CHAPTER V

NATURE OF STATE IN SOUTHERN KARNATAKA

(A) THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS:

There has been much debate recently on the nature of state in early medieval India. In the earlier works up to the mid-1950's, the unitary state with its centrally organized kingdom and strong central bureaucracy held the field. B.L. Rice, in his Mysore and Coorg from Inscriptions published in 1909, dealt with the administrative system of early medieval Southern Karnataka at some length. However, the discussion was not confined to the Gaṇgas. Rice discusses them together with all other dynasties, which had ruled in that region. The implication clearly is that there was not much change in the administration from the period of Nandas and Mauryas to that of Vijayanagara. His account is largely descriptive and is based principally on epigraphic references. He considers the aims and ideals of administration, the role of brahmanas, priests and saints, the status and functions of the yuvarāja, the duties and functions of ministers, the provincial administration, military affairs, revenue matters, the various dues paid by the population and remissions thereof. He also discusses the judicial system, provision of irrigation facilities and the local government. The other chapters are devoted to manners and customs, literature and religion. There is very little attempt to correlate these different aspects.

This format was followed by other scholars who have worked on the Gaṇgas. Some quotations of Rice are repeated by them. Thus Mādhava I is said to have assumed the honours of the kingdom solely for the sake of good government. This

*1 B.L. Rice, Mysore and Coorg from Inscriptions, Bangalore 1909, pp 167-84.
statement in his eulogy is repeated ad nauseum by all works on Ganga administration.*2

M.V. Krishna Rao's monograph on the Gangas was published in 1936 when the nationalist movement was at its height. His attitude was influenced by this fact as is clearly revealed by the following statement: "The royal authority was by no means despotic, for the constitution itself was designed not in the interests of the king or one class but to secure for all classes as full a measure of liberty and spiritual and material possessions as their respective capacities and considerations for the common weal permitted."*3 Krishna Rao too had a fairly static view of history, deriving his information on administration, social life, religion and other aspects not only from contemporary records but also from those of preceding and succeeding periods. The same could be said for B. Sheik Ali whose History of the Western Gangas was published in 1976. He concludes his chapter on administration with the following statement: "......the Ganga administration contained almost the same features that are to be seen in any ancient dynasties (sic) of Karnāṭaka, namely the king the queen, the vuvarrāja, the Ministers, the Governors, the district heads and village officers, all performing the same functions as under the Kadambas, or the Cālukyas, or the Rāṣṭrakūṭas or the Hoysalas".*4

Sheik Ali follows the pattern set by Rice and Krishna Rao in most respects. The only difference is that he has a strong regionalist bias which is most apparent in his discussion of the origins of the dynasty.*5

K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, the doyen of Indian historians of his generation has discussed the structure of polity in South India in this period. He places great stress on

*2 M.V. Krishna Rao, The Gangas of Talkād, A Monograph on the History of Mysore from the fourth to the close of the eleventh century, Mysore, 1936, p.120; B. Sheik Ali, A History of the Western Gangas, Mysore, 1976, p.105.
*3 M.V. Krishna Rao, op.cit., p 125.
*5 Ibid, Chapter I, particularly pp 11 - 17.
the autonomy of the village and its self-governing institutions. On the other hand, the king is also described as an autocrat who placed heavy demands by way of taxes, tolls and imposts on the villages. The autocracy of the king is said to be mitigated by the hereditary officials of the state, the presence of numerous feudatory monarchs and the domination of social life by the numerous corporate organizations.*6 In conceptual terms such writings fed the stereotype of ‘Oriental Despotism’ and a self-sufficient village community. But the conception of polity in all these works was contradictory. On the one hand we have the king presiding over a centralized bureaucratic structure and wielding supreme power while on the other we have feudatories and governors who were powerful in their own sphere. Further, villages were largely self-governing. This was coupled with a static view of society which was studied on the basis of the Dharmaśastras, Purāṇas and other religious texts rather than on the basis of contemporary evidence. Nor was there any attempt to correlate the various aspects of polity, society and economy.*7

This static view of Indian history was first challenged by D.D.Kosambi in 1956 when he published two articles on the development of feudalism in India and the origin of feudalism in Kashmir.*8 Two years later R.S.Sharma commenced the contribution of a series of articles in various journals on the origin and development of feudalism in India which were incorporated in his monograph Indian Feudalism.*9 D.D.Kosambi proposed a two-stage theory of the development of feudalism. The first stage which he terms "feudalism from above" commenced in the early centuries of the

Christian era when kings began to transfer fiscal and administrative rights over land to their subordinate chiefs thus creating a class of intermediaries between the peasantry and the royalty. This, he believed reached an advanced stage of development during the period of the Guptas and Harṣa. Later, a class of landowners developed within the village and came to wield armed power over the peasantry. This, he terms "feudalism from below".*10 However in the early stages we do not have much evidence for the creation of a class of lay intermediaries. On the other hand, the majority of land grants record grants of land together with administrative and fiscal rights to brāhmaṇas and later to temples. Secular assignments as a reward for military service was a development contemporaneous with the rise of the stratum of rural landlords. Subordinate chiefs appear to have emerged out of autochthonous population and were encapsulated within existing early medieval states either through conquest or their voluntary acceptance of the sovereignty of a crowned king of recognized lineage.*11 A similar process of integration of minor chieftains and the growth of a regional kingdom has been delineated for early medieval Orissa by Kulke.*12

R.S. Sharma on the other hand holds that feudalism in India commenced with landgrants to religious beneficiaries - brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries. They were given complete fiscal, administrative and judicial rights without interference from royal officials. These rights were later given to secular chiefs as well. Such grants became more popular in a milieu wherein local self-sufficient economies were developing even as urban centres and commercial intercourse declined. The rise of landed intermediaries


*10 D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the study of Indian History, Bombay 1956, p.275-76.

*11 Supra, Chapter IV for an analysis of the composition of the class of feudatories.

led to restrictions on the mobility of the peasantry which was under the obligation to perform forced labour. The peasantry also had to bear greater tax burdens.*13

Both Kosambi and Sharma stressed the decline of foreign trade and urban commodity production as the prelude to the development of a feudal economy marked by a paucity of coins. This, in their opinion necessitated land grants since cash payments to state functionaries could no longer be made.

D.C.Sircar opposed the application of the concept of feudal mode of production to early medieval India. He defined feudalism as the grant of fiefs by the overlord to tenants-in-chief in return for specific services. He argued that in India the majority of the charters record grants of land to temples or brāhmaṇas without stipulating any obligations of the donees towards the donor and added that priests were unsuitable for rendering services of the feudal type.*14 However, as Kulke observes and we have seen in the case of the early Gaṅgas, brāhmaṇas helped to establish state structure in the outlying areas where state formation was of recent occurrence.*15

Sircar is of the opinion that even in secular assignments of Jagirs in lieu of salary, no obligations of the feudal type are specified in our records.*16 While epigraphic sources are indeed silent on the obligations of the assignees, literary works which we have cited elsewhere, clearly reveal that retainers were expected to repay with their lives if need be in lieu of the material support received from the lord.*17

It has been argued that both Sharma and Sircar view feudalism essentially in

| *15 | H.Kulke, "Fragmentation and Segmentation..." loc.cit.p.241.,Also supra, Chapter IV. |
| *16 | D.C.Sircar, op.cit.,p.17. |
| *17 | Supra, Chapter IV |
terms of the West European experience. Perlin has pointed out that there are two types of usages of the term "feudal". The first is classificatory and concerns a comparison with medieval Europe. This usage raises the issues of service tenures, property rights, differing degrees and forms of peasant bondage, militarism and political segmentation. The second usage is concerned with the nature of social and political relations of production. When surplus is generated through non-economic means, for instance, through political and military power backed up by jural institutions and growth derives from an increase in the intensity of surplus extraction through non-economic means then conditions of production may be described as feudal in the Marxist sense of the term. R.S. Sharma in his opinion confuses the two usages and applies the term feudal to India by demonstrating the actual historical formation of certain characteristic ties and relations of classical European feudalism. Pirenne's thesis of decline of markets and money-use stimulating a return to closed autarkic type of economy and search for protection acts as a model for Sharma in his monograph.*18

Mukhia observes that trade and feudalism are no longer considered as incompatible as the Pirennean thesis held, a point also made by D.N. Jha.*19 Moreover, the complete eclipse of trade and urbanization in early medieval India has been questioned by D.C. Sircar and B.D. Chattopadhyaya.*20 Mukhia's main criticism of the concept of Indian feudalism relates to the question of its origin and causation. Whereas in Europe feudalism arose as a result of changes at the base of society and a crisis in the primitive Germanic mode of production as well as the slave mode of production... 

*19 H. Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History" in Ibid, p. 267; D.N. Jha, "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique", Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, PIHC, (Waltair, 1979), p. 20
production, the origins of Indian feudalism is attributed by its proponents mainly to state action in granting lands in lieu of salary or in charity. The donees then subjected the peasantry through the legal rights granted by the state.*21

Furthermore, Mukhia holds that in Europe, feudalism was characterized by a structured dependence of the class of peasants on the lord wherein a part of the labour of the peasants was diverted from their own manse to the demesne of the lord. In India on the other hand, he opines that peasants enjoyed autonomy in the process of production and forced labour was an incidental manifestation of the administrative and political power of the ruling class.*22 Since the process of agricultural production in India did not create an acute shortage of labour, enserfment of the peasant was rarely resorted to.*23

However, as Wickham observes, Mukhia's definition of feudalism as constituted by labour service would imply that labour service constituted control by the landlords over the work process different in type from that involved in the specification of precise types of produce as rent in kind. In fact even in western Europe, labour service was not the only method of surplus extraction, rent in cash and kind are also attested to. These were not different economic systems.*24

Mukhia is of the view that in India surplus was extracted by the state, and this formed the chief instrument of exploitation, in the form of revenue and cesses. The high fertility of land and the low subsistence level of the peasantry enabled the state to

*21 H.Mukhia, op.cit.,p.268.
*22 Ibid, p.268.
*23 Ibid, p.271.
appropriate a high quantum of surplus in conditions of relative stability. In addition, the peasant's independent control over production obviated the possibility of acute social tensions which might have necessitated wholesale changes in the system of production.*25

This would imply, then, as Stein has pointed out that there was no major change in the means and relations of production for some two thousand years. Mukhia thereby denies any basis for the materialist explanation of the pre-colonial period. Thus changes from the post-Mauryan to the Mughal period have to be explained by precisely the political, judicial and ideological forces which he criticises in the interpretations of Indian feudalism. Stein also observes that the point about soil fertility is misconceived. In his opinion, the difference between the European and south Asian agrarian regimes lies not in the greater fertility of Indian soils but in the greater span of time available for cultivation. Given adequate moisture, cultivation can take place almost throughout the year on most soils. But without that, yields are low and uncertain, worse than in Europe.*26

In response to these views, Sharma has somewhat amended his argument, providing an essentialist definition of feudalism as characterized by a class of landlords and a class of servile peasants, wherein surplus is extracted in cash, kind or labour through non-economic means.*27 Moreover, the origin of feudalism in India is no longer attributed entirely to state action but to a social crisis reflected in many epic and purānic passages bemoaning the evils of the Kali Age. These describe a state of chaos wherein the vaiśyās and śūdras refused to perform their assigned functions and peasants ceased to pay taxes in protest against the excessive oppression by the state. This appears to have necessitated the practice of land grants in lieu of salary on a wide scale in the major part of the country.

*25 H. Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History", op. cit. p.274-75.
*26 B. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India" in H. Mukhia and T.J. Byres (ed), op. cit., pp.56-57
*27 R.S. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism" in Ibid, p.20.
from the fourth or fifth century AD.*28 However, as D.N.Jha points out, the areas where the land grant economy first emerged were on the periphery of the regions with the firmly entrenched brahminical order and thus did not have anything to do with the decadence and social crisis of the Kali Age.*29 B.D.Chattopadhyaya also questions the existence of such a crisis since the breakdown of the Mauryan state to which the emergence of the feudal polity is traced does not appear to have generated any crisis. In fact the disappearance of the Mauryan and even the Gupta empire was followed by a spurt of state formation in areas of pre-state polity.*30

Sharma questions Mukhia's contention that the Indian peasant enjoyed autonomy in production. He cites epigraphic evidence to support his view that beneficiaries both lay and religious, came to enjoy numerous privileges in the early medieval period. These privileges included the right to try civil and criminal cases, levy fines, freedom from the entry of royal officials, etc., which enabled them to effectively exploit the peasantry living in the estate granted to them. Many charters confer on the beneficiaries complete control over all the resources of the village such as minerals which would enable the donees to control the process of production.*31

Where serfdom is concerned, Sharma argues that it is not coeval with feudalism.*32 This is also the view of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst who opine that the core of the feudal mode of production lay essentially in the rent extraction relationship intrinsic to pre-capitalist landlordship backed up by coercive force. Peasant enserfment was not a necessary concomitant or a defining feature. If it is considered an essential

*28 Ibid, pp.33-34.
*29 D.N.Jha, "Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique", Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, 40th Session, Waltair, 1979; p.41-42.
*32 Ibid, p.30, 32.
attribute of feudalism, very little of medieval western Europe could be characterized as feudal.*33 Sharma also refutes Mukhia's argument that the process of production in India did not create an acute shortage of labour by directing our attention to the fact that paddy cultivation, particularly the process of transplantation of paddy saplings was labour intensive. Hence paddy transplantation would create scarcity of labour in the peak season necessitating resort to forced labour.*34 Moreover, he argues that the terms sōtpādyamānaṇaviśī and sarva viṣṭi which occur in land grants possibly implied the use of forced labour in the process of production as well. Compulsory attachment of peasants to the soil is also attested to from Madhya Pradesh, Chamba, Eastern India and Rajasthan. Hence he argues that serfdom in India cannot be dismissed as an incidental feature.*35

Perry Anderson opposes the essentialist definition of feudalism which reduces it to a combination of large landownerships with small peasant production where the exploiting class extracts surplus from the immediate producer by the customary forms of labour services and rents in cash or kind. He argues that by ignoring the juridical and constitutional systems peculiar to feudalism, in particular, parcellized sovereignty, vassal heirarchy and fief system, in the definition of feudalism the unique dynamism of the European theatre of feudalism cannot be explained.*36 In his opinion, all pre-capitalist modes of production are characterized by extra-economic coercion and therefore these modes can only be defined in terms of their political, legal and ideological superstructures since these determine the type of extra-economic coercion that specifies them.*37

*37 Ibid, pp. 403-404.
However, Chris Wickham has suggested that the difference between the historical development of Europe and Asia lies in the fact that in Europe alone the feudal mode of production dominated the social formation.*38 In Asia, the feudal mode of production subsisted along with state taxation which he terms the 'tributary mode of production,' borrowing the phrase from Samir Amin. In his opinion, the territorial extent of the state increased and decreased by turns, empires were frequently replaced by regional kingdoms, but the centralized state and its revenue collection machinery never entirely disappeared as in medieval Europe. Tax collection, in his opinion was never decentralized institutionally in Asia although it was farmed out in times of trouble.*39

Sharma, however, is of the opinion that it was precisely the institutional decentralization of the revenue collection machinery which occurred in the fifth and sixth century AD through the process of land grants to brāhmaṇas and other religious beneficiaries. The collection of taxes was entrusted on a permanent basis to lay and clerical beneficiaries in India. This enabled the feudal aristocracy to take root in the countryside and wipe out the centralized state machinery.*40 To what extent this holds good for southern Karnataka in the early medieval period shall be taken up later.

Although Anderson was of the opinion that parcelized sovereignty, vassal heirarchy and the fief system were peculiar to Europe we have already cited sufficient evidence to indicate their existence in the period and region under study. The difference

*38 Chris Wickham, op.cit.,p.169.
*40 Nicholas Dirks also holds that the pre-colonial Indian kingdoms were sustained by means of an efficient system of military mobilization organized around subordinate chieftains, connubial connections and privileged landholding rather than a centralized or a bureaucratically organized system of revenue collection. Military organization was sustained by royal grants and little if any revenue flowed to the royal treasury. "The original caste: Power, History and Heirarchy in South Asia" in Mckim Marriott (ed) IndiaThrough Hindu Categories, Delhi 1990, p.66.
lay in the fact that service assignments were not made conditional to the performance of military service but were rewards for past performance of such service. There does not appear to be any evidence for their revocation. The obligation of the vassals to their lord is brought out in the literary works of the period through the concept of jolapāli.*41 Hence even if we define feudalism in terms of its superstructural components the applicability of the term feudalism for India of the early medieval period cannot be denied.

Thus, the feudal political order was characterized by the existence of a large number of sāmantas of various grades. The growth of the sāmanta hierarchy after the sixth century was reflected in the ideology of dharmavijaya whereby the conqueror was enjoined to reinstate defeated princes, but its material basis has been explained by the protagonists of the Indian feudalism theory to the fragmentation and hierarchial gradation of political authority.*42

Whereas the Indian feudalism school views the sāmanta hierarchy as an expression of parcellized sovereignty, Kulke and Chattopadhyaya lay stress on the integrative mechanisms operative in the early medieval polity. Chattopadhyaya is of the view that the main trends in the early medieval period were the horizontal spread of agrarian settlements, caste formation through the spread of the dominant ideology of social order based on varṇa divisions, and the integration of local cults, rituals and sacred centres into a supralocal structure by seeking affiliation with a deity of supralocal significance. Parallel to these developments in the economic, social and religious fields, the political processes of the period were characterized by the presence of established norms and nuclei of state society, the horizontal spread of state society by the transformation of pre-state polities into state polities and the integration of local polities into structures transcending the bounds of local polities.*43 The spread of state society

*41 Infra, Section B.
*42 B.N.S. Yadava, Soceity and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth century, Allahabad 1973, p.149.
*43 B.D.Chattopadhyaya, "Political Processes....", loc.cit., p.36
in the early medieval period led to the proliferation of ruling lineages in both the nuclear and peripheral areas. The domains of these lineages were not static since mobilization of military power could displace a ruling lineage. He cites the instance of the Bādāmi Cālukyas who were supplanted in northern Karnātaka by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in AD 757. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas in turn were overthrown by the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi in AD 973.*44

Consequently, Chattopadhyaya suggests that the study of polity commence with an analysis of the formation of lineages and the network represented by them at different levels of organization of political power. At the supra local level, there were many different foci of power represented by the sāmanta system. The structure of polity was based not on the elimination of existing bases of power but on their integration, with the overlord as the spearhead of the structure. The overlord himself had his roots in local lineage power. The expansion of the lineage to supra-local power was through a pooling of military resources and other forms of support from other lineages. Such pooling required not only a redistribution of resources acquired in the process of expansion but also a system of ranking related to the territorial hold of the rankholder. Since the territory of a lineage was far from static, the ranking of individual lineages also underwent changes.*45

The model of integrative polity does not question the existence of a sāmanta feudal network. Rather, it questions the standard interpretation which views it as a creation of the state. Instead, the early medieval polity is viewed as having arisen from the spread of state society to peripheral areas and its penetration to the local agrarian level.*46 It suggests how these intermediary strata could have emerged. It also recognizes that the presence of these sāmantas, the landed aristocracy of this period led to the weakening of the state's hold over both the polity and the revenue from its constituent territorial units.*47 However, beyond this, the socio-economic infrastructure of the early medieval polity is not discussed. Thus while the model of integrative polity differs from the Indian Feudalism School on the question of the

*44 Ibid.
*46 Ibid, p.46.
*47 Ibid, p.44.
genesis of the fragmented early medieval political order it does not question its existence. The recognition that the centre could not enjoy the revenues from the territories held by the sāmantas amounts to at least a partial acquiescence in characterising the state as feudal.

Kulke in his study of Orissa posits a step-wise territorial integration of nuclear areas and the growth of a regional kingdom. This process of conquest and integration was supplemented and supported by cultural integration through the media of religion and language. Cultural integration operated through the growth of regional traditions. In Orissa, this was focussed around the cult of Jagannātha sponsored by the Eastern Gangas, the first suzerains to have integrated all the nuclear areas of Orissa. The Jagannātha cult integrated at the regional level, the major sub-regional and local cults. This period also witnessed the compilation of local legends and traditions whether in the vernacular or in Sanskrit. These compilations or Sthala Purāṇas played an important role in the assimilation of tribes and integrated the legends and tradition of the local nuclear areas.

Apart from the models of feudal and integrative polity, a group of western scholars has recently suggested that the early medieval polity is best characterized as segmentary. The segmentary state theory has been derived from Aidan Southall’s analysis of an East African society, the Ālur. Stein, the leading exponent of this theory, has postulated the following defining features for a segmentary state:

(i) limited territorial sovereignty which weakens as one moves from the centre to the periphery, shading off into ritual hegemony;
(ii) centralized government existing together with numerous peripheral foci of administration over which the centre exercises limited control;

(iii) repetition on a reduced scale of the specialized administrative staff of the centre in the peripheral foci;

(iv) absence of absolute monopoly of force at the centre;

(v) shifting allegiances of the periphery as a result of which the segmentary states are flexible and fluctuating.

(vi) several levels of subordinate foci may be distinguishable, organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority.

The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model the latter being reduced images of the former. Similar powers are repeated at each level with a decreasing range.*51

Stein holds that the basic segments of the south Indian segmentary states were the nādus under the leadership of chiefs who in the Cōla period held titles such as Udaiyār, arasar, mummuṇḍi or mūvēndavelar. Since segmentation is always associated with complementary opposition among segments, Stein adds that the basis of opposition of these nādus was not that of ethnically or culturally differentiated peoples as in the case of the Alur. In the medieval South Indian case opposing elements were of a different nature and often asymmetrical, such as opposition between the family of chiefs and the dominant castes from which they had emerged, between agricultural and non-agricultural groups, between established castes of a locality and newcomers and among sect and cult groups. Many of these oppositions in his opinion, took concrete form in the right and left caste groupings.*52

Stein analyses the territorial structure of the Cōla state into three zones as central, intermediate and peripheral.*53 He asserts that effective territorial sovereignty of the Cōlas was confined only to the central zone, the rich and populous Kāvēri delta and holds that beyond this region, Cōla sovereignty was an increasingly ritual hegemony as the peripheral zones of Kongu and Gangavāḍi were approached.*54 The myth of

*51 Ibid, p.265.  
Gangetic origin, the royal Siva cult which incorporated local and caste tutelary deities, the network of brahmanical institutions established throughout the realm accompanied by impressive rituals at times jointly participated in by the Cōla ruling house and the locally dominant personages, the propagation of a standard symbolic system through copper and lithic inscriptions, etc., are all viewed as means used by the Cōla rulers to establish ritual hegemony over the locality chieftains. *55

Stein following Southall posits the segmentary state model in opposition to the unitary state which is defined as possessing territorial sovereignty centralized government a specialized administrative staff and monopoly of the use of legitimate force. *56 However, as R.S.Shanna points out both Southall and Stein miss out the significance of the existence of a privileged ruling class which is implicit in the definition of the state. The extraction of surplus from the primary producers by a privileged class is the distinguishing feature of a state. Instead Southall lays emphasis on voluntary submission which was characteristic of the Alur state. Indeed, the Alur society does not qualify as a state in most respects lacking as it does a system of taxation a professional army and bureaucracy. *57

Stein argued that the Cōla state lacked a centralized system of taxation with the king depending mainly on war booty for income. This is further elaborated by Spencer who posits a tax-tribute-plunder continuum with taxation as the form of exaction imposed on areas where dynastic power is strongest, tribute as the form imposed on more peripheral or powerful chiefs and plunder as an irregular exaction taken from the most distant places ordinarily, subject to rival dynastic centres. The conventional view that taxation was the most important and plunder the least important and aberrant source of income is reversed by Spencer. In his view, chiefs, villages and corporate bodies were well organized to resist both cattle raids from neighbouring settlements.

*55 Ibid, p.357.  
*56 Ibid, p.265  
and unassimilated forest dwelling tribes as well as the revenue demands of the state. Consequently kings had to turn to compensatory long-range plundering raids on rival dynastic territory in order to secure a supplementary flow of booty in the form of livestock, jewels and other forms of portable wealth.*58 Further he holds that such plundering raids also constituted an integrative device whereby kings could mobilize the military capabilities of subordinate chiefs and keep them occupied with profitable expeditions.*59 A similar view of invasions on neighbouring kingdoms is taken by Derrett in his work on the Hoysalas. He observes:

"One cannot avoid a suspicion that Ballâla's readiness for war in the North was in part due to a desire to find employment for the troublesome inhabitants of his own country. The prospect of booty from Bankâpura and Lokkiguni was doubtless more attractive than the chance of stealing the cows of the next village but one ".*60

Stein had questioned the existence of tax transfer from the localities to the central government on the ground that the taxes mentioned in inscriptions are unwieldily numerous and were mostly paid in kind since the Côla coinage system was not much developed.*61 However, the research of Karashima and Sitaraman*62 has shown that only a few of the four hundred odd taxes mentioned in Côla inscriptions were widely prevalent and the remaining were mostly local and occasional in nature. These widely prevalent taxes such as irai or Kadami, the major land tax, professional

*59 Ibid, p.419.
*61 B.Stein, Peasant State ..., loc.cit.,pp 258-264.
taxes on oil pressers, weavers and gold-smiths and tax on cultivating tenants were the major sources of revenue for the state. Although inscriptions are silent on the mode of transfer and storage of grain in the case of taxes collected in kind, a fact made much of by Stein, the fact of tax-transfer cannot be denied.*63

Karashima draws our attention to the land surveys carried out under Rājarāja I and Kulottunga I and the introduction of the valanāḍu territorial unit replacing the Köṭtam and integrating the nāḍus as evidence of vigorous attempts made by these kings to build up a centralized, politically integrated state. Moreover, the grants of revenues from villages scattered all over the Cōla realm to the Rājarājēśvara temple at Taṅjavūr including villages in Śrī Lanka would point at least to the fact that tax assessment was a centrally managed function.*64 This point is made by Champakalakshmi as well.*65

In the light of all this evidence, the postulation of plunder as the major source of resource acquisition does not stand scrutiny at least for the Cōla state. As Chattopadhyaya has observed, "politics of plunder" would hold good for the polity of chiefdoms characteristic of the Sangam age but is hardly apposite for the Cōla period when a vast agrarian surplus was available for the state for redistribution to integrative elements in society. In addition, the state's penetration into growing networks of trade could expand its resource base tremendously.*66 It remains to be seen how far Spencer's postulate of politics of plunder holds good for Southern Karnataka prior to its conquest by the Cōjas.

*63 Ibid, p. 287,299.
*64 Noboru Karashima, South Indian History and Society, loc. cit., Introduction, p (xxvi)-(xxvii).
Stein also denies the existence of a standing army. He believes that the earlier existing military units controlled and led by the peasantry were recruited for the military expeditions of the Cōḷaś.*67 However, Subbarayalu cites evidence of the existence of royal regiments named after the various pseudonyms of Rājarāja Cōḷa I in the countryside. The military personnel also performed many civil functions. After the eleventh century the peasants grew powerful and we begin to find evidence for the existence of the peasant militia as well as of the supralocal mercantile organizations.*68

Stein interprets Cōḷa officials not as bureaucrats but as locality leaders who derived their power and legitimacy of secular authority from their membership in and leadership over peasant groups in their localities.*69 Whenever adikāris and other high officials are found in royal records they are considered to be performing scribal functions producing ritual documents not bureaucratic orders.*70 However, Subbarayalu points out that Stein confuses offices with titles of status. Officials in the Cōḷa state were highly mobile while locality leaders were confined to their localities.*71 Moreover, Cōḷa inscriptions also record grants of land and revenue which are precisely defined and demarcated. This would indicate that Cōḷa inscriptions were not merely ritual documents aimed at incorporating locality chiefs under their sacral kingship but were records of administrative acts as well.

The distinction between central, intermediate and peripheral zones is of analytical value in the study of dynastic hinterlands.*72 However, Subbarayalu is of the opinion that the zones need to be defined more rigorously since in the case of the Cōḷas

*67 B. Stein, Peasant State ..., loc.cit.,p.189.
*69 B. Stein Peasant State ..., loc.cit.,p.117.
*70 Ibid, p.357.
*72 R. S. Sharma, "The Segmentary state" ...loc.cit.p.84-85.
at least, Tondaimandalam which Stein classifies as an intermediate zone should be more correctly considered part of the central zone from the point of view of the temporal distribution of inscriptions.*73

Stein interprets eleemosynary grants as evidence not of political control but of ritual sovereignty.*74 Kulke, however, is of the opinion that in traditional societies, ritual sovereignty is an integral part and sometimes a pacemaker of political power. He feels that Stein is over-strict in his distinction between political power and ritual sovereignty.*75 In his study of the Tiruvidaimarudur inscriptions, Kenneth Hall has come to a similar conclusion, i.e., that ritual sovereignty was a means to implement political power. The Cōla kings built up a permanent presence through their local alliances and networks of loyalty. He shows how the Colas used "divide and rule" tactics favouring the brahmadeśa sabhā and the nagaram at Tiruvidaimarudur as against the Tiraimūr nāṭṭār, thus breaking the nāṭu autonomy and intervening in local politics. The Uttaramērūr epigraphs are also cited to prove the fluctuating fortunes of the various local corporate bodies in so far as royal favour and patronage were concerned. Thus royal presence in local politics was greater than Stein allows.*76

Subbarayalu has criticised Stein's treatment of the nāṭus the basic segments of his hypothetical segmentary state. He points out that Stein's suggestions regarding the internal organization of the nāṭus are speculative and not supported by data.

*73 Y. Subbarayalu, "The Cōla State", loc.cit., p.298
*74 B. Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian system of South India" in R.E. Frykenberg (ed) Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, Madison, 1969, p.17.
For instance, in the predominantly agrarian society of the period, opposition between agricultural and non-agricultural groups would be non-existent or insignificant. Consequently the opposition between the Right and Left Hand groups cannot be viewed as one between agricultural and non-agricultural groups. It is possible that the latter signified an opposition between the established castes of a locality and newcomers. In any case as Stein himself admits relations between opposing elements in South India were often asymmetrical. Thus, in the absence of complementary opposition between balanced and opposed elements it would be hardly appropriate to speak of pyramidal segmentation which was a defining feature of a segmentary state.*77

The other defining features of the segmentary state such as the presence of numerous peripheral foci of administration and the absence of monopoly of the use of legitimate force at the centre, imply a decentralized polity with parcellized sovereignty. This affinity of the segmentary political order with feudalism has been observed by Southall who considered the feudal system compatible with a segmentary political system.*78 Similarly, Stein in his recent formulation posits a generalized polity of chiefdoms based on a strong hereditary principle with extensive authority over wide areas and over varied and internally ranked local social segments. In his opinion these chieftains derived their authority from local landholding groups or from conquest. They were deemed to share sovereignty with greater kings who derived their exalted status from anointment in accordance with the Vedic canon.*79

It is hard to see how this differs from the feudal political order. However, the concept of feudalism is not exhausted with the delineation of a decentralized and

*78 Aidan Southall Alur Society... loc.cit.,p.256,cited by R.S.Shanna, "Segmentary State....",p.93.
parcellized political system. In fact the core of the feudal mode of production lay in the rent-extraction relationship between a class of landlords and a class of servile peasantry. The segmentary state concept on the other hand does not elaborate its socio-economic aspect.*80 In fact Southall envisages the application of the segmentary state concept not only to the feudal mode but also to the kinship mode and to the Asiatic mode. As Sharma observes, our understanding does not improve by applying a blanket label to divergent social formations with separate and distinct identities.*81

Perlin points out that the terms "segmentary state" and "peasant state" are negative and are used by Stein to refer to the priority of the corporate peasant order and its autonomous and pre-state character. Its relations with the court or temple were one of ritual unity and not of a managerial or exploitational kind. Given that the system according to Stein was marked by the absence of surplus extraction, the usage of the term "peasant" is anomalous since the conventional definition of "peasant" posits his incorporation into larger spheres of political or exploitative ordering through various forms of surplus extraction.*82 Thus Stein's usage of the terms "state" and "peasantry" is questionable given his premise that the segmentary state in South India was marked by absence of a bureaucratic state order, a standing army and taxation.

In the light of these varied hypotheses regarding the nature of state in early medieval India, we turn to a study of our sources to examine their validity for our region.


*81 Ibid, p.93.

(B) EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

We have seen that the Gaṅgas perhaps in origin a chiefly clan of southern Karnataka established a principality around Kōlār in the mid-fourth century A.D. probably under the influence of the neighbouring states of the Čuṭukulānanda Śātakarṇīs, their successors, the Kadambas, the early Pallavas and the Ikṣvākus of Āndhra deśa**83. The Gaṅgas were apparently aided in their project of state formation and political control by brāhmaṇas whom they patronized on a large scale until the mid-eighth century. Brāhmaṇas had a salient presence in the Gaṅga royal court during the first phase, acting as secretaries,**84 royal counsellors**85 and witnesses to royal charters in their capacity as Mahāmanuṣyas of subordinate districts.**86

Brāhmaṇas had access to religious, politico-administrative and even scientific and technical texts which enabled them to contribute towards the establishment of a new state and economic structure in many ways. Their contribution to the spread of agriculture by the introduction of new techniques and a calendar is well recognised**87 as is their role in legitimizing the newly emergent tribal elite by fabricating genealogies and performing ceremonies like the hiranyagarbha and asvamedha.**88 Knowledge of the Nīti and Arthaśāstra texts also made them effective political and military advisors - a role highlighted

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83. supra, Chapter III, Section A.

84. K. V. Ramesh, Inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas, New Delhi, 1984, No. 1, 2., 6, 9. etc.

85. EC VIII (new ed) Hn. 10.

86. Supra, Chapter III, Section B, fn. 250-253.


88. Supra, Chapter III, Section B, fn 262.
by the Keregalur plates of Madhavavarman II [Talakad branch]. The drafting of charters, king-lists and other administrative documents was also their preserve.

In Scotland in the same period, writing was introduced by the Church and manipulated to help establish its own position in the traditional pagan society. In doing so, the church extended an awareness of the potential of literacy to secular authorities of the kingdom who began to use documents to authorize their claims to power and position. In the context of Southern Karnataka bramhanas and even the Jaina Sangha which enjoyed some patronage in the first phase do not appear to have enjoyed autonomy comparable to the Christian church in Early Historic Scotland which tended to intervene in areas such as dispute-resolution, and affairs of the family, matrimony and inheritance that fell within the jurisdiction of secular authorities. Bramhanas appear to have been more dependent on secular authorities, at least to start with, placing their expertise at the disposal of the king and in return receiving grants which made them autonomous lords over villages and even districts. Instances of conflict between the kings and bramhana landlords are rare and are datable only from the second phase by which time the bramhanas were well-entrenched in this region. The nature of privileges granted to the bramha donees in the first phase has been examined earlier. Most of the lands thus granted appear to have been situated in the Eastern division and might have contributed in part, at least to the shift in the locus of power of the Ganga lineage from the Eastern to the Western division.


92. Infra, Chapter VI, Section - A.

93. Supra, Chapter IV, Section E-I, p. 230, fn. 354.

In the context of Tamil Nadu under Pallava rule, Stein has posited a brāhmaṇa-peasant alliance to explain the system of land grants for brāhmaṇas. In his opinion, it was not the Pallavas who gave up rights over taxes and land but the dominant peasantry which patronized the brāhmaṇas with a view to strengthen its own position in the varṇa-divided peasant society. The need to provide ideological coherence to the peasant order in the face of threats from the non-peasant order as had occurred during the Kaḷabhra interregnum was another motive for the class of dominant peasantry to patronize brāhmaṇas in Stein’s opinion*95. He states that it is inexplicable why the Pallavas should abdicate control over resources to the brāhmaṇas*96. By this yardstick it is equally hard to understand why the peasants should gift away their own lands to the brāhmaṇas. As Sharma observes, the ideological propaganda and agricultural knowledge of the brāhmaṇas might have made them acceptable to peasants, but their constant presence in the granted villages and their efforts to collect various kinds of dues strained their mutual relations with the peasants in the long run*97.

Stein also attributes the absence of a viable kṣatriya caste in the south to the brāhmaṇa - peasant alliance which obviated the necessity of brāhmaṇas to collaborate with warriors. However, the peasant landholding elite also discharged administrative and military functions*98 and cannot be considered antipodal to the warrior category*99. The lack of a kṣatriya varṇa in the south is more correctly attributed to the fact that the varṇa system here developed in a period when the category of śūdra came to include all those engaged in agricultural activities including the independent peasants and artisans. The term vaisya now connoted primarily a trader. Thus the dominant peasant castes of the south, the Vellālas in

*95. B. Stein, Peasant State and Society, loc. cit., pp. 84-85.

*96. Ibid., p. 82.


*98. Supra, Chapter IV, Section D.

Tamil Nadu, the Gavundas in Karnataka and Reddis and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh were assigned Sudra status. Only some local ruling lineages attempted to better their status by claiming descent from well-known Ksatriya vanisás under the influence of varna ideology.

Stein is factually wrong on another count. Upto the eighth century brahmadeya grants were made by the kings personally. The subordinate chiefs' role was confined to either the execution or to requesting the king to make such grants (vijñapti). For the kings such grants were a means of the acculturation of the periphery and legitimation of their rule. This is borne out by Karashima also who opines that brahmadeyas were strategically placed to ensure the loyalty of and exert influence on non-bráhmana villages. He hypothesized that brahmadeyas which came into existence as agents of the king's authority could decline with the succession of a new king who could build up his own following among the bráhmanas. In part this is borne out by the Gaṅga evidence with Mādhavavarma II of the Talakāḍ branch revoking grants by his cousins of the Kaivāra branch in favour of his own nominee.

The pre-eighth century political and administrative structure does not appear to have been very complex. We have evidence of the division of territory into units designated as visaya and bhoga. These units were held by military commanders and loyal bráhmanas. We have a few references to subordinates who bore the title of arasa [the vernacular variant of Sanskrit rāja] from the sixth century. These individuals were...


*102. Supra, Chapter III, Section B, fn 191-192.

*103. K.V. Ramesh, op. cit., No. 5.

*104. EC VIII (new ed.) Hn 10 describes the cāturvaidyas as lords of districts.

possibly local rulers of indeterminate origins who were subordinated to the Gaṅgas by military or other political means. They evidently held territories in their own right, merely paying tribute to the regional overlords.

The Bēdirūr grant of Bhūvikrama indicates that by the seventh century officials and governors were remunerated for their services in land and revenue. This charter registers the grant of Bēdirūr grāma in Hodali visaya to the Kōḷāla visavādhipati Vikramāditya gāv founded. The point is further reinforced by the Hallegere plates of Sivamāra I, which mention the voygas of Oraṅkal and Simpāl who were jointly ruling over Tuppūr. Voyga in K.V. Ramesh’s opinion was the Kannada variant of bhukti and signified enjoyment of land or revenue.

Thus at the end of the first phase the Gangas had emerged as overlords in an incipient feudal structure, with brāhmaṇas, indigenous chiefs and officials enjoying lands and revenues autonomously. The second phase saw the crystallization of this structure with a vast array of landed intermediaries between the king and the cultivator. In the eighth century the Gaṅgas controlled their dominions through a peripatetic system indicated by frequent references to vijaya-skandhāvāras as well as the distribution of the domain among members of the lineage and transfer of subordinates from one unit to another. These methods of control appear to have been abandoned in the ninth and tenth centuries when the Gaṅgas appear to have exercised administrative control only over their lineage domains in the Western division. Rival lineages of the Nōlambas, Bāṇas and

*106. Ibid., No. 29; vide supra, Chapter III, Secton B, p.157, fn, 272.

*107. EC VII (new ed) Md. 35; II - 34-35.

*108. K.V. Ramesh, op. cit., No. 35, p. 139, fn. 3

*109. Supra, Chapter IV

*110. K.V. Ramesh, op. cit., No. 42, 43, 45, etc.

*111. Supra, Chapter IV, Section A.

*112. Ibid., p.64, fn 3
Cālukyas held vast tracts of land in the Eastern and Western divisions without acknowledging the sovereignty of the Gaṅgas. The patrimonial estates of the Gaṅgas underwent further diminution of size when service assignments were made to warriors and vassals who loyally served them. Service assignments were made on terms and tenures similar to those granted to brahmanas and temples; i.e., sarva-mānya, sarva-parihāra, sarva-bādhā-parihāra, abhyantara-siddhi, etc.

Mānya signified tax-free land\(^{113}\). It is frequently used to denote an estate. The earliest if doubtful reference to mānya comes from the Narasimharājapura plates of Śivamāra II of the early ninth century\(^{114}\) which record the grant of Karimāniya [black soil as mānya\(^{115}\)] to the cēdiya at Tōḷar by Viṭṭarasa who was exercising the rulership (erettana) of Sinda nādu - 8000 and Tagare nādu - 70. Other references come from the end of the tenth century and early eleventh century. The Kempanapura inscription [Chāmarājanagar taluk, Mysore district] of A.D. 991 registers the grant of two khandugas of wet land, at Kīrī Hērur, and a garden and ten khandugas of land within his own mānya in Nelligunda at Pōginūr by Pōleyya of Kellūr to Sōmarāsi bhāṭṭāraka\(^{116}\) Here mānya seems to denote estate. It is noteworthy that Pōleyya does not seek the consent of any superior authority for the grant. Similarly, the Tālagunda inscription [Shikārpur taluk, Shimoga district] records the grant of Nariyālige - 70 as mānnyā to Kāyimma by Pergade Kālimayya\(^{117}\), while the Tāgaratī inscription [Shikārpur Taluk] of A.D. 1027 registers the grant of Kūḍigeri Manneya in Koḍanāḍu-30 as abhyantara-siddhi to the deity Nārāyanaḍēva of the temple constructed by Perbārva Mādhavayya, the son of Arasimayya, the īr-odeya of Tāgaracce\(^{118}\). In both these cases mānnyā denotes estate. Moreover, all these were

\(^{113}\) D.C. Sircar, *I.Ε.Г.*, q.v. mānya, mānnyā


\(^{115}\) Ibid, p. 275, fn 2.

\(^{116}\) *EC IV* (new ed) Ch. 145.

\(^{117}\) *EC VII* (old ed) Sk. 179 of A.D. 997.

\(^{118}\) Ibid, Sk. 53.
instances of sub-infeudation where grants of land were made to secular or religious beneficiaries by feudal lords without reference to the overlord. In one case, an entire unit of seventy villages was thus bestowed.

**Bilārvrtti** is another term denoting an inalienable, permanent land tenure. It is mentioned in the Karbail inscription [Nāgamaṅgaḷa taluk, Maṇḍya district] of the ninth century. This hero-stone records that Ārambhallava was ruling Īḍule in perpetuity [*bilārvrtti āluttire*]. Ramesh interprets bilā as permanent being the converse of bilī, to quit, while vrīti connoted land granted for the donee's enjoyment. Here Ārambhallava was evidently the local lord who held Īḍule en permanence. Under his auspices a kalnād grant was made to the hero who fell during the Rāṣṭrakūṭa invasion in defence of Gangavādi.

Sarva pariḥāra and Sarva-bādha-pariḥāra signify land granted with all exemptions and free from all troubles. We have seen that early Ganga charters used these blanket phrases without any further specification of their import. This continued in the eighth century as well. The Baradur grant charter of A.D. 725 registers the donation of Bāradūr grāma to a brāhmaṇa as sarva-pariḥāra. No details are given to explain what it denoted. Similarly the eighth century Dēvarahālli inscription [Guṇḍlupēṭ taluk Mysore, district] registers the grant of land where paddy (nellu) and pāndi (?) could be grown as well as garden land (totta) to the Seventy of Upagōḷa as sarva-pariḥāra. However, the Agara inscription [Yelandūr taluk, Mysore district] of the same period indicates that the term sarva-pariḥāra could be used even when exemptions related to specific dues only. The

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*120. Ibid., p. 313, fn. 1.
*122. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q.v. pariḥāra, sarva-bādha-pariḥāra
*122. Supra, Chapter III; Section B., p.14-3 ff
*123. EC V (new ed.) Kn 49.
*124. EC III (new ed) Gu 207.
*125. EC IV (new ed) YI. 138.
Tayaluru inscription [Maddur taluk, Mandya district] of A.D. 907 suggests that sarva-parihara grants were not in fact fully exempt from taxation. This inscription registers the grant of 35 gandugas of land out of which five were for personal consumption while pattondi tax had to be paid on the remaining thirty gandugas. In addition, the payment of fifteen pana in loha drammis annually and 12 kulas of pepper (? miki) and one kula of clarified butter has been stipulated. At all events, it is clear that even lands granted as sarva-parihara could not escape taxation entirely. Whether this held good in all cases cannot be discerned from available evidence.

Similar evidence is not forthcoming in grants made with the condition sarva-badhaparihara meaning "free from all troubles". Thus the Kyatanahalli inscription [Pandavapura taluk, Mandya district] of the end of the ninth century records a sarva-badhaparihara grant for the Kella basadi constructed by Cagi Permänadi. There is no hint of a tax liability. Another grant of the same period is recorded in the Hire-Basur Virgal [Kadur taluk, Chikmagalur district] which registers the gift of Basanur to Mārasingha gamundha who died in a battle against Nolamba of Āsandī nāḍ. Two inscriptions from Varupa [Mysore taluk] of the tenth century register sarva-badhaparihara grants for the Būtesvara temple which were entrusted to Nannikārttāra bhaṭāra. In all these cases the donees enjoyed complete control over the gift land, apparently without any tax liability to a superior authority.

Another land tenure mentioned in inscriptions is talavṛtti. The I.E.G. explains this as land granted for the maintenance of a temple or a deity at the time of consecration. Our inscriptions do not bring out this association with first consecration though talavṛttis were clearly meant for the maintenance of the temple and worship therein. Thus the Hecce

*126. EC VII (new ed) Mu 56.

*127. EC VI (new ed) Ppu 16.

*128. EC VI (old ed) Kd 141.

*129. EC V. (new ed) My 168, 169.

*130. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G. q.v. talavṛtti
inscription [Sorab taluk, Shimoga district] of A.D. 939 records grants for the Srikantheshvara temple by Katakada gova Caitayadeva in the presence of Mahasamantadhipati Macciga who was ruling the kingdom of Banavasi-12,000. The grants were made for (i) angabhoga, (ii) raangabhoga (iii) caitrapavitra, (iv) tapodanara aharadana (v) khandasphutita jirnoddhara and (vi) naivedya and included the talavrtti of lands to the south of the fort in the Kallakevabeya polage*131. There is no indication that the temple was newly constructed and consecrated. But the grant was made both for the maintenance of the structure and the conduct of various rites therein. Similarly, the Siralakoppa inscription [Shikarpur taluk, Shimoga district] of A.D. 1019*132 records several grants of lands, gardens and streets*133 for the temple of Mulasthana Nandikesvara after its renovation for (i) naivedya and (ii) khandasphutita jirnoddhara as talavrtti. Thus renovation of a temple was also an occasion for making talavrtti grants. These lands apparently constituted the temple estate over which the management exercised complete control. There is no indication of royal interference once the grant was made nor of a tax liability to the local or royal authorities.

Sircar is of the opinion that lands were declared tax-free only when the individual at whose instance the grant was made compensated the state for loss of revenue*134. This is certainly the case with the Colas*135. Moreover, under the Cola administration, even brahmadeyas were not exempt from taxation*136. For Southern Karnataka prior to the Cola conquest, we have no evidence either of compensation for loss of revenue or for payment of taxes by brahmadeya villages to the state. The Tāyaluru inscription cited above records a

*131 EC VIII (old ed) Sb 476.
*132 EC VII (old ed) Sk. 125.
*133 Supra, Chapter II, Section C
bittuvatta grant and not an eleemosynary gift. Thus grants of land made under tenures such as mānya, sarva-bādhā-parihāra and talavṛtti or bīḷavṛtti imply an institutional decentralization of the taxation system with the right to collect taxes due to the state vested with the donees for their own consumption. Indeed, the numerous references to taxes in our inscriptions occur in the context of sub-infeudation in most cases.

Early Kadamba and Cāḷukya records mention taxes such as kara, antahkara (internal taxes), paṅga [contributions from eleemosynary holdings], utkōta [presents to the king], hiranya [cash revenues]¹³⁷ from which the donees were exempt. Early Gaṅga inscriptions also mention some specific dues. The Noṇaṁaṅgaḷa copper plates of the close of the fifth century belonging to the reign of Avinīta record the grant of the proceeds of tolls (śulka) in kāṛāpanas levied outside Pēṟū to the temple of Arhat situated at Uranūr¹³⁸. Śulka [later sunka] signifies tolls, customs duties or octroi duties. The Arthaśāstra explains it as duties levied on articles imported into a city¹³⁹. It is this meaning which applies to the Noṇaṁaṅgaḷa Plates which probably refer to Pēṟū in Koṅgudeśa which was an important trade centre in the early historic period¹⁴⁰. Although śulka is not mentioned in the Bīrūr copper plates of Viṣṇuvarma Kadamba, the description of Vaijayanti (Banavāsi) as adorned with eighteen mandapikas indicates that śulka was levied on incoming goods in this city as well¹⁴¹.

While Pēṟū and Banavāsi were urban survivals from the early historic era, the Agara inscription appears to relate to an emergent rural market centre. This eighth century epigraph records a temporary exemption from tolls on headloads (taḷe pōre) to the twenty by a Mane-ōḍeya of Queen Vinettinimmaḍī, for the duration of a festival¹⁴². The reference

¹³⁷. Supra, Chapter III, Section B, p 14, 4, 5f, fn 231-242


¹³⁹. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q.v. śulka, sunka

¹⁴⁰. Supra, Chapter III, Section - A, p. 111

¹⁴¹. Supra, Chapter II, Section E-III, p. 90, fn 560-61

¹⁴². EC IV (new ed) Y1 138.
to headloads might imply that the tolls were levied at a nearest market centre to which peasants carried their produce for sale. The Twenty was probably the local corporate group which won this concession from the local ruler, Queen Vinettinimaḍi. The area (Yelandūr taluk, Mysore district) was evidently included in the Gaṅga domains at this time. A similar context of a local market centre also manifests itself in the Chittavaḷḷi inscription [Chikmagalūr district] of c. A.D. 1025 which records the grant of tolls of the ūr (ūrsurūkavan) together with imports on clarified butter to the Jīvēṣvara temple at Chittavaḷḷi. In at least two instances we have rulers granting proceeds from revenue to religious institutions, while in another the local ruler granted a temporary exemption to a local corporate body. Such grants indicate the feudalization of trade and commerce, a common feature in other parts of the country as well.

We have references to an array of taxes on land. Most of them appear to have been levied by local rulers and in some cases we have evidence of further farming out of the tax to a subordinate. The eighth century Kuppepāḷya inscription [Māgadi taluk, Bangalore district] records that Śivamāra Ereyappōr, the son of Śripuruṣa and the ruler of Kuṇungil nādu extended the right of cultivation (karaṇme) to all the inhabitants of Bisigtir ['uṛ bālya prajegaļge'] in a mandatory order (kattāne). It is possible that this is the meaning of karaṇme in this record. In that case it would imply that the right of ploughing was limited to the tenants-in-chief. At all events if the right of cultivation was the basis of taxation, the extension of the right to all inhabitants would suggest that the local ruler was attempting to raise taxes by extending a taxable

*143. The Gaṅgas and other ruling lineages controlled their dominions by parceling them out among members of the royal family supra chapter IV, Section A & B (II)

*144. EC VI (Old ed) Cm 95.


*146. K.V. Ramesh, op.cit., No. 68; p. 249, fn. 3 for an explanation of 'kattāne'.

*147. Ibid., p. 250, fn. 1.
right. In the period of Cola domination in Southern Karnataka, कारान्माश was the principal tax as attested by an inscription of A.D. 1022-23 from कोलार 148. This registers the grant of बीत्याभत्ता to the goddess बीत्याभत्ता at कुवाला (कोलार). The income from this village is computed very precisely in cash and kind. While this would indicate central management of the assessment under the कोलास, the grant of revenue to a temple would show that even the कोलास resorted to tax-farming to some extent.

Siddhāya was another levy on agriculture in the early medieval period. It was raised by the local ruler within his own domains and frequently further given away to private individuals. Thus the ninth century Koturu inscription [Virājpēṭ taluk, Coorg district] records the grant of 70 गद्यानास of gold and a hundred measures of dehusked paddy (‘बेल्याभत्ता’) of siddhāya as कालाद to a गावुंडा 149. The donor was the गायगा king. Likewise, the Hebbāni inscription [Mulbāğāl taluk, कोलार district] of c. A.D. 1000 150 of the reign of राजाराजा कोल records the grant of the siddhāya of Perbenna which amounted to ten गद्यानास of gold and 26 units of paddy (bhatta) to कादियान्ना of Hebbāni for repairing the big tank of Perbenna. The donor was नोलांबाद्हिराजा, a subordinate of राजाराजा and the local ruler. The third reference to siddhāya comes from the Muttatti inscription (T. Narsipur taluk, Mysore district) of the close of the ninth century 151 which records the grant of Muttatti to नागकुमारया. The grant is specifically stated to consist of five गद्यानास as siddhāya, one गद्याना for पुत्तीगोजा, and three गुलागास as वल्लघोलगा and कुरुदेरे. The inscription being fragmentary we cannot discern clearly who the donor was. But it is likely to be वलाभिपुरवर्तेश्वर who is mentioned in the prelude. Siddhāya has been explained by the I.E.G. as fixed or regular income probably from agriculture. It is also explained as a tax 152. But it would qualify better as rent received by the landlord from his tenants. The rate of siddhāya however, is not specified in any record.

*148. EC X (Old ed) Kl: 112 (a)

*149. EC I (new ed) No. 97.

*150. EC X (old ed) Mb 208

*151. EC V. (new ed) TN 39.

*152. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q. v. siddhāya
This difficulty does not arise with two other taxes named *pattondi* (one-tenth) and *aydondi* (one-fifth). One of the earliest references to *pattondi* comes from the eighth century Hemmige inscription [T. Narsipur taluk]^{153} which records its remission for two generations for all the inhabitants of Pemoge (probably the same as Hemmige) by Konguni at the request of his queen (Mahādevi). The Hemmige inscription does not indicate whether *pattondi* was levied on agricultural produce only or on merchandise as well. But the Vijayapura inscription of Śivamāra II (T. Narsipur taluk) records that *pattondi* was remitted on land and gold (*Poṇpula*) in favour of the Twelve of Kiṟupēli probably by Peḷedi of Kolattūr who was ruling Kiṟupēlnagara^{154}. This would indicate that *pattondi* was levied on all kinds of income, agricultural or otherwise.

*Pattondi* also signified the rate of tax on land in some cases. Thus the Rāmpura inscription of A.D. 905 (Śhirāṅgapatana taluk, Maṇḍya district) specifies the rate of tax payable by the cultivators of land irrigated by a dam as *pattondi* for the first year, *ḍalavi* (one-seventh) for the second year and *āydalavi* (one-fifth) for the third year and thereafter^{155}. These taxes were to be appropriated by Kēsiga who constructed the dam. However, the usual connotation of the term is a tax on land. Thus the Meḷāgani inscription of the close of the ninth century records the remission of *pattondi* tax on the land below Pālakōdu tank probably by Peḷaṅde gauḍa Śri Pūlī who was ruling Agali-12^{156}.

The Tāyalūru inscription retains as we have seen earlier^{157} the *pattondi* tax on thirty *gaṇḍugas* out of the thirty-five which were granted to Kaccāvara Polalāṣṭī for

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*154. EC V (new ed) TN 145.

*155. EC VI (new ed) Sr. 85.

*156. ASMAR 1926, No. 100, pp. 87-88

*157. Supra p 127, fn.126.
constructing a tank at Kadariir. The grant had been made by the gavundas and okkal who clearly did not have the right to remit payment of pattondi. Exemptions from payment were made only by the feudal lords who appear also to have levied it. Aydondi was probably similar in character. Apart from the Melagani inscription, aydondi is mentioned in the Vijayapura inscription (T. Narsipur Taluk) of the ninth century\footnote{158} which registers the grant of 25 gaṇḍugas of land (bilmānṇu) without payment of aydondi tax by brāhmaṇas. The donor was Arasaṇṇa (the king's elder brother?) Evidently this was a brahmādeya grant by the local lord.

Mannadere, literally land tax, is mentioned in the eighth century Basavāṭī inscription [Chāmarājanagar taluk Mysore district]\footnote{159}. The proceeds of the tax together with the tax on shepherds (Kurimbadere) were donated to Kurimba gavunda. This inscription thus brings out not only the process of sub-infeudation but also the sedentanization of the shepherd community and the growth of stratification among them.

The Mankunda inscription (Channapatna taluk, Bangalore district) of A.D. 913 indicates that corporate bodies of villages could be vested with rights of tax-collection over another settlement. This records the grant of the proceeds of karudere and addadere of Mankunda by Kūḍalūr and Bhodariyūr to an unknown donee\footnote{160}. This is reminiscent of the grant of bittuvatta of Vijayādityamaṅgaṇa together with two neighbouring villages to the Mahājanas of Kayvāra to ensure the maintenance of the tank at Vijayādityamandgaṇa\footnote{161}.

The Mankunda inscription, however does not reveal how Kūḍalūr and Bhodariyūr came to be vested with rights of tax collection over Mankunda. But the further alienation of revenue is noteworthy.

\footnote{158}{EC V (new ed) TN 145.}
\footnote{159}{EC IV (new ed) Ch. 126, also Supra, Chapter II, Section D and Chapter IV, Section D.}
\footnote{160}{EC IX (old ed) Cp 161.}
\footnote{161}{EC X (old ed.) Bp 4.}
Bhāga which originally signified the king's share of the product but later came to
denote tax in general*162 finds mention in several inscriptions. However, in most cases it is
unclear whether it denoted a tax or merely a share in the produce or property. Thus the
Sorab copper plates of Vinayāditya Cālukya record a supplementary grant of Sālivogegrava's bhāga by Basanta Kumāra, the son-in-law or nephew (aliya) of Āneṣeti of Banavāsi
to Dēvere*.163 It is not clear whether this denoted a part of the village or proceeds of
bhāga, the tax. In either case we do not know whence Basanta Kumāra derived his
authority to make such a grant. The second reference to bhāga comes from the Hecche
vīrgal of A.D. 991 (Sōrāb taluk, Shimoga district). This records the grant of an equal part
(bhāga) of gold and bālḍu (rice porridge?) from Gedeya together with the abhyantara-
siddhi-ālke of Gedeya-12 to Jōgayya, the grandson of Eṛhayya of Sīballi, the Nālgāvunda
of Gedeya-12*164. Here bhāga appears to relate to the mode of collecting dues rather than
the tax per se. The Uttarāṇāḷḷi inscription of A.D. 1012 (Shikārpur taluk, Shimoga
district)*165 which records the establishment of a linga by Kōṇḍēsara Būtagōsi gāvunda of
Uttarāṇi and the grant of one māttal of land for the deity stipulates that the donor received
three shares (mūbhāga) while Kōṇḍēsara Jōgayya (his brother or son?) received one share.
Here bhāga clearly relates to shares of the produce of the granted land and not to the tax
bhāga. At all events, it is noteworthy that the donors retained a stake in the granted land.
The Ārūr inscription [Chintāmanī taluk, Kōlār district] of A.D. 950*166 states that
Pallavāditya Iḷeva Nō ámba granted pannāsu bhāga (50%) from five golas of land to
Kandayyāyta who was apparently a soldier attached to the king. While it is not clear
whether the grant was of half the total produce of the land in question or of revenue from
it, we have here, a feudal lord bestowing rights over land or revenue to his retainer.

*162. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q.v. bhāga
*163. EC VIII (old ed) Sb 571
*164. EC VIII (old ed) Sb 477.
*165. EC VII (old ed) Sk 71
*166. EC X (old ed) Ct. 50
Apart from these taxes on land we have references to an array of minor or occasional dues. One such minor tax was *kirudere*, literally small tax, which finds mention in several epigraphs. Thus the Bélaguli *virgal* which registers the grant of Bélgali grāma as abhyantara-siddhi to the son and successors of Aṅkada Ketayya, specifically states that the village was not to be entered by the Nādabōva and Nālgāvunda for the collection of *kirudere* and *attadere*\(^{167}\). A mid-tenth century record from Āvari (Mulbagal taluk, Kolar district) registers the remission of twelve minor taxes (*kirudere*) on the sthāna of Avanya in favour of the deity Mahādeva by Dīlipayya Nōlamba\(^{168}\). This would indicate that *kirudere* was not one tax but a bundle of minor or occasional dues levied by a sovereign ruler and collected by Nādabōvas and Nālgāmundas. Like other sources of revenue, however, it too was undergoing the process of sub-infeudation. This impression is strengthened by the Köligere inscription (Maddur taluk, Maṇḍya district) of A.D. 916-17\(^{169}\) which registers the gift of the proceeds of *attadere, kurudere* and *sāmantadere* from Tippeyur to a basadi. The grant was made in the king’s presence (‘arasara adhyakṣadol’) evidently with his consent. *Kurudere* was possibly an orthographic error for *kirudere*. The nature and incidence of *attadere* cannot be discerned but since it is coupled with *kirudere* in two cases its levying authority was probably the same, i.e. a sovereign within his personal domain.

*Sāmantadere* literally means tax (tere) on the samantas and might imply either tribute paid by the *sāmantas* or the tax paid by the tenants to the feudatory of the sovereign who held authority in a particular area. While *sāmantadere* might imply tribute it is noteworthy that literary works prefer the term *kappa* for tribute. Thus in the *Vaddaradhane*, Dhātrivāhana sends messengers to Gurudatta demanding tribute (*kappa*) and the return of a fugitive carpenter (*baṇagi*)\(^{170}\). Similarly, in the *Pampa Bhārata*, Arjuna is said to have extracted tribute (*kappa*) from Kubēra\(^{171}\). In view of this the second suggested meaning of

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\(^{167}\) EC VIII (new ed) Ag. 41 of the tenth century.

\(^{168}\) EC X (old ed) Mb 51.

\(^{169}\) EC VII (new ed) Mu 100.

\(^{170}\) Vaddaradhane op. cit., p. 191.

\(^{171}\) Pampa Bhārata, VI. 32 vacana
\(\text{sāmantadere}\) might apply to the Kōligere inscription. The further grant of this tax to the \text{basadi}\) would suggest that the \text{basadi}\) was now given the status of a \text{sāmanta}.

A multitude of taxes are mentioned in the Krishnāpura inscription (Yelandūr taluk, Mysore district) of the early tenth century. This epigraph records the grant of land as \(\text{kahād}\) with the right of \text{abhyantara-siddhi}. The granted land is specifically stated to be free from taxes such as \text{padevala-gāma-gadyāna}, \text{kōmāragadyāna}, \text{permādi/-itunayavaratere}, \text{peggedegānke}, \text{nalchāvirapugilu}, \text{masivuttige} and \text{maṭṭadere}. Of these, \text{kōmāragadyāna} has been explained by the \text{I.E.G.} as the tax of one \text{gadyāna} levied on the birth of a prince. This was apparently an occasional levy by the Gaṅga, the donor in this case, within his own estate. The other terms have been left unexplained. However, \text{padevala-gāma-gadyāna} might signify either a tax paid for the general (\text{padevala}) or by him from the village (\text{gāma}) held as fief. \text{Peggedegānke} might have been a tax for Pergades. Padevalas and Pergades were included among the feudatories in this period. But since the area in question fell within the royal domain of the Gaṅgas, we can argue that the overlord draw resources to support his personal bureaucratic and military retinue by levying these taxes. \text{Nālchāvirapugilu} was possibly an entry tax levied by the Four Thousand, a local corporate group. The meaning and significance of the other taxes cannot be guessed. The Krishnāpura inscription clearly shows at all events, the heavy burden of taxes placed on the peasants. While the donee did not have, in future, to pay these dues to the overlord there was nothing to prevent his collecting them from the cultivating tenant.

The Sosale inscription of the end of the eigth century (T. Narsipur taluk, Mysore district) indicates that local rulers could collect taxes to support their military retinue. The inscription records the appropriation by Vikramādityarasa of one \text{pon} (a gold coin) during harvest (\text{suggiyul}) out of the \text{bhaṭamāṇya} of the palace soldiers (‘aramaneya bhaṭamāṇya’). Apart from this, the eighth century \text{Varuṇa} inscription (Mysore taluk,

\*172. \text{EC IV (new ed) YI. 183.}

\*173. \text{D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q.v. kōmāragadyāna}

\*174. \text{F. Kittel, A Kannada-English Dictionary, q.v. padevala}

\*175. \text{EC V (new ed) TN 120.}
district) suggests that the army on the march was to be fed by the general populace. The details are unclear but the army was probably to be fed one day while going and one day while coming back by the people of an ur whose name is now lost."^{176}

Apart from these varied taxes and the requirement to feed the army and touring officials, we also have evidence of the impressment of bullocks. The first reference comes from the eighth century Agara inscription which registers the exemption from impressment of bullocks (ettuköl) for one month during the festival (parbadol) to the Forty of Amasu and the Twenty. In addition, exemption from forced labour (viṭṭā?) was granted to the Forty for the same period."^{177} Evidently peasants were required to lend their bullocks at the will of the local ruler for the rest of the year. An indirect reference to this practice comes from the seventh century Kigga inscription (Koppa taluk, Chikmagalūr district).*^{178} This records the grant of tax (vari) in the form of paddy, milk and bullocks, for the god Kīlgānesvara. The inscription specifically states that it was to be enjoyed by the god's servants which included the devadittiyer (female servants of the deity).*^{179} This would indicate that the impressment and use of bullocks was regularly appropriated by the state. When transferred to a temple, a brāhmaṇa or a secular assignee it enabled them to exploit this practice for forced labour on their own lands. A similar grant of bullocks comes from the eleventh century Chittavalli inscription (Chikmagalūr taluk, district), which records that three bullocks from Nerele were given to the temple of Jiviteśvara constructed by Jimūtavāhana Sēnāvara.*^{180}

References to viṣṭi cover a longer timespan. The Hiṭṭinahebbāgilu plates of Vijayaśiva Mrgeśavarman Kadamba records the grant of Kirunirillī grāma to Sarvasvāmi of


*177. EC IV (new ed) YI 138.


*179. S. Settar, Personal Communication

*180. EC VI (old ed) Cm. 95 of c. AD 1025.
Aupagahani gotra, along with daksina and the right of antarkara vistikam\textsuperscript{181}. i.e. the right to levy internal taxes and forced labour\textsuperscript{182}. Thus the donee could now use forced labour for his own purposes. Similarly, the fifth century Birur plates of Vishuvarma Kadamba (Kadur taluk, Chikmagalur district) record the grant of a village and a hundred nivarttanas of land to 85 brahmanas along with daksina and the right of visti\textsuperscript{183}. While these early copper plates record brahmadeya grants, later references to visti occur in the context of devadana grants. Thus the Kyananthalli inscription of the close of the ninth century records the grant of forced labour (bitti) for the Kella basadi constructed by Cagi Permanna by Ereyapparasa II and Racamalla II\textsuperscript{184}. Similarly, the Kumasigrana inscription (Shimoga taluk) of c. AD 950 which records the construction of a linageha includes details of grants made to it by several gaudas and settis\textsuperscript{185}. Here we have a reference to bitti but since the inscription is fragmentary at this point it is not quite clear who had made this grant. If it was the gaudas it would imply that the local landholding elite enjoyed the right to order forced labour and could transfer the right at will.

Apart from the right of levying forced labour which was conferred on the donees we also have evidence that the peasants tilling the soil were tied to the land. This is brought out by the Mysore copper plates of the early eleventh century\textsuperscript{186}, which record the grant of a kalnad consisting of Kadekola and Bermave to Kuladhari. The inscription goes on to record his death at the house of his son Dharimuttara, who fled for some unknown reason. Thereupon, the gavundas and besamakkal were freed (bidisidam). Besamakkal has been explained as bond-servants by Nandi. He draws an interesting contrast between the terms bandugiyar, toltu and besamaga. The two former in his opinion were bonded field

\textsuperscript{*181. EC IV (new ed) Pp 149 of the fifth century.}

\textsuperscript{*182. D.C. Sircar, I.E.G., q.v. antahkara, visti.}

\textsuperscript{*183. EC VI (old ed) Kd 162.}

\textsuperscript{*184. EC VI (new ed) Ppu 16.}

\textsuperscript{*185. EC VII (old ed) Sh 114.}

\textsuperscript{*186. EC V (new ed) My 102.}
labourers, while besamaga which mostly appears in the context of attacks on agrahāras probably denoted members of the rural militia. In the present inscription, however, the bracketing of the besamakkal with the gāvundas might suggest that they were field labourers. It would appear that the death of the assignee and the disappearance of his heir released the gāvundas and besamakkal from the ties that bound them to their lord. Interestingly the witnesses to this record were individuals of diverse occupations such as Manniga (earthworker or potter?), Pongulan (goldsmith), Koḍaliyan (woodcutter), and Kammara (ironsmith). A similar range of occupational specialists acted as witnesses to the tying of the patta of Goggiyācāri on the son of Būvācāri in the Hale Bōgaddī record of the same period. The list included a Turuvāla (cowherd), a Nāvida (barber), a Kammara (ironsmith) an Asaga (washerman), an Ōja (a smith) and a Holeya (outcaste) Would this imply that the act of reducing either a peasant or an artisan to bondage required the validation of the entire village community represented by members of various castes and occupations?

At all events it would seem that the Okkal, the cultivating tenants, were a vital productive resource for the landlords without whom the possession of land became meaningless. This is brought out by imprecations in several Mysore district inscriptions which stated that the Okkal of the individual violating the grant would perish.

Thus grants of land made to brahmanas, temples and secular assignees made them virtually autonomous with rights to levy taxes, forced labour and impress bullocks. Like Rāṣṭrakūṭa epigraphs inscriptions of the second phase from Southern Karnātaka clearly specify the taxes which were transferred to the donee. In some cases even the amounts to

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*188. EC V (new ed) My 221.

*189. EC III (new ed) Hg 63 and 156; EC V (new ed) TN 307, 145; My 183 have imprecations such as ‘Okkal Koripoguge" and "Okkal Kulanāśa".

be collected are clearly mentioned. This would limit the scope enjoyed by the donee to increase the amount to be collected. Indeed the Māgūḍilu inscription (Heggāḍēvānakōṭe taluk, Mysore district) of the eighth century states that taxes and produce of the land were to be collected at the prevailing rates ('andina tereē andina keyvesane')191. This might have been an attempt to protect the interests of the tenant by the state. However it is a moot point whether the state could indeed check excesses by the donee once the grant was made. The Devarahalli inscription (Guṇḍlupēṭ taluk Mysore district) suggests that the sanction employed by the state to protect the tenants' interests may have been purely ideological. It includes an imprecation stating that the person who took the land away from the tenants, enjoyed it and fought for it would lose his eyes and arms192. This could have been a threat of punishment as well. But the fact that it is coupled with the standard imprecation of Pañcamahāpātaka has led us to interpret it as an imprecation.

The position of the tenants may have been mitigated somewhat by corporate groups. We might recollect that the Forty of Amasu and the Twenty won for the cultivators at least a temporary reprieve from forced labour and the impressment of bullocks. The composition of many such groups is unclear. We have seen that they might have comprised of gāvunda landlords in many cases193. Inscriptions from Coorg mention the Entokkal194 which clearly was a body of cultivators. K.V. Ramesh interprets Okkalu preceded by a number as the permanent resident families of a locality having inalienable landholdings there195. That this body's consent to grants is required together with the Aysāmantas and the Seventy (Ēlpadimbar) indicates that such bodies could wield some influence.

In literary works the term okkal is used to denote not merely the cultivating tenants of a landlord but the military retainers as well. This is brought out by the

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*191. EC III (new ed) Hg 156.

*192. Ibid, Gu 207 of the eighth century.


*194. EC I. (new ed) No. 96, 98.

Cāvundarāyapurāṇa where the daughter of Damitārisakti takes the veil out of grief at the
death of her family and Okkal, after the destruction of their army at the hands of Aparājita
and Anantavirya 196. Since the work mentions only the destruction of the army and not
laying waste the countryside, it would appear that Okkal refers here to the military retainers
and not tenants. The analytic inseparability of the cultivating tenants and vassals owing
military service in Kannada literary works of the tenth century, is further brought out by the
Pampa Bharata in two contexts. In one, Pampa states that rulers, villagers and clans (kula)
accepting the suzerainty of the Pāṇḍavas offered all their wealth (‘sāra dhana’) and
accepted the performance of the three forms of forced labour (mūvittigam) 197. In another
context, after the period of exile infractious Mālepas (hill chieftains), Mandalikas and heroes
(vīrarkal) are said to have offered their living and their heads (bāldale) and any object
desired by the Pāṇḍavas and agreed to perform the three forms of forced labour like any
tenant (‘Okkala vōlim’). 198. Mūvittigam (threelfold forced labour) has been explained by
D.L. Narasimhachar by reference to the Arthasāstra of Kautilya as

i) śodhanakarma i.e. repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, wells, etc.,

ii) vahanakarama, i.e. transport of weapons, grains, tools, etc., and

iii) apanayana karma, i.e., to hand over wounded and dead soldiers together with their
    weapons and armour 199.

These were duties to be performed by defeated kings. When applied to tenants, the third
form of labour might have been agricultural.

Assuming that this definition of viṣṭī applies to our period also it is note worthy that
it is presumed to be more appropriate for the Okkal. But that vassals too are stated to have
accepted this obligation would imply that they were recognized merely as a specialised
category of tenants. In the first context moreover, the groups submitting and accepting the
obligation of mūvittī were villagers, clans and petty rulers (rājaka). This perhaps reflects the


197. Pampa Bhārata VI. 30

198. Ibid., IX. 10.

pervasiveness at the lowest levels of the socio-political hierarchy of the corporate peasant order of petty rulers (arasas) of local origins and of ruling lineages. In contrast to these groups, Málepas, Mandalikas and heroes (virarkal) offered their heads and their living (baldale) more befitting their station. The reference to their head perhaps implies the obligation of military service accepted by them.

Literary works deal at length with the duties and obligations of the vassal to his lord. "A servant (bhṛtya) should sacrifice wealth and life for his master and fight without expecting aid and without fear. If he can he should fight to win; if not he should put his best effort and die fighting. Such is the duty of a servant (āl, bhṛtya). If he should slip away from the field without doing either his honour would be tarnished". Thus does Ranna's Duryodhana define the duties of the subordinate to the lord who nourished him. The obligation of the vassal is termed jāladapāli, the debt of subsistence. Karṇa refuses to join the Pāṇḍavas at Kunti's behest saying that by doing so he would default on his debt to Duryodhana and tarnish his fame. Duryodhana likewise, chides Bhīṣma for only recollecting his kinship to and affection for the Pāṇḍavas and requests him to remember his debt of subsistence to the Kauravas ("jālada pāḍyamaninisu bageyim nimmoj"). In the Gadayuddham Duryodhana rails against Droṇa and Aśvatthāma for disregarding their debt to him. In Ponna's Sānti Purāṇam the vassals of Damitāri resolve to fight Aparājita and Anantavrīya who had abducted princess Kanakāśri in order to discharge their debt to their lord. While inscriptions conspicuously omit mention of the term jālapāli the vassals' obligation to fight at their master's command is brought out clearly enough. We have already cited several instances of subordinates marching to battle at the command of their lord (ere vesadoj).

*200. Gadayuddham II. 21, 22.

*201. Pampa Bhārata IX. 84.


*203. Gadayuddham II. 11.


*205. Chapter IV, Section E-II.
Velevris, on the other hand are mentioned in inscriptions but do not receive much attention in literary works. Among the few references in literature we have the Vaddaradhan which mentions fierce warriors under the oath of vele ("Velegondirdatyugra bhatarkal") among the mainstays of a ruler[^200]. Velevris were expected to fight for their master during his lifetime and we have several epigraphic references to velevris dying in battle[^207]. In this respect they are indistinguishable from other retainers (āl) of a monarch. What set them apart was their following their lord or lady in death whether they did so by offering their head as Akaṭega[^208] or Ḍekalinga[^209] did or by entering fire as Bṛante Rāceya[^210] and Bābiyamma[^211] did or by becoming kīgunthe like Manemaga Agarayya[^212].

The institution of velevri points to the close bonds between the warrior and the ruler and his consort. Some kind of contract seems to be implied. M. Chidanandamurthy draws our attention to a twelfth century virgal which records the death of Boppaṇa, the vēle of Mahāmāndalēsvara Sūvidēva's consort, Laccadalēvī, in accordance with the promise given earlier. The illustrations on the panel show Laccadalēvī presenting a cloth to Boppaṇa, which he accepts with obvious devotion. This, in his opinion portrays the ceremony is which Boppaṇa took oath as a vēlevadica in return for which he received due honour from his patroness[^213]. Whether such a ceremony existed prior to this is unknown

[^207]: EC XVI (rev ed) Tm 95, EC V. (new ed), My 173, 174, 178.
[^208]: EC VIII (old ed) Sb 479
[^209]: EC VI (new ed) Ppu 253
[^210]: EC VIII (new ed) Ag 24.
[^211]: Ibid, Ag 26.
[^213]: Ibid., p. 307-308.
but not unlikely. Velevalis were also known as mane-maga (son of the house). This, it has been suggested corresponded to kulaputra mentioned in the \textit{Harsacarita} \textsuperscript{214}. The term once again, highlights the close bond existing between the retainer and his lord. The velevadica evidently looked upon the lord as his father and identified himself completely with his interests.

The vele oath implied that the individual accepting it would have to commit suicide on the death of the person for whom it was undertaken. For most part it was warriors who undertook this vow. But occasionally kinsmen could take the vele vow for their loved ones as Yudhisthira did for his brothers in the Pampa Bharata\textsuperscript{215} or Kondabbe for her father, Nágattara\textsuperscript{216}. The ceremony of oath-taking had elements of contract with the velevadica offering his life in the interests of his lord or lady and in return receiving subsistence and the status of the son-of-the-house.

In general, virgals represent a recognition of the fulfilment of contractual obligations by the subordinate in responding to the chief's summons for armed service and by the overlord in extending protection and reward to the families of warriors. Nandi opines\textsuperscript{217} that the contract was symbolized by the tying of a badge of honour (paṭṭamgaṭṭi) on the forehead of the subordinate by the lord superior in the case of low-ranking fiefholders. In the case of high-ranking officers and commanders the contract was symbolized by the gifts of estate honour and symbols of feudal authority like the paṇcamaḥasabda (five musical instruments) parasol, throne, gateways, horses, servants and an agricultural tract commensurate with the status of the enfeebled lord.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., S. Settar and M.M. Kalaburgi "The Hero-cult; A study of Kannada literature from the 9th to the 13th centuries" in S.Settar and G.D. Sontheimer (ed) Memorial Stones, Dharwar (1982), p. 32.

\textsuperscript{215} Pampa Bharata XIII. 15

\textsuperscript{216} EC IX (old ed) Bn 88.

\textsuperscript{217} R.N. Nandi, Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India", in \textit{P.I.H.C. Presidential Address,). Ancient Indian Section, (Annamalai Nagar, 1984), p. 27.
In literary sources the pattabandha ceremony is associated with the conferment of the supreme command of the army\textsuperscript{218}. The element of contract is most clearly brought out in the consecration of Karna as the commander-in-chief in the 

\textit{Pampa Bhārata} wherein Duryodhana requested him to defeat the enemy and protect his sovereignty while Karṇa reasserted his subordination\textsuperscript{219}. Duryodhana then tied the chaplet with his own hands, blessed him (‘sēseyaniikki’) and conferred on him much gold (‘pañcineput kōṭi ponnumam’), some of his own ornaments and jewel-bedecked elephants. Karṇa in turn bestowed this gold on those desiring it and significantly apparels his captains (nāyaka)\textsuperscript{220}.

The gifts thus conferred by Duryodhana on Karṇa and by Karṇa on his captains were made in expectation of future service. Kānād grants recorded in virgals, however, were made in appreciation of past service as a reward. Unlike in Europe where the fief was an economic grant of land conditional on the performance of military duties,\textsuperscript{221} our evidence indicates that here the grant was made subsequent to the performance of military service to the overlord as a reward and the grant was in the majority of cases, made in perpetuity\textsuperscript{222}.

In many cases inscriptions do not record the performance of service prior to the grant. Thus the eighth century Aralukote inscription records that Veḍḍipenimane begged and got himself anointed (‘pattānagāṭi koṭṭudu’) and received a grant of land in perpetuity\textsuperscript{223}. We are not told about the services rendered by him prior to the anointment nor are the duties owed by him as a consequence of his anointment specified. Similarly the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{218} \textit{Pampa Bhārata} X. 25, 33-34, vacana
  \item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid XII. 57 vacana
  \item \textsuperscript{220} Ibid XII. 52 vacana
  \item \textsuperscript{221} Perry Anderson, \textit{Lineages of the Absolutist state}, op.cit p. 208.
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Supra, Chapter IV, Section E.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} K.V. Ramesh, op. cit., No. 54.
\end{itemize}
Mugalavalli inscription includes a supplementary grant of land (manna) to the son of Rāma gāvunda together with the tying of the patta. It is possible that Rāma gāvunda's son was being rewarded for his father's role in the battle of Kalikatti for which Mādivarman was lauded in the same record but the epigraph does not state so specifically. The Vartur inscription (Bangalore taluk) also records a supplementary grant of land to a nāyaka. Here there is no mention of a pattabandha ceremony and we have no clue as to why this grant was made. It was probably a service assignment but the conditions are not stated in the document.

In the case of higher-ranking feudatories pattabandha implied coronation by the overlord following defeat in battle as in the case of Śivamāra II or voluntary submission as in the case of Mārasiṃha II. Such subordination carried with it obligations of service which are more clearly brought out in literary sources than in inscriptions.

Thus the picture which emerges is of a complex political structure held together by obligations of military service and grants of land. The feudal lord held land over which he appears to have had autonomous control, extracting rent, tax and unpaid labour from the peasants. His relations with his superiors appears to have depended on the existing balance of power and the commonality of interests between the overlord and vassal. If the overlord was powerful or if it suited his interest, the feudal lord served him. If not, he failed even to acknowledge the overlord's suzerainty. We have seen earlier that the Gaṅgas lost large tracts of land in the Eastern division to the Bānas and Nōjambas who rarely acknowledge their overlordship. Although the feudal ethos demanded dedicated service from the vassal, the nature of the kalnād grant appears to have resulted in growing autonomy of the fief-holder.

*224. EC VI (old ed) Cm 129.
*225. EC IX (old ed) Bn 40.
*226. Supra, Chapter III, Section C, p 160, fn 325.
*228. Supra, p 301, fn 198.
The lack of an organized bureaucracy appears to be another feature of the state in southern Karnāṭaka. The gāvunda headmen of villages and nāḍus were responsible for the collection of taxes such as attadere and kirudere as we have seen earlier. They also acted as witnesses to grants and were responsible for demarcation of granted lands. But they 'emerged as a significant section of the landholding elite as fief-holders closely bound to the ruler and bearing his titles. Indeed, the gāvunda of a nāḍu was frequently granted as a reward for meritorious military service. Thus the position of the gāvundas was ambiguous. They were both landlords and representatives of the state with the former being more important for their self-definition.

Pergades were officials who were entrusted with the rule of a village with rights of abhyantara-siddhi. They gradually became a class of feudal lords and were ranked as such. Some Pergades enjoyed a higher rank in the feudatory hierarchy and are said to be endowed with the qualities of a Mahāmātya. In literary sources pergades continue to be looked upon as royal officials employed either as envoys or as superintendents of the royal household (mane vergade) or of the harem (raṇiyavāsada vergade). While we have couple of references to Pergades in their function as royal envoys and one in the capacity of mane-vergade the majority of epigraphic references to Pergades stress their character as feudal lords.

Inscriptions from Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Hássan and Mysore mention Prabhus and Naḷgāmīgas who discharged administrative and military functions such as granting tax

*229. Supra, p.295, fn 167, Chapter IV, Section D.

*230. Supra, Chapter IV, Section E-II, p.237, fn. 386–88

*231. Supra, Chapter IV, Section C(I).

*232. Śanti Purāṇam II-22, Vacana

*233. Ibid, II-60.
exemptions and defending the ōdu. But primarily they were local notables who were enlisted as witnesses for grants.\(^{234}\)

Literary sources mention other officials as well who are conspicuous by their absence from the epigraphic corpus. This is the case with the Niyōjis who are listed in the Vaddārādhane as royal officials\(^{235}\) likewise the Pampa Bhārata mentions the Niyōgi of the Mādiya Bhandāra (jewels) who are apparently responsible for providing the princes, princesses and queens with their clothes and jewels\(^{236}\). While the Pampa Bhārata mentions the Māṇikya Bhandāra Niyōgi as responsible for the safe-keeping of jewels the Sānti Purāṇa vests this responsibility with the Kosādhyaksa\(^{237}\).

Other officials were those who officiated in court ceremonies. Principal among these was the Pādiyāra\(^{238}\) or Dauvārka\(^{239}\) who was the door-keeper and informed the king of the arrival of visitors. The Pādiyāra is mentioned in the Kāḍūr epitaph of AD 971 which commemorates the death of Pāmbabbe, the sister of Būtuga II. She was the senior queen (piriyarasi) of Immaḍi Pādiyāra Dhōrapayya\(^{240}\). The title of piriyarasi applied to Pāmbabbe would indicate that Dhōrapayya was king (arasa) within his own domain but filled the post of Pādiyāra in the Gaṅga court. From the standpoint of the Gaṅgas his identity was defined by his court position. This would indicate that officials of the royal court were drawn from the ranks of the feudatories. Similar is the case with the office of the Adapa, the carrier of the betel pouch, which is mentioned in the Aṛāṇi inscription (Nāgamaṇigala taluk, Maḷḍya district) of AD 972. The inscribed slab is said to have been

\(^{234}\) Supra, Chapter IV, Section C-III & IV.

\(^{235}\) Vaddārādhane op. cit., p. 56.

\(^{236}\) Pampa Bhārata V-67, vacana

\(^{237}\) Ponna’s Sānti Purāṇam II. 70 vacana.

\(^{238}\) Pampa Bhārata IX 29 vacana

\(^{239}\) Sānti Purāṇam II 18 vacana

\(^{240}\) Sānti Purāṇam II 18 vacana
prepared by Adepada Ādayya. K.V. Ramesh opines that many Adepavalas are known to have risen to eminent administrative positions. However, it is more likely the Padiyara the Adep or Adepavalas were subordinate feudal lords who were reduced to this position in the court of their overlord. Harsacarita mentions defeated kings who were humiliated in the court of Harṣa by being made to carry fans. Their rise to higher positions may have been due to an increase in power arising from enhanced territorial holdings or loyal service to the overlord.

The Sāsanadore or maintainer of records is referred to in the Kukkanūr plates of Mārasimha II of AD 968. He was responsible in this case, for the drafting and engraving of the document. This official does not appear to be a feudal lord though the possibility cannot be ruled out.

A state structure lacking an organized bureaucracy which was dependent on corporate militias and levies of feudatories might appear to support the segmentary state hypothesis of Stein. But this model has serious weaknesses. Its proponents stress voluntary submission of the peripheral units and the ritual hegemony of the centre and deny the use of political, administrative and military means of control. Accordingly they have posited "politics of plunder" as the major means of resource acquisition by the centre.

While plunder might have ensured an additional supply of free-flowing resources to the sovereign the numerous inscriptional references to taxes indicate that the state was not devoid of a regular income from its own subject population. However, as we have seen, the continual process of sub-infeudation led to the growth of autonomous power centres within the state.

*241. EC VII (new ed) Ng 99


*244. K.V. Ramesh, op. cit., No. 159, ll.229-230

*245. Supra, p.289ff fn. 137–176
Like the segmentary state theory the proponents of the integrative polity model do not elaborate on its socio-economic structure beyond a recognition that the period was marked by the spread of agrarian settlements, a gradual growth of urbanism and that the pervasive presence of samantas weakened the hold of the state over its revenue base. In his recent formulation Chattopadhyaya does not rule out a categorization of the early medieval state in India as feudal only disagreeing with the Eurocentric orientation of the Indian Federalism and its perceived genesis as resulting from the breakdown of the early historical social formation. The differences between the Indian Federalism school and that of integrative polity has consequently narrowed down.

The Cōlas in Southern Karnāṭaka

As mentioned earlier, the Imperial Cōlas under Rājarāja I had conquered Gangavāḍi by AD 1004. Their inscriptions attest to the presence of officials such as Irai-tanduginra (tax-collector) officials of the Puravuvari (revenue accounts) such as the Puravuvari-tinai-kkalattu-kankani, Puravuvari-tinaikkalam-nayagam, vari-tinaikkalam, Mugavetti, Varipottagakanakkku, Variyilu, and Pattolar the Naṟuvagai (officer who made the tax-settlement of the nādu) etc. This would indicate that the Cōlas extended their bureaucratic organization to cover southern Karnāṭaka as well. Although lands and taxes were often assigned to temples in Gangavāḍi itself, the impression we gain from the

*246. Supra p 270 , fn 46-47.


*248. Supra, Chapter III, Section C.

*249. EC X (old ed) Kl 25

*250. Ibid, Kl 111, 112 (a).

*251. EC IX (old ed), Cp 132.
epigraphic record is that they drew resources from southern Karnataka. The bureaucratic control of the Cōlas over this region is further supported by the fact that Southern Karnataka was brought within the ambit of the territorial reorganization carried out by Rājaraja I and Rājendra I, wherein Gangavadi and Nolambavadi were renamed Mudigondasōlāmandalam and Nigarilisōlāmandalam and the new valanādu units were introduced here as well. The process of renaming nadus and settlements was thorough with Talakādi renamed as Rājarājapuram, Tatimālingi as Jananāthapuram, etc.

However, a closer look at Cōla inscriptions in Southern Karnataka indicates that they exercised close control over the emergent nagarams and brahmadeyas established by them. It is in these settlements that Tamil inscriptions recording the presence of the Cōla administrative cadre are found. In ordinary peasant settlements, Cōla inscriptions are in Kannada and portray a situation where the gāvundas continued to hold sway having shifted their allegiance to the Cōlas and bearing the titles of their new sovereigns.

This does not imply that the Cōlas derived revenue only from nagarams and brahmadeyas and their dependent settlements. On the contrary as the Kōlar inscriptions from the Saptāmārka temples indicate, ordinary peasant settlements were also assessed and their revenue collected and apparently remitted to Cōlamandalam unless they were granted for some temple in Gangavadi itself. The ur and nālgāvundas were yoked to the new order and were responsible for the collection of taxes from their areas of jurisdiction as

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*252. Vide Appendix I., Nos. 29, 30, 34, 186-188, 201


*255. Ibid, TN 230, 227, 233, 229, EC IX (old ed) Cp 132, 130, 131, 42 (a), 135, 88, 127, 129, 139 84; EC X (old ed), Mb 123, Kl 106 (b) and (c), (a), Kl 112(a), (f), Kl 111, etc.

*256. EC V (new ed) TN 142; EC III (new ed) Hg 58; EC IX (old ed) Ht 10, EC X (old ed) Mb 208, 256, etc.

*257. EC X (old ed) Kl 106 (b) and (c)
the Sulidenahalli inscriptions attest. Apart from gavundas, feudatories of higher rank such as Apramęya, the lord of Kottamaṇḍala, the Kongāḷvas and the last Gaṅgas themselves accepted the overlordship of the Imperial Cōḷas and rendered military service to their suzerain.

Thus the Cōḷas differ from earlier suzerains such as the Gaṅgas, the Cāḷukyas, the Rāṣṭrāṇīḷas only in possessing a more organized bureaucracy. For the most part they attempted to utilize the existing power hierarchy for their purposes. But they also systematically used brahmadeyas, nagarams and temples to integrate peripheral units to their heartland. The introduction of Śivabṛāhmaṇas and Śrīvaiṣṇavas to Southern Karnāṭaka was possibly a deliberate device to plant loyal groups of ideologues in the newly conquered territory. Certainly, the Cōḷas exercised closer control over Gangavāḍi than the protagonists of the segmentary state theory suggest.

In sum, the early medieval state in Southern Karnāṭaka was feudal in nature. It was characterised by a vast class of landed intermediaries, ranging in rank from a mahāsāmantādhipati to the humble dependents of heroes. These landlords extracted surplus in the form of rent, siddhāya and taxes such as kirudere, atṭadere, sāmantadere, pattondi and aydondi. Numerous other taxes are mentioned in the epigraphic corpus, which would point to the heavy burden placed on the cultivators. These taxes were farmed.
out to subordinates pointing to the process of sub-infeudation. However we do not have any actual examples of eviction of peasants as its consequence. We do have one reference to the settlement of new peasants at Kirupāṅgara in the ninth century Vijayapura inscription, but this does not appear to be at the expense of the earlier tenants. The tenants (okkal) who were organized in corporate groups in many areas enjoyed inalienable rights over their holdings. They suffered from the imposition of higher graded rights over their lands by the landlords to whom they owed rent and taxes.

In addition to these exactions the peasants were required to feed the army on the march, perform forced labour and lend their bullocks for carting services and perhaps for ploughing the land of the seigneur. We also have evidence that tenants were bound to the land for the duration of their lords’ lives. Their position was made worse by the whittling away of communal rights of pasture in forest and waste lands by their grant to private individuals.

The state attempted to protect the tenants’ interests by specifying the taxes to be collected by the beneficiary and even stipulating the amount. But there was little it could do to prevent abuse once the grant was made in perpetuity. The position of tenants was ameliorated to some extent by the influence wielded by corporate groups who often won tax exemptions from the local ruler.

Literary works class cultivating tenants and the vassals owing military service on par. The ethos of the period demanded dedicated service from the military retainers and the vassals to their lord in return for the subsistence received. Such ties were exemplified by the veḷḷaṇḍicas who bound themselves to commit suicide at the death of their lord or lady. Higher ranking feudatories, however, often reneged on their commitment if the overlord was weak. Power, commonality of interest and ties of blood were as important in holding together the political structure as ties of obedience. This may have been due to the nature of service assignments in our region - a permanent grant made subsequent to service rather than conditional on the performance of service as in Europe. In this as in the absence of a seigneurial system, the social formation of our region differed from the classical West European feudal order.
We have seen earlier that the proponents of the integrative polity do not reject in toto the applicability of the feudal model to early medieval India. Their strength lies in the delineation of the political processes of the early medieval period. But they fail to elaborate on its socio-economic basis. Similarly, the segmentary state hypothesis is inapplicable to our region and period, since the Gaṅgas and more emphatically the Cōlas exercised more than ritual sovereignty over Gaṅgavāḍi. Under the latter, an organized bureaucracy controlled tax assessment and collection even in this peripheral province. Its other major features were parcellized sovereignty and lack of monopoly of force at the centre which is characteristic of the feudal model as well. The feudal social formation thus appears to be best fitted to the evidence at our disposal.