajñāna*) to Vidyāraṇya, is certainly not older than ca. 1580 A.D.²⁴ And it is significant that the description of the origin of Vijayanagara given by these late accounts, resemble firstly the story which we know from the spurious and most probably contemporary inscriptions which refer to the year 1336 and, secondly, to the narration of Nunes, the Portuguese trader of the mid-16th century.

For an outsider, as the present author admits to be, it is strange to realize that scholars like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya wrote during the following years their histories of the early Vijayanagara period mainly on the basis of these late accounts and dubious inscriptions of the year 1336. The latter even did not hesitate to write about his 'opponents' and their Kannada version: "Though espoused with enthusiasm by some eminent South Indian epigraphists and historians, this view seems to be based not on facts but on gratuitous assumptions and false identifications which need not to be discussed here." And significantly enough N. Venkataramanayya explicitly states that the early history of Vijayanagara which he wrote in the *History and culture of the Indian people* is based on these late accounts as known from the *Vidyāraṇya kālajñāna* and *Vidyāraṇya-Vṛttānta*.²⁵

III

In view of the fact that, firstly, these accounts which were composed mainly after the downfall of imperial Vijayanagara in 1565 still form the major basis of many modern historical writings on early Vijayanagara, and, secondly, that this version still has to be regarded, at least outside Karnataka, as the 'standard version' of the history of early Vijayanagara,²⁶ Vasundhara Filliozat's more recent epigraphical studies are of greatest importance. Thanks to her Ph.D. thesis *L'épigraphie de Vijayanagar du début à 1377*,²⁷ we now possess a complete corpus of the inscriptions which refer to the rule of the first generation of Saṅgama rulers, excluding, however, the inscriptions which have been defined as spurious since H. Heras. On the basis of this epigraphical material, she raises again the

whole spectrum of problems in her comprehensive introduction. She rejects again completely all attempts to trace the origin of the Saṅgama dynasty in Warangal and shows very convincingly that the brothers began their careers under the Hoysaḷa king Ballāla III.

This fact is further verified by the early titles of the Saṅgama brothers. Initially, they all held the typical title of 'Great Tributary Lord' (*mahāmandāleśvara*). Whereas this title seems to have remained the only title of Harihara I throughout his lifetime,²⁸ his brother Bukka acquired in the year 1349 (Filliozat, inscription n. 28) and again in 1358 (n. 50) the additional title of a *mahārāja*. But it was only in the year 1368²⁹ that Bukka bore, for the first time, in an inscription of his minister Mādhava, the new imperial title of *mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara* ('the Chief King of the Great Kings, the Most Excellent Lord') (n. 104).³⁰ Though this title is repeated in another inscription of the minister Mādhava in the year 1369, nearly all further inscriptions till his death refer to Bukka again under his tributary title. The only exceptions are two inscriptions of the year 1376 (nos. 130 and 139) which praised Bukka shortly before his death by his imperial titles. These imperial titles were finally acquired by Harihara II, Bukka's son and successor.

From the epigraphical evidence it is thus quite clear that the first generation of the Saṅgama rulers obviously hesitated to bear imperial titles, a fact which can only be explained by their loyalty to their former sovereigns of the Hoysaḷa dynasty. This conclusion derived from the epigraphical evidence of these titles is further confirmed by the fact that the early rulers of Vijayanagara sometimes even associated their own rule with the glory of the former Hoysaḷa dynasty. In the year 1354, for instance, it is mentioned in an inscription (n. 36) that Bukka "ruled from his capital Hosapaṭṭaṇa over the kingdom which belongs to the dynasty of the Hoysaḷas".³¹

Another title may be of greatest significance for the problem of an alleged conversion of the princely brothers to Islam. In the year 1347³² Mārappa and from the year 1354 onwards, also his brothers Bukka and Harihara (nos. 35 and 36) were praised as "Sultans of the Hindurājas" (*hindurājasuratāla* or *-suratrana*). The meaning of this title is not very clear. But it is quite likely that the early kings of Vijayanagara laid claim to a status among the Hindu Rājas equal to that of the Sultans among the Muslim rulers. The examples might have been the Sultans of Madurai (since 1334) and the Bahmanīs (since 1347) rather than the distant Sultans of Delhi. If this interpretation is correct, it is inconceivable, at least for the present author, that Harihara and Bukka would have thought it advisable or even would have dared to acquire the title in a Hindu context if they had once really been converted to Islam. In this case, they would have certainly preferred to pass over this inglorious event in silence. If this inference is correct, it would be another, if not the strongest, argument against the story of their conversion to Islam in Delhi. Their conversion to Islam, however, is one of the main props for the assumption "that they were sent to the province of Kampili to take over the administration from Malik Muhammad and to deal with the revolt of the Hindu subjects [of the Sultan of Delhi]." ³³ If this prop is removed, the assumption of the 'foreign origin' of the Saṅgama dynasty must be questioned as a whole.

Vasundhara Filliozat, furthermore, devotes a whole chapter of her

introduction to the names and the early history of the city of Vijayanagara. As mentioned above, the supporters of the Telugu origin of the Saṅgama dynasty ascribe its foundation to Harihara I and Vidyāranya in the year 1336, whereas Saletore assigned the merit to Bukka I and dated this event in the year 1368.³⁴ Vasundhara Filliozat, however, shows that already under Ballāḷa III and Ballāḷa IV a Hoysala capital existed within the vast area of the future city of Vijayanagara. This capital was known as Virūpākṣapattana, Hosapattana, or Vijayavirūpākṣapura.³⁵ It continued to exist under similar names till the death of Harihara I in the year 1357. In the same year, the name Vijayanagara appeared for the first time in an inscription of Bukka I (n. 49). It is possible that Bukka began the construction of a new capital soon after he had succeeded his brother Harihara I. And it is quite likely that this new capital is identical with the area to the South of the Virūpākṣa temple which has been identified as the 'Royal Centre' by G. Michell and J. Fritz. At the latest since the year 1368, Bukka was ruling in this new capital when an inscription of his minister Mādhava praises Bukka sitting on the "great jewel lion throne in the new City of Victory" (*abhinava-vijayanagara-mahā-ratnasimhāsana*) (n. 104).³⁶

It is significant that this inscription for the first time also mentions Bukka's full imperial title *mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara*. The fact that the name New Vijayanagara and the new imperial titles are referred to simultaneously for the first time in this inscription, certainly has to be regarded as an important evidence for the development of the statehood of Vijayanagara. But whether this evidence suffices to infer that the empire was also founded only in 1368 is quite doubtful. It is more likely that the emergence of Vijayanagara's statehood was a gradual and protracted process. But there can be no doubt that the 'festival of victory' in the year 1346 and the existence of a new capital and new imperial titles in the year 1368 formed, according to our present knowledge, major steps towards this development.

This interpretation of the early history of Vijayanagara, however, does not imply that the transition from the Hoysala dynasty to the Saṅgama dynasty of Vijayanagara took place in complete harmony. There might have been rivalries between officers of the old and new dynasties. And these rivalries, in some cases, might even have led to skirmishes when the new assignments began to have their impact on the local level. But the crucial question is whether there was really anything like a war between the two dynasties. Be it as it may, Venkataramanayya's conclusion that "the conquest of the Hoysala kingdom was the most notable military achievement in the reign of Harihara I"³⁷ is contradicted by the contemporary epigraphical evidence. This assumption is based only on later literary sources. As an example one may quote from the *Vidyāranya kālajñāna* of the late 16th century. According to this text, Vidyāranya is reported to have said that Harihara I and Bukka "came to me, related their history and prayed to me. I instructed them to fight again and they did so and this time they succeeded in defeating king Ballāḷa and occupying his kingdom and rules in the city of Hastikōṇa (Aneyagondi)".³⁸

It is difficult to find an explanation for this obviously later invention of the 'historians' of Sringeri. But one reason may be just a confusion between the alleged achievements of the two kings Hari-

hara II and Harihara I. The idea of a conquest of the Hoysala kingdom by the Saṅgama dynasty became part of the ideology of these new Hindu rulers only during the reign of Harihara II (1377-1404). In an inscription of the year 1384 king Harihara II claims to have conquered Karnāṭaka, Kuntāḷa, Konkana, Hoysala, Āndhra, Cōla, and Pāṇḍya.³⁹ Harihara II furthermore deliberately concealed the name of Harihara I in the list of his predecessors. In the same inscription of the year 1384, for instance, he mentions as his predecessors only his grandfather Saṅgama and his father Bukka I. Harihara I, his own uncle and Bukka's brother, is passed over in silence. The idea of a military conquest of the Hoysala kingdom by Harihara I might therefore have been derived from inscriptions of Harihara II which were in the possession of Sringeri when the *Vidyāranya kālajñāna* and other texts were compiled after the downfall of imperial Vijayanagara.

IV

So far, we have dealt mainly with the first two points which were raised at the beginning, i.e. the origin of the Saṅgama dynasty and its relationship with the Hoysala dynasty. After rejecting the traditional stories about the Telugu origin of the Saṅgama brothers, their temporary conversion to Islam, the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336 under the influence of Vidyāranya, and, finally, the military conquest of the Hoysala kingdom by the Saṅgamas, we must now turn our attention to the third problem, i.e. the Mādhava-Vidyāranya problem. In his monumental work on the *History of the Dharmaśāstra* P.V. Kane summarizes:

"Mādhvācārya is the brightest star in the galaxy of dākṣiṇāṭya authors on dharmaśāstra. His fame stands only second to that of the great Śaṅkarācārya. He had a most versatile genius and either himself wrote or inspired his brother Sāyaṇa and others to write voluminous works on almost all branches of Sanskrit literature. As an erudite scholar, as a far-sighted statesman, as a bulwark of the Vijayanagara kingdom in the first days of its foundation, as a samnyāsin given to peaceful contemplation and renunciation in old age, he led such a varied and useful life that even to this day his is a name to conjure with."⁴⁰

In the context of this paper we are not concerned with his undisputed greatness as one of the most prolific orthodox intellectuals and writers of his age. Our delineation will focus only on the important role which he allegedly played in the foundation of the Vijayanagara empire.

The assumption of Vidyāranya's greatness as a "far-sighted statesman and a bulwark of the Vijayanagara empire" is based on several assumptions:

1. King Harihara and Bukka acted under the instruction of Vidyāranya when they founded Vijayanagara in the year 1336 A.D.
2. During the following decades he acted as a minister or even chief minister of the early rulers of Vijayanagara. During this early period of his life he was known as Mādhava or Mādhvācārya.
3. Throughout the greater part of his life he was also the *jagad-*

guru ('guru of the world') or 'pontiff' of the most influential *maṭha* at Sringeri, which, according to tradition had been founded more than five hundred years ago by the great Śaṅkarācārya. As a *saṃnyāsīn* and *jaḡadguru* of Sringeri, Mādhava was known as Vidyāraṇya.

In case these statements are correct, and, furthermore, if we take into consideration his tremendous influence as philosopher and writer, it needs no further proof to call Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya the "guiding star" of early Vijayanagara and its rulers. But, as will be shown, none of these statements can be regarded as historically established facts.

We have already seen that the assumption of Vidyāraṇya's active role in the foundation of Vijayanagara in the year 1336 is solely based on spurious inscriptions and literary works of a later age. But despite the rejection of these major props of all the theories about Vidyāraṇya's statesmanship, there seems to exist still sufficient evidence about his importance as a minister of the early kings of Vijayanagara and as the *jaḡadguru* of Sringeri. In the colophon of the *Pa-rāśara Mādhaviya*, which is accepted unreservedly as a work of Mādhava, the author calls himself the "minister (*amātya*) Mādhava who was the bearer of the burden of the sovereignty of King Bukka".⁴¹ Furthermore, Sāyaṇa, Mādhava's famous younger brother, also mentions in the opening verses of his *Puruṣārtha-sudhānidhi* that his brother Mādhava was a hereditary preceptor and minister (*mantrin*) of king Bukka.⁴² And the colophon of the *Mādhaviya Dhātuvṛtti* also describes Mādhava as a great minister (*mahā-mantrin*) of Saṅgama II who was the son of Kamparāja and thus a nephew of Harihara I and Bukka.⁴³ From other contemporary sources we know that Mādhava's younger brothers, too, had close relations with the early rulers of Vijayanagara. According to the colophon of Sāyaṇa's works he was a minister of Bukka I, Harihara II, Kampa and Saṅgama II.⁴⁴ And an inscription from Bitragunta of the year 1356 shows that another brother, Bhoganātha, was a *narmasaeiva* ('minister of amusement') of Saṅgama II.⁴⁵

The Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya problem is further complicated by the fact that besides this literary evidence, we possess substantial epigraphical evidence about the existence of a minister Mādhava who served for nearly half a century, from 1347 till 1391, under several rulers of Vijayanagara. In an inscription from Hejje, near the western coast, of the year 1347, this Mādhava is mentioned as a minister (*mantrin*) of prince Mārappa, the younger brother of king Harihara I. He is praised for his knowledge of the Vedas, Purāṇas and Saṃhitās and for having composed "a work consisting of the essence of all Śaiva āgamas" (*saṃasta-śaivāgama-sāra-saṃgraha*). Furthermore, this inscription mentions Kriyāśakti as Mādhava's guru.⁴⁶ From the year 1368 we possess two inscriptions which mention Mādhava as Great Minister (*mahāpradhāna*) and Governor of Banavasi near the western coast.⁴⁷ Most important for our knowledge about the identity of this minister Mādhava is the already mentioned inscription of the year 1368 which contains for the first time Bukka's full imperial titles and the name of the new capital Vijayanagara.⁴⁸ According to this inscription the minister (*amātya*) Mādhava belonged to the Āṅgīrasa *gotra*, his father was the Brahmin Cauṇḍa and his guru was Kāśivilāśakriyāśakti. The last inscription of this Mādhava is known from Goa from the year 1391.⁴⁹

In the early historical writing on Vijayanagara the famous 'Mādhavācārya' whom we know from his literary works has been identified with this 'Mādhavamantrin' who is known from several inscriptions.⁵⁰ It is beyond doubt that this identification has greatly enhanced the importance of Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya in early historical writing on Vijayanagara. But this identification has to be regarded as one of the many myths created by modern historians. It is therefore to be welcomed that Vasundhara Filliozat in her thesis on the inscriptions of early Vijayanagara again took up this problem. On the basis of her epigraphical studies she verified the conclusions of Rao Bahadur R. Narasimhachar. In an article on 'Mādhavācārya and his younger brothers' published already in 1917, Narasimhachar differentiated sharply between the minister Mādhava who ruled as a governor of Banavasi near the western coast under the kings Harihara I, Bukka I and Harihara II till 1391 on the one side, and the famous Mādhava *alias* Vidyāraṇya on the other. Narasimhachar pointed out that, according to the epigraphical evidence, the minister Mādhava firstly belonged to the Āṅgīrasa *gotra*, secondly his parents were Mācāmbikā and Caundabhaṭṭa and thirdly, his guru was Kriyāśakti. In contrast to this, it is known from several literary works, that Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya's parents were Śrīmatī and Māyaṇa of the Bhāradvāja *gotra* and that he was a disciple of Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha and Śrīkaṇṭha.⁵¹ As another criterion of this distinction of the two Mādhavas one may add the fact that the minister Mādhava twice described himself in his inscriptions of the year 1368 as "depending on his king Bukka's lotus feet" (*tat-pāda-padma-upajīvi*).⁵² This expression, unthinkable for a *saṃnyāsīn*, in my opinion, finally excludes the possibility of identifying the minister Mādhava with Mādhava *alias* Vidyāraṇya. For the sake of clarity, it may be convenient to name these two Mādhavas as Mādhavamantrin and Mādhavācārya.

On the basis of this distinction between the two Mādhavas we are able to come to yet another conclusion, which again might be of greatest importance for our delineations. Mādhavācārya, if he really ever held any 'secular' post, was a minister of the kings Bukka I (1357-1377) and of his nephew Saṅgama II. Nothing, however, is known from these sources about any 'secular' activity of Mādhava under king Harihara I. Everybody who works on this or similar material is aware of the danger and risk to draw any conclusion from the *argumentum ex silentio*. But in our case, the cumulative evidence certainly justifies the hypothesis that contemporary literary evidence, too, confirms our inference that Mādhavācārya played no significant role in the foundation of Vijayanagara.

Before we are able to continue this process of 'cumulative verification' of our inference, we have at least to mention the problem of the identity of Mādhavācārya and Vidyāraṇya. This question arises from the fact that in none of the works of Mādhavācārya is his name Vidyāraṇya mentioned, nor does any of the later inscriptions which mention Vidyāraṇya refer to him under his earlier name Mādhava. The identification, however, can be derived from his own literary works.

For instance in the work *Jīvamuktiviveka*, which is ascribed to Vidyāraṇya, the author refers directly to his earlier commentary work on *Parāśara-smṛtī*. This latter work together with the *Parāśara-mādhavajaya* can safely be ascribed to Mādhava. Mainly on the basis of this literary evidence of cross-reference in his own work, the traditional identification of Mādhavācārya can be, therefore, considered as an established fact.

V

We may now turn our attention to Mādhavācārya *alias* Vidyāraṇya. It is generally accepted that he assumed this second name after he had become a *saṃnyāsīn*. And it is this name under which he became known as the *mahant* and *jagadguru* of Sringeri. Already a first glance at the epigraphical evidence confirms our assumption that this change must have taken place only at an advanced age. This assumption seems to become nearly a certainty when we look at the famous inscriptions of Sringeri of the years 1346 and 1356 which are the earliest inscriptions known from Sringeri during the Vijayanagara period. The inscription of the year 1346 commemorates the *viḷayotsava* of the five Śaṅgama brothers. It begins with a praise of the great guru Vidyātīrtha. After mentioning the participants of this ceremony, it contains a list of nine villages which king Harihara I donated to Bhāratīrtha, his forty servants and his disciples at the *tīrtha* Sringeri (Filliozat, n. 14). Vidyāraṇya is not mentioned at all. The same is true of the inscription of the year 1356, which commemorates king Bukka's visit to Sringeri. Again this donative inscription begins with a praise of Vidyātīrtha. This time, however, Vidyātīrtha is mentioned as the donee of Bukka's gifts, too. What is most important in the context of our present discussion is the fact that Vidyāraṇya again is not mentioned in connection with Bukka's visit and donations to Sringeri in the year 1356. The non-existence of his name in these earliest inscriptions of Vijayanagara kings at Sringeri is in sharp contrast with later inscriptions in which Vidyāraṇya is always mentioned together with Vidyātīrtha and Bhāratīrthā (see below).

It is only in the year 1375, nearly thirty and twenty years respectively after the first appearance of Bhāratīrtha and Vidyātīrtha in inscriptions at Sringeri, that Vidyāraṇya is referred to in an inscription at Kudupu (Filliozat, appendix n. 25). This inscription gives an account of the donation of the revenue of two villages to Vidyāraṇya-Śrīpāda, the head of Sringeri for the maintenance of brahmins and the ritual at the Śaṅkara temple. Vidyāraṇya, therefore, must have taken over the *maṭha* at Sringeri some time between the years 1356 and 1375 A.D.

The *kaḍita* books⁵³ of the Sringeri *maṭha* contain the copy of an interesting inscription of king Harihara II (1377-1404). The inscription begins with an eloquent eulogy of the three great gurus: Vidyātīrtha, Vidyāraṇya and Bhāratīrtha. After mentioning king Bukka's donations in the year 1356, it contains an interesting account of the circumstances of Vidyāraṇya's accession to the *pīṭha* of Sringeri: "Subsequently Bukkarāya sent a *nirūpa* (order) of Hiriya-Śrīpādangaḷ (senior guru) and his own *binnavattale* (letter of request) to Benares and a few days after the return of Vidyāraṇya-Śrīpāda to Virūpākṣa (Hampe) [Bukka] took him to Sringeri and desirous of providing for maintenance of the ascetics, disciples, attendant Brahmins and their families residing with Vidyāraṇya-Śrīpāda issued a *nirūpa* to Mādarasa (= Mādhavamantrin) directing him to grant [to Vidyāraṇya] lands."⁵⁴

A very similar version of the story of Vidyāraṇya's accession to the *gaḍi* of Sringeri is known from Sringeri's *Guruvamśakāvya*.⁵⁵ It was composed in the 18th century, approximately at the same time when Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380 was copied for the *kaḍita*.

Since we possess no further 'independent' source about Vidyāraṇya's stay at Banares, we have only the option to accept or to refute its historicity. But even, if we assume that this story was 'fabricated' it would also show that Vidyāraṇya was absent from Sringeri for a considerable time. And we may even infer that the story was created in order to interpret the 'non-existence' of Vidyāraṇya in Sringeri before 1374/75 into a 'temporary absence'.⁵⁶ But whatever may be the truth, Vidyāraṇya was certainly in charge of Sringeri in the year 1375 A.D., the date of the above mentioned inscription of Kudupu. And since another *kaḍita* of Sringeri mentions that Bhāratīrtha died in the year 1374,⁵⁷ it is quite likely that Vidyāraṇya was offered Bhāratīrtha's successorship and the *gaḍi* of Sringeri during this time.

Shortly afterwards (1377), king Bukka I died and his son Harihara II ascended the throne of Vijayanagara. He became a great devotee of Vidyāraṇya. In one of his inscriptions it is mentioned that "by the glances full of love of Vidyāraṇya, the chief of ascetics, he acquired the empire of knowledge [*jñāna-saṃwājya*] unattainable by other kings."⁵⁸ From the following years we possess quite a few inscriptions which prove Vidyāraṇya's important role as *mahant* of Sringeri. And, furthermore, they give evidence of the tremendous impact which he and his brother Sāyana exercised on the religious revival in South India. In the year 1378 an inscription mentions that Harihara II ordered to donate land to Sāyana and to two brahmin scholars.⁵⁹ These two scholars together with a third received again larger land grants in the year 1381 from Harihara's son Cikka Rāya and in the year 1386 from king Harihara II himself.⁶⁰ These Brahmins are called authors or promoters (*pravartaka*) of the commentary of the four Vedas. And it is stated by the editor of this inscription "that the descendants of these three scholars received special honours at the Sringeri Maṭha and were the owners of the first, second and third houses at Sringeri town". These scholars, according to a *kaḍita* copy of an inscription of Harihara II,⁶¹ are said to have received again a grant as a reward "for having brought out commentaries on the four Vedas in the name of the king" (*namma hesaralu caturvēdabhāṣyagaḷa pravartisuva sambandha*). This is, of course, a clear hint at Sāyana's renowned commentaries on the Vedas. But the editor of the inscription rightly complained that "no part of the present commentaries in the name of Sāyana gives the names of the three scholars as authors or collaborators, nor does Sāyana anywhere acknowledge their help."⁶² In the year 1384 two other brahmin scholars, who were clearly named as disciples (*śiṣya*) of Vidyāraṇya, received land grants from king Harihara II in the presence of god Virūpākṣa at Vijayanagara.⁶³

The great work done by these scholars was highly appreciated by king Harihara II. In fact, in several inscriptions the king himself was praised for his "protection of the Vedas and the twice born" (*veda-dvijāti-parirakṣana*)⁶⁴ or even as "establisher of the path of the Vedas" (*vaidika-mārga-pratiṣṭhāpaka*).⁶⁵ Harihara II's high estimation⁶⁶ of Vidyāraṇya became again very evident when Vidyāraṇya died in the year 1386. On the occasion of his death, Harihara donated to the Mahājanas (Brahmins?) of Sringeri the revenue income of several villages, amounting to 500 *gaḍyāna* (gold coins).⁶⁷ This was exactly double the amount which Harihara II's father and his four brothers had dedicated to Bhāratīrtha during their famous *viḷayotsava* at Sringeri in the year 1346.

All this evidence leaves us in no doubt about the important and most influential role which Vidyāraṇya played as a guru, scholar and *mahant* after he took charge of Sringeri in about 1374/75. But of equal relevance for our discussion is the obvious fact that none of these inscriptions mention or, at least, allude to any political function held by Vidyāraṇya during the early history of Vijayanagara. And, furthermore, these inscriptions make it clear that although Vidyāraṇya was a great scholar - and certainly not only since the time when he is known to have become the *mahant* of Sringeri - he reached the highest level of hierocracy only in his old age.

VI

Finally, we may now turn our attention to the most crucial problems of our discussion, i.e. Sringeri and its 'Śaṅkara tradition'. It is universally agreed upon that the famous *maṭha* of Sringeri was established by the great Śaṅkarācārya in the early 9th century.⁶⁸ From this southern *maṭha* he started his glorious *digvijaya*, the religious "conquest of the (four) quarters of the world", in the course of which he founded three Śaṅkarācārya-*maṭhas* in the other cardinal points of India, i.e. at Dwarka in the West, Badrinath in the North and Puri in the East. An analysis of the epigraphical sources, however, again reveals a completely different picture. The earliest inscription which refers to Sringeri in connection with its *maṭha* is the inscription of 1346. But even this first inscription refers to Sringeri only as a "place of pilgrimage" or "holy ford" (*tīrtha*) where Bhāratī-tīrtha and his followers were performing their services. Only in the year 1356, when Bukka I again donated the revenue income of several villages to Sringeri, is it stated that this income was meant for the maintenance of the service of the *maṭha* at Sringeri. This evidence, of course, does not yet suffice to prove that the *maṭha* was established only after the five brothers of the Saṅgama family had performed their *vijayotsava* at Sringeri. But from our previous experience with the historicity of hitherto seemingly established traditions of early Vijayanagara and its relations with Sringeri, it is only consequent to try a new investigation into the traditions of Sringeri, too. A thorough analysis of all relevant sources is certainly beyond the scope of the present paper and the capacity of the present author. But we may point out some facts - most of which are certainly already known, though usually they have been neglected or 'by-passed' - and draw some hypothetical conclusions from them.

First of all, it is well known that no contemporary sources exist about the history of the Sringeri *maṭha* from Śaṅkarācārya up to the year 1346, when the five Saṅgama brothers paid a visit to Bhāratī-tīrtha at the *tīrtha* of Sringeri.⁶⁹ Sringeri itself, however, was not unknown in previous centuries. Epigraphical evidence clearly shows that Jainism was well established at Sringeri in the 12th century. The oldest inscriptions of Sringeri date back to the years 1150 and 1160 A.D. and they are found in the Pārśvanātha Basti.⁷⁰ In the first inscription, next to nothing is legible except a praise of the Jina-śāsana and the second contains information about a donation of Jaina merchants. In view of the existence of a Jaina establishment at Sringeri in the 12th century it is remarkable that Mādhamantrin established an *agrahāra* village for Brahmins who were not

only well-versed in many sciences but were also praised as "demolishers of Bauddha and Jain religions."⁷¹ It may be a coincidence but it is nevertheless notable that this *agrahāra* with its significant name Saṅgamapura was founded in the year 1347, only one year after the known history of the Sringeri *maṭha* began under Bhārati-tīrtha. This saint, too, is praised posthumously for having "toss-
[ed] up the Bauddhas [and] reduce[d] to powder in no time the teachings of the Kṣapanakas [Jainas]".⁷² This rather scattered evidence certainly does not yet permit an established theory of a Jaina origin of Sringeri. But in view of these facts at least the hypothetical possibility cannot be ruled out any longer.

The landed property of the Sringeri *maṭha*, or rather the revenue income which was transferred to Sringeri, during early Vijayanagara is also of great significance. An analysis of the relevant inscriptions from the *viḥayotsava* in the year 1346 till Vidyāraṇya's death in the year 1386 shows a tremendous increase of the landed property of Sringeri. This increase is particularly remarkable during the initial phase in the years 1346 and 1356 and after 1374/75, when Vidyāraṇya had become the *mahant* of Sringeri. During the first ten years, Sringeri received the revenue income from villages amounting to 250 and 360 *gadyānas* (= 610 g.).⁷³ During the years of Vidyāraṇya's term of office, Sringeri and its scholarly Brahmins, however, received revenue income of various villages amounting to 1419 or even to 1871 *gadyānas*.⁷⁴ This increase demonstrates the importance of Sringeri under Vidyāraṇya and even more Vidyāraṇya's importance for the enhancement of Sringeri's greatness.

But even more interesting than this precipitous growth rate during the early Vijayanagara is the question of Sringeri's property in the pre-Vijayanagara period. Here we are in the fortunate position not to be forced to use only the *argumentum ex silentio* in the absence of earlier inscriptions. The inscription of Harihara II of the year 1380 A.D. contains a detailed list of all previous donations which the early rulers of Vijayanagara had dedicated to Sringeri since 1346. Harihara II reconfirmed these donations and added his own 'revenue gift'. As already mentioned, this inscription is known only from a *kāḍita* copy. It is certainly not advisable to rely fully on it, particularly since we know that its statements differ in some cases from those of the original inscriptions of the years 1346 and 1356 to which Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380 (resp. its *kāḍita* copy) refers to.⁷⁵ It would certainly be interesting to know whether these 'mistakes', which increased the amount of the revenue gifts of the years 1346 and 1356, were already 'fabricated' in the year 1380 in order to get them sanctioned by Harihara II's new inscription. But what matters more at the moment is the fact that this inscription gives the impression of being a comprehensive list of all 'landed property' which Sringeri possessed in the year 1380. Accordingly, this inscription contains a detailed description, too, of the distribution of this revenue income among the Brahmins and several newly constructed temples at Sringeri.⁷⁶ To the knowledge of the present author, Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380 as well as the other contemporary inscriptions of early Vijayanagara thus do not contain the slightest reference to any older institutions which had some connections with the *maṭha* of Sringeri which is mentioned in an inscription for the first time in the year 1356.

VII

Even more intriguing, however, is the fact that none of these early inscriptions of Sringeri contain any reference to the great Śaṅkarācārya himself, reputedly the founder of Sringeri. Many inscriptions could have easily provided their authors with the opportunity to mention the Ādiśaṅkara. A good example is the earliest inscription of the year 1346. It commences with a praise of the saint Vidyātīrtha, followed by a praise of Śiva and Viṣṇu and then explains details of the royal donations to the saint Bhāratīrtha. Another particularly striking example is Harihara II's long donative inscription which he issued on the occasion of the death of Vidyāraṇya in the year 1386.⁷⁷ This inscription begins with the usual praise of Śiva and Viṣṇu (lines 1-5). Immediately after this invocation follows a long eulogy on the three great saints of Sringeri, i.e. Vidyātīrtha (lines 5-9), Vidyāraṇya (lines 9-16) and Bhāratīrtha (lines 16-20). These three saints of Sringeri are mentioned again in lines 25-29 and Vidyāraṇya is particularly praised for his knowledge of "non-dualism" (*advaya*, [sic]). Śaṅkara, however, who was the founder of Advaitism and, allegedly, of Sringeri, too, is not mentioned. In the *kaḍita* copy of Harihara's inscription of the year 1380, Bhāratīrtha is even praised for breaking up the doctrines of Bhaṭṭa (= Kumārila).⁷⁸ Kumārila was Śaṅkarācārya's guru and, after Śaṅkara had become an Advaitist, his strongest opponent. This mention of Kumārila would have certainly been an excellent opportunity to mention Śaṅkara himself.

Of course, no author of any inscription etc. of the 14th century was 'obliged' to mention Śaṅkara. But to ignore him completely even in Sringeri at a time when Sringeri became the sacerdotal centre of a newly established Hindu empire is certainly a fact which is difficult to explain - if we assume that Śaṅkara had once established this *matha* at Sringeri. There are, generally speaking, mainly two possibilities to explain this silence, i.e. Śaṅkara either never had any relations with Sringeri or he belonged to a completely different religious or philosophical tradition than the *matha* of Sringeri during Vijayanagara time. But since we know from inscriptions and later sources of Sringeri (e.g. the *Guruvamśakāvya*) that Sringeri adhered to Śaṅkara's teaching, it is most likely that the Sringeri *matha* of the 14th century had indeed nothing to do with the great Śaṅkarācārya.

This assumption attains nearly certainty when we take into consideration the *Śrī Puruṣottama Bhāratī Carita*. This text of the 15th century still exists in the archives of the *matha* at Sringeri. This manuscript contains 12 chapters and the first three chapters give a brief account "of the Ācharyās from Śrī Vidyāśaṅkara [Vidyātīrtha] to Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhāratī II [1454-1464], and the rest deals with Śrī Puruṣottama Bhāratī [1408-1448], until his assumption of the pontificate at Hampi and taking over of the *Matha* administration in Sriṅgēri."⁷⁹ Particularly in the case of this text, which was also meant to give a history of the Sringeri *matha*, it is scarcely believable that its author would have missed the chance to trace Sringeri's history back to Śaṅkara - if he really had been its founder.

Already about two decades ago, the late Paul Hacker, the renowned German Indologist and specialist in Vedānta studies summarized the

results of his own studies on Śaṅkarācārya and his associations with Sringeri while critically reviewing J. Gonda's extensive study on Hinduism, which repeats the conventional story of Śaṅkara and his close relations with Sringeri.⁸⁰ In this connection, Hacker drew our attention to the fact that none of the literary works which can be ascribed to Śaṅkara himself refers to anything like Śaṅkara's *digvijaya* throughout India during which he allegedly established the *advaita mathas* in the four cardinal points of India.⁸¹ According to P. Hacker, this tradition clearly originates or was at least greatly enhanced by Vidyāraṇya, the author of the famous *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. Hacker furthermore pointed out that according to his own research no genuine or historical reliable *guruvamśa* (or list of *mahants*) exists in these four *mathas* for the time prior to the fourteenth century.

These statements about the *Śaṅkaramathas* have been fully corroborated by J. Lütt during his research on the *Śaṅkarācāryas* of Puri which he carried out in connection with the Orissa Research Project on the Jagannāth cult.⁸² Though the Govardhanamatha in Puri, the foundation of which tradition ascribes to Śaṅkarācārya, looks quite old, no genuine historical documents are known of this matter which are older than the Marāṭha period.

From the literary evidence, Hacker inferred that the tradition of the *Śaṅkaramathas* and thus also of Sringeri's association with Śaṅkara goes back only to Vidyāraṇya in the late 14th century. Together with his famous brother Sāyaṇa, the author of the *Veḍābhāṣya*, Vidyāraṇya tried to establish in an act of intentional cultural policy ("in einer Art bewußter Hindu-Kulturpolitik", Hacker), a new system of orthodoxy in order to counteract the influence of Islamic inroads into South India.

From the aforesaid, it follows that the epigraphical evidence clearly confirms Hacker's conclusions which he had drawn from his studies of the literary sources. Although it is far too early to come to any final conclusions, the following picture seems to emerge from this reassessment of the epigraphical evidence. The early history of Sringeri is unknown but the earliest historical evidence which dates from the 12th century shows that it was a centre of Jainism. The earliest references to the existence of the *matha* is known from Bukka's inscription of the year 1356 but Bhāratīrtha was already 'on the spot' in the year 1346. The fact, however, that the *vijayotsava* of the Saṅgama brothers was held at Sringeri, certainly proves that it was already in 1346 a place of considerable importance. The epigraphical evidence, however, does not provide any clue for an explanation of the reason of Sringeri's important role during the early years of Vijayanagara. But at the same time, it is equally evident that the epigraphical sources also do not allow any assumption that this importance was either based on the 'Vidyāraṇya tradition' or on the 'Śaṅkara tradition'. On the contrary, the hitherto known epigraphical evidence allows only the conclusion that Śaṅkara was not the founder of Sringeri's famous *matha*. The epigraphical sources permit, at least hypothetically, the inference that the *matha* was established only some time between 1346 and 1356. In this initial phase, Vidyātīrtha and not Vidyāraṇya seems to have played the most important role.⁸³ As a good guru and 'professor' Vidyātīrtha was able to place his students Bhāratīrtha and Vidyāraṇya on the *gadī* of the newly established *matha* at Sringeri.

The inscriptional evidence leaves no doubt that Sringeri became an important place already under Harihara I and Bukka I - perhaps because of its geographical location between the capitals of the old Hoysala kingdom and the new Vijayanagara empire. But only after Vidyāranya had become the *mahant* of Sringeri in 1374/75 and Harihara II the king of Vijayanagara in the year 1377, Sringeri's fame and wealth increased tremendously. And it is quite plausible that exactly during this time, Vidyāranya and his brother Sāyana intensified their great work to reconstruct Hindu orthodoxy with the active support of king Harihara II who proudly called himself the "establisher of the Vedic path". Furthermore, it is quite likely that the activities of three saints and *mahants* of Sringeri partly influenced or even formed the basis of Sringeri's 'Śaṅkara tradition', e.g. their extensive literary activities, their fame to have "demolished Bauddhas and Jainas" and to have even fought against the teachings of Kumārila and, finally, Vidyāranya's alleged *digvijaya* to Benares. All these details are familiar to us from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, too. Sringeri's claim that its *matha* was founded by Śaṅkara and that afterwards Śaṅkara established in the course of his *digvijaya* three other *advaita mathas* in the cardinal points of India, put Sringeri at the centre of a new religious network covering India as a whole. Thus, Sringeri's 'Śaṅkara tradition', too, provided a further legitimation to Vijayanagara's claim to be the centre of the new orthodoxy.

This hypothetical interpretation of Sringeri's early history and its relations with early Vijayanagara should not be misunderstood only as a deliberate destruction of cherished traditions about Śaṅkara's role in the foundation of the *matha* at Sringeri and Vidyāranya's role in the foundation of Vijayanagara. On the contrary, if this new interpretation can be verified by new sources, it would depict Vidyāranya's and Sāyana's role in a much clearer historical light. Because it proves that Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha and the two brothers Vidyāranya and Sāyana formed a most fascinating group of religious reformers and creators of a new religious institution. Due to their immense philosophical and literary activities their work had a tremendous impact on Hinduism which lasts till today. The fact that although they had to 'share' a lot of their own activities with Śaṅkara and that their version of Sringeri's and Vijayanagara's origin is still generally accepted is perhaps the best proof of their success.

This new interpretation may also be misunderstood as a striking proof of a gross manipulation of religious institutions: Not Sringeri and its *jagadguru* Vidyāranya established Vijayanagara but the kings of Vijayanagara established Sringeri with its new 'Śaṅkara tradition' for their own political ends. But nothing would be wronger than this conclusion. In fact, the new interpretation only depicts the most intricate and mutual relations between *brahman* and *ksatra*, the sacerdotal and secular realms in Indian history.⁸⁴ Though being intricately interwoven, they both follow their own *Eigengesetzlichkeit* or *svadharma*.⁸⁵

Notes and references

- * The author gratefully acknowledges the help and advice given by Dr. M.S. Nagaraja Rao, New Delhi, Dr. V. Filliozat, Paris, and Dr. P.K. Aithal, Heidelberg. However, the author alone is responsible for the facts and opinions stated in this paper.
- 1 Sewell, Robert: A forgotten empire - Vijayanagar (London: 1900, 1st. Indian edition, New Delhi: 1962).
 - 2 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A.: A history of South India (2nd. ed., Madras: 1958).
 - 3 Venkataramanayya, N.: The kingdom of Vijayanagara, in: Majumdar, R.C. (ed.): The Delhi sultanate (Bombay: 1967) (The history and culture of the Indian people, vol. VI), pp. 271-325.
 - 4 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A.: A history of South India, *op. cit.*, pp. 229 f.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, p. 231.
 - 6 For instance, Smith, V.A.: The Oxford history of India (3rd. ed., ed. by P. Spear, Oxford: 1958), p. 304; Nilakanta Sastri, K.A.: A history of South India, *op. cit.*; Venkataramanayya, N.: The kingdom of Vijayanagara, *op. cit.*; Derrett, J.D.M.: The Hoysalas (Madras: 1957), pp. 168 ff.
 - 7 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A.: A history of South India, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
 - 8 For instance, most of the contributors to the Vijayanagara sixcentenary commemoration volume (see note 19). Most important among them are H. Heras (note 12), B.A. Saletore (notes 17 and 21) and S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar (note 20); and: Hindu states in southern India, A.D. 1000-1565, in: The Cambridge history of India, vol. III Turks and Afghans (Cambridge: 1928), pp. 491 ff., and more recently V. Filliozat (notes 11 and 27).
 - 9 As, for instance, N. Venkataramanayya, *op. cit.*, p. 275, assumes.
 - 10 For further details about the alleged war of Harihara I against the Hoysalas, see p. 125.
 - 11 Filliozat, V.: Relatives and officers of Ballāla III and IV who accepted service under the kings of Vijayanagara, in: Itihas. Journal of the Andhra Pradesh Archives, 1, 2 (1974), p. 28. The inscription referred to is no. 25 of V. Filliozat, *op. cit.* (note 27).
 - 12 Heras, H.: Beginnings of Vijayanagara history (Bombay: 1929).
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
 - 14 Mallappa, T.N.: Kriyasakti Vidyaranya (Bangalore: 1974), p. 1.

- 15 Mallappa even states that he "was drawn to investigate this matter by this exclamation", *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 16 Annual report of the Mysore Archaeological Department for the year 1934 (Bangalore: 1936), p. 142 (quoted as ARMAD together with the years mentioned in the titles. The year of publication usually differs about 2 to 3 years).
- 17 Saletore, B.A.: Social and political life in the Vijayanagara empire (Madras: 1934), vol. I, pp. 83-112.
- 18 Kane, P.V.: History of Dharmaśāstra (Poona: 1975), vol. I, pt. 2, p. 789.
- 19 Karmarkar, D.P. and S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar (eds.): Vijayanagara sexcentenary commemoration volume (Dharwar: 1936).
- 20 Krishnaswami Aiyangar, S.: The character and signification of the empire of Vijayanagara in Indian history, in: Karmarkar, D.P. and S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar: Vijayanagara sexcentenary commemoration volume, op. cit., pp. 1-28. Already in a lecture held at the Mythic Society in 1920, S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar pointed out that the future Vijayanagara was founded by Ballāḷa III under the names of Hosapattana and Virūpāksapattana. Furthermore, he rejected the traditional date 1336 A.D. as the foundation year of Vijayanagara, but he pointed out that it must have been founded "before A.D. 1344". Published in: Krishnaswami Aiyangar, S.: Ancient India and South Indian history and culture (Poona: 1941), vol. II, pp. 1-34.
- 21 Saletore, B.A.: Theories concerning the origin of Vijayanagar, in: Vijayanagara sexcentenary commemoration volume, op. cit., pp. 139-159.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- 23 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A. and N. Venkataramanayya: Further sources of Vijayanagara history (Madras: Madras University, 1946) (Madras University Historical Series, vol. 18). In 1919, S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar had already published his Sources of Vijayanagara history as vol. 1 of the Madras University Historical Series.
- 24 ARMAD, 1932, p. 101.
- 25 Venkataramanayya, N.: The kingdom of Vijayanagara, *op. cit.*, p. 321.
- 26 Even in Karnataka, the traditional date 1336 is sometimes still accepted. A.K. Shastry in his recent publication, A history of Srīngēri, (Dharwad: Karnatak University, 1982), states: "It is proved now beyond any doubt that Harihara and his brothers established the Vijayanagara Empire in A.D. 1336 with the help of Srī Vidyāranya." (p. 21). A.K. Shastry argues mainly on the basis of the literary accounts of Sringeri (see below, note 53). See also the most recent comprehensive publication by M.H. Rama

Sharma: The history of the Vijayanagara empire, ed. by M.H. Gopal (Bombay: 1978 and 1980). Sharma accepts the whole traditional story about the origins of Vijayanagara and its founders, except for the indigenous Kuruba origin of Saṅgama (vol. I, p. 18).

- 27 Filliozat, V.: L'épigraphie de Vijayanagar du début à 1377 (Paris: 1973) (Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, vol. 91). In order to avoid lengthy references, the inscriptions edited by V. Filliozat, are referred to by the serial numbers of her edition.
- 28 There may be one exception. But it is unclear whether the short inscription no. 32 which mentions "*Harīha ... rāya mahārāya ...*" refers to Harihara I. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 29 *Ibid.*, no. 104. For its date (3-11-1368 or 22/23-10-1369) see *ibid.*, p. 98, note 1.
- 30 See also V. Filliozat's introductory chapter on "Les titres", *ibid.*, p. XVI-XVIII.
- 31 See also inscriptions nos. 84 and 87, *ibid.*
- 32 Hejje (Heddase) inscription of Mārappa of the year 1347, line 39; ARMAD, 1929, no. 90, pp. 159-173. V. Filliozat doubts about the authenticity of this inscription (see p. XV of her introduction) and therefore includes only a *résumé* of this inscription (no. 146) in her work.
- 33 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A.: A history of South India, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- 34 Saletore, B.A.: Social and political life in the Vijayanagara empire, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- 35 The Virūpākṣa temple is known to have existed at the latest since the early 13th century (Filliozat, V.: L'épigraphie de Vijayanagar, *op. cit.*, p. XXVI).
- 36 Compare the Belugula inscription of Harihara II of the year 1384, who claims to have seated ("only") on the "lion throne of Vijayanagari" [sic], (*vijayanagariya siṃhāsana*), ARMAD, 1933, no. 23, line 37, pp. 132 ff.
- 37 Venkataramanayya, N.: The kingdom of Vijayanagara, *op. cit.*, p. 275.
- 38 ARMAD, 1932, p. 107.
- 39 Belugula inscription (see note 36), line 26. As another example, one may quote the *agrāhāra* Vidyāranya-pura which Harihara II established near Sringeri after Vidyāranya's death in the year 1386 (Vidyāranya copper plate inscription of the year 1386, ARMAD, 1933, pp. 138-146). Later tradition, however, ascribes this foundation to king Harihara I (*ibid.*, p. 145).

- 40 Kane, P.V.: History of Dharmaśāstra, *op. cit.*, p. 779.
- 41 Narasimhachar, Rao Bahadur R.: Mādhavāchārya and his younger brothers, in: The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, 7 (1917), pp. 318-320. - I am particularly grateful to Dr. V. Filliozat for her considerable help in all matters concerning the "identification" of Vidyāranya-Mādhava.
- 42 Narasimhachar, Rao Bahadur R.: Mādhavāchārya and his younger brothers, *op. cit.*, p. 319.
- 43 Kane, P.V.: History of Dharmaśāstra, *op. cit.*, p. 789.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 781.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 789.
- 46 Hejje inscription (see note 32), lines 85-88.
- 47 Filliozat, nos. 88 and 90.
- 48 See above, note 29.
- 49 ARMAD, 1929, p. 129.
- 50 Even H. Heras still identified Mādhavācārya/Vidyāranya with Mādhava mantrin (Heras, H.: Beginnings of Vijayanagara history, *op. cit.*, p. 18).
- 51 This is mentioned in the Parāśara-mādhavīya and the Kālanirnaya, see Kane, P.V.: History of Dharmaśāstra, *op. cit.*, pp. 785 f.
- 52 See note 47.
- 53 The *kaḍita* ("account") books of Sringeri which run into several hundreds contain also copies of older inscriptions. Their authenticity, however, is often very doubtful. See also Shastry, A.K.: A history of Śrīngēri, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 ff.
- 54 *kaḍita* copy of a copper plate grant of the reign of Harihara II of the year 1360. ARMAD, 1933, pp. 211-228, lines 66 ff.
- 55 See ARMAD, 1933, p. 227. For the Guruvamśakāvya see Shastry, A.K.: It was "composed in about A.D. 1735 by Kāśī Lakshmaṇa Śāstri, a contemporary of Śrī Satchitānanda Bhāratī II. [It] gives biographical sketches of the successive Āchāryas from Śaṅkara to Satchidānanda Bhāratī (A.D. 1705 - A.D. 1741)." (Shastry, A.K.: A history of Śrīngēri, *op. cit.*, p. 8).
- 56 To 'interpret' the previous non-existence of a special aspect of a local cult or a group of its priests into a "temporary absence" is a well-known literary topos in Hinduism. See, for instance, the legendary account about the "resettlement" of the 3000 Brahmin priests in Chidambaram by the saint Hiraṇyavarman. (Kulke, H.:

Funktionale Erklärung eines südindischen Mähätmyas. Die Legende Hiraṇyavarmans und das Leben des Cōḷa-Königs Kulottuṅga I, in: Saeculum, 20 (1969), pp. 412-422.

- 57 See ARMAD, 1933, pp. 266 f.
- 58 Belugula inscription of the year 1386 (lines 29-31), ARMAD, 1933, p. 134.
- 59 Epigraphia Carnatica, V, Chennarayapatna 256; see ARMAD, 1934, p. 116.
- 60 The so-called Inām Office (Bangalore) copper plate inscription of the year 1386, see Narasimhachar, R. (ed.): Archaeological survey of Mysore, annual report: 1906-1909, vol. II, A study by S. Settar (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1976), pp. 64 f.
- 61 Kaḍita copy of an inscription of Harihara II of the year 1395, ARMAD, 1934, pp. 114-117. As this donation was performed in the presence of Vidyāraṇya, at least the date of this inscription (1395) is wrong because Vidyāraṇya already died in the year 1386.
- 62 ARMAD, 1934, p. 115.
- 63 Belugula inscription, lines 41 d., ARMAD, 1933, p. 135; see above, note 36.
- 64 *Ibid.*, line 25.
- 65 See note 60.
- 66 This veneration was not restricted to the first two generations of Saṅgama rulers. An unfinished inscription at Srirangam mentions that even Harihara II's son, Virūpākṣa had once paid a visit to Vidyāraṇya (Annual Report - A.R., no. 54 of 1936-37; South Indian inscriptions, vol. XXIV, no. 294). I am grateful to Dr. V. Filliozat for having drawn my attention to this record. In a personal communication, she wrote: "The young prince must have met the sage during his young age. It is interesting to note that in a Shri vaishnava temple in the extreme South Vidyāraṇya's name is recorded in an epigraph. There are also other inscriptions of this prince in the same temple ranging from 1382 to 1387."
- 67 Vidyāraṇyapura copper plate of Harihara II of the year 1386, lines 37 ff., ARMAD, 1933, pp. 140 f.
- 68 It is therefore not astonishing that A.K. Sastri's work on Sringeri begins with the sentence: "Śrī Sāradā Pīṭha (the matha or monastery) at Śringēri was established about twelve hundred years ago by Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya" (Shastry, A.K.: A history of Srīngēri, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

- 69 This fact is also clearly pointed out by A.K. Shastry in his most recent study on Sringeri (*ibid.*, p. 5). His remarks are of particular relevance as he has worked for several years in the archives of Sringeri, particularly in order to classify and catalogue the *kaḍitas*.
- 70 Inscription dated 1150 A.D. on a slab in the *mukhamandapa* of the Pārśvanātha basti of Sringeri (ARMAD, 1934, pp. 113 f.) and an inscription dated 1160 in the *navaraṅga* at the same place, ARMAD, 1933, pp. 122 ff.).
- 71 Heddasse (Hejje) inscription (see above, note 32), line 60; in the case of Karnataka *ārahanmatotsedhakāḥ* certainly mainly referred to the Jains.
- 72 *Kaḍita* copy of Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380, lines 9 f. (see note 54).
- 73 This amount is mentioned in the two inscriptions of the years 1346 and 1356 (Filliozat, nos. 14 and 43).
- 74 This amount consists of donations by Bukka (222 g.) and Cikka Rāya (427 g.) as mentioned in the *kaḍita* copy of Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380; Harihara II's donation of the year 1384 (120 f., Belugula inscription); Harihara II's donation of the year 1386 (150 g., Inām office inscription); and Harihara II's donation of the year 1386 on the occasion of Vidyāranya's death (500 g., Vidyāranyapura inscription). In addition to these 1419 g. an amount of 425 g. may be added which was donated by Harihara II according to the wrongly dated inscription of the year 1395 (see note 61).
- 75 According to this *kaḍita* copy, Harihara and Bukka donated in the years 1346 and 1356 land of the total revenue value of 928 *gadyāṇa*.
- 76 The temples mentioned in the Vidyāranyapura inscription of the year 1386 are *samādhi* temples of the three great saints. The names of these temples are Vidyāśaṅkara, Bhāratīrāmanātha, Vidyāviśveśvara. A temple of Janārdana is also mentioned in this inscription.
- 77 Vidyāranyapura inscription; see note 65.
- 78 *Kaḍita* copy of Harihara II's inscription of the year 1380, line 8; see note 54.
- 79 Shastry, A.K.: History of Śringēri, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 80 Gonda, J.: Die Religionen Indiens. II. Der jüngere Hinduismus (Stuttgart: 1963) (*Die Religionen der Menschheit*, Bd. 12), p. 83.
- 81 Hacker, P.: Kleine Schriften, ed. by L. Schmithausen (Wiesbaden: 1978) (*Glasenapp-Stiftung*, Bd. 15), pp. 478 ff.

- 82 Lütt, J.: The Śaṅkarācāryas of Puri, in: The cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa, ed. by A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G.C. Tripathī (New Delhi: 1978), pp. 411-419.
- 83 P. Hacker, however, supposed that even during this initial phase Vidyāraṇya played the decisive role: "Und dann gründete er [Vidyāraṇya] eine Institution, die dieser Lehre einen Rückhalt bieten könne: den Śaṅkara-Maṭha. Er schuf Fiktionen, denen, nachdem das Land von den Muslims total verheert worden war, kaum zu widersprechen war. Er gab aus, der Maṭha sei von Śaṅkara selber gegründet worden und habe seither dauernd bestanden. Er setzte zunächst den alten Vidyāśaṅkara als Vorsteher ein und gab aus, dieser habe dort schon seit Jahrzehnten gewirkt." (Hacker, P.: Kleine Schriften, op. cit., p. 479). Hacker's assumption that Vidyāraṇya played an important role already during the early years of Vijayanagara seems to be based on Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya's wrong identification with Mādhavamantrin ("Vidyāraṇya [war] Minister des Königs von Vijayanagara, nachdem das Land von Moslems verwüstet worden ... war", *ibid.*).
- 84 Dumont, L.: The conception of kingship in ancient India, in: Religion, politics and history in India (Paris/The Hague: 1970), pp. 62-88.
- 85 Conrad, D.: Max Weber's interpretation of dharma and the concept of *Eigengesetzlichkeit*, unpublished paper, Max Weber Conference, New Delhi, 1.-3.3.1984.