20.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit discusses the urban processes and characteristics of the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire, Vijayanagara. The Vijayanagara Empire (1336-1672 CE) was established in the fourteenth century against the backdrop of the invasions of the Delhi Sultanate under Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324-51 CE) and the decline of the Hoysala power (1022-1342 CE) in Karnataka and Kakatiyas (1000-1326 CE) in the Andhra region. The first dynasty of the empire, the Sangamas (1336-1486 CE) established and built the capital of the empire near a village called Hampi along the Tungabhadra river in the Deccan. However, the economic and political potential of this area were limited. It was with the subsequent political conquests southwards that the Empire emerged as a consolidated ruling power. Thus this political process of expansion integrated the peninsular region south of river Tungabhadra, by bringing together the three zones of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka. Finally, the defeat of the Madurai or Ma’bar Sultan Alauddin Sikander Shah and the capture of Madurai in 1378 CE, in the hands of the Vijayanagar general, Kumara Kampana, also the son of the Vijayanagara ruler, Bukka (1344-77 CE), pushed the frontiers to the southernmost point. The empire comprised four ruling dynasties. The three dynasties, viz., the Sangamas (1336-1486 CE), Saluvas (1486-91 CE) and Tuluvas (1505-76) ruled successively from the capital. The Tuluva

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period under Krishnadevaraya (1509-29 CE) and his brother Achyutadevaraya (1529-42) reached the height of imperial extent and authority with a strengthened centralised control over the realms. In 1565, during the reign of Rama Raja (1542-65), the first ruler of the fourth dynasty, the Aravidus (1542-1672 CE), the Vijayanagara army suffered defeat in the hands of a confederacy of five Deccani sultanates of Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar, all located in the Deccan plateau between river Krishna and the Vindhya Range. Thereafter, the capital was abandoned and the empire persisted in a weakened state until 1684 under the Aravidus, who ruled from different capitals (Sinopoli and Morrison, 1995: 85).

This Unit outlines briefly the processes of urbanisation during the Vijayanagara period. Against this backdrop, a discussion on the capital city at Hampi will follow with a focus on the modern discovery of the capital Vijayanagara primarily due to various archaeological and historical projects that have constructed a picture of urban life and highlighted the material remains and textual sources. It will be emphasised that there was a pre-existing history of this region before it became the site of imperial capital. Since many scholars have termed the nature of the imperial capital and the Empire as ‘Hindu’, the Unit will discuss the city architecture and the court culture to show that the city was cosmopolitan in nature and various religious traditions like that of Islam and Jainism influenced the urban layout, the courtly life and the creativity of the elites. In fact, various strategies of control were institutionalised through religious festivals, like the Mahanavami celebrations, militarism and trade and commerce. A discussion on the mythical and religious landscapes as a part of the city area will also figure, as these were important to understand the city-metropolitan network. The city’s economic life that is trade and commerce, agriculture, arts and crafts and its social classes will also be discussed in the context of the urban life and urbanism of Vijayanagara. The accounts of various foreign travellers who visited the imperial city, especially in the sixteenth century are important sources of information about the glory and city life of Vijayanagara. Therefore, this Unit will discuss these accounts along with short biographies of the travellers. Finally, the decline of the city in 1565 after the battle of Talikota, as discussed by the scholars, will be outlined.

20.2 URBAN PROCESSES DURING THE VIJAYANAGARA PERIOD

The urban developments in Vijayanagara were linked to several factors like militarisation, migration and trade and commerce. Due to increasing militarisation of the polity, numerous fortified settlements emerged. Fortifications of mercantile towns established by powerful merchant organisations and armed presence within the temple precincts increased. The towns emerged as trading centres and often eroded the power of the older agrarian elites, leading to the rise of urban power groups that entered into alliances with new political forces.

Since the consolidation of the Vijayanagara empire integrated the entire Peninsula, migration of traders and artisans across the regions created a supra-local urban network that bolstered trade. For instance, with the establishment of the centre of power in the Tungabhadra basin in north Karnataka, a large number of merchant and crafts organisations moved out of the Tamil region and entered into contractual relations with new power groups, thus establishing supra local organisations. Due to large-scale migration of weavers from the Deccan and Andhra region, new weaving centres emerged in Coimbatore and Madurai in the Vijayanagara period. Migration also brought into prominence a new class of itinerant merchants and traders, several of whom gradually settled down as powerful landowners. The inscriptive references to the Kaikkola,
Vaniya, Sikku Vaniya Vyapari, Mayilatti, Kanmala, and Komatti traders, Devangana 
weavers from Karnataka and Pattanulkar (silk weavers) from Saurashtra point to the 
development of a brisk trade and increased craft production which found a thriving 
market in the Vijayanagar and post-Vijayanagar kingdoms. Migrants settled in many 
stages. For instance, the Pattanulkars migrated from Saurashtra in the fourteenth and 
fifteenth centuries, briefly settled in the city of Vijayanagara, from where they again 
moved out, and finally settled in the pilgrimage centers of Kancipuram, Madurai and 
Ramesvaram. Older weaving centres like Kanchipuram, Tanjavur and Kumbhakonam 
also flourished (For details see Unit 19 of this Block). Due to greater monetisation, this 
period also saw an emergence of individual traders and master craftsmen.

One of the most important changes in the urban processes in the thirteenth and fourteenth 
centuries was the participation of the Vaishnava and Shaiva monastic institutions or the 
mathas in urbanisation and trade, leading to the development of sacred centres as 
prosperous pilgrimage towns. Another associated phenomenon that played an important 
role in urbanisation and urban process during the Vijayanagara period was the emergence 
of temple centres as trading towns. Large temple complexes at Tirupati, Srirangam 
(For details see Unit 19 of this Block) and Hampi housed different social groups, whose 
increasing consumption of various commodities stimulated trade. Donations in the form 
of land, gold coins, precious metals and livestock from the pilgrims generated an economy 
of exchange and also enhanced temple activities leading to the expansion of temple 
organisation (Champakalakshmi, 1999). Consequently temple towns emerged as centres 
of diverse economic activities, employing sculptors, craftsman and artisans. In the 
Vijayanagara period, not only the status of the merchants, but that of the weavers and 
artisans grew and they were an important part of the temple rituals and temple hierarchies. 
Religious traditions like the Shri vaishnavas provided ideological support and validation 
to these groups.

Both external and internal trade flourished and the revenues accruing from them were 
crucial to the Vijayanagara state. Taxation on trade and manufacture were an important 
source of income. Maritime trade flourished and the Vijayanagara rulers encouraged it 
as one of the most crucial items of import from Iran were war horses, others being 
copper, gold, spices, sandalwood, musk and camphor. Pepper, sugar and textile were 
items of export. The importance of maritime trade is well attested as the Vijayanagara 
rulers called themselves “Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans” signifying their 
domination over Bay of Bengal in the east and Arabian Sea in the west. Domination 
over the coastal territories was one of their primary geo-political objectives and a frequent 
cause of conflict with other kingdoms. Bhatkal, Calicut and Pulicat were some of the 
important ports. Warhorses imported from Iran were shipped to Bhatkal and from 
there they were supplied to the capital at Hampi. Arab traders came in large numbers 
from West Asia and settled mainly in Calicut, which also was visited by the Chinese 
ships. Muslim and Armenian traders controlled the trade at Pulicat on the Coromandel 
Coast. Pulicat also had active trading relations with Bengal that supplied foodstuff and 
textiles. Further impetus to urbanisation occurred with the advent of the Portuguese 
and establishment of the European companies with their joint stock systems in the 
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively.

Domestic trade also developed in the Vijayanagar period. Commodities from inland 
centres of production were brought to the coastal emporia by boats and pack bullock. 
One of the main reasons for the growth in the networks of maritime trade was the 
domestic production of commodities that had an international demand. The prosperity 
of agrarian economy encouraged the production of food crops as well as commercial
crops like indigo, cotton and sugarcane. An excellent network of roads facilitated the transportation of these crops (Asher and Talbot, 2008: 77-83).

It is difficult to estimate the size of urban population. Sources tell us that there were at least 80 trading centres and the capital, Vijayanagara was the largest city. Inscriptions throw some light on the social composition of the towns. For instance, in 1429 in a revolt in the Tamil region against the Vijayanagara state, a list of *jatis* or caste groups apart from peasants were listed as follows: merchants, weavers, herders, oil merchants, blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, potters, barbers, washermen, watchmen, craftsmen, soldiers and toddy tappers. The indigenous merchants belonged to the caste group of Chetties. In various localities mercantile groups vied for privileges and monopolies, An inscription of 1430 from the Udipi district in Karnataka tells of two merchants from two adjacent places disputed over trade in various commodities and one of the groups succeeded in maintaining its monopoly over trade in cotton cloth (Habib, 2016: 104-5).

It was in the backdrop of these developments that we discuss the city of Vijayanagara, which apart from being a political centre, was an economic and religious centre, too.

### 20.3 Vijayanagara: Modern Discovery and Sources

Vijayanagara means the “City of Victory”. It is now in ruins and is located in a village called Hampi in central Karnataka. UNESCO declared it as a World Heritage Site in 1987. It figures in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List as the “Hampi Group of Monuments.”

#### 20.3.1 The Beginning

In 1799 the British antiquarian, Colin Mackenzie, the future Surveyor General of India, visited the ruins, collected some manuscripts, had some watercolours painted of monuments and made the first map of the site. Around the same time, Mark Wilks, a resident of the East India Company at the court of the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore on the basis of some Kannada works presented an account of the Vijayanagara dynasty. Thereafter the site became known to the visitors, especially the photographers, most well known being Alexander Greenlaw who photographed this site in 1856.

A British civil servant, Robert Sewell, the Collector of Bellary district in which the site was situated interacted with several locals. One of them showed him a Sanskrit book, *Vidyaranya Sikka* that explained the foundation of the Vijayanagara empire. Thereafter, Sewell wrote a book *A Forgotten Empire: Vijayanagar: A Contribution to the History of India* which was published in 1900. Urging the importance of the Vijayanagara Empire and its capital at Hampi, he wrote:

> And yet in the present day the very existence of this kingdom is hardly remembered in India; while its once magnificent capital, planted on the extreme northern border of its dominions and bearing the proud title of the “City of Victory,” has entirely disappeared save for a few scattered ruins of buildings that were once temples or palaces, and for the long lines of massive walls that constituted its defences. Even the name has died out of men’s minds and memories, and the remains that mark its site are known only as the ruins lying near the little village of Hampe.

Sewell, 1962[1900]: 11

#### 20.3.2 Archaeological Works

The work at the capital, clearing of the site and excavating the palace area began only in 1970s under the aegis of the state and central archaeologists. These activities were fully under way when the *Vijayanagara Research Project* first began work at the site
in 1980, under the direction of the Archaeological Survey of India and the Karnataka Government Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, comprising an international group of archaeologists namely George Michell and John Fritz. The Project carried extensive excavations and surveys of the site at Hampi, where the capital was located and the findings and interpretations, especially related to the urban layout and civic and religious monuments have been published.

Another major archaeological project called the Vijayanagara Metropolitan Survey (VMS) led by two American archaeologist, Carla Sinopolis and Kathleen Morrison was launched in 1987. The project has tried to understand the city of Vijayanagara in its regional context, focussing on the agricultural sites or ‘landscapes of productions’ located in the Tungabhadra basin and the outlying areas where the crafts goods circulated. These areas, according to them, were the ‘metropolitan region’ or the hinterland that supported the growth of the city. Thus, the Project aimed to move beyond the site where architecture and archaeology of the monuments were the focus and studied the interaction of the city with this urban hinterland in which ‘more prosaic bulk commodities such as metal, ceramics, building stone, mortar and of course food and drink used by city residents were the most part generated within the urban hinterland itself.’ (http://www.kathleenmorrisonlab.com/). Since an overwhelming attention has been given to external trade in luxury items, such a view that focusses on internal exchange and commerce is important to understand the growth and decline of the imperial capital.

20.3.3 Sources

Apart from the archaeological reports and monographs, there are several primary sources for the study of the city of Vijayanagara. Contemporary literature in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu Sanskrit and Persian give insights into courtly life and traditions, activities in war and peace, palace architecture and temples. Inscriptions have formed an important source of study. There are about some 500 odd inscriptions scattered throughout the area on buildings and boulders, which have been documented by various scholars throughout the 20th century. Foreign travellers, accounts form a very important source of study and have been used widely in the research on the city of Vijayanagara. Robert Sewell in his work, *A Forgotten Empire* for the first time translated the works of two Portuguese travellers, Fernao Nunez and Domingo Paes who visited the capital city in the sixteenth century. In addition, Sewell also used the accounts of Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveller and Abdur Razzaq from Samarqand for the first time.

20.4 EARLY HISTORY OF VIJAYANAGARA

The city of Vijayanagara, as stated already, was located in the basin of the Tungabhadra River in the southern Deccan region in central Karnataka. The city nestles in the midst of volcanic rocky outcrops of varying tones of grey, ochre and pink. In fact, Hampi’s granite terrain is one of the most ancient and stable surfaces in the world. Therefore, this area already had a history of settlements right from the Iron Age before it became the chosen site for the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. Near the medieval imperial centre of Vijayanagara, in central Karnataka, during Iron Age, 1200-300 BCE, there has been archaeological evidence of social inequalities. The elaborate megalithic monuments show that there was an unequal access to seemingly mundane features such as water-retaining rock pools, and soil retention features for the purposes of maintaining grazing areas. These resources had implications for the production of material and symbolic resources associated with herd management, communal feasts, and mobilisation of social labour (Bauer, 2015).
The *Vijayanagara Research Project* provides details of the physical and mythical landscape. According to the information in this Project, the granite hills, caves and boulders of the Tungabhadra valley have ancient cults that became important pilgrimage sites especially from the eight-ninth centuries and continued to flourish and expand even in the Vijayanagara period. Myths and legends around these cults dominated the landscape. One such cult that flourished in the pre-Vijayanagara period was that of the river goddess Pampa and her consort Virupaksha, a form of Shiva. There are inscriptions between the eleventh and thirteenth century that register gifts made to the temple of Hampadevi or Pampadevi. An inscription of the Hoysala period refers to this place as Virupakshapattana or Vijaya Virupakshapura. Under the Sangama kings of Vijayanagara, Virupaksha was adopted as the guardian deity of the newly expanding state and the rulers constructed a temple complex at Hampi in his name. The legend relates the story of the marriage of Virupaksha to Pampa, a beautiful local maiden (after whom the village of Hampi takes its name). Hemakuta hill above Hampi marks the spot where Pampa worshiped Shiva with great devotion, thereby attracting the attention of the god, who agreed to marry her. The betrothal and marriage of Pampa to Shiva under the name of Virupaksha are still celebrated in and around Hampi. (For details, see [http://www.vijayanagara.org/](http://www.vijayanagara.org/))

Map 1: Layout of the Ancient City of Vijayanagara
Myths and legends related to the *Ramayana* tradition were also popular at Hampi. There is a detailed description in the *Vijaynagara Research Project* that has been summarised in the following lines. The Vijayanagara site is believed to be Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom where the episodes of one of the chapters of the *Ramayana* took place. This site with its surrounding hills was believed to be the place where the epic hero Rama, his brother Lakshmana and their loyal supporter, Hanuman came and found the ornaments of Rama’s wife Sita. Sita had dropped her ornaments and a garment in the hope that they would show Rama in which direction Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, was carrying her away forcibly. These hills and caves here were also mythical sites where Rama met other characters from the *Ramayana*. They were Sugriva, a claimant to the Kishkindha throne, deposed by his brother Vaali and the female ascetic, Shabari, a disciple of the sage Matanga. Immediately beneath the hill, on the south bank of the Tungabhadra, is a boulder carved with the figures of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman. This marks the spot where Lakshmana crowned Sugriva. The boulder is incorporated into the Kodandarama temple at Hampi. At the northwards turning of the Tungabhadra river is a holy spot called, *Chakra tirtha*, where Shiva gave Vishnu one of his most powerful weapons, the *Chakra*. Despite the associations of the site with the Kishkindha chapter of the *Ramayana*, Vaishnavite cults had little following at the sites in the pre or early Vijayanagara periods. Only in the 15th century did the Vijayanagara kings come to sponsor the cults of Rama and Vitthala.

Hampi and the area in and around Hampi became the arena of political activities only during the fourteenth century, when hill forts like Anegondi and Kampili emerged as centres of opposition to Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The five brothers of the Sangama family including Harihara and Bukka were said to be in employment of the king of Kampili. The Sangama brothers established themselves in the Hampi area, donating to the Virupaksha temple there and adding temples on Hemakuta hill immediately to the south. In the second half of the fourteenth century, under Bukka and Harihara, the Hampi *tirtha* had been incorporated into a walled city, which they named Vijayanagara. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, under the Sangama kings the city was further expanded with the construction of additional protective walls and gateways.

By this time, Vijayanagara had become a true capital city with a varied population of people from all parts of southern India, including Jains and Muslims. Building activity at Vijayanagara was halted temporarily towards the end of the fifteenth century, as a result of two successive military coups. Stability was restored only at the turn of the sixteenth century by the rulers of the Tuluva dynasty. Under Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya the city expanded. New suburbs with temple complexes were laid out. The Virupaksha cult at Hampi was renovated and expanded, and a new royal residence was established some 12 kilometres away, at a site coinciding with the modern town of Hospet. (For details, see, Vijayanagara Research Project and Vasundhara Filliozat, 1977: 1-56)

### 20.5 THE CITY: LAYOUT, BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE

The imperial capital city of Vijayanagara was spread over a large area, divided into a number of zones; marked by wide network of roads; and provided with massive irrigation system.

#### 20.5.1 Layout of the City

The ruins of the imperial capital of Vijayanagara are spread over 25 kilometres in the rocky outcrops of Hampi. The archaeologists have mapped out a spatial layout of the
city calling it as the ‘zonal concept of the city’. Thus the city was divided into three zones, each of which had different urban configurations and functions: a) Royal Centre b) Sacred Centre and c) Urban Core. The Vijayanagara Research Project has detailed descriptions of these zones (www.vijayanagara.org). A summary of the details of the Royal Centre, Sacred Centre and the Urban Core from the Project website is presented below.

**Royal Centre**

The **Royal Centre** occupies the western end of the Urban Core. The Royal Centre consists of what the archaeologists have imagined as palace structures and residences of the Vijayanagara kings and their private households. Daily business of ceremony and government was probably conducted from here. There are gateways leading to the Royal Centre. It is divided into high slender walls built of tightly fitted granite blocks that face a rubble core. The archaeologists have excavated several structures here namely the small shrines, Hazara Rama temple, Audience Hall, Great Paltform, Queen’s Palace, Lotus Mahal, elephant stables and Underground Temple.

The architecture of the Royal Centre is integrated with the mythical landscape that existed from before as has been stated above. The cult of Virupaksha and Pampa and some of the sites already associated with the *Ramayana* like the Matanga hill, the Kodandarama Temple and Anjenadri Hill and some of the pre-existing Vaishnava and Shaiva shrines were symbolically incorporated into the kingly authority at the Royal Centre. From the fifteenth century onwards, Rama as a divinity was at the generative core of the king’s capital and embodied the different activities of the Vijayanagara king.

**Map 2: Layout of the Royal Centre**

Courtesy: George Michell and John Fritz; Vijayanagara Research Project (VRP) http://www.vijayanagara.org/html/Maps.html

The Vijayanagara ruler, Devaraya I (1406-1422) constructed the famous **Hazara Rama Temple** as a shrine of Ramachandra in the fifteenth century. Situated in the middle of the Royal Centre, it functioned as a state temple and was used by the Vijayanagara rulers and their private family members. Since the Hazara Rama temple was a royal temple, the frescoes and sculptures on the walls of the temple depicted royal authority and power. For instance, royal processions and courtly festivals carved in relief on the outside of its enclosing walls depict the processions of elephants, horses with attendants,
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Military contingents, and dancing women, exactly as in the Mahanavami festival described by the foreign visitors. The reliefs inside the temple on various portions illustrate scenes from the *Ramayana* and are a representation of the artistic excellence of the artisans and sculptors present in the imperial city. An empty pedestal stands within the sanctuary; its three holes may have secured images of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita but these are lost. The temple is surrounded by smaller shrines of Narasimha, an incarnation of Vishnu, Hanumana and Garuda, the last two being characters in the Ramayana. However, by the sixteenth century, the king took the centre stage and sat at the core of a constellation of powerful divinities, whose temples complexes in the Sacred Centre and the metropolitan region surrounded the Royal Centre.

**Hazara Rama Temple**

Photograph by Dineshkannanbadi, June, 2012

Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/79/Rear_view_of_shrines_in_Hazara_Rama_temple_in_Hampi.JPG

Immediately south of the main entrance to the Hazara Rama temple is a sequence of two gateways leading to the two important structures of the Royal Centre. These structures are the **Audience Hall** and **Great Platform**. The **audience hall** comprises 100 stone footings, probably props for the wooden pillars which disappeared long ago. Nearby is the multi-storied **Great Platform**, popularly associated with the Mahanavami festival. Constructed in the fourteenth century, the Platform or the **Mahanavami dibba** has three ascending diminishing stages, each a solid square, added at a different time. Steps lead up the platform from the south and west sides, but there is no structure on top, only the recently exposed stone footings of a vanished wooden pavilion. The platform is often identified with the House of Victory. On the basis of the accounts of the foreign travellers who visited the city, the king is supposed to have witnessed the celebrations of the Mahanavami festival from the top of the platform, which had a temporary shrine dedicated to Durga. Relief carvings at the bottom stage of the platform depict diverse images of royal life: the king sitting on a throne receiving visitors or watching wrestling matches, going out on hunting expeditions; lines of prancing horses, elephants and even camels; dancing girls and foreigners, probably Turkish Muslims, serving as armed guardians, horse-trainers, and dancers and musicians. These images portray the life of the king rather than the processions of the Mahanavami. Even so, the platform has always been associated with this great occasion. There is a stepped tank immediately to the south, and other nearby bathing places, were probably used on particular festival occasions.
Short distances from the Mahanavami *dibba* are two structures whose architectural layouts are influenced by Islamic styles. One is the **Queen’s Bath** and the other is the **Lotus Mahal**. The queens’ bath was probably intended for the amusement of the Vijayanagara king and his courtiers. It has an ornate interior arcade with balconies running around a sunken square pool. The two-storied **Lotus Mahal** was probably a
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royal pavilion. Like the queens’ bath, it is built in the fanciful Vijayanagara courtly style influenced by Islamic designs and motifs. It is located in the middle of a high walled compound. A vaulted hall nearby may have served as a treasury or gymnasium. Octagonal and square watchtowers with balconies are located outside.

Lotus Mahal
Photograph by Rajesh, April, 2009
Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/b/b7/Lotus_temple_hampi.jpg

A small doorway to the east leads to the elephant stables, suggesting that the Lotus Mahal enclosure was an abode of men rather than a zenana, or women’s quarter, as is sometimes believed. The elephant stables comprise a long line of eleven chambers roofed by alternating vaults and domes in a distinct Islamic style. These face west onto an open ground where troops and animals would have paraded. This parade ground comprises a building with a high arcaded porch and an interior court, possibly used to view military displays in front and martial entertainments such as wrestling and boxing matches inside.

Elephant Stables
Photograph by Kevin Sallée, January, 2007
Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cc/Elephant_stables%2C_Hampi%2C_Karnataka%2C_India.jpg

Excavations in the compounds west of the Hazara Rama Temple have revealed the remains of numerous palaces, presumably for the royal household. One complex of fifteen palaces has even been labelled the Noblemen’s Quarter. An important early shrine located in this palace zone is known as the Underground Temple, because it was built in a small valley and was later partly buried by eroded soil. The shrine at its
core is dedicated to Virupaksha, the same god worshiped at Hampi. It probably served as the principal shrine worshiped by the royal family.

Sacred Centre

Laid out along the southern bank of the Tungabhadra river, the Sacred Centre of Vijayanagara is made up of distinct temple complexes, partly surrounded by fortifications. On the east are the Vaishnava shrines and on the west are the Shaivite shrines. Dominating the Shaivite area is a temple district known as Hampi, the village that today gives its name to the whole site. Here is situated the Virupaksha Temple, the seat of a god celebrated in pre-Vijayanagara times and still in worship today. The Virupaksha temple is dedicated to Virupaksha, form of Shiva and the consort of local goddess, Pampa. As stated before, the pre-Vijayanagara mythical landscape is full of stories about this local goddess and Hampi is named in her honour. The Virupaksha-Pampa sanctuary existed well before the foundation of the Vijayanagara capital; inscriptions referring to the god date back to the 9th-10th centuries. The Sangamas transformed the shrine into a major religious monument. The Tuluvas greatly extended Virupaksha temple. A slab set up in front of the main shrine records Krishnadevaraya’s benefactions on the occasion of his coronation in 1510. Krishnadevaraya also erected the gopura or the temple gateway that stands immediately opposite. The eastern side of the temple leads to the broad colonnaded street that serves today, as it did in the past, as the main bazaar of Hampi. The cult of Virupaksha-Pampa did not die out after the destruction of the city in 1565. Worship there continued through the years, and at the turn of the 19th century there were major renovations. The temple, an important pilgrimage centre, is the largest Hindu monument in central Karnataka, continues to prosper and attracts huge crowds during the betrothal and marriage festivities of Virupaksha and Pampa.
The *Vitthaladeva temple* dedicated to Vitthala, a form of Krishna and constructed in the fifteenth century is located at the centre of the temple district known as Vitthalapura, near the south bank of the Tungabhadra in the Sacred Centre. Possibly Vira Narasimha, the first ruler of the Tuluva dynasty, founded it in the first decade of the 16th century. All of his successors made additions. Krishnadevaraya was responsible for the hundred-columned hall built up to the southern enclosure wall, while two of his queens each added a *gopura* (ornate entrance gate). A third *gopura* was the work of Achyutaraya.
In 1554, during the reign of Sadashiva, a magnificent “swing-pavilion” was added, but its sponsor was a military commander rather than the emperor himself. A Garuda shrine, fashioned as a chariot with stone wheels, stands in front of the temple. There are colonnaded bazaar streets running east and north from the temple that also lead to other shrines. The district abounds in minor shrines, service structures, feeding houses, wells and a large tank. The twelfth century saint, Ramanuja was probably worshiped in a large temple that faced south onto a branch of the Vitthala bazaar.

Urban Core

The Urban Core was the elite residential zone of the Vijayanagara capital. It was surrounded in the east by the Raghunatha temple on the Malyavanta hill and ridges, valleys and rocky outcrops. Massive fortifications with bastions and gateways at strategic locations surround the Urban Core. In one area, a moat is preserved. The Urban Core consists of residential quarters of various social groups from different occupations and religious traditions, including Islam. According to the archaeologists, gateways, aligned buildings and pavements indicate major roads, while worn paths and stairways suggest numerous pedestrian routes that linked the different residential areas. The Urban Core also consists of shrines, palace complexes, rock-cut features and tombs (see Map 1).

20.5.2 The Vijayanagara Metropolitan Region

As mentioned above, the Vijayanagara Metropolitan Survey (VMS) that began in 1987 emphasised that the regional setting of Vijayanagara should be analysed to understand the city. Carla M. Sinopolis and Kathleen D. Morrison, founders of VMS, mapped and documented a vast area of 600 sq kms in and around the city. Thus, the Vijayanagara Metropolitan Region was the Urban Core and number of settlements outside it. This expanded the scope of understanding an urban centre, in this case the imperial capital of Vijayanagara. According to the project, the rural settlements of the metropolitan region and the city not only interacted with each other economically through a circulation and exchange of agricultural, craft and trading commodities, they also interacted in political and cultural terms, each affecting the other. The cultural landscape transformed with this interaction led to the construction of small shrines and large temples, the cutting of inscriptions, and the carving of sculptures, many of which continue to be venerated to this day. Outside the Urban Core, in the outlying areas, thousands of troops and animals displayed during the annual Mahanavami festival and organised for warfares were camped. Fortifications and gateways that protect the Urban Core and dams and reservoirs supplying water dot the outskirts of the city. Roads, canals, walls, and bridges built in and around the imperial city defined the movement across the region.

This project further highlighted the roles of peasants, herdsmen, artisans and other occupational groups in the development of the imperial city. Morrison emphasised that the ‘...actors typically invisible in conventional historical research – farmers, herders, hunters, pastoralists, and others – played a role in the successes, failures, and ambitions of the Vijayanagara state. Their labor constituted the backbone of the polity...’ (http://www.kathleenmorrissonlab.com/vijayanagara-metropolitan-surv/). Anegondi, Kamalapura, Kadirampura, Malpannagudi and Anantashayanagudi are some of the important villages of the Vijayanagara Metropolitan Region. Except Anegondi, the rest three of them have some buildings of Islamic architecture. For instance, in Kadirampura, there are two Islamic tombs and archaeologists conclude that in this village Muslim military officers must have resided. Malpannagudi has an early fifteenth century octagonal well surrounded by Islamic styled arches.
20.5.3 Other Features of the City

The city had beautifully laid out roads and well provided with irrigation.

Roads

There was a well developed network of roads that connected different zones within the city of Vijayanagara and the city and metropolitan region. Trade, military and ceremonial movements were facilitated by these roads. The archaeologists reconstructed the network of roads on the basis of gateways and smaller openings in the fortification walls, fragments of stone pavements, alignments of temples, colonnades, monolithic columns and other structures, literary evidence and inscriptions.

They conclude that there were three types of roads in the city: radial, ring, and linear. The radial road system was focussed on the Royal Centre and connected to the Urban Core and the Sacred City. This system of roads converged in front of the Ramachandra temple. One of the most important roads running through the Urban Core was the Northeast road (NE) that connected to the Ramachandra Temple. Shrines, colonnades and gateways were located along this road. When the road reached the northeast part of the Tungabhadra Valley, it branched into, one connecting to Anegondi and the other to an unknown location. A second, or ring series of roads encircled the Royal Centre one of them leading to the village of Hampi. The third type, linear roads, included a major route linking Hampi to the town now known as Hospet (also see, John Fritz, 1983, pp.51-9).

Irrigation Systems

The Tungabhadra Valley was dry with rocky outcrops of granite rock and water for agriculture was a challenge. According to Kathleen Morrison, since the peasants in Vijayanagara practised ‘agricultural intensification’, that is, used a variety of agricultural techniques and strategies, therefore, irrigation was crucial. In fact, the metropolitan region shows numerous irrigation facilities ranging from river canals and reservoirs to embankments, terraces, erosion control walls and drainage basins. These irrigation facilities helped in the production of a range of wet and dry crops like rice, sugarcane and vegetables and millet, pulses, oilseeds and cotton respectively.

Since water was scarce in the rocky terrain in the Tungabhadra Valley, it had to be harnessed to its optimum use. Therefore, the state tried to control the irrigation techniques in the Vijayanagara metropolitan region and this was also important for the assertion of power and authority. The kings exploited the hydrological environment to its maximum advantage, irrigating agricultural land inside the city, directing water into urban areas for domestic use, and building an impressive system of baths and channels to service the Royal Centre. At a larger scale several instances of interlinked reservoirs and canals were also created. The most elaborate of these involved channels directing water into the Daroji tank, 30 kilometres east of Hospet. In this and similar projects of the era, the Vijayanagara kings showed their mastery of water control to provide for the many and varied needs of the population, both urban and agricultural. Even the urban political elites, temple personnel and merchant groups invested in irrigation technology. Tax concessions were granted to individuals for construction and maintenance of irrigation facilities. These constructions required a large number of work force and coercion must have been used in their recruitment.
Fortifications and Warfare Technology

The capital city of Vijaynagara was surrounded by impressive fortifications, gateways and height towers in several circles. Walls on low ground were protected by moats and by fields of large stones while bodies of water and irrigated fields were located nearby. The foreign travellers who visited the city were impressed with the defense walls and described them in great detail. These fortifications and defense walls extending over several kilometres dominating the geopolitical landscape of the city and its metropolitan region were made of quarried granite rocks and earthen fill. These structures were excellent examples of masonry and must have required heavy investment of resources. Defense masonry also consisted of moats, ditches and fields of “horse stones” – multiple lines of large, irregularly placed natural boulders – placed so as to preclude the movement of mounted troops. Vijayanagara’s system of security arrangements developed over time because of its location and constant threat from the Bahamani Sultanate on its northern boundaries. However, the militarisation of the Vijayanagara empire and the city was also due to the expansion of armed forces in Europe and Asia during this period. New weapons were being introduced and the gunpowder technology was spreading. And by second half of the fifteenth century was used in canons.

The ramparts of the city exploited the defensive advantages of the rocky landscape, while the river protected the city’s northern flank and provided essential water for agriculture and domestic use. At the core of this walled zone was the royal centre, where the Sangama kings had their palaces, private places for worship and platforms and halls for their royal ceremonies. The aforesaid description of the fortifications is a synopsis of the detailed report on the website of the Vijayanagara Research Project.

20.6 TRADE AND MANUFACTURE

The Vijayanagara period saw intense monetisation. Minting of currency took place. Taxes, tariffs and salaries to officials and soldiers were paid in cash. Both internal and external trade made progress and the city was a trading centre where all merchants came and
settled there, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There were thriving markets. Extensive maritime trade with Persia, Arabia, Malayan Archipelago, Burma, China, Portugal and numerous islands in the Indian Ocean, Africa, Bukhara and the Mediterranean flourished. External trade was very important for the Vijayanagara rulers and influenced the politics. In fact, Abdur Razzaq whose account of the city of Vijayanagara is used by the historians was the ambassador of the ruler of Samarqand and had come to promote trading relations. Abdur Razzaq who had travelled widely in and outside India, and was an ambassador at the court of Deva Raya II (1423-46), says: “This latter prince has in his dominions three hundred ports, each of which is equal to Calicut, and on terra firma his territories comprise a space of three months journey.” All travellers agree that the country was thickly populated with numerous towns and villages. Abdur Razzaq says: “The country is for the most part well cultivated, very fertile. The troops amount in number to eleven lakhs.” Barbosa writes: “It is very rich, and well supplied with provisions, and is very full of cities and large townships.” He describes the large trade of the seaport of Bhatkal on its western coast, the exports from which consisted of iron, spices, drugs, myrabolans, and the imports of horses and pearls. Thus, the city of Vijayanagara was a commercial centre and the focal point of several trans-peninsular routes. The market places in the royal centre, shops on the bazaar streets of the temple complexes and in the suburbs all sold goods whose trade was conducted by the merchant guilds of the respective commodities. According to Burton Stein, “Vijayanagara was the place where its kings conducted their political business for substantial parts of each year, where tribute from powerful provincial lords of the realm was received during the mahanavami festival, and where the rayas’ army was garrisoned and resupplied when it was not in the field.” (Stein, 2008: 39). The city was a centre of consumption as it was an administrative centre and there were various social classes residing in it. There would have been a scope of internal demands. Since the city was inhabited by foot soldiers, court and camp servants, dancing women and kings’ households, a large market of daily necessaries would have been present. Luxury items would have reached the capital also as tributes from coastal rulers, gifts from foreign visitors or through merchants. Similarly textile products imported from China or produced at workshops in south India were distributed through internal trade and exchange.

![Market Place at Hampi](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Hampi_marketplace.jpg)

Photograph by Dineshkannambadi, September, 2006
Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Hampi_marketplace.jpg
According to the *Vijayanagara Research Project* report, considerable number of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain shards, as well as celadon and polychrome wares has been found on the surface and in excavations of the Vijayanagara site, especially in and around the Royal Centre. Datable to the Ming period (late 15th century onwards), these porcelain shards indicate that in the first half of the 16th century Vijayanagara was linked to a trade network that imported luxury goods from southern China, presumably by sea. Whether this network was achieved through coastal traders in direct contact with the Vijayanagara court or through the intermediary kingdoms of the Deccan sultans has not yet been determined. Carla Sinopoli has studied no less than 4,000 earthenware ceramic fragments recovered in the excavations of the palaces in Noblemen’s Quarter of the Royal Centre. Based on a comprehensive statistical approach to the classification of these finds, and a comparison of these data with ceramics collected from other areas of the site, Sinopoli concluded that they reflected particular cultural and behavioural differences. For example, she speculates that the considerable variation in ceramic form indicates that production was not under centralised control, in contrast, perhaps, to luxury goods, that no longer survive. These porcelain remains are found in large numbers in administrative and palace areas, pointing out to the fact that the sites had greater access to them. Although in the metropolitan region, the amount of porcelain sherds is less, it indicates that access to it was not exclusive (www.vijayanagara.org/html/Ceramics.html; Carla Sinopoli, 1983: 1-9).

Stone tools were manufactured and used in the city. Though available and used since the Palaeolithic period, the people in Vijayanagara used variety of stone tools, especially for quarrying purposes cutting stones for various constructions. Archaeologists have excavated quarry sites with partly finished architectural elements, as well as associated ramps and cart tracks: all evidence for the different techniques of stone cutting and methods of transport and construction. There are not many archeological evidence of craft production in the city except some small iron processing area. Most of the iron, stone and earthenware workshops suggest a shifting pattern with masons and artisans moving from one site of construction to the other. According to Sinopoli and Morrison, caste councils regulated production and distribution of craft goods. These councils also arbitrated in inter and intra-caste disputes which revolved mainly around ritual privileges rather than exclusive economic matters.

### 20.7 STRATEGIES OF IMPERIAL CONTROL, COURT CULTURE AND NATURE OF THE CITY

Ideology was an important mechanism to assert control and dominance in political and religious spheres. According to Sinopoli and Morrison, the creation of the capital was in alignment with the construction of the sacred landscape comprising the Hindu values and beliefs. The grand architectural styles of the temples show that rulers also sponsored the construction of the temples and made lavish donations to them for political legitimacy. Further they also adopted the local deities into the royal pantheon of divinities. This was a strategy to universalise and incorporate symbolically diverse areas of the Empire. The large number of shrines and temples in the metropolitan region also were linked to the imperial sacred landscape. Individual merchants and craftsmen also patronised some of these temples. The Empire also included numerous Muslim and Jaina architecture at the capital. State documents and proclamations attest the support of non-Hindu religious groups (Sinopoli and Morrison, 1995: 87).

Religious rituals like Mahanavami were publicly performed to display the power of the king at the end of the rainy season in September-October, after which the Vijayanagara
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Rulers planned military expeditions. The Mahanavami probably focused on the worship of Durga, the goddess who empowered the king’s weapons, troops, and animals. The ceremonies took place over nine nights, after which there was a great parade and feast. All of the governors and commanders of the empire were encouraged to attend this event, during which they paid tribute and expressed their homage to the Vijayanagara ruler. In addition, the architectural plan in the capital as seen in the presence of the Mahanavami dibba, the marking and alignment of the processional routes and sculptures on the platform all depict and celebrate the institution of kingship and empire. Foreigners were also invited to the capital on this occasion. Foreign travellers like Abdur Razzaq, Domingo Paes, and Fernao Nunez witnessed the festival and have written extensively about it.

However, according to R. Champakalakshmi, the physical demarcation of the royal centre by special ramparts from the sacred centre at Vijayanagara depicted a certain secularisation and separation of the sacred and secular sphere. According to her, the royal centre represented the ceremonial and administrative aspects and the sacred centre represented the sacred aspects of the ideological tradition. Further, she says that the Mahanavami ritual laid emphasis on the royal persona of the king rather than the tutelary deity.

Despite adopting Sanskrit titles like upholder of the varnashrama dharma (moral and religious order), constructing temples and conducting public rituals like the Mahanavami festival, the city and the empire were not Hindu in their approach. The city clearly reflected an Islamicate influence. Scholars use the term Islamicate, instead of Islamic as the term Islamicate means a series of cultural complexes like architecture, dress, paper, literature, and military technology associated with people who were followers of Islam and not the religion of Islam as such. The architectural styles clearly reflected an Islamicate influence. However, the Vijayanagara architects did not simply imitate these Islamicate models. They creatively used them within the aesthetic context of the South Indian tradition, especially in the buildings of the royal centre. After the sack of the city in 1565, this hybrid style of architecture was further developed in the palaces of the later Vijayanagara rulers at Penukonda and Chandragiri. Besides the court culture of the Vijayanagara rulers also reflected Islamicate influence.

This cosmopolitan approach was visible in the courtly ceremonies and royal court dresses. According to Philip Wagoner, the Vijayanagara rulers were adept at switching from Indic to Islamicate forms of dress. They wore tunics and caps, kullai and kabayi tailored in accordance with Arabic fashions. This according to Wagoner was done when the Vijayanagara rulers received and interacted with Muslim guests at the court. In this way, they were presenting themselves not only to the kingdoms in the north, like the Bahamani but also to the larger Islamic civilizational world. Interestingly, the Vijayanagara rulers adopted a title called, Hinduraya Suratrana, which in Sanskrit meant Sultan among the Hindu kings. Similar cosmopolitan nature is reflected in the urban life of Vijayanagara when the elites irrespective of their religious affiliation switched willingly from Islamicate to Indic styles and vice-versa. For example, in 1439, a Muslim noble built a mosque in the city using traditional Indic temple style of post and lintel construction. The inscription on the mosque refers to the structure not as a mosque but as dharmasale, hall of dharma and it is further stated that it was built for the merit of the ruler (Asher and Talbot, 2008: 71-2).

Fortifications of the city, canal irrigated zones and areas of reservoir irrigation also reflected the control of imperial power over agricultural areas. Epigraphic and historical records provide information about the coercive control. The well-defined routes of
movements with clearly marked out portions of access and denial of it shows the control the rulers had over the city. The gateways marked out the elite areas and temples, which were walled. The bastions and watchtowers in and around the royal centre show that the movements of the population residing in the city were monitored. Control of movement and transport appears to have been connected to revenue collection including taxes on produce, animals and people who collected at the gateways. Vijayanagara political elites invested heavily in military technology, horses, war elephants and soldiers and maintained a large standing army. Evidence shows the presence of a large army stationed in the capital and the salary was given in cash. Horses, elephants and artillery were the bulk of the trading items and the rulers monopolised the trade in these commodities. Sinopoli and Morrison point out that there is hardly any evidence to show that the Vijayanagara rulers exerted direct control over any sphere of economic production. However, they also point out that the inscriptive evidence and fortifications around the reservoirs, tanks and irrigated fields show that the rulers were concerned with enhancing agricultural production and safe transport for subsistence and other goods. Already the state interest in controlling water and irrigation facilities has been discussed above. There also appears to have been considerable control over the share in the produce, and rulers, landlords and other political elites were entitled to their respective share. These were collected in kind and cash and the peasants had to visit the market for selling the crops.

20.8 ACCOUNTS OF FOREIGN TRAVELLERS

Several foreign travellers from Persia and Europe visited the city of Vijayanagara in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were impressed with the city and their accounts on administration, layout, bazaars, temples and palaces, local historical traditions have been useful for the historians and archaeologists to construct the picture of Vijayanagara. Their accounts of the spectacular ceremonies of the nine day festival of Mahanavami to which the rulers invited them are particularly vivid. Their reports on the precious stones, including diamonds, textiles and other luxury goods on sale in the markets testify to the role of the capital as one of the greatest emporia in South India. (http://www.vijayanagara.org/html/Vijay_Hist.html)

Abdur Razzaq who visited the city in 1443 CE considers Vijayanagara to be one of the most splendid city in the world. Razzaq was a Timurid chronicler and Islamic scholar and was for a while the ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia. In his role as ambassador he visited Calicut and Vijayanagara. Describing the city, Razzaq wrote: “The city of Bijanagar is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth. It is so built that it has seven fortified walls, one within the other.” (Filliozat, 1996: 257) Further, while describing his meeting with the king, Razzaq wrote about the wealth of the palace and the king’s throne, “On the third day, when the king was about to leave the scene of the festival, I was carried before the throne of His Majesty. It was of a prodigious size, made of gold, inlaid with beautiful jewels, and ornamented with exceeding delicacy and art; seeing that this kind of manufacture is nowhere excelled in the other kingdoms of the earth. Before the throne there was placed a cushion of zaituni satin, round which three rows of most exquisite pearls were sewn.” (Filliozat, 1996: 276) The wealth of the Vijayanagar city and its kings are attested by another Persian historian, Ferishta, the author of Tarikh-i Ferishta, “The princes of the Bahmani maintained their superiority by valour only; for in power, wealth and extent of the country, the Rayas of Bijanagar (Vijayanagar) greatly exceeded them.” Ferishta had joined the service of King Ibrahim Adil II of Bijapur in 1589.
Any writing on the history of the Vijayanagar Empire invariably cites the accounts of two Portuguese chronicles written by Domingo Paes and Fernao Nunez. Both the writings date to sixteenth century, Domingo Paes’s account is dated around 1520-22 and Fernao Nunez’s is dated around 1535-37. The former writing coincided with Krishnadevaraya’s period (1509-29) and the latter’s accounts corresponded to Achyutadevaraya’s period (1529-42), two iconic monarchs belonging to the Tuluva dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire. It is to be noted that sixteenth century is also considered a period when Vijayanagara was well consolidated. For Paes, the scene of action is the capital Vijayanagar. He was definitely fascinated by its magnificence and grandeur, describing Vijayanagara’s fortified urban landscape, its markets, temples and the royal centre. For him, the kingship was a spectacle, closely identified with court rituals and ceremonies. The famous Mahanavami festival that has become a theme of analysis for understanding the connections between rituals, religion and politics find an elaborate mention in his accounts. The details about the king, his character, his physique, his household, clothing, daily routine and the description of the palace that he managed to see dominate his accounts. According to Paes, Vijaynagara was as large as Rome and “the best provided city of the world.” In one of his descriptions of the city, Paes states:

The king has made within it a very strong city, fortified with walls and towers, and the gates at the entrance are very strong... these walls are not made like those of other cities, but are made of very strong masonry... and inside very beautiful rows of buildings... with flat roofs. There live... many merchants, and it is filled with a large population because the king induces many honourable merchants to go there from his cities... You have a broad and beautiful street full of fine houses... and it is understood that the houses belong to... merchants, and there you find all sorts of rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds, and pearls... and cloths and every sort of thing there is on the earth that you may wish to buy. Then you have there every evening a fair where they sell many common horses, and also many citrons, and limes, and oranges, and grapes, and every kind of garden stuff, and wood; you have all this in the street [which]... leads to the palace.

(Sewell, 1962: 236-39)

Fernao Nunez came to the city of Vijayanagara as a merchant and spent a considerable time there and had access to the court of the ruler. Apart from recording what he saw, his business took him to markets and people with whom he interacted and gathered information. Like Paes, the focus was the capital in Nuniz’s accounts. He explains the rise of the Vijayangar and its foundation, the war with the king of Delhi, reference to Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and the establishment of the city of Vijayanagara. According to Nunez, this place was a deserted area, a hunting ground. Harihara, the founder of the dynasty, while still a prince, went hunting with his hound. At one spot the hare that he was chasing turned against the hound and bit it. The prince was astonished by this unusual happening and related the incident to the hermit Vidyaranya who was present there. The sage said this was the right spot from where he should rule the country. This legend finds several mentions starting from the origin myth of the Vijayanagar Empire to various accounts till the modern day. The various exploits of the king, politics, and the siege of Raichur all find mention in the account. Nunez, too, gives details of the Mahanavami festival, noting admiringly the extravagant jewels worn by the courtly women, as well as the thousands of women in the king’s service.

Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese factor at Cannanore and Cochin in between 1503 and (about) 1517 and had left behind an interesting account on trade and political events of the southeast including Bengal. We have an account of what Vijayanagara was like in 1504-14 in the narrative of Duarte Barbosa. Niccolò de’ Conti, who also visited Vijaynagara was a Venetian merchant and explorer, born in Chioggia, who travelled to India and Southeast Asia, and possibly to Southern China, during the early
15th century. Cesare Frederici, an Italian traveller who spent seven months at Vijayanagara in 1567, two years after the city was sacked, suggests that the capital was only partly destroyed and that Tirumala of the Aravidu dynasty intended to re-establish the Vijayanagara capital there. This attempt turned out to be unsuccessful and the city was eventually abandoned for good. After Frederici, no foreign accounts of the city have come down to us until that of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Scottish antiquarian who visited Vijayanagara in 1799. Mackenzie’s description of the site, accompanied by a watercolour map and views, represent the first modern step to study the ruins (For details, see, http://www.vijayanagara.org/html/Vijay_Hist.html, Filliozat, 1996, Robert Sewell, 1900).

20.9 DECLINE OF THE CITY
Conflict with the Deccan sultans intensified during Tuluva times, leading eventually to the famous battle fought near Talikota, a site some 100 km away from the capital, in January 1565. After the catastrophic defeat of their army, the Vijayanagara king and court fled the capital. The capital is said to have been completely ransacked. Both sultanate and Vijayanagara officers briefly attempted to reoccupy the remains of the city after its destruction. Soon thereafter, the ruins were left to agriculturalists and pastoral groups. Despite the defeat and abandonment of the capital, the empire continued to exist. Under the rule of the last line of Vijayanagara kings, that of the Aravidus (1570-1646), the empire continued for almost another hundred years. The Aravidus established themselves at the fortified sites of Penukonda and then at Chandragiri, near the shrines at Tirumala-Tirupati, in southern Andhra. However, the northern parts of the empire were lost to the Deccan sultans. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Nayakas asserted their independence as rulers over much of Tamilnadu and local chiefs, known as Poligars divided northern Kamataka and Andhra. A civil war in 1614 left the Aravidus with a much-reduced kingdom. The last of the Vijayanagara kings Sriranga III died in 1672.

20.10 SUMMARY
This Unit discussed the development and growth of Vijayanagara that was the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. Situated on the banks of the Tungabhadra River in the middle of granite rocky outcrops, the city of Vijayanagara represented a medieval imperial city in peninsular India. With the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire in the fourteenth century, the urban processes, which were already active, accelerated and acquired new dimensions that are discussed in the Unit. It is against this backdrop of medieval urbanisation that the development and growth of Vijayanagara should be examined. One should remember that this area of Tungabhadra valley already had settlements and a religious landscape from the Iron Age. These settlements and the religious culture contributed to the growth of the city. The layout of the city into three zones, the royal centre, sacred centre and the urban core with well-developed irrigation networks and structures shows the sophisticated urban planning and a distinct architectural style. Trade and commerce, militarisation, migration and the development of an agrarian hinterland often referred to as the metropolitan region contributed to the vibrant urban nature. Since many scholars have termed the nature of the imperial capital and the Empire as ‘Hindu’, the Unit discussed the city architecture and the court culture to show that the city was cosmopolitan in nature and various religious traditions like that of Islam and Jainism influenced the urban layout. Various foreign travellers who visited the imperial city, especially in the sixteenth century have left useful information about the glory and city life of Vijayanagara. In 1565, after the defeat of the Vijayanagara army in the hands of the Deccan sultans.
of a confederacy of five Deccani sultanates, the capital was abandoned and the empire persisted in a weakened state until 1684 under the Aravidus, who ruled from different capitals. However, the city continued to be inhabited by agriculturists and pastoralists of that region.

20.11 EXERCISES

1) Examine the growth of urbanism and urban processes during the Vijayanagara period.

2) Narrate the saga of the emergence of the city of Vijayanagara in the early phase in the 15th century.

3) To what extent does the spatial layout of the city of Vijayanagara reflect high level of urbanisation?

4) ‘In the 16th century Vijayanagara was a vibrant city.’ Comment.

5) How did the city layout and courtly culture of Vijayanagara reflect the dominance of Imperial control?

6) Highlight the importance of the city of Vijayanagara on the basis of foreign accounts.

20.12 REFERENCES


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