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Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South Indian History*

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It has often been said that pre-modern south Asian states were in certain vital respects timeless, and sometimes even that Indian society had no real social history before colonial intervention. Most prominently, theories of oriental despotism have provided a lens for viewing traditional Indian polity and society. This lens goes in and out of focus in endless succession, not in response to any essential changes in the political structure, but rather due to the cyclic manifestation of a despotic superstructure overlaying a persistently discernible social infrastructure. The two social theorists perhaps most responsible for promulgating this already widely held view were H.S. Maine and K. Marx. It is curious that despite their many differences they agreed on the two basic tenets of what might be called the nineteenth century colonial sociology of India: they shared a reified conception of the organic and integral Indian village community, and they believed in its essentially changeless autonomy from the political superstructure.[1]

Recently, Indian historians have begun to provide alternative frameworks for understanding pre-modern Indian history. They have gone beyond analyses of the variable base-lines for structural change in the nineteenth century, and have asked whether structural changes can be said to have occurred long before the effects of British rule were ever felt. The work of Irfan Habib and other Mughal economic historians stands out in this regard.[2] These historians have been revo-

* I am deeply indebted to Kathi Rose for her many suggestions. Also, I am thankful to Arjun Appadurai, Carol A. Breckenridge, Ronald Inden, Donald Nelson, Ralph Nicholas, and Burton Stein.

[1]See D. Thorner, 'Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production,' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, IX, 1966, and L. Dumont, 'The Village Community from Marx to Maine,' in *ibid*. For a most interesting reappraisal of the old method, see E. Stokes, 'The First Century of British Colonial Rule in India: Social Revolution or Social Stagnation,' in *Past and Present*, February 1973.

[2]See I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of the Mughal Empire*, London, 1963; and a review by T. Raychaudhuri, 'The Agrarian System of Mughal India,' in

lutionizing our views of the Indian economy before the nineteenth century : e.g., with respect to its responsiveness to broad regional and even pan-Imperial trends and influences, its early development of infrastructures associated with capitalist or pre-capitalist economic structures, *inter alia*.

However, pre-modern Indian political history still shows many traces of the nineteenth century sociology which economic historians have been so quick to renounce. There are notable exceptions, but theoretical attempts to understand political structures and the relation of the 'political' to the 'social' have been for the most part inadequate. Even the worthwhile attempts of scholars such as R. Fox and B. Stein to propose such alternative models as the 'segmentary state' fail to provide a suitable analytic for grappling with the question of structural change.[3] The segmentary state model is neither sufficiently well calibrated to index changes in political or social relations, nor is it culturally sensitive enough to identify the differences between East Africa and India, or even more particularly between north and south India.

Part of the problem is a general lack of theoretical attention to what is meant by 'social structure' and 'political system' in early Indian history. Indeed, the very term 'structural change' presupposes an understanding of structure, and yet there is little clarity and even less agreement on what exactly 'structure' is.

This paper represents an initial attempt to view social and political structures as integrally related. That is, the assumption of Marx and Maine that social structure can be understood as autonomous from the political superstructure will be vigorously contested. Here, cultural notions of the 'authoritative' will be considered to underlie both the political and the social, and will be implicitly assumed to relate to the economic as well, defined as the mode and relations of production.

Structure, here defined loosely as the set or sets of formal relations of the constituent elements of social phenomena, will thus be seen as articulated on the basis of a unified conception of authority. This formulation has ramifications both for a consideration of political leadership, dominance, and superordination of any sort, as well as for an analysis of relations and roles throughout 'political society.' Changes in the conception of authority will be seen to have repercussions for the total set of social relations.

Enquiry, New Series II, I, Spring 1965. Also, for a critique of Western Marxist analyses, see I. Habib, 'Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis,' in *Enquiry*, New Series III, II, Monsoon, 1969.

[3]See R. Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule*, Berkeley, 1971; and B. Stein, 'The

In my understanding of authority, as well as of pre-modern Indian political systems, I owe much to the work of A.M. Hocart.[4] Hocart's writings have already been recognized by analysts such as C. Levi-Strauss and L. Dumont for their contribution to the study of caste systems in south Asia. However, his work on kingship has been largely ignored by Indian historians.

Following Hocart, I analyze political systems in the same terms as ritual systems. However, by viewing these systems as analytically homologous rather than as evolutionally derivative (political from ritual), this argument avoids the problematics of Hocart's historicism. The heuristic value of Hocart's scheme begins with his understanding of ritual as an arena for the positing of systems of transformative equivalences. The central actor of the ritual is the principal. In the ritual this principal is made equivalent to the natural and moral world of the kingdom. The transformative action of the ritual therefore not only effects a change in him, but also that with which he is homologized. The primary goal of the ritual is the generation of prosperity.

So it is with kingship. In Hocart's scheme, this ritual principal is the king. Hocart uses ths definition to demonstrate the usual arbitrariness of the classification of 'political leaders' in pre-modern context :[5]

> The principal of the ritual, if he is human, is the head of the community. In a small tribe of low degree we call him the headman, in more advanced or larger communities we call him the king. Sometimes we hesitate between chief and king. Our use of these words is rather arbitrary : we translate the native word one way or the other, according as the state kept by the principal comes near to our idea of a king, or falls short of it. . .

For Hocart, then, the important classificatory unit is the ritual system, the head of which is the king.

By emphasizing ritual systems, Hocart thus points to the importance of conceptual features for understanding different political structures. For instance, Hocart contrasts states in terms of such features as polytheism and monotheism. A polytheistic world-view accompanies a type of kingship which can be called 'incorporative.' In such a system, 'kings include in their divinity the divinities of their

Segmentary State in South Indian History,' MS.

[4]See A.M. Hocart, *Kingship*, London, 1927; *Caste*, New York, 1968; and *Kings and Councillors*, Chicago, 1970.

[5]Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*, p. 86.

chieftains.[6] A converse type of incorporation, not discussed by Hocart, is manifest in a state where chiefs share in the sovereignty of the ritual principal. Such systems could be contrasted with Hocart's characterization of a monotheistic, feudal system in which 'kings... are one indivisible and only god, and where chieftains consequently cannot be different gods, but only dimmer reflections of the same god as their liege.'[7] Service here replaces the identity and incorporation of the former system.

The usefulness of this typological scheme lies in Hocart's analysis of political structures from the perspective of his exegesis of ideas about ritual authority. Given this perspective, however, it is important to understand that ritual, though susceptible to an autonomous analytic, is itself situated in larger social and cultural fields. Hence, ritual cannot in the final analysis be considered to represent the totality of social relations, nor can it be used to suggest the full set of meanings accompanying social action. Nonetheless, the particular importance of ritual for kingship in India is that it has a constitutive function, and as such is culturally a primary, though not exhaustive, locus of meaning and action.

In order to understand the formulaic meanings of ritual it will be necessary to consult textual materials which may not seem either historically or geographically relevant. Furthermore, in order to characterize the relation of ritual to cultural meanings and social interactions, the argument will at times consist of certain generalizations which might overlook important details. However, the value of such an attempt to correlate early political structures with seemingly systematic conceptual systems is that relationships within structures and changes from one structure to another might be better highlighted and more logically interpreted.

This paper, then, represents a general attempt to trace, and to characterize, the history of kingship in south India from the first and second centuries B.C. up to the rise of the Colas during the tenth century A.D. The principal locus for these developments in the Deccan was the Satavahana empire, which probably began to be of major significance sometime during the first century B.C.[8] Other

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 89.

[8]The dating of the Satavahanas has provided the grist for much historical debate; here I generally accept the suggestions of D.C. Sircar in *The Age Of Imperial Unity: The History and Culture of the Indian People*, II, edited by R.C. Majumdar, Bombay, 1951, pp. 191-210. The earlier dating of the Satavahanas (by such historians as G. Venkat Rao and K.A. Nilakantha Sastri) was based on, firstly, doubtful paleographic determination by Buhler that the Nanaghat inscription should be dated at 200 - 150 B.C., and secondly, reference

roughly contemporaneous dynasties were the Cedis of Kalinga and the Ksarata Ksatrapas of western India. A number of successor states appeared upon the collapse of the Satavahanas sometime around the end of the second or the beginning of the third century A.D., many of which appear to have previously been political units subordinate to the Satavahanas or to one or another of their collateral branches. These states included the Abhiras in the northwest, the Cutus in southern Maharashtra and western Mysore, the Salankayanas of northern Andhra, and the Iksvakus in the Vengi region of Andhra.[9] It should be noted that these successor states reflected a political geography that had been in evidence throughout the Satavahana period; the distribution of the coins issued by the so-called feudatories of the Satavahanas demarcates this geography.[10]

The Pallavas can also be considered as a successor state. Their origins are even more unclear than the above-mentioned ones, but plausible theories of scholars such as S.K. Aiyanger, R. Sathianathaier, D.C. Sircar, and T.V. Mahalingam suggest that the Pallavas arose in connection with the web of alliances centring on the Satavahanas.[11] According to these scholars, the Pallavas emerged in or near the area with which they were later associated, that of Tontaimantalam, what is now the northeastern section of Tamil Nadu. The Pallavas played a prominent, though intermittent role in the development of political systems in south India during the first millennium A.D.

In discussing the origins and history of the Pallavas the approach in this paper will of necessity be highly selective. Most conspicuously, there will be little mention of the ideas expressed in the Tamil Cankam literature (of the first several centuries A.D.) relating to kingship. The reason for this lack of emphasis is that the Pallavas seem to have been influenced more by the Deccan dynasties of the

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to a certain Dimita (Demetrius) in a Cedi inscription of Kharavela which is thought to be contemporaneous with Satakarni's rule. On this second point, Sircar noted that this Dimita (if in fact that is the proper reading) was probably a later Indo-Greek ruler of the Punjab, not the son of Euthemious who was known to have retreated from the Deccan in 175 B.C.

[9]For information on these dynastics, see D.C. Sircar, *Successors of the Satavahanas*, Calcutta, 1939.

[10]*The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 191-210. Also see Rapson, *Catelogue of the Coins of the Andhra Dynasty...*, London, 1908, p. ixx.

[11]See S.K. Aiyanger, *Evolution of Hindu Administrative Institutions in South India*, Madras, 1938; T.V. Mahalingam, *Kancipuram in Early South Indian History*, Delhi, 1969; C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1938; R. Sathianathaier, 'The Pallavas,' in *The Classical Age: The History and Culture of the Indian People*, III, pp. 255-262; and Subramania Aiyar, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, n.d.

second century B.C. through the third century A.D. than by the forms of polity represented in the Cankam literature. The Cankam poems contain no reference to the Pallavas, nor do the Pallavas refer to any of the kings mentioned in the poems. Moreover, the most plausible theories about the origins of the Pallavas suggest that they had initially been a ruler-cum-warrior group which had entered into subordinate relations with the Satavahanas. And finally, the ritual performances of the Pallavas are better explained by looking north, not south.

Nonetheless, though the Pallavas apparently looked north, they were firmly implanted in the south. Therefore, before beginning the rest of my analysis, it would be worthwhile to briefly characterize certain social structural conditions which, as expressed in the Tamil literature, can contribute to our understanding of the early Pallavas. The few examples that I will mention are only illustrative of the rich potentiality of these texts for this kind of socio-political analysis.

In Pallava inscriptions there are manifold references to battles, both military confrontations with far-off hostile dynasties and internal skirmishes with recalcitrant chieftains. But we are told next to nothing about the armies, aside from occasional eulogies and panegyrics about generals or the king himself. Cankam literature provides us with some clues about the constituency and organization of armies of the time. This question is of particular importance in south Indian history because there was no kin system like the Rajput clans and lineages in north India, the groups upon which military organization was based. The generals were usually important velalas (the highest ranked agricultural caste) and were honoured, and presumably selected, by the king.[12] Many of the warriors came from castes which have long had a martial reputation, such as the maravar, the paratavar, and the kallar.[13] The poems are replete with references to the ferocity and valour of these warriors, many of whom apparently earned their reputation in bands of robbers and plunderers, and were known as dwellers of the hills and forests.[14] The poems suggest sustained and rather profound tension and hostility between these 'wrathful and furious' hill folk and the settled agricultural groups, and scholars have speculated that these hill tribes had in fact constituted the Kalabhra threat.[15] However, these scholars have underestimated the extent to which the mercenary armies of south Indian

[12]*Cilappatikaram*, XXVI, 4; V. 157-160. Also see N. Subramanian, *Sangam Polity*, Bombay, 1966, p. 142.

[13]*Cilappatikaram*, V. 55; Subramanian, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[14]Subramanian, *op. cit.*, pp. 142, 143; B. Stein, 'Brahman and Peasant,' in *Adyar Library Bulletin*, 31-32, 1967-68, pp. 229-69.

[15]Stein, 'Brahman and Peasant,' p. 249.

kingdoms had the function of defusing the threat of hill domination by effecting some integration and acculturation of the hill groups and by harnessing their military power for cooperative purposes.[16] In brief, political systems in south India played a strong role in providing opportunities and structures for cooperative alliances among discrete social groups. As will be seen, the capacity of the Pallavas to fashion alliances with warrior groups and their chieftains appears to have been a major factor in the establishment and continuance of Pallava rule.

Conversely, these groups were reliant on systems of alliance formed in the framework of political cooperation because of their own localized territorial base. The high degree of territorial segmentation in the south is suggested by the five conventionalized ecological and symbolic landscapes *(tinai)* which served as basic frames for all poetic expression in the Cankam corpus. On a more sociological level, the word used for tribe, *kuti*, seems to have had as its major defining feature the notion of territoriality.[17] Hence, we might suppose that perhaps the most important constitutive element of tribal community was a shared locality, and by extension that the so-called tribes were territorially bounded sets of relationships.

This same kind of territorial segmentation has been well documented for modern south India. Although local communities are large and complex, perhaps more so than in any other region of south Asia, caste networks themselves are not very extensive. According to Inden and Marriott, firstly, 'endogamous castes here tend to become very small and close, to divide into numerous smaller circles by the preferred repetition of reciprocal, protective marriages among cousins and other known kin,' and secondly, 'the relatively small spread of each caste leaves it available to be ranked consistently by its members' exchanges with other castes in just a few nearby localities.'[18] Both of these characteristics appear to be derivative of the kuti principle of social organization, and further confirm these suggestions about the high degree of territorial segmentation in early south India.

[16]In 'Brahman and Peasant,' Stein refers to E. Leach's study of highland Burma to document the venerable tradition of hostility between lowland peasant folk and highland tribal groups. While I accept this basic notion, it should also be noted that Leach refers to a number of cross-cutting ties which often mitigate the extent and degree of conflict. Such cross-cutting ties existed in south Indian history, and in fact were manipulated by successful imperial systems. See Leach, *Political Systems in Highland Burma*, Boston, 1965, pp. 1-61.

[17]A.K. Ramanujam suggested this interpretation of kuti in a lecture at the University of Chicago, Winter 1974.

[18]R. Inden and M. Marriott, 'Caste Systems,' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1974.

Pallava history has traditionally been divided into three periods according to the language of the inscriptions. The earliest plates were in Prakrit and have been assigned to the period 250-350 A.D.; the intermediary period, the evidence for which has been found in Sanskrit copper plates, has been put at roughly 350-600 A.D.; and lithic and copper plate records in Sanskrit and Tamil demarcate the final period from the beginning of the seventh century to the early tenth century.[19] The earliest Prakrit inscriptions, though issued from Kanci, all referred to areas to the north or northwest of Tontaimantalam proper. The intermediary period of the Sanskrit charters has baffled scholars for generations for two basic reasons: firstly due to the mysterious incursion from c. 400/450—c. 550 A.D. of a much feared group generally known as the Kalabhras; and secondly, the probable, though long unrecognized, existence of a collateral branch of the Pallava family which ruled from Andhra (and whose capital town apparently was Palakkada, from whence many of the grants of this period were addressed) from c. 375/400—550/575 A.D.[20] The coincidence of these two factors makes sense when they are analyzed together; the Kalabhras apparently dominated the area of Tontaimantalam at approximately the same time for which we have some records of the Andhra Pallavas. Unfortunately, the evidence is still more complicated and does not allow one to go beyond, if even to sustain, this rudimentary chronological suggestion. This intermediary period is generally conceded to have been brought to a close in the latter half of the sixth century by the military prowess of Simhavarman and his son Simhavisnu. These monarchs are said to have been the first of the Greater Pallavas who ushered in a 'new epoch' of Pallava history.[21]

This epoch, according to historians such as Mahalingam, extended down to the early tenth century, when the accession of the Cola monarch Parantaka presaged the new reign of Cola hegemony throughout the south.

None of these traditional factors of periodization entails any notion of structural change. However, Pallava history is particularly fascinating because it presents the historian with major transformations, for example, both in its generalized conception of sovereignty and in its expansion of the scale of the political system. Burton Stein has correctly criticized the tendency of south Indian historians to view Pallava history as a unity which is on the one hand juxtaposed against the earlier 'clan-tribal' Cankam society and on the other hand

[19]*The Classical Age*, pp. 275-83.
[20]*Ibid.*
[21]Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

representative of an only slightly less glorified version of the later Cola period.[22] However, Stein's work too has neglected the significance of transformations in the Pallava period by associating many of these changes with their later expression in the Cola period or by simply referring to the slowly evolving changes of the Pallava period. Conspicuously, previous work in general has not noted the importance of differential modes of the constitution of sovereign authority for this period.

Briefly, sovereign authority was initially constituted in the royal sacrifice, whereas in the later Pallava period the sacrifice receded from importance and divine genealogies began to posit the base of sovereignty for the family of kings. The royal gift, while always important, became an autonomous arena for the proclamation and expression of authority. As will be seen, such a change in the base of authority had profound correlations with changes in the political structure of south Indian kingdoms, in their scale, their capacity for the incorporation of new elites, and their elevation of the particular families associated with such genealogies to positions of long-standing importance in south Indian history.

KINGSHIP AND THE ROYAL SACRIFICE

The royal sacrifice was important in south Indian history from the beginning of the period under consideration, the second century B.C., up to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. These royal sacrifices, when performed, were the kingly arenas *par excellence*. It was through the sacrifice that the king both transformed himself and the kingdom. Gonda remarks that the great royal sacrifices were considered as *samskara* rituals, or rather as transformative sacraments which effected the purification of the sacrificer through the mechanism of rebirth.[23] It was also through the sacrificer that the king became identified with the gods. One persistently important model for the positing of equivalences of king and god is found in the notion of the *lokapalas*, the guardians of the world. As expressed in the Manu Dharma Sastras:[24]

> A king is an incarnation of the eight guardian deities of the world, the Moon, the Fire, the Sun, the Wind, Indra, the Lords of wealth and water (Kubera and Varuna), and Yama.

[22]B. Stein, 'Brahman and Peasant,' p. 231; also see Stein, 'Agrarian Integration in South India,' in *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, edited by Frykenberg, Madison, 1969.

[23]J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, Leiden, 1966, p. 100.

[24]*Manu Dharmasastra*, V, 96.

These particular equivalences not only provide insights about the functions of a king, primarily with respect to his task of protection, but also express a great deal about the conceptual system underlying both the idea of kingship and more general ideas about the nature of the world.

First, we must accept Gonda's *caveat* that the king is a *deva* in the sense that he is one of a 'class of powerful beings, regarded as possessing supernormal facilities and as controlling a department of nature or activity in the human sphere.'[25] That is, the homologies of the sacrifice must be contextualized: first, in terms of Hocart's notion of a polyarchic system which attributes godly substance to more than one repository or source, and second, in light of Gonda's insistence that the qualities and attributes of a king be seen in terms of the king's earthly sphere of influence.

With this in mind, we can analyze the equivalence of the king with the lokapala deities in terms of both the activities and the attributes of kings.[26] The king is the sun in that he is luminous, he dispels darkness, is splendid and majestic yet burning and scorching; he is the moon (king of the planets) because he is gentle, beneficent, a cause of vegetation and fruitfulness; he is the wind in that he is unbound, swift and violent; he is fire in that he is beneficent, a protector, the dispeller of demons, cleansing, purifying, as well as a mediator between the people and the gods; he is *Kubera* (the lord of the north) because he is the norm of inexhaustible wealth, who is united with *Rddhi* (prosperity) and a possessor of *Sri* (a goddess of productivity and fertility); the king is *Varuna* in that he protects *rta* (the moral and natural order of the Vedas) and the upholder of *dharma* on earth, and of the order of the seasons and of nature; he is *Yama* in that he is a controller, a judge, a punisher, and a gatherer of people.

Perhaps most importantly, the king is *Indra,* the god who archetypically represents kingship in the Vedic period. Indra is a god of growth, vitality, rainfall, vegetation, fertility, in short, of energetic action in nature.[27] Moreover, Indra is associated with war, and is most prominently known for his brave battles against the evil powers and enemies of the gods and of mankind. The king was expected to secure the prosperity of his people in Indra-like manner, by regulating the powers of fertility and of nature, and by vanquishing the enemies of the people. A number of ancient Indian festivals centring

[25]Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[26]This discussion derives from Gonda, *op. cit.*, 1966, p. 25ff.
[27]Gonda, *Ancient Indian Ojas*, Utrecht, 1952, p. 18ff.

around Indra express the god's relation to fertility and prosperity.[28] Such a festival figures in the Tamil epic, the *Cilappatikaram*.[29] In this version the ritual chant of the dancers sounded: 'May the king and his vast empire never know famine, disease, or dissension. May we be blessed with wealth—and, when the season comes, with rains.' Indra's quintessential expression of the nature of sacrificial kingship will be referred to later when we note a change in the cosmic underpinnings of kingship in the *Puranic* period.

One of the most important Vedic rituals is the *Rajasuya*, the consecration of a king. The sacrificer becomes (is reborn as) a king, and as such becomes identified with the world. To quote from Hocart's account:[30]

> The king at his consecration is dressed in robes that represent the womb and the placenta from which he is to be reborn. In order to complete his identification with the world he is given a mace which stands for the thunderbolt; a gold disc is placed on his head to represent the sun.

A more recent scholarly monograph by J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, has confirmed much of Hocart's exegetical interpretation. Heesterman notes that the cosmic implications of the ritual are apparent throughout. As he states:[31]

> ...the scene of the unction is a replica of the universe: the king standing in the center and stretching his arms to the sky impersonates...the cosmic pillar; round him the officiants are standing and confer on him his new body from the four points of the compass; moreover each officiant...imparts the king the quality of one of the gods mentioned in the unction formula: Soma's glory, Agni's brilliance, etc. ...

Heesterman agrees, then, with Hocart's sense of the meanings of the various equivalences made in the course of the ritual, as well as with his emphasis on the unction (*abhiseka*) as an enactment of rebirth, and as the central and most crucial part of the whole ritual.

As the kingdom is the 'universe' of natural and moral relations which centre on the king in the ritual, we might also speculate that

[28]Gonda, *op. cit.*, 1966, p. 39.

[29]Quoted from *Shilappadikaram*, translated by A. Danielou, New York, 1965, pp. 19, 20. I thank K. Rose for pointing this out.

[30]Hocart, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[31]J. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, Gravenhage, Mouton, 1957, p. 120.

the chiefs and dignitaries, or subsidiary principles, will participate in the ritual in a special capacity. This can be seen in the oblations to the *ratnins* (jewels) of the kingdom in preparation for the royal unction. Hocart describes this part of the ritual as a process of absorption, or appropriation.[32]

> At one stage of the consecration the Vedic king goes to the house of the general and makes an offering to the fire-god whom the general represents. Thereby he makes that officer of the state 'bound to himself'. Then the king goes to the chaplain's house and makes an offering to the priestly god with whom the chaplain is identified, and so makes the chaplain 'bound to himself'. And so he successively appropriates the twelve court personages.

Gonda essentially agrees with this analysis, noting that the ratnins, 'by their very presence and qualities add to the power of their royal master.'[33] According to the *Taittiriya Brahmana*,[34] the twelve ratnins are the *purohita* (the king's priest), the *rajanya* (the royal prince), the chief queen, the favourite wife, a discarded wife, the commander of the army, the *suta* (the charioteer and bard), the *gramani* (village headman), the chamberlain, the treasurer, the tax collector, and the superintendent of gambling.

The king, then, is not simply a king in his own right, but is godly in that he incorporates the godly substance of his ratnins. The king thus represents the totality of the political system. We may view this aspect of ritual equivalence in the sacrifice as complementary to the ideas expressed by the identification with the lokapala deities. Both of these formulations—the personages represented by the ratnins and the constituent elements of the lokapalas, particularly the inclusion of earth, air, fire, and water—suggest a localized, territorial set of ritual relations.[35] The *rajasuya* sacrifice, in which the king is identified with the kingdom in terms of the lokapalas (in spite of the cosmic symbolism), represents a relatively bounded structural event. Perhaps the only ratnin not integrally based in and connected with the king's court is the *gramani*, and the village level of his constituency suggests that the principal 'locality' chieftain is the king himself.

The sacrifice was an arena in which not only the respective (and

[32]Hocart, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[33]Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

[34]*Taittiriya Brahmana*, 1, 7, 3.

[35]This idea about the relation of territoriality to the symbolic system represented by the lokapalas was developed through conversations with K. Rose.

representative) members of the local political system (i.e., the ratnins) were included in the conferral of sovereignty, but in which larger confrontations of discrete political systems took place over the conferral of public honours.[36] These confrontations were predicated on the relative smallness of scale of each separably organized unit, since there was as yet no larger institutional unit which could submit the segmentary units to the arbitration of a single system of authority.

The other most important type of Vedic royal sacrifice is the *Asvamedha*, the horse sacrifice. This was usually performed by kings to establish their universal status (as *samrajyas*) after a series of military conquests. The performance itself should not be looked upon as merely celebratory, for the right to perform such a ritual sacrifice could be contested. The sacrifice endowed the sacrificer with 'royal sway':[37]

> Verily, the Asvamedha means royal sway: it is after royal sway that these strive who guard the horse. Those of them who reach the end become (sharers in) the royal sway, but those who do not reach the end are cut off from sway. Wherefore let him who holds royal sway perform the horse sacrifice; for, verily, whosoever performs the horse-sacrifice, without possessing power, is poured (swept) away. — Now, were unfriendly men to get hold of the horse, his sacrifice would be cut in twain, and he would become the poorer for it. A hundred men clad in armour guard it for the continuity and uninterrupted performance of the sacrifice...

The guardians of the horse are apparently identified with the guardians of the quarters: 'The guardians of the quarters are a hundred princes born in wedlock: to them he commits it (the horse).'[38]

At the beginning of the new year a horse, said to represent the king, is set out to roam. This homology of king and horse is enacted in several ways, for instance in the enforced celibacy of both for the entire year (the king must refrain from intercourse though he is enjoined to lie every night between the thighs of his favourite wife). The horse is not only identified with the king, but with Yama (the god of death), Aditya (the sun) and Soma (king of the gods). The horse, when sacrificed, is offered to all the gods, so as not to exclude any from his proper share.

The asvamedha also has territorial implications; the horse

[36]See *Mahabharata*, II, 2.
[37]*Satapatha Brahmana*, XIII, 1, 6, 3.
[38]*Ibid.*, XIII, 1, 6, 2.

circumambulates the territory of the kingdom and thereby asserts royal dominance over it. Oldenberg asserts that the whole country was brought into contact with the divine power of the animal in the course of its roamings.[39] Moreover, the royal queen is apparently homologized with the earth of the kingdom.[40]

The generative implications of the sacrifice are apparent throughout. As the wife is made equivalent to the earth, it is enjoined that 'the centre of her body prosper,—the centre of royal power, doubtless, is glory: glory (prosperity), food, he then lays into the very centre of royal power (or, the kingdom).'[41] In preparation for the sacrifice, the king's wives, who are referred to as a form of prosperity, anoint the horse, so that 'neither fiery spirit, nor energy, nor cattle, nor prosperity, pass away fom him (the sacrificer).'[42] When the horse is killed at the end of the year of roaming, the queen is made to lie down near the horse, covered by an upper cloth, after which she says, 'May the vigorous male, the layer of seed, lay seed,' for 'the completeness of union.'[43]

Thus, the asvamedha is performed with the explicit goal of prosperity for the king and his kingdom. The *Satapatha Brahmana* states that:[44]

> Where they perform this sacrifice, there Parganya, indeed, rains whenever they list, — "may our fruitbearing plants ripen," — there the fruitbearing plants indeed ripen where they perform this sacrifice;—"may security of possession be assured for us,"—(it) indeed is assured.

Jan Gonda, on the basis of a consideration of all the Vedic and Brahmanic literature on the horse sacrifice, has written that, 'the objects pursued by the horse sacrifice... are cows, horses, sons, and all-nourishing possessions, and in addition to these ritual and moral purity. That means, from the point of view of an ancient Indian prince, in short, unqualified welfare.'[45] Here again, the roles of the ritual and political head are one and the same: to generate prosperity for the kingdom by generating it for oneself.

The early history of kingship in south India can be seen as a sacrificial system in which the role of kings was to act as ritual principals with the goal of generating prosperity. Sacrifices were

[39]Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
[40]*Ibid.*
[41]*Satapatha Brahmana*, XIII, 2, 9. 4.
[42]*Ibid.*, XIII, 2, 6, 7.
[43]*Ibid.*, XIII, 5, 2, 2.
[44]*Ibid.*, XIII, 1, 9, 10.
[45]Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

usually mentioned in ways which portrayed them as generating prosperity, manifested most directly in the wealth and munificent gifts of the king. For instance, mention of the sacrifices of Santamula in Iksvaku inscriptions (third century A.D.) were immediately followed by phrases such as '...whose gold was great in quantity, the giver of hundred thousands of ploughs (of land) and cows and the giver of many crores of gold.' [46]

Numerous Vedic sacrifices were performed by kings of the early Deccan states (from c. 100 B.C. to c. 250 A.D.). For instance, Satakarni, one of the first Satavahana kings, performed the rajasuya, two asvamedhas, and fifteen other kinds of Vedic sacrifices.[47] Sacrifices, in particular royal sacrifices such as the rajasuya, asvamedha, and the vajapeya, were often performed at the commencement of a dynasty, usually after some considerable measure of military success had asserted the dominant power of a king and his ruling group. For example, Kharavela of the Orissan Cedis, though already anointed as the king, performed the rajasuya after his first five years of battle had proven his military prowess.[48] And Santamula I of the Iksvakus performed the asvamedha and the vajapeya, *inter alia*, apparently to proclaim his overthrow of Satavahana hegemony.[49] An initial performance of one or several sacrifices could elevate the subsequent line to kingship in addition to the actual performer, as can be seen from the bunching of sacrificial references toward the early years of dynasties and the continuing references to the sacrifices of the respective primordial kings. The capacity of the sacrifice to have cross-generational effect was particularly important because there was no independent attribution of divine origin to the kings either in the genealogies or in the eulogistic epithets, nor did the kings have any ksatriya base which would have endowed them with the substance of kingship.

The sacrifice was important because it was the defining feature of sovereignty during this period. In the inscriptions, kings often proclaimed their kingship primarily in terms of the sacrifices they performed, and secondarily in terms of the gifts they made, gifts which were often given as *daksinas* (offerings) for ritual services in the sacrifices. For instance, one of the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions of the Iksvakus, in which a princess is recorded to have given a gift, begins by identifying her father as the 'Maharaja Vasithiputa Ikhaku Siri-Chamtamula' as 'the offerer of Asvamedha, the giver of many

[46] *Epigraphica Indica* (hereafter cited *E.I.*), XXXIV, pp. 17-22.

[47] Burgess, *Report on the Elura Cave Temples: Archaeological Survey of Western India*, V, pp. 60-64.

[48] *E.I.*, XX, p. 72ff.

[49] See *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 62-63; XXXIV, pp. 17-22; XX, pp. 17-25.

crores of gold...'[50] Another such formulation is found in the Hirahadagalli grant of the Pallava Sivaskandavarman (c. 300-325 A.D.), which begins by stating:[51]

> Success! From Kamchipura—the righteous supreme king of great kings of the Pallavas Sivakhamdavama, a Bharaddaya, an offerer of Agnishtoma, Vajapeya and Asvamedha (sacrifices) issues the following orders:

Later generations of Pallava kings continued to base their sovereignty on the sacrifices performed by the earliest Pallavas. For instance, the Uruvapalli Grant of Visnugopavarman, probably of the late fifth century, begins with a formula that is found in many Pallava charters of the fifth through the seventh centuries.[52]

> Victory has been achieved by the holy one! From the glorious and victorious locality of Palakkada, at the command of Sri-Vishnugopavarma, the pious Yuvamaharaja of the Pallavas, who are the receptacles of the royal glory of other kings that have been overcome by their valour, *and who have prepared for celebration horse-sacrifices according to the proper rites...* (italics mine)

The absence of specific sacrificial references in these later inscriptions suggests that the primordial performances constituted the basis for such statements. It is noteworthy that this last inscription contains within it a reference to the lokapala model. Visnugopavarman's ancestor, Sri-Skandavarman, is referred to, *inter alia*, as one 'who was skillful in protecting his subjects, who was the fifth Lokapala of the Lokapalas...'[53] In this period, this was a common epithet among the Pallavas.

Gifts (*danas*) were usually given as offerings in the sacrificial context, but they were sometimes given independently as well. In conjunction with his many sacrifices, Satakarni of the Satavahanas made lavish gifts, including villages, cows, horses, and elephants.[54] Outside of the sacrifice, his successors continued liberally to grant gifts to sramanas and brahmanas.[55] The case of Kharavela, of the Cedis, suggests that gifts to such a variegated lot of recipients could be linked to a sacrifice; Kharavela performed a fire sacrifice to make

[50]*E.I.*, XX, pp. 17-25.
[51]*E.I.*, I, pp. 2-10.
[52]*Indian Antiquary*, February 1876, p. 50ff.
[53]*Ibid.*
[54]Burgess, n. 47.
[55]*E.I.*, VIII, pp. 52-96.

his many gifts 'acceptable'.[56] So what might be viewed as a trend towards the increasing separation of the dana from the sacrifice (*yajna*) cannot be interpreted as simply a reflection of increasing religious eclecticism, since such eclecticism accompanied gift-giving contexts which were sacrificial.

Royal gifts were made meaningful in terms of a conception of sovereignty which was at its root connected with the performance of royal sacrifices. This can be seen in the role of royal women of the Satavahana and Iksvaku lineages as munificent givers, whose gifts were particularly important due to their royal substance. While Santamula I of the Iksvakus was performing Vedic sacrifices and giving gold, and 'hundred thousands' of land and kine, the royal women (his wives and daughters) were giving gifts to brahmanas, sramanas, and the poor, as well as constructing pillars and caves dedicated to the Buddha. The merit accruing from these gifts was credited to the women's two families, natal and affinal, as well as to the world. An example can be cited from another of the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions:[57]

> She, the great mistress of munificence, devoted to all the virtuous, having due regard for the past, future, and present (members) of both the houses to which she belongs, for the attainment of welfare and happiness in both the worlds and in order to attain herself the bliss of Nirvana and for the attainment of welfare and happiness by all the world, has erected this pillar.

The reference to both houses should be seen in light of first, the use of matronymics in naming, and second, the prevalence of cross-cousin marriage in the royal houses. It should also be noted that during this period gifts of major political significance were only made by members of royal families.

Not only were gifts often associated with sacrificial contexts, but they had parallel teleological structures as well. An endowment for the construction of a *deva-kula* (shrine) is said to have the result of dharma in one Iksvaku inscription.[58] As noted in the quote above, grants by royal personages of the Iksvakus are said to effect, or facilitate, the attainment of welfare, happiness, and bliss for the individual donors and for the world. In Pallava inscriptions of the early period, gifts are accompanied by phrases which refer to them as 'means of the increase of the merit, longevity, power, and fame

[56] *E.I.*, XX, p. 72ff.
[57] *E.I.*, XX, pp. 17-25.
[58] *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 17-22.

of (their) own family and race.'[59] The benefits of the gifts are said to accrue only to the family (*kula*) of the Pallavas; the sovereignty of the Pallavas was based on their performance of sacrifices and their distribution of gifts in the framework of this mode of self-reference. That is, it was through the sacrifice that first, the Pallava family became kingly, and second, they were able to then bestow royal gifts.

Although the sacrifice was in some special sense constitutive, it cannot be viewed apart from the full set of conditional pre-requisites of kingship in this period. To perform a sacrifice, a king had to prove his munificence as a redistributor of resources, as well as his military prowess, a necessary skill if he were to garner those resources. However, the performance of a sacrifice had more than a legitimating function; the sacrifice should be regarded as an efficacious ritual. It did not make a powerful king into an authoritative king; rather, it made a leader into a king, or a little king into a big king. That is, the position, or office, of kingship was itself constituted by the ritual act, even though that ritual act must be seen in terms of the variable attributes and activities of kings.

Similarly, the personages of the political systems had positions which were constituted, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, by the king, the ritual principal. In this early period, the personages who filled the categories and bore the titles of royal conferral were as various as the wives, daughters, and princes of the royal families; the so-called officials who participated in the sacrifices, engaged in military action, and executed royal gifts; and the local kings and chieftains who had subordinate relations with more powerful kings. In analytic terms it is possible to liken these types to different kinds of ratnins.

First, there was the group of royalty whose position was based on their kin relation to a royal figure who successfully performed, or whose ancestors performed, a royal sacrifice. Included in this category would be crowned and uncrowned princes, queens and daughters of kings, as well as generals and/or other kings who had affinal ties with the kingly house. As mentioned above, one of the primary roles fulfilled by this group had to do with royal danas, gifts that were often themselves unrelated to particular sacrifices but rather linked in a more general sense to the sacrificial arena by royal substance, which in turn worked to orient the nature and distribution of the merit accruing from them.

Second, not necessarily mutually exclusive, there was the group of so-called officials to the court. This might include generals

[59]See *E.I.*, I, pp. 2-10.

(senapatis and *dandanayakas),* as well as divisional commanders (such as *ghumikas, tuthikas, nayakas,* etc.) who had military responsibilities to the court and control over the mobilization and organization of the armies. It would also include individuals who were given particular titles in the context of their performance of certain 'administrative' tasks, such as transmitting the information of a grant and overseeing it with the authority of the king (as implied by the titles *ajnapti* and *vyaprita*), or executing the details of the grant at the village level, for instance an official such as the *pariharatha pariharapetha* (the root here is *parihara*, which refers to the remission of a particular tax in connection with a grant, or more often the recirculation of a particular cess rather than remission).

Third, and again not exclusive, was the category of chieftain, or village/locality headman. These personages were variously labelled *mahatalavaras, rastrikas, nattars, desadhikatadikas, madyasthas etc.* These were the chiefs who themselves did not participate in the royal sovereignty of gift-giving in the king's or king's family name, but who did participate in so far as they expressed subordination to the king by acknowledging his right to make gifts and perform sacrifices.

These categories are only typological; and they are not mutually exclusive. With the Iksvakus, for instance, one character could be a son-in-law of the king, a general, and a mahatalavara all at the same time. The typological value of this scheme is that it illustrates, first, various potentially independent criteria of involvement in the political systems of the period, second, the major criteria of appropriateness for particular kinds of 'political' activity, and third, the distinctive feature of sovereignty which oriented all involvement, namely, the sacrificial base of kingship.

The administrative character of the early Pallava period for the most part appears not to have been very complex, and it was relatively small-scale in direct application. There were 'chiefly' types in the system, but their importance was not yet major, nor were they consistently singled out. The sharing of royal sovereignty, illustrated both in the capacity to give royal gifts and in the tenor of the inscriptional rhetoric, was apparently limited to consanguineal and affinal kin of the sacrificial king. Other modalities of exchange solidarity had not yet been articulated in the system.

In conclusion, kingship in a sacrificial universe is constitutive by virtue of the sacrifice. That is, the king himself is constituted by performing the royal sacrificial rituals. Similarly, and simultaneously, the relations of the kingdom are constituted in the dramatic arena of the sacrifice, by virtue of the nature of and criteria for individual and corporate participation. Royal gift-giving, in the framework of this constitutive system, is an integral part of this primary sacrificial

world-view.

FROM YAJNA TO VAMSA: THE GIFT AS RITUAL

The transformations of Pallava kingship had primarily to do with a change in the conception of what constitutes sovereignty. In the late seventh century, two inscriptions proclaimed that the Pallava kings traced their descent from Brahman, Brihaspati, (Samyu), Bharadvaja, Drona, Asvatthaman, to the eponymous Pallava and so on.[60] The shift was not abrupt, since both Paramesvaravarman I (c. 669-690) and Rajasimha (or Narasimhavarman II, c. 690-728), the issuers of these two grants, issued other grants which were much more like the earlier charters in their general style of composition and in their reference to Pallava sacrifices.[61] But the trend was firmly established with the accession of Nandivarman Pallavamalla c. 731 A.D., after which no grants of the earlier style have been found.

References to the performances of royal sacrifices did not appear in inscriptions which began with these mythical charters. Instead, the claim to sovereignty of the Pallava kula was predicated on divine origin, and on their identification with the great personages of their

[60]See the Kuram Plates, *South Indian Inscriptions* (hereafter cited *S.I.I.*), I. p. 144ff.; and the Vayilur Plates, *E.I.*, XVIII, pp. 145ff. The genealogy in the Kuram plates does not include Samyu. There are two earlier grants which have similar genealogical charters, but they have been dated much later for paleographic reasons, and so we can assume that the original inscriptions when re-inscribed were modified to conform with the later style. See, e.g., Pallankovil Plates, *Annual Report of Epigraphy* (1958, 59). At this point in the narrative, certain caveats should be proffered. First, the divine genealogies should not be seen as distinctly Pallava in style, but rather as part of the developing Puranic tradition. The Pallavas were not the only dynasty to adopt this style in their inscriptions, though they were certainly among the very earliest to do so. Second, the lack of references to the sacrifice does not suggest the demise of sacrificial activity, but instead its recontextualization. For instance, many of the gifts, particularly the mahadanas made by kings, were accompanied by references to and performances of various sacrifices, e.g., the hiranyagarbha. Finally, it might be pointed out that the shift of sovereignty does not represent a classical sociological case of movement from recruitment via achievement to that via ascription, though it will be seen that the shift did signal the increasing saliance and importance of particular kingly lines in south Indian history.

[61]The continued promulgation of old-style inscriptions is not difficult to explain; for instance, they might have been drafted by lower officials of the king according to the standard formulas. In any case, such a major transition in both the form and the content of inscriptional rhetoric would not be so abrupt as to exclude some overlap.

ancestral past. For instance, Asvatthaman (not always presented as a salubrious character) provided them with a mix of Brahman birth and Ksatriya conduct. The various Pallava kings were given epithets such as *su-racita*, the source of prosperity, and they were described as luminous with splendour, full of learning, endowed with noble conduct, etc.[62]

The Pallava kings continued to describe themselves as munificent givers. However, the kings no longer identified the particular purpose of each grant, as they did earlier when they proclaimed that the gifts would add to the welfare, merit, and general prosperity of their race and family. Rather, their welfare and prosperity was predicated principally on their divine origin and their inherent noble conduct. The particular grant now appeared more as an expression of their sovereignty than as the generative principle of it, and yet as an expression it was still thought to promote prosperity.

Because of this, the royal dana took on a new and different character. It was no longer a natural extension of the sacrificial system, in which the dana was either given as *daksina* or in the constitutive framework of the sacrifice. Rather, the gift became an emanation of sovereignty, in which the endowed institution or individual(s) became actualized expressions of sovereignty, and in that sense made equivalent in ritual terms to the king. The identification of a king with his gift was not new, but the system of equivalences was re-situated in terms of a new conception of sovereignty.

Again, Hocart can contribute to a formulation regarding this system of equivalences. He postulated the structural similarity of the temple and the sacrifice because he saw both as conceived to promote prosperity. In this sense, Hocart viewed temples and other public works in the same way:[63]

> It would be an error to put such works in a category by themselves as 'utilitarian' in opposition to 'religious' works such as temples. Temples are just as utilitarian as dams and canals, since they are necessary to prosperity; dams and canals are as ritual as temples, since they are part of the same social system of seeking welfare. If we call reservoirs 'utilitarian' it is because *we* believe in their efficacy; *we* do not call temples so because *we* do not believe in their efficacy for crops. What *we* think has nothing to do with the matter, but only what the people we are studying think.

It is thus not surprising that what we call public works, irrigational projects and the like, were usually connected with and administered

[62]See *S.I.I.*, I, p. 144ff.; *S.I.I.*, II, p, 253ff.; E.I., XVIII, p. 121ff.
[63]Hocart, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

under the auspices of temples in south India, from the middle Pallava period through at least the Vijayanagar period.[64] It is also quite consonant with this scheme that in ritual terms there are many parallels between the temple and the sacrifice. For instance, the central purifying (rebirth) ritual of temples consists of an unction *(kumbabhiseka)* of the temple towers, paralleling the unction of the king in rajasuya sacrifice. (Hocart noted that, 'Since temple and man are interchangeable they are treated alike in the ritual. They are consecrated in the same manner.'[65]) Also, the title of a temple-donor is *yajamana*, the same title as that assumed by the sacrificer.[66]

It must be noted that these structural parallels are not homologized quite as Hocart would have it. They must be viewed in the context of a new conception of the constituents of sovereign power. The temple, like the sacrifice, did create prosperity. However, the gift of a temple or of a *brahmadeya* (endowment for the support of brahmanas) did not confer sovereignty in the sense that the performance of a royal sacrifice had.

The Pallava charters attained their fullest expression during the reign of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (c. 731-796).[67] In two of his important charters, Visnu appears as the primordial ancestor of the Pallava race, whereas before they had begun with Brahma. In the Kasakudi plates, the genealogy begins with a statement of adoration to Sri, wife of Visnu and goddess of prosperity. Then the full genealogy *(vamsa)* begins.

> First, from the lotus which rose from the navel of Visnu, was born the creator, whose origin is the (supreme) Brahman; who is self-existent; who fully knows the meaning of the sacred texts; (and) who has performed the creation of the whole world.

From there, the genealogy proceeds through Angiras, chief of the seers, Brihaspati, guru of Indra and Visnu, Samyu, who resembles the sun and destroys sin, Bharadvaja, the sage who founded the race of Pallavas through his austerities. Drona, preceptor of the Kurus, Asvatthaman, the powerful one who terrifies Krsna, Arjuna, and Bhima, and then the glorious eponymous Pallava. This Pallava, though born from a race of brahmanas, is said to possess 'in the highest degree the valour of the kshatriyas.'

[64]See C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1938; also Stein, 'The Economic Functions of a South Indian Temple,' in *Journal of Asian Studies*, February 1960, pp. 163-76.

[65]Hocart, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

[66]C.A. Breckenridge brought this to my attention.

[67]See *E.I.*, XVIII, p. 121ff.; *S.I.I.*, II, p. 253ff.

The Pattattalmangalam grant has a similar genealogy:

> From the navel-lotus of Narakari (i.e. Visnu) was born Brahma; from him was (born) Angiras; from him Devaguru (i.e., Brihaspati); from him (came) Samyu, the best of sages; from his son Bharadvaja (was born) Drona who was renowned as an archer on the battlefield; from him came Drauni (Asvatthaman) who was of irresistible great power, and from him came Pallava.

In addition, both of these grants are prefaced by invocations to Visnu. The Kasakudi plates invoke Brahma and Siva as well. Regarding Visnu, it states: 'May that blessed Trivikrama (Visnu) grant you prosperity, who, at the sacrifice of Bali, deceitfully asked only for three steps (of land), but suddenly expanded (and) strode thrice, (thereby) appropriating the world!' The Pattattalmangalam plates begin thus:

> Hail! Prosperity! Let that body of the husband of Sri (i.e. Visnu), which is resplendent with the kaustabha jewel on its chest and which with a hundred marakata-like arms is lying on the ocean, resembling a collection of clouds lustrous with the interspersed lightning and settling on the waters of the ocean to imbibe (its waters) grant you welfare.

In addition, the Kasakudi plates liken the race of the Pallavas to a 'partial incarnation of Visnu, as it displayed unbroken courage in conquering the circle of the world with all its parts, (and) as it enforced the special rules of all castes and orders...'

The sacrificial world-view was replaced by one that might in general terms be characterized as Puranic (or, as Gonda says, Hinduistic). Visnu (and at times Siva) replaced Indra and the other Vedic gods, particularly with respect to kingship.[68] As Gonda notes:[69]

> In the ancient literature Visnu is his (Indra's) friend and assistant; in later texts this god, assuming a superior position, becomes the typical fighter of the gods. Hence also the remarkable change in the relation between kingship and these gods. In later times it is Visnu who maintains intimate relations with the royal dignity in the earth.

[68]I am grateful to K. Rose for her comments regarding the symbology of Visnu in the Puranic period.

[69]Gonda, 1966, p. 29.

The rising importance of Visnu, both in the Puranic system of post-Vedic 'religion' and 'mythology,' as well as of the developing *agamic* system of temple worship with which Puranic gods were increasingly associated, can be understood partly as the correlative to an increasingly universalistic world-view. Again, we can refer to the work of Jan Gonda, who notes that :[70]

> There is much truth in the time-honoured Indian interpretation of the god's (Visnu's) character as representing pervasiveness. The quality expressed by the term *viraj-*, i.e. the idea of extending far and wide, which is at the same time regarded as the totality or sum of all existence and often identified with Sri-, or 'prosperity' point in the same direction as Visnu's famous striding activity which enabled him to transverse the worlds and cover the universe ...The universe being tripartite the act intimates, in a way, the god's universal character. All beings reside in these three steps... Being concerned with the axis, the navel, the descent of celestial light and the transmission of the heavenly blessings to the world of mankind, assisting Indra in destroying and warding off the powers of evil, Visnu was in a natural manner considered a protector who rendered services of the utmost importance to gods and men, developing (often, but not always, as Indra's successor) a fighting spirit, and being regarded as invincible... Visnu was, often in cooperation with other gods, intent on promoting the processes and maintaining the phenomena connected with vegetation, fecundation, and fertilization, with the means of supporting life and with the continuance of the human race in general. Hence, the intimate relations with kingship which become manifest in later times.

We have seen precisely these intimate relations with the later developments of Pallava kingship. The inscriptions, referred to above, note the story of Visnu's three steps, thereby clearly displaying the association of Visnu's pervasion of the universe with the Pallava's own conquests. We also saw the origin of the Pallavas from Visnu's navel, from which they derived all their substantial attributes. And finally, we noted the association of this divine origin with the Pallava epithets relating to prosperity.

Thus, it is not coincidental that Visnu is closely associated with the period that witnessed the growing consolidation by the Pallavas of a trans-regional system of kingship, the most extensive system yet developed in south India. The Vedic notions of 'incorporative' kingship were transmuted, and the new basis of sovereignty for the

[70]Gonda, *Aspects of Early Visnuism*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 172-73.

later Pallavas can better be characterized in terms of the development of 'shared sovereignty' relations between Pallava kings and local chieftains.

The primary constitutive ritual of the early south Indian kingdoms had been the sacrifice. In the later period, the ritual of the royal dana became primary, since it represented the arena in which authority and authoritative relations were constituted in reference to the newly developed theory of divine origin.

First, royal danas provided public occasions for the composition of hymns of praise which inscribed the genealogical legacy of the kings and described their particular exploits. Secondly, whereas in earlier grants there had been variously classified but essentially unidentified personages participating in the execution of grants, in the late seventh century, certain persons were praised for their own qualities and identified by their personal constituencies as local big men or chiefs. The first examples of this had to do with the category of *ajnapti* (executor), which had previously been one of a number of intermediary titles. In grants of the late seventh century, (grants which were stylistically similar to grants of the early Pallavas, but which apparently recognized the newly developing political system in their references to these officials) the ajnapti was singled out as the major category or title for officials who were vitally concerned with the execution of the grant at the level of mediation between the court and the village. In a grant of Paramesvaravarman I, of c. 680 A.D. the ajnapti was identified as the ruler (*nripesvarah*) of a particular *kurram* (locality, or group of villages).[71] And in the Reyuru grant of Pallava Narasimhavarman, of c. 700 A.D., the ajnapti was called Isvara (lord) of Nandakurra, and was said to equal *Rajaditya* in valour.[72]

Perhaps more importantly, in the grants of this and the later period which expressed the shift in the notion of sovereignty, an altogether new category appeared, that of *vijnapti* (petitioner). The first reference to such a figure is found in the Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarman I (c. 669-690), the same plates that contain the first *bona fide* mythical charter.[73] A gift of a brahmadeya was made by the king at the request of Vidyavinita, 'the lord of the Pallavas.' There is also mention of the ajnapti who executed the terms of the grant. What is important about this grant is that a lord of the

[71] *E.I.*, XXXII, pp. 5-1.
[72] *E.I.*, XXVIX, p. 89ff.
[73] *S.I.I.*, I, p. 144ff.

kingdom, apparently not of the Pallava kula, participated in the making of the grant in more than an executive capacity; in this and later grants, the vijnapti provided the impetus for gift giving.

Similar personages appear in the three major inscriptions of Nandivarman Pallavamalla. In the Kasakudi plates, the vijnapti was Brahmasriraja, 'who is a friend of men; who is filled with all virtues, as the ocean with a heap of gems'; — The eulogy continues:

> who is famous (but) modest, handsome (and) long-lived, of soft-speech (and) the best of men; who just as Brihaspati (is the minister) of (Indra) the lord of heaven, and is the chief of the handsome Nandin, the lord of the earth (and) chief of the Pallavas; who is refined both by nature and through education; who is the first of the wise, firm (and) brave; who possesses the full splendour of the Brahmana and Ksatriya castes, and a loyalty to the glorious Nandipotaraja (Nandivarman), which does not cease as long as the moon and the stars endure; who supports (his) family; who is the chief of (his) family; who is an eldest son; who resembles the moon in beauty; who excells in all virtues; (and) who is an eldest grandson.

In the Udayendirum plates, the vijnapti was Udayacandra, chief general of Nandivarman Pallavamalla and fighter of many battles surrounding Nandivarman's problematic accession (he was the first of a collateral branch—the descendent through Hiranyavarman of Bhimavarman, the younger brother of Simhavarman, the crowned son of Simhavisnu, the first of the greater Pallavas who reigned in the mid to late sixth century). Much of this grant proclaims the praises of Udayacandra, lord of Vilvalapura, 'the wealthy, who gave a kingdom to Pallava from many a battlefield, the benevolent, the punisher of foreign armies, the ornamental fore-head of the Puchan race, and famous throughout the world...' Finally, in the Pattattalmangalam plates, the vijnapti was called Mangalarastrabharti in Sanskrit (lord of the district, or rastra, of Mangala) and Mangalanalvan in Tamil. The royal order (*tirumukam*) for the grant was issued at the request (or petition) of this lord to the *nattar* (residents of *natu*, a locality term) of Arvalakurram in Cola natu. In the Sanskrit lines of praise (*prasasti*) he was lavishly eulogized:

> The servant of this (king Nandivarman) who was the storehouse of austerity and virtue, who was heroic, highly distinguished, respected by the good, whose wealth was honour, whose spreading fame enveloped the interior of all quarters, and in whom, who was the relative of the world, the name Mangalarastra became well known, gave to a concourse of Brahmans (their) desired object, having repeatedly petitioned the king.

The last lines suggest that the vijnapti petitioned the king for the right to give the grant himself.

These eulogies suggest that these personages represented an order of magnitude previously embodied only in the king and his family. The expansion of the political system was such that the king was now able to establish relations with individuals who either did not exist before, or who had previously been either rivals or allies. These chiefs are said to be independently virtuous and deserving of honour. They received honour by participating in the granting of royal danas, and in that capacity they entered a relation with the Pallava king predicated on 'shared sovereignty.' That is, they became active and apparently necessary participants in the central royal ritual, and the sovereignty of the Pallavas which was predicated on their origin was shared with the chieftains who embodied similar virtues on a lesser scale. It is in this capacity that the ritual of the royal dana proclaimed the basis of sovereignty and then, by sharing the royal perquisites of that sovereignty, established authoritative relations which loyal subordinates. Again, we must recall that in the earlier period these perquisites were restricted to members of the royal family.

The set of relations established during the late seventh and eighth centuries continued to exist through to the end of Pallava rule. In the Bahur plates of Nrpatungavarman (c. 855-899 A.D.; the plates can be dated c. 867 A.D.)[74] the earlier pattern was replicated. The vijnapti in this grant was Martantan of the family of Vesali:

> a descendant of the family of Kuru, and intent on affording refuge to his subjects. An ornament to the world like the moon, (and) resembling the ocean in profundity, etc. (this) ruler of men (became) the resort of the people by protecting the people as if (he were) the sun. Therefore the surname Nilaitangi (i.e. the support of the world) was as suitable to this ruler as (unto) a god.

Again, the chief had many of the attributes of the Pallava kings themselves, and was even likened to a god. As with the Pattattalmangalam grant, the chief petitioned for the right to give the grant, albeit in the king's name.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The inclusion of both a new level in the political system and a new modality of relations between the chiefs and the king represents the expansion of a regional system to a trans-regional system. This larger

[74] *E.I.*, XVIII, pp. 5-15.

system included chiefs who were themselves ritual principals with their own retinue of ratnins. The new system of sovereignty, associated as it was with the universalism of Visnu and the primordiality of the family's own sovereign constituents, was well-suited to accommodate the larger political system.

As more and more networks of chieftains and their subjects became tied to the Pallava king, the particular institutions that were spreading as a result of the royal danas, also added to the depth and scale of the central polity. Temples were becoming increasingly important, both as institutions with constituencies and organizational capacities and as symbolic centres in which the growth of *puja* (worship) was responsible for transmitting new cultural and mythological formulations to larger and larger groups of people. Temple worship was overshadowing Vedic practices and replacing them with the new *agamic* codifications of rules for worship. Further, it might be suggested that honours (*mariyatai*) garnered in temple worship were becoming more important than those which had previously been gained in sacrificial contexts, and perhaps that, even this early, temple honours had a particularly important function with respect to kingship.[75] Further, the growing importance of temples can be seen as a reflection of, if not as at least in part, a stimulus to the elaboration and consolidation of local communities, making their rulers sufficiently powerful to necessitate (or to make possible) their incorporation into royal relationship in hitherto unprecedented ways.

Neither should the importance of brahmadeyas be underestimated for this period. In later Pallava times brahmadeya settlements began to develop the social infrastructures and the cultural centrality that characterized them in later Cola times.[76] Brahmans acted as the ritual specialists of temple worship in addition to carrying on their role as domestic ritualists. It has further been suggested that Brahmans developed a series of alliances with dominant agrarian groups during this period,[77] and their early participation in locality assemblies sug-

[75]See A. Appadurai, 'Honor and Conquest: Warrior-Kings and Vaisnava Sectarianism in South India,' MS., 1975; and C.A. Breckenridge, 'Betel-Nut and Honor: Exchange-Relationships and Temple-Entry in a South Indian Temple,' MS., 1975.

[76]The most famous and well-studied of all brahmadeya villages is Uttaramerur, which may have been initially endowed as early as the late seventh century (though the date is subject to great debate) and was highly developed throughout the late Pallava period. See K.V. Subramanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan* II, Coimbatore, 1967, pp. 209-88; and K.A.N. Sastri, *Studies in Cola History and Administration*, Madras, 1932, pp. 96-175.

[77]See Stein, 'Brahman and Peasant.'

gests the extent of their influence in agrarian politics. The gift of a brahmadeya was the gift par excellence of the kingdom. Whether gifted by the king himself or by a chieftain, the brahmadeya had an importance which made the right to earn merit from its gifting the most valued resource in the kingdom. The usual procedure for endowing a brahmadeya consisted of the redirection (*parihara*) of royal cesses (a certain portion of the crop, the *melvaram*, and the allotment of services that were owed to the king) and the allocation of a plot of land. The appointed land was circumambulated by the village headman—the royal order held over his head—at the time of the transmission of the details of the grant to the relevant locality.

Indeed, the expansion of the political system cannot be discussed without reference to the full system of transactions revolving around the king. Very few of the royal cesses mentioned in the inscriptions seem actually to have found the way to the central court of the king. The proliferation of tax-exempt Brahman land settlements, temples and temple land, and their accompanying corporate institutions as well as the seemingly great number of personages referred to as *bhoga gramyakas* (in the enjoyment of villages), all suggest the above conclusion when viewed in light of the fact that the relevant areas for such complex socio-economic organization were limited to the relatively small riverine and coastal areas. Records of local provision for other 'intermediary' recipients, such as warriors in some way connected with the centre, further confirm the vast number of short-circuits which existed in the transactional system. The inscriptional rhetoric which posited a royal claim on all these goods and services was in no sense vitiated by the decentralized functioning of the system, at least as long as the ideological coherence of the king's centrality was maintained by the subordination of these various units to the Pallava dynasty. However, the initiative for the re-allocation of certain resources to recipients such as Brahmans and temples appears to have diffused throughout the higher echelons of the system over time.

Some direct inscriptional evidence suggests that at least some royal income was garnered in war; for instance in the Pattattalmangalam plates it was noted that the Pallavas went about accumulating fame, 'by giving largesses to suitors after having made the wealth their own by conquering enemy kings.'[78] This is consistent with Burton Stein's suggestion that in the Cola period for the most part:[79]

[78] *E.I.*, XVIII, p. 123.
[79] Stein, 'Agrarian Integration in South India,' pp. 186-87.

> 'royal' income came from looting expeditions against neighboring peoples who had developed something like the complex economic and social structure of the nuclear areas of Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam. These peoples were the Pandyans and the Sinhalese in the South and a few centers of Telegu- and Kannada-speaking peoples to the north. To the same predatory category belong the expeditions to South-east Asia. These looting wars were a source of wealth... and the wars appear to have had no other purpose than the extraction of wealth either through looting or ransom; conquest and settlement were rarely undertaken.

The scale of military operations under the Pallavas, as well as later under the Colas, suggests that some kind of service obligation to provide the centre with troops might well have constituted a major linkage between locality and centre. However, the inscriptions are silent on this issue. An early Pallava inscription does note that localities had certain customary obligations to support the army, at least when a military contingent was in the particular area. In the Mayidavolu inscription four of the five *pariharas* referred to obligations toward the army: (1) the supply of food to soldiers; (2) the right of entry of soldiers; (3) the supply of bullocks (presumably to the army); and (4) the necessity to render periodic assistance to the provincial guards.[80] So the army itself constituted one of the major repositories for local cesses. However, the army was run on a decentralised basis, and only coalesced at the royal level for wars of a predatory or defensive sort.

The full range of intermediary recipients, or trustees, of these cesses might have had certain reciprocal obligations to the villages who supported them, but this cannot be established by the inscriptional data, unless the construction of irrigation facilities and the availability of priests and temples can be interpreted in this way. The kinds of cesses, however, remind one of the formal system of transactions involved in the so-called *jajmani* network of 'patron-client' relations. The extent to which this ancient 'tax structure' involved some sort of formal exchange network, in which the kingdom was an exchange unit structurally similar to modern accounts of Indian villages, is difficult to ascertain.

A list of some of the pariharas will illustrate the degree and nature of the penetration of the political system into the local levels; and an analysis of clues about the way in which these cesses were redirected might better suggest the way in which this local-level

[80] *E.I.*, VI, pp. 84ff.
[81] Minakshi, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

transactional network was integrated into the political system. There were cesses on the manufacture of salt, on toddy tappers, on cattle breeders, on Brahman priests, on marriages (Minakshi notes that: 'even to this day the custom prevails and the headman of the village collects from the principal parties in charge of the performance of a marriage, a small tax known as Raja-Sambhavana'),[81] on the potters, goldsmiths, washermen, traders, oil presses, cloth sellers, fishermen, ghee, fines from adjudication, and an unspecified tax which was payable to the *viyavan* (headman). Almost all of these cesses appear to have been in kind; a dearth of references to money in the inscriptions and an absence of major coin finds for this period suggest a low level of monetization. Not only were goods transferred, but services as well. For example, the major epigraphical reference to the tax on the runners of oil presses (*sekku*) notes that the brahmadeya village enjoyed the free services of oil presses as a special privilege granted by the kind.[82] In other words, one might say that the intermediaries of the king (i.e., those sanctioned by the king), like the high-caste landowning families of the jajmani system in modern India, were 'provided services and products by the various lower castes such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, watercarriers, sweepers and laundrymen.' [83] Again, there is no direct evidence to suggest that these groups were incorporated into a system of customary rewards, in which these same intermediaries, or agents thereof, were the chief arbitrators. The resemblance, however, is striking, and further made plausible by Hocart's suggestions regarding the structural homology of the Royal State and the jajmani system in early Sri Lanka.[84]

The way in which cesses were re-channelled to newly created groups or institutions is illustrated in the Velurpalaiyam plates.[85] The community which had been attached to this village was evidently occupied by fishermen. The grant recorded the transfer of the right to the fishery for a sum payable to the temple. Also, the case noted above in which the brahmadeya was serviced by the oil pressers suggests the way in which services were allocated in this context. For all of the cases noted, the important ideological statement is consistently in evidence, namely, that no matter how resources were initially allocated, it was the king who was the ultimate recipient.

The king was also the ultimate doner. This was the case with grants to Brahmans and temples, and this also seems to have been

[82]*Ibid.*, p. 77.

[83]P.M. Kolenda, 'Towards a Model of the Hindu Jajmani System,' in *Tribal and Peasant Economics*, edited by Dalton, New York, 1967, p. 287.

[84]Hocart, 1968, p. 68.

[85]Minakshi, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

the case with the redistribution of resources in such areas as irrigational facilities. C. Minakshi has collated a list of major tanks, canals, and wells that were built under the aegis of Pallava rule, and has suggested that this represented a rather major investment.[86] These investments were heavily concentrated in riverine or coastal areas relatively close to the capital area.[87] Such activities should be seen in light of Burton Stein's suggestions that settled agricultural tracts constituted a far smaller area during this period than even in the subsequent Cola period, and that attempts to expand these settlements were not only designed to expand the resource base, but to challenge the power of tribal warriors from the neighbouring hill areas.[88] The temples and brahmadeya communities established by the ruling kings doubtless facilitated the integration and the agricultural development of these settled tracts.

A consideration of the inscriptional evidence over time suggests an increasing expansion of this system of transactions. But, even as penetration from centre to periphery became more pronounced, decentralizing developments also took place. More and more intermediaries — persons who had local constituencies and control over local institutions such as temples and locality assemblies — arose in the system. However, because of the mechanism of shared sovereignty relations it was possible for the political system to expand as a single cultural entity. These relations with the central king were apparently highly valued and mutually advantageous. Otherwise, we could not explain the extraordinary pertinacity and stability of the Pallavas. The modalities of royal relations established under the later Pallavas functioned as adaptive institutions, and were well-suited to accommodate the growing scale and complexity of the political system.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I began by defining social structure as the set or sets of social relations which have as their central constituent feature a conception of authority. Following from this, I posited that there was a definite relation between the modes of social and political relations on the one hand and ideas and ritual expressions of authority on the other. The correlations are impressive for this period of south Indian history. Moreover, it seems clear that an approach which considers structural change from the twin lenses of social

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-111.
[88] Stein, 'Brahman and Peasant.'

relations and political authority allows for a uniquely holistic mode of analysis.

More specifically, I have made a general plea on behalf of pre-Cola south Indian political systems. A study of the Pallavas is essential for understanding the background and origins of trans-regional kingship, the forms of political authority in medieval south Indian history, Brahman settlements and agrarian institutions, as well as the rise of temples and temple-related beliefs and rituals. In this latter regard, the transformations in the system of royal equivalence, from one in which kings were identified with the guardians of the quarters to one in which they became identified with Visnu, the Puranic god of protection, fecundity, and victorious expansion, can be understood as a part of a total systemic transformation in which the symbology of temple worship was an integral part. The king's divine origin made it possible for him to be worshipped as the other Puranic deities were being worshipped in temples. Gonda notes that, 'the honour shown to a sovereign is, in Hinduistic times, in many respects similar to the marks of veneration conferred on the images of the gods.'[89] In fact, in Tamil the word for temple means the place of the king: *kovil*. Perhaps this vindicates Hocart's suggestion that there were kings before gods, but this question of historical precedence may be of little consequence.

In conclusion, ideas of kingship and authority developed in concert with ideas of cosmology and with myth and ritual. Hocart was certainly correct to suggest that one must not separate ritual from politics in the study of ancient government. For, throughout the period under study in south Indian history, ritual played a constitutive role for political authority, and hence for social relations. And, curiously enough, a study of ritual may even provide the key for discerning structural change.

[89]Gonda, *op cit.*, p. 56.