THE SHADOW LINES:
The Advent of Territoriality in South Asia

The historiography of precolonial south Asia presents a spectre of uneven development. Much has been written on state formation, feudalism, colonialism, revenue systems, temple building, trade and seafaring, but many aspects of history which are crucial for an understanding of the past continue to remain grey. Substantial research is yet to commence on the conditions which facilitated the advent of an agrarian milieu, the transition of totemic settlements and chieftaincies into entrenched regional polities, the birth of vernacular languages, the rise and fall of divine kingship, the making of religious identities, the beginnings of rural monetization, industrialization, the commodification of surplus, premodern capital accumulation and so on. There has indeed been a spate of overviews, debates, critiques and responses over the years on many of these issues, but what they offer us are *a priori* positions that do not bear out the temperance of sustained historical scrutiny. To say that it is more-or-less impossible today to speak about many aspects of the subcontinent's past with any measure of empirical precision will certainly not be unseemly. One such area which cries out for systematic inquiry is the emergence of territorial consciousness in south Asia.

It is now generally acknowledged that the territories known to us today were refashioned in the age of nationalism and print capitalism. Territories affiliated with linguistic, ethnic, religious and other forms of identities are seen verily as products of the capitalist era. Nevertheless, under what conditions did the entities which prefigured these refashionings come into being is a question less often asked and hardly ever understood. This paper is an attempt to offer a pioneering account of the processes through which south Asia witnessed the making of territorial constituencies. We will begin with a brief discussion of the problematic in the first section, followed by an overview of the antecedent historical developments – like the origin of private property and state, the surplus regime, and agrarian expansion – in the second. The last section will look at how the new material formation precipitated by these developments led to the making of territorial constituencies in south Asia.

1.

Early Representations of the Territory:

A recent overview in the context of Kerala has shown that the region rose into territorial self-consciousness only after the seventh century.[1] Daṇḍin's reference to Keraḷa in his *Avantisundarīkathā* is said to be the first known instance where the southwest coast is recognized as a distinct territorial entity.[2] By the late ninth century, it

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[1] Kesavan Veluthat, 'Evolution of a Regional Identity,' in his *The Early Medieval in South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008, p. 295-311.
[2] Ibid., p. 297.

became possible for a Cēra king, Kulaśēkhara, to identify himself as 'the overlord of Kēraḷa' (Kēraḷādhinātha) and to describe his country as a land rich in paddy fields.[3] When the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Nṛpatuṅga commissioned Śrīvijaya in the mid-ninth century to render substantial parts of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* into Kannaḍa, the intention was not only to produce the earliest known literary text in the language, but also to identify Karnataka as the "territory lying between Kāvēri and Gōdāvari, a country imagined in Kannaḍa."[4] We come across a similar reference to territory in the *Tolkkāppiyaṃ*, the first-known Tamil text on poetics, where we are introduced to "the noble country of Tamiḻ ties [lying] between Veṅgaḍaṃ in the north and Kumari in the south."[5] The *Tolkkāppiyaṃ* belongs to the early centuries of the first millennium, but the reference to 'the noble country' occurs in an invocation composed by Panaṃbāranār and added to the text at a later date. Nothing is known about Panaṃ's life and times, nor do we know if a song attributed to him in one of the *Eṭṭutogai* texts (ca. CE 100-300) was indeed composed by him or by one of his namesakes.[6] In all likelihood, it is a composition of our poet who lived after the seventh century, when the compilation of the *Eṭṭutogai* texts were carried out and many new songs added to make good the shortfall in the process of constructing each text as a neat anthology of one hundred or four hundred verses. By the tenth century, territorial consciousness had gained deep roots. In his *Vikramārjunavijayaṃ* (CE 941), Paṃpa gives us a rich description of the Kuru country centering on Hastinapura.[7]

> Streams are seen flowing liltingly, the fresh water-lilies risen in the streams, the rice swaying in the red bunches ripened by the spreading fragrance of the new water-lilies, the flock of parrots flying to those new rice – with such adorned paddy-fields to be seen, Siri [Lakṣmī] dwells in the heart of that province. Paddy-fields ripe and bowed, flower-ponds in blossom surrounding the paddy-fields, bright stretches of gardens surrounding the flower-ponds in blossom, swarms of mad bees surrounding the stretches of gardens, [they] look like the hair of the virgin-girl that the province is. The forest with its gentle, bright leaves, fruits and flowers raises proud elephants, the field known as being raised by the elixirs of heaven [rains] raises fresh, fragrant rice, the lovely stretches of garden raises love in the [hearts of the] people separated [from their lovers], the yield of the country and the forest in the heart of that province is yield indeed…. The sugarcanes yield juice when pressed [with the fingers], the bees turn their faces away by the mere fragrance of the flowers, the parrots face indigestion on sipping the juice of a fruit. Encircled by rivers of juice, numerous houses of pearls and rubies, bounded by forests with mad and frenzy elephants, what shall I tell of the glory of that country?

Such embellished accounts of countries celebrated in the narratives of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* traditions were all too familiar to every connoisseur of literature during this period. But Paṃpa went on to give an equally bright picture of Banavāsi, a country that was particularly dear to him, a country which nonetheless did not enjoy the status of the famed *itihāsa-purāṇa* locations like Avantī and Amarāvatī, Kāśi and Kōsala, Matsya and Madra, Magadha and Mithilā, Takṣaśilā and Tāmraparṇī, or Vidēha and Vaiśālī. Banavāsi was only a regional centre which had no place worth the name in the dominant

[3] *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, prologue.
[4] *Kavirājamārgaṃ*, 1.36.
[5] *Ciṟuppuppāyiraṃ*, *Tolkkāppiyaṃ*.
[6] *Kuṟundogai*, 52.
[7] 1.52-57 (translation mine).

itihāsa-purāṇa narratives of the day. Yet, Paṃpa portrayed it with a brilliance that was comparable to the above description of the Kuru country and surpassed it in its ability to invite nostalgic responses.

> Splendidly grown mango-trees, tender betel-leaf creepers, blossomed jasmines and champaks, sweet-throated cuckoos, singing bees, lovers with smiling faces patting their bright-faced beloveds, making love, only these are to be seen on any of the hills and in any of the gardens in the Banavāsi country. The people are the people who are the store of the sweetness of joy of the gatherings of sacrifice, amusement, letters and music. Is it possible to be born like them? If it is not possible, then [one] should be born a little bee or a cuckoo in the garden of the Vanavāsi country. When the southern wind blows, when [I] listen to sweet words, when melodious songs fill my ears, when [I] see the bloomed jasmine, when [I] partake of love-making, when it is the spring festival, O what shall I say, [even] when someone pierces [me] with a spear, my heart remembers the Vanavāsi country. Looking at my palms, if I am reminded of the sweetness of love-making that beats ambrosia, the gathering of letters cuddling like a song, the sweet words of the wise, the cool bunches [of flowers], and what shall I say of the pleasures of the body, is it possible to make up the mind to forget the southern country?[8]

More vivid and passionate was the description of Veṅgi in the first canto of Ranna's *Ajitatīrthakarapurāṇaṃ* (ca. CE 1000),[9] which appears to be the only surviving portion of a lost text reconstructed at a later date by more than one incompetent hand. Veṅgi was for Ranna the territory par excellence.[10] Such fabulous descriptions of the localities within the region have no precedence in the literatures of the subcontinent before the seventh century, which leaves us with an inevitable question. How did this sense of territoriality emerge in south Asia?

Territory and the Political Economy:

Extant sources tell us that the definition of territorial constituencies after the seventh century was a patently political imperative. This is understandable. The impetus for territorial self-definitions came from the powerful monarchies that arose after the sixth century. The picture presented of these newly self-conscious entities was that of a milieu celebrating its material affluence. Rice fields and mango trees, sugarcanes and betel leaves, rivers and streams, pearls and rubies, music and merriment, the spring and love-making – it was through such necessarily material tropes that the literary and epigraphic sources of the day chose to embellish the emergent territorialities. What we are suggesting, therefore, is that the making of territoriality in south Asia was causally contingent on the making of a new political economy.

The regions mentioned in the Aśōkan inscriptions of the third century BCE are identified in political terms. There is, however, a striking lack of territoriality in them. The chieftaincies figuring in records like Rock Edict II or XIII, do not present an

[8] 4.28-31 (translation mine).
[9] 1.20-23.
[10] 1.20.

air of territorial self-awareness.[11] That they were lineage groups rather than territorially conscious polities is clear from the use of plural by the Aśōkan scribe to identify them: Cōḻas, Pāṇḍyas, Adigaimāns, Cēramāns, Yavanas, Kāṃbōjas, Nābhakas, Āndhras and Pulindas. The situation is not very different with respect to the polities of the *Eṭṭutogai* texts either.[12] Striking as the occasional representations of urban life in these Tamil texts are, what they present though is an air of universality and geopolitical imprecision, not a sense of territorial self-consciousness, not even an incipient one, so to speak. The countries listed in the *Mahābhārata* are, like those in Aśōkan inscriptions, political. While the inventory of these polities is impressive, the regional milieu presented there is one that is many crossroads away in time from the world of territorially conscious polities.[13] Precision is found only in the identification of mountains – Mahēndra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimān, Ṛkṣavān, Vindhya and Pāriyātra – and rivers – Gaṅgā, Sindhū, Sarasvatī, Gōdavarī, Narmadā, Bāhudā, Mahānadī, Śatadru, Candrabhāgā, Yamunā, and so on. Territorial frontiers of the ruling dynasties remain vague and indeterminate, many of them still being located in terms of lineage affiliations: Kurupāñcāla, Śālva, Madra, Vidēha, Magadha, Siṃha, Mahadāya, Śūrasēna, Kaliṅga, Bōdhā, Maukha, Matsya, Sukuṭya, Saubalya, Kuntala, Kāśikōśala, Cēdi and so on. Kauṭilya offers an alternate perspective. He evaluates the regions of the subcontinent in relation to their exploitable resources.[14] This arch-materialist, who commands a rich database on the resource profile of such far lying countries as China and southern Tamil Nadu, is verily concerned with the modalities through which goods and commodities can be made to gravitate towards the Gaṅga valley where they are destined to fall prey to the endless gluttony of tolls and duties. An association between language and region is presented in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, where seven regional variants of the Prakrit are defined as *dēśabhāṣā*s: Māgadhi, Avanti, Prācī, Śauraseni, Ardhamāgadhi, Bālhīka and Dākṣiṇātya. Bharata also speaks of seven deformed languages (*vibhāṣā*s), of which two are regional: Drāviḍa and Ōdra.[15] This pattern is followed by Uddyōtanasūri in his *Kuvalayamālā* (CE 799), where he offers a list of sixteen *dēśabhāṣā*s, which include Marāṭhi (Marahaṭṭhē), Kannaḍa (Kannāḍē) and Telugu (Āndhē), and the Apabhraṃśas of what would eventually emerge as Mārvāḍī, Gujarātī and Sindhī (Māruē, Gujjarē and Sēndhavē).[16] It needs to be noted that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Kuvalayamālā* do not appreciate the region in terms of its language; instead, they configure the latter in relation to the former. But the contrary was certainly not impossible. We have seen Panaṃ referring to the land of 'Tamiḻ ties' and Śrīvijaya speaking of a country 'imagined in Kannaḍa.' In any case, Panaṃ and Śrīvijaya should not prompt us to make sense of territories in terms of their languages. They should rather enable us to ask why such representations came to be made in the first place, for we know that territories – like Kerala, Bengal or Kashmir for instance – came into being long before the languages native to them – Malayalam, Bengali and Kashmiri – were

[11] See *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 1 for the text of these inscriptions.
[12] On the *Eṭṭutogai* corpus, see John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies – A Study in Early Tamil Literature*, Institute of Asian Studies, Madras, 1985.
[13] 6.10.
[14] *Arthaśāstra*, 2.
[15] 17.46-49.
[16] 152.22.

born. The origins of territoriality should therefore be traced to no other force than the political economy.

2.

The Emergence of Private Property and State:

The most elementary requirement in the making of territorial identities is, needless to say, a settlement located in geographic space with a sedentary form of life and an ability to exploit agriculture to fruitful ends. Such settlements began to appear in the Gaṅga valley some three centuries or so before the advent of state around 500 BCE, and was occasioned by the increased use of iron, which enabled sedentary agriculture more viable than before.[17] It was in this context that the chieftains mentioned in texts like the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* began to consolidate their hold over their hamlets through various strategies of resource-mobilization, the most important of them being raids which at times assumed a ritual countenance in the guise of sacrifices like the *aśvamēdha*. The earliest known instance of a fascination for land as a resource comes from the *Bhūsūkta* of the *Atharva Vēda* (ca. 800-600 BCE).[18] Such fascinations were the result of new economic practices in which land came to be seen as a veritable resource that could be owned, acquired, deployed for productive farming practices or alienated. This invested land with a new semiotic ambience. By the late sixth century BCE, it assumed the form of private property in the Gaṅga valley. Buddhist sources often give a larger-than-life picture of the fabulous wealth held by the agrarian trading magnates like Anāthapiṇḍika, generally referred to as the *gahapati*s.[19] A powerful group of financers, called *sēṭṭhi*s, funded these trading entrepreneurs, and extant sources tell us that they functioned in tune with the ways and waywardness of the powerful ruling houses.[20] These developments remained uneven though, and when the famed *mahājanapada*s made their appearance, some of them like Magadha, Kōsala, Avantī, Vatsa and Aṅga had already transcended the stage of kin-based production and emerged as powerful monarchic states, while others like Śākyas, Licchavis, Mallas and Kōliyas were still bound by clan affiliations. By the late sixth century BCE, iron-based cultivation enabled the production of a large agrarian surplus. The discovery of paddy transplantation technique introduced wet-rice of a high quality called *śāḷī*, unlike the ordinary *vrīhī*.[21] The surplus regime facilitated a phase of urbanization, trade and newer political forms like the ones which the houses of Biṃbisāra in Magadha, Pradyōta Mahāsēna in Avantī, Pasēnadi in Kōsala, Udayana in Vatsa and Brahmadatta in Aṅga represented. But these early political formations seem to have focused more on trade rather than engaging in conscious agrarian expansion. Agricultural

[17] See the classic discussion in D.D. Kosambi, 'Ancient Kosala and Magadha,' *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1951-52, p. 80-213 and Ram Sharan Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983.
[18] 12.1.
[19] See the pioneering discussion on the *gahapati*s in Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Munshiram Mahoharlal, New Delhi, 1996, p.65-93.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Sharma, *Material Culture*, p.161-62 and 96.

surplus, we are forced to presume, was realized by the iron age settlements more-or-less independently of political intervention from the *mahājanapada*s. Some of the *janapada*s were in fact yet to outgrow the stage of subsistence production, so much so that chieftains were at times seen engaged in mundane farming activities, like regular peasants. The Śākyan chief – the Buddha's father – was one of them.[22]

The early monarchies and the fast-disintegrating clan-based chieftaincies built their political edifices on their ability to secure their hold over the emergent trade routes controlled by the *sārttavāha*s (caravan traders). In other words, the economy of these early political houses was based on their ability to *mobilize* and not *generate* surplus, which meant that they had access – through the *sārttavāha*s – to a vast territory beyond their provenance and its immediate hinterlands, from where surplus arrived. This large expanse constituted a universal territory, which came to be identified as Jaṃbūdvīpa in Aśōkan inscriptions,[23] and more specifically in the early centuries of our era as Bhāratavarṣa, lying to the south of a mountain called Mēru, which formed the axis of Jaṃbūdvīpa. It became possible in this context to produce identities based on territorial affiliations, as can be seen from names like 'Āśvalāyana of Kōsala' and 'Bhārgava of Vidharbha' figuring in the Upaṇiṣads.[24] From the humble *Bhūsūkta* to the world of the *gahapati*s and *sēṭṭhi*s to the grandiloquent Jaṃbūdvīpa and Bhāratavarṣa was a profound transformation in the realms of wealth and private property. What we see here verily is the reification of a set of entrenched practices in the realms of political economy into a territorial constituency. Territoriality is therefore one of the forms through which private property finds its reified expression. And the Magadhan state which issued from the *mahājanapada*s represents the institutional forms of this reification.[25] Notwithstanding the cartographic imprecision of Jaṃbūdvīpa, there seems to have developed an excellent knowledge-base about various regions within this macrotope and the exploitable resources occurring there. The second chapter of the *Arthaśāstra*, supposedly the oldest section of the book, contains a dossier which enumerates a wide range of resources and the regions where they occur. The resources include gems, shells, necklaces, diamonds, perfumes, leather and garments of wool, fibre, silk and cotton,[26] ores and minerals, salts, metals like silver, copper, lead, tin, brass, bronze and arsenic,[27] gold,[28] edible goods,[29]

[22] D.D. Kosambi, *Combined Methods in Indology and Other Writings*, (compiled, edited and introduced by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya), New Delhi, 2002, p.215.

[23] See the different versions of minor rock edict 1 in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 1.

[24] *Praśnōpaniṣad* 1.1.

[25] Reification has been defined as '[t]he act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life.' See Gajo Petrović's contribution in Tom Bottomore (ed), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, second edition, Maya Blackwell/ Worldview, New Delhi, 2000 [1991], p.463-5. Also see the classic discussion in Georg Lucács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Merlin Press, London, 1971, p.83-222. The modalities through which private property comes to be reified into the state is discussed in Manu V. Devadevan, 'From the Womb of Dearth: The Origin of State in South India,' forthcoming.

[26] 2.11.

[27] 2.12.

[28] 2.13.

[29] 2.15.

forest produce,[30] agricultural produce,[31] and even horses[32] and elephants.[33] It is certainly not improbable that more extensive resource-manuals were under circulation – in whatever form – among the *sārttavāha*s. Such manuals were indispensable when political economy was informed by the fortunes of surplus mobilization rather than the practice of conscious production of surplus.

Agrarian Expansion:

The situation seems to have begun to alter during the Mauryan period. Kauṭilya refers to agriculture, animal-husbandry and trade as *vārtā*,[34] and devotes an entire section carrying a manual of instructions addressed to the overseer in charge of agriculture, discussing patterns of rainfall, techniques of monsoon forecasting, soil conditions, cropping pattern, deployment of labour, ways of bringing virgin land under the plough and the share of produce to be exacted by the state from those who cultivated the land, with an additional share charged on those who chose to artificially irrigate their fields.[35] We do not know if any of these injunctions ever translated into practice or if an official in charge of agriculture did indeed exist, but it is certainly one of the earliest acknowledgements of the fact that a shift from surplus mobilization to surplus production was impending. The compilation of early Buddhist texts began in earnest during this period, and we find similar emphases being laid to agriculture, animal-husbandry and trade, which were upheld as the noblest of professions. There seems to have been a gradual shift from surplus mobilization to surplus production towards the close of the millennium. The coming of the Indo-Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians and the Kuṣāṇas, and the establishment of new political settlements by them, might have augmented this process by causing a horizontal diffusion of political, economic and religious praxes from the Gaṅga valley and Hakṣamanēyan and post-Hakṣamanēyan Persia, leading to the rise of parallel practices in different parts of the subcontinent.[36] The north-western region occupied by the Kuṣāṇas was indeed conducive for such diffusion, for it was not only influenced by the dominant praxes of the earlier period, but also

[30] 2.17.
[31] 2.24.
[32] 2.30.
[33] 2.2.
[34] 1.4.
[35] 2.24.
[36] For a discussion, see Manu V. Devadevan, *Pruthviyallodagida Ghatavu: Karnatakada Ninnegalu* (in Kannada), Akshara Prakashana, Heggodu, 2009, p.16-22. To identify this process as "diffusion" has assumed a pejorative air in recent years. The quest for "uniqueness" and "specificity" of the "local" has at times made some historians overcautious about the use of diffusion as an explanatory category. Nonetheless, diffusion need not be understood merely as the percolation of situated practices from one region to another in which the latter is seen as copying or appropriating the former. Historically entrenched practices do travel from region to region, no matter how passionate the historian's quest is to establish the contrary and idealize the local, but what needs to be borne in mind is that the practices are verily transformed in the process, at times beyond recognition. To speak of diffusion without identifying its transformative dynamism, or to gainsay the very process of diffusion, are both extreme positions which fail to stand serious scrutiny. For a critique of diffusion of political praxis in early India, see Aloka Parasher-Sen, 'Localities, Coins and the Transition to the Early State in the Deccan,' *Studies in History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2007, p.231-269.

participated actively in it, thanks to the presence of urban centres like Takṣaśila, and *mahājanapada*s like Matsya, Gāndhāra and Kāṃbōja. So also was the case with the Sātavāhanas and the western Kṣatrapas, who established themselves in the erstwhile provenance of two of the sixteen *mahājanapada*s, Avantī and Aśmaka. This diffusion was of great consequences and seems to have effected a thorough rewinding of the prevailing forms of economy, with the result that what came forth in the end was not merely a diffused replica of situated practices obtaining in the Gaṅga Valley and Persia, but a substantially new order of things. We come across over 800 rock-cut caves in the western Deccan alone,[37] and there are no reasons to believe that the labour expended in excavating them was imported from elsewhere, for nowhere else in the subcontinent did rock-cut caves in such large numbers exist before the Sātavāhana period. It is only plausible that local inhabitants provided the labour-force and were trained into the new activity. Such caves were generally meant for Buddhist mendicants, and their soaring number in the Deccan region meant that there was an increasing presence of people not directly involved in the food-production process. The sustenance of these groups could not draw upon prevailing forms of surplus generation. A similar increase in trade transpired in this region during this period, and the inscriptions of Dhēnukākaṭa, Bhārhūṭ, Sāñcī, Sannati and such other places provide fine instances of the traders and their activities at the local level. These traders constituted another major chunk of population who were not primary producers of grain surplus. Kauṭilya's concern for agriculture must be placed in this emerging context. The shift is unequivocally visible in the Sātavāhana inscriptions, where we encounter the earliest instances of land grants in the subcontinent. In the later half of the first century BC, Nāganīka granted two villages as part of a series of *vaidic* sacrifices organized under her aegis, apart from incurring an expenditure of at least 64,503 *kārṣāpaṇa*s and 44,340 cows, in addition to a number of horses, chariots, elephants, pots, silver containers and clothes.[38] This is the first known instance of land grant from the subcontinent.[39] More grants came to be made during the reigns of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi and Vāsiṣṭīputra Pulumāvi, mostly to Buddhist *Saṅgha*s. In his eighteenth regnal year, Gautamīputra made a grant of two hundred *nivartana*s of land in the western quarter of Khakaḍi village to Buddhist monks.[40] We are told that the village was earlier under the possession of Uṣabhadatta, the western Kṣatrapa ruler. But this piece of land was uninhabited and was yet to be brought under the plough, making it difficult for the monks to make productive use of it. Gautamīputra, therefore, granted the

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[37] Kathleen Morrison, 'Commerce and Culture in South Asia: Perspectives from Archaeology and History,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26, 1997, p.95.

[38] No. 3 in Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi, *The History and Inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas*, Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, Bombay, 1981.

[39] Land grants were certainly not an invention of this period, though. There is a reference in the "Lōhicca Sutta" to the grant of a village made by the Kōsala king Pasēnadi to a brāhmaṇa called Lōhicca (*Dīgha Nikāya* 12). The *sutta* is later than Pasēnadi by at least two centuries, if not more, but it is certainly from the pre-Nāganīka times. Unlike the grant made by Nāganīka, the earlier grants like the one received by Lōhicca was not meant for setting up a new agrarian settlement, but given as gifts to brāhmaṇas and *samaṇas*, and drew sustenance from the patronage of trading groups. We also come across a reference in the *Arthaśāstra*, where Kauṭilya forbids the granting of villages as salary, in lieu of money. This is found in one of those sections of the text, which historians believe was composed at a later date, perhaps third century CE (5.3).

[40] A *nivartana* is a plot of land measuring 200 x 200 cubits and approximates to about an acre and a half. The sowing capacity of this plot, which is about a quintal and a half, is also referred to as *nivartana*.

monks one hundred *nivartana*s from the royal holding (*rājakaṃ khētaṃ*) in exchange. In his twenty second year, Vāsiṣṭīputra revoked the grant of the Sudarśana village made over to the monks of the Bhadāyanīya sect earlier, and granted them the village of Śālmalīpādra in replacement, perhaps for similar reasons. Land given to the monks for generating agrarian resources was called the mendicant's holding (*bhikku hala*), as suggested by Gautamīputra's grant of the Karajaka village to the monks. Grants made to Buddhist monks and *vaidik* priests were generally untilled before, and at least in some instances, uninhabited. Reclamation of virgin land and making them over to potential proprietors was becoming increasingly popular in the early centuries of our era, and points to a shift in emphasis towards expansion of resources and the surplus base. Such grants came to be identified as perpetual endowment (*akṣaya nīvī*), as can be seen in the Vāsiṣṭīputra grant cited above. We learn from the Sātavāhana inscriptions that land grant was not an exclusive preserve of royalty, but could be made by influential elites as well, though such instances were all too rare. Vāsiṣṭīputra Sōmadēva, son of a certain Kauśikīputra Mitradēva of Ōkhaḷakiya, is said to have given away a village to the Buddhists mendicants of the Valuraka caves.[41] The stupas, inscriptions and other remains from major Buddhist centres like Kārlē, Sāñcī, Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Ajantā and Sannati point to the pioneering role played by the trading classes, local elites, and the 'robe and plough' in ushering in a new political economy.[42] While the reference to Kauśikīputra Mitradēva as belonging to the village of Ōkhaḷakiya, and the case of a grant made by him points to the rise of private property in the Deccan region, the rise of the Sātavāhana state and the practice of land grants initiated by them suggests that the reification of private property had begun to assume institutionalized forms in this part of the country.

The diffusion of these practices into the greater parts of the subcontinent and the resultant land reclamation and generation of perpetual endowments led to major economic transformations. The increasing presence of economic and political elites was attended to by a sharp rise in the number of religious orders of both *vaidic* and *samaṇa* types, and by the early centuries of our era, *āgamic* religious orders like Pāśupata (Lākuḷaśaiva), Pañcarātra and Bhāgavata had also appeared on the scene. These orders embodied power, and patronizing them was one of the ways in which political authority came to be reified. We begin to encounter sacrifices like *rājasūya*, *aśvamēdha*, and those that went by the name of *trirātra* and *atirātra*, which were alien to the Deccan region. Such sacrifices were unknown even in the Gaṅga valley for nearly half a millennium after 600 BCE, when *vaidic* practices were restricted to the predominantly domestic rites and rituals spelt out in the *gṛhyasūtra*s and other *kalpasūtra* texts. Biṃbisāra, Ajātaśatru and their contemporaries like Udayana, Brahmadatta, Pradyōta and Pasēnadi are not known to have performed any *vaidic* sacrifices, nor did *rājasūya*s, *vājapēya*s and *aśvamēdha*s have any place in the political expressions of the Nandas and the Mauryas. Thus, the fabulous

[41] The inscriptions are No. 11 (Khakaḍi), No. 13 (*rājakaṃ khētaṃ*), No. 19 (Śālmalīpādra), No. 12 (Karajaka) and No. 17 (Valuraka) in Mirashi, *The History and Inscriptions*.
[42] See also Himanshi Prabha Ray, *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Satavahanas*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986. The phrase in quotes is from R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*, University of Arizona Press, Tuscon, 1979.

nature of the Nāganīka inscription – in which as many as fifteen *vaidic* sacrifices are mentioned[43] – is more than telling about the nature of the shift which the economic scenario witnessed towards the turn of the millennium. What transpired in the course of these developments was the unwinding of the existing relations of production – which included the nature of extant resources, the unevenly configured means of access to them, the variegated processes involved in their mobilization, redistribution and consumption, the forms of production which these resources entailed and the economic hierarchies which they brought forth – and their rewinding in tune to the emergent requirements of the milieu.

State Formation in South India:

Something similar, if not identical, was happening in the Tamil country as well. The famed chieftaincies of *Eṭṭutogai* texts were certainly operating in a milieu of flourishing trade, prone more towards surplus mobilization than surplus production. The early chieftains do not seem to have made any conscious efforts to develop sustainable agrarian foundations oriented towards surplus production. Nor were their incessant raids against each other guided by any profound economic motives. One of the first acts by a raiding chieftain was to set fire to the enemy's fields, not lay siege of his granary.[44] Yet, early efforts towards agrarian expansion are already visible in these anthologies. Kapilar reports that Pāri excavated a pond at Paṟaṃbu, from where he ruled.[45] More substantial were the initiatives taken by the Cōḻa chief Karikāla to harness the waters of Kāvēri for irrigation, if the memory cherished by posterity is any indication.[46] At about the same time, we come across the earliest inroads of *vaidic* practices into the Tamil country, as suggested by titles like *palyāgaśālai* (of many *yāgaśālā*s) and *irājasūyaṃ vēṭṭa* (who performed the *rājasūya*), held respectively by the Pāṇḍyan chieftain Muduguḍumi and the Cōḻa chieftain Perunar Kiḷḷi.[47] In any case, the *Eṭṭutogai* phase of Tamil history was marked by a sense of universal territory akin to the Jaṃbūdvīpa or the emerging Bhāratavarṣa in the north, pointing to the fact that the early chieftaincies were sustained by the surplus which the trade routes could mobilize from far and wide, not by the surplus which they could generate from within their provenances. It is within this notion of a universal territory that we must locate the rich depictions of the earliest cities presented in the *Eṭṭutogai* songs. Much of these songs are preoccupied with the question

[43] *Agnyādhēya*, *Anvāraṃbhaṇīya*, *Aṅgārika*, *Rājasūya*, *Aśvamēdha*, *Saptadaśātirātra*, *Bhagaladaśarātra*, *Gargatrirātra*, *Gavamayana*, *Aptōryāma*, *Aṅgirasāmayana*, *Chandōmapavamānatrirātra*, *Śatātrirātra*, *Aṅgirasatrirātra* and *Trayōdaśātirātra*.

[44] It has been argued that the raids were symbolic acts of authority by early chiefs who seem to have drawn inspiration from the might of the Nanda and the Maurya states. Cēra titles like *imayavar-anban* (beloved of those who dwell on the Himalayas, the gods) and *vānavar-anban* (beloved of those who dwell in the skies, also gods) were perhaps derived from the Aśōkan title *Dēvānāṃ Priya*, while the reference to the chief's wheel (*nēmi*) may either point to Aśōka's *dharma-cakra*. See Manu V. Devadevan, 'Lying on the Edge of the Burning Ground: Rethinking *Tinai*s,' *JESHO*, Vol 49, No. 2, 2006, p.199-218.

[45] *Puṟanānūṟu* 118.

[46] No. 35, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. 9.

[47] See the colophons of *Puṟanānūṟu* 6, 12, 15 and 64 for *palyāgaśālai*, and 16, 125, 367 and 377 for *irājasūyaṃ vēṭṭa*.

of separation, caused invariably as it were by trans-local engagements. In most cases, the separation is caused because a lover or a husband is away on a mercantile journey or is on a stealthy cattle-lifting operation in a rival settlement, the later frequently leading to clashes that cause the ultimate separation – death.[48] The *Eṭṭutogai* songs were a form of power through which the control exercised by the chieftaincies over the political economy of early Tamil Nadu came to be articulated. It is true that the milieu was yet to witness the emergence of private property and the advent of a state to reify it. But certain beginnings had already been made by the likes of Pāri and Karikāla, and in consequence it became possible to produce identities with distinct place-name affiliations. The name of one of the celebrated poets of the day points to this shift – Māṅguḍi Marudanār. By the fifth century, place-name affiliations had become relatively common in South India. An inscription of Avinīta Gaṅga in Karnataka refers to Kāḍasvāmi, the recipient of a *brahmadēya* grant, as belonging to Tippūr in Maṟugere Rāṣṭra.[49]

With the appearance of surplus oriented agricultural settlements in the north and the pioneering initiatives towards agrarian expansion by southern chieftains like Pāri and Karikāla, new trading networks at the local level were activated. The shift towards sustainable surplus production at the local level necessitated localized forms of appropriation, redistribution and consumption, which eventually rendered long-distance trade like the ones associated with the *sārttavāha*s redundant.[50] The presence of local elites on the political and economic atlas meant that the dominant patterns of consumption also assumed localized forms. It was these developments which led to the great urban eclipse of the second and third centuries of our era. Between CE 100 and 300, most cities of early India went into oblivion.[51] No more do we hear of the great Pāṭalīputra, Takṣaśila, Kuśīnārā, Kauśāṃbī, Vaiśālī and Śrāvaṣṭī. In these two centuries, cities like Kaundanpur, Pauni, Bhokardan, Bahal, Nasik, Brahmapuri, Kausam, Paithan, Nevasa and Ter died away in Maharashtra, as did Peddabankur, Dhulikatta, Polakonda, Paddamarrur, Kondapur, Satanikota, Rajahmundry, Dharanikota, Kesarpalle, Amaravati, Chandavaram and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra, and Vadgaon-Madhavpur, Brahmagiri and

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[48] Devadevan, 'Lying on the Edge.'

[49] No 16, K.V. Ramesh (ed), *Inscriptions of the Western Gangas*, Agam Prakashan and ICHR, New Delhi, 1984. This is a Sanskrit inscription with two briefs fragments in Kannada towards the end. Interestingly enough, this is the earliest extant fragment of the Kannada language known to us.

[50] Devadevan, *Pruthviyallodagida Ghatavu*, p.20.

[51] See the brilliant account of urban decay in Ram Sharan Sharma, *Urban Decay in India: c.300-c.1000*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1987. Also see R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996. Sharma has argued that the great urban decay was contingent upon the decline in long-distance trade, but he fails to relate it to the process of agrarian expansion and the rise of localized forms of production, appropriation, redistribution and consumption of surplus. More importantly, Sharma believes that the greater part of the first millennium of our era was characterized by urban decay and trade decline, as indicated in the very subtitle of Sharma's thesis (c.300-c.1000). But this goes against the grain of the formidable evidence he has marshalled, most of which are from the 100-300 CE period. The urban decay thesis, as conceptualized by Sharma, is therefore open to critique. But not only have the critics of Sharma not been successful in accounting for the great volume of data which his thesis commands, they have also failed to produce any evidence for the existence of long-distance trade – which does not necessarily mean overseas trade – between CE 300, when the early cities died away, and CE 500, when the subcontinent witnessed a new flowering of urban centres. See Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994 for a critique of Sharma.

Chandravalli in Karnataka.[52] It has been observed that "[a]fter ca. 400 the force of ancient urbanism was spent in South Asia, for both literary and archaeological data point to a decline in number and centrality of cities."[53] Over the next couple of centuries, the new agrarian order developed into well-entrenched economic forms, leading eventually to the rise of powerful regional monarchies like Cāḷukyas in the Deccan, Pallavas in Tamil Nadu and Maukharis in the north, a process which was preceded by the appearance of regional states like those of the Kadaṃbas and Gaṅgas in Karnataka, Vākāṭakas and Viṣṇukuṇḍis in the Vindhya region, Guptas in the mid-Ganga valley, Śālaṅkāyanas, Ikṣvākus and Rēnāṭi Cōḻas in Andhra, and the early Pallavas in Tamil Nadu.[54]

State formation in South India after the fourth century was invariably related to agrarian expansion and the rights conferred by the state on landed property through eleemosynary grants like *brahmadēya*, *dēvadāna* or *dēvabhōga*, *śālābhōgaṃ*, *kaṇimuttūṟṟu* and *paḷḷiccandaṃ*.[55] Political theory in this period was conscious of the fact that the state was essentially an economic entity and that its greatest role was to regulate the control of private property. The *Manusmṛti* speaks of eighteen areas that falls under the king's functional jurisprudence, and except assault, abuse and adultery, all other areas had a direct bearing on the institution of private property: debt repayment, investment, sale of ownership, partnership, gift-making, wages, breach of agreement, revoking of sale and purchase, dispute between master and servant, boundary disputes, theft, violence, the duties of man and woman, partition of property and income from gambling.[56] These eighteen areas of kingly jurisdiction are enumerated in *Nāradasmṛti* as well,[57] a text compiled with the sole purpose of expounding them. Needless to say, assault, abuse and adultery become acts that fall within the ambit of legal mediation only in the context of private property. State, in other words, emerged as a reification of private property.

By the sixth century, state had become an entrenched institution and the new economy had already inaugurated the next phase of urbanization in the subcontinent, and the contingently related revival of long-distance trade.[58] Some of the erstwhile urban centres like Banavāsi in Karnataka, Kāñci and Madurai (Kūḍal) in Tamil Nadu, and Sopāra and Kalyān in the western Deccan were not totally abandoned in the urban eclipse, and managed to reemerge as powerful centres of trade and polity in the sixth

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[52] See Sharma, ibid.

[53] James Heitzman, 'Temple Urbanism in Medieval South India,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1987, p.792.

[54] Some of them, like the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas, were in fact as powerful as the Cāḷukyas and the Pallavas, which has often led historians of an earlier generation to compare the former with the Mauryan Empire.

[55] The earliest known epigraphic reference to *brahmadēya* and *dēvabhōga* from South Asia occurs in a third century Prakrit inscription of the Cuṭukulānandas from Banavāsi. See B.R. Gopal (ed), *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, Vol 1, Kadamba Institute of Cultural Studies, Siris, 1985, p.6.

[56] *Manusmṛti* 8.3-7.

[57] The *Naradasmriti*, M1.16-18.

[58] I have elsewhere argued that these developments caused a momentous rupture in the foundations of material world, and that the emergence of vernacular languages in the Deccan region in the mid-centuries of our era was one of the fallouts of this great rupture. The causal relationship between agrarian expansion and urban decay, which we have established in the foregoing discussion, was originally developed as part of this study on the emergence of vernaculars. See Devadevan, *Pruthviyallodagida Ghatavu*, p.27-30.

century, while some like Muciri in Kerala had to wait up to the ninth century to reestablish its prominence in the new political and economic geography, when it became part of the political complex of Mahōdayapuraṃ, from where the Cēra Perumāḷs ruled.[59] But the impacts of urbanization was already being felt in south Asia from the latter half of the sixth century, and more forcefully from the early seventh century.

3.

The Making of Locality Polities:

It is in this new milieu beginning with the fifth century that we come across chiefdoms called *viṣaya*s in the inscriptions. The *viṣaya* was essentially a micro-region constituted into a politically conscious locality. The production relations of this locality, which oftentimes were agrarian relations, were controlled by a group of elites under the stewardship of the head of a prominent family. The *viṣaya*s were similar to the erstwhile *mahājanapada*s in their origins,[60] but they assumed a very different ambience of authority than the latter when they came to be enlisted into the service of the state. The *viṣaya*s figured prominently in the Gupta and Vākāṭaka inscriptions of the north and in the Kadaṃba, Gaṅga and Pallava copperplates of the south, where they was at times also referred to as *rājya* and *rāṣṭra*. The earliest extant copperplate inscription of the Guptas speaks of the chief of a *viṣaya* (*viṣayapati*).[61] These chiefdom localities came to be more popularly designated as *nāḍu* in south India after the eighth century, and their affiliation with the state enabled some of them to graduate to the position of *sāmanta*s (literally 'companions'), who enjoyed the status of the king's close confidantes. The *nāḍu* was a surplus producing agrarian unit. Not all *nāḍu*s rose to the status of chiefdoms within the state's sphere of control. Not all chiefdoms in the state's sphere of control were entitled to the status of *sāmanta* either. The hierarchical relationship thus created was to get entangled in more complex ways in the coming centuries, as more *nāḍu*s came within the fold of the state and agrarian expansion assumed dynamic proportions.

In the context of Kerala, some of the *nāḍu*s mentioned in the Tiruvalla copperplates, like Iḷaṅkunṟanāḍ, Neḍuṅṅālināḍ, Tāmaṟṟanāḍ, Kaṇṇanāḍ, Veḷḷeyūrnāḍ and Paḻaiyanāḍ were no more than surplus-producing agrarian settlement, or at least this is what the conspicuous absence of a reference to chiefs or ruling houses in their case indicates, but inscriptions throw light on more than a dozen *nāḍu*s that had already

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[59] Muciri (Muzyris) was one of the ports named in the *Periplus*, but it did not figure in the list of five pepper-exporting markets of "Male" mentioned by Cosmas Indicopleustus. The five marts are Parti, Mangarouth, Salopatana, Nalopatana and Poudupatana (McCrindle 1897: 367). Toṇḍi or Tyndis of the Greeks also suffered a similar demise and seems to have had a later-day reemergence, if its identification with Koyilandi (Pandalāyini Kollaṃ) is correct.

[60] Chattopadhyaya, B.D., 'Transition to the Early Historical Phase in the Deccan: A Note,' in B.M. Pande and B.D. Chattopadhyaya (ed), *History and Archaeology: Essays in Memory of Shri A. Ghosh*, Vol. II, Agam Kala Prakashan, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 727-29.

[61] Indore plates of Skandagupta, No. 16, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 3.

emerged as chiefdoms in the service of the state.[62] They include, in that order from north to south, Kōlattunāḍ, Puṟaikiḻānāḍ, Kuṟuṃboṟaināḍ, Rāmavaḷanāḍ, Ēṟāḷanāḍ, Vaḷḷuvanāḍ, Neḍuṃbuṟaiyūrnāḍ, Maṉanāḍ, Kālkkaraināḍ, Veṃbolināḍ, Kīḻmalaināḍ, Muññināḍ, Nanṟuḻaināḍ and Vēṇāḍ.[63] Inscriptions from Karnataka speak of Sēndraka Viṣaya, Tagare Viṣaya, Kovaḷāla Viṣaya, Vanne Viṣaya, Vaḷḷāvi Viṣaya, Sinda Viṣaya, Paruvi Viṣaya, Tegattūru Viṣaya, Kaivara Viṣaya, Marukara Viṣaya, Eḍetoṟe Nāḍu, Nirggunda Nāḍu, Gañje Nāḍu, Badagere Nāḍu, Beḷvola Nāḍu, Pudal Nāḍu, Hoḍali Nāḍu, Korikunda Nāḍu, Morasa Nāḍu, Kuliṅgijya Nāḍu, Puṟamalai Nāḍu and so on.[64] More awesome was the situation in Tamil Nadu. By the first quarter of the eleventh century, there were as many as 105 *nāḍu*s mentioned in the inscriptions of Cōḻamaṇḍalaṃ alone, and thirty five from Naḍuvil Nāḍu.[65] Such distinct localities were to be seen across large parts of south Asia after the fifth century. The localities were not as dense in the north as they were to the south of the Gōdāvari, but by the late fifth century many locality chiefs under the Guptas had begun to make land grants, a privilege reserved only for the king and his family ever since regional monarchies began to appear in the early fourth century.[66] That it was possible for a conglomeration of agrarian settlements to identify itself as a geographical unit called *nāḍu* or *viṣaya* and make its presence felt on the political atlas as a chiefdom points not only to the distance which the milieu had traversed from the stage of surplus mobilization to that of surplus production, but also to the extent to which the latter had matured into a reified political configuration.

The Transition towards Territoriality:

As early as the fourth and the fifth century, the songs in the *Pattupāṭṭu* celebrated the new agrarian dispensation, and texts like *Malaipaḍugaḍāṃ*, *Neḍunalvāḍai*, *Paṭṭinaippālai* and *Maduraikkāñji* jubilantly evoked the agricultural prosperity of the provenance of the chieftains to whom the songs were addressed. These cases have to be understood in the context of the making of regional and local polities and the emergence of local trading networks, and the contingently related change in the very semantics of land, where land was transformed into something that would henceforth be identified as property. We see here the earnest beginnings of what would in the coming centuries become deep-seated territorialities. Yet, a conscious sense of territorial affiliation is certainly missing at this early stage. Even in the *Cilappadigāraṃ*, the sense of territoriality is nearer to the universal, and the colourful description of the Cōḻa country is answered with a matchingly brilliant picture of the Pāṇḍya and Cēra landscape. But the process of differentiation had already begun, and it was becoming possible to juxtapose

[62] See No. 120 in Puthusseri Ramachandran, *Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Rekhakal* (in Malayalam), State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2007.
[63] See M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Published by the author, Calicut, 1996. The *nāḍu*s are identified by Narayanan as "Divisions of the Kingdom." A major corrective is offered in Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993.
[64] Devadevan, *Pruthviyallodagida Ghatavu*, p.21.
[65] Y. Subbarayalu, *The Political Geography of the Chola Country*, Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology, Madras, 1973, p.20.
[66] Some of these grants are recorded in No. 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and so on in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 3.

one region with another. What is indeed striking about the *Pattupāṭṭu* or the *Cilappadigāraṃ* is the fact that the description of the landscape was always done by enumerating its resources, especially flora, in which the rice-fields figured almost invariably, as did the other crops oftentimes. A description of the Pāṇḍya landscape in the *Cilappadigāraṃ* should illustrate this well.[67]

> You will then reach the Pāṇṭiyaṉ's Little Mountain.
> Visible by its glimmer, it is thickly covered
> With wild rice, sugarcane with severed joints,
> Millets ready for plucking, ragi that grows
> On fertile soil, garlic, turmeric,
> Lovely kavalai vines, plantains,
> Arecas, bunches of coconuts hanging low,
> Manges, and jackfruits.

Iḷaṅgō Aḍigaḷ's description of urban life in the *Cilappadigāraṃ* is indeed a matchless riot of economic affluence.

> The billowing sea, her robes. The hills,
> Her breasts. The broad rivers, her garlands.
> The clouds, her shock of hair. This vast
> And boundless Earth seemed a woman.
> On top of the Utaiya Hill the Sun
> Rose, pulled down the veil of darkness
> By splashing his bright rays to light up
> This resplendent world. On open terraces,
> On treasure houses with ornaments, on mansions
> With airholes like the eyes of deer, he shone.
> Near the harbor, the passerby was stopped dead
> By the homes of Yavanas whose profits never shrunk.
> On the edge of the burnished waters lived
> And mingled as one traders from distant
> Lands, come for goods carried
> By ships. With paints, scented powders,
> Cool sandalwood paste, flowers,
> Incense and fragrant perfumes, hawkers
> Went round the city streets.
> One saw the fine work of making
> Cloth from silk, fur, and cotton
> In the weavers' quarter. Silk, coral,
> Sandalwood, agar, flawless pearls,
> Gems, gold, and an endless profusion
> Of rare ornaments were piled high
> In the commodious streets. Heaped separately
> Were grains in the street of the grain merchants,
> As also a variety of provisions distinct from one
> Another. Pedlars of pastry, appam;
> Women hawking wine; fishermen
> Offering fish for sale; vendors
> Of white salt; sellers of betel

[67] *Cilappadigāraṃ* 11.96-104. The translation and numbering pattern is from R. Parthasarathy, *The Cilappatikāram: The Tale of an Anklet*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2004 [1993].

Leaves; perfumers; butchers flogging
Different kinds of meat; oilmongers;
Overcrowded shops packed with food;
Braziers; coppersmiths; painters; sculptors;
Goldsmiths; jewelers; tailors; cobblers;
A host of artisans making various
Flawless objects with cloth and pith;
The homes of great musicians, expert
In the traditions of music, who could display
Impeccable skill on the flute and lute by sounding
The first seven notes; and other workers
Who excelled in the small crafts –
All had their homes in the suburbs of the city.[68]

The *Pattupāṭṭu* corpus and texts like the *Cilappadigāraṃ* and the *Maṇimēgalai* demonstrate that the configuration of a territory was explicitly related to the identification of its exploitable resources and the potentials of its surplus regime. Control over these resources and the possibilities of gaining access to the larger political formation by rising to the status of *sāmanta*s opened up a field of conflict and robust political encounters, which remained relatively mute in some parts of the subcontinent like Kerala, Andhra, Orissa and Rajastan till the thirteenth century, but assumed profound subversive undertones in many other regions like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and the Gaṅga valley as early as the seventh century. By the tenth century, chiefs like Arikēsari of Vēmulavāḍā, Śaṅkaragaṇḍa of Banavāsi, Rājarāja Narēndra of Veṅgi and the Cāḷukya prince Satyāśraya in his capacity as a lord under his father Taila II patronized poets – Paṃpa, Ponna, Nannayya and Ranna respectively – who would give expression not only to their territory, but also extol the beauty of neighbouring territories and thereby tacitly extend their territorial claims, as in the case of Paṃpa's celebration of Banavāsi and Ranna's shower of praise on the resources and beauty of Veṅgi. By the twelfth century, the idiom developed by Paṃpa, Ranna and their tenth century contemporaries came to be deployed by several petty chiefs in their inscriptions. A dazzling picture of Kōḷūr's landscape in the CE 1147 *praśasti* of Bhīmarasa II is found in an inscription from the village,[69] while the Yēṇagi inscription of CE 1258-59 gives an impression of Hūvina Haḍagali not very different from Paṃpa's Banavāsi or Ranna's Veṅgi.[70] Similar pictures obtain from two inscriptions of the twelfth century, found at Kuṟugōḍu.[71]

The relationship between the ability of a territory to generate its resources on the one hand and the genesis of a sense of territoriality on the other is conspicuous, as is the latter's causal dependence on the former. But the territory is more vivacious than this relationship suggests. Consider the following lines from the *Cilappadigāraṃ*.[72]

Great and renowned kings envied
The immense wealth of the seafaring merchants
Of the opulent city of Pukār. Ships

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[68] 5.1-45.
[69] BLR-3 in *Kannada University Epigraphical Series*, Vol.1.
[70] HBL-37 in *Kannada University Epigraphical Series*, Vol.1.
[71] BLR-7 and 18 in *Kannada University Epigraphical Series*, Vol.1.
[72] 2.1-8.

And caravans from foreign lands poured
In abundance rare objects and diverse
Merchandise. Its treasure would be untouched
Through the entire world, bound by the roaring seas,
Crowd into the city.

Here is another instance from the same text.[73]

He passed the huts of cowherds, rich in cattle,
And with tired steps went down the street,
Before him appeared a humped bull: his people
Did not know it was a bad omen. He passed
Beyond the meeting place, the pollen of flowers
All over it. Walking through the street of courtesans,
He arrived at the market place. There he saw
A goldsmith in court dress, marching at a distance,
Pincers in hand, followed by a hundred goldsmiths
Renowned for their skill in melting gold
And making fine jewels.

Resources, locality, forms of political control, production relations, labour, commodity, trade, market – these were the inimitable templates against which poets like Māṅguḍi Marudanār, Iḷaṅgō Aḍigaḷ, Paṃpa and Ranna, and the lesser known composers of the inscriptions chose to celebrate their new-found self-awareness of territoriality. They spoke of rice, ragi and millets, vines, mangoes and jackfruits, pepper, coconut and turmeric, pearls, rubies and coral, gold, silk and sandalwood, incense, perfumes and agar, merchants, caravans and ships, painters, weavers and goldsmiths, flutes, lutes and the seven notes, and bards, sculptors and courtesans. This is not a simple relationship between resources and the forms of control they entail, but a stunning pageantry of the political economy at whose heart lies the institution of private property.

This world of affluence – or at least the possibility of producing such vivid representations – was contingent on a series of entrenched historical developments which began in the early centuries of our era. Agrarian expansion, the origin of private property, the birth of local circuits of trade and the genesis of new political elites to control the emergent production relations led to the rise of regional monarchies, localities, hierarchies and conflicts, which culminated in the making of territorial consciousness in south Asia after the seventh century. Our study shows that the passion for territory, its embedded delusions, its sensualities and its nostalgias are ultimately the reified countenances assumed by the political economy. It has assumed umpteen visages in the centuries down to our times and lives amidst us in such flaunting guises as empires, nations, motherlands and global villages. These shadow lines of territoriality may continue to rule the roost for centuries or millennia to come, but it will not outlive the day when the institution of private property has been cremated on the shores of time. This, and perhaps this alone, is the promise of the future, a promise that may never indeed be realized.

[73] 16.105-115.