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Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India : Problems of Perspective

THE PROBLEM I refer to concerns the study of polity in early medieval India. There is hardly any need to underline that this erstwhile 'dark period' of Indian history (a characterization deriving ineidentally from the 'absence' of vast territorial empires in the period) is fast emerging as one in which significant changes were taking place[1]—a useful reminder that historical assessments never remain static and need to go through a process of constant re-evaluation. As one interested in the study of early medieval India, my feeling has been that the problem of the political formation of this period is in an urgent need of re-evaluation, and while it will be presumptuous to think in terms of a single empirical work which will cover the problem at the level of the entire subcontinent, one can at least pose the problem, constant reminders regarding regional variations notwithstanding, at the subcontinental level from the perspective of the possible processes in operation. My own interest in the study of early medieval polity derives not so much from the recent spate of publications on early state and the possibility of analyzing early Indian political systems in the light of new ideas[2] but from more pragmatic considerations. The foremost among these is the resurrection, through the study of polity, of an interest in the study of the political history of the period. I apprehend that this sentiment is likely to raise a murmur of protest and I am also likely to be reminded that we have had enough of political history which may be sanctioned well-earned rest for some time to come. I wonder if this is really so, since I would like to think that historical re-evaluation of the nature of change in a period implies re-evaluation of its sources in their entirety. As a teacher of ancient Indian history I notice a growing trend among students to whom "social and economic history" is what really matters since political history with its endless dates, genealogical charts and catalogues of battles involves senseless cramming and serves no intellectual purpose at all.[3] Given the nature of ancient Indian political historiography[4], the distaste is understandable, but if in sheer frustration we turn away from a serious study of political history, we shall, perhaps unwittingly, be subscribing to the equally dangerous lapse of compart-

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mentalized history. After all, the study of polity essentially involves analysis of the nature, organization and distribution of power, and in state society in which the contours of inequality are sharp, relations of power encompass relations at other levels in some form or the other.[5] Even the seemingly bewildering variety of details of the political history of early medieval India—the absurdly long genealogies, the inflated records of achievements of microscopic kingdoms, the rapidity of the rise and fall of centres of power—are ultimately manifestations of the way polity evolved in the period and hence worthy, not so much of cataloguing, but of serious analysis. I may make an additional point in justification of my plea for the study of political history by saying that an occasional comparison of notes with the historiography of medieval India would help, because medieval historians, instead of increasingly building up a prejudice against political history, have in fact continued to enrich its historiography and have made it an essential part of our understanding of that period.[6]

I

The relevant approaches to the study of early medieval polity will be taken up for further discussion later; let me start with a brief reference to the basic opposition between two broad strands of assumptions that bear upon the study of Indian polity. In one assumption, polity in pre-modern India is variously characterized as 'traditional'[7] or 'Oriental Despotic'[8]; in fact, it has been considered possible by different individual authors—all apparently subscribing to the assumption of 'traditional polity'—to view political ideas and structures of disparate periods of Indian history in terms of a model of pre-State polity.[9] It would of course be too simplistic to lump a wide variety of writings on traditional pre-modern polity together because both in their empirical and theoretical contents such contributions vary substantially, but basically the broad assumption underlying most of them remains that traditional polity was essentially changeless: 'a continual kalaeidoscopic reorientation of a given political and social content'.[10] Opposed to this view of "traditional" polity within which what we call 'early medieval' does not stand clearly demarcated is the other which envisages possibilities of change and, curiously, it is within this view that most empirical studies on early medieval India can be located. Here too views on change or on mechanisms of change are not identical; the majority of works on early medieval political history and institutions in fact contain generalizations which are mutually contradictory. The king in all the monarchical states is the source of absolute power and wields control through bureaucracy; there is thus nothing much to distinguish him from the 'absolute despot' despite his benevolent disposition: and yet, the malaise of polity is generated by tendencies of feudalism.[11] Change, expressed mostly in terms of dynastic shifts, becomes, in the early medieval context, a concern over the size of the emperor's territory; imperial rulers down to the time of Harsa endeavour to

stem the tide of disintegration and fragmentation, which is seen as a disastrous change from the ideal imperial pattern and which is invariably assessed against the ultimate failure to ratain what used to be called—and I fear many of our much used text books continue to call—the Hindu political order.[12] Concern with failure of the early medieval political order—a concern not only noticeable in works on political history[13] but a starting point in serious monographs on social and economic history[14] as well—has logically led to value-judgements on the structure of polity; a single quote from a widely-read text book on polity, out of many such available, will serve to illustrate the sentiment common to most historians of early medieval India: '(the) ideal of federal-feudal empire, with full liberty to each constituent state to strive for the imperial status but without permission to forge a unitary empire after the conquest thus produced a state of continuous instability in ancient India'[15]. I have chosen this quote to underline the kind of ambivalence which permeates the writings even of those who tend to think in terms of change: there is dichotomy between 'constituent state' and 'unitary empire', the dichotomy deriving in the present case from adherence to the model provided by ancient polittical thinkers; the dichotomy is not timeless because its emergence is located in the fourth century A.D. and yet it 'produced a state of continuous instability in ancient India', instability being change from the norm i.e., the centralized State.

Whatever be the merit of the terminologies used in these writings, historiographically the interesting correlation is between change in polity and feudalism. 'Feudalism' is thus not a new historiographical convention; its use, limited to the political plane, has been as a synonym for political fragmentation and the term has in fact been shuttled back and forth in Indian history to suit any period in which no 'unitary empire' could be located on the political horizon.[16]

We all know that a major breakthrough in the application of this term to the Indian context came in the form of a new genre of empirical works from the fifties;[17] here for the first time 'feudal polity' is not an entity-in-itself; through a reasoned argument—irrespective of whether we accept the argument or not—'feudal polity' is shown to be a stage which represents a structural change in the Indian social and economic order; it envisages the emergence of a hierarchical structure of society in place of the binarily opposed entities of the State and the peasantry, and it is basically this hierarchical structure with its different tiers of intermediaries which explains the mechanism of exploitation and coercion of the early medieval state. The distinctive contribution of 'Indian feudalism', from the perspective of the problem I have in view, consists in the attempt to plug in the gap between polity and society.

In concluding this brief review of various stands of opinions on early Indian polity, which tend to be organized into two opposite sets, I feel that the opposition cannot be pushed to any extreme limits. If the feeling represents a curious contradiction, the contradiction is embedded in avail-

able historiography. For even those who work within the framework of traditional polity do not all necessarily work with such a historical models as 'Oriental Despotism'[18]; similarly, the current construct of 'feudal polity' carries over elements from past historiography, which in a way hinder the formulation of a long-term perspective of change. The opposition perhaps ultimately lies in the realm of ideologies and perspectives than in the realization of the necessity of study of change. We turn now to the specificity of the problem which this historiographical situation has created for the study of early medieval polity.

II

The structure of the construct of Indian feudalism, which is spoken of as a variant form, rests, so far as the study of polity is concerned, on two interrelated arguments. Since detailed studies of early medieval political formation within the framework of the feudalism hypothesis are still a desideratum,[19] they therefore need to be stated: (i) Feudal polity emerged out of a gradual breakdown of a centralized bureaucratic state system, empirically represented by the Mauryan state, the implication of the argument being that the emergence of diverse centres of power of later periods would correspond to a process of displacement of bureaucratic units. The crystallization of feudal polity, in this argument, however, lies at a distance of eight centuries from the time of the disintegration of the Mauryan state, although elements of feudal polity—suggested by a two-tier or three-tier structure of the administrative system—are identified in the Kusana polity of north India and the Satavahana polity of the Deccan;[20] (ii) the system of assignment of land, apparently absent in the Mauryan state because of the practice of remuneration in cash, became widespread and intermixed with transfer of rights of administration, corroding the authority of the state and leading to the 'parcellization' of its sovereignty.[20a] It may be interesting to dilate on this characterization of the Mauryan state and its choice as a starting point for the study of feudal polity because at one level it carries over from past historiography the equation, fedual polity=political fragmentation=dismemberment of a centralized state; at another, it represents an unstated search for a proto-type of the state system of the Classical West the breakdown of which provides a starting point for the study of western feudalism. However, for our purpose, the validity of the arguments stated above can be subjected to a single test: do they sufficiently explain the total political configuration of what is called the feudal formation? The explanation has to relate not to the structures of individual monarchies alone but also to the political geography of the subcontinent at any given point of time—a requirement suggested by frequent shifts in the centres of power and the ongoing process of the formation of new polities as a result of transition from pre-state to state societies. It is considerations such as these which have led to considerable rethinking regarding the Mauryan state itself[21], which—the focal point in the concentration area of the earlier *mahajanapadas* of

the upper and middle Ganges basin—represents basically a relationship between the nucleus which is the metropolitan state and a range of differentiated polities. The disappearance of the metropolitan Mauryan state did not create a political or economic crisis either in areas where state polity had been in existence before or in areas of pre-state polity incorporated within the Mauryan empire. In fact, Mauryan territorial expansion and similar expansions at later times seem to have created a fresh spurt in the emergence of local states in areas of pre-state polity—a phenomenon certainly not to be confused with a process of decentralization of a centralized administration.[22]

Two further points regarding the current historiography on the genesis of feudal polity need to be made. First, not all criticisms levelled against the use of landgrant evidence for explaining the genesis of feudal polity can be brushed aside lightly. The fact remains that the major bulk of epigraphic evidence relates to *brahmadeyas* and *devadanas*, grants to brahmanas and religious establishments, and the element of contract is largely absent in the system of early and early medieval landgrants. The presence of contractual element cannot be altogether denied;[23] it would also be difficult to disagree with the view that the system of assignments brought in important changes in agrarian relations in areas where such assignments were made[24]—but how does it all help us to understand the genesis of feudal polity ? Let me clarify. The *samanta*-feudatory system has been considered to be the hallmark of the structure of polity in early medieval India[25] and there is no reason to dispute the empirical validity of this point—but it has not been seriously examined how even the system of secular or service assignments to officials led to the emergence of *samanta*-feudatory network. It has been conceded that the general chronology of the epigraphic evidence for service-assignments postdates the genesis of feudal polity.[26] The conclusion which ought to follow from it is that service grants present a facet and not the precondition for the emergence of the overall pattern of political dominance. Secondly, irrespective of whether administrative measures can bring in changes in societal formations or not[27], there is the larger question : what generates administrative measures? Land assignments as administrative measures are, we have seen, presented as deliberate acts which corrode the authority of the State; the State not only parts with its sources of revenue but also with its coercive and administrative prerogatives. Thus feudal polity arises because pre-feudal polity decides, to use an all-too-familiar expression, to preside over the liquidation of its own power. This is a curious position to take, which could be understandable only in terms of a crisis of structural significance in pre-fedual political and economic order. We have argued earlier that the breakdown of the Mauryan State does not appear to have generated such a crisis;[28] in fact, in a situation in which the state polity was ever expanding horizontally and the final annihilation of the *gana-samgha* system of polity was taking place,[29] it would be a difficult exercise indeed to construct a reasoned theory of crisis in State power.

One must then look for an alternative explanation. In presenting the above critique of the historiography of the genesis of early medieval polity, the differential distribution of power represented by the *samanta*-feudatory structure is not disputed; what is questioned is the rather one-track argument, wholly centred around a particular value attached to the evidence of the landgrants; for the emergence of the structure in pre-Gupta and Gupta times. In fact, in no state system, however centralized, there can be a single focus or level of power, and the specificity of the differential distribution of power in early medieval polity may be an issue more complex than it has hitherto been assumed. And perhaps, a re-evaluation of the evidence of the majority of landgrants may be located within this complexity.

III

At one level this complexity derives from the presence of trans-political ideology in all State systems, even though in the context of early medieval India one may not perceive such ideology from the perspective of anthropologists or anthropology-oriented historians. One dimension of this was the need for constant validation of power not only in areas where a community was passing from pre-state to state-society stage but even in established State societies. The root of this need which, in the early medieval context, may de understood by broadly labelling it as the legitimation' process, lay in the separation between the temporal and the sacred domain[30]. The domains, if one goes beyond theory and tries to grasp their relationship in concrete existential terms, must be seen as interdependent; if temporal power needed 'legitimation' from 'spiritual' authority, so did the human agents of 'spiritual' authority require sustenance from temporal power. Viewed from this perspective, it should not be surprising that priestly validation of temporal power continued beyond the period of 'Hindu' dynasties; the brahmana, in situation of reciprocal relationship, could continue to prepare *prasastis* of the rule of a Sultan and Sanskritize his title to *Suratrana*.[31] Emphasis on legitimation alone obfuscates crucial aspects of the exercise of force and of the secular compulsions of State power, but as a part of overall political process it nevertheless offers us a convenient vantage point from which to view the ideological dimension of the State. Temporal power, in early as well as later theoretical writings, was required to guarantee protection; it would be too narrow a view of 'protection' to take it simply to mean physical protection of subjects. Protection related to the ideal social order as defined by the guardians of the sacred domain. *Danda* or force which may have had both secular and non-secular connotations was intended by the guardians of sacred domain primarily not as a political expedient but for the preservation of the social order.[32] Curiously, the ideal social order was defined, but *dharma*, nevertheless, was not uniform, and although the King was required to preserve social order, he was at the same time enjoined to allow the disparate *dharmas* of regions, guilds and asso-

ciations and of social groups to continue.[33] If there is an anomaly here, the anomaly may help us to understand the massive support which the ruling elites extended to the representatives of the sacred domain in the early medieval period. The territorial spread of the State society required cutting through the tangle of disparate *dharmas* through the territorial spread of the brahmanas and of institutions representing uniform norm in some form or the other; they did not necessarily eliminate the disparate norms but they could provide a central focus to such disparate norms by their physical presence, their style of functioning and their control over what could be projected as the 'transcendental' norm.[34]

Another dimension of this central focus becomes noticeable with the crystallization of the Puranic order, implying the ascendancy of the Bhakti ideology. In sectarian terms, Bhakti could lead to growth of conflicts in society,[35] but from the standpoint of the State, Bhakti could, perhaps much more effectively than *Dharmasastra*-oriented norms, be an instrument of integration of men.[36] If there was opposition between *Dharmasastra*—oriented norms and community norms, Bhakti, at least ideally, provided no incompatibility: local cults and sacred centres could be brought within the expansive Puranic fold through the process of identification. Though originating in an earlier period, temple grew to be the major institutional locus of Bhakti in the early medieval period,[37] and for temporal power, the temple, as symbol in material space of the sacred domain, could provide a direct link with that domain in two ways: (i) the King could seek to approximate the sacred domain through a process of identification with the divinity enshrined in the temple. The practice initiated by the Pallavas and augmented by the Colas, taken to similar to the Devaraja cult of south-east Asia, is an example of such a process;[38] (ii) the second way was to surrender temporal power to the divinity, the cult of which was raised to the status of the central cult and to act as its agent. This process is illustrated by the stages through which the cult of Jagannatha emerged as the central cult in Orissa and the ritual surrender of temporal power to the divinity by King Anangabhima.[39] The centrality of the cult in relation to others in this process implied the centrality of its agents as well.[40] The Cola and Codaganga practices are perhaps facets of the same concern —to have direct links with the sacred domain.

The process of legitimation thus cannot be viewed simply in terms of a newly emerged local polity seeking validation through linkage with a respectable Ksatriya ancestry or by underlining its local roots; the constant validation of temporal authority really relates to the complex of ideological apparatuses through which temporal power was reaching out to its temporal domain. '(If) the State (is) a special apparatus, exhibiting a peculiar material framework that cannot be reduced to the given relations of political domination',[41] then it becomes imperative to study the pattern of use of the available ideological apparatuses which constituted an integral part of the overall political order.[42] From the perspective of the interdependence between temporal power and sacred authority, it becomes

understandable that assignments such a *brahmadeyas* and *devadanas* were not an administrative but a socio-religious necessity for the temporal power; the earthly agents of the sacred domain—and such agents were ultimately defined by the changing contexts of both the temporal and the sacred order—generated a pattern of dominance in their areas of preserve, but it would not be compatible with the argument presented here to generalize either that temporal power in early medieval India was a tool in the hands of the brahmanas and the temple managers,[43] or that massive support to the representatives of the sacred domain meant parcellization of temporal power, an assumption which in any case will have to presuppose that temporal power emanated from a single source. It needs also to be underlined that the duality of the temporal and sacred domains does not necessarily imply that the domains and their interrelationship remained unchanged from the Vedic times to eternity.[44] From the standpoint of temporal power Vedism, Puranism, Tantrism and other forms of heterodoxism could simultaneously acquire the connotation of the sacred domain.[45] What is required is to analyze the regional and group perception of the sacred domain. This will help us understand the curious contradiction between general support and cases of persecution; the overwhelming domination of the brahmana groups and temples in south India juxtaposed with the incorporation of Jaina tenets in the religious policies of individual rulers of Western India[46] or the appointment of a *devotpatananayaka*, an official in charge of uprooting images of gods from temples and of confiscation of temple property, by an early medieval ruler of Kashmir[47]. Taking even the uncommon cases as aberrations would be to bypass the issue; the point is how in the early medieval context the relevance of the sacred domain was defined by temporal power.

Another aspect of the complexity we have talked about concerns the territorial limits of the temporal domain. Temporal domain was defined by the extent of royal power but Kingdom was not defined in concrete territorial terms; even the *janapada* or *rastra*, one of the constituent limbs of the State in the *Saptanga* formulation, was not 'internally coherent and closed towards the outside'.[48] The State was thus not a static unit but one that was naturally dynamic.[49] Even the territory of the Mauryas, which for the period of Asoka alone can be clearly defined by the distribution of his edicts, was designated as *vijita* or *rajavisaya*[50]—an area over which the rule of the emperor extended. The territorial composition of the Mauryan empire in Asoka's period can be characterized as a combination of several nodes such as Pataliputra, Ujjayini, Taksasila, Tosali and Suvarnagiri as well as areas of such peoples as Bhojas, Rathikas, Pulindas, Nabhakas and that of the *atavikas* or forest people.[51] Such fluid situations —for there is no guarantee that this territorial composition remained static throughout the Mauryan period—are schematized in the *mandala* concept of the political theorists who locate the *vijigisu* at the core of the *mandala*,[52] and the 'royal mystique'[53] represented by the *Cakravartin* model of kingship, is a logical follow-up of this formulation. It has been a bane of

writings on the political history of early and early medieval India to search for approximations of the *Cakravarti* among kings of big-sized states;[54] the ideal is only a recognition of the existence of disparate polities and of military success as a precondition of the *Cakravarti* status which was superior to the status represented by the heads of other polities.

IV

Within the parameters of interdependence of temporal and sacred domains, and more precisely the essentially dynamic contours of these domains, the political processes of early medieval India may be sought to be identified. I would venture to begin by suggesting that political processes may be seen in terms of parallels with contemporary economic social and religious processes. The essence of the economic, process lay in the horizontal spread of rural agrarian settlements, and this remains true even for the early historical period, despite the accent often put on urban economy or money economy of the period.[55] The process of caste formation, the chief mechanism of which was the horizontal spread of the dominant ideology of social order based on *varna*-division—despite, again, the ascendancy of heterodoxism in the early historical period[56]—remained the essence of the social process which drew widely dispersed and originally outlying groups into a structure which allowed them in a large measure to retain their original character except that this character was now defined with reference to the structure.[57] In the related religious process too the major trend was integration of local cults, rituals and sacred centres into a pantheistic supralocal structure; the mechanism of integration was by seeking affiliation with a deity or a sacred centre which had come to acquire supralocal significance.[58] Applied to the study of the political process, these parallels would suggest consideration of three levels: presence of established norms and nuclei of State society, horizontal spread of State society implying transformation of pre-State polities into State polities, and integration of local polities into structures that transcended the bounds of local polities. In other words, in trying to understand the political processes and structures in early medieval India it may be more profitable to start by juxtaposing the processes of the formation of local state polities and supralocal polities than by assessing the structures in terms of a perennial oscillation between forces of centralization and decentralization.

The parallelism drawn here is in a sense misleading since in polity, as in society or religion, no given structures could be immutable in view of the underlying dynamism I have already drawn attention to, but the point about process as essentially a range of interactions will still remain valid. The specific complexities of early medieval political formation have, therefore, to be stated in clear empirical terms. The first major point which may be put forward with regard to post-Gupta polity is that State society, represented by emergence of ruling lineages, had covered all nuclear regions and had progressed well into peripheral areas by the end of the

Gupta period. I assume details of political geography need not be cited to substantiate this generalization. And yet, it is significant that inscriptions from the seventh century alone, from different regions of India, begin to produce elaborate genealogies, either aligning alleged local roots of ruling lineages with a mythical tradition or by tracing their descent from mythical heroic lineages.[59] The emergence of genealogy has been taken as a shift from 'yajna to vamsa',[60] indicating a change in the nature of kingship, but in the totality of its geographical distribution, genealogical evidence has a more significant implication : proliferation of actual ruling lineages defining the domain of political power. State society even in nuclear areas did not have a stable locus; mobilization of military strength could not only displace a ruling lineage but could create a new locus and a new network of political relations. The shift from the Badami Calukyas to the Rastrakutas and then again to the Calukyas of Kalyana, or from the Pallavas and the Pandyas to the Colas was not simply a change from one lineage to another; each change redefined the locus of the State in a geographical context which had nevertheless experienced long and uninterrupted history of State society. In such contexts, the use of the term 'State formation', primary, secondary or even tertiary, would be highly inappropriate and would obscure distinction with areas which were indeed experiencing passage from pre-State to State society on a significant scale. The distinction remains valid throughout Indian history —for reasons of uneven pace of change—and transition from pre-State to State society has been documented through medieval to modern times.[61]

I have been using such rather vague expressions as 'lineage domain'[61a] and 'State society'[61b] without clear reference to the State in the early medieval context. This vagueness arises out of some definitional problems which could be clearly stated by working out the geography of the loci of political power over a few centuries. I can however make a very brief reference to a selected span of time—the eleventh century—the two reasons for considering the span as significant being : (i) evidence for this period—particularly from south India—has recently evoked considerable urge for re-evaluation of commonly used concepts on State, (ii) eleventh century, in relation to the centuries preceding and following it, does not present any major fluctuations in the list and geography of the distribution of ruling lineages. At a rough estimate the number of ruling lineages of this century could be put around forty;[62] the number is reconstructed on the basis of specific references to lineage names and excludes cases where, despite use of regal title or title approximating it, descent is not clearly indicated. In a sense the reconstruction of such numbers would be useless since I am not sure that we can convert these numbers into the number of States and say that forty States existed in India in the eleventh century. Terms such as Cola State, Calukya State or Pala State in place of 'kingdoms' or 'empires' may not raise serious objections, but I am doubtful if we would be equally justified in going ahead with the

use of this terminology in relation to, say, Kadambas of Vanavasi, Hangal and Goa;[63] the Cahamanas of Sakambhari, Broach, Dholpur, Pratabgarh, Nadol and Ranthambhor;[64] Paramaras of Malwa, Lata, Candravati, Arbuda and Suvarnagiri;[65] similarly, Nolamba State, Bana State or Ratta State,[66] signifying the domains of these respective lineages, may be found equally inappropriate. The reason is not simply the status of a lineage; the point really is whether there is always a necessary correspondence between a lineage and a static territorial limit. Early medieval evidence suggests that this was not so. I have cited the cases of the Kadambas and the Cahamanas; many more are readily available. The Kalacuris, an ancient lineage, are found in western Deccan in a comparatively early period but they established several nuclei of power, as in Tripuri and Ratanpur, in the upper Narmada basin in the early medieval period, whereas one of its segments ventured into such a remote area of northeastern India that it came to be designated as Sarayupara.[67] The movements of Karnatas outside Karnataka, although the particular lineages involved are not always specified, led to the establishment of new ruling families in Bengal and Bihar,[68] and possibly also to the formation of such Rajput clans as Solankis and Rathods.[69] The ruling lineage in its entirety is the point of reference in the case of major lineages in many records, as suggested by expressions like *Pallavanam* or *Kadambanam*.[70] What I am, therefore, arguing is that since the changing distribution patterns of ruling lineages do not necessarily correspond to static territorial limits, an initial study of polity has to start with an analysis of the formation of lineages and of the pattern of network they represent, both territorially and in inter-lineage combinations, at *different levels of organization of political power*. Such analysis may ultimately clarify relations in the structures of supra-local polities, which alone seem to be issues in historiographical debates on the polity of early medieval India. The focus then will have to shift from extremities like 'virtual absence of' or 'construction and collapse of' administrative apparatus. In fact, as empirical evidence from regions like Rajasthan suggests, distribution of political authority could be organized by a network of lineages within the framework of the monarchical form of polity, retaining at the same time areas of bureaucratic functioning.[71] A remark, made with reference to medieval Deccan, seems pertinent here : "The development of State bureaucracy and private lordly organization was neither mutually exclusive nor confined to two different stages of a process. In this agrarian society private and State interests developed simultaneously and in terms of one another.[72]

The formation and mobilization of lineage power did not, of course, develop along a single channel; it could involve colonization of areas of pre-State polity and change of the economic pattern of the region by expansive lineages;[73] in particular contexts, emergence of ruling lineages would correspond to 'primary State formation' and introduction of the monarchical ideology of rule; it could even be simple replacement of one lineage by another. All these processes could and did operate simulta-

neously but—and this needs to be underlined if we are to take an all-India perspective—not in isolation from one another. Polities were interactive and interlocking—if nothing else, inventories of battles fought in the early medieval period would be a sure index of this—and this often resulted in the formation of new blocks and networks of power in which the original identity of a lineage was obliterated.[74]

Two further points about lineages as bases for the study of political power may be made. First, Kalacuri or Cahamana evidence has shown that lineages could be amazingly expansive but there are other levels at which relationships between lineages and territories can be examined. Pre-tenth century evidence from Tamilnadu has been cited to show that the nucleus of the power of a lineage could be an area comprised by two or three districts. The relationship between the lineage and its territory was expressed in the form of the name of the area in which the lineage was dominant; examples of this are common in the south and in the Deccan: Cola-nadu, Cera-nadu, Tondai-nadu, Oyma-nadu, Irungola-padi, Ganga-padi, Nulamba-padi, to mention a few, bear out this relationship. The growth of a lineage into a supra-local or supra-regional power would result in the reorganization of the *nadus* or *padis* into administrative units, as suggested by the emergence of the *vala-nadus* and *mandalams* in the Cola State,[75] but, from our point of view, what is important is that such administrative units emerged by integrating pre-existing lineage areas. It must be conceded that the pattern available for the south and the Deccan cannot be applied to all regions; in Bengal, for example, such details of lineage geography are simply not available, Elsewhere, as in early medieval Rajasthan and Gujarat, the trend seems to have been toward the parcellization of the area variously called Gurjara-bhumi, Gurjaratra, Gurjara-dharitri, Gurjaradhara—all obviously derived from the ethnic term Gurjara[76]—into strongholds of several lineages, only some of which traced their descent from the Gurjara stock.[77]

Secondly, the formation of ruling lineages can be seen also from the perspective of the social mobility process in early medieval India. In a situation of openended polity and of congenial climate for 'Ksatriyization',[78] any lineage or segment of larger ethnic group, with a coherent organization of force, could successfully make a bid for political power and lay the foundation of a large state structure. The origin of the Hoysala State, which lasted for about three centuries and a half, goes back to the *malepas* or the hill chiefs of the Soseyur forests and the hill forces that the chiefs could command at that stage.[79] Here too the pattern of the formation of a lineage and the level of power a lineage would reach would not be identical in all areas. Generally, the mobility upward was from a base which can be broadly characterized as agrarian, and political changes from the seventh century, again in western India, provide an idea of the sequences in the political mobility process. We have noted that Gurjaratra or Gurjarabhumi was the base from which several lineages tracing descent from the Gurjaras emerged; the separation of the ruling lineages

from the common stock is suggested by the general name Gurjara-Pratihara used by the lineages, and while the base of one such lineage in the Jodhpur area seems to have been established by displacing pre-existing groups, in the Alwar area in eastern Rajasthan there is clear indication of a sharp distinction which had developed between Gurjara cultivators and the Gurjara-Pratihara ruling lineage.[80] It is on this base that the Gurjara-Pratihara supra-regional power, which began with the expansion of one of the lineages and extended at one stage as far east as Bengal, was built up. Elsewhere, for example the presence of Vellala generals and warrior elements and of feudatories in Pallava and Cola polities in south India[81] or the formation of the Damaras into a major political group in the Lohara period (C.A.D. 1000-1170) in Kashmir[82] would suggest a similar process of the emergence of potentially dominant elements from within local agrarian bases.

V

The structure of supra-local or supra-regional polities has then to become understandable in a large measure with reference to its substratum components, and it is in the characterization of this reference that the perspectives of historians substantially differ. Before the debate is taken up for review, the geographical loci of larger polities need to be briefly touched upon. The larger polities tended to emerge, throughout Indian history, in what geographers call 'nuclear' regions,[83] providing such polities with a resource base potentially much richer and easier to integrate administratively than relatively isolated pockets where 'State formation', a chronologically phased phenomenon, would reveal less integrative patterns of polity. Ganges basin, Kaveri basin, Krishna-Godavari *doab*, Raichur *doab* are cited as examples of 'nuclear' regions, and indeed the large State structures of the early medieval period all thrived in these regions. Two qualifications are, however, necessary. First, 'nuclear' region is finally a historical-chronological and not purely geographical category; the nuclearity of a region is related to how historical factors converge on it and not merely to its resource potential. Warangal, away from the nuclear Krishna-Godavari *doab*, remained a base of the large structure of the Kakatiya State;[84] the Caulukya State of Gujarat, with its base at Anahilapataka, emerged in a region which, from the point of view of its basic agrarian resource potential, was not sufficiently 'nuclear'.[85] Secondly, large polities did not necessarily originate in nuclear areas; military mobilization could generate movement toward nuclear areas and result in major transformations in polity. The movement of the Pratiharas from Rajasthan to Kanauj, of the Palas from southeast Bengal to the middle and the lower Ganges basin,[86] the descent of the Hoysalas from the hilly region of Soseyur forests into the areas of south Karnataka held by the Gangas for centuries produced steady growth of political structures of substantial dimensions in these regions.

I have already noted in the beginning that recognition of the disper-

sed foci of power was present even in traditional historiography in the form of the formulation of 'feudal tendencies', although the formulation was applied generally to a pattern of polity which was considered not sufficiently large in terms of its approximation to an all-India empire and which could not, therefore, be considered centralized. Recent perspectives specifically related to only early medieval India have shifted from acceptance of 'centralization' and 'bureaucracy' as essential characteristics of large State structures to detailed analyses of dispersed foci of power within such structures. This concern appears to be common both to those who characterize these structures in terms of 'feudal polity' and their critics to whom the 'feudal' model is either 'outworn' or an excusively European formation which hinders a proper understanding of the uniqueness of the Indian political system[87]. Where does then lie the difference? Reducing the discussion to the level of political relations alone, the fundamental difference seems to lie, as I understand it, between their respective notions of 'parcellized sovereignty' and 'shared sovereignty'. Opposition to the 'feudal' model[88] is best articulated in the model of 'segmentary state' which is currently bandied about, at least in the circle of Western Indologists, as a major breakthrough in our understanding of traditional Indian political system. The model which is directly lifted from the analysis of a pre-State polity in East Africa but, in the Indian context, is mixed up with concepts of Kingship derived from literature, presents the following characteristics of the 'segmentary state': (i) limited territorial sovereignty which further weakens gradually as one moves from the core to the periphery, and often 'shades off into ritual hegemony', (ii) the existence of a centralized core with quasi-autonomous foci of administration, (iii) the pyramidal repetition of administrative structures and functions in the peripheral foci, (iv) absence of absolute monopoly of legitimate force at the centre, and (v) shifting allegiances of the periphery of the system.[89] In the schema of segmentary State, as it has been variously worked out in the Indian context, the major integrative factor is 'ritual sovereignty' rather than 'political sovereignty', and attempts at explications of the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' locate the King as the principal ritualist. The 'new modality of relations between the chiefs and the King', one writer argues in the context of the later phase of Pallava polity, (which) 'represents the expanson of a regional system into a trans-regional system' is nothing much more than a shift from an earlier ritual system and the different foci of power nothing much more than ritual accessories.[90] It is the Kingship which is 'incorporative' and, one may say by extending this logic, whatever be the territorial spread of the State, it is ritual space.

All this is fine example of study of the State *sans* politics. While the analytic inseparability of 'State structure from State ritual'[91] is understandable, particularly in south India where material for the study of such relationship is plentifully available, the subordination of political and economic dimensions of the State structure to its ritual dimension has led to inevitable neglect of two imperatives under which a State is expected to

operate: (i) stability in its power structure, (ii) resource mobilization[92] which, logically, cannot be separated from the process of redistribution of resources to integrative elements within the State structure. To briefly illustrate the implications of these omissions, too narrow a definition of the 'core' of the Cola territory would leave unanswered why the Cola territorial reorganizations included apparently peripheral areas like Gangavadi and Nolamba-vadi[93] or why territorial conquests of strategic areas and areas of resource potential sought to eliminate existing powerholders and to convert them, in some cases at least, into extensions of patrimonial holdings.[94] The concept of 'core' area as remaining permanently limited to the lineage area in the context of a supra-local polity is untenable; its definition too has to be seen more as functional than geographical.[95] The second omission has resulted in the postulate of the 'politics of plunder' as the major mechanism of resource acquisition and redistribution[96]—in fact, a mechanism which is essentially identical with the one present in the polity of the 'chiefdoms' of the Sangam age.[97] It is indeed curious that the postulate of the 'politics of plunder' has been put forward in relation to the Cola State in which vast agrarian surplus sustained integrative elements in society and in which State penetration into growing networks of trade and exchange could diversify and expand its resource bases enormously.[98]

The 'segmentary state' model or the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' cannot in fact resolve the problem of the political basis of integration since a rigid use of the 'segmentary state' concept relegates the different foci of power to the 'periphery' and does not really see them as components of the State structure. The phenmenon of different foci of power was not peculiarly south Indian but cut across all major political structures of the early medieval period, and there is thus a need for a common perspective, irrespective of the quality or the volume of material available from different regions. These diffused foci of 'quasi-autonomous' power are represented by what is broadly labelled as the *samanta* system which, although present in some form or the other in all major polities, has not been taken proper cognizance of by the protagonists of the 'segmentary state' model.[99] *Samanta* is of course a broad-spectrum category and encompasses a proliferating range of designations in use in the early medieval period. Not all the designations emerge simultaneously, but by the twelfth-thirteenth centuries such terms as *mahasamanta*, *samanta*, *mahamandalesvara*, *mandalesvara*, *ranaka*, *rauta*, *thakkura* and so on came to be indicative of a political order which was non-bureaucratic and in the context of which, in the overall structure of polity, the *rajapurusas* constituting the bureaucracy had only a limited part to play[100] The order assumed the characteristics of a hierarchical formation, and this is clear not only in the binary hierarchy of *mahasamanta* and *samanta* or *mahamandalesvara* and *mandalesvara* but in the attempted schematization of the order in early medieval texts like the *Aparajitaprccha* as well.[101] The *samanta* in its trans-political connotation corresponded to the landed

aristocracy' of the period; in addition, the spate of land assignments and other forms of prestation to various categories of donees, including those rendering military service to the State,[102] were factors which, apart from the presence of the *samanta* landed aristocracy, weakened the hold of the State over both the polity and the revenue potential of its constituent territorial units.

The composition of the elites in any given State structure may have been varied, but the argument that I am trying to formulate requires that we begin with an explanation of the formation of a political structure rather than with a statement of its decentralized character. In other words, if the *samanta* system was. as has been suggested, the keynote of early medieval polity, then it needs to be recognized that from a pattern of relations characterized by *grahana-moksa* (i.e., capture and release) of the early Gupta phase,[103] there was a shift toward a pattern in which the *samantas* were integrated into the structure of polity and in which the overlord-subordinate relation came to be dominant over other levels of relations in the structure. The political exigency of this integration from the Gupta period specially—and I posit *political* integration as a counterpoint to the decentralized polity of the feudal model—lay in the interrelatedness of polities caused by what I have called the horizontal spread of State society and represented geographically, by the lineages at their varied local bases. The exigency is expressed with some clarity in the following quote : "The larger the unit the greater the King's power, and hence the greater his chances of being efficient within his geographical scope. Hence the constant urge to conquer..."[104] The structure of polities was only partly based on elimination of existing bases of power, by expansion of the kin network of the lineage that emerged as dominant or by organization of a bureaucracy that could connect different nodes in the structure, but the fact that political relations were regularly expressed as between the overlord and his feudatories suggests that the dominant mode in the formation of the structure way by encapsulation of the existing bases of power, the spearhead in the structure being the overlord.

At the current stage of research on the political history of the period it would be impossible to advance any generalization, from the vast corpus of early medieval material, regarding the composition of the feudatories, but two suggestions may be made : (i) since the emergence of the overlord himself had its basis mostly in local lineage power, the expansion of a lineage into supra-local power was through pooling military resources and perhaps other forms of support of other lineages, [105] (ii) more importantly, pooling not only required a circulation or redistribution of resources[106] acquired in the process of expansion but required a system of ranking as well. These suggestions are in consonance with integrative polity and the transformation of the *samanta* into a vital component of the political structure is itself an evidence of ranking and in turn clarifies the political basis of integration. Ranking was associated with roles and services, and it may be postulated that a correlation was worked out be-

tween such roles as those of *dutaka, sanphivigrahika, dandandyaka* and so on and raking in the *samanta* hierarchy.[107] The gradual crystallization of ranking permeated the early medieval society to such an extent that statuses of members within individual ruling lineages came to be expressed in terms of ranks[108] and that ranks extended to even non-ruling groups and individuals.[109] And in terms of social process, the transformation of political ranking could in the long run take the form of caste ranking.[110]

Rank as the basis of political organization implies differential access to the centre as also shifts within the system of ranking. The description in the *Aparajitaprccha*, although built up around an overlord of the ideal *cakravarti* model, nevertheless points to the relative positioning of different categories of ruling elites including *dandanayakas, mandalesas, mandalikas, mahasamantas, samantas, laghusamantas, caturasikas, rajaputras* and so on. The system of ranking in relation to the overlord as offered in the text which was composed at the Caulukyan court in Gujarat may be reflective more of the text's perception of *Cakravarti* power than an actual order, but significantly, a correlation between territorial political hold and rank can be detected in its description.[111] Since the basis of territorial and political hold was not static, rank was not static either. In fact, even inadequate studies available so far would suggest that ranks held by individual families underwent changes,[112] that ranks varied from one generation to the next[113] and that aspirations for higher ranks were operative within individual political structures.[114] If the idea of ranking as the political basis of the organization of both local and supra-local structures be accepted, then it may be followed up for locating the potential sources of tension on the political plane: between the rank-holders as also between them and the overlord. Channels open for diffusion of such tension would not have been many; expansion of kinship network, itself encompassed by the system of ranking, assignments in return for services as a means of displacement of locally entrenched lineage power or diversification of the composition of ruling elites by drawing in non-ruling groups in the system of ranking[115] could only create new loci of power. Crisis was thus built into the process of the formation of the structures; a concrete statement of the crisis as it manifested itself in individual cases is a detail which has still to be satisfactorily worked out.

IV

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate what I said in the beginning: what has been presented above is essentially a statement of my groping for a framework for the study of early medieval polity. I have tried to argue that the genesis of the specific features of early medieval polity cannot be satisfactorily comprehehned either by isolating a single unit and analyzing the relationship of its segments in ritual terms or by the notion of decentralized polity in which bases of power are created from above through individual or institutional agents. If we take an all-India perspective, the shifting political geography of the lineages of the period

seems, on the other hand, to suggest that the structure of early medieval polity was a logical development from the territorially limited State society of the early historical period to a gradual but far greater penetration of State society into local agrarian and peripheral levels, generating continuous fissions at such levels. The feudatory and other intermediary strata in the early medieval structures of polity, in the absence of a definite correlation between service assignments and the formation of these strata, may thus be seen in terms of 'integrative polity',[116] with potential sources of tension built into the structures. The early medieval phase of polity was perhaps in a way an intermediate phase—a prelude to the exercise of greater control by the medieval State through its nobility and its regulated system of service assignments, but then if the broad-spectrum *samanta* category was a dominant element in early medieval polity, so did the broad-spectrum category of 'zamindars' continue as an 'irritant' in the medieval State structure.[117]

[For constraints of space, I have tried to limit the references to recent writings and to use earlier publications mostly for the purpose of comparison. My thanks are due to Sri Asok V. Settar and especially to Sri P.K. Basant, research students at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for the help that I have received from them in the preparation of this Address.]

1 The stereotype of the 'dark period' however seems to persist ; see Simon Digby in T. Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, ed., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Volume I:c 1200—c. 1750, Cambridge University Press, 1982, 45-47.

2 Evidence of recent interest in the study of the early State will be found in the range of contributions and bibliographies in two recent publications : H.J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik ed., *The Early State*, Mouton Publishers, 1978; *The Study of the State*, Mouton Publishers, 1981. The focus of most of the contributions in such publications is on the emergence of the early State which is often distinguished only from the modern industrial State and is therefore of little value in understanding processes of change. Relevant ideas on the emergence of the State have been used for the study of the pre-State and origin of the State society in India by Romila Thapar, 'State formation in early India,' *International Social Science Journal*, 32.4 (1980), 655-669 and *From Lineage to State* (in press) and by R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture aud Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983; 'Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in Pre-Maurya times (*c.*600-300 B.C.)' (manuscript); 'From Gopati to Bhupati (a review of the changing position of the king), *Studies in History*, 2.2 (1980), 1-10.

3 It is necessary to keep it in mind that social and economic history by itself is not a sufficient guarantee of the quality of history. Most available monographs on social and economic history of the period, including my own, are no more interesting readings than dynastic accounts.

4 The dominant trend in the writing of the political history of early medieval India is of the form of reconstruction of dynastic accounts, and the trend carried to an extreme has yielded more than one monograph for a single 'dynasty'. We have thus at least three monographs on the Yadavas and the same number of works on the Candellas. For a very useful critique of dynastic reconstruction, through 'concatenation' of distinct segments of the

same ruling lineage see David P. Henige, 'Some phantom dynasties of early and medieval India: Epigraphic evidence and the abhorrence of a vacuum', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 38.3 (1975).

5 I have only to refer here to the statement made by Perry Anderson in the Foreword to his *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (Verso Edition, London, 1979, II), 'Today, when 'history from below' has become a watch-word in both Marxist and non-Marxist circles, and has produced major gains in our understanding of the past, it is nevertheless necessary to recall one of the basic axioms of historical materialism: that secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the *political*—not at the economic or cultural level of society. In other words, it is the construction and destruction of State which seal the basic shifts in the relations of production. . . A 'history from above' . . is thus no less necessary than a 'history from below'. Elsewhere (404) he writes:' . . pre-capitalist modes of production cannot be defined *except* via their political, legal and ideological superstructures, since these are what determine the extra-economic coercion that specifies them.'

6 A few works which illustrate this interest in what may be called the post-J.N. Sarkar phase may be cited: Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, 1707-1740, 3rd edition, Delhi, 1979; M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb*, Asia Publishing House, 1968; Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a Mughal noble Munim Khan Khan-i-Khanan: 1497-1575*, Orient Longman, 1973, and J.F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975.

7 'Traditional polity' is implied in the statements and titles of writings on disparate periods of Indian history, in which a long-term perspective is absent and in most of which the accent is on Kingship and rituals associated with Kingship; see, for example, the following collections, Richard G. Fox, ed., *Realm and Region in Traditional India*, Delhi, 1977; R.J. Moore, ed., *Tradition and Politics in South Asia*, Delhi, 1979; J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*. South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison Publication Series-Publication No. 3, 1978. S.N. Eisenstadt's typologies of 'centralized historical bureaueratic empires or States' in which he curiously clubs together Gupta, Maurya and the Mughal empires as 'several ancient Hindu States', also essentially correspond to the notion of 'traditional polity', *The Political System of Empires*, New York, 1969.

8 That 'Oriental Despotism' characterizes changeless polity and society will be clear from the following statement of K.A. Wittfogel, "...varying forms of semicomplex hydraulic property and society prevailed in India almost from the dawn of written history to the 19th Century", *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, Yale University Press, 7th Printing, 1970, 260. For the genesis of the concept of Oriental Despotism, its incorporation into Marx's notion of 'Asiatic mode' and its relevance in the Indian context see Perry Anderson, *op. cit.*; Irfan Habib, 'An examination of Wittfogel's theory of Oriental Despotism', *Enquiry*, 6, 53-73; 'Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis', in *Science and Human Progress*: Essays in honour of Prof. D.D. Kosambi, Bombay, 1974, 34-47; idem, 'Classifying economic formations in pre-colonial India' (manuscript); Romila Thapar, *The Past and Prejudice*, Delhi, 1972; H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik, 'The Early State: Theories and Hypotheses' In *The Early State*, 7-8. Recently D. Lorenzen has argued ('Imperialism and Ancient Indian Historiography' in S.N. Mukherjee, ed. *History and Thought:* Essays in honour of A.L. Basham, Calcutta, 1982, 84-102) that Oriental Despotism was a key concept in pro-Imperialist interpretations of ancient Indian polity and society and that the concept is present in the writings of nationalist historians in its inverted version.

9 I refer here to the model of the 'segmentary State', constructed by A. South all on the basis of his study of a pre-State polity in East Africa, *Alur Society: A Study in processes and types of domination*, Cambridge, 1953; for further discussion, idem, 'A critique of the typology of States and Political Systems' in M. Banton, ed., *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, ASA Monographs 2, Tavistock Publications, 1968, 113-140. The model is found applicable in the Indian context in relation to the *mandala* theory by J.C. Heesterman, 'Power and Authority in Indian tradition', in R.J. Moore, ed., *op. cit.*, 77-78; by Burton Stein in relation to south Indian polity from the Cola period onward: 'The segmentary State in South Indian history' in R.G. Fox, ed *op. cit*, 1-51 and *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Oxford University Press, 1980; and by R.G. Fox in the context of the organization of the Rajput clans in Uttar Pradesh in late Mughal period (without, however, much reference to the Mughals !), *Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule: State-hinterland relations in pre-industrial India*, Berkeley, The University of California, 1971.

10 Frank Perlin, 'The pre-colonial Indian State in History and Epistemology: A reconstruction of societal formation in the Western Deccan from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century', in H.J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik, ed, *The Study of the State*, 276.

11 See, for example, A.S. Altekar, *State and Government in ancient India*, reprint of 3rd edition, Delhi, 1972, Chapters 16-17. In the context of south India, while T.V. Mahalingam (*South Indian Polity*, University of Madras, 2nd edition, 1967, ch. 1, sec. 2) talks of checks on royal absolutism and the presence of *samantas* or *mandalesvaras*, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*The Colas*, reprint of 2nd edition, University of Madras, 1975, 447-48) characterizes Cola polity as indicating change from 'somewhat tribal chieftaincy of the earlier time' to 'the almost Byzantine royalty of Rajaraja and his successors'. For relevant discussion see Lorenzen, *op cit.*

12 R.C. Majumdar, for example, writes in his preface to *The Struggle for Empire* (Vol. 5 of the History and Culture of the Indian people, Bombay, 1957, xliii): 'This volume deals with the transition period that marks the end of independent Hindu rule'. See also K.M. Panikkar's Foreword to Dasarath Sharma's *Early Cauhan Dynasties*, Delhi, 1959. R.C.P. Singh (*Kingship in northern India, Cir. 600 A.D.-1200 A.D.*, Delhi, 1968, ch. 8) analyzes this failure in terms of the nature of Hindu Kingship. Most works on the political history of the period dealing with change in loci of power are charged with communal overtones, completely ignoring the fact that such shifts were constantly taking place in Indian history.

13 D. Sharma, *op. cit*, ch. 27.

14 B.P. Mazumdar, *Socio-economic history of northern India (1030-1194 A.D.)*, Calcutta, 1960, preface.

15 Altekar, *op. cit*, 388.

16 H.C. Raychaudhuri (*Political History of Ancient India*, 6th edition, University of Calcutta, 1953, 208) speaks of *mandalika-rajas* in the period of Bimbisara as 'corresponding perhaps to the Earls and Counts of medieval European polity', A.L. Basham speaks of quasi-feudal order in the pre-Mauryan age and when 'that empire broke up.... Mauryan bureaucracy gave way to quasi-feudalism once more', *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Calcutta, 1964, 5.

17 Serious analytical work of this genre starts with D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, and R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism, C. 300-1200*, University of Calcutta, 1965, is the first thoroughly researched monograph on the subject. In terms of documentation another important work is by B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in*

northern India in the twelfth century, Allahabad, 1973. The literature on 'Indian Feudalism' is of course growing and useful bibliographical references will be found in R.S. Sharma and D.N. Jha, 'The economic history of India up to A.D. 1200 : trends and prospects', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 17.1, 48-80; D.N. Jha, 'Early Indian Feudalism: A historiographical critique', Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, Ancient India Section, 40th session, Waltair, 1979; H. Mukhia, 'Was there Feudalism in Indian History ?' Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, Indian History Congress, Waltair 1979; B.N.S. Yadava, 'The problem of the emergence of feudal relations in early India', Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, 41st session, Bombay, 1980.

18 Compare, for example, two articles by Nicholas B. Dirks written on two different periods of south Indian history, i) 'Political authority and structural changes in early south Indian history', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 13.2 (1976), 125-158; ii) 'The structure and meaning of political relations in a south Indian little Kingdom', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 13.2 (1979), 169-206. B. Stein too (*Peasant State and Society...*), attempts to see change from the Cola to the Vijaynagar period. Their perception of change is, of course, not in terms of feudal polity.

19 Detailed documentation is found only in R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, ch. 2, which analyzes 'feudal polity' in three Kingdoms; B.P. Majumdar, *op. cit*, chs 1-2, and B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture*, chs. 3-4; for regional pattern see D.D. Kosambi, 'Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir, '*Journal of the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1956-57, 108-120 and Krishna Mohan, *Early Medieval History of Kashmir* (with special reference to the Loharas, A.D. 1003-1171), Delhi, 1981, ch. 4. An earlier work, not usually cited but deserving attention for its wealth of material, is N.C. Bandyopadhyaya, *Development of Hindu Polity and Political Theories*, ed. by N.N. Bhattacharyya, Delhi, 1980.

20 R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, 2nd edition, Delhi 1968, ch. 15; Kosambi, *An Introduction*, ch. 9; B.N.S. Yadava, 'Some aspects of the changing order in India during the Saka-Kusana Age' in G.R. Sharma, ed., *Kusana Studies*, University of Allahabad, 1968, 75-90.

20a This supposition is based on two sets of evidence:i) reference in the *Arthasastra* (5.3) to payment of state officials in coined money; ii) actual circulation of coined money in the Mauryan period. However, there seems to be contradiction in the *Arthasastra* itself; cf, 5.3 with 2.1.7. Even 5.3, which deals with payment of state officials, states; '...He should fix (wages for) the work of servants at one quarter of the revenue, or by payment to servants.' (R.P. Kangle's translation, 2nd edition, Bombay, 1972, 302). More importantly, there is no necessary correlation between circulation of coined money and payment in cash. This will hold true not only for the post-Mauryan period to the 5th century at least but, for the medieval period as well, although in the medieval period the remuneration was computed in cash.

21 Interestingly, Beni Prasad, as early as 1928, held the 'unitary' character of the Mauryan State as suspect, *The State in Ancient India*, Allahabad, 1928, 192; Romila Thapar has considerbly changed her views on the character of the Mauryan State : compare *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 1973, ch.4 with her 'The State as Empire' in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik, *The Study of the State*, 409-426 and *From Lineage to State*, ch.3. For other discussions, I.W. Mabett, *Truth, Myth and Politics in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1972, chs 5-6; S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, Cambridge University Press, 1976,

pt. 1 ch. 5; Heesterman, 'Power and Authority...*loc. cit.*, 66.

22 S. Seneviratne, 'Kalinga and Andhra: The Process of Secondary State formation in early India' in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik, ed., *The Study of the State*. 317-337.

23 See N.C. Bandyopadhyaya, *op. cit.*; see the important paper of B.N.S. Yadava, 'Secular landgrants of the post-Gupta period and some aspects of the growth of feudal complex in north India', in D.C. Sircar, ed., *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, University of Calcutta, 1966,72-94. The general absence of the contractual element in the vast corpus of epigraphic material seems to be irrefutable; for contents of grants in general, cf the writings of D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Delhi, 1965, ch. 5; *Political and Administrative System of Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, 1973; *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records*, Lucknow, 1969 and *The Emperor and the Subordinate Rulers*, Santiniketan, 1982. Sircar's critique of 'feudal polity' is curious since he freely uses such terms as 'fiefs' and 'vassals' in the Indian context; see R.S. Sharma's criticism of Sircar's approach to the problem: 'Indian Fedualism retouched', *The Indian Historical Review*, 1.2 (1974), 320-330. For me, however, the 'contractual' element remains important as otherwise the logic of service assignments does not appear intelligible. See also fn 26.

24 See fn. 18 for references. A restatement of this will be available in R.S. Sharma, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism ?' (mss, to be published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*).

25 Yadava, *Society and Culture...*, ch. 3.

26 R.S. Sharma, 'Landgrants to vassals and officials in Northern India C.A.D. 1000-1200,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 4 (1961), 70-71; idem, 'Rajasasana: meaning, scope and application.' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 37th session, Calicut, 1976, 76-87. For other details of such grants known variously as *prasada-likhita*, *prasada-pattala*, *jivita*, *rakta-kodagi* and so on see N.C. Bandyopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, Yadava, 'Secular Landgrants...', *loc. cit.; Society and Culture...* ch. 3; K.K. Gopal, "Assignment to Officials and Royal Kinsmen in early medieval India (c. 700-1200 A.D.)', *University of Allahabad Studies* (Ancient History Section), 1963-64, 75-103. Three points may, however, be noted : i) the generally late chronology of such grants in some of which only the 'contract' element is explicitly stated, ii) they are, including *grasas* and *angabhogas* more an evidence of sharing of lineage patrimonial holding than of service grants, iii) in terms of total area controlled by dominant sections in a polity such grants may be found to constitute a relatively insignificant proportion.

27 This point has been raised by H. Mukhia, *op. cit.*

28 Recent attempts to 'construct' a crisis lean heavily on Brahmanical perception of the evils of Kaliyuga and on correlation of the evils with actual changes in terms of shifts in positions of *varnas* and producing classes, decline of urbanism, decentralization of polity and so on; see B.N.S. Yadava 'The Accounts of the Kali age and the social transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages', *The Indian Historical Review*, 5. 1-2 (1979), 31-64; R.S. Sharma, 'The Kali Age: A period of social crisis' in S.N. Mukherjee, ed., *op. cit*, 186-203. The 'crisis', of course, is chronologically located several centuries after the Maurya period, but in any case, the historical roots of the 'crisis' are not clear.

29 See note 22; also the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta in D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, 1, 2nd edition, Calcutta University, 1965, 262-268.

30 The literature on the 'legitimation' process in early medieval India is grow-

ing; relevant discussions will be found in Romila Thapar, 'Social mobility in ancient India with special reference to elite groups' in her *Ancient Indian Social History: some interpretations*, Delhi, 1978; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Origin of the Rajputs: Political, economic and social processes in early medieval Rajasthan', *The Indian Historical Review*, 3.1 (1976), 59-82; H. Kulke, 'Early State Formation and Royal legitimation in Tribal areas of eastern India', *Studia Ethnologica Bernensia*, ed, R. Moser & M.K. Gautam, 1 (1978), 29-37; idem, 'Legitimation and town planning in the feudatory states of central Orissa', *Cities in South Asia: History, Society and Culture*, ed. H. Kulke, *et al*, Wiesbaden, 1982, 17-36; 'Royal temple policy and the structure of medieval Hindu Kingdoms' in A. Eschmann, *et al.* ed., *The Cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa*, Delhi, 1978, 125-138; Dirks, 'Political Authority...'. *loc. cit.*; G.W. Spencer, 'Religious networks and royal influence in eleventh century south India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 12 (1969), 32-56; S. Jaiswal, 'Caste in the socio-economic framework of early India,' Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 38th session, Bhuvaneswar, 1977, 16ff; idem, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', *The Indian Historical Review*, 6. 1-2 (1979-80), 1-63; J.G. De Casparis, 'Inscriptions and south Asian dynastic tradition' in R.J. Moore, ed, *op. cit.*, 103-127. The discussions show that 'legitimation' could take various forms: performance of ritual, including sacrificial ritual; genealogical sanctity and construction of temple networks. The relationship between temporal authority and sacred domain of which the 'legitimation' process is a manifestation, is explored in A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, American Oriental Society, 1942, ; also L. Dumont, "The conception of kingship in Ancient India', *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Mouton Publishers, 1970, ch. 4. The following statement of Dumont is important: 'while spiritually, absolutely, the priest is superior, he is at the same time, from a temporal or material point of view, subject and dependent' (65). J.F. Richards (*Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Introduction) claims that recent perspective "...has revealed that too facile usage of only half recognized Western terms and concepts such as legitimation, and the Church-State dichotomy have obscured the complexity and true significance of Kingship in India," and Heesterman in his contribution ('The conundrum of King's authority', *ibid*, 1-27) initially agrees with this claim but finally concedes that "King and brahmin were definitely separated and made into two mutually exclusive categories. The greater the King's power, the more he needs the brahmin", Cf also C.R. Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, 216.

31 See Cambay Stambhana Parsvanath temple inscription of 1308 A.D. refering to Alauddin as *suratrana*, Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, 19-23, no. 664. An interesting record from Kotihar in Kashmir, dated 1369 A.D., refers to Shihab-u-din as Shahabhadana and traces his descent from the Pandava lineage, B.K. Kaul Deambi, *Corpus of Sarada Inscriptions Of Kashmir*, Delhi, 1982, 113-118; the Veraval record of 1263 from Junagadh equates the prophet with Visvanatha—visvarupa and begins with his *prasasti* and refers to the Hijrera as *Srivisvanatha-pratibaddha-nau-jananam-badhaka-rasula-Muhammada samvat*, D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*. 2, Delhi, 1983, 303.

32 See Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, 2nd edition, Allahabad, 1968, 333-35: Mabbett, *op cit.*, ch. 8.

33 For details see P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law), 3, 2nd edition, Poona, 1973, ch, 33; also

Heesterman, 'The conundrum'...*loc. cit.*

34 Heesterman, 'Power and Authority...', *loc. cit.*

35 R.N. Nandi, 'Origin and nature of Saivite Monasticism: the case of Kalamukhas' in R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, ed. *Indian Society: Historical Probings* (In memory of D.D. Kosambi), Delhi, 1974, 190-201; R. Champakalakshmi, 'Religious conflict in the Tamil Country : a re-appraisal of epigraphic evidence', *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, 5 (1978).

36 Bhakti could provide the delusion of equality among the lower orders which in reality remained beyond their access even in the ritual area; R.N. Nandi convincingly points to the shift in the ideology of the Bhakti movement as also to the change brought about by its temple base and Sanskrit-educated priesthood, supported by members of ruling families, 'Some social aspects of the Nalayira Prabandham', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 37 session, Calicut, 1976, 111-123; Kesavan Veluthat, 'The temple base of the Bhakti movement in South India,' *ibid*, 40 session, Waltair, 1979, 185-194.

37 Nandi, *op. cit*; idem, *Religious Institutions ond cults in the Deccan*, Delhi, 1973, 10ff; Veluthat, *op. cit.*

38 K. Veluthat, 'Royalty and Divinity: Legitimisation of Monarchical power in south', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39 session, Hyderabad, 1979, 241-39; see also B. Stein, *Peasant State*, 334ff.

39 H. Kulke, 'Royal Temple policy...', *loc. cit*; idem, 'King Anangabhtma III, the veritable founder of the Gajapati kingship and of the Jaganatha Trinity at Puri', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1981), 26-39.

40 For an interesting analysis of this process, H. Kulke, 'Legitimation and Town-planning in the Feudatory States of Central Orissa', in *Ritual Space in India; Studies in Architectural Anthropology*, ed. by Jan Pieper, offprint, 30-40.

41 N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, London, 1980, 12.

42 Poulantzas further explains (*ibid.*, 37): '...ideological power is never exhausted by the State and its ideological apparatuses. For just as they do not create the dominant ideology, they are not the only, or even primary factors in the reproductions of the relations of ideological domination/subordination. The ideological apparatuses simply elaborate and inculcate the dominant ideology.'

43 This view seems to be projected by both K. Veluthat, 'Royalty and Divinity...', *loc. cit*, and P.M. Rajan Gurukkal who considers the Kulasekhara state of Kerala to be 'in a way the creation' of a dominant landed group among brahmanas, 'Medieval landrights: Structure and Pattern of Distribution', *ibid*, 279-84.

44 See footnotes 30 and 87.

45 This requires to be underlined in view of the changing patterns of patronage in different periods. For the early medieval period, the relative neglect of the implications of the deep penetration of Tantrism into religion and polity will bear out the point I am trying to make. Devangana Dessai argues that the patronage of Tantrism is reflective of feudal degeneration, as it served the two dominant interests of the kings and feudal chiefs of early medieval India : War and Sex, 'Art under Feudalism in India', *The Indian Historical Review*, 1.1 (1974), 12; also idem, *Erotic Sculpture of India*, Delhi 1975. This seems to be too narrow a view to take of the profound impact of Tantrism in early medieval society. If Tantra represented esoteric knowledge, then the remark of F. Edgerton, made in relation to the Upanisads, seems relevant here: 'Knowledge, true esoteric knowledge, is the

magic key to Omnipotence, absolute power. By it one becomes autonomous...,' 'Upanisads; what do they seek and why', in D.P. Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Studies in the History of Indian Philosophy*, 1, Calcutta, 1978, 136. For Tantric impact on Puranic as well as heterodox religious orders and its close association with temporal power, R.N. Nandi, *Religious Institution...:* David N. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: two lost Saivite sects*, New Delhi, 1972; R.B.P. Singh, *Jainism in early medieval Karnataka, (C.A.D. 500-1200)*, Delhi, 1975; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Rajasekhara, his court elities and their religion : a study of some aspects of the *Karpuramanjari'* (in press).

46 A.K. Majumdar, *Chaulukyas of Gujarat* (A Survey of the history and culture of Gujarat from the middle of the tenth to the end of the thirteenth century), Bombay, 1956, 310, 315.

47 *Rajatarangini*, VII, 1146-48.

48 Heesterman, 'Power and Authority...', *loc. cit.*

49 De Casparis, 'Inscriptions and South Asian Dynastic tradition', *loc. cit.*

50 Major Rock Edicts, II, XIII; see D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, 17, 35-36.

51 Ibid.

52 The concept is found in such texts as *Artasastra*, 6.2; *Kamandakiya Nitisara*, 8.45 and so on. See Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government*...143ff; Altekar, *op. cit.* 293ff;, for recent comments, Heesterman, 'Power and Authority...', *loc. cit*, 77-78.

53 T.R. Trautmann, 'Tradition of Statecraft in Ancient India,' in R.J. Moore, ed., *op. cit.*, 86-102. Trautmann defines 'royal mystique' as 'a network of interrelated symbols' its vehicles being 'works of art such as courtly epics, royal biographies, and ornate ideologies found in inscriptions'; he takes Rajendra Cola's expedition to the north and north-east as an expression of this 'mystique'.

54 Even R. Inden, who by no means suffers from the limitations of traditional political historiography, cannot seem to resist the search for a 'paramount king of all India','Hierarchies of Kings in early medieval India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. N.S., 15.1-2 (1981), 99.

55 R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, Delhi, 1983, ch. 10.

56 For example, despite the substantial support extended to the Buddhist sects by both the Satavahanas and Western Ksatrapas, the dominance of *Varna* ideology is evident in their records, cf. the expression *vinivatitacatuvana samkarasa* applied to Gautamiputra Satakarni in a *prasasti* written in his memory, and the expression *sarvva-varnairabhigamya-raksanartham patitve vrtena* applied to Saka Rudradaman I in the Junagadh inscription of A.D. 150; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, 177-204.

57 Despite their differences in many respects, N.S. Bose's model of 'tribal absorption', and M.N. Srinivas's model of 'Sanskritization' are being drawn upon to make this generalization. A useful review of the contributions of these two authors, with complete bibliographical references, will be found in S. Munshi, 'Tribal absorption and Sanskritization in Hindu Society', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S., 13.2 (1979), 293-317. It must be made clear that 'tribal absorption' is merely a broadly defined process and not the only process, and that the continuity of internal organization in a large measure does not imply status of equality within the social order; a misreading of the caste formation process would totally miss the hierarchical ordering in the caste structure down to the level of the untouchables. Secondly, the ethnic group as a whole, in view of the complex operation of the social mobility process, does not retain its pre-

caste character; otherwise, we would not have had brahmanas, Ksatriyas, Sudras and so on emerging from the same stock. For useful discussion see Jaiswal, 'Studies in early Indian Social History...', *loc. cit.*

58 Synoptic studies on processes of cult formation in early medieval India are not known to me but the excellent study on the cult of Jagannatha may help illuminate the process, A. Eschmann *et al*, ed., *The Cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa*, particularly, pt. I, chs. 3, 5; pt. 2, chs. 13-14. In the case of Tamilnadu in the Cola period, note the remark of R. Champakalakshmi, "The early Chola temples...systematically used the *linga* mainly due to its assimilative character as the only aniconic from which could incorporate in canonical temples, local and popular cult practices centring round the *Kangu* or pillar and tree, thus providing a constantly widening orbit for bringing in divergent socio-economic and ethnic groups into Saiva worship', 'Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India: A Review Article', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 18. 3-4 (1982), 420.

59 De Casparis, *op. cit.*

60 Dirks, 'Political Authority and Structural Change...', *loc. cit.*

61 A, Guha, 'Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750', *The Indian Historical Review*, 1.1 (1974), 65-76, Surajit Sinha, 'State Formation and Rajput myth in Tribal central India', *Man in India*, 42.1 (1962), 35-80; K. Suresh Singh, 'A Study in State-formation among Tribal communities', in R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings* 317-36; H.R. Sanyal, 'Malla-bhum' (manuscript)

61a 'Lineage' is here simply used to translate such terms as *kula*, *vamsa* or *anvaya* which were suffixed to the names of the ruling families, 'Lineage' in this sense does not denote prestate stage of polity as it may have done in the nascent stage of the emergence of State in early India (Romila Thapar, *From Lineage..*).

61b The range of the definitions of State is enormous, and to view State as opposed to chiefdom in terms of the former's capacity to arrest fission in society and in terms of a 'centralized and hierarchically organized political system' (R. Cohen, 'State origins: A Reappraisal' in *The Early State*, 35-36) will not be compatible with long-term histories of state societies. Morton Fried's definition (*The Evolution of Political Society*, New York, 1967, 229) of State 'as a complex of institutions by means of which the power of the society is organized on a basis superior to kinship' also does not seem sufficient. The real question is the context of power. Since the basis of the State lies in separation between producing and non-producing groups, there is no incompatibility between state society and organization of political power along lineage ties or/and in other terms. State society, however, only points to the existence of this separation and does not suggest the historical specificity of the total complex of a State structure.

62 This estimate is based on : H.C. Ray, *The Dynastic History of Northern India (Early Medieval Period)*, 2 vols., reprint, Delhi, 1973; F. Kielhorn, 'A List of Inscriptions of northern India', Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, 5, 1-96; D.R. Bhandarkar, 'A List of the inscriptions of northern India in Brahmi and its derivative scripts, from about 200 A.C.', Appendix to *Epigaaphia Indica*, 19-23; F. Kielhorn, 'Synchronistic tables for southern India, A.D. 400-1400', *Epigraphia Indica* 8.

63 G.M. Moraes, *The Kadamba-Kula. A History of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka*, Bombay, 1931.

64 Dasarath Sharma, *op. cit,;* also 2nd edition, Delhi, 1975.

65 P. Bhatia, *The Paramaras*, Delhi, 1968; also, H.V. Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the*

Paramaras (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 7.2) New Delhi, n.d.

66 See M.S. Krishnamurthy, *Nolambas: a Political and Cultural Study*, Mysore, 1980; D. Desai, *The Mahamandalesvaras under the Calukyas of Kalyani*, Bombay, 1951; M.S. Govindaswamy, *The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History*, Annamalai University, 1965; idem, 'The Role of Feudatories in Cola History', Ph.D. thesis, Annamalai University, 1973; V. Balambal, *Feudatories of South India*, Allahabad, 1978.

67 For the records of different Kalacuri lines see V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chediera* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 4, 1-2), Ootacamund, 1955.

68 For a recent discussion see D.C. Sircar, *Pala-Sena Yuger Vamsanucarita* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1982.

69 The common origin of the Calukyas of Karnataka and the Caulukyas or Solankis of Gujarat has been doubted by many, including A.K. Majumdar, but Majumdar himself points to the existence of common traditions among them, *op. cit.* 5; Rathod is derived from Rastrakuta, the name being in existence at Dhanop and Hathundi in Rajasthan in the early medieval period, D. Sharma, ed., *Rajasthan through the ages* 1, Bikaner, 1966, 287; also Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*

70 De Casparis, *op.cit.*

71 Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*

72 Perlin, *op. cit*, 279.

73 Yadava' *Society and Culture*, 103, fn. 623; Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, 63-64; an example of this is provided by Ajayagadh rock inscription in which Ananda, brother of Candella Trailokyavarman, is said to have reduced to submission the 'wild tribes of Bhillas, Sabaras and Pulindas', *Epigraphia Indica*, 1, 337.

74 Apart from the cases of the Solankis and the Rathods those of Codagangas and Vengi Calukyas may be cited to illustrate this process.

75 Y. Subbarayalu, 'Mandalam as a politico-geographical unit in south India', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39 session, Hyderabad, 1978, 84-86. For details of the political geography of the Cola country see idem, *Political Geography of the Chola country*, Madras, 1973. Subbarayalu convincingly argues to show that *nadus* were basically agraian regions and not 'artificial administrative *divisions*' (*Political Geography*, 32-33), but from the point of view of polity the important point is the correlation in many cases between 'chieftaincies' and *nadus* and *padis* (*Political Geography*...ch. 7); see also Stein, *Peasant State*...ch. 3.

76 A.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, 17-22.

77 Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*

78 See references in note 30.

79 J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysalas* (A Medieval Indian Royal Family), Oxford University Press, 1957, 7-8; S. Settar, *Hoysala Sculptures in the National Museum, Copenhagen*, Copenhagen, 1975, 16.

80 Rajorgadh Inscription of Mathanadeva, *Epigraphia Indica*, 3, 263-267.

81 Dirks, 'Political Authority and Structural Change...,' *loc. cit.*, 130; Stein, *Peasant State*..., 188; for reference to Velirs of Kodumbalur as feudatories of the Pallavas, Govindaswamy, *The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History*, 70ff.

82 Kosambi writes, "The essential question is : were the Damaras feudal lords? Did they hold land as feudal property ? The answer is fairly clear, in the affirmative', 'Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir', *loc. cit.*; Yadava ('Secular landgrants...', *loc. cit.*, 90) too refers to a merchant called Jayyaka who amassed wealth and became a Damara chief. These assertions seem to

result from a misreading of the *Rajatarangini* evidence. The reference relating to Jayyaka (VII. 93-95) seems to show him to be from a peasant family,who traded in foodgrains with foreign countries and achieved Damara status (see also IV. 347-48), The possible tribal background of the Damaras, their transformation into peasantry and emergence into a dominant section may have striking parallels with the Vellalas and other dominant peasant sections elsewhere; see the Appendix on Damaras in Krishna Mohan, *op. cit.*

83 The concept of 'nuclear'regions or even' sub-nuclear regions' has been used by historians working on this period : Kulke Royal Temple policy...', *loc. cit.*; B. Stein, 'Integration of the Agrarian System in south India' in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Madison, 1969, 175-216. Theoretical discussions will be found in R.I. Crane, ed., *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies*, Duke University, 1966; J.E. Schwartzberg, 'The evolution of regionl power configurations in the Indian subcontinent', in R.G. Fox, ed., *op. cit.*, 197-233. I have, however, mainly followed the idea of the relative order of regions outlined in O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, *India and Pakistan*, University Paperback, Delhi, 1972, chs. 6, 13.

84 G. Yazdani, ed., *Early History of the Deccan*, Oxford University Press, 1960, vol. 2.

85 However, for irrigation and development of the agrarian base of the Caulukyan state structure, V.K. Jain, 'Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 1000-1300)', Ph.D. dissertation, Delhi University, 1981, ch. 2; for Rajasthan, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Irrigation in early medieval Rajasthan', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 16. 2-3 (1973), 298-316.

86 D.C. Sircar; *Pala-Sena Yuger...*

87 This particular brand of criticism in respect of Indian polity has emanated, curiously, from American academic institutions, and in the context of early medieval polity been initiated by B Stein, 'The State and Agrarian order in medieval south India: A Historiographical Critique', in B. Stein, ed. *Essays on South India*, Delhi, 1976, 64-91. Stein proposed the alternative model of 'segmentary state' ('The segmentary state...' *loc. cit.*,) which has proved a rallying point for South Asia experts from these institutions, even for initial detractors. For example, Dirks ('Political Authority and Structural Change', *loc. cit.*, 126) in 1976 declared: 'The segmentary state model is neither 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*' (emphasis added; the implication perhaps is that the differences between north India and south India are greater than those between East Africa and India); by 1979 his criticism of the model had mellowed down considerably ('Structure and meaning of political relations'...*loc. cit.*,). R. Inden considers the model a 'real break with previous approaches, 'Ritual, Authority, and cyclic time in Hindu Kingship', in J.F. Richards, ed., *op. cit.*, 28-73; see also B. Stein, 'All the Kings' *Mana*: Perspectives on Kingship in Medieval south India', *ibid.*, 115-167; idem, 'Mahanavami: Medieval and modern Kingly ritual in south India' in B.L. Smith, ed., *Essays on Gupta Culture*, Delhi, 1983, 67-92. The real point of convergence in these writings is that they view the Indian State system, whatever be the period, as a ritual system.

88 The discussion here is restricted only to the construct of 'feudal polity' and to a particular brand of criticism it has been recently subjected to. It

does not take into account the total range of the critique of the feudal formation.

89 See note 9 for references to Southall's writings in which the 'segmentary state' model has been constructed. The applicability of the model has been debated in the volume edited by R.G. Fox, *op. cit.*; various points regarding the empirical validity of its application to the Cola State by Stein have been raised by R. Champakalakshmi, 'Peasant State and Society...', *loc. cit.*, and in greater detail by D.N. Jha, 'Relevance of Peasant State and Society to Pallava and Cola times' (mss). I do not wish to re-examine the question of empirical validity here, but would briefly touch upon the internal consistency or the validity of the model itself. Southall constructs his model by drawing a distinction between 'segmentary state' and unitary state', which is, for a historian, as irrelevant as the dichotomy between 'early state' and 'industrial state'. If pre-state polity has a varied range (and according to Southall's own characterization, his East African Alur polity would approximate 'chiefdom' category), so too has State polity, and to equate State with 'unitary state' is to totally ignore historical experience. Curiously, Southall's 'segmentary state' and 'unitary state' are not ultimately distinctly separate categories either; they are two extreme points in the same structure, which change positions, depending on the degree of or centralization decentralization in existence in the structure at any given point of time (260). Secondly, Southall posits 'segmentary state' as a counter-point to 'feudal polity' but ends up by suggesting its applicability to a series of historical political structures ranging from feudal France to 'traditional states of India, China and inner Asia' (252-254). There is no dearth of models one can draw upon (for example, the model of 'galactic' state constructed by Tambiah, *op, cit.*, on the basis of evidence from Thailand), and Stein is certainly not unaware of the curious position taken by Southall (Stein, 'Segmentary State...', *loc. cit.*,), but the point remains that the model is projected as a key to our understanding of polity in 'traditional' India. Is it that it is being rushed in to fill in the vacuum created by the decline of 'Oriental Despotism' or of the venerated tradition of East-West dichotomy ?

90 Dirks, 'Political authority and Structural Change...', *loc. cit.*

91 Dirks, 'Struture and meaning of political relations...,' *loc. cit.*

92 See Eisentadt, *op. cit.*, xv-xvi, 7-8.

93 Subbarayalu, 'Mandalam as a politico—geographical unit..., *loc. cit.*

94 The emergence of Cola power had its basis in the elimination of Muttaraiyar power in the Kaveri basin and then its penetration into *Tondaimandalam.* Kongudesa, Pandya country, Gangavadi, Vengi, to mention only a few regions, lay inside the orbit of the Cola political interests, irrespective of the duration and fluctuations in actual control, whereas on the fringes of the Cola region proper local lineages could continue, although Subbarayalu thinks that, the families of the 'Chiefs were enlisted for 'Chola army and administrative *staff* (*Political Geography.*, 80). For an attempt to determine the core of the Cola dominion through a study of the distribution pattern of Cola records see G.W. Spencer and K.R. Hall, 'Toward an analysis of dynastic hinterlands: The Imperial Cholas of 11th Century South India,' *Asian Profile*, 2.1 (1974), 51-62.

95 I have already referred to the dispersed nodes of Mauryan State (note 50); in the case of the Kusanas too Gandhara in the north-west was a 'core' region and Mathura in the upper Ganga-Yamuna basin another (B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Mathura from Sunga to Kusana times: an historical outline,' mss). 'Core', in the context of supra-local polities, has thus to

acquire a flexible connotation.

96 Stein, 'The State and Agrarian order...', *loc. cit.*; the idea has been elaborated by G.W. Spencer, 'The politics of plunder: The Cholas in eleventh Century Cylon', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 33.3 (1976), 405-19. (Since I have not been able to consult Spencer's new publication, *Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya*, Madras, 1983, I can only state his formulations in the article cited here). Spencer's own evidence contradicts his conclusion since it shows that Cola expansion was motivated more by strategic-commercial considerations, particularly considerations, relating to the Pandya country, than by resource acquisition through raids. One may suggest that despite the revenue survey evidence of the time of the Colas and the actual occurrence of revenue terms (N. Karasima & B. Sitaraman, 'Revenue terms in Chola Inscriptions', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 5 (1972), 88-117; N. Karashima, 'Land Revenue Assessment in Cola times as seen in the inscriptions of the Thanjavur and Gangaikonda-colapuram temples', Cyclostyled copy) the revenue yield may have been limited, but the real issue is whether it was 'plunder' or agricultural surplus which sustained the ruling and non-ruling elites of society in 11th century India. The answer is, of course, obvious, and studies on both north and south suggest that revenue demand in the early medieval period was on the increase.

97 R.S. Kennedy, 'The King in early south India, as Chieftain and Emperor', *The Indian Historical Review*, 3.1 (1976), 1-15.

98 A recent detailed study on this is K.R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the age of the Colas*, Delhi, 1980; idem, 'International Trade and Foreign Diplomacy in early medieval south India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 21 (1978), 75-98. In fact, the phenomenon of the emergence of networks of exchange from 9th-10th centuries, which, in littoral regions, converged with those of international trade of that period was widespread; for Gujarat, V.K. Jain. *op. cit*; for local centres of exchange coinciding with centres of ruling lineages in various parts of India, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Urban centres in early medieval India: an overview' (in press).

99 Stein (*Peasant State...*, ch. 3) talks of local, autonomous chiefs in connection with the *nadu*, but his study of the Cola State has virtually no reference to the actual political linkage between them and the organization of Cola power. The report presented by N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu ('Statistical Study of personal names in Tamil Inscriptions: Interim Report II', *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, No. 3, 1976, 9-20), on records from seven districts, lists more than 28 titles as 'Feudatory', refers to their association with administration and to distinctions between these titles; for details of different patterns of political and kin linkages, Balambal, *op. cit.*; Govindaswamy, 'The Role of Feudatories in Chola history'.

100 For details for north India, Yadava, *Society and Culture...*, ch. 3.

101 *Ibid*, also R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in early medieval India* (circa. A.D. 500-1200), Delhi 1969; a detailed study of the evidence has recently been made by R. Inden, 'Hierachies of Kings... , *loc. cit.*

102 See note 23.

103 Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1, 265. The expression is identical in meaning with *grhita-pratimuktasya* which occurs in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsam*: IV. 33. And yet, it is from the 5th-6th century that the term *samanta* comes to denote subordinate position in relation to an overlord, L. Gopal, Samanta—its variyng significance in

ancient India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1963, 21-37.

104 Derrett, *op. cit.*, 177.

105 A detailed examination of this will prove that the basic mechanism of the growth of overlord—feudatory axis was not through assignment of land and transfer of state power. The Pratiharas, for example, in the process of their emergence as a supra—regional power received support from Calukyas of Gujarat, Cahamanas and other minor Pratihara lineages; see *Epigraphia Indica*, 9,107-9; *ibid*, 18, 87-99; the reference to the *samastata-vika-samantacakra* in the *Ramacarita* will also hardly fit the suggestion that the *samantas* were basically created, K.K. Gopal, 'The assembly of the samantas in early medieval India', *Journal of Indian History*, 42 (1964), 231-50. For similar evidence regarding Pallava and Cola polities, Dirks, 'Political Authority...,' *loc. cit.*, Stein, 'All the king's *Mana...*', *loc. cit.;* Govindaswamy and Balambal (works cited above).

106 cf. references in the records of Rastrakuta Krsna III to the distribution of conquered dominions among his subordinates, *Epigraphia Indica*, 4, 285; *ibid*, 5, 35; for reference to award, in the Cola period, of chiefship for the suppression of *raja-drohis*, *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*, 1913, 40.

107 Sharma (*Social changes...*) too uses the term 'feudal ranks' but not in the sense of a system which emerges in the context of interdependent polities. Ranking is suggested by the pairing or other forms of combination of *samanta/mahasamanta* with designations which are basically administrative in connotation. For details, Yadava, *Society and Culture*...ch. 3, although Yadava does not view the evidence from the position that I would like to take; also. L. Gopal, *op. cit.*; for the south, Karashima and Subbarayalu 'Statistical study...', *loc. cit;* D. Desai, *Mahamandalesvaras...*; Balambal, *op. cit.* Govindaswamy, *op. cit.*

108 cf. the interesting case of great queen Bammaladevi being addressed as *mahamandalesvari* in a record of 1179, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, 12, Tm. 35; for evidence from Rajasthan, Chattopadhyaya, 'Origin of the Rajputs'..., *loc. cit.*

109 Sulapani, who was head of *Varendraka-silpi-gosthi* (guild of *sutradharas* of north Bengal) is mentioned as *ranaka* in Deopara *prasasti* of 12th century, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 2, 121; a record of 1263 from Jalor refers to the 'head-worshipper' of a Mahavira temple as *Bhattaraka Ravala*, Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica*, 19-23, no. 563.

110 K.P. Ammakutty, 'Origin of the Samanta caste in Kerala', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 41 session, Bombay, 1980, 86-92. In Bengal and Orissa. *samanta, mahapatra, pattanayaka* and so on are related to caste position.

111 R. Inden, 'Hierarchies of Kings...', *loc. cit.*

112 For example, a record of 1151 from Tumkur district, *Epigraphia Carantica*, 12, Tm. 9: the range is between *Pancamahasabda mahasamanta* and *nayaka.*

113 Cf. the article by D. Shukla,' The trend of demotion of feudal families in the early medieval Indian Complex', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 41 session, Bombay, 1980, 177-183.

114 Derrett, *op. cit.* 179.

115 For examples of big merchants and merchant families being elevated to the ranks of *danda-pati, dandadhipati* and even *nrpati* with appropriate insignias, V.K. Jain, *op. cit.*, 323 ff.

116 H. Kulke ('Fragmentation and Segmentation Versus Integration: Reflections on the concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in

Indian history', to be published shortly in *Studies in History*) also speaks of integration at the regional level but generally avoids discussing the political mechanism of integration.

117 I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Asia Publishing House, 1963, ch. 5; idem, 'The Peasant in Indian History', General President's Address, Indian History Congress, 43 session, Kurukshetra, 1982, S. Nural Hasan, 'Zamindars under the Mughals' in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *op. cit.*, 17-32; also A.R. Khan, *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar*, Simla, 1977, Introduction.

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