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THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS IN A
SOUTH INDIAN LITTLE KINGDOM

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HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER 81

April 1983

ABSTRACT

This paper represents a preliminary formulation of an analysis of the development of political structures of authority and kingship in the little kingdom of Pudukkottai as well as a partial presentation of ethnographic material concerning the royal subcaste of Pudukkottai. The basic argument is that kinship, or social organization, cannot be seen apart from a political context which must be understood in terms of particular historical dynamics. This argument is exemplified by the myriad ways in which the royal caste, the Kallars, as a whole and the royal subcaste in particular have been formed in relation to the political history of Pudukkottai. The argument further places great emphasis on the institution of the temple, and demonstrates the ways in which temples, and the honors which they constitute and distribute, mediate the relationship of politics and society. Finally, kinship is seen to be only one aspect of the symbolic and moral relationships which are ultimately constituted in relation to the king and the gifts of honors, privileges, and entitlements which he gives.

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The Settlement of Pudukkottai

The little kingdom which will frame this discussion of lineages and subcastes is Pudukkottai, located in the central Tamil country to the south of Tanjore and to the north of Madurai. Pudukkottai was a dry area, with its one major river dry except for a few months of the year when it became a catchment basin for the rains of the northeast monsoon. The annual average rainfall in the state in the twentieth century has been between thirty and thirty-five inches, more than half of which falls in the three months of October, November, and December. Perhaps as much a problem as the uneven distribution of rains is the unpredictability of this already problematic distribution, which, when combined with the occasional failure of all or at least the regular monsoonal distribution, makes planning and production both inextricably uncertain. But, even though Pudukkottai is one of the dry regions of southern India, it is not desert. The steady development of interlocking systems of rain-fed irrigation tanks and associated patterns of dry land agriculture have not only sustained settled agrarian communities but have provided a surplus sufficient to support some of the same kinds of civilizational complexes found in the wet regions of the Tamil country, albeit on a

lesser scale. In addition, Pudukkottai had a symbolic and strategic position of greater importance than many ecologically similar "mixed economy zones," since it was situated directly between the Pantiya and Cola heartlands.

Settlement in the Putukkōṭṭai area was relatively sparse until the early Cōḷa period, that is the ninth and tenth centuries. However, the construction of a number of early rock cut temples of the Pallava style, and the occupation of the area's numerous natural caves by wandering hunters and herders, Jaina ascetics, and early settlers, occasional Cankam literary references to chieftains in the area, and a few lithic inscriptions detailing such events as the feeding of Brahmins, the construction of a sluice, and the provision of arrangements for sacrifice and puja worship, do suggest that the area had been by no means unoccupied.¹ But with the coming of the Cōḷa era there is strong evidence of increasing agrarian settlement, the growth of locality institutions such as community, village, and town assemblies, and the construction and expansion of temples. In fact, during the period from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, which includes periods of both Cōḷa and Pāṇṭiya hegemony over the region, we can already identify many of the local level social and political institutions which remain important in Putukkōṭṭai through to the nineteenth century.

Oral traditions and palm leaf manuscripts provide accounts of settlement in Putukkōṭṭai which express certain fundamental features of social and political relations in the early medieval period. Perhaps the most cited version is found in the Tēkkattūr palm leaf

manuscript:²

Ādonḍaicakravarti brought these Vellālars with him (from Conjeevaram) into the Cōla territory, and Ugra Peru Valudi, the Pāndya king, selected 48,000 good families and imported them from east Conjeevaram and settled them in Pāndya land. The Cōlanāḍu territory occupied by the Vellālars was called Kōnāḍu or the land of the king, and the Pāndya territory, Kānāḍu or forest land.

As in many other settlement stories, for example the Story of the Brothers which recounts the settlement of the Kavuntars in Koṅku Nātu³ and the accounts of the settlement of Vellālars in Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam,⁴ the role of the king in initiating and sponsoring settlement is central. The king is explicitly credited with constituting the new community, and the stories all make reference to the need for the initial conquering of and subsequent protection from the much feared Kurumpars and Vētars who are thought to have roamed in these regions before their settlement by higher castes. Given this conventional frame, the stories then explain the structure of the caste being described. The Tēkkattūr Manuscript concerns the Kārāla Vellālars, and the settlement story accounts for the basic division of the caste into Kānāṭṭars and Kōnāṭṭars each of which have then in addition many exogamous sub-divisions. (Konatu was for the most part north of the river Vēllār, though it extended to the south of the river in the western part of the state, and Kanatu was the region in the southeastern part of the state; Konatu, literally meaning land of the king, was usually thought to be situated in Cola natu, Kanatu,

literally the land of forests, was included in Pantiya natu -- see map.) The manuscript then goes on to eulogize the agricultural skills of the Vellālar community and describes the clearing of the land, the first use of the plough, the building and digging of dams, anicuts, tanks, channels, and wells.

According to copper plate inscriptions that can be found with virtually every Maravar community in Konatu, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Konatu was divided into three kuurrams (Uraiyuur, Ollaiyuur, and URattuur) and was ruled over by the KoonaaTTu Vellalars. According to one such inscription, which begins with a long eulogy to the Vijayanagara Kings: "The Maaniya Turai, King Cuntara PaNTiyan, came to the place and saw the paTTayam (copper plates) and kalveTTu (stone inscriptions) and they decided that the place was for the KoonaaTTu VeLLaLars. . . . The seven paTTams (lineages) of Karukaatta are the overlords of the Perunalluur Kaaniyaacci in Ponnamaraavati, having 756 villages, 1511 hamlets, 21 brahmateyams, 212 tevataayams, and 64 naaTus. . . ." When the Vellalars arrived as settlers they did not come alone; they brought with them the eighteen castes: including barbers, potters, the full range of service castes, as well as shepherds, valaiyars, and paLLis.⁵

While the main purpose of the copper plates held by KonaTTu Maravars is to show how they acquired rights to lands and in temples (kaniyacci), the main purpose of the Tekkatur manuscript seems to be to explain the decline in the position of Vellālar in Putukkōṭṭai after the initial golden age. Disputes and quarrels arose between the two major branches over land, temples, tanks, rights to water of the

river Vēllār, and temple honors.⁶ The fighting that resulted weakened the Vēllālars and led to the settlement and eventually dominance of Maravars in the country. Other manuscripts which concern the migration of Maravars into the State⁷ confirm this connection, and specify that large groups of Maravars were invited by Vēllālars to settle in the southern and western parts of the state to protect them. (I will discuss these manuscripts in more detail when I describe the structure of Maravar settlement in Pudukkottai.) One oral tradition I collected which also suggests this further states that the Kallars were invited by the northern group of Vēllālars to defend them, and that in the process of granting protection rights to these two groups the Vēllālars lost their position of dominance on both sides of the river. Yet another manuscript states that the Kallars came on their own initiative and took sides in the quarrel only after settling down.⁸

Certain basic structural features which emerge from these traditions, however variable they may be, correspond with other evidence about the history of the area. Old copper plates found in the state mention a number of settlements of Karalar Vellalars. Traces of forts built by Vēllālars are still to be found in Kodumbalur and elsewhere in the state. A number of wells built by Karala Vellalars as early as the tenth century remain in use in the southern part of Pudukkottai state.⁹ Vēllālars were certainly among the earliest agricultural settlers in Putukkōṭṭai, but either they never settled in great numbers, or a considerable portion of their population migrated elsewhere before the eighteenth century.

According to oral traditions, Vellalars who continue to live in Konatu trace their ancestry to these early Vellalar settlers. The single remaining family of Kanattu Vellalars claims that the entire group left Pudukkottai shortly after Konatu Kanatu war, with the exception of one family, enjoined to stay by the god so that the entire group would not vanish without a trace (see interview with Tekkatur Vellalar).

All the Maravar groups in Pudukkottai trace their settlement in Pudukkottai to the great war between Konatu and Kanatu. The Maravars became the dominant caste throughout much of the southern part of the state, restricting their settlement to the eastern portion of Kanatu and that portion of Konatu south of the river Velar. The presence of Kallars north of the river Velar was most probably the reason why the Maravars restricted their settlement in such a way, though this is unconfirmed by Kallar oral traditions, which provide few clues about the settlement of the Kallars in Pudukkottai at all. It is reasonable therefore to assume that the Kallars have been the dominant caste in the northern part of the state from perhaps as early as the tenth century. As is evident not only from the story about the settlement of the Maravars in Pudukkottai but also from the later history of Pudukkottai, the dominant position of both the Kallars and Maravars is in large measure a result of their military prowess and strong territorial clan organization, which enabled them early on to establish and maintain rights of protection and local adjudication over the communities where they settled.

Indeed, throughout the Tamil country Kallars and Maravars progressively converted lands which were often just outside the major riverine and deltaic areas of settlement to peasant agriculture. This settlement probably occurred first, during Cōla times, in the Ramnad, Maturai and Pudukkottai areas, and later in portions of Tirunelveli and Tanjore.¹⁰ Stein has noted that in these areas "the relationships between a particular ethnic group and the territory were perhaps stronger than in the older peasant core areas." These areas for the most part correspond with the mixed economy zones of Ludden's description wherein local territorial forms of dominance were most highly developed.¹¹ For the last several centuries it is well known that both Maravars and Kallars have been divided into endogamous sub-divisions which corresponded with territorial sub-divisions. For the most part (and this is certainly true for all areas other than Tanjore), both Maravars and Kallars settled in areas which were unoccupied by the earlier high caste settlers of the Tamil country (mostly Vellalars and Brahmans) or where they managed to oust them from positions of dominance. In addition, both Kallars and Maravars settled in ways designed to facilitate single caste, and at a local level single subcaste, dominance. Although both groups often settled in areas contiguous to each other, it is rare to find Kallars and Maravars settled together in the same locality. The areas of Kallar and Maravar settlement were not, however, unoccupied by lower caste or tribal groups. In Pudukkottai the earliest settlers seem to have been Kurumbas, Vetars, and Valaiyars, all of whom are associated with the forest. (There is no trace today of the Vetars, but the Kurumbas and

the Valaiyars, as late as the nineteenth century, lived in villages on the borders of old forest areas.) The Valaiyars in particular seem to have been converted to quasi serf status as agricultural laborers along with untouchable groups, whose local presence has for long been associated with Maravars and Kallars but whose origins are largely unknown.

The Rise of Kingship in Putukkōṭṭai

The inscriptions of Putukkōṭṭai State provide evidence that chieftains (araiyars) arose at about the same time as locality (nāṭu) assemblies. The araiyars seem to have played an important role in the decision making of the assemblies.¹² However they are most conspicuous in the inscriptions as major donors to temples.¹³ Endowing gifts to temples fulfilled textual prescriptions of kingly beneficence; more particularly the araiyars reenacted models of kingly behavior which had become well established in south India under the Pallavas, Coḷas, and Pāṇṭiyas.¹⁴ These gifts further demonstrated the early relation between temple honors and kingly authority, since an endowment to a temple effected increased participation in the distribution of honors in the temple¹⁵ even as it in more general terms underscored the importance of kingly patronage for temple development. Participation in a larger political universe was also accomplished by the occasional designation of merit accruing from a gift by a chieftain to a larger king.¹⁶

Given the correspondence between more modern forms of territorial and hierarchical organization among the dominant castes of

Putukkōttai and the structure and operation of locality assemblies in the medieval period, we might infer, however speculatively, that these little kings had their origins in positions of authority in both the locality assemblies (as nāttars or nātālvāns)¹⁷ and in their local lineages and subcastes. Indeed (supposing here that later ethnography must be our guide) locality assemblies were nothing more than an extension of lineage and subcaste assemblies, which, as the assemblages and representative bodies of the constituent segmentary units of the dominant caste group, provided authoritative leadership for the entire territorial constellation of social groups. As indicated in palm leaf manuscripts and copper plates, the grant of kaniyacci to a particular territory included not only rights to land and temple honors, but also to the service of, variably put, the eighteen castes, or the right and left hand castes (the valai and itai) and the pallar and paraiyan besides. That the early villages which made up the constituencies of these assemblies had strong caste bases is suggested by the frequent mention in the inscriptions of single caste villages, such as akaraparru (Brahman villages), kallaparru (Kallar villages), and vellanparru (Vellālar villages).

The settlement of villages, endowments of gifts to temples, the exchange of protection rights for shares of the produce between villagers and chiefs, and the particular types of relations that existed between chiefs and their military retainers were all articulated in terms of more general Tamil ideas concerning rights to and shares of the produce of the land. In particular, the mēlvāram, the top, or first, cut, usually thought to be the right of the king or

landlord, was shared with, or rather redirected to, the many individuals and institutions we see represented in the inscriptions, from chiefs to temples to tanks and their keepers. For example, one araiyar remitted (iraiyoli) the melvaram share owed by a particular landholder ordering him to make instead certain contributions both in kind and coin to the temple at Nelvayil.¹⁸ This is the basic form of all inscriptional grants in the Tamil country from the Pallavas on.¹⁹

What makes the Putukkōṭṭai inscriptions particularly interesting is that in addition to this classic sharing of the king's right, we also see the appropriation of kingly rights through the assumption of pāṭikkāval, or protection rights, by nascent kings. These are araiyars with a variety of types and levels of constituency bases. Pāṭikkāval means the protection (kāval) of a place (pāṭi). In the fourteenth century and after, the position of the araiyars as chief donors was complemented by the accordance of patikkaval rights to them over villages and localities.²⁰ The perquisites of the pāṭikkāval right usually included both particular lands which were set aside and specified shares of the total produce of the area. For example in one inscription of 1380 A.D., patikkaval rights included:²¹

1. For lands growing paddy, a head load of sheaves per taṭi of land (taṭi means a measuring rod, or stick, but the unit of land apparently varied over time and space).
2. For lands growing sugar-cane, for one taṭi, twenty palams (an Indian ounce whereof twelve make an English pound) of sugar.
3. For lands growing turmeric, ginger, karanai, and betel also, he is to receive his share.

4. Of cocoanuts, jack trees, plantains, and mangoes growing in the village, he is to receive his due.
5. For cotton growing on dry land, for one punjai land ten pods of cotton

Other rights were included in addition, as well as the apparent purchase of a plot of land for the private use of this chieftain. An initial payment of coin was often made by the araiyars to obtain the pāṭikkāval, but the significance of this is unclear. The payment could have been for a plot of land as in the above case, it could have been a form of security or potential collateral, or it might simply have been a traditional prestation. In any case, the shares of village produce accorded for pāṭikkāval, initially labelled pāṭikkāval cuventiram (from svatantra, meaning share, customary fee, emoluments), gradually became referred to as aracu cuventiram, or the kingly share. Thus, the appropriation of kāval rights seems to have been the major means by which local chiefs attained local sovereignty.

We might also presume that the fundamental prerequisite for the performance of pāṭikkāval, in addition to the initial payment, would be command over a group of military retainers and the ability to support them (which of course would both in turn be increased with every expansion of pāṭikkāval responsibilities and perquisites). Such support would at the very least have consisted of the provision of lands for subsistence. The alienation of lands for the support of military retainers is confirmed by the existence of quite a number of pataiparrus, or hamlets of military holdings.²² Araiyaars are often identified as belonging to a particular pataiparru²³ but the exact

nature of the relation between the chief and the residents of the hamlets is unclear. One inscription records that a number of pataiparrus regularly payed fees to a particular araiyar, and that the araiyar ordered a substantial reduction in those fees in recognition of service and for help rendered when one Valuttūr Pallavarāyar invaded the territory of the chief.²⁴

In addition, the araiyars played an important role in the settlement of new villages and in developing and maintaining infrastructures necessary for agricultural production, most centrally, facilities for irrigation. In an inscription of the early twelfth century one nātālvar (who is also called an aracan, or ruler) is responsible for building a kaliṅku, or sluice, for the Kavinātu tank, which is located just to the southwest of present-day Putukkōttai town.²⁵ In the mid thirteenth century the village of Vicalūr, left uncultivated for years, was resettled by one Vaippūrūtaiyan who is said to have conquered the surrounding nātu. This chief took a direct part in the resettlement of the area by digging tanks and diverting water from the river Vēllār into them.²⁶ In another record,²⁷ the araiyars joined with the residents of the village Cempāttūr in making a gift of land for the maintenance of a tank (kuḷapaṭṭi). In yet another village the residents granted certain pāṭikkāval rights to one Kannaṇ of the village for the excavation of the Umayāṇṭi ēri (tank).²⁸ In addition, inscriptions of the next few centuries amply document the role of araiyars in arbitrating disputes connected with the utilization of irrigational facilities.²⁹ It should also be mentioned in this context that the gifts of araiyars to temples also contributed

to the development of agrarian infrastructures as a consequence of the multifaceted activities of the temple.³⁰ For example, at least one Putukkōṭṭai inscription suggests that temple treasuries served as rural banks.³¹

To return to our earlier discussion of manuscripts concerning the early settlement of the state first by Vellālars and later by Kallars and Maravars, it seems plausible to assume that chiefs of the latter two castes were conspicuously successful in developing the resources and leadership capabilities which would have led, firstly, to their being accorded pāṭikkāval rights, and secondly, to their becoming the araiyars of the inscriptions, particularly from the fourteenth century on, when protection became both the means of securing sovereign rights and of procuring the resources for substantial donorship. Unfortunately, given the variable nature of the titles accorded members of these castes, it is usually impossible to verify this assumption from inscriptional evidence alone. However, the subsequent history of political relations in Putukkōṭṭai reveals so dramatically the appropriation of local-level military control and caste dominance by Kallars in the north and Maravars in the south that it is difficult to doubt a correlation.

The history of the Putukkōṭṭai area from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century was influenced by three interrelated changes: the decline in the importance of locality assemblies, the consolidation of local control and, sometimes, sovereign rights by increasingly powerful araiyars, and, in systemic terms, the introduction of new, intermediate levels of chiefly authority (this is not to say that

intermediate levels are new, only that these particular manifestations are) above the $\bar{n}\bar{a}\bar{t}u$ and yet below the provincial scale (i.e. below the level of the $\bar{C}\bar{o}\bar{l}\bar{a}$ s and the $\bar{P}\bar{a}\bar{n}\bar{t}\bar{i}\bar{y}\bar{a}$ s). All of these changes were in part due to more general trends occurring throughout all of Tamil society under Vijayanagara: the final decline of Pallava, $\bar{C}\bar{o}\bar{l}\bar{a}$, and $\bar{P}\bar{a}\bar{n}\bar{t}\bar{i}\bar{y}\bar{a}$ n rule, the rise of $\bar{N}\bar{a}\bar{y}\bar{a}\bar{k}\bar{a}$ rulership under the framework of Vijayanagara overlordship, the migration of northern Tamil and Telegu castes to southern Tamil $\bar{N}\bar{a}\bar{t}u$, and an associated rise in new settlements and increased competition for agrarian resources particularly in the dry land regions adjacent to traditional agricultural and civilizational centers.³²

The vast expansion of the political and geographical universe under Vijayanagara both provided unprecedented opportunities for mobility and migration and removed from serious contention for overlordship the last of the great Tamil kingdoms, the $\bar{P}\bar{a}\bar{n}\bar{t}\bar{i}\bar{y}\bar{a}$ s. As a corollary of this expansion, the political geography of Tamil $\bar{N}\bar{a}\bar{t}u$ not only became more extensive but also more localized and as a result more subject to frequent alteration and adjustment, depending on the military skills of the araiyars and their capacity to make lasting local alliances and institutional relationships. This was true, as we noted earlier, particularly in the "mixed economy" zones where agrarian settlement was still at an early stage, and where mobility, both for reasons of political and ecological instability, was most pronounced. These developments were not only aided from above but were outgrowths of local political developments. Chiefly groups and persons emerged out of a context in which local authority and decision

making was vested in locality assemblies by being conspicuous donors to temples, charities, and Brahman communities. Their control over the resources necessary for such beneficent activity was then furthered by the transfer of protection rights from locality assemblies to these chiefs, as gradually the chiefs took on more generalized rights than had initially been allocated to them in their position as *kāval* chiefs. Some of these additional rights had to do with the honors accorded the chiefs; others had to do with their control over military followers and their communities. The chiefs continued to be active donors and through this activity garnered increasing shares of local and temple honors as well as ever increasing rights, which, only to regenerate the cycle, they then alienated again.

It was out of this context that south Indian society and polity became dominated in the pre-British period by local chieftains called *pālaiyakārars*, literally leaders of *pālaiyams*, or camps. But local conditions were no more standardized throughout the regions of southern India than were the positions of local *pālaiyakārars*. This can be readily seen by the inclusion in this category of *Rāmanātapuram* and *Putukkōṭṭai* on the one hand and the tiny estates of certain *Tirunelveli* *pālaiyakārars*, sometimes of only a handful of villages, such as *Ciṅkampatti* and *Ūrkātu* on the other. Indeed, the full spectrum of political authority must be seen to include on the bottom end certain *kāvalkārars* (*kāval* chiefs) as well, for example the *Maṇavar* *kāvalkārars* of the *Kalakkātu* and *Naṅkunēri* regions of *Tirunelveli*. Not only in this region, but throughout much of southern

Tamil Nāṭu, local big men took on rights of kāval. In exchange for their service of protecting the grain, cattle, and other domestic property of village inhabitants they were accorded a share of village production in ways similar to the kinds of arrangements made for pāṭikkāval cuventiram as outlined above.³³ Whether these kāval chiefs were at one stage in a developmental cycle of political authority or whether our argument must be restricted to different categories of classification, it is certainly the case that the institutional processes by which protection rights were exchanged for shares of production were at the base of local political systems.

To return to the above sweeping generalizations about changes under Vijayanagara, it must be stressed first, that the salience of intermediate levels of authority was not altogether new, and second, that the decline in the importance of village and locality assemblies was only relative. In the first instance, one of the most important chiefly allies of the Colas in the eighth through tenth centuries had been the Irukkuvels of Kodumpalur, an important Cola temple site on the banks of the river Velar in the northwestern part of modern Pudukkottai state. Stein disputes Arokiaswami's claims that the Irukkuvels were Vellalars on the basis of the later dominance of Kallars and Maravars in the whole area, but the congruence of Irukkuvel titles (velir, velar, muveṇḍavelar) with titles used by Vellalars of the area today and the coincidence of the dates of Irukkuvel dominance with the time sequences implied in the many origin stories, copper plates, and palm leaf manuscripts which all attribute initial settlement and leadership in Konatu to Vellalars may

suggest otherwise. Certainly, the Irrukkuvels were emulating notions of local kingship established in core areas of Vellalar and Brahman dominance. These ideas were impressively enacted in the building of major temples and the establishment of brahman settlements (brahmadeyas). Nevertheless, whoever the Irrukkuvels were, and whatever their relationship to karala and/or karkatta Vellalars referred to in local sources, the distinctive development of Kallar and Maravar kingship in this region seems as much an outgrowth of trends established by the local araiyars who secured patikkaval rights in the period after the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as of the nascent forms of chiefship which were so central to Pallava and Cola periods, however much later Kallar and Maravar forms borrowed from earlier chiefly traditions.

The increasing importance of the araiyar throughout the Vijayanagara period can further be seen in the new privileges accorded him and in the increased formalization of the transfer of pāṭikkāval rights in the āciriyaṭiramaṇam, a deed of āciriyaṇ (from āśraya, meaning seeking refuge from,³⁴ a term which suggests a more wide ranging "submission" on the part of the residents of the localities to the authority of the araiyar than might have been the case before).³⁵ It is also at this point that the share accorded to the araiyar was called the aracu cuventiram rather than pāṭikkāval cuventiram, which as I noted above makes explicit the kingly nature of the right.

The new and broader nature of the privileges accorded to pāṭikkāval araiyars can be seen in an inscription of 1477.³⁶ For assuming the pāṭikkāval of a cluster of villages, the araiyar was

entitled to receive twelve ari (a reaped handful of paddy) and one patakkū (as with all measures they vary, but this usually means 200 cubic inches) of paddy for every mā (approximately one-third of an acre), a share in the fees leviable from temples, special rights over tanks, one cage of hares from the Valaiyars (hunters) during the months of Āṭi and Kārtikkai (roughly, July and November), milk and ghee from the shepherds, two fowl from the Pallars and Paraiyars during the same two months; in addition, flags and torches were to be carried in front of the araiyar during the day, conches were to be blown as he mounted or dismounted from his horse or vehicle, and he was entitled to append a long series of titles (virutāvali) to his name. In other words, the honors of kingly authority were now being attached to the previous shares of produce, and the araiyar had become a little king of the sort we read about in the vamcāvalis.

An examination of the career of the Cūraikkuti chiefs of Atalaiyūr Nāṭu in the southwestern portion of Putukkōṭṭai exemplifies the general picture already presented. The first inscriptional reference to chiefs of this area comes in the eighth century³⁷ when a Nāṭālvān (chief of a nāṭu) of this nāṭu gave a gold offering for the maintenance of a lamp to one Tirumūlaṭṭānaṭṭu-māṭēver who belonged to a certain tēvatāna (a land grant for the support of temples and temple personnel). This gift was placed under the protection of the residents (ūrom) of Punnankuṭi, suggesting that the rights and the capacity of protection at that time rested with locality assemblies. In the early twelfth century³⁸ another Atalaiyūr Nāṭālvān made a gift, this time along with the local nāṭu assembly, of tax free land for

offerings to a Visnu temple in Irumpunāṭu. Although the gift was given jointly by the chief and the assembly, the offering was consecrated in the chief's name. In the early thirteenth century³⁹ the Atalaiyūr Nāṭālvān, acting alone, assigned the cesses from a particular village for daily offerings in a temple. This inscription, especially in so far as it contrasts with those before it, suggests the increased concentration of rights to the mēlvāram (or structural equivalent) of the village produce in the hands of the chief and the associated decline in the power and position of the local assembly.

This trend is further advanced in a grant of the early fourteenth century⁴⁰ in which the local chief, no longer called the nāṭālvān but now entitled Ponnān Alakiya Perumāḷ, again acting alone, assigned the mēlvāram of a particular piece of land for the support of some temple offerings. In the mid fourteenth century⁴¹ an inscription registers the grant of pāṭikkāval lands and rights by the residents of Mēlur to the chief. Forty years later⁴² the residents of nearby Ātanūr followed suit and also granted their pāṭikkāval rights to the Cūraikkutī chief. In a grant of 1421⁴³ the subordinate position of the local assembly is again suggested by its perfunctory acceptance of alienations made by the chief. In other grants of the same period the chief patronized priests and monasteries (maṭam) in addition to making the usual temple offerings in his own name.⁴⁴ It was a chieftain in this line who in 1449⁴⁵ reduced the cesses owed him by members of a number of pataiparrus in recognition of their military services, which as I mentioned above demonstrates the kingly nature of the rights over military hamlets as well. In the sixteenth century, chiefs of

Cūraikkuṭi granted land and shares of produce (cuventirams) to military commanders (paṭaittalaivari) serving under him.⁴⁶ Here the mention of military commanders rather than simply military hamlets suggests the increased number of levels in the chain of command and perhaps as well the enhanced power of the Cūraikkuṭi chiefs.

Beginning with a grant of 1498,⁴⁷ the inscriptions of this line of chiefs were prefaced by prasastis which contained eulogies of the chiefs and listed their glorious titles. The earliest title referred to their renown as protectors: "He who preserved those who sought protection," a clear reference to their ability to fulfill all the terms of the pāṭikkāval right. A title used twice in the sixteenth century concerned their domination over the Pāṇṭiyas: "He who mounted his horse while the Pāṇṭiyan was holding the stirrup."⁴⁸ In the second of these grants the Cūraikkuṭi chiefs included with their own titles an introductory prasāsti to the Vijayanagara king: "The establisher of the Pāṇṭiya and the Cōḷa dominions, the conqueror of Ilam (Sri Lanka), Kampalam, and Yatpānam, the victory over the army of the Muslims and the subduer of their pride." Thus the Cūraikkuṭi rulers achieved victory first by their local exploits and finally by their metonymic identification with the great overlord of Vijayanagara. These prasāstis thus succinctly record the history of the chiefly line. Starting as local protectors they rose in power at the time of the Pāṇṭiyan decline and proudly proclaimed a symbolic victory over a once powerful and still culturally pervasive dynasty. This victory was accomplished under the aegis of the new supreme overlord of Vijayanagara, which had dramatically reconstituted the

coordinates of the Tamil political universe from the late fourteenth century on.

Other local dynasties which exercised intermittent control over multi-natu areas within the Putukkōṭṭai region during this period followed similar paths. The Pallavaraiyars (now one of the major titles used by some Kallars and Maṇavars in Putukkōṭṭai and the last of the little kings in Pudukkottai before the rise of the Tontaimans, the Kallar kings) first appeared in Peruṅkalūr and Vaitṭūr (in the north-central part of the state) in inscriptions of the early fourteenth century as araiyars.⁴⁹ By the mid fifteenth century they were appending illustrious epithets to their names such as "those who protected the crown of the Pāṇṭiya and the dignity of the Caluva" and claimed to have been granted land from one Rāmappa Nāyakar, the representative of Vicuvanata Nayaka of Maturai.⁵⁰ The last two rulers of this line assumed the title of "Rājyampaṇṇi Arulukaiyil," or those who performed the act of ruling with grace.⁵¹ Another trans-local dynasty of the same period was the Vanataraiyars, or Banas, who ruled a region in western Putukkōṭṭai contiguous to and in parts overlapping with those areas "ruled" by the Pallavaraiyars. They made their first appearance as cattle raiders in 1274⁵² and by the late fifteenth century appear to have become quite powerful. One of their inscriptions announced that when the banner of the Banas was unfurled, the tiger of the Cōḷa, the carp of the Pāṇṭiya, and the bow of the Cēra all disappeared.⁵³ Although it is not clear to which caste the Banas belonged, the Tēkkattūr Manuscript mentions that they enrolled Kallar chieftains to assist them in fighting against the Kōṇāṭu

Vellāḷars.⁵⁴ Other similar local chiefly families in Putukkōṭṭai were the Kāṅkaraiyars, the Dharmaraiyars, the Tōṇṭaimāns of Arantaṅki, and the chiefs of Pērāmpūr and Kuttalūr, of Iluppūr, Kumarāvāṭi, and Maruṅkāpuri.

Thus we see the political dynamic of little kingship operating at a level which began with araiyars who then developed into little kings of the above type. The inscriptional record parallel rather precisely the stories in the vamaḥvalis which depict the rise to little kingship of pālaiyakārars. Whereas in the vamaḥvalis the little kings begin their "political" careers by performing heroic acts, here the araiyars begin by engaging in the protection of village communities and local institutions. In both cases the rise to little kingship is effected through beneficence to temples and Brahmins as well as the attainment of royal honors.

But what about the social base of these little kings? Did they really abandon the local level social and political groups which provided the initial base for their emergent political activity? As noted above, inscriptional evidence (and this is not true for Pudukkottai alone) for the period after the fifteenth century seems to suggest that in Putukkōṭṭai there was a marked decline in the functional importance of the village (ūr) and locality (nātu) assemblies. Later inscriptions of the sixteenth century⁵⁵ refer to meetings of temple authorities, leaders of various castes and communities, and representatives of villages, but not to the old assembly names of the ūr, cāpa, or nātu. When residents did meet together it was often to sell or grant pāṭikkāval rights to a

chieftain.⁵⁶

However, this conventional interpretation based on the appearance of terms in the inscriptional record may miss the actual structural dynamic. Village and locality assemblies did not so much decline as become increasingly encompassed by leaders who represented these assemblies and assembled them in new hierarchical forms. These forms, due to the congruence mentioned earlier between kin-based and territory-based assemblies, inevitably entailed newly formulated relationships over time between different groups and different territories and indeed changes in the very structures of lineage and subcaste.

In writing a social history of this kind, this may be the trickiest area of all, for the evidence is not only slim but often not organized in the chronological form which supplies most of the explanatory energy and structure of such histories. We must often read modern day social forms backward in time, with only the thinnest of contemporaneous or contextual information to guide a series of speculations based on structural arguments. But try we must, for this is the area where we may ultimately find the richest results in our attempt to disentangle the murky relations of social structure and political authority in the Tamil country. And we must do this before proceeding further with the "political history" of Pudukkottai, since the very terms of our reconstruction of this history must now be based on what we perceive to be certain fundamental social processes occurring at the local level.

Indeed, it will be my thesis here that to adequately explore the development of Kallar and Maravar kingship (and, in the case of Pudukkottai we are, of course, dealing specifically with Kallar kingship) we must strive, often without much help from the inscriptional record, to understand the developing structures of local level Kallar and Maravar society. In this attempt, it will be equally clear that no adequate understanding of Kallar and Maravar society can be gained without paying a great deal of simultaneous attention to the political dimension of local society. Ultimately, my argument will be that neither society nor polity can be understood as separate domains, indeed that Stein's proposal of a segmentary argument can be most usefully employed in this kind of inquiry, where we can see direct links (as well as instructively inexact fits) between the segmentary structure of lineages, subcastes, and castes and the emerging structure, at the regional level, of the pre-colonial old regime state. As problematic as the historical record may be, the problems of avoiding history (and by implication the political) are more severe, as can be seen in (and subsequently will be addressed in relation to) the writings of Louis Dumont on the Kallars of Tamil Nadu.

Because Kallar kingship emerged triumphant in Pudukkottai at the end of the seventeenth century and has continued to give society and politics in Pudukkottai its characteristic shape to the present day (even with the colonial freezing of the old regime's political and social process) we must begin with, and stress, the Kallars of Pudukkottai.

The Kallars of Pudukkottai

However one defines "dominance," the Kallars are the dominant caste throughout Pudukkottai state, though their dominance (at the village, locality, as well as statewide levels) applies particularly to the northern and eastern portions of the state, roughly demarcated by Kolattur and Alankuti taluks. The only group with a higher statewide population is the Valaiyars, whose position in caste rank and economic position is usually only slightly above the untouchables and certainly below all the other major caste groups. In the 1931 census the Valaiyars had a population of 56,607, and the Kallars had 46,743. In Kolattur taluk, Kallars held an absolute majority. In Alankuti they were virtually tied with the Valaiyars. However if one discounts Pudukkottai town, which is necessary in a study of village and local level dominance, even in Alankuti the Kallars exceeded Valaiyars in population. In Tirumayyam, where many Kallars settled only after the establishment of Kallar kingship at the specific instance of the Tontaiman kings, there were fewer Kallars than Valaiyars, or Chettiars, or for that matter Pallans.

Population figures only define a certain aspect of dominance, though it is important to note the preponderance of Kallars in absolute numbers in major portions of the state. More importantly, Kallars owned the greatest amount of land; occupied by far the greatest number of authoritative positions, particularly as village and locality headmen, and more generally as mirasdars (a term which will be defined later, but can for the moment be glossed rather inappropriately as village elites or magnates); and controlled the

most important temples as trustees. These temples were often their lineage, village, or natu temples, and of course Kallars received temple honors accordingly, as well as because of their relationship to the king. In short, Kallars were dominant not only in terms of their numbers, but for economic, political, and ritual reasons. In this latter regard, it is important to note at the outset that while Kallars have been said in other regions to be relatively low among non-Brahman castes, this is not true in Pudukkottai. Some Brahman informants even told me that they were the local representatives of Kshatriyas.

In Pudukkottai the Kallars are organized into exogamous patrilineal lineages called (inter alia) paTTapeyars (literally meaning the name of a title -- lineages are also called karais, particularly when referring to them in the context of temple honors or wherever rank might be invoked). These are grouped into territorially based endogamous subcastes called naaTu, a word which means social group in a marked sense but in an unmarked sense means territory or country (a meaning shared by all Tamilians). In Putukkōṭṭai there are at least thirty-four Kallar natus, and⁵⁷ they represent discrete territorial groupings which are often contiguous but not overlapping, except where natus have split. The natus vary in size. Most natus average between 12 and 18 villages. Some are even smaller. The largest natu is the Vicinki Natu. It is followed by the Ampu Natu, the royal subcaste, which has internal territorial subdivisions called kuppams. The Vicinki Natu constitutes an exception to the rule of natu endogamy, in that it is divided into a number of territorial

subdivisions which, unlike the case in Ampu Natu, are of roughly equivalent size and are called natus as well. These natus, while important for ritual and juridical reasons, define neither endogamy nor exogamy. The Kall̥ar n̄atus are fairly evenly distributed across the part of the state which is north of the river, and which is today represented by the two taluks of Kolatt̄ur and Alaṅkuṭi (see Figure 1). More than half of the n̄atus I have mapped correspond to, and nearly as many take their names from, n̄atus which existed in the Cōla and Pāṇṭiya periods. Those n̄atus which do correspond tend to be situated along or near the river Vēllār (see Figure 2). Each n̄atu has one central town where the subcaste temple is located. The town is usually located in the center of the n̄atu. However there are a number of n̄atus which have apparently split into northern and southern, or eastern and western divisions and which continue to share the same subcaste temple and deity.

Each Kall̥ar lineage, village, and subcaste has its own headman, and its own tutelary deity. This is merely a general statement which must be examined in a number of ethnographic contexts to realize the structure of variation. Even though most lineages have a head of some sort, in some cases individual lineage will not have a formal headman but will belong to a group of lineages or a village which will. Often the group of lineages and the village are coterminous.

The usual term for headman is ampalam, which means more generally the central square and/or meeting place of the village. This central square is sometimes more specifically marked by a raised

stone platform, and in some villages a stone pillar represents the village ampalam. The ampalam of the subcaste is usually called the nattampalam. In some villages which constitute the centers of their natus the raised stone platform might have as many stone pillars as there are village ampalams with one larger pillar representing the nattampalam. In some parts of the state, and also elsewhere, Kallars are referred to as ampalakarars, people of the ampalam; in this instance this title has been generalized in exactly the same manner as the title Teevar for Maturai Kallars.⁵⁸

The subcaste as a whole and its two most important (and variably interrelated) constituent units of villages and lineages are represented not only by ampalams but also by deities. There are lineage deities, village deities (sometimes the same as the lineage deity of the highest lineage but often separate), and subcaste deities. Often the lineage deities (kula teyvam) are not housed in formal temples but rather are simple shrines, sometimes to ancestors, under trees or behind houses. Village deities (kirama teyvam) are often protection deities such as Aiyanar and Karuppar, though sometimes a goddess such as Mariyamman will serve as the village deity. Either choice will not necessarily mean that the other kind of temple is not present, but will rather reflect the inflection of the common stock of village deities by local social concerns and orientations. The subcaste deity (nattu teyvam) is often a goddess, though here again there is much variation, with this deity often being Siva and sometimes even Aiyanar. The subcaste deity is housed in a temple (nattu kovil) which serves as a locus for subcaste festivals

(tiruvira) and meetings (nattu kuttam). These temples thus serve to symbolize the hierarchical supremacy of the natu as well as the incorporation of the two lower units — lineages and villages -- within a single encompassing entity, with ritual, political, and juridical functions. They do not merely represent a whole but also gradate and rank the parts of that whole with respect to each other.

Membership in a village, a lineage, and a subcaste was ultimately talked about in terms of whether one had kaniyacci (a right to worship and receive temple honors) in the relevant temples. While all kaniyaccikarars were equal in that they all held an equal right to (urimai) or share in (panku) participation in the affairs of the temple, the nature of participation was ranked. The nattampalams were honored first, followed in order either by a ranked list of villages (represented by their respective ampalams) or of lineages (likewise represented). Thus, the units were hierarchialized both in that each unit in the system was represented by one or more persons, and in that each unit at each particular level was ranked. Hierarchialization extended beyond even the boundaries of the subcaste. The natu of the Pudukkottai king, Ampu Natu, was recognized as superior to all others, and in each local temple a local representative of this natu, if present, could receive first honors on behalf of the Raja.

I mentioned above that the term for lineage was pattapeyar. This is not the only, nor the most frequently used, term for lineage. The other important term for lineage is karai. Karai literally means border, or boundary, often referring to the bank of a river or the shore of the sea. It is a term depicting the space where two

different things meet: more specifically where these two things are differentiated. Interestingly, karai has many of the same literal meanings as mariyaatai, a term which is generally used to mean honor but in a more literal sense means boundary as well. This is particularly important because karai is used for lineage when lineages are ranked, and they are most commonly ranked when honors are involved in some form or another. Karais, whether they are named or not, are almost always talked about in numerical rank order: as in first karai (mutal karai), second karai (ireeNTam karai), and so on down the line. In this context, karais usually refer to lineages, but karai can also mean village. This in itself is not so extraordinary, since we will see a markedly strong correlation between particular villages and particular lineages. But the term karai, though less commonly, can mean other things as well, such as family, or even subcaste or caste, depending upon context. The use of this term is not specific to Kallars. It is used among most other castes even when the term pattapeyar is not used. Not only are karais always ranked, this ranking usually has something to do with honor(s) in the specific context of temple festivals. The term pattapeyar is usually used in talking about kinship, which seems to privilege sentiments of equality rather than rank, although limited forms of hypergamy will be seen to operate even in our pure Dravidian kinship system. It seems to me that this difference is of major importance in understanding the way in which kinship can be variably inflected by political and territorial concerns. Further this kind of inflection is invariably mediated by temples and honors, about which I will have a great deal

to say.

My analytic construction of the hierarchical ordering and structuration of these units and layers is of course an outsider's construction, put together on the basis of fragments of speech and praxis, ethnographically grounded to be sure, but ultimately cemented by external rules of logic and evidence. But, in the same terms as I have proposed for the interrelation of ethnohistory and history⁵⁹ I contend that ethnosociology shapes the ethnology here at every point, providing not simply checks against overt ethnocentrism but wherever possible the epistemological parameters for the evaluation of evidence, the identification of the logic of social construction, and the cultural argumentation within this book.

I will give two pertinent examples here. I have noted that Kallar social forms are defined by the authority of the ampalam and the deity. At one point when I asked a group of Kallars about the meaning of kuppam (the territorial subdivision within the royal subcaste), I was told: "By kuppam we mean the assemblage of Kallars in a group having a common temple and headed by an ampalam of their own. This group discusses the issues in the common temple under the leadership of the ampalam. They also discuss the festival (tiruviRaa) at these times. We settle our issues and our disputes within the kuppam." It is in these terms that the kuppam, like the natu, is a political, ritual, and juridical group. That it is a social group as well is assumed due to marriage rules.

I have gone even further to suggest that temples and worship were of especially crucial importance for the development of social

forms in Pudukkottai. Let me quote again from a different interview.

I asked about the origin of the Ampu Nattu Kallars, and was told:

"You see, in the beginning temples were formed. Each temple was constituted by a group (camutaayam) of worshippers. The people of this camutaayam became relatives. The people worshipping in Ampu kovil are AmpunaaTTu kallars. We are so called because of the God we worship, our temple, our customs, etc." Statements like this take on explanatory privilege in my argument because they reveal for example that however much priority anthropology as a discipline might place on kinship as the bedrock of social formation (true both generally and more relevantly in the writings of Louis Dumont on Kallars and Maravars) we cannot accept this a priori claim as either true or guiding in my study. As hinted above, the significance of temples and honors is that they define the unity of the group, at the same time that they provide a way of ranking and gradating the units of the group (which units also are defined in the same way . . .). As I will show, the sociological verities inherited from Durkheim as well as the political logics insisted upon by any student of history become most vividly constructed, displayed, and contested in (and in relation to) temples (of all sorts). Hence it is hard to understand Dumont's differential inflection and definition of religion as separate from and encompassing of politics (and economics, which, if anything in this system, seems to be encompassed rather by politics, kinship, and religion together).

The above insights derived from interviews have been supplemented by explicit statements of similar sorts which were

written in court cases and petitions to the king and his officers. For example, disputes over temple management often led to explicit statements, as in the following petition to the Darbar: "In the village of Themmavoor there is a Mariammankovil endowed with manyam lands by Sircar and with other property and income by the petitioner and others of the village. The social unit of the village consists of six karais and other laboring classes. One of the karais represents the chief of the six karais and is served as the Ampalakarar. All the social and religious functions common to the residents of the village are performed by the said social unit and the duties, respects, and responsibilities are shared by the various groups in the social unit. So to say, the diversions of the social unit form a component part for all the common affairs of the village, and no individual can have his own way of doing things in respect of the common affairs. . . ."

These "ethnological" insights (and it is hard to improve upon the sociology of the above quote) provide the basis for my construction of a cultural grammar. Guided by the categories and analytic procedures of this kind of ethnological method, I go further to identify the domains which are of crucial significance for mediating certain principles of kinship and the dynamic logic of politics. As the above examples show, the temple is such a critical domain. Though the pathbreaking work of Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge has focussed on temples of a very different scale with very different sociologies, it has anticipated the key role of the temple in a study such as this. But, because of the focus of their

work, they have not been able to view the role of kinship either in the constitution of the temple or in the part the temple plays in mediating kinship and political processes. As a methodological caveat, however, we must remember that our study of the temple will reveal that these mediative operations can only be isolated at an analytic level. Our identification of mediation cannot be allowed necessarily to affect our assessment of the intentional reality, or rather, of the epistemological grid which mediates all meaning in the given society, unless the ethnosociological evidence permits.

So far, our picture of Kallar society is general, and must be examined in its particulars. For example, the natu temple of the royal subcaste was not the state temple. Rather, the king established a separate temple, adjacent to the capital town, as the temple of the tutelary deity of the royal family. In consequence it became the state temple. As another example, the raja's lineage within the royal subcaste was not actually the first in rank within the subcaste. As one informant told me, the raja got the first honors because he was the raja, not because of his position within the kinship hierarchy. On this same point, another informant said that the raja mariyaatai is different from ina mariyaatai. This means that the honors given to a king because of his position as king are different from the honors given to individuals on the basis of their position in their caste or community (inam). Both these examples show us that the segmentary structure of the kinship system can neither be fully explained by nor be seen to have fully accommodated itself to the particular political developments in the state. Without these details our picture of the

interaction of kinship and politics is incomplete. As mentioned above, there are similar irregularities in the systematic interaction of territory and kinship. There were major differences in the relative importance and interrelations of lineages and villages in different subcastes. Clearly, these details must be scrutinized if we are to understand the relation of territory to social forms (an important question in relation to Dumont, who saw kinship among the Kallars as substantially unaffected either by territory or politics -- and the two for him go together -- below the level of the natu).

I will now examine the data in context. Although, there are differences in each natu, there are four general types. First, the royal subcaste is of crucial ethnographic importance. Second, Vicinki Natu, the most extensive of all natus, was subdivided in turn by natus, and was least inflected of all natus in Pudukkottai by the political order. Third, the common type of natu, middling in status, smaller in size, can be observed in most of the other natus; in this study we will include data from a number of different natus to establish the fundamental parameters of this basic type. It will be seen that there was also a fourth type: that of the immigrant group. This last type was represented by the Terkketi Kallars, who migrated rather recently (probably in the early eighteenth century) to Pudukkottai as a result of the recruitment of a major chief of this subcaste for the service of the Pudukkottai king. (In this paper I will only present, and that too in incomplete form, a picture of the royal subcaste.)

The Royal Subcaste: Ampu Natu

Ampu Natu is located in the far northeastern part of Pudukkottai state, extending beyond the boundaries of the state. The Natu is divided into nine kuppams, or groups, which are territorial divisions named in all but two cases after villages. The word kuppam is not used anywhere else in Pudukkottai. Kuppam has a strong territorial connotation, keeping in mind that territory does not exist independently of the social groups it defines and demarcates. On several occasions my informants used kuppam interchangeably with natu.

The two exceptions, sometimes given as the first and second kuppams and other times as the two halves of the first kuppam, are named after streets, a commonly used way of subdividing villages. In both of these cases, Vata Teru and Ten Teru (northern street and southern street), the kuppams now occupy more than one village, though each group has a head village. Since these two groups occupy the first (or first and second) kuppams, the particular names suggest a primordial division (a division which correlated with a territorial division in settlement within the village) within the first and most important lineage (Ten Teru is the Raja's kuppam) at a time before the subsequent diversity of settlement developed, and perhaps even before the other kuppams had joined the natu. In other words, it was not initially necessary to specify the village because in the beginning the village in which Vata Teru and Ten Teru was located was probably the only village of the group. Here I am speculating not on the base of a specific oral tradition about this group but rather on comments made by a number of informants that all natus began with an initial

primordial lineage. Other lineages joined later in time. The order of joining is reflected in the order in which temple honors are given at the annual natu festival. This explanation of the development of the group avoids the possibility that lineages derive from divisions from a common lineage. Thus there is no violation of the basic marriage pattern that only the lineage is the exogamous unit and that each lineage can and does marry any other lineage within the endogamous subcaste natu. (The Pudukkottai Kallars are different in this respect from the Pramalai Kallar for whom lineages do not necessarily constitute the unit of exogamy.) There are, as we shall see, certain lineages that do not intermarry, but these are always specified. Sometimes this is because of the prohibition of marriage with a particular lineage because of excommunication for one reason or another. Other times this is because of the specification of a particular relationship between lineages which would mean they cannot intermarry, as for example in the rare cases when lineages may start with divisions of brothers of the same father but of different wives.

Although all my informants agreed that there were nine kuppams, the exact list varied in a number of renditions, according to whether certain groups were said to be half kuppams or full. The kuppams were always listed in order or rank. This order was said to be that in which the kuppams were called for honors at the annual festival of the subcaste temple, Ampu Kovil. This temple, while located relatively centrally for the natu as a whole, was not situated in the middle of a village which was the central village for the natu. Today there are no Kallars living in the village which takes its name

from the temple. The main temple is an old Civa temple built most probably in early Cola times, perhaps in the tenth century. The actual nattu teyvam is a goddess, Vira Makali Amman, housed in a separate shrine outside the prakara (wall) of the main Civa temple. This suggests that the goddess shrine was added on considerably later. The connection of the temple to the Colas also figures in the origin myth stated by some of the Ampu Nattu informants. According to these informants, the Ampu Nattu Kallars were brought to Ampu Nattu by the Colas to secure their borders.

The Ampu Nattu Kallars are the only Kallar group to have a particular conception of their settlement in Pudukkottai (with the single exception of the Terketti Kallars, who migrated to the state area in the eighteenth century). Those AN Kallars of the Raja's kuppam (and here I refer both to Vata Teru and Ten Teru) share their origin story with the Tontaiman Rajas. I do not know whether this story is of independent origin or is more recently derived from the royal vamcavali, although I suspect the latter. They came from the north, from the forests and hills around Tirupati, which is on the northern border of the Tamil country where it becomes increasingly inhabited by Telegu speakers. Tirupati is one of the most sacred sites in the south, a rough outcrop of the Eastern Ghats which was of special importance during Vijayanagara times because of the major temple center there. From Tirupati they went to Kancheepuram, a bit further to the south, the ancient capital of the Pallava dynasty and the Tontaimantalam country, from which the royal family took its title, Tontaiman, and from which the first group in Ten Teru, the

Pallavaraiyars, also took their title. From there during CoRa times they moved to Ampil, near Lalkuti, on the northern banks of the Kaveri river midway between Tiruchirappalli and Tanjavur (this explains one folk etymology for Ampu Natu, which derives Ampu from Ampil). Finally, according to Pallavaraiyar informants, the Ampu Nattu Kallars were brought from Ampil and settled in Ampu Natu, a southern outpost of the CoRa kingdom (just to the south of the plain irrigated by the Kaveri) by the CoRa kings. This would suggest a time period roughly between the tenth and late twelfth centuries. According to the Pallavaraiyars, the nine kuppams then dispersed from Ampu Kovil to their different respective places within the natu.

Origin accounts from other AN kuppams provide a different story of settlement. Informants from Karampakuti and Neiveli kuppams both said that they came from Manapparai, located about thirty miles southwest of Tiruchirappalli. I was told by the nattampalam of Karampakuti kuppam that: "Our kula teyvam was originally at Manapparai and still there is a temple in Manapparai called AanTavaar Kovil. This MaNappaarai temple is like the 'head of the department' [spoken in English, using a familiar bureaucratic metaphor]. We took the swami from Manapparai to VaTavaaLam and from there to KarampakkuTi, where we finally settled down. The Sri Karuppar Muttaiya in Karampakuti, our family deity [for all members of his paTTapeyar, Tennatiraiyar] here, is the same god as the ones in VaTavaalam and MaNappaarai." This statement is interesting because it reveals that in all probability Ampu Natu is an amalgamation of at least two different migrations of Kallars who, when they settled down

in the same area, formed a social basis (the natu grouping) for their territorial proximity. We can speculate that the logic of social formation is one that insists upon the formation of a social entity to parallel territorial association, even as we know that territorial association often develops at least in part because of group migration.

In the vamcavalis, we see many cases of groups, sometimes divisions of formerly larger groups which divided due to a quarrel, migrating and settling down together in a new area. All of these groups establish their family deity in the new places to which they go. These Kallars follow the same method of transferring their deity as that described for the Pramalai Kallar by Dumont. They take a handful of soil -- pitimaan -- from the site of the original shrine which continues to exist and use it to install their deity in a new shrine.⁶⁰ Given the strong territorial associations of Kallars, we might assume that migration is not undertaken lightly. And yet this technique of migration provides a means for the mixing of the old soil which was appropriate to the particular group (indeed part of their substance) with the new soil, making it, too, appropriate. The establishment of the deity is of course all important, since the social group is defined largely in terms of its common worship of a tutelary deity.

Another informant from the Neiveli kuppam also said that his family migrated from Manapparai. He told me that when his forefathers came from Manapparai, the headman of their group walked with an arrow which he used like a walking stick. The group stopped walking when

the arrow became stuck in the ground in Ampu Kovil. According to him, there is still an arrow there which is worshipped along with Siva and the goddess. Thus he explained to me how Ampu Kovil got its name, since ampu means arrow. This kind of etymological explanation is an important component of folk discourse about origins. Interestingly, both the Pallavaraiyars and this latter informant invoke etymology as proof of the veracity of their tales, which differ. In this last story, we also see that migration is guided by the deity, which resides within the arrow. It is often the case that a family deity has no iconic form other than as a spear or sword. The arrow, guided by the deity, finds the soil which is appropriate for it, and therefore for the group at large. In other vamcavalis for other areas, a deity will often appear before the headman in the chosen place and instruct the headman that he should stop his migration there. The first action signifying the end of migration is the building of a temple to the family deity.

Beyond this, we can only speculate about the formation of Ampu Natu. In other natus I was sometimes told that the reason that one lineage was ranked first and received first honors was that it was the first to settle in a particular place. Other groups who migrated later on were incorporated as affines but could never be accorded first rank. This might also explain why it is that in some cases the family deity of the head lineage is also the deity of the natu. Even in these cases the head lineage may have two different family deities. We can suppose from this that territorial association is not simply a product of a kinship system, but in many cases the dynamic cause

(though not the mechanism) for the development of territorially bounded affinal networks. (Dumont is correct that territory is never disassociated from its kinship content. However, as we will see, territory at the level of natu is not the mediating factor for kinship and politics).

In the case of Ampu Natu the central natu temple does not belong to one particular lineage. Instead, the temple belongs to the entire natu. We know nothing about the past associations of Vira Makali Amman with any particular group within Ampu Natu. Indeed, if the goddess was the tutelary deity of any particular group before she was elevated to the status of nattu teyvam it is likely that this group was not Kallar, but Vellalar. As in the case of Maravar settlement in the southern part of the state, Vellalars were the chief previous residents of the area.

There are two branches of Vellalars living in the Ampu Natu. First, the Ampu Kovil is essentially run by a small group of Cooriya Vellalars (Vellalars who come from the CoRa country) variably called AaNTipillai (aaNTi means those who render service in temples; pillai is the common surname used by Vellalars), KaNTiyar (the village from which these Vellalars claim originally to have come), and Staanikar (a term often used for those who manage the internal affairs of the temple). The KaNTiyar Vellalars have as their principal duty the supervision of the temple honors (mariyaatai, or kaalaanci; mariyaatai is the general term meaning honor or respect, and kaalaanci are the actual items given as honors, such as sandalwood paste, holy ash, betel nut, and the piracaatam, or returned food, of rice, plantains,

and coconuts), and make sure that every one gets their due honor in the proper order. The KaNTiyars also oversee the major festivals in Ampu Kovil, and have been allocated one of the important mantakapatis during the major festivals (mantakapati means the right to host and conduct worship and receive first honors on one of the days of the festival).

The KaaNTiyars said about themselves that they were the talaimai (headmen) of the Ampu Nattu Kallars, on whose behalf they did this service and to whom they gave honors. They said that they were given this duty by the raja. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that they have the privilege of calling the natu assembly (or kuuTTam) within which they oversee the arbitration of disputes. This is unusual, as in every other subcaste the nattampalam is the one (except where there are several nattampalams) who calls the assembly and settles the disputes. However since one of the major causes of dispute which occasions these assemblies has to do with honors, it is a natural extension of their role as the guardians of honor in the natu.

How long the Kantiyars have acted in this role is unclear. It could be a longstanding traditional arrangement. It could be that because the head of Vata Teru is outside of Pudukkottai it seems inappropriate to have him conduct it. What is more likely is that since the Raja is obviously the de facto and de jure head of the natu, and indeed the person from whom the peculiar status of the natu is derived, this role would ordinarily be conducted by him. But the Raja does not perform this role, either because there may be a conflict

between him and the classificatory head of the natu (the karaikar of Vatu Teru) or because the Raja has no time for or does not want to associate himself so closely with the adjudication of affairs in his particular community. He is after all the ultimate court of appeal of all Kallars and all communities in the whole state. No other Kallar leader is seen to have the locus standi to fill in for the Raja.

According to one Kallar informant (Narankiapattu): "It was the Vellalars who were living here originally. We were brought here by them. Even now, they have the first mariyaatai." In the words of another Kallar informant (Ammanipattu): "Ampu Kovil is the talaimai iTam (the head place) for Ampu NaaTu. No Ampu Nattu Kallars live there. The Raja placed a KaNTiyaar there to protect (do the paripaalaNam of) the temple. He gives mariyaatai in the temple. He is a piLLai Vellalar." The head of the Pallavaraiyar lineage (the chief lineage in Ten Teru) told me that: "The nattukuttam for Ampu NaaTu should be convened only by the Piccar and KaNTiyar, i.e. the ampunattu vellaalars. For the services of being the staaNikar of ampunaaTu, they were given a maniyam of eighty acres of land. These staaNikars have to meet the expenses for arranging the naTTukuTTam such as providing meals for the participants from their maniyam lands. They do not only organize the kuttam but also function as arbitrators."⁶¹ Another Pallavaraiyar continued to explain: "The nine ampalamas guided by the StaaNikar pass the judgement. Though the raja does not come, on the final day, they place kalkaNtu, lime, betel nut, etc., on a chair to represent the raja. The others sit on a mat spread on the ground." Thus we see that the claims made by the

KaNTiyars are borne out by the Kallars. This last statement is striking in that it suggests that the Vellalars do in a curious way represent the authority of the raja himself. They constitute the symbolic presence of the king by setting up a chair (perhaps a symbol of the throne -- in other traditional assemblies the nattampalams were distinguished either by sitting on the only mat, or by sitting on a raised stone platform) with honors to represent the raja. As the guardians of honor they are uniquely empowered to handle and invoke kingly honors. Indeed, the Kantiyars were occasionally called the Kantiraaajas, thereby expressing the perception that they were, in some sense, kings. As the greatest honor of all, they alone were allowed to sit on an equal platform (camamaata) with the raja during palace functions.

In their capacity as guardians of honor the Vellalars were said to receive first honors. This means that they receive honors before the nine kuppams, but, importantly, not before the raja, whose claim to first honors in all the temples in Pudukkottai goes before even that of learned Brahmans. Further the Vellalars had certain emblems which they were entitled (and indeed enjoined) to use not only in temple rituals but also on state occasions. As the KaNTiyars told me, "If there was any function in the Palace, we used to go with all

* (A similar situation exists within one of the AN kuppams, that of Karampakuti. In this kuppam, and particularly in their kuppam kovil -- to Aiyanar -- a staanikar was appointed for similar reasons. As I was told, "In spite of the pujas performed by the Brahman Gurukkal, other duties such as breaking the coconut, sacrificing the goats, distributing the vipuuti to the kallars, etc., were done by the local group of stanikars, also Cooriya Vellalars.)

of our emblems and honors, with music, etc., taking us in procession, taking the mariyatai. Palace functions could only take place with our presence." Certain of the honors were privileges rather than emblems per se. For example, the raja used to send the car for the KaNTiyars to bring them to any palace function. As mentioned above, the Kantiyars alone were allowed to sit on an equal platform with the raja. The importance of equal seating -- sariyiruppu -- is made clear in a number of the vamcavalis. The specific emblems taken by the Kantiyars were the paTTaa Katti (a sword of honor), betel, garlands, sandal wood, and some other things too. "The sword is a perumai (mark of honor)." I asked for whom the sword was an honor, for him or for the raja. He answered by saying that it was an honor for both: "For us because we serve the raja, for the raja because we show respect to him."

Thus we see again the importance of honors and emblems for constituting and representing social relationships and political authority. The honors given by the Raja to the Vellalars contain, especially in the case of the Kantiyars, some of the sovereign honor of the Raja himself. Here, as elsewhere, honors not only depict hierarchical forms, but express the worship and service components of hierarchical relationships. All honors have the dual role of marking a particular group within the total structure and marking them in such a way as to display the preeminence of the king. In the particular ethnohistory of Pudukkottai, we also realize that the special position of Vellalars is as precursors of Kallar kingship. Insofar as they have residual authority from being the previous honorable settlers of

the Pudukkottai country, they are most uniquely qualified to represent the new kingly authority of the Kallars.

The position of the other group of Vellalars in Ampu Natu also illustrates their special position in Ampu Natu. These Vellalars live in VellalaviTuti, which forms one of the kuppams of Ampu Natu. They receive one share of honors as one half of a kuppam, and the other share is given to Kallars in KallakoTTai. I was told by the Vellalars, that whereas all other kuppams were given only one honor, which could be shared, this kuppam was specifically given two. These Vellalars do not have affinal relations with the CooRiya Vellalars of Ampu Natu, but rather call themselves Karukatta Vellaalars. This is the same title used by the early Vellaalar inhabitants of southern Pudukkottai. According to the chief of the Pallavaraiyars:

For a long time, the Vellalars were ruling the areas around VellalaviTuti as kuṛunilamannars (little kings). They were ruling the paalaiyapaTTus. When the Kallars migrated from Anpil to this area, they destroyed the dominance of the Vellalars. When the Vellalars lost their hold and leadership, they retreated to the single settlement of VellalaviTuti. They requested that we include them as the urimaikaarars and pankutaarars (rightful shareholders) of the temples and families of this kuppam, since they were the AaNta paramparai (the then rulers) of this area. So we gave them the position of a half kuppam and they receive the mariyaatai (honor) for this half kuppam only from us.

This serves as an explanation for this anomaly within Ampu Natu: that

a Vellalar group receives honors as Kallars, at least in a structural sense. This is the only instance in which a caste other than Brahmans receives honors along with the dominant caste. In all other cases within the Ampu Natu and in other natus the representatives of other castes are given honors after those of the individual lineages of the dominant caste. Dominance is signified not only by the fact that the lineages of the dominant group precede other castes in receiving honors but that in structural terms individual lineages are given equivalence to other entire caste groups.

Now that we have examined the Ampu Natu subcaste and its peculiarities as a whole, we should take a more detailed look at the nine kuppams. To begin, let us return to the question: What is a kuppam? Kuppam seems to be related to the word kuppai, which means heap, crowd, or company. Here etymology affords little help. The term kuppam is used among no other groups within Pudukkottai. I have found no reference to it in the ethnographic literature concerning Tamil Nadu. As we noted above, kuppam seems to mean natu. However, the kuppam is sometimes a single village, and never more than ten villages. Hence it corresponds more to the subdivisions which are called natu by the Vicinki Nattu Kallars than to natus in the usual sense of the term. Kuppam is first and foremost a term which defines territory. The list of the nine kuppams is a list of villages and subdivisions thereof. Each kuppam is said to contain a specified group of lineages. Sometimes these are settled in a number of villages each taking its name from its dominant lineage, others are mixed together in a single town or set of hamlets.

There are a number of cases where people of one lineage migrate to and settle in another kuppam. The interesting question then becomes: did they really join another kuppam or did they continue to be acknowledged simply as migrants, who moved for various reasons (often because they were the second or third sons and moved to live with their affinal relatives)? I asked this question many times. In no response did migration change the specific kinship rule among pankalis. Marriages could never be contracted within the exogamous group. But I was struck by what at first appeared to be a contradiction. Some families or sets of families continued to have rights (kaniyacci) to honors (mariyaatai) in their original temple after they had migrated from their native village. Other groups had lost the right to receive their traditional honors. They could only receive honors, usually at a lower rank, in the temple in the village (or kuppam) where they made their new home (e.g. Pantuvakkottai). My informants were unaware of any contradiction in the above.

The contradiction could be resolved logically (though for my purposes never systematically enough) by taking three interrelated factors into account: the reasons for resettlement, the status of the the group within the new settlement, and the duration of time since the migration. Families which were resettled by the king maintained their local status in their original village and kuppam, while in their new places they did not merge with any new group but rather became the in loco representatives of the Raja. Families which moved for economic reasons, often moving to the village of the wife's family, clearly moved with less status and often reversed the usual

hierarchical order between wife giver and wife taker. Status within the new community must also have been determined in part by how large, and subsequently how wealthy and powerful, the new karai was to become. The length of stay within the new village no doubt explains why certain groups increasingly merged with their new kuppams: what happened here was nothing more than a continuation of the powerful assertion over time of the territorial factor, part of the original dynamic involved in the creation and ordering of the kuppams. As we recall, the first karai to settle in any given village (or kuppam) tended to be the dominant karai and to maintain its position of firstness when other groups subsequently joined. It might be noted here that it was far easier, and part of general ethnosociological discourse, to change kuppams than it was to change natus. Very few informants in any natu talked about processes which involved the transfer by any family from membership in one natu to another.

The Royal Kuppam: Vata Teru and Ten Teru

We have already noted irregularities in the segmentary construction of the system. For example, within Ten Teru the Tontaimans are not ranked first even though they are the royal lineage and receive first honors as kings and the relatives of kings. This asymmetry also exists in the relations between Vata Teru and Ten Teru. Vata Teru is always listed first, whether the two are listed as single kuppams or half kuppams. However, today Ten Teru is the pre-eminent kuppam within the Ampu Nattu subcaste. The historical factors that caused this are the rise to kingship of the Tontaiman family and the

delineation of the boundaries of Pudukkottai state in the late seventeenth century. Vata Teru, which consists of ten villages, was left completely outside the boundaries of the state. Vata Teru is therefore politically, socially, and territorially on the margins of the royal subcaste.

Vata Teru consists of ten villages and ten lineages. The villages derive their names from the lineages which settled in them. Vata Teru provides the clearest example of a case where the territorial and social (i.e., the village and the lineage) correspond exactly. Each village is the territorial realization of a single lineage structure. The first lineage is the MaNikkaraayar karai. They live in MaNikkaraayarviTuti. ViTuti is a term for settlement or village. It is used frequently in ampu natu. The total kuppam is as follows:

A. VaTa Teru

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. MaNikkaraayar | if you add a viTuti you |
| 2. PaNikoNTaar | know the name of the village |
| 3. Raacaaliyar | in which the karai settled. |
| 4. Aarccuttiyar | |
| 5. Toppayar | |
| 6. KaaTu VeTTiyar | |
| 7. Vellattevan | |
| 8. Oonciya | |
| 9. Kaliraan | |
| 10. Akkara VaTTam MaNiyam | |

The common temple of the Vata Teru kuppam is a mariyamman kovil in Tiruvonam, a small town located just two miles to the north of MaNikkaraayar vituti, more or less in the center of the kuppam. This town does not belong to any one of the lineages. Larger than any viTutis, it was probably a multi-caste marketing and temple center for the entire area covered by the kuppam. This Mariyamman temple serves as a locus for the annual kuppam festival and all assemblies of the whole kuppam. On the next level are the village temples. Due to the direct correspondence between lineage and village, the village temple is the same as the lineage temple. These temples are for the most part dedicated to Aiyanar as is often the case when the kuppam, or natu, temple is dedicated to a goddess.

The Karpaka Pillaiyaar Kovil is another important temple for Vata Teru, though not for them alone like the Tiruvonam Mariyamman Kovil. According to the Pallavaraiyar chief Vata Teru and Ten Teru share it "equally." The boundary stone of Vata Teru and Ten Teru, which also demarcates the boundary between Tanjore District and Pudukkottai State, lies near the ample navel of Pillaiyar (Ganesha) indicating that one-half of the god was meant for Vata Teru and one-half for Ten Teru. Perhaps this temple marks the spot of the original settlement of the two half kuppams. Like other temples, this temple defines a social community. As the Pallavaraiyar chief said: "If one could not find a place to prepare ponkal during the festival (tiruvira) in this Pillaiyaar kovil, then one is considered to be an alien to Ampu naaTu, or as unfit to be an ampunaTTu Kallar (arukataiyaruvan). The VaTa Teru and Ten Teru kallars are the

pankutaarikal (shareholders) having kaniyaaci in this temple." Since the temple is located in the middle of Cervaipatti village, one-half of the village comes under the limits of Vata Teru and one-half comes under Ten Teru. Interestingly, the Pallavaraiyars represent their teru by preparing ponkal at this temple, while a group of Vellalars represent Vata Teru. After worship, the leaders of these two groups receive the temple honors and then distribute them to the other karais in their respective terus.

The logic of division in Cervaipatti village is so absolute that all the people and resources of the village are divided equally. Even the Vellalars are part of the divided resources of the village. "During the partition (of Vata Teru and Ten Teru), a complete bifurcation was made between brothers. In Cervaipatti, half of the Vellalars belong to Vata Teru and the other half belong to Ten Teru. All mariyatai must be shared by both terus; even if a fish is caught in the village tank, the two groups should divide it equally." This is yet another sign of dominance, where the group of Vellalars, obviously clients of the Kallars, divide at the instance and according to the structure of the Kallar division. We usually see this happening not with Vellalars, but with subordinate castes such as Valaiyars and Pallars and Paraiyars. These latter groups are more obviously clients, as demonstrated by their socio-economic relationship to the dominant Kallars. For instance many of them were aTimai ("serfs"). They take the karai names as well as natu divisions of their patrons.

This kind of division is also in evidence in Ten Teru, though interestingly not in Vata Teru. It seems likely that Ten Teru split off from Vata Teru, but without breaking all of its connections. The Aiyanaar temple in PilaaviTuti, the head village of Ten Teru, is divided between the two terus. When Ten Teru celebrates its own festivals in this temple it gets the first respects. But during the one festival that is still jointly celebrated here Vata Teru receives the first respect. In spite of Ten Teru's association with the Pudukkottai kings, at this structural level its subordinate position continues to be expressed.

I asked the Pallavaraiyar chief why the two kuppams divided. He said that: "Actually, there were only eight kuppams in the beginning. At that time, VaTa Teru and Ten Teru were united and observed as a single kuppam. The population of the kuppam became too dense and it resulted in a partition between VaTa Teru and Ten Teru. The MaNikkaraayar (first karai of VaTateru) is the aNnan (elder brother) and the Pallavaraayar (first karai of Ten Teru) is the tampi (younger brother). The VaTateru MaNikkarayar, the Tenteru Pallavaraiyar, and the Narankiyapettu Coonaiyar are brothers, pankaaLis, and so there is no marriage (koLvinaI koTuppinaI -- exchange of women) among them. These three rank first in their respective kuppams." The Pallavaraiyar chiefs remarks support my earlier conjecture that Vata Teru and Ten Teru differ from the other kuppams because they split off from each other. In addition we learn that the first karaIs of the two kuppams were the descendents of two brothers. Thus the hierarchical relationship between the two Kuppams

is that of older and younger brother as well as that of north and south. With regard to the latter, north is usually seen as superior to the south. Even though the first karais of each teru are related as pankalis, and therefore do not exchange women, other karais in the two terus are not collateral relatives.

However, what is most striking here is that the Pallavaraiyar chief does not mention what would seem to be the obvious cause of the division between the two terus. While it is possible that population pressures and the organizational constraints of size and geographical spread led to division, it seems more likely that the two divided when the Tontaimans became chiefs. But, while he later attributes the reversal of status between the two terus to the rise of the Tontaimans, he nowhere assigns this as a possible cause for the unique division of a kuppam.

There is also a third brother, the Narankiyapattu Coonaiyar, the first karai of the sixth kuppam. This suggests another and perhaps earlier division. When pressed, the Pallavaraiyar suggested that this story of the brothers was probably metaphorical rather than literal. In contrast, the Narankiapattu Coonaiyar claimed historical truth for the story. He explained that the three were brothers from the same father but from different mothers.⁶² Thus he implies that the hierarchical gradations among the brothers were due to the relative seniority of their mothers as wives and not so much to their relative ages. Given the fact that Narankiyapattu kuppam is ranked sixth and not third, it may be that the first two brothers were born of the same mother, while the third brother was born of a junior wife.

The Pallavaraiyar chief admitted that the ranked position of the Narankiyapattu kuppam was anomalous but had no explanation of his own to offer.

Though, as we have firmly established, Vata Teru is structurally superior to Ten Teru, Ten Teru became superior to Vata Teru chiefly by virtue of its connection to the Tontaiman rajas. In the words of the Pallavaraiyar chief: "when we assumed our royal status (antastu) we became, as it were, a royal family. Hence we, the five karaikaarkaL (the five top lineages of tenteru) began to have affinal relations (uravus) with the royal families. So we became more dignified than the other kuppams. In the course of time, financial conditions might change; but we five karaikaararkaL maintain our antastu. We have raaja antastu and we sit in the king's assembly (raaja capai). While the influence (celvaakku: literally meaning the spread of the word) and glory of the raaja was high, the influence of those of us living in Ten Teru also went up accordingly. Others who are do not have marriage ties with the five chief lineages also reside here (in Ten Teru) but we classify them at a lower level (taram kuraittal)."

Here is a clear statement about the inflection of kinship by politics, which itself has a large kinship component. All Ampu Nattu Kallars were loosely called rajapantu, which means those who had a connection with the raja. They were entitled to accept honors on behalf of the king if the king was absent when the arammanai mariyatai (palace honors) were called out. The arammanai mariyatai were called first in all the state temples. While all Ampu Nattu Kallars were

elevated to the status of rajapantu at each further segmental specification of the social structure, the elevation was more or less pronounced. If one member of each segment were present when the royal mariyatai was given; the segment with the highest royal marking would "represent" the raja. The Ten Teru, variably classified as the second kuppam or as the second half of the first kuppam, became in effect the chief kuppam of the subcaste. Its members became the highest nobility or the land as the Pallavairyar chief makes clear. Within this kuppam, those Kallars with direct affinal ties to the Raja found their status even more greatly elevated. They often contested that they alone had to right to call themselves rajapantu. Even among these the Cervaikarars formed a specially marked group. (The picture is further complicated by the fact that some Cervaikarars did not belong to the Ten Teru kuppam.) Finally, the greatest impact of this extended sovereignty was felt within the raja's lineage itself, the Tontaimans. The chief collateral relations of the Raja became Jakirtars. Thus, the political inflection of the kinship system occurs at every level of the system, demonstrating not only the plasticity of the system but the impossibility of bounding it in any absolute way up to the level of the little kingdom. Kinship can even be considered to extend further than the little kingdom as will be seen when we examine the use of the term kumaravarkkam.

Ten Teru is not only unique in being the royal nobility of the little kingdom, it is the only kuppam to have two levels of hierarchy within it. It consists of two groups of lineages. The higher group, comprised of five lineages, is called aracu ancū. The lower group,

puuti pattu, contains ten lineages. Aracu is the Tamil word for king. Ancu means five. Thus the top five lineages are the royal five. They share the sovereignty of the Raja more than the group of ten. The aracu ancū is the group from which, for the most part, the Rajas take their wives. It is in effect the royal connubium. With certain key exceptions, for instance the Kannanur Cervaikarars, the Rajas did not marry within the group of ten. Only in very recent times have marriage alliances occurred regularly between the aracu ancū and the puuti pattu. This occurs because since merger the royalty of the king has become less important than the rising wealth of some of the puuti pattu, who trade their economic position for the status of the aracu ancū. This is an example of the complex and changing relationship between economics and politics in modern India.

Within the royal five, the lineages are ranked. The Pallavaraiyars are the first lineage. The Tontaiman lineage comes second, thereby posing structural problems for the kuppam. The historical process by which the Tontaimans came to dominate the Pallavaraiyars is unclear to me. None of my informants, including the Pallavaraiyar chief and the representatives of the Tontaimans had any explanation.

The Pallavaraiyar chief classifies the puuti pattu as taram kuraittal. Taram means quality. It is used in land records to refer to the classification of land according to its quality, i.e. sandy, loamy, irrigated, etc. Kurai means lower. Therefore the use of taram kuraittal suggests that the puuti pattu are lower in quality even though they are within the same classificatory group as the other

lineages in Ten Teru. This is further evidenced by the name puuti pattu itself. Puuti probably derives from puu, meaning earth. Earth is lower than the sky which is the domain of the king, who enjoys the fruits of the earth. Pattu means ten. Like ancu, it merely specifies the number of lineages within the group.

The total structure of the kuppam looks like this:

B. Ten Teru

lineage name	group
1. Pallavaraayar }	
2. ToNTaimaan }	
3. Raankiyar }	aracu ancu (5)
4. Kaliyaraayar }	
5. Teevar }	
1. TaRancirar }	
2. KuRantai raayar }	
3. ValankoNTar }	
4. Aaraar }	
5. VeTTuvar }	puuti paTTu (10)
6. CammaTTiyar }	
7. Ceeppalaar }	
8. Maakaali }	
9. MaRavaraayar }	
10. Narankiyar }	

According to the Pallavaraiyar chief, these groups initially

had their own settlements. These are still maintained to some extent though today most of the members of Ten Teru live in Pilavituti. The Pallavaraiyars initially settled in Pallavarapattu PuTupaTTi. Long ago the majority of this group migrated to PilaviTuti. The ToNTaimans probably settled initially in ToNTaimaan ViTuti. The Teevars live in KoRantaraanpaTTu and Tiirttaan ViTuti. The Kaliyarayars live in Kaliyaraayar ViTuti and a nearby hamlet called Kattaali. Maakaalis, though they seem not to have had an original place of their own, live in a hamlet called Maakaali teru near Pilavituti. There is also a Raankiyan vituti for Raankiyars, most of whom have also shifted to Pilavituti. It is unclear why PilaviTuti has become the central village for the naaTu.

Ten Teru is a unique kuppam in another respect. Though all of its lineages have their own temples, Ten Teru as a whole has no single kuppam temple. The border temple in Cervaipatti that Ten Teru shares with Vata Teru is a Pillaiyar temple. It is therefore unsuitable as a kuppam temple, which is usually dedicated to village goddesses such as Mariyamman or to village protection deities such as Aiyanar.

According to the Pallavaraiyar chief, Ten Teru has many temples: "We constructed temples wherever we settled" (kc5-12). Its head village is PilaaviTitu, where the majority of four of the top five lineages now reside. The only Mariyamman there is now in ruins. Its idol was taken to karampakuti where a temple was built for it twelve years ago. However, no major festival is held in the new temple, reportedly because then the Karampakuti kuppam would claim honors for themselves during the festival. Another common (potu) temple is located in

nearby MuLLankuricci. It is also a Mariyamman temple. All those who are entitled to panku (a share in honors) in Ten Teru can get their respects here.

The lack of a central kuppam temple indicates that Ten Teru never achieved full structural differentiation apart from Vata Teru and unlike Vata Teru and the other kuppams. A major reason for this probably lies in the fact that and the way in which Ten Teru split off from Vata Teru. Ten Teru could hardly have kept the Mariyamman temple in Tiruvonam as its kuppam temple, both because Vata Teru would not have permitted it and because Ten Teru had no access to it. It was located well outside the limits of Ten Teru and of Pudukkottai State, with which Ten Teru so strongly identified. Given the attainment of royal status by the Tontaimans Ten Teru became much more of a royal elite than a simple kuppam. The need for a kuppam temple to provide the basis of kuppam identity has been supplanted by the more important identification of the kuppam members with the raja and with his temples. The major of these is the goddess temple in Pudukkottai, in which Brihadambal was established by the Raja as the Tontaimans' central tutelary deity. Further, the interface of the raja as raja and the raja as the head of secondary lineage in Ten Teru was highly problematic. Who would receive first honors in the kuppam temple? In addition the internal differentiation of the kuppam into two strata suggests that relations with and identification with the raja have become more important than the solidarity of the kuppam.

In Ten Teru's uniqueness we see the partial sedimentation of historical process in the structure of categories and groups. The

segmentary logic renders unnecessary certain rearrangements of categories and groups such as the elevation of the Tontaimans over the Pallavaraiyars or of Ten Teru over Vata Teru. The fact that the Tontaimans become kings rapidly makes it irrelevant within the context of the little kingdom that they are not the first lineage. Any member of Pudukkottai State or the subcaste has only to hear the term Tontaiman to know that one is talking of the royal family. The natural consequence of this politically generated cultural grammar is that certain types of rearrangements within encompassed segments need never be made, particularly given the lack of a kuppam temple. The Tontaimans would never appear to receive mariyatai in the local temple as Tontaimans (ina mariyatai) but only as rajas (raja mariyatai). Thus apparent contradictions are immediately resolved by resort to a higher domain (that of kingship over kinship) as well as to the higher segment (that of kingdom over kuppam). This process is not just convenient but necessary.

There are many other empirical complexities which should but perhaps never can be fully explained. Like all complexity, they push us further in our search for order and make our acceptance of received structures more difficult. For example, in Ammanipattu, one of the nine kuppams which is located only a few miles to the west of Pilavituti, the Pallavaraiyars receive first honors in the kuppam temple. The explanation for this given by the nattampalam of Ammanipattu is that the Pallavaraiyars are received as honored guests, but this does not happen in other kuppams. What original relationship between Ammanipattu and Ten Teru might explain this is unknown to us.

In addition, we have some difficulty explaining the position of the Makali lineage within Ten Teru. Though they are classified in the puuti pattu, they have obviously been in competition with the Teevars for inclusion in the aracu ancu, for the two groups never receive honors together in the same temple festival. Within Ten Teru as a whole, there are a wide range of temples which do not correspond to any neat differentiation of lineages and villages within the kuppam. For example, in KaaTTaati, the local goddess temple (to ViiramaakaaLiyamman) provides honors to only three lineages: Pallavaraiyars, Kalinkaraiyars, and Tevars. While in a general sense we can explain the subversion and reconstitution of a presumed original structure by reference to the peculiar historical processes affecting this kuppam and the central identification of the kuppam with the Raja, there are many details about the particularities of the kuppam which we cannot begin to explain.

As in all other social groups in Pudukkottai State kuttams or assemblies were held to decide various issues and questions such as those relating to the festival and to arbitrate disputes and settle problems as they came up within the community. Such assemblies took place in villages. The village ampalam would act as officiant and judge. In all the natus, the highest court of appeal for village assemblies was the nattu kuttam. This was also the body which would judge all issues which were of significance beyond the boundaries of a single village. It would be headed by the nattu ampalam(s), sometimes one, sometimes three persons who were ranked. The Ampu Nattu kuttam was not led by the nattampalam but rather by the Vellalar Kantiyars.

There were also kuppa(m) kuttams, which were officiated by the kuppam ampalam. Like the nattu kuttams, they were held at that temple which constituted and defined the relevant social and territorial unit. Ten Teru is again exceptional. No one was designated as the ampalam of the kuppam. Again this is no doubt because of the inherent contradiction that the king was not the senior member of his kuppam. The head of the Pallavaraiyar lineage was in effect the ampalam. He was the first recourse for issues which concerned members of the teru. He was just called the Ayya, a simple term of respect meaning lord. The assemblies were held at his house, called the AyyaviTu. When asked why the meetings did not take place in a temple, the Pallavaraiyar chief was unable to give me an answer. The lack of any temple which served as the single focus for the identity of the group was obviously the reason for this departure from the normal structure. The political anomalies of this royal kuppam led to significant modifications at every level of structure (see kc5-12).

The special position and particular dominance of the Ten teru kuppam was displayed not only within Ampu Nattu but throughout the entire kingdom. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Pudukkottai kings had settled Ampu Nattu kallars in villages throughout Pudukkottai. One or two and sometimes more AN families were given inam lands and certain special privileges in virtually every village in Kolattur Taluk and many villages in AlankuTi and Tirumayyam taluks. Their privileges included being allowed to accept temple honors on behalf of the Raja. These aranmanai mariyaatai came before all other honors. Many of these AN Kallars took the name or

suffix Cervai or Cervaikarar, deliberately modelling themselves on the great chiefs, the Vakappu Cervaikarars, with whom they are not to be confused. In a structural sense these Kallars were like the Cervaikarars. Their dispersed settlement, their local position, their relationship to the royal family through their maniyam lands and their kinship ties to the raja (whether actual or potential, mostly the latter) suggest a structural replication of the Cervaikarars at a lower level. They were settled for the same reasons as the Vakappu Cervaikarars: to secure Tontaiman rule and protect its institutions. The AN Kallars were clearly settled to provide a local presence throughout the little kingdom of the royal subcaste and to be, in fact, the spies and informants of the little kings. Most of the Vakappu Cervaikarars and the local Cervais were from the Ten Teru Kuppam or Ampu Natu. This was difficult to establish since the addition of the surname Cervai often substituted for the pattapeyar, the lineage name which indicates kuppam membership. All other AN Kallars, even the Vakappu Cervaikarars use their pattapeyar in their name. So outside of Ampu Natu membership in the kuppam became less important for establishing identity than relationship to the raja. Many of these local Cervais, while from Ten Teru, were from the puutipattu, the lower ten karais. This may explain why the Cervais were content to let their pattapeyar drop while the Vakappu Cervaikarars maintained theirs.

While we will be discussing the great military chiefs (Cervaikarars or Cartars) of Pudukkottai in detail elsewhere we might mention here that they were not only all Kallars, but that with one

exception they were all AN kallars. The exception was Ilantari Ampalakarar, who was "gifted" to the Pudukkottai raja by the neighboring Raja (called the Cetupati) of Ramnad, with whom the Tontaimans had contracted an affinal tie when the Cetupati married the Raja's sister. Further, all but one of the Ampu Nattu Cervaikarars were from the Ten Teru kuppam. Interestingly, there are always exceptions. As noted throughout this study, there is never a perfect correspondence between the so-called political and so-called kinship structures, however much they seem to determine each other. The structure of kinship and politics would lead one to predict that the cervaikarar who did not come from Ten Teru, however unimportant a Cervaikarar he may be, would at least come from a similarly high kuppam. Instead he came from Neiveli, one of the lowest kuppams. Some informants claimed that it did not even receive honors at Ampu Kovil. This however might be more recent, dating after merger. In any case, the Neiveli Cervaikarars was one of the least important Cervaikarars. And yet, one of the more important Cervaikarars, the Kannanur Valankontar, came from the puuti patti. Whereas the reasons for the elevation of the Manna Velar Antakkulam Cervaikarars (of the Neiveli kuppam) remain unclear, the Kannanur chiefs, whatever the source of their initial position, were instrumental in the seventeenth century in securing the kingship of the Tontaimans. Thus their special position has a very particular historical cause. The other great Vakappu Cervaikarars come from the most important of the Ten Teru karais, the Pallavaraiyars and the Rankiyaars. They have many marriage alliances with the royal family. This pattern holds all the

way down the political hierarchy. The Kurikarars are the next level below the Cervaikarars and above the Cervais. Some of the Kurikarars were from Ten Teru, from the kaliyarayar lineage, a member of the arasu ancū. Others were members of the Terketti Kallars, the same group that Ilantari Ampalakarar hailed from. Because of their relationship to Ilantari Ampalakarar their status, like his, was that of honoured guest within the little kingdom. Through him they too were connected to the Cetupati or Ramnad, who was an affine of all Raja. Further, as outsiders, they were not likely to provide the basis for any kind of internal threat.

At the highest level in the political hierarchy were the two Jakirtars, whose status in the little kingdom was second only to the Raja. They represented the collateral members of the royal lineage. These Jakirtars were given extensive lands, which were less like the jivitam lands given to Cervaikarars than they were parcels of the little kingdom. They replicated in almost every aspect the set of social and political relations contained in the greater little kingdom. Not all Tontaimans were Jakirtars, and many of these Tontaimans appear to have hung about one or another of the royal houses. Another group of Tontaimans which was settled near Taccanpatti had the dubious honor of taking on the pollution of the royal family and conducting their funerals. They also represented them on other ritual occasions.

In thinking about the set of issues involved in the structuring of identity within the royal subcaste, it is necessary to return briefly to the question of what happens to members of karais

when they migrate outside their original place of settlement. We saw that families which were resettled by the king maintained their local status in their original village and kuppam, while in their new places they did not merge with any new group but rather became the in loco representatives of the Raja. Other families, not settled at the specific instance of the Raja, tended over time to lose contact with their original kuppams and to accept honors from the new kuppam kovil. The families which were settled by the king were usually from Ten Teru. Once again, the position of Ten Teru is distinctive because the Raja, and relations with the Raja, provided the principal context for the formation and expression of identity not merely within the kuppam but outside it as well.

The privileged position of the Ten Teru kuppam among the AN kallars was further exemplified by the special privileges accorded to women of the arasu ancu as well as of the families of Cervaikarars and other important nobles. They were virtually kept in purdah. The customary freedom and boldness of Kallar women was not in evidence. These particular Kallar women rarely left their domestic compounds. Visitors did not come inside their houses but were entertained in a separate house or mantapam constructed some distance from the domestic hearth. When these women did leave their houses, they did so in royal style, in covered palanquins. They also covered their bodies from head to foot when they went out (nilai mukkaaTu). The only Kallar women allowed to wear blouses (ravikkai), they also wore special earrings (meemeelaTu), a necklace of black glass beads (karukamaNi), and green and black glass bangles (paccai and karuviLaivi).

We have thus seen the many ways in which the royal kuppam was set off from and placed above the rest of ampu naTTu society, and the specific political and cultural dynamics of this hierarchical marking. Before moving on to consider in more detail the other kuppams within Ampu Nattu (which I will do elsewhere), we will now discuss some further remarks by the Pallavaraiyar chief about the nature of hierarchy and status within his caste, and correlate them with what we have so far learned about the social structure of the state.

Hierarchy and Honor: The Politics of Kinship

I asked the Pallavaraiyar chief in many different ways what he meant by hierarchy and status, and how he could explain the way in which the Ampu Nattu subcaste was structured. In the early days, he told me, his forefathers had instituted the laws of society (camutaayam, 5-13). He was not absolutely sure why the Vata Teru and Ten Teru had been at the top of the subcaste. Perhaps, he said, the chieftains of these two kuppams were powerful and attained their rights due to their power. Here he mentioned that the two chieftains were brothers. Their other brother, as noted above, was the head of the Narankiapattu kuppam. There were reasons why the Narankiapattu brother must have slipped in status. Each kuppam has its own merit and only by merit, status, and dignity was each kuppam classified. The Pallavaraiyar chief used the English word "merit." Merit was determined by four things. First, merit was thought about in terms of antastu, which means status or dignity, and refers particularly to a royal model for what would constitute dignity. Second, merit was

measured by the temple in which one had kaniyacci or rights to receive honors. Third, merit was determined by one's life style, one's code for conduct (kattuppaatu) and how strictly this code was enforced and followed. Finally, merit had to do with a group's scrupulous concern with social relations and in particular marriage ties (uravumuraikal).

I quote from one interview at length:

One has to maintain one's family status, one's temple, one's karai, and royal blood. Antastu can take its meaning from one's village, or kuppam, or natu. By dignity and status we do not mean money (kaacu), but rather having alliances within the uravumurai. To maintain and establish good alliances, one must maintain one's dignity and status. Even the poor of Ten teru are regarded as having higher status and others would desire to have an alliance with a poor PilaaviTuti Kallar. They feel that if they have an alliance (campantam) with PilaaviTuti, their status among Kallars will go up. We have this belief (nampikkai). Why are we superior to others? Because we maintain the camutaaya kaTTuppaatu. We do not allow widow remarriage and we abide by the moral codes of our society strictly. Other Kallars may say that all Kallars are the same. It is popularly assumed that all Kallars were KaLavaaNis (thieves). But we are not thieves. How can the ruling Kallars steal from others? Our Kallars are Panchayattars, Zamintars, Kurikarars, Cervaikarars, and Mirastars. We have to maintain law and order. How can we go off thieving? We decided that we should lead a life of kaTTuppaatu and oRunku (restriction and order). Others are not like us. We

lead a life for mariyaatai and antastu (honor and status). Our Kallars base their lives on koovil and uravumuraikal (marriage relations). Therefore, when we go out to seek an alliance, we ask the following questions: what is your karai? what is your koovil? what is your kuppam? Only if these questions are answered satisfactorily will we have an alliance (campantam). Otherwise, we judge the other party as inappropriate, less dignifying, as if judging the quality of gold by the number of karats. Our mariyaatais are usually measured [by the nature of the honors we get] in temples and [the kind of] marriages [we contract] or when we convene the capai (assembly). When we measure the mariyaatai in those places, will we like less dignified lineages to take seats on a par with us. We say that their status is such that they are not fit to sit with us.

There is much that seems circular in this statement. Definitions often appear tautological. But clearly there is a cultural logic which is at the base of these assumptions, apparent tautologies, and assertions. Much of this cultural logic has already been identified by the work of Inden and Marriott. There is an obvious interrelationship between substance (biogenetic substance, symbolized by blood and other bodily fluids, generated and maintained through marriage and reproduction) and code for conduct (which entails certain standards for marriage and other actions ranging from caste discipline, prohibition of widow remarriages, etc.). But we must stress that both the interrelationship of substance and code and the particular definitions of both reveal not so much a concern about the

improper mixing of substances, as suggested in the work of Inden and Marriott, but rather an emphasis on royalty, honor, and dominance. The Ampu Nattu Kallars are superior because they are ordered. Further, they have control not only of order but also over what constitutes order. Indeed, they define the epistemic formation (to borrow a concept from Foucault) of order for the social world of Pudukkottai. What is important is that the Ampu Nattu Kallars are leaders of society: rulers rather than thieves, kings rather than bandits. As kings they are the fount of honor. As the nobility they are the honored (and honorable) people of the little kingdom.

The first model for the code for conduct is the royal model. This status or royalty is achieved by actions and through kinship networks with the royal family. These kinds of behaviors and these sorts of relationships are implied by the chief word used for status: antastu. The code for conduct also specifically denotes a conception of a rigidly prescribed order that must be adhered to. Order is better than disorder. Discipline is a vital component of status. Kattupatu, which can be taken to mean code for conduct and discipline, literally means something more like restriction, or even constriction. It derives from the root kaTTu, which means tied or knotted or restricted. The code for conduct includes rigid kinship behaviors. Concern about social relationships is part of a general conception of status. One must avoid such things as widow remarriages. One must marry according to the wishes of the maternal uncle (maman). Over and above this one must realize that kinship ties provide a way to elevate one's own position. Marriage with the Raja is best. Failing that

comes marriage with a Cervaikarar, failing that, with a Pallavaraiyar, or a member of PilaviTuti, or a member of the royal five karais, and so on down the line.

Complicated marriage strategies and transactions reveal the highly complex structure of social relations, demonstrating both the functioning of social units such as karais and kuppams and the definition of units such as the aracu ancu. We also realize here the incapacity of any reified conception or representation of the kinship system to encapsulate the full range of potential strategies and the full political context within which kinship operates. For example, Ten Teru Kurikarar sought a son-in-law from a Neyveli kuppam Cervaikarar who accepted a daughter from a lower status in the "political" hierarchy to establish closer kinship relations with the Raja. Marriage has implications for more than the individual families involved in the affinal alliance. If, for example, one marries a girl from PilaviTuti, one becomes the son in law -- mappilai -- of the entire village.

In choosing alliances the initial questions are basic: what is your lineage (karai), your temple (kovil), your territorial unit (kuppam or natu)? However, the resolution of any given affinal decision is far more difficult. Temples defined membership in social groups and also provided contexts in which these social groups were more finely gradated and ranked. Ultimately, social relations and the set of units, conceptions, rules, and strategies concerning them come back to a complex conception of status in its two interrelated senses: antastu and mariyaatai. Antastu was measured in the king's court;

mariyaatai was measured in the temple, in the subcaste assembly (capai), and in marriages. These were the primary institutions, therefore, upon which the social and political fabric rested.

In the Pallavaraiyar's statements we can perceive some key anxieties as well as modes of reflection about issues such as status and hierarchy. For example, the Kallars are concerned about their general reputation as thieves. The very word Kallan means thief in Tamil. No one disputes the fact that at certain times and places particular groups of Kallars engaged in predatory activity. Here we see the Pallavaraiyar chief making the argument that the way in which the royal subcaste organizes its social relations makes it impossible that they could be thieves, or indeed affected in any way by this general reputation. Not only is the royal subcaste headed by a king, it provides almost all the nobility and elite groups within the society. The fundamental duty of these members of the elite is to subdue disorder, destroy lawlessness, and enforce law and order. In this context, we can better understand the Pallavaraiyar's subsequent statement: "most important of all is the kattupatu, the fact that our society [i.e., the AN Kallars] only exists as such because of a social contract in which the group corporately set and then enforced a comprehensive code for conduct. It is no accident of history that we are the ones who belong to the royal family, since we have all the virtues and qualities of a royal and noble group."

The Pallavaraiyar chief continued his discussion of these questions by talking about the costs of status and the difficulties of the position of his group. "We have so many things to do, so many

responsibilities. We have to conduct festivals. We have to feed people. Even if we have to starve ourselves we have to do these things. We have to follow our codes so rigidly that it is not uncommon for men, and even women, to marry very late in life. Thus our population has been declining for many years."

Ultimately, however much one's capacity for appropriate behavior was encoded by one's birth, one's actual behavioral performance was the key. The Pallavaraiyar told me that, "if someone else is able to follow all of our restrictions and codes we welcome them. They too can become Ampu Nattu kallars." Code and substance were very definitely interactive. In a related vein, the Pallavaraiyar described the creation of political hierarchy at the level of the Cervaikarars in very similar terms. "The titles have not just been given away like that. There must be deeds attached to them. Rankiyar Tevar [perhaps the most powerful of the Cervaikarars] does not, for example, just go and solicit titles. Rather, the titles and privileges will be given to him in recognition of his service to the community and his heroic deeds, which will be mutal taram [first class]. Once privileges and honors are given, people will live only for them, preferring to starve rather than, for example, being served on anything but a twin plantain leaf." Status thus has an etiology which has both to do with action and recognition, the two being indissolubly combined. Privileges and honor are of paramount importance, and they are more hotly contested than anything else. In the villages in which I worked more money was spent on disputes over honors often involving interminable litigation than on any corporate

village project.

In the same way, as we have seen, politics (substitute for code) and kinship (substitute for substance) were interactive. Temples, because of their capacity to define social communities and provide honors related to these social units as well as to one's political standing within the context of the little kingdom, always appear to mediate this interaction. This will become particularly clear elsewhere when I examine contests over honor within temples.

The guiding principles of social organization among the Kallars in Pudukkottai must be, I submit, unknowable without an appreciation of the particular significance of politics and without some sense of how politics has exerted its powerful influence at both infrastructural and superstructural levels over the period of the last three hundred years. Much of what we have discovered was anticipated by earlier discoveries about the structural history of Pudukkottai, and the relationship of structures of leadership and protection to the growth of temples and the development of hierarchical relations throughout the entire society of Pudukkottai. In addition, what we learn about the Kallars from this kind of ethnohistorically motivated field work enables us to understand far better than mere reliance on inscriptions and even oral traditions the historical processes which began early on with the initial settlement of Pudukkottai by Vellalar peasants in the ninth and tenth centuries and which continue today, albeit in vastly altered forms. Subjects as various as kinship, the significance of territory, authority, the growth of temples, the nature of caste dominance and subcaste settlement, would be far more

unclear and seem totally unrelated without the historical background and context of this investigation.

The imperfect fit between politics and kinship remains to be explained. Here, the structural system of segmentation must be seen in terms of certain implicit rules which determine cognition and perception of the system. It is because of these rules that what appears to an outsider to be contradictory may not be so to an insider. Or, rather, if and when it does become a contradiction the system changes accordingly, or there will be conflict. But many changes need never be explicitly made. Any attempt to represent the system in these cultural terms means for the outsider a problematic analytic. We must determine the structure of the system while at the same time realizing that the structure reflects but does not determine the cultural reality. This cultural reality can be represented structurally, but the structures must always be framed by relevant rules of perception and action.

Similarly, rules can become abstract analytics in much the same way as structures. Bourdieu has addressed this problem in his critique of the normative basis of most anthropological analysis, and has suggested among other things the replacement of the concept of rule by one of strategy.⁶³ His criticism is instructive but overly polemical. He is correct that at the level of action the intervention of time (naively constructed notions of before and after if not of causality) makes the rule a fiction. However he is wrong that the notion of rule is therefore totally irrelevant. Rules are like structures. They are good for representation, both for outsiders and

insiders. This is the great conjunction, the epistemological ground where the anthropologist and the informant meet or for that matter where the historian and his data interact. The anthropologist cannot understand the strategy without being told the rules, and he cannot understand the rules without some notion of the structure. Structures and rules are both inhabitants of the domain of intersubjective meaning, as is true with all symbols.

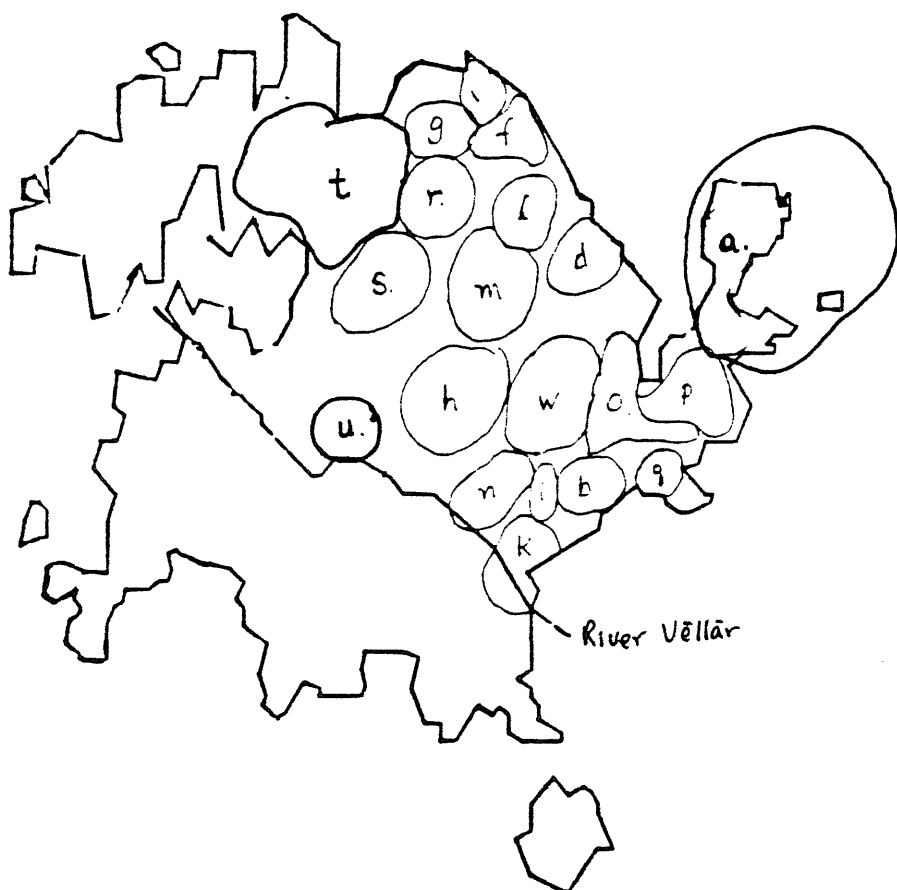
To further complicate matters, the domain of intersubjective meaning is never as clearly bounded as we would like it to be, by virtue of the simple fact of the necessary, though always partial, intrusion of the outside analyst, as well as the constant incorporation of new groups within local society. Given not only the factor of time but also the structure of variation over space, new lineages within kuppams, new representatives of the royal family within villages, etc., are also for a time outsiders. As we observe we always participate, and vice versa. So called insiders do the same, though with the order of observation and participation reversed in emphasis. As limited as structures and rules might be for understanding the total social reality we must realize that structures and rules are not just for outsiders like us, and that is why they will continue to inform (or if you follow Bourdieu, to haunt) our analysis. However, Bourdieu as well as Foucault and Habermas caution us correctly that all representations are interested representations, not in the simple sense of individual material interest but in that context is always presenting new and particular purposes, constraints, possibilities, and problems of dominance.⁶⁴ What is ultimately

required, therefore, is not only an ethnosociology of knowledge, but also a sociology of knowledge, although I would insist that the terms of this latter sociology be constructed from the former "ethnosociology."⁶⁵

To conclude, the state in medieval south India, at its fundamental level of segmental construction, was ultimately the expression of a set of social relationships. These were constituted and mediated by institutions we are used to labelling (misleadingly) as religious, and had as their center the Raja. The Raja made his presence felt in a great variety of ways. I have shown here that the royal caste, and in particular the royal subcaste, was so fundamentally ordered in terms of the relations of and with the Raja, that it is impossible to isolate our study of kinship (or social organization) from our study of the state. I have argued elsewhere⁶⁶ that relations with the king were in no way defined solely by "kinship," but rather that social relations of the type I have been discussing here constitute only one part of the total set of political relations which made up the little kingdom. Royal honors and privileges were by no means restricted to members of the royal subcaste, which as we have already seen explains in part the particular structure of the subcaste as well as the ubiquitous occurrence of exceptions to any straightforward kinship rule.

The argument I have put forward here is only part of a larger argument which would demonstrate that gifts from the king to all sorts of "subjects" are the dynamic medium for the constitution of political relations. Gifts of land and privileges provided the basis for a

political hierarchy in which Jakirtars were superior to Cervaikarars, Cervaikarars to Kurikarars, Kurikarars to Cervais, and so on down the line to local subcaste, lineage, and village "headmen." This political hierarchy was partially rooted in kinship. But the principal means for the formation and articulation of a political community were royal grants of rights to land and of various honors, emblems, titles, and perquisites. These grants symbolically and morally linked individuals with the sovereignty of the king. Kinship was affected by other forms and modalities of relationship. It was only one component of the formation and constitution of the political community. I have sought here to specify both the part that kinship played in this larger community, as well as the necessity to view kinship as part of a total field of social relations. Anthropologists and historians must both realize and begin to accept the implications of the centrality of the king for constituting this total field of social relations at various (and varying) moments in India's history if they are ever to begin to understand the cultural dynamics of social and political change in the colonial period. This is also necessary to achieve an understanding of the particular place of kinship within the newly constituted social, political, and economic context of modern India. As Stein has persuasively reminded us in his paper, the culture of the old regime continues to be important through to the present day.⁶⁷



- a. Aspu Nāṭu
 b. Alankuṭi Nāṭu
 c. Unjanaṭi Nāṭu
 d. Sōttruppalai Nāṭu
 e. Kāṣa Nāṭu
 f. Kila Ceṅkili Nāṭu *
 g. Mel Ceṅkili Nāṭu *
 h. Kulamaṅkilya Nāṭu
 i. Ceṅkāṭṭu Nāṭu
 j. Pāppa Nāṭu
 k. Pālaiyūr Nāṭu
 l. Varamalai Nāṭu *

- m. Tennalai Nāṭu *
 n. Valla Nāṭu
 o. Vārappūr Nāṭu
 p. Vīrakuṭi Nāṭu
 q. Tānava Nāṭu
 r. Cīruvayal Nāṭu (north) *
 s. Cīruvayal Nāṭu (south) *
 t. Vicanki Nāṭu *
 u. Kavi Nāṭu
 v. Tīrumanakala Nāṭu
 w. Perumkalūr Nāṭu

* all sub-nāṭus of Vicanki Nāṭu

FIGURE 1: KALLAR NĀṬUS IN PUTUKKŌṬṬAI

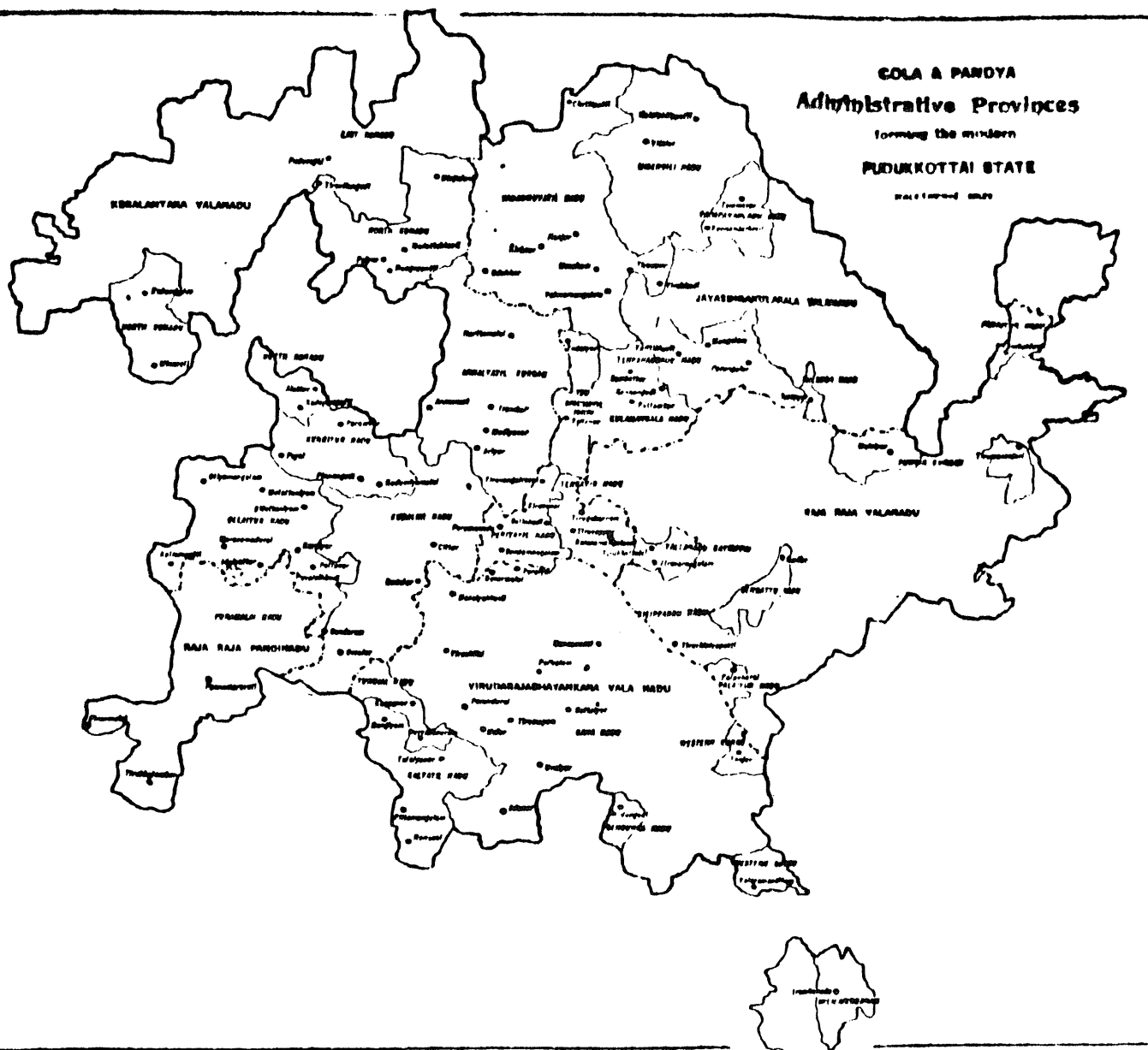


FIGURE 2: CŌLA AND PĀNTIYA NĀTUS IN PUTUKKŌTTAI



FIGURE 3: MAP OF PUTUKKÖTTAI STATE

FOOTNOTES

* This paper has been prepared for delivery to the South Asian Anthropologists Group Meeting, London School of Economics, May, 1983, and should be considered both preliminary and provisional. I must apologize for the fact that the transliteration is a mess. Whatever order may be apparent in this paper is due solely to the efforts of Leela Wood.

1. A Manual of the Pudukkottai State, 2:526, 527, 542, 546; also Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State (Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadamba State Press, 1929), Inscriptions 1-19 (hereafter cited P.S.I.); see also Chronological List of Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State (Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadamba State Press, 1929).
2. Manual, 2:547-548.
3. B.E.F. Beck, Peasant Society in Konku: A Study of Right and Left Subcastes in South India (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972).
4. T.V. Mahalingam, Mackenzie Manuscripts, 1:547-548.
5. See Manual, p. 549; also Radhakrishnan.
6. Manual, 2:548. (Interestingly, in later oral traditions that I collected temple honors were singled out as the major cause of the rivalry -- mariyaatai takaraaru in the Malaiyakovil, a temple

which marks one of the most important boundary sites between konatu and kanatu. Here one must also note the treatment of the war in copper plates of Tekkatur and of the Konattu Maravars).

7. Ibid., 2:544.
8. Ibid., 2:544.
9. Ibid., 2:548.
10. Stein, Peasant State, pp. 109-110.
11. See Ludden, Agrarian Organization in Tinnevely District: 800 to 1900 A.D., 1978.
12. Manual, 2:653; see also P.S.I., no. 198.
13. P.S.I. nos. 107, 119, 139, 141, 146, 159, 169, 295, 304, 313, 314.
14. See Dirks, "Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South Indian History," 1976.
15. See A. Appadurai, and C. Breckenridge, "The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour, and Redistribution," Contributions to Indian Sociology (NS), 10, no. 2 (1976):187-211; and A. Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India," in The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 14, no. 1 (1977):47-73.
16. E.g. P.S.I. no. 169.
17. Ibid., no. 124.

726, 968.

50. Ibid., no. 752.

51. Manual, 2:735.

52. P.S.I., no. 380.

53. Ibid., no. 674.

54. Manual, 2:728.

55. E.g. P.S.I., nos. 818, 833, 834, 898, 972.

56. Ibid., nos. 703, 715, 799, 821, 843, 681, 751, 898.

57. Based on information given in Manual, 1:106-112 as well as on my own ethnographic survey conducted in 1982.

58. See Dumont, Une Sous Caste de L'Inde du Sud, 1957.

59. See Dirks, "The Past of a Palaiyakarar: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King," The Journal of Asian Studies, 41, no. 4, 1982.

60. See the discussion about the significance of soil for social identity in E.V. Daniel's forthcoming book.

61. Another Kallar told me that the reason for the position of the kantiyars was that the Vellalars, being outsiders to the community, would be objective. Therefore the raja chose them to perform these tasks. However plausible this sounds like an a

posteriori explanation.

62. Dumont would quickly seize upon the Coonaiyar's explanation as an example of bastardy, about which he talks incessantly and erroneously in his Une Sous Caste. . . . We see here that there is nothing pejorative about the ordering of wives. It implies a hierarchical order but without the creation of a subordinate group of lineages.
63. See Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice.
64. See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interest.
65. See D. McGilvran, "Mukkuvar Vannimai," in McGilvray, ed., Caste Ideology and Interaction, 1982.
66. See Dirks, Little Kingdoms of South India, 1981.
67. B. Stein, "Does Culture Make Practice Perfect," mss., 1983.