

*POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRANSITION  
IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA AND SRI LANKA*

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IN  
MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA AND SRI LANKA*

*By*

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## ABSTRACT

*The two most important ordering principles for human society are the political and the religious. In some way, the history of a society might be viewed as the process with which a community attempts to affirm, through religious and political structures and values, the legitimation of its power and authority. Successive efforts to weave new patterns of legitimation might then be thought to define the process of change in that society. As traditional forms of society succumb to new means of ordering reality the changes that come about raise the question: What happens to a community's ordering of reality when it attempts to redefine its political legitimizing process in terms of its religious orientation? The purpose of this thesis is to examine this question in the related societies of South India and Sri Lanka.*

*The process of transforming society is not a simple evolution of new ideas and the breakdown of older ideas. Instead the process is more likely a dialectic of critical thought in which a common horizontal thread (politico-religious man) entwines with a series of vertical threads linking that society with its past traditions. The vertical threads are those by which a society establishes the relation of its system of thought to previous expression in the same branch of cultural activity (religion, politics, philosophy). By the horizontal thread a society critically assesses its legitimizing values in terms of what is appearing in other branches of cultural activity and in terms of values in other societies. South India and Sri Lanka stand out in*

the degree to which they exemplify this historical process of shaping and transforming the mechanisms of the social order. The latter religious tradition, as it is expressed in the historiography of the chronicles, the Dīpavaṃsa, the Mahāvāṃsa and the Cūlavāṃsa is portrayed as an ideal society that does define itself against the past (the South India Brahmanic influence and its basic political and social institutions), but quite self-consciously identifies itself as a transformation and extension of the older tradition. The subtleties of such a transformation are exemplified by the normative pattern for Sinhalese kingship provided in what Tambiah and B. Smith have called a "paradigm of kingship", the Asokan concept of Dharmavijaya. This concept of kingship is central to the idea of social order in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka and its political legitimation process differs markedly from South Indian concepts of kingship even though it shares the same origin.

The Sri Lankan conceptualization of what a state should be appears to be a remarkable break from the political and religious tradition in mainland India. The design of Sri Lankan statehood differs in that it is schism-preventing or monistic. Virtually all aspects of Sri Lankan society appear to revolve around a fear of disorder and disruptive forces. The ideal social order in Sri Lanka is rooted in this concern. This perspective is in direct contrast to Chola concepts of the state which can be called non-centralized or pyramidally segmented. Burton Stein puts forward in his book Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, the idea of the segmented state in which each level of political organization stands in opposition to each other inviting rivalry and dispute between lesser politi-

cal leaders (Nadu chieftains) in order to legitimize the sovereignty of the king. This system appears to be in marked contrast to the Sri Lankan political theory where disunity is considered tantamount to chaos. In the Cholan segmentary state, unlike in Ceylon, there are two kinds of centres in both the conceptual and empirical sense.

As to the first sense, the segmentary state exists as a state only insofar as the segmentary units comprising it (Nādus) recognize a single ritual authority -- the king. This recognition provides some legitimacy for the nadus which are in themselves centres in the second sense. In a segmentary state, political control is appropriately distributed among many throughout the system, ritual supremacy is legitimately conceded to a single centre. In the Cholan state, the king (dēva-rāja) as protector of the social order sacrificially attains divinity and becomes Siva incarnate. Ritually incorporative kingship of this kind provides the ritual focus for balanced and opposed internal groupings.

In the Sri Lankan state there is an amalgamation or absorption of localized chieftainships so that they lose their essential being as smaller parts of a political whole. Hence, ritually incorporative kingship in Sri Lanka does not exist at the same incorporative level of organization as in the Chola state.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Two of the most important ordering principles for human society are the political and the religious. Indeed, evolution of a society may be viewed as a process by which a community affirms through religious and political structures and values the legitimation of power through authority. As earlier forms of the legitimizing process succumb to new forms of legitimation, society changes. What happens to a community when the legitimizing process is redefined through a change of religious orientation as in the cases of medieval South India and Sri Lanka?*

*The transformation of the legitimation process is not simply an imposition of new ideas and the breakdown of older ideas; rather, the process is more likely to involve an interaction of critical thought in which a common thread of cultural continuities abides amidst the reality of change producing the fabric of society. The vertical threads of the fabric are those elements by which a society establishes the relation of its current system of thought to its ancient foundations. The horizontal thread of tradition allows a society to critically assess new legitimating values. The two threads, the warp and the woof, combine to form the cultural fabric of history. South India and Sri Lanka exemplify this historical process of shaping and transforming the mechanisms of social order. The religious tradition of Sri Lanka, as expressed in the historiography of the chronicles, the Dīpavamsa, the Mahāvamsa and the Cūlavamsa, is portrayed as an ideal society whose central legitimating features are defined against the past but which also quite consciously identifies with a transformation and*

*extension of an earlier tradition. The subtleties of such a transformation are most clearly seen in the central legitimating process of Sri Lankan ideals of power and authority if those are contrasted with the South Indian concept of power and authority. In Sri Lanka and South India, the focus for the legitimation process was kingship. Accordingly, this study is concerned with the religious aspects and implications of the institution of kingship as it functioned within the social orders of medieval Sri Lanka, third century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. and South India, seventh through the eleventh century A.D.*

*The reason why the medieval period of South Indian history and the medieval period of Sri Lankan history (the Anurādhapura period), have been selected for study is that they were of pivotal importance in the political, cultural and religious history of South India and Sri Lanka. The Anuradhapura period of Sri Lankan history is widely considered to be an important formative period because of the emergence of Sinhala- Buddhist nationalism, and the emergence of a distinct political ideology. Of particular relevance to the student of these developments is the existence of a substantial historical literature including the Chronicles and documents of the religious and political heritage of the Island. The Chronicles of Sri Lanka which form the only historical literature of its kind within the area of South Asian culture, are writings that arise from a particular motivation. What is the source of the motivation? The answer to this question is important because the Chronicles have an intentional political relevance. This thesis attempts to answer this question by demonstrating the effect of the political and religious motivations of medieval Sri Lankan society on the legitimation process.*



*Medieval South India is a period of Indian history that is a synthesis of cultural interaction between entrenched religious and political values and new values. For the historian, it is of particular interest how much this synthesis in the political field stands out against its Sinhalese counterpart. The development of a separate political orientation between Sri Lanka and South India can be traced to the vicissitudes of history. Buddhism in Sri Lanka and South India, originated in North India with Asoka, but by the eighth century Buddhism was no longer a vital force within the religious and political spheres of South India. On the basis of a comparative analysis of South Indian and Sri Lankan processes of legitimation and from observations of their respective ideal social orders, it quickly becomes evident that conservatism is a characteristic that applies to the culture of Sri Lanka but not to South India. Whereas South India was adaptable to change of cultural elements such as the highly developed alliance between Brahmans and the peasantry, Sri Lanka exhibited a more conservative maintenance of the Buddhist tradition upon which it was founded; the best evidence of this is the political independence of the Island as it developed over most of the Anurādhapura period. This thesis examines three questions which arise from the drive to political independence: Where did Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism originate? How is the process of legitimating power and authority reflected in the Sri Lankan nationalist ideology? Can these legitimating processes be compared with the Medieval South Indian counterpart?*

*The comparative task concentrates on three related themes in the process of legitimizing power in Sri Lanka and South India: 1) the Sri Lankans and South Indians were each attempting to put into practice a certain model of kingship which had previously existed in the literature;*

2) this model of kingship reflects the legitimating processes of the respective traditions which are fundamentally different in their orientation; and 3) the fundamental difference in their respective legitimation processes lay in the Sri Lankan emphasis upon the king's political function as a measure of his legitimate rule, social and religious, within a pan-island relationship. The Sri Lankan emphasis on the political realm seems to be absent in South India where the functions of a king's legitimate authority were portrayed within a ritual context which, in turn, had repercussions for the political organization of the society.

The first of the three themes, the idea of a normative pattern of kingship, is a feature of Indian kingship in general. Moreover, the processes of legitimating authority are based on ancient doctrines of power that were used by later monarchs as norms for legitimation. Kings in South India and Sri Lanka had a sense of continuity with their predecessors, whether the principles of continuity stemmed from cultural contact and were productive of new forms of kingship, or whether they had been cultivated from a common Brahmanic institution and ideology. The commonality of the Brahmanic influences is apparent in the philosophical attitudes about power and its function in society. Vedic ideas on kingship provide a foundation for the later traditions. The discontinuities with the Vedic basis are also apparent in the way in which legitimation is subsequently reflected in the subtleties of transformed political and religious institutions, as is exemplified by the normative pattern for Sinhalese kingship provided in the "paradigm" of kingship, the Asokan concept of dharmaviṣāya. This concept is carried a step further by Sri Lankan political ideology in a radical break from South Indian concepts of cakkavatti kingship; a divergence reflected in the different respective conceptions of

*the ideal social order. The Sri Lankan ideal political community arises from an ideology that strives to maintain a homogeneous social order in contrast to the South Indian conception of the ideal political order wherein opposition between heterogeneous components of the social order are considered to have a stabilizing rather than a disintegrating effect. The South Indian integrative oppositional quality leads to a common ritual focus without political cohesiveness.*

*The second theme takes up this fundamental difference between the two societies regarding the nature and purpose of the ideal political order to determine the way in which this dissimilarity functions as part of the legitimation process by clarifying essential differences and similarities in the way in which each social order defines power and its central constituent force. An analysis of the conceptions of force of each social order, in particular the way in which force is defined or limited, is provided to assist in clarifying the legitimation process of kingship.*

*The third theme is intertwined in the second theme: the assertion that the Sri Lankan legitimation process gave sanction to the king not only as a political figure, but as a cultural ritual participant. This particular conception of the relationship of power and authority is related to an ethnic nationalist ideology in Sri Lanka that is blunted in the South Indian political scheme. The legitimate political involvement of South Indian kings appears to be restricted both territorially and ideologically which is not the case in Sri Lanka. In South India, overarching political sovereignty is less important than ritual sovereignty. Therefore, the provinces could enjoy a strong measure of autonomy. In contrast, the Sri Lankan legitimation process attached great importance to political interdependence between the provinces as a necessary ingredient for the stability and*

*maintenance of the social order. This difference is comprehensible if it is understood that the legitimation processes in South India and Sri Lanka emphasize different aspects of two foci of sovereignty, the ritual and the political.*

*In the South Indian social order, unlike in Sri Lanka, there are two kinds of centres of sovereignty in both the conceptual and empirical sense. In South India, the king is recognized as the single most important ritual authority. This is true for Sinhalese kings as well. In South India, however, political control is distributed among many throughout the system. In South India, the king rules by ritual incorporation through his sacrality which is engendered through sacrifice. The Sri Lankan king, on the other hand, is recognized as both the central political figure and the ritual leader as he attempts to rule a unified island whose various sub-units have lost their political autonomy as smaller parts of a political whole. The entire legitimation process for a Sri Lankan king revolves around his political and ritual sovereignty whereas in South India the king, a political figure of major importance, rules almost entirely through ritual incorporation.*

#### *Structure of the Thesis*

*In order to give the proper scope to understanding the concepts of legitimation in Sri Lanka and South India, it is necessary to go back to the earliest Indian views of kingship. Therefore, Chapter One is devoted to an analysis of the institution of kingship as it relates to the attempt of each tradition to fashion an ideal social order. Several subcategories within the first chapter specifically address those Vedic, Brahmanic-Dharma-śāstric and Buddhist theories regarding the origin and legitimation of the*

institution of kingship which directly influence South Indian and Sri Lankan orientations. A second subcategory reflects the ideal correlation between authority and power as it relates to these traditions; specifically, the relationship between Brahman and Ksatriya and Sangha and Cakkavatti. Third, the conception of matsyanyāya will be considered as a central influence in the forging of both ideals of social order. Fourth, the idea of normative kingship will be analyzed within the historical perspective of the traditions themselves concentrating on the essential characteristics of the ideal king as they are reflected in the literature of the traditions to establish the existence of an ideal type. The essential argument involves the South Indian sacral character of kingship which is a functional transformation of earlier Vedic views, and the paradigm of kingship provided by Asoka which presages a Sri Lankan concept of the righteous kingship. Within Sri Lankan history, a new paradigm based on Asokan kingship emerged to provide for the religiously sanctioned use of violence in the name of Buddhist national security. The fifth subcategory is concerned with the cosmological dimensions of legitimated authority as they are reflected in the king's sovereignty within the social order.

Chapter Two is devoted to the role of force as an expression of legitimated power. To illustrate the essential differences between Sri Lankan and South Indian concepts of legitimated power, force will be analyzed in four categories: 1) force as a necessary expression of sovereign power; 2) the relationship between those who possess power and those against whom force is directed; 3) the extents, limitations and legitimacy of force; and 4) force as an expression of ritual sovereignty as opposed to political sovereignty.

*Chapter Three examines the role of ritual in the legitimizing process, and confronts the dissimilar and similar functions of ritual in medieval South India and Sri Lanka. The chapter begins with an analysis of the consecration ceremony which provides a focus for key differences in the legitimizing process, and then turns to the way in which legitimacy is reinforced and created through ritual means. The royal patronage of the religious community and the extent to which religious authorities become politicized as links between the king and community are considered. Next, the ideological framework of ritual in both social orders is analyzed in terms of the concrete institutions and the administrative processes related to them, especially the growth of South Indian ritual hegemony as a means of asserting sovereignty over the people. The Sinhalese festival of the tooth relic which becomes part of Sri Lankan political ideology is considered in contrast to ritual sovereignty.*

*Chapter Four is a review of the political organization of medieval South India and Sri Lanka as these societies attempt to construct patterns of legitimized authority in order to create a stable social order. The Sri Lankan idea of political organization is built on a nationalist ideal and is monistic. Virtually all aspects of Sri Lankan political life are concerned with order and fear of invasion. This perspective differs from South Indian conceptions of political organization which find legitimacy and stability in the opposition by which each sub-group defines itself within the social order. This system of political organization contrasts with Sri Lankan political theory in which political disunity is synonymous with chaos.*

*Chapter Four is comprised of three sub-sections: one is devoted to analyzing some of the major historical forces that shaped the early political*

development of South India and Sri Lanka; two is concerned with an historical analysis of the political organization as it relates to the legitimacy of the rules (of importance in this regard is the idea of segmentation or opposition among many sub-groups in South India and the schism-preventing ideology of Sri Lanka); three addresses the problem of conflict between the claimants of political power and the ultimate collapse of political legitimacy and the transformation of the values that support that collapse.

### Sources

No methodological analysis of this scope could be carried out without the utilization of those tools which are the link between the past and the present. The sources employed in this thesis range from early Vedic texts to temple inscriptional records, and from the application of interpretive analysis to the use of historical accounts.

The earliest literary sources consulted are the Vedic samhita(s) and brahmana(s) which are especially useful because they give detailed accounts of the major royal sacrifices, the Rajasuya, the Asvamedha and the Vajapeya. These texts provide a good foundation for understanding ancient Vedic kingship. The ancient law books, the Dharmaśāstra and the Arthaśāstra, provide some concepts of kingship as well as accounts of the ideal social order. Texts of the Pali Canon contain a number of chapters on kingship and the ideal social order which aid in the understanding of early Buddhist kingship, specifically, the Dīgha Nikāya of the Sutta Pitaka.

The Mahābhārata discusses kingship in great detail and many references in this thesis are drawn from the Śānti Parvan chapter in which kingship figures predominantly.

*In the literary sources of the medieval period of South India and Sri Lanka, there is a vast amount of good material available from a variety of different writers. In particular, the Chronicles of Sri Lanka are indispensable in formulating ideas about Sinhalese kingship. The nature of these Chronicles will be considered in Chapter One. Tamil heroic poetry and the Silappatikaram provide valuable sources of information about early South Indian culture. This literature is necessary to interpret the concepts of kingship during the pre-Pallava Age as well as to understand the ideology of the Devaram saints and the social structure of early South India.*

*Much of the material used in interpreting the political and economic conditions of the two cultures is based on inscriptional record. The inscriptions of Aśoka (270-232 B.D.) provide evidence of the relationship between kingship and religion. For South India, primary sources of the temple records translated by scholars such as Balasubhramanyam, Barret and Nilakanta Sastri, provide the basis for an analysis of South Indian kingship. Apart from the inscriptional record, temples, Viharas and dagobas, provide a wealth of information regarding style, design, purpose and inspiration.*

*Other sources are the scholarly interpretative writing by specialists in medieval South India and Sri Lanka. In terms of providing a good historical analysis, the works of Gieger (Ancient Ceylon) and Nilakanta Sastri (History of South India) are unparalleled. These sources provide the keystone of information upon which the thesis is built.*

*Interpretative work by Dumont, Gonda, Heesterman, Spellman, Drekmeier, de Silva, Tambiah, Berger and Seneviratne, allow for exploration within the political and social heartbeat of South India and Sri Lanka*



while at the same time providing for the diversity of factors and influences that determined the legitimizing process.

Finally, the interpretative works by Bardwell Smith and Burton Stein were the inspiration for this thesis. Stein's Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India provides focus for the political and economic aspects of the legitimation process, while Bardwell Smith's Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka is the source for understanding Sri Lankan concepts of the ideal social order and Sinhalese kingship. These writings provided a general understanding of the political and ideological background from which it was possible to do a cross-comparison of the two cultures. This thesis relies upon these secondary interpretative sources and translations of the aforementioned primary sources. Source material beginning with the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, Dharmaśāstras and Arthaśāstra provide the common base for evaluating concepts of ideal kingship in both traditions; in the turn from commonalities to comparison of the major differences of normative kingship in the two traditions, the historical material has been broadened to include classical South Indian literature and the Sinhalese Chronicles.

## CHAPTER I - IDEAL SOCIAL ORDERS

### Introduction

*This chapter considers the process of legitimizing power in Medieval South India and Sri Lanka as reflected in their respective notions of the ideal social order to establish an ahistorical model of the ideals that will provide a conceptual framework for identifying and contrasting real differences and similarities in the legitimizing process between the two cultures. A functional basis for both continuity and change is established by consideration of five related issues. I begin with an account of the ideas about the origins of kingship as they emerge in the legends of the early Vedic and Epic literature to lay the foundation for the continuity, shared by the brahmanic tradition and the Sinhalese Buddhist tradition, by concentrating on theoretical and mythological beliefs about the origins of kingship. Then, the concept of order and the ever present threat of anarchy underlying both the parent political tradition and the more recent Sri Lankan political tradition is considered. The emerging themes of the relationship between king and priest will provide the basis for the third line of investigation to highlight the relationship between secular rule and religious authority; the relationship between Kṣatra and Brahman in the Indian tradition, and Cakkavatti and Sangha in the Sinhalese tradition will contrast the dissimilar functions of kingship in each culture. The fourth line of investigation outlines a normative pattern of kingship as described in the written material of the period. Finally, the cosmological dimensions of legitimated power are considered.*

*These inquiries are built upon a general understanding of the relationship between power and authority provided by L. Dumont in "Kingship in Ancient India" and J.C. Heesterman in "Connundrum of the King's Authority." In brief, their conclusions are as follows: Dumont distinguishes between the magico-religious function of kings and the political function of kings. The religious sphere, Dumont argues, corresponds to the legitimizing values and norms of society, whereas the political sphere belongs to the realm of pure force and interest. The function of the king, as described in early Vedic and Epic literature, was comprised of magico-religious as well as political elements. Gradually over time, Dumont postulates, the function of the king became disassociated from the magico-religious sphere. The consequences of this differentiation were the increased secularization of the royal function and a loss of hierarchical preeminence in favour of the Brahman. Increased secularization, Dumont argues, is discernible by what may be called conventional or contractual kingship as opposed to magico-religious kingship. The contractual view of kingship is a theme taken up by Buddhist critiques of Brahmanic hierarchical values which is in turn duplicated, rationalized and ritualized by South Indian dharmaśāstra-based kingship.*

*On the other hand, Heesterman's analysis of ancient kingship leads to a different conclusion. Heesterman attacks the differentiation of the authority of transcendent values and power and declares the separation to be problematic. For Heesterman, the dichotomy of authority and power in ancient Indian kingship is a connundrum. This is because the king is cut-off from the ultimate authority the Brahman possesses. The king is separated from the sanctioning authority of ultimate values but is in need of them. The only way a king can retrieve the legitimation he needs is to*

obtain sanction from the priest through a process of ritual which ensures the king a degree of legitimation which is otherwise unobtainable. In early pre-śrāuta India the function and roles of priests and kings were interchangeable. Heesterman cites examples of warrior cum priests in the earliest literature.<sup>1</sup> This interchangeability ensured that the king had direct access to the transcendent knowledge of the Veda, but over time the two domains became classified and ritualized so that ultimate authority became the exclusive domain of the Brahman and power was left to the Ksatriya. Consequently, the king became dependent on the priest who alone was capable of sanctioning the king's power through ritual.

Though Dumont and Heesterman offer different explanations as to why there exists a dichotomy between power and transcendent authority, they do agree that kingship requires and is dependent upon the legitimacy it obtains from ultimate values. In the example of Buddhist inspired contractual kingship which Dumont calls a triumph of secular values, the king is chosen by the people and therefore legitimacy lies with the people. In contrast, the Brahmanic model exemplifies legitimacy rooted in divine acts of creation and in divine revelations of sacred knowledge. In the Brahmanic model, legitimacy lies with those to whom this knowledge was revealed and their heirs who, in transmitting that knowledge over time, endowed that knowledge with authority.

The revolutionary feature of Buddhism outside of India, specifically in Sri Lanka, was the degree of ultimate authority given to the king who served both as cakkavatti and bodhisattva. In the Sinhalese model, the link between transcendent, ultimate, values and power stemmed from a human being and was expressed in the equation bodhisattva-cakkavatti. The extent to which this formulation differs from its Brahmanic counterpart can



be found in the respective legitimizing rituals to be discussed in detail in Chapter III.

The Sri Lankan model is not alone in its search for a new expression of the authority-power dichotomy. South Indian Kingship also formulated new theories about the legitimizing process that served not to usurp the Brahman's authority but to augment the king's sacred powers because the Brahmans became a powerful force within the peasant community through the creation of centers of learning, worship and ritual. In certain specific ways, this new relationship gave to the Brahmans a degree of secular authority normally enjoyed by the Kṣatriya. This transformation will also be considered in Chapter III.

#### I. Origins of Kingship

The precise origins of kingship in India are obscure; knowledge of the antecedents of kingship gleaned from the legends of the Aryan people is important because it is from these early beliefs that an understanding of the Brahmanic institutions of authority and power are obtained. In the literature, great emphasis was placed on the inviability of the institution of kingship. The earliest sources on the origin of kingship are references to a king's primary function, the physical response to external threats. One of the earliest hymns in the Rg Veda, speaks of this type of kingship on a celestial rather than a human level but still reflects the turbulent realities of the Vedic age.

*Of one accord they made and formed for kingship, Indra, the hero who in all encounters overcometh, most eminent for power, destroyer in the conflict, fierce and exceeding strong, stalwart and full of vigour.<sup>2</sup>*

A second account in the Rg Veda describes the defeat of a confederacy of kings by King Sudas, in a good example of the struggle for supremacy among the small tribal communities of early Vedic India.<sup>3</sup>

The Āitareya Brahman outlines in greater detail a similar account of how a union of the gods who were initially divided, was unable to defeat the evil Āsūras but when united under a chosen king, they were victorious.<sup>4</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa echoes this early concept of contractual obligation between rules and ruled:

... we are in an evil plight the Asura-Raksasas have come in between us; we shall fall a prey to our enemies. Let us come to an agreement and yield to the excellence of Indra; wherefore it is said, Indra is all the deities the gods have Indra for their chief.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of all the references to kings and battles in the Rg Veda and the Brāhmaṇa, three important views of the origin of kingship come to the forefront: 1. It becomes clear that the original function of the king was as a military leader. Spellman, in his text Political Theory of Ancient India, believes that the same military qualities that were attributed to Indra for his kingship were maintained as the regal qualifications on the human level as well. 2. A second important view, on a more abstract level, Drekmeier and Gonda argue that Vedic kingship originated in a compact of which the first elements can be found in the passage quoted from the Āitareya Brāhmaṇa. The earliest contractual theory rests not on the supposition that the people are the final authority in political matters but on the supposition that the group entrusted one member with the powers of political force to resolve conflicts. In support of this idea, Heesterman believes that in the earliest literature on Indian kingship,

there was very little to distinguish the king from, for example, priests except that a king possesses force. It was the possession of force that created the royal function. In fact, ancient Indian warriors were not segregated from religious knowledge and had access to it. This theory allows for the possibility that the Vedic people developed an idea about the role of kingship as they attempted to respond to questions concerning the king's relationship to the social order and ultimate values. This evolutionary change resulted in what Dumont calls contractual kingship since it sought to impose obligations and restrictions on the king. Contractual kingship in its rudimentary form, Drekmeier suggests, is concerned with what it is that authorized one man to control others. In other words, what combination of action and access to ultimate values legitimize the king's power? The implications of this view for the status of Vedic kingship is that Vedic society had limited restraint on the authority of the king. What is significant is that the conception of a fully developed idea of contractual obligation resurfaces in Pali canonic literature and in the Śānti Parvan chapter of the Mahābhārata in which the king-subject relationship is basically an exchange of protection for taxes.<sup>7</sup> 3. In what Dumont calls magico-religious kingship and what Gonda believes to be the essence of ancient kingship, kingship is considered to be the creation of a divine institution. Once again, the "raison d'etre" of kingship is conflict, however, this view includes divine status to the exclusion of the rights of restraint for the people.

There are several myths within the Vedic literature which attribute the origin of kingship to an act of divine creation. According to the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, Indra the first king of the gods, was created by Prajapati in order to protect the gods from the anarchy of the āsuras. In



this myth, as in a myth in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, there is a connection between the celestial King, Indra, and the earthly king. For example, it was Indra who helped King Sudas defeat the ten kings. Significantly, Indra played an important role in the affairs of kings and the Rg Veda makes it clear that there was a direct identification of Vedic Kings with the god, Indra<sup>8</sup>; moreover, the king was said to perform the same function among men as Indra did among the gods. In Śrūti mythology, Indra is the warrior king par excellence with his weapon, the vajra, (thunderbolt). As an atmospheric god often identified with thunder and emboldened by soma, Indra crushes the demons of drought, chaos and darkness with his long powerful arms. In the Veda, the most significant myth which recounts Indra's deeds concerns his slaying of the demon Vṛtra (who encloses the water and the sun, the very embodiment of cosmic chaos), thus gaining the epithet Vṛtrahān.<sup>9</sup> It would not be inaccurate to state that Indra was the leading god with whom Vedic kings not only identified but attempted to embody through sacrifice.<sup>10</sup>

There are many myths within the Vedic corpus relating to the concept of divine association. For example, the famous puruśāsūkta hymn of the Rg Veda and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad explain the origin of kings in relation to the creation of the social order. According to the Rg Veda, when Puruṣa (the primal man) was divided among the gods during a sacrifice of cosmic proportions, "the Brahmana was his mouth, his arms the ruling man, his thighs were the Vaisya and from his feet came the Sudra."<sup>11</sup> The major divisions of social order arose in this way. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad states that, "In the beginning, this world was only Brahma, being one he was not developed. He created still further a superior form the ksatrahood, even those who are ksatras (rulers among the gods)



*Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Yama, Mrtyu Isana. Therefore, at the Rājasūya ceremony, the Brahman sits below the Kṣatriya. Upon ksatrihood alone does he confer this honour."*<sup>12</sup>

*These two hymns reveal several significant characteristics of early kingship in India. First, there is the basis for an anthropomorphic conception of kingship as an integral part of post-Vedic formulations. The divine origin of warriors and kings from the arms of puruṣa is significant in relation to the descriptions of the ideal king in later literature wherein there is frequently some reference to the great "arms" possessed by the kings. These later references find their earliest formulation in the puruṣa sūkta hymn. In both passages there is the indication that the divine creation of the institution of kingship placed the king in a dominant position in the socio-political order. Notice that in the puruṣa sūkta hymn the Brahman who sprang from the mouth of the primal being is placed in a primary, authoritative position with respect to the descending social order, but his power in the social order does not match that of the king. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, the king clearly performs the dominant role in society. These conflicting descriptions of kingship do not reflect a struggle for supremacy between the two groups, but, rather, as it becomes more clear later on, they exemplify a widening functional differentiation between priest and king. As Heesterman points out, by the time śrāuta ritual is dominant within the tradition, the Brahman is clearly a free agent within the social order; his domain is that of renunciation whereas the king is a dependent agent whose domain is the social world and the world of intersecting relationships.*

*The theory that kingship originated as a divine institution does not stand in total opposition to the theory of the contractual origins of king-*

ship, but, rather, can be seen as a logical extension of contractualism. Since the chosen king is not a free agent but is dependent upon others, his consent is diffused among the realm; that is, among the people. The king, however, requires legitimation from the Brahman who holds the key to religious values and therefore to legitimacy and authority. The theory of divinity, as it was developed in the Vedic texts, has no place for ordinary kings. Therefore, in order to enhance his legitimacy, the sacral qualities, stressing the king's ritual transformation into a god, are posited as a solution to the problem of his dependency.

The earliest references in these texts reflect a transformation of the tribal values of the Vedic Age that differentiate them from the period of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads. The Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata formulates elements of justification of a king's performance in terms of his divinity: Yuddhisthira asks the dying sage Bhishma why, "having hands and arms and neck like others, having an understanding and senses like those of others ... possessed of vital airs and bodies like other men, resembling others in birth and death, in fact similar to others regarding all the attributes of men, why does one man, the king, govern the rest of the world consisting of many brave and intelligent persons?"<sup>13</sup> Bhishma answers, describing a world in the time of the kṛtayuga, a world without a king, a world caught in darkness, anarchy, degeneracy and moral confusion, where there was no one to protect the rights and the property of the weak and to exercise control over wicked men: "The world would fall to the way of the fishes (matsyanyāya), the three Vedas would disappear, sacrifices duly completed with presents according to the sacred texts would no longer be performed; no marriage would take place; society would cease to exist if the king did not exercise the duty of protection."<sup>14</sup>

The myth continues with the eventual creation of Virajas chosen by the gods to lead other men from anarchy. However, Virajas chooses the life of Brahman, renunciation being preferred to a life of ruling other men. His son and his grandson also become renouncers and eventually the world is ruled by the corrupt Vena until he is slain by the ṛsis. The nārādeva Prthu is drawn from the body of Vena and given life by those same ṛsis. Prthu immediately demonstrates his submission to Brahmanical values, seeks the sage's advice and is consecrated, thus restoring the original natural order. Implicit in this passage is the legitimacy the king seeks from the priests whose knowledge of the Vedas link the world with the past. Drekmeier and Dumont point out that the gods entered into Prthu only after his performance of kingly duties.<sup>15</sup>

The king has been disassociated from any religious duties yet maintains divine status in his person and function. The necessity of the function of a consecration is also clarified in this account. The king needs the consecration for his legitimation and must seek it outside the community; that is, with those who hold ultimate transcendent values, the Brahmins. Further, functional transformation is evident in comparing the myth of Prthu with earlier Vedic literature. The epic myth detailing the death of Vena demonstrates the risk and violence inherent in the articulation between king and priest. The consecration is symbolically dangerous and destructive since Prthu became king only because of the death of King Vena.<sup>16</sup>

Later literature, such as the Agni Purāṇa, reiterates the story of Prthu but leaves out the justification for the divine origins of kings. Instead, what is evident in the purāṇa as well as the Narada Smṛti and Manu Smṛti is the total acceptance of the divine function of the king.<sup>17</sup>



A second theme is apparent in passages of the Manu Smṛti; a king who fails to rule the people justly, is considered incompetent or corrupt, and is therefore subject to the same laws as other men. Even the king was not above the law, despite his divine status.

Another underlying theme also becomes apparent in the puranic literature. This is the transformation of the belief in the total divinity of the king as it is described in the samhitas, upaniṣads and brāhmaṇas, into the belief that the king incorporated elements of the gods in his person, as in the epic literature, and, then the identification of the function of the king with that of the gods. This gradual ideological change indicates how popular belief in the divinity of kings evolved in ancient India. Spellman outlines twelve mutually inclusive gradations of divine kingship in which the inviability of the king's function becomes progressively more dependent on sacrifice.<sup>18</sup>

The final stage is reached when Manu, in reference to the sacrificially obtained divinity of the king, declared the king to be made up of the elements from Indra the wind god, Yama the sun, Agni, Varuna the moon and Kubera. As gods are honoured by men, so are kings because of their appointment in the mahābhisheka which consecrates or ritually transforms each human king, just as it did the primordial divine King Indra.<sup>19</sup> Sacrificially created power is thereafter passed to the king continuously. This concept is general in the law texts (dharmasāstras); it is the Code of Manu, however, that goes the furthest with the equation of the anointed king not only with Indra but with all of the cosmic gods.<sup>20</sup> As well, the epic poets speak of divine incarnation as a prominent part of legitimated kingship, as exemplified by Prthu.<sup>21</sup>

*In the Vedas, divinity is attributed to kings because of their participation in ritual which identified the king with Indra, whereas in the dharmaśāstras, the divinity of the kings is posited as a reason for obedience to royal orders. Therefore, it is the institution not the royal person which is deified. The exercise of the royal function is equivalent to the celebration of sacrifice of long duration (sattra), which is why the king remains pure for whatever acts he is led to commit.<sup>22</sup>*

*Two significant aspects of sacral kingship arise from the conception of the sacrificially attained divinity of the king. The sacral character of the king, as it is exemplified in the practice of major rituals such as the aśvamedha, implies ritual incorporation in which all other elements of the realm are incorporated and controlled by the king. In a number of his works, Heesterman posits the origins of the incorporative characteristic origins in the pre-Srauta period when the king was forced to look for his authority outside of the community while still remaining part of it. The cyclical nature of the major royal consecration ceremonies accommodated this demand by utilizing an expeditionary element within the ritual which was symbolic of a wandering phase and the attachment to transcendent brahmanical values. The wandering phase, which could continue for years and was often symbolized by the ritual use of a horse, made effective kingship difficult since the inthronisation proper was encompassed by even more ritual cycles and demands upon the king's time. The ritualist's solution to this problem came in a series of ritual innovations which provided a less cumbersome ritual without destroying the link between community and transcendent values.*

*The second aspect, formulated by Robert Lingat in his study of the dharmaśāstras, is that the social origins of a king are not considered*

important since it is the institution of kingship that is divine rather than the king himself, an idea that has important implications for the legitimacy of kingship during the medieval period of South India and Sri Lanka.

Changes in the conception of the origin of kingship from the Vedic period imply a fluid political system, but whether these ideas were ever believed on the popular level is a different matter. Popular belief in the divinity of kings in later periods was based upon the notion of divine obligation rather than the principle of divine right. The first duty of the king was to preserve the social order.

Buddhist views of the origin of kingship represent a significant break from early Brahmanic views. In Buddhist descriptions of the origins of kings, a ruler is chosen by other men not divinely created; an a-kṣatriya response, scholars argue, to Brahmanic values. The purpose of this type of conventional kingship is considered next, to emphasize the importance kingship had in the maintenance of social order.

## II. Anarchy and the Ideal Social Order

The recurring theme of the threat of anarchy and attendant social disorder is central to the concept of an ideal social order within both the South Indian and Sinhalese traditions. If the concepts of kingship common to two traditions demonstrate a common political lineage, then the fear of anarchy reinforces that common lineage. The fear of anarchy emphasizes the similarities of the views of the two traditions concerning human nature and the transformation of man. Both traditions are concerned with understanding human moral capabilities in a world without political order.

The basic state of nature has been variously described in the texts of ancient Hinduism and in the Pāli canon. Intrinsic to both accounts is a



concern with man's capacity for evil. In the Vāna Parvan a reference to the ideal state of nature is described.<sup>23</sup> The Śānti Parvan like the Vāna Parvan postulates a Golden Age in which men were equal to gods, living without a king or laws, until a complex state of progressive decay set in marked by increasing immorality. Eventually, the Vedas disappeared, sacrifices were not held, and social anarchy prevailed. The idea of progressive moral decay from a state of absolute perfection underlies two elements of the Brahmanic political order. One image is of human potential; an insight into man's propensity towards evil under disorder and confusion that society in its natural and rulerless state operates under the principle of matsyanyāya can be found in Brahmanic literature as early as the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Mahābhārata.<sup>24</sup> Also, the Śānti Parvan section of the Mahābhārata illustrates a world thrown into a rulerless state (arājaka) on the model of the rule of the fishes: "As all creatures become unable to see one another and sink in utter darkness if the sun and the moon do not rise, as fishes in shallow water and birds in a spot safe from danger dart and rove as thee please (for a time) and repeatedly attack and grind one another with force and then meet with certain destruction if they have no king to protect them, like a herd of cattle without a herdsman to look after them. If the king did not exercise the duty of protection the strong would forcibly appropriate the possession of the weak, and if the latter refused to surrender them with ease their very lives would then be taken."<sup>25</sup> In this text the Brahmanic principle for the restoration of the social order, royal coercion, or daṇḍa reflects a somewhat cynical view of human nature and kingship. The necessity of daṇḍa, as a legitimate restraint on the social order and a safeguard against anarchy, has considerable implications for the ideal relationship between political power and religious authority in

both Hindu and Buddhist society. The doctrine of matsyayānya as it is described in the epic literature, provides a theoretical basis for later Indian texts to explore the principle of daṇḍa as a necessary element in the institution of kingship.

Though the king may be despised by the people, he nevertheless is considered necessary for the survival of the community. The fear of matsyanyāya is the overriding factor in choosing a king. The obsession with order is balanced by the necessity of a king no matter how evil he may be. Hence a bad king is better than no king; Manu declares, "Ten slaughterhouses, equal one oil press, ten oil presses one tavern, ten taverns one brothel, one king is equal to a butcher who keeps one hundred slaughterhouses."<sup>26</sup> The contrast is not simply a choice between good kings who further prosperity and evil kings who are destructive. For example, King Vena, the wicked king who attempted to usurp the authority of the ṛsis, was killed by those same ṛsis. It is interesting that Vena's predecessors, because of the nature of the job, refused to serve as king until Pr̥thu was brought forth from Vena's arm. Pr̥thu immediately demonstrated his submission to brahmanical values, and, henceforth, the earth is called pr̥thivī after him. By slaying Vena, however, the ṛsis commit the greatest adharmic transgression causing the world to enter a state of ārājaka (rulerlessness).

In content, Buddhist conceptions of man's original state do not differ markedly from those of epic Hindu literature but their intent, as Louis Dumont observes, offers a reinterpretation of the role of conventional kingship in society. The Aggañña Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya contain the basic notions of the Buddhist view of ideal kingship, and offer an explanation of varṇa which contradicts the brahmanic theory of the divine



creation of the world. In the sutta, the Buddha speaks of a golden age in which men had neither form nor desire. As time gradually passed, morality declined: the solid world took shape, marked by human sexual differentiation and the desire for food. The desire for private property appeared, accompanied by theft and punishment. The need for a king to protect individual property became apparent. Men finally selected one great individual called the Mahāsammata ("great elect")<sup>27</sup>, who protected the social order in return for a share of the crops. This is a contractual view of the origin of kingship, the most concise exposition of its kind in Buddhist canonic literature, wherein kingship is portrayed as a communalized response to social and political chaos. Dumont describes the passage as being indicative of a Buddhist schema which is clearly a-brahmanical and secular. Dumont argues, "... no advantage is taken of the magico-religious aspects of kingship on the contrary they are shunned ... secularization is carried further than in the brahmanical view of ksatra; we can say that it is extended to the brahman itself, in so far as (group) religion is banished from the tale and ultimate values only appear in individual morality."<sup>28</sup>

From a common shared view of man's social origins and propensity for evil, both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions make the underlying assumption for the necessity of a ruler. For Dumont, there is no question that brahmanical kingship, as it is described in the epics and puranas, is non-contractual. A contract implies a non-religious economic relationship between king and subjects which would be a function of increased secularization. As Heesterman points out, contractual kingship is also problematic because it makes the king a dependent agent whose power and resources are diffused among the realm. His legitimacy would come into question if he were dependent on others. Buddhist formulations seem to advocate this

dependency, not as a problem for legitimacy, but as a way of enhancing legitimacy. This development had profound effects on brahmanical re-interpretation of kingship, specifically the law texts of Manu and Kāutilya. The Dharmaśāstra and the Artha Śāstra in particular, utilize the Buddhist formula particularly where it balances public order or the "protection afforded by the king and the prestations the king receives which consist first of all in a share, mostly of one sixth of the harvested crops."<sup>29</sup> For this condition to be fully accepted, kingship had to be severed completely from the religious sphere "to which it generally adheres."<sup>30</sup>

#### Sri Lanka and Disorder

Both the Buddhist and brahmanic understanding of evil centres on apprehension about the consequences of disorder. The Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Suttanta presents two images of one life under the rule of evil and dhamma respectively. Both images, the former an image of confusion and injustice, the latter of liberation and justice, are "extended images of the human potential"<sup>31</sup> which places kingship in a less vilifying light than earlier brahmanic literature. This innovation finds its most thorough re-interpretation in the Buddhism of Sri Lanka as it is described in the Chronicles which trace the history of Sri Lanka from the advent of Vijāya in 483 B.C. to modern times.

The period of the chronicles corresponds to the medieval period of Sinhalese Buddhism, from its inception in the third century B.C. to the fall of its second capital, Polonnaruva, in 1293 A.D. According to Bardwell Smith, the chronicles provide the setting for man's social predicament, and



they are themselves a source of encouragement towards ecstatic euphoria and sober meditation on the dhamma.

The two earliest chronicles, the Mahāvamsa and the Dipavamsa, together trace the image of an ideal social order in a historically continuous manner. Starting from the mythological visit of the Buddha to the succession of royal clans, they describe the ever present threat of Tamil invasion.<sup>32</sup> The chronicles, works of fourth and fifth century Sinhalese Theravadin monks, represent a narrative approach to history; "History written with a motive, Heilgeschichte, the sacred history of people, interpreted history."<sup>33</sup> The intent of these historical texts is to locate and affirm an irrefutable connection between Buddhism and Sri Lanka.<sup>34</sup> In these texts, secular history is subservient to religious history. Historical narrative is woven around around certain archetypal persons or events, to create a mythical mood which permeates the cultural self-consciousness and acts to establish a system of moral values, social consciousness which is the framework for political order. For example, the Mahāvamsa presents a detailed account of the three mythological visits to Lanka that the Buddha made and devotes 84 verses to a precise review of the event. In the story, the Buddha encounters yakkhas, nagas and devas, all portrayed as non-human beings and original inhabitants of the island. The Buddha is eventually successful in vanquishing the yakkhas; in great fear the yakkhas give the island to the Buddha who then deposits them on another part of the island. The Mahāvamsa relates that "Lanka was known to the Conquerer as a place where his doctrine should (thereafter) shine in glory and (he knew that) from Lanka filled with yakkhas, the yakkhas must first be driven forth."<sup>35</sup>

To Bardwell Smith, the yakkhas represent more than primitive or non-human beings. They are symbolic of the primal chaos which is the sovereigns' responsibility to control:

*The threat of anarchy and chaos is everpresent in the chronicles mind ... Aborigines in some sense, the (yakkhas) represent the aboriginal spirit of man which lives not far beneath the surface ...<sup>36</sup>*

The conquest over the yakkhas by the Buddha so that Lanka "could be a fit dwelling place for man"<sup>37</sup>, defines the archetypal struggle for Sinhalese kingship in its assertion to maintain order. From the visit of the Buddha on, confrontation with the forces of chaos becomes a real possibility. It is in this interpretative framework, the importance of the maintenance of order in Sri Lanka, that the concept of interdependence between the ideal monarch and the Buddhist community and its institutions can be fully understood. Moreover, the theme of the threat of disorder provides a key to understanding the process of establishing Buddhist legitimacy in an effort to create a Sinhalese nationalist ideal in response to external threats.

#### South India and Disorder

A recurrent theme in South Indian classical poetic literature of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. is the fear and loathing that the tribal hill people inspired in the peasant settlements of the plains. Prominent in the classical literature of that time was the five category description of distinct geographic characteristics of South India; and accompanying descriptions of cultural subsystems which include hunting, fishing, pastoral and peasant settlements. Peasant-peoples and non-peasant peoples settled in the settled in the Coromandel plains and fertile Kaveri river basin of Tamilnad



in an antagonistic relationship. The wealthy and populous peasant folk or uḷavar of the fertile lowlands had, by the late classical period of the Sangam age, assimilated some of the maṛavars of the dry plains and hills. However, a substantial number of non-peasants (maṛavars) remained in scattered and isolated pockets often raiding and even controlling the lowland peasant population. So great was the tension between the two factions that the warlike tribal people became symbols of oppression and disorder among the South Indian peasant culture. The kalittokai, which is part of the Sangam of the fifth century A.D., describes the maṛavars as instigators of chaos in the following terms:

Of strong limbs, and hearty frames and fierce looking as tigers, wearing long and curls locks of hair, the blood thirsty maṛavars armed with bow bound with leather every ready to injure others, shoot their arrows at poor and helpless travellers from whom they can rob nothing, only to feast their eyes on the quivering limbs of their victims ... The wrathful and furious maṛavar ... the loud twang of those powerful bow strings and the stirring sound of those double headed drums, compel even kings at the head of large armies to turn their backs and fly ...<sup>38</sup>

In the "Hunters' Song" of the Ṣilappatikaram, a priestess berates the maṛavar hunters for ceasing their practice of plundering passerbys as a result of which the tribal hill villages suffered, and the people of the plain prospered.<sup>39</sup> The Pūra-Porul Venba Malai, a Tamil heroic poem of the same period, relates the constant and bloody struggle between the cattle raiders of the hills and the heroic peasant warriors. This poem describes demon worshipping and blood-thirsty hill people who partake in priestess-led demon dances prior to their cattle raids.<sup>40</sup> These literary references to the antagonism between the people of the lowland and the hills offer an important parallel to the hostility between the yakkhas, whom

*we can assume were remote tribal peoples related to the present day Vaddas, and the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka. The considerable antagonism between the two peoples in South India involved a lengthy struggle, and the information it offers is useful from both political and cultural points of view. Firstly, the position of the tribal people in South India and their eventual assimilation into society sets the stage for medieval political arrangements in which antagonistic elements play a fundamental role. The assimilation also resulted in a widespread adoption of Brahmanical institutions and a confirmation of the military dominance of peasant tribal chieftains. In turn, peasant society, with its steady encroachment and dominance upon non-peasant peoples, resulted in a non-peasant large scale defection to heretical faiths such as Jainism and Buddhism. This intrusion upon the religious and cultural order had the important effect of stimulating religious activity in later generations which in turn strengthened the Brahmanic political, military and ideological important influences. Although Brahmanic changes in South India did act to establish a Brahman-peasant alliance throughout South India regional differences still existed. Having come through a period when anarchistic forces threatened security, medieval peasantry sought ideological coherence under the umbrella of Brahmanical institutions which acted to ideologically unify various opposed segments of the population.*

*In contrast to this change, early Buddhist incursions into Lanka by vijāyabāhu(s) (forebearers of the race) succeeded in unifying the island ideologically and politically by utilizing the symbols of Buddhist nationalism.*

*The emphasis on the ideological component of legitimation, i.e. the threat of socially disruptive forces as a factor in the creation of new political orders, is not a denial that genuine piety motivated the action of many*

*new adherents to the faith. In seeking to understand the factors involved in the creation of an ideal social order, however, one notices patterns that occur in religious symbols and archetypes of the period constitute a powerful component in the ideological makeup of early Sinhalese and South Indian culture indicating that the concern with disruptive forces is central to the creation and establishment of legitimacy in South India and Sri Lanka. Sensitivity towards the possibility of anarchy is a permanent ingredient in both traditions. The image of the liberation from fear and ignorance suggests a symbiotic ideal between socio/political order and religious order, perhaps moreso in Lanka because its ideology is inbred with a sensitivity towards invasion. On a soteriological level, the stabilizing of order comes through as an exorcism of the demonic.*

*These periods in the creation of new social orders in response to disruptive forces, may be taken as the on-going recognition of traditional fears of disorder and evil. The social and political change associated with these transformations can be understood as part of the effort to consolidate a social order. To this end, both traditions supported kings who emulated archetypal styles of kingship not only for the need of protection but for the contribution such kings could make to political legitimacy and ritual cohesiveness.*

### *III. Ideal Kingship*

*A normative pattern of Brahmanic kingship emerges from the early Vedic writings. The element of continuity in Brahmanic thought on sacred law presents a composite picture of certain elementary philosophical and conceptual ideas about kingship that establishes ideological continuity that overrides chronological details. For the purpose of conveying a brahmanic*

theory of ideal kingship, this investigation will begin with the dharmasāstras and the works on arthaśāstra, especially that of Kautilya. These texts will assist in understanding rulership in South India from the Pallava period onward when brahmanical kingship took hold and modified the earlier forms of kingship described in the pūram poems of the Sangam age.

The early Buddhist picture of ideal kingship, which rejected the authority of the Vedas, presents a rival and wholly different scheme of meaning. The Agganna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya presents an early Buddhist conception of the "great elect" which later became transformed during a second phase of Buddhist political speculation into a doctrine of cakkavatti. This idealization underwent a third transformation in Sri Lanka wherein Buddhist ideals of kingship incorporated some essential reworkings of South Indian prototypical kingship as well as its own interpretations.

A central difference between Hindu and Buddhist ideas of kingship is what Tambiah has called the Buddhist attempt "to substitute a theory of politics that is ethically comprehensive."<sup>41</sup> At the root of this transformation was a Buddhist negation of the Vedic world system, including the idea of divine creation, the system of varna with its particular allocation of the interpretation of dharma and the performance of brahmanic sacrifice. The earliest Buddhist conceptions of ideal kingship were ideologically opposed to Brahmanic conceptions of kingship such as those described in the Arthaśāstra. However, the tolerance Sinhalese Buddhism displayed toward many Brahmanic institutions underscores the danger of radically separating Buddhism from Brahmanism. The Sinhalese retention of brahmanic ceremonial practice is a case in point. Moreover, there is more than one example in the chronicles where the teaching of nīti, or state craft, had an



impact on Sinhalese policy-making.<sup>42</sup> These levels of similarity between South Indian and Sinhalese kingship provide a perspective of continuity that is normally not found in comparative analyses of Buddhist and Brahmanic kingship.

### The Dharma Sastra Ideal

The dharmasāstras viewed kingship within the general context of society. Robert Lingat states that,

*In the dharmasāstras the function of the king is seen under its aspect of the duties incumbent on him in order that his mission should be accomplished. It is studied as an element in the social system of which it forms the keystone.*<sup>43</sup>

The central concern for the authors of the dharmasāstras was the relationship between king, society and dharma, "the code of conduct that upholds the moral and natural order."<sup>44</sup> The concept of dharma appears in the sāstric literature along with artha: "the control of material and human resources, the administration of things, particularly wealth and kāma the fulfillment of personal desires."<sup>45</sup> These three concepts are the hierarchized goals that apply to all varṇa. In the dharmasāstras, the king is perceived as the executor of dharma, for he is responsible for insuring that all of the duties and codes of conduct are adhered to within a society. The king performs this function by providing protection as a rājadharma. The means by which society is regulated and controlled is the king's attendant force, daṇḍa. The dharmasāstras, based as they are upon vedic śrūti sources, argue that the king's responsibility was to compel obedience to the instructions of the Brahman law givers. The consequence of this was the depersonalization of the royal function. "The dominant idea of the

dharmasāstra writers seems to have been that it was not the king who had a divine nature but the royal function itself", according to Lingat.<sup>46</sup>

While many of the śāstras speak of the divinity of kings, the idea is rarely encountered in the earlier dharmasūtras. Lingat argues that by the time of the dharmasāstras of Manu and Narada, obedience to royal orders is the central reason why the divinity of kings is posited. This idea is clearly evident in the śāstric references to a king's power to command and to the ideas of power and force.<sup>47</sup>

In the dharmasāstras, the royal function is based primarily on a king's ability as a warrior, and, accordingly, the duties of a king include acts of violence. The question arises as to whether or not a king remains pure when he commits an act of violence. The dharmasāstras, including those of Manu, Gāutama and Vaśiṣṭha, concur that the king is absolved of any sin while fulfilling his duty:<sup>48</sup> "(the) king (remains pure) lest their business be impeded."<sup>49</sup>

It is significant that the purity of the king is based on a sacrifice of long duration, (śātra). Indeed, according to the dharmasāstras the king's rulership is actually one long sacrifice. The traditional meaning of the term śātra includes the attainment of progeny, prosperity, high position, and heaven.<sup>50</sup> With reference to sacral kingship, however, the śātra had a specific meaning. The śātra, the link between Brahman and king, transformed the king into a god; therefore, the śātra ensured the king's purity and legitimacy, and by the period of the dharmasāstras the legitimacy was expressed through a series of well-defined liturgical acts.

During the earliest types of sacrifice the divinity of the king is posited because of the king's participation in ritual which identified the king with a god. By the time of the dharmasāstras, however, it is the institu-

tion, not the royal person, which is defied; hence, the necessity of the śātra which legitimized the king's power and made him pure no matter what violent acts he committed. Lingat emphasizes the significance of this conception of sacral kingship when he notes that all the law books, except *Manu*, agree that the origin is of the king unimportant. It is only important that the king has been anointed and is an able warrior;<sup>51</sup> a concept crucial to understanding South Indian and Sinhalese kingship since it is in these two systems that sacral kingship is expressed to its fullest extent.

Lingat offers a summary judgment of sacral kingship:

... the king appears to owe his authority, neither to divine will nor to his birth, nor to any social compact, but solely to the force at his disposal. His authority is entirely temporal and secular. Punishment is the instrument of his policies.<sup>52</sup>

to which Heesterman adds:

... (the) king shares in the responsibility for both merit and demerit of his subjects ... the trouble is that once the king is no longer affected by the world's evil ways he is freed from responsibility for them ... the king has to belong to the community but at the same time he must be foreign to it so as to guarantee his authority.<sup>53</sup>

The king is a lifelong śātrin; during this time the king is free of sin. He possesses pure force, daṇḍa, which is a divine institution of punishment. The free and total expression of the use of daṇḍa can only arise when the king is properly anointed and involved in the extended sacrifice. During this time, the king must adhere to a strict code of self-control and maintain a degree of asceticism.<sup>54</sup> The king is expected to

perform certain rites and observances designed to ensure the prosperity of the kingdom.

The emphasis of the dharmasāstras on the royal function as an extended sacrifice tended toward a depersonalization of kingship which reflects a growing idealization of kingship as expressed. There were several important idealized attributes a king was required to possess in order to govern properly. These include physical attributes. the law book of Visnu contains the following verse on the appearance of the king:

Let him be splendid (in apparel and ornaments);  
Let him smile before he speaks to any one;  
Let him not frown upon criminals doomed to capital  
punishment.<sup>55</sup>

The institution of kingship is related to the idea of a cosmic ruler. In the Visnu Smṛti the king is equated with Visnu and in the Manu Smṛti the king is said to be formed of the particles of the eight deities. There appears to be a common attempt among the śāstric literature to account for the origins of legitimate power in a way that equates that power with a supreme power in the cosmos.

According to Tambiah, later dharmasāstras expounded the concept of rajadharma as the ideal practical art of government with a basis in a rational-*artha*-style politics, as opposed to the cosmological explanation of earlier dharmasāstras.<sup>56</sup> The most informative of this kind of practical literature is Kautilya's Arthasāstra (300 B.C. to 300 A.D.). Kautilya confirms the original conceptions of kingship as posited in the śruti and the dharma texts. The significant transformation that occurs in Kautilya's Arthasāstra is his expanded interpretation of the function of the king. In the earlier śruti and smṛti literature, the king's function can be said to be

determined by his participation in sacrifice by which the king becomes divine and by which all other elements of his realm are controlled. Kautilya, in addition to positing the idea of sacral kingship, is concerned with the "public function of the king."<sup>57</sup> This concept is derived from the "inductive investigation of the phenomena of the state"<sup>58</sup> which, according to Kautilya, is the only practical way of dealing with problems of administration and state institutions. Sacral kingship, from the point of view of morality, was based on the supposition that the king as rājadharma, protector of the social order and its citizens, possessed a "morality of his own"<sup>59</sup> and that kingly conduct was determined "by the ideal of the highest good of the individual."<sup>60</sup> The Arthasāstra, which has as its highest end the maintenance of the order and prosperity of the state, accordingly defines kingly duty as a function of the total interest of the state. To this end, Kautilya seems to attempt to divorce politics and ethics although he never denies the ultimate purpose, the maintenance of dharma.

An example of this higher moral purpose is seen in the distinction Kautilya makes between three types of conquerers: the dharma vijāyin (righteous conquerer), the lobha vijāyin (greedy conquerer) and the āsūra vijāyin (demonic conquerer).<sup>61</sup> A dharma vijāyin is the ideal empire builder who conquers according to the principle of dharma, incorporating new territory and maintaining order through coercion, so that the state may exist in a stable and safe environment. The lobha vijāyin and the āsūra vijāyin are concerned with conquest and plunder not in the interest of the state but purely for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Though Kautilya argues that moral principles are subordinate to the interests of the state, he implies that the moral principles are dependent upon the existence of the state. It is not surprising then that Kāutilya's image of

an ideal king, the dharma vijāyin, is unlike those found in the earlier smṛti and śrūti. By the time of Kautilya, there is no confusion as to the nature of the king's dharma which is to compel obedience to the Brahman law givers. Kautilya, and his sastric predecessors, defined dharma as the basis for stabilizing society, and, in this light, created ideas about legitimacy that gave extreme inviability to the king.<sup>62</sup> One of the important differences between Kautilya's interpretation about kingship and dharma-sāstric ideas is contained in his discussion on the innovative maṇḍala strategy of alliance and warfare and the seven elements of sovereignty (saptaṅga).

Though arthaśāstric notions of kingship were concerned with dharma as the real stabilizing force in society, it is unlikely that Kautilya's more elaborate notions of political aggrandizement formed the principle political arrangement in South India because political arrangements in South India required an incorporative system of greater durability and meaning. As will become evident later, rulership in South India was dependent upon ritual, not territorial control, hence the sacral character of kingship, most thoroughly presented in the dharmaśāstras, provided a means for attaining incorporative universal kingship.<sup>63</sup> The infusion of Brahmanic conceptions of kingship into South India make it clear that sacrificially created power, as depicted in the mahābhisheka, is as important as the physical power of which Kautilya speaks.

It is important to distinguish between two conceptual ideals of royal incorporation: the political, and the ritual. Concerning the latter, the dharmaśāstras refer to sovereignty as rājadharmā which Lingat describes as "universal rule, duty and obligation of a personal character which is incumbent upon the king's conscience and obtains stability only through

his will."<sup>64</sup> Kṣātra is "territorial control", akin to Kautilya's version of rājadharmā, because it implies direct power over the soil that is an immediate power over a thing or a person. In light of the difference between Kautilya's ideal king and the ideals posited in dharmaśāstras, the distinction of the two characteristics of ritual and territorial incorporation in South India is valid. Rulership in medieval South India, based upon ancient canons of Aryan kingship, considered ideal kingship to be based on both sides ideal kingship to be based on both sacrificially attained divinity as well as territorial sovereignty. Ritual sovereignty, synonymous with the word rājadharmā, reflects the normative component of the South Indian tradition. It is conceptualized universal rule which brings to bear moral and ethical obligations upon the social order. The notion Kṣātra requires the king to be a politically limited figure dependent on hierarchical relationships.<sup>65</sup>

These apparently disparate formulations together comprise a complex but unified basis from which to understand South Indian kingship. Neither formulation alone can be considered adequate, but together they are the means by which kings were capable of ruling vast territory and acquiring new territory. Legitimacy derives from the king being a ritual figure of major importance and not just a politically active conquerer. This formulation helps explain why South Indian kings put such great emphasis on ritual incorporation.

#### Buddhist Ideal Kingship: The Asokan Paradigm

Early Buddhist texts, such as the Agaṇṇa Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya of the Pāli Canon, denounce the science of kingship as khattavija (warrior knowledge), a low art and a wrongful occupation.<sup>66</sup> The Jātaka tales

contain many stories about wicked kings involved in this wrongful occupation (miccijiṇva). The central theme of these writings is the negative Buddhist attitude towards the arthaśāstric conception of kingship - "manipulative action inspired by self-preservation and self-interest."<sup>67</sup> In the Jātaka tales the righteous king advocates reciprocity rather than self-interest.<sup>68</sup> The primary idealization of a righteous king is given in the Agaṇṇa Sutta where the first king, the mahasammata, arises as a practical necessity for mankind. This sutta defines the quintessential relationship between the king, the dhamma and the Buddha:

O Vasettha, following is an illustration for understanding how the Dharma is the best among this folk both in this life and the next. King Pasenadi of Kosala is aware that the Saman Gotama has gone forth from the Clan of the Sakiyas who are his vassals. They render him homage and respectful salutation, they rise and do him obeisance, and treat him with ceremony. Now just as the Sakyans treat the king Pasenadi of Kosala, so does the king treat the Tatha gods. It is because the king honours the dhamma, reveres the Dhamma, regards the Dhamma that he renders homage and respectful salutation to the Tathagata.<sup>69</sup>

In this passage, the idea of the righteous king is presented in perspective of a concern for reciprocity, and with regard to the supremacy of the dhamma. Of the righteous king Tambiah says, "This Buddhist conception makes the universalistic assertion that dharma in its manifold aspect as a cosmic law that regulates the world totally and as the truth embodied in the Buddha's teachings that shows the path to liberation in the absolute encompassing norm and that the code of kingship embodying righteousness (dharma) has as its source in this dharma and is ideally a concrete manifestation of it in the conduct of worldly affairs."<sup>70</sup> Buddhism asserts that the dharma is the universal code of conduct which not only



includes the cosmic law but also the rules of righteousness, as well as the servant of the law. Unlike the Brahmanic conceptualization of ideal kingship expressed in the dharmāśāstras, where the king was bound to protect the social order and possessed a morality of his own,<sup>71</sup> the Buddhist king was subject to the universal norm that gave form to society and the king's ruling activities. Brahmanical understanding of hierarchical domains of dharma, artha and kāma is replaced in the early Buddhist scheme by the total ordering process of dharma, the cosmic law and the law of righteous kingship.

The relationship between the greater cosmic law and the lower dharma of righteousness under the aegis of the king presents a totality that encompasses both the temporal realm of kings and the spiritual realm of the Buddha. Early Buddhist thought put forward two distinct ideals of kingship that expressed the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual. The theory of the two wheels, two spheres of action, was first expressed by King Ajatsātta at the First Buddhist Council held in Rājagaha when he said to the sangha, "yours is the authority of the spirit, mine is power."<sup>72</sup> The two ideal leaders of these distinct domains are the cakkavatti (skt:chakravartin), leader of the temporal realm, and the Bodhisattva, pre-eminant in the spiritual realm. The dichotomy between the rulers of the two wheels is complicated by the fact that the symbolism of the wheel, cakka, may denote political supremacy, in which case the cakkavatti is understood to be the paramount ruler, but it may also denote the dhamma of the Buddha in which case the cakkavatti is understood to be the supreme righteous ruler, dhammiko or dhammarāja. Notwithstanding the asymmetrical relationship between the ideal of righteous and political ruler, the parallelism between the righteous king as an earthly overlord

and the bodhisattva as the supreme founder of the kingdom of enlightenment is an important feature of early Buddhist kingship. In the Dīgha Nikāya, the Buddha speaks of his encounter with King Mahasudasena, whose wheel of cosmic righteousness (cakka) conquered more effectively than daṇḍa.<sup>71</sup> The policy of conquest through dharma provided a model of conduct for historical Buddhist kings that was essential in the propagation of the dhamma. Tambiah comments:

... It is the policy of pacification after conquest that has been of greater relevance. The cakkavatti, in effect, grants back their domains to the subdued kings when they submit to the five basic moral precepts of Buddhism. We thus see the king represented as the propagator of the Buddhist precepts and as the overseer and guardian of the morals of his subdued tributaries. Indeed, in a sense the king must let conquered rulers keep their thrones since only as a king of kings is he a world monarch.<sup>74</sup>

The most interesting aspect of this total application of a policy of pacification is that the theory insisted on both non-injury and conquest through righteousness. It therefore was in constant tension with the real life application of state-craft. This tension is best symbolized in the cakkavatti, King Asoka. It is Asoka who provides a paradigm of kingship for Sinhalese Buddhism.

The central appeal of Asoka as an ideal monarch was not simply his attraction to power, but his attraction to power made tame and righteous. Asoka formed an "ideal of righteous and benevolent power in tension with self-seeking power as most men know it."<sup>75</sup> Asoka provided Buddhism with a paradigm of ruler-action: a model of the transition from everyman, wicked and cruel (candāśoka), to the mahāpurisa, to the righteous (dhammāśoka). The link between these contrasting images of brutality and

tolerance was the repentance said to be felt by Asoka following the massacre of the Kalingas by his troops. This destruction and the king's subsequent remorse and conversion to Buddhism led Asoka towards dhamma vijāya. Implicit within this transition from wickedness to the righteous conquerer is the political tension the paradigm provides. On one side is supreme human enlightenment, the potential to do good and be righteous, and, on the other side, is delusion and confrontation with chaos.

In his book The Wonder that Was India, A.L. Basham states that Asoka, although a statesman and a conquerer, was "by no means, another worldly dreamer, a little naive, often self-righteous and pompous, but indefatigable, strong-willed and imperious".<sup>74</sup> Underlying Basham's assessment of Asokan political astuteness is the idea of harmony between the monarch as cakkavatti and the monarch in search of dhamma for political purposes. Asoka's motives are elucidated in this passage: "These are trifling comforts for the people have received various facilities from previous kings as well as from me. But I have done what I have primarily in order that the people may follow the path of dharma with faith and devotion."<sup>77</sup> The idea that the dharma had relevant social implications is described in this conclusive statement:

The early Buddhist philosophy of kingship is a compound of three distinct attitudes. Although the early Buddhists betray feelings of disquiet bordering on fear about the nature of kingship as it existed in their times they see no alternative to it and declare it to be absolutely essential to prevent humanity from lapsing into a state of anarchy. Finally, confronted with the fact of kingship and the absolute necessity for it for orderly human existence, they attempt to tame absolute political power by infusing into it a spirit of higher morality.<sup>78</sup>

The paradigm of Asokan kingship provides a scheme of rulership which later Buddhist kings could build upon. His advocacy of righteous rulership and his choice of dhammavijāya was based on the primacy of dharma over danḍa in opposition to the Brahmanic ideal which posits force as a means of ensuring the dharma. The Asokan concept of benevolent kingship was no doubt inspired by pacifist Buddhist ideals and values. Asoka's enthusiastic propagation of those ideals had their effect on the Buddhist community in India as well as on neighbouring communities. The most politically significant transformation of the Asokan model occurred in medieval Sri Lanka where violent acts by the king were not only considered necessary and essential but part of the legitimizing of a king's power. Walpola Rahula points out in his The Heritage of the Bhikkus, that eventual universal acceptance of the king as cakkavatti had such a powerful effect on Sinhalese political ideology that Sinhalese kings had not only to be righteous rulers but bodhisattvas as well.<sup>79</sup>

#### The Dutthagamani Transition

The story of Dutthagāmaṇī (101-137 B.C.) in the Mahāvamsa presents a new principle of ideal kingship that builds upon the Asokan paradigm. The political significance of this new "message" becomes clear when the message is examined in association with the primary myth in the chronicle about the conquering of Lanka by the Buddha. The legends of the Buddha and his encounters with yakkhas, nagas and devas, all non-human symbols of primal chaos, clarify the notion of the archetypal struggle of Sinhalese kingship to maintain order. In light of this legend the paradigmatic actions of Dutthagāmaṇi can be interpreted with reference to two major themes: 1) a king who commits violence for the glory of the

sasana (religion) incurs no evil; and, 2) the response to external (non-Buddhist) forces creates a Sinhalese nationalist ideal with a political imperative – the creation of Lanka by the Buddha, for the Buddhists and continuation of the realm by later Buddhist kings. Around these two themes, the legend of Dutthagamani provides a focus for the transformation of the concept of the Buddhist ideal of kingship; to wit, legitimate force can be a means of maintaining order as well as a means of conquest. The combination of danḍa as a coercive element and dharmavi-jāya as a higher conceptual element of kingship formulate a new model for Sinhalese kings. The Asokan ideal of kingship, as described in the chronicles and edicts, was based on non-violence. Kings in Lanka revered this ideal as the saga of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī shows. The methods used by Dutthagamani to legitimately assert his authority were neither an aberration of the Asokan ideal, nor a single minded quest for power, unhampered by codes of ethical conduct. They were the foundation for a distinct Sinhalese ideal of kingship. The use of the Buddha's supernatural powers in removing the yakkhas presents "an ethical principle distinct from those found in the Pali Canon, violence is permissible in the interest of the sasana against those who do not understand the true doctrine and are opposed to it."<sup>80</sup>

In this context, the message of the story of Dutthagamani becomes clear. In the Mahāvamsa, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is introduced at the point of his birth from a previously infertile queen. He is a cakkavatti as he is "endowed with auspicious signs."<sup>81</sup> Enraged as youth by a royal edict prohibits him from taking arms against the Tamils, Gamaṇī declares: "over there beyond the Ganga are the Damilas, here on this side is the Gotha ocean how can I lie with outstretched limbs?"<sup>82</sup> Thus angered, he earns the epithet Duṭṭha (the angry one). From this point, the young prince is

presented in the *Chronicles* as embracing violence to vanquish the Tamils invading Lanka and to overcome rivals to the throne. By beginning his glorious reign by purging Lanka of enemies and internal threats to his authority, on the surface, *Duttahagamani* would seem to be inviting disorder and chaos by contradicting the very nature of the cakkavatti. Unlike Asoka, who served to inspire the moral transformation of his subjects by engaging in rule by example, Dutthagamani sought to exploit his role as cakkavatti.

Thus, *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī* placed a relic of the Buddha upon his battle lance and requested the company of monks in battle.<sup>83</sup> Also, allowing his 500 bhikkus to aid the king in war was a blatant violation of Buddhist dogma, which theoretically does not even allow monks to watch armies on parade. More importantly, it was a violation of the Buddhist concept of ahimsa or non-violence asserted in the Dhammapada: that "it is not by hurting creatures that man becomes excellent, only by non-violence is excellence achieved."<sup>84</sup>

The basis of the ideological break are two Sinhalese beliefs that are non-Buddhist in character. First, there is the acceptance of violence as permissible under certain conditions such as the legitimation of the king. Despite affronts to Buddhist orthodoxy, *Dutthagamani* is hailed as an exemplary national hero in the *Chronicles* and by modern scholars such as Rahula.<sup>85</sup> The paradigm of the relationship between the sacred doctrine of ahimsa and political motives exemplified by *Dutthagamani* seems to be a result of the historical consciousness of the Buddhist community in Lanka which resolved to write about *Dutthagamani* as a man of violence, but, nevertheless, an ideal king. Alice Greenwald contends, in her essay on The Historiography of the Saga of Duṭṭhāgamaṇī, that the king did not



*compromise his legitimacy and claim to the throne because he was relieved of any sense of wrongdoing by the "novel assertion that one's humanity is a function of one's being Buddhist and to kill a non-Buddhist is therefore of little consequence in terms of blemishing one's record of merit as killing an animal."<sup>86</sup>*

*From the standpoint of ahimsa, Dutthagamani may seem irreverent, unless it is recalled that in the Chronicles the island of Lanka belonged to the Buddha. Not only was the island taken by the Buddha by force, but the Buddha had acquired a complete and unchallengeable claim over the island in the name of the dhamma. As compiled in the Mahāvamsa, the history of Lanka supports this contention. The visit of the Buddha and the saga of Dutthagāmaṇī present two types of acceptable violence based on the principle of restoring and maintaining order for the stability of the Buddhist community and the legitimation of royal authority.*

*The story of Dutthagāmaṇī is an interpretation of history because, later on in his life, the king is credited with aiding in the growth of Buddhism on the island by constructing monuments at his capital Anurādhapura. Following the massive carnage in the battle to eliminate Tamil influence, Dutthagamani, like Asoka, felt great remorse on account of the many dead on the battlefield. The Mahāvamsa relates the consequences of this change in attitude when the monks tell the king:*

*From this deed arises no hindrance in the way to heaven:  
Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee,  
O lord of men. The one had come unto the three refuges  
the others had taken of himself the five precepts.  
Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest not more to  
be esteemed than beasts.<sup>87</sup>*

The saga of Dutthagāmaṇi supports the necessity of violence in purging the state of all non-believers. That the sanction comes from the bhikku community makes it all the more remarkable.

A second theme that arises out of the use of violence by Sinhalese kings is the discrepancy of violent tactics with the Asokan ideal. According to Greenwald, the assumption of Buddhist kingship is that all Buddhist kings must be khattiyas. It is a consequence of the Buddha being born into the warrior class that kingship, as an institution essential to the maintenance of order, is firmly grounded in the principle of conquest because "warriorship was intrinsic to rulership."<sup>88</sup> This concept of royal authority is in keeping with the Brahmanic concept of ideal kingship in which the use of political force is freed from the consequences of sin and error, as in the emphasis on danda as the symbol of power in the dharma-sāstras. But there is an important difference in the ideas about the use of force between the two traditions. Essentially, the Sinhalese ideals concerning the use of force are directed towards maintaining order in a response to external non-Buddhist threats, whereas the use of danda by the Brahmanic king carries the authority to create new dharma but the king cannot intervene in customs contrary to dharma. In other words, he cannot use force against non-Brahmanic orders. In Lanka, the use of force has become part of a political ideal, in direct contrast to the Asokan paradigm. Greenwald argues that the function of violent political action and remorse at the taking of life in violation of the dhamma is a symbolic articulation of the coming together of two distinct but overlapping principles of legitimated authority. The placing of a relic on the spear reflects "danda, the sociopolitical element of coercion and control..., materialized in the battle lance, whose brutal effect is tempered by the religio-cosmo-



logical suggestion of cakka (the wheel of dhamma) which a relic of the Buddha surely connotes."<sup>89</sup>

The placing of a relic on the spear, the monks going to war, and the violence on the battlefield are an innovative representation of coercive attempts by a king to establish a new dynasty. This Sinhalese innovation for the legitimation of political assertiveness was not an attempt to subsume the dharmavijāya principle. It was, rather, the product of a new order in which the conquest of that which threatened the dhamma provoked a religio-national self-consciousness steeped in a tradition of political and communal interdependence.

Although in peacetime Dutthagāmaṇī was seen primarily as a builder of thūpas and viharas, it was in the context of his warrior mode in which the social ideal of medieval Lanka should be understood. Dutthagāmaṇī's war-like attitude is taken as a means of legitimizing a distinct Sinhalese political enterprise which, in turn, finds its roots in the metaphoric visit of the Buddha. This enterprise, as Greenwald points out, takes on certain elements of foreboding as it confronts what would later come. Dutthagāmaṇī's violent response to a non-Buddhist Tamil invasion is an indication of the new proportions Buddhist kingship had taken on, incorporating within it important principles of Indian kingship such as force being freed from sin. Where the Tamils can be seen as analogous to the yakkhas dispelled by the Buddha, so in his response to the Tamils does Dutthagāmaṇī present the central principle of ideal Sinhalese kingship which is the legitimate use of force as a means of stabilizing and perpetuating the community.

In a society threatened by the constant spectre of disorder such a perpetuation was necessary for the livelihood of the sasana. Every effort a

king made to maintain and establish the universal dhamma was an effort to stabilize society and visa versa. One way of stabilizing society is seen in the intricate interdependence between king and sangha. An investigation of this relationship will clarify the legitimation process against which an analysis of the relationship between the king and Brahman will provide a useful parallel.

#### IV. Ksatriya-Brahman

The relationship between Brahman and Ksatriya in early Brahmanic society is characterized by both solidarity and opposition. Dumont has shown that the hierarchical enumeration of the four varṇa(s) was not only linear, but it was also based on a series of oppositions defined by the principle of religious duty. The first three classes, the Brahman, Ksatriya and Vaisya are, according to Manu, taken as twice born (dvīja) whose duties including bestowing gifts, offering sacrifices, and studying the Veda.<sup>90</sup> The three groups stand in opposition to the Sudra class who have no direct religious duty other than to serve the former three classes. A second, less frequent, set of oppositions are between the Brahmans and the Ksatriya on the one hand, and the Vaisya on the other, because the former have control over the spiritual and secular domain and the latter over cattle only.<sup>91</sup> The third opposition is between Brahmins and Kṣatriyas. The early texts extol the superiority of the Brahman since he controls the sacrifice and has access to transcendent knowledge which is closed to others. The Brahman occupies a unique place in regard to the power of the king. The Ksatriya is said to have sprung from the womb of the Brahman, hence the principle of direct power over the soil (kṣātra)

was thought to originate and be controlled by the principle of spiritual authority (brahma). The principle of brahma was embodied in the Brahmins just as the principle of ksatra was embodied in the Ksatriya. Thus, the Brahmin is considered the source of the Ksatriya. Because his authority is legitimated on a higher metaphysical plane, the Brahmin is naturally freed from any obligation to bow before the ruler. According to Dumont, the final and most central opposition is the dependence all three of the lower varna have on the Brahmin. The Āitareya Brāhmana emphasizes the dependent opposition in which it draws the logical consequence: "the king must, through appropriate rites, be identified with the Brahmin during the performance of the sacrifice and be made to leave this identification at the end of this ceremony."<sup>92</sup>

The intricate abstract relationship between Ksatriya and Brahmin is nowhere better displayed than in the personal relationship between the king and his spiritual delegate (purohita). The king selects his purohita in order to fulfill his own religious duties.<sup>93</sup> The purohita presides over all royal sacrifices and the king is dependent on him for all actions of his life; "the purohita is to the king as thought is to will, as Mitra is to Varuna."<sup>94</sup> The characteristics of a good purohita are given as follows (although they could be equally applied to any good Brahmin):

... a Brahmin who is learned (in the Vedas), of noble family, eloquent, handsome of (a suitable) age, of virtuous disposition, who lives righteously and who is austere.<sup>95</sup>

The dharmaśāstra(s) and the Arthaśāstra implicitly intend the king to govern with the close association of his purohita who was to guide the king in all spiritual matters.<sup>96</sup> The relationship between purohita and king

exemplifies how the "Brahman's function" is to absolve evil that would otherwise befall his king. The purohita is in a tenuous and ambiguous position because of his potentially polluting close association with the king. Interestingly, the Mahābhārata and Manu consider the purohita as equal in status to the Ksatriya and not equal to the Brahman.

The resultant relationship between purohita and king has led more than one scholar such as Dumont to assume that the Brahman is superior to his king. Heesterman argues that Dumont fails to distinguish between the true renunciant and those Brahmans who are in potentially polluting situations such as the purohita. Heesterman believes that it is the renunciant who occupies the highest point in the social order since he does not come in contact with impurity. The purohita is caught in a apparent contradiction in that to exercise his craft he needs a king just as the king needs the purohita to gain legitimacy, but the purohita risks impurity as a king's advocate and priest.<sup>97</sup>

Gonda offers a conciliatory, if not definitive, response to the often repeated idea that the true basis of kingship is the priest's power by stressing the religious basis of the reciprocal relationship: "Their union is perfection, although readily enunciated by the brahmans in order to consolidate their influence, must therefore be regarded as being founded on a relation of a genuine religious character."<sup>98</sup>

The ideological consequence of the relationship between priest and warrior indicates that sovereignty incorporates the dichotomy of mutual cooperation and absolute separation by the relationship: "The king depends on the priest for the religious functions, he cannot be his own sacrificer, instead he puts in front of himself the purohita."<sup>99</sup> Thus, the purohita as a Brahman is engaged in the drama of the use of power in the



worldly process, rather than being detached from the values that determine the world processes. There are many rules in the works on dharma and artha which are designed to ensure the independence of the Brahman, but the śāstras hold that the Brahman is entitled to certain immunities, such as immunity from corporal punishment, imprisonment, fines, taxes, etc.,<sup>110</sup> which are not extended to other varnas. But these rules do not address the inherent problem of purity which a Brahman faces by being involved in ritual. Though these rules are really expressions indicating that all values are subordinate to religious values, they do not require that the purohita should be construed to be the highest paradigm of the social order. His preeminence is supplanted by the even higher ideal of the renunciant who embodies disengagement and is independent of the world.<sup>101</sup>

The renunciant can re-enter into society and exert considerable influence on it.<sup>102</sup> Burton Stein has demonstrated that the formation of communities composed of Brahman renunciants, who reenter the world (brahmadeya), did more than anything else to lead to a stabilized economic link between peasant and king. The communities served as disseminating points of high and varied culture and were the focus for gift giving by the major dynasties of South India. Even after the establishment of large urban places, the sacerdotal elite of South India maintained an interest in rural society and moulded a social order that was unique to the plains and river communities of South India. The persistence of reciprocal advantages in the relationship between King, Brahman and peasant assured the durability of these settlements. In return for protection and donations, the Brahmans provided strong support for the institution of monarchy. During the period in South India when the position of the Brahmans had been threatened by the rise of heterodoxies like Buddhism and Jainism, by

the proximity of the communities to organized and antagonistic tribal folk, the Pallava kings supported an increase in the number of Brahman communities near every peasant village. The communities played a significant integrative role, serving as a focus of Brahmanic activity in peasant villages, while maintaining a strong link with the populous towns of antiquity, Kanchi and Madurai. In the outlying peasant settlements, where the majority of economic activities took place, Brahmans established ritual and social doctrines according to śāstric proscription. In these communities, the lifestyles of the Brahmans - including language, ritual activity, and support of the institution of kingship - were emulated by the peasantry. The Brahman village was a keystone of the social order in South India, the basis of the establishment and maintenance of Aryan culture. But while the presence of royal power in these villages is clear,<sup>103</sup> the villages were unequally influenced by kings proximity and accessibility according to the court. However, these factors had less effect on the brahmadeyas who were instrumental in carrying out an educational function including the preservation of dharmasastric ideals of kingship.<sup>104</sup>

The structural alliance between king and Brahman was balanced in South India by an equally powerful alliance based on close cooperation between the peasants and the Brahmans. The process of "Sanskritization" of the peasantry, as evidence indicates, was well advanced before Pallava power extended southward. The secular relationship between Brahman and peasant grew as a result of syncretic cultural dominance. As Stein says, "The achievement of dominance in South India and the firm establishment of those social and cultural forms reflecting and supporting this dominance, must be considered one of the most important developments in Indian history."<sup>105</sup> Moreover, the achievement of this peasant dominance

arose out of a transformation of social and economic changes influenced by Brahmanical institutions rather than being a consequence of deliberate state policy. Pallava power was not capable in itself of transforming existing social and cultural institutions. The evolving social order of South India was an assimilation of indigenous Bravidian elements around which a gradual development of Brahmanical institutions grew. The basis of this evolving social order was the asymmetrical relationship between king and Brahman, and between Brahman and peasant.

Although in South India there are examples of powerful secular authority vested in kings such as the Pallavas and Cholas, the institution of kingship never challenged the secular authority of Brahmans. The failure of a distinct localized ksatriya tradition to emerge to hold sway over the peasantry was due to the "entrenched secular power of the Brahman."<sup>104</sup> "Collaboration with would-be ksatriya warriors could not strengthen but only weaken Brahman secular authority. Since Brahmans were firmly anchored in a satisfactory alliance with localized peasant groups and their chiefs, there would have been no inducement for Brahman collaboration with aspirants to ksatriya status."<sup>107</sup>

An important characteristic of the South Indian social order is the prominence afforded dominant peasant groups. The Śilappadikaram (6th century A.D.) suggests an indigenous stratification of society that placed farmers (Ulavars) in the highest rank. This kind of stratification led to a status ordering in society that differed from Indo-Aryan varṇa organized society in which Ksatriya groups were dominant. The peasantry provided the best, if not the only, support for Brahmans during the periods of Jaina and Buddhist dominance. The urbanized areas of South India, such as Kanchi, were controlled by the heterodoxies and often displayed open

hostility toward Brahmanic institutions. Hence, the best association for Brahmans at this time was with the rural peasantry.

The relationship between Brahman and king is dominated by an intricate balance between the strength of the Brahman-peasants relationship and the patronage that kings gave to Brahmans. The ideal relationship as it is expressed in the dharmasāstras and earlier literature, has relevance for kings and Brahmans in South India only if the influence of other factors are considered. Since the dharmasāstras identify an association between king and Brahman that is time-honoured and mutually beneficial, the question then arises as to why alliances developed between other groups who were not constrained by tradition. The answer to this question lies in part with the convergence of interests within a new and powerful ideology. The Brahmanic-peasant alliance existed as an end in itself providing stability and order that an essentially de-politicized Ksatriya group could not provide. The alliance between secular authority, as it is represented by the growth of Brahmadeyas and the community, has its beginning in a relationship that involved new insights into economic and political needs. On the other hand, the quickly emerging Monarchy-sangha relationship in Sri Lanka provided a different basis of political and religious motives.

### Cakkavatti-Sangha

The Sinhalese chronicles argue that sasana, under the guidance of a cakkavatti, offers stability and a path to enlightenment, while at the same time acknowledging the ever-present reality of evil. The ideal social order in Sri Lanka incorporates social and political needs in accordance with the order of the dhamma. The chronicles argue for a continuum

between social needs and the sacred order, so conceived that any threat to the latter is automatically construed as disruptive of the former.<sup>108</sup> A brief consideration of Asoka's relationship to the sangha, as it is described in his edicts and the Chronicle, provides a basis to compare with later developments. The roots of the relationship between monarch and sangha can be traced back to the reports of the Buddha's life. The Dīpavamsa's account of king Bimbisara's vision describes the relationship:

A khattiya is in need of sovereignty he the enlightened one, the bull among men should arise in my kingdom, the Tathagata should approach to show himself first to me, he should preach the everlasting norm, should penetrate into the excellent norm.<sup>109</sup>

The relationship is carried a step further when the secular authority of the throne is subsumed under the sovereignty of the dhamma. The story of Asoka's conversion by the Bhikku Nigrodha describes the transition. Asoka asks, "When should I approach to have a sight of good men? Listening to this good saying I shall give my sovereignty along with my kingdom."<sup>110</sup> Having come to Nigrodha, Asoka says, in words which depict the Sangha-monarch relationship, "Teach me the Norm which you have learned, you will be my teacher and I shall be taught by you. O great sage I will act according to your word. Instruct me I will listen to your instruction."<sup>111</sup> Having listened to the teachings of the Buddha, Asoka takes refuge in the three jewels, bestowing upon the sangha his loyalty and his wealth, "As much as the monks desire, I give them whatever they choose."<sup>112</sup>

The model of royal patronage to the sangha by the king is an example of the king's political sovereignty and religious authority. Asoka had

dared to say, "Whatever the Lord Buddha has said, Reverend Sirs is of course well said. But it is proper for me to enumerate the texts which express the true dharma and which make it everlasting."<sup>111</sup> Not only did Asoka thus claim the prerogative to evaluate the doctrines, he also exercised the authority to enforce discipline on the religious community. Both are distinct characteristics of Buddhist kingship and separate it from the Brahmanic tradition.

The chronicles give accounts of royal patronage to both Sangha and the community at large. As a follower of dharmavijāya, Asoka chose to protect the dharma from "heretical incursions, settling disputes among the Bhikkus encouraging the teaching and the spreading of the doctrine."<sup>112</sup> The relationship between Sangha and king may have been a reciprocal one but it was clearly oriented towards the political maintenance of social order. In the Sīgalovada Sutta, regarded as the Vinaya of the Buddhist layman, the ideal relationship between king and sangha is portrayed.<sup>113</sup> This sutta emphasized the role the king had in ensuring the purity of the sangha.

As Asoka can be portrayed as Cakkavatti at one end of the spectrum and as an individual in the Buddhist community at the other end, so too can he be seen in search of Dhamma for both political purposes and personal meaning. In essence, Asoka's relationship with the Sangha was based on the notion that the state did not exist as an end in itself but as a means of preserving and articulating the dhamma, of which the sangha was the conscience. Thus, Asoka delegated responsibility to the Sangha and insured that the doctrine be taught. Asoka provided the stability and order upon which the efforts of the Sangha could be freely pursued. The Asokan model of kingship provided an ideal normative pattern that established a social ethic of reciprocity between monarch and sangha as opposed



to a religious ethic which was the foundation of king-Brahman reciprocity. This social imperative of reciprocity was emulated and enhanced in Sri Lanka.

The acquiring and confirming of royal power in Sri Lanka begins with the conversion of Devanāṃ piya Tissa who, following the Buddha's parinibbana, established a thupa on the spot on which a Buddha relic was enshrined. The connection of mainland India to Lanka was symbolized in Tissa's conversion to the dhamma and the arrival of Asoka's envoy Mahinda on the island. A chapter of the Mahāvamsa describes the acceptance of the Mahavihara bhikku community as the act in which Mahinda demarcates the boundaries (sīma) of the newly created monastery. This act established a continuum of universal dhamma realization, and the sangha is the perpetuation of that realization. Such traditions of permanency and perpetuation were necessary in a society threatened by the constant spectre of disorder. Mahinda's mission established a prototypical link that was based on the Asokan paradigm in that the symbols of office, modes of consecration, and forms of administrative practice established were largely Indian in origin. Over the centuries, the relationship between cakkavatti and sangha became even more politicized because effective and legitimate power became measured by "effective response to the everyday needs of society."<sup>116</sup>

No less important was the influence exercised by the sangha in controlling a potentially tyrannical king. The influence of the dhamma, symbolic of the authority of the sangha, moderated the power of the king, by limiting his use of danḍa. This controlling effect is evident in the chronicles concerning the story of Sanghamitta, a monk of the third century A.D. who exercised political influence during times of communal

strife and political discord. Bhikkus exercised great secular influence like their Brahman counterparts. Buddhist monks recognized that dandaniti was not synonymous with tyranny. Indeed, responsible statecraft and legitimation were perceived as belonging together, as hand and glove.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, monks stood for the conscience of the social order and became influential members of the community, controlling vast tracts of tax-free arable land and advising the king in state matters. In contrast, the South Indian Brahmanic community did not exercise direct control over political power.

In Sri Lanka, a king's claim to cakkavatti status lay in the protection of the sangha, and the sangha was a factor in limiting and legitimizing the king's power. The sangha(s) closeness to the people and its cohesiveness helped unify the social order. On the other hand, a non-unified bhikku community spelled disaster for the state. A weak king sought to balance rival factions within the sangha so as to reduce the inherent political power they each held. The purity of the sangha enhanced the growth of membership and the protection of the sangha in the form of patronage enhanced the legitimacy of the monasteries. In both cases, a good cakkavatti established a unified and healthy monastic community which, in turn, could keep a tyrannical king in check. This ongoing interdependent relationship exemplifies the intricacies involved in the legitimation process.<sup>118</sup>

The construction of viharas and thūpas was no less a part of this nurturing. The Tooth Relic Festival, as an example of the king's involvement in the religious realm, brought to the public eye the historicity of the dhamma and reinforced the principle of devotion to a universal symbol representing order and genuine sovereignty. Monks were directly and actively involved in the political process as advisors to the king but were also considered to be sans reproche. Therefore, one of the kings perfor-

med a fundamental regulative act (dhammakammena) which extirpated and purified the sangha. Dissent between two rival groups of monks could escalate to the point of destroying a unified social order, and at these times, the king directed the monks to reform in order to purify the doctrine. The interesting part of this regulative act was the implicit recognition in its use that a pure religious community was beneficial to the social order as a whole. The interests of king and monks were closely knit and in the act of dhammakammena converged. The cakkavatti-sangha relationship was one of interdependence, and the king was faced with a socio-political task in order to make this reciprocity possible. The purpose of this reciprocity was to create and maintain an ordered society where men could freely pursue the path of dhamma that lay beyond order.

#### V. Cosmology and the Ideal Social Order

The society/cosmos relationships of the Brahmanic and the Buddhist social orders offers disparate eschatological dimensions to the two schemes of meaning. This section is concerned with those dimensions and how they are united with certain cosmological assumptions about the perceived nature of reality, legitimation and kingship in each social order. The central dimension to be explored is the institution of dharma and the meaning dharma has within a cosmological framework. It was noted above that the Buddhist story of genesis which parallels the Vedic theory of the origin of varṇa, was said to be a self-conscious inversion, not only a-Brahmanical, but also what Dumont characterized as a-religious. The Brahmanical version of the creation, as it is presented by Manu, concentrates on three central ideas that embrace the notion of the dharma. First,

dharma in the Kṛti Age is four-footed identical with truth and in the three successive ages, including that age in which men now live, the Kali Age, wherein dharma has been successively deprived of one foot due to the growing prevalence of falsehood and deceitfulness. Tāpas (austerities) constitute the highest dharma of the Kṛta Age whereas giving alone is the highest dharma in the Kali Age<sup>119</sup> since disparity with respect to material possessions is the root cause of all evil.

Second, Manu outlines the origin of the caste structure. Dharma is described as a universal code of conduct prescribed by scriptures and ordained by the sacred tradition (the sacred law).<sup>120</sup> Third, in succeeding chapters, Manu declares the domain of dharma, the highest value, to include "sacraments, studentship, marriage rites, funeral sacrifices, the modes of gaining subsistence, the rules relating to lawful and forbidden food, the purification of men and things, the laws concerning women, the laws of jurisprudence and inheritance and division of property, the behaviour of the varṇa and mixed castes, the whole duty of king, final emancipation and renouncing the world, transmigration and on and on."<sup>121</sup> The thrust of Manu's assertion is that dharma is an all encompassing Sacred Law. In cosmological terms, it conveys the sense that a divinely ordained dharmic code of conduct, whose foremost representative is the Brahman himself, is the root and foundation of the social order. The Manu account envelops divinity, the process of creation and the creation of a moral code into what Tambiah has called, "One single total unitary phenomenon."<sup>122</sup> The political and cultural processes of man are inseparable from the processes of nature. The laws of nature and the laws of man essentially move forward as a totality governed by the sacred law of dharma.

In contrast to the divine creative processes posited by Brahman-

ism, the Buddhist creation account rests on a process of degenerating human morality in conjunction with the degeneration of nature as a whole. The practical basis of the ongoing process called a paṭicca samuppāda, is a dialectical process in which culture and nature are related in a single scheme both having a "dependent origination."<sup>123</sup> Unlike Brahmanical theories, the mechanics of the process do not involve a single unified process linked by an all-encompassing sacred law. The Buddhist schema suggests that there is no absolute and original causative agent, but, instead, all reality is a network of causes and effects. Transposed to the ideal social order, the theory established that the independent voluntary actions of men form a network of interrelated function, that fit into a framework known as society. Hence, the institution of kingship with its contractual basis has as its foundation not a code appropriate to Ksatriya status as in Brahmanism, but the actions, words and desires of each individual person in a cosmologically coordinated pattern. In cosmic terms, paṭicca samuppada conveys the idea that there are relative degrees of good and evil, disorder and order, in which "the entire universe is a fabric with parts dependent upon each other, a tissue of entities making up one whole."<sup>124</sup>

The dharma of Buddhism has as a centre of focus and paradigm Mount Meru which "facing all the directions assembled under its polar supremacy, that controlling center cybernetically conditions to them to what they have to be in order to provide the creatures reborn there with a fitting set of retributions."<sup>125</sup> The key character in the cosmological process is the individual who maintains the social order, the cakkavatti, who, like Mount Meru, stabilized the world and makes the wheel of righteousness revolve around the centre. "His rule thus appears in the Buddhist image

of the world as a moral and ordinating service of the community - a fit substitute for the Vedic sacrifice and sacrificial power (brahman).<sup>126</sup>

Buddhist reformulation provides the point of difference in how the two traditions understand dharma. The Buddhist position is that dharma, in its manifold aspect as a Cosmic Law, regulates the code of conduct of a righteous ruler which in turn gives form to the social order in contrast to the Brahmanic notion of dharma as Sacred Law with the supremacy of dharma over artha (including the concept of varna asrāmadharma), indicating that the social order encompasses the regulative function of the king and that in some sense the social order determines the action of kings.<sup>127</sup> Simplified, it could be said that in Buddhism the king gives form to the social order whereas in Brahmanism the social order determines what the king may and may not do.

While this major reformulation is common to all aspects of the two traditions, nowhere is it better exemplified than in the cosmology portrayed in the chronicles of Lanka and Tamil heroic poems of South India. A chapter in the Mahāvamsa describes the monarch-universe relationship in a portrayal of the organic harmony of Cakkavatti rule:

*From the Himalaya did the devas bring for cleansing the teeth, twigs of naga-creeper. The spirits of the air brought garments of five colours ... out of the raja kingdom the nagas (brought stuff coloured like the jasmine blossom and without a seam ... parrots brought daily ... wagon loads of rice, unbroken into grains without husk or powder ... perpetually did honey-bees prepare honey for him ... kara vika - birds graceful and sweet of voice, came and made delightful music for the king.<sup>128</sup>*

Similarly, the acceptance of the relationship between Buddhist institutions and the cakkavatti is seen in the Mahāvamsa; there, Mahinda,



*Asoka's envoy, marks off boundaries in the capital city, Anuradhapura, so that the great Vihara can be constructed by order of the king. Each act of sīma is marked by an earthquake, a symbolic affirmation.<sup>129</sup> In this example, a symbol of kingly action on earth is carried out in accordance with the greater good of the universal dhamma and it crystallizes the oneness with the universe. It also conveys the universal unity between sangha and monarchy which are dependent on each other within the context of the highest ordering principle, the dhamma. If the fundamental structure of Buddhist kingship resides in the promise of order in the face of the threat of disorder, then the cosmology on which the world is structure also double-sided. The status of Buddhist kingship is based upon a cosmic frame of reference deriving stability from the organic harmony within the universe. The turning of the wheel is therefore based upon the cohesiveness of nature. This is emphasized in the Mahāvamsa in reference to Asoka, "straight away after his consecration, his command spread so far as a yojana into the air and downward in the earth."<sup>130</sup> Wilhelm Geiger argues that this passage suggests that royal sovereignty derived power from the universal nature of the dhamma and worked in accordance with it. Similarly, the examples of Mahinda preaching to devas during the act of sīma implies a theme of universal coherence.*

*The establishment of the Mahāvihara, the enshrining of the Buddha's relics, and the building of thūpas during the reigns of Devānaṃpiya Tissa and Dutthagamani emphasize the power of dhamma beyond the real world: "All these were completed without hindrance by reason of the wondrous power of the king, the wondrous power of the devatas and the wondrous power of the holy theras."<sup>129</sup> Each example underscores the*

universal wonderment of the dhamma which every king, every monk and every man was compelled to seek on his own.

Political authority became potent through these mythologies and direct association with the Buddha made a king's sovereignty even stronger. The king giving human activity which is precarious and transitory, and filled with doubt, provides reassurance in a semblance of universal permanency allowing such activity to be seen on a figurative level as establishing a continuum of the universal dhamma.

In contrast to the universalized conceptions of kingship portrayed in the Sinhalese chronicles, the literature and inscriptions of Medieval south Indian kingship portray an idiom of kingship in keeping with śāstric ordinances. The pūram poems disclose a fixation on martial prowess and warrior bravery of the heroes of the age. In fact, inscriptions of the Pallava and Chola period kings refer to them as upholders of the dharma codified by Manu. Brahmanic kings are portrayed as protectors who controlled with power, protected with care and administered justice. They did so when often portrayed as dharma roaming on earth with a thousand eyes. The king maintained order, not by making laws, but by ensuring the fertility of the fields, producing life giving water and ensuring the passage of normal seasons.<sup>132</sup> In this way a traditional pattern of an ideal ruler existed within the central framework of law and order. The king's realm of political power was not subsumed under a larger realm of universal dharma as in Buddhism, but it remained separated from and relatively autonomous with the absolute values of a cosmic law.

Since kingship's central function was to give order to society, South Indian kingship became centred on specific structures and the diversity of the social order, and not so much on its relation to a universal order. The

inscriptional records of the Pallavas, Cholas and Pandya's attest to the emphasis South Indian kingship placed on the institutional and organization modes of society. Transcending this technical conception of the South Indian social order was the conception of rāja dharma which, notwithstanding Buddhist conceptions, placed a greater emphasis on a king's ability to control and protect within his own sphere or power.

The poems of South India indicate the cosmological significance given to those kings who were adept at war:

*The men of ancient race that appear foremost in the fight,  
wielding their swords, who stand as in the universal  
deluge, some mountaintop rises firm amid the flood; what  
wonder if their glory lives when all falsehoods have passed  
away.<sup>133</sup>*

A second poem of the same period underscores the protective function of the king which carries on even after his death.

*He had the praises many fold of minstrels whose wants he  
relieved; he was most loving to the dancers who deserted  
his court; he swayed the sceptre in accordance with the  
teaching of sages; he cultivated the friendships of the  
honoured wise; He was gentle to women, brave, and strong  
in the face of the brave. He was the refuge of the spotless  
learned ones, such an one death did not consider, but  
carried off his sweet soul, therefore my afflicted kinsfolk  
let us. Embracing one another joining in reviling death.  
Come all ye bards whose words come true. He hath become  
a pillar planted in the wild, crowned with immortal praise,  
such is the lot of him who was our guardian true.<sup>134</sup>*

These are not isolated examples of ideal kingship; rather, they present an aspect of kingship which emphasizes the universality of the military prowess required by all kings. The conception of universal sovereignty in South India included the element of coercive power, but was expanded to

include the acceptance of kingship as a focus of loyalty and sacral power. But, as significant as the expression of universal royal power through military might was, it was not the only expression of kingship. Ritual incorporation, that characteristic of kingship peculiar to South India, formed a transcendent political element which accentuated the universal dharmic character of South Indian sovereignty. Such ritual incorporation necessitated a cosmological acceptance which had its roots in the extended sacrifice. Sacrificially created power, such as that revealed in the asvamedha, asserted ownership over territory circumambulated by the king's sacrificial horse, and also the horse transmitted to that territory its divine power acquired as a result of ritual.

Though the king's primary function is to ensure social order, it becomes evident that certain cosmological augmentations (sacral kingship) enhanced and legitimized an already established expression of authority and sovereignty. Despite the significance of the more elaborate attempts at ritual incorporation (the Rajaraja temple is the best example) the king's central role of maintaining social order remained. A king who failed to uphold the dharma was confronted by cosmological chaos, since the king is often portrayed as an intermediary between society and nature. The actions of an adharmic monarch led to natural and social catastrophe. The similarities in this respect to Sinhalese kingship are of some interest.

The sensitivity of both traditions to mankind's plight is central to the understanding of the role of the kings. In some sense, the activity of kings provides an ordinating pattern that makes the flux of daily existence comprehensible. Thus, in the literature of both traditions, when kings prove unworthy, their code of conduct is questioned because it is their conduct that constitutes the norms for society.

### Conclusions

The preceding analysis reveals different formulations of an ideal social order; different at the level of structure, different in orientation. As to the structural differences, the institution of kingship as the stabilizing basis of social order is defined differently in each tradition. The contractual character of Buddhist kingship reveals a degree of secularization that emphasizes a high degree of interdependence between the sangha, the king, and the people of the social order.<sup>135</sup> In the dominant Brahmanic tradition, kingship, as the political and economic domain, embraces religion as an ultimate system of values. Hence, the basis of kingship is defined along religious rather than political lines. Although Brahmanic kingship in South India never rejected the most important legitimating feature of the Brahman-ksātra relationship, daṇḍa, rethinking the use of daṇḍa as an important legitimating feature, became predominant. The reduction in the use of daṇḍa was due in part to theories which posited the relative autonomy of kingship with regard to absolute values. The secular authority enjoyed by Brahmans in their relationship with the peasantry helped define a new role for kings. An analysis of political arrangements in South India reveals that the dichotomy of secular power between Brahmans and kings became manifest in the kings increased role in ritual, which helped, in term, to increase political stability, economic growth and religious popularity.

The Sinhalese social order, on the other hand, shows a consolidation of values within a framework of kingship, the dhamma, and the sangha. Sinhalese kingship's central legitimating feature, the claim of adherence to dhamma, gave new meaning to the political ambitions of Sinhalese kings.

*This political motivation finds its beginning in a national consciousness and in a powerful fear of disorder. The concept of interdependence between king and sangha, in which each legitimated the social order as a whole by ensuring that they were both dedicated to the growth and maintenance of social order, provides a verifiable means of understanding significant transformation in the social order in Sri Lanka as it is described in the chronicles.*

*The continuing awareness of the precariousness of the social order underlies the interplay between political and religious authority. The Sinhalese experience of political realism arose from the broader Indian doctrine of matsyanyāya. Legitimation of power in both traditions is in part formed by an awareness of the threat of disorder so that the sine qua non of Sinhalese and South Indian political legitimacy is protection from anarchy and its consequences.*

*No less instructive is the relationship between institutions, the values of society and those who exercise power. Thus, the safeguarding of authority rests not only with political power but with the values reflected in the ideal social order which sets criteria for legitimacy. While the Sinhalese and South Indian traditions are not unique in this regard, they have invested certain institutions of authority with enduring significance "bestowing upon them an ultimately valid cosmological status ... by locating them within a cosmic frame of reference their empirical tenuousness is transformed into an overpowering stability as they are understood as but the manifestations of the underlying structure of the universe."<sup>134</sup>*

*Danḍa is one clear fact of legitimized power that is grounded on the structure of the universe. The next chapter will consider the foundation of danḍa in the institutions of both traditions.*



## CHAPTER 2: FORCE - DAṆḌA

### Introduction

*Force and the idea of force is at the heart of political authority. Force is the empirical manifestation of the effectiveness of political authority in allocating values. Force is one of the central constituents in the totality of political institutional arrangements in both Medieval South India and Sri Lanka; this totality, at the political level, constitutes the tools for the exercise of power. In both South India and Sri Lanka, notions of ideal social orders emerge to define the central political institutions that encompass both their basis in religious legitimation and their incorporation into an underlying deep-rooted concern for order.*

*Force, as part of this constitutional totality, is a relatively easily examined element of South Indian and Sri Lankan political power because the possession of the instruments of force and the exercise of force are centrally distinguishable constituents of legitimated royal power. This is to say, that the conceptual framework of power and its empirical constituent force, are idealized in kingship, and the legitimate use of force lies only with legitimized power.*

*This chapter will examine three themes related to the idea of force. First, since force is a necessary constituent of power in both traditions, an examination of the idea of power, both sacral and secular, will provide insight into the legitimate use of force as one of the major functions of kingship. Within the traditions, considerations about power represent an empirical as well as a theoretical focus for speculation about the role of*

kingship and where its power originates. An analysis of power in the Tamil poetry of South India which reflects the idea of kingship possessed of sacred power is also relevant there. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan chronicles present a concept of power that is thoroughly mundane, despite references to legitimation within a cosmic frame of reference. The second theme is two-fold and is based on the assumption that the use of force necessarily implies a relationship between two or more elements of the social order. Thus, the second section is devoted to an examination of the relationship between those who possess force and those against whom force is directed. The third theme is, in part, an outgrowth of an examination of the relationship between those who possess force and those who are concerned with the transformation of the idea of force as it is depicted in Medieval South India as an instrument for internal order and the Sinhalese conceptual widening of the ideology of force as a necessary response to external threat. Within the latter context, the saga of *Dutthagamaṅṅī* and *Parākkamabāhu* will illustrate the Sinhalese transformation of the concept of force. It is argued that this transformation comprises a major development in the legitimation process which incorporated secularization of religious ideals as part of the function of kingship. From this standpoint, South Indian political philosophy encompasses a use of force that is limited. An examination of the limiting factors of force in South India as it is legitimated will provide a contrast to the Sinhalese concept of force that is expansive. The Sinhalese political tradition forms a framework of interrelated institutions that support and legitimize an expanded conception of force in which the emphasis is placed on response to external threats as well as on maintaining internal order, whereas the

*principle of force in South India is conceptualized as part of legitimated power. An examination of the political arrangements (Chapter 4) in Medieval South India will reveal that a diffusion of political power was often the case, including the great dynasties of the Pallavas, Pandyas and Cholas which relied heavily on alliances with lesser political leaders. This conceptual difference suggests that though force was a central characteristic in the legitimating process, certain political power allocations provided just as strong and permanent basis for legitimizing kingship, indicating that the possession of force was not the definitive and underpinning legitimating factor in South Indian kingship. In contrast, the transformation of the use of force in Sri Lanka and the way in which it was legitimated suggests that the use of force in Sri Lanka as a response to external threats was not simply an effect of a cohesive nationalist consciousness but a reflection of a transformation of the organizational modes of ritual and political sovereignty in which the king was a figure of religious authority as well as political power.*

### I: Power

*The basic framework of a polity and the sets of institutions and rules that define it need not be incorporated into a single religious or political constitution. As the previous chapter has shown, both the Sri Lankan and South Indian political arrangements have drawn from several important frameworks of laws and various deeply rooted traditions in an emerging legitimizing process. The totality of political institutional arrangements, either codified or uncoded, are the instruments for the exercise of power. Since the legitimate exercise of power is simultaneously the overriding consideration and the most perplexing problem about politics,*

*the institutions, laws and values of the society which set criteria for legitimacy are constantly under scrutiny and are subject to change.*

*In this section, two criteria for the process of legitimating power in South India and Sri Lanka that have their basis in transcendence and tradition are examined. The first is the ontological status of power in South India and Sri Lanka which is the manner in which power is rooted deeply in a transcendent sacred reality in an attempt to give a cosmic legitimacy to the status of kingship. The second feature is the manner in which power in the form of royal sovereignty is acquired and confirmed.*

#### *The Ontological Status of Power*

*Peter Berger, in his text The Sacred Canopy, contends that "religion often invests social institutions with enduring significance, bestowing upon them an ultimately valid cosmological status by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, "The institutions are thus given a semblance of inevitability, firmness and durability."<sup>2</sup> The grounding of social institutions, particularly kingship, in the transcendent underlying structure of the universe was for the Sinhalese and South Indian traditions a central legitimizing feature. The characteristic which distinguishes South Indian kingship from Sinhalese kingship in this regard was the way in which power in each society was grounded in the universal.*

*The chronicles of Sri Lanka give frequent examples of power conceived in mythological terms, exemplifying perhaps a North Indian influence, whereas early South Indian poems of the Sangam Age suggest that ideas about power (sacred power manifest in the individual) were based on indigenous conceptions of power.*

George Hart, in his text *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, contends that sacred power was thought to "inhere in certain objects and persons and to be activated in certain situations."<sup>3</sup> This sacred power, *anāṅku*, was a force that was both potentially benevolent and potentially malevolent. One of the most important roles *anāṅku* fulfilled in South Indian culture was the influence it had on a king's actions. The *Manimekalāi* has its basis in this idea of *anāṅku* as a powerful force that effected peoples lives. The construction and worship of sepulchral tombs which are directly related to hero-stones also have their basis in *anāṅku*.

It was argued in the previous chapter that South Indian kings were responsible for the order they instilled in their domain. A kingdom whose king was *dharmic* would flourish, while a kingdom of a king who was *adharmic* would suffer drought and other natural catastrophes. The king was at the centre of sacred forces and those forces had to be controlled by the king. This excerpt from a Tamil poem is an example of a king whose *anāṅku* is both controlled and uncontrolled.

... Now you have become enraged and smashed them fearfully and their beauty is ruined, their cities are changed like sick bodies relentlessly assaulted by Death. Fields of flowering sugarcane are barren and demon women with curly hair ride donkeys amongst *vitatter* trees with twisted fruits and amongst dark *vṭai*. There battlefields covered with thorns and strewn with ashes and spread over by dust, have lost their loveliness. Their bleakness makes the hearts of the might perish, and destroys the strength of those who think on them, so that they tremble. But great lord, the land you guard blossoms devoid of hunger and disease. Ascetics live in its forests, warriors inhabit its meadows with shining-bangled girls, and its roads are easy to pass over.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of this poem lies in the idea that political control and communal order are dependent upon and are a manifestation of a king's

anāṅku. So important to South Indian culture is the idea of sacred power as part of the individual king that rites of war take on a new meaning. For example, a king victorious in battle would hold celebrations in which the flesh of the king slain in battle was ritually cooked and eaten. In this way, a close bond was established between slayer and slain, "in order to protect the victorious king from the power unleashed on the death of his rivals, to which he was particularly vulnerable because he too was a king and a locus of sacred power and because he was responsible for their death."<sup>5</sup>

The rite of ritual suicide (vaṭākkiruttal) of the king was another means of bringing under control the unleashed power of a king who was either unsuccessful in battle or politically impotent. Often, a king's entire retinue would join him in fasting unto death suggesting that a king's legitimacy was shared among his family.

A king who had died, either through vaṭākkiruttal or in battle, was honoured by a memorial stone (pallipadāi), megalithic memorial-tombs indigenous to South India in which the king's power was said to reside. The pallipadāi became an institution of South Indian kingship that was an integral part of ritual incorporation utilized by Chola kings. The stone not only promoted the memory of a dead king through worship, but also through an inscriptional record which, written on the stone itself, praised the dead king's heir. Also, the uncontrolled anāṅku of the king was essentially dangerous hence it was given a material focus that in effect bottled-up potential malevolence.

The double-sided nature of sacred power manifested by a king, is exemplified in the way in which his power is grounded in a ritual frame of reference such as a consecration ceremony like the mahābhiskeka. On the one hand, the theory of anāṅku assumes that power is inherent in the king,



while, on the other hand, coronation ritual essentially transformed the king, legitimating his power through sacrifice. South Indian conceptions of power were a combination of the two and thus they allowed for the use of pallipadāi as an indigenous element while maintaining Brahmanic concepts of ritual transformation. The grounding of legitimacy in inherent and ritually obtained power did not make the institution of kingship in South India as vulnerable and open to questions of legitimacy as it did the person of the king, in keeping with Lingat's theory that it was the institution of kingship that was sacred and not the king himself. This had a stabilizing effect on the institution of kingship since the values and traditions the king represented were not being placed in a position of doubt.

Sinhalese traditions of locating authority in a comprehensive mythology suggests a similar approach to the precariousness of power. The chronicles indicate that basing a king's power on mythology had implications for the process of legitimation in that it was the king himself who was ultimately responsible. Sinhalese mythology, though not part of Buddhist orthodox teaching, was an expansion of early Buddhist thought. The prime legitimating feature of power was its embodiment in the dhamma and the Buddha, "a sovereign of the universe."<sup>6</sup>

Sinhalese kingship associated itself with the violent mythical visits the Buddha made to the island by laying claim to his relics, housing and protecting them. This association elevated Sinhalese kingship to divine status so that, eventually, conquerer kings were not only required to be kṣatriya Buddhists but bodhisattva(s) as well. There are examples in the Sinhalese chronicles of Brahmanic mythological influences: the king was said to be made up the eight elements of Indra, Vayu, Yama, the sun, Fire, Varuna, Moon and Kubera. Despite this mythological association,

which is similarly applied in South India, the ultimate association with the Buddha remained the most powerful legitimating feature. A passage in the Cūlavamsa describes the similarities Sinhalese kings shared with the Buddha. In the tale of King Kassapa (473-491 A.D.), it is said that as Kubera, a Hindu god, he was converted into the service of the dhamma by the Buddha and resided atop sigiri as a cakkavatti.<sup>7</sup> The strongest association a Sinhalese king had with the Buddha was his claim to cakkavatti status which, in effect, made him a world conquerer like the Buddha.<sup>8</sup>

A more subtle way in which power was given a cosmological frame of reference was through a confirmation and through association with the Buddha's relics and the miracles associated with their enshrinement. The chronicles depict the arrival of the relics during the reign of Dutthagāmaṇī: "Celestial instruments of music resounded a celestial chorus pealed forth, the devatas let fall a rain of heavenly perfumes and so forth."<sup>9</sup> All this was completed without hindrance by reason of the wondrous power of the devatas and the wondrous power of the holy (theras).<sup>10</sup> The chronicle goes on to say that the power manifest in the relics is so great that a king who sees the relics sees the Buddha, Sovereign of the universe.

This association had several implications for a king's power. By the very authority they command, the ontological priority of the dhamma and the Buddha in the spiritual world legitimate, the power of the king in the real world. The legitimating mythologies of the Buddha's visit and the even more abstract yet equally potent association with the Buddha and the Buddha relics gave to the king the appearance of durability and cosmic status. To quote Berger:

*The historically crucial part of religion in the process of legitimation is explicable in terms of the unique capacity of religion*



to "locate" human phenomena within a cosmic frame of reference. Religious legitimation purports to relate the humanly defined reality to ultimate and sacred reality. The inherent precariousness and transitory constructions of human activity are thus given the semblance of ultimate security and permanence.<sup>11</sup>

The emphasis the South Indian tradition placed on a king's sacred authority appears to be a combination of two ideologies. Not only was sacred power acquired through ritual but it was also said to be inherent in the king. The effect of this combination did not diminish the possibility of incorporative kingship but, instead, augmented its legitimacy. In contrast to the diffuse sacral nature of royal power in South India, Sinhalese sacralty carried with it a clear focus as a political imperative. The chronicles show that in many ways the king was both a political and ritual figure of major importance. Hence, his sacred power was conceived as a part of his entire political task. The perception of sacred power as a means of ensuring the continuance of the Buddhist religion was developed in close ideological relation with a model of political control. In Lanka, the relics of the Buddha were symbols which expressed the idea that political sovereignty was inseparable from its affiliation with Buddhism. In both traditions, legitimation was ultimately grounded in the sacred and it is this grounding that validated the king's use of power. The potency of a king's legitimacy was equally determined by his ability to convert this sacred grounding into meaningful and responsible action.

#### Power and Responsible Action

Power is legitimated by responsible action, not just by where the ultimate source of power is perceived to reside. The notion of competent political statecraft plays an important role in both South Indian and

*Sinhalese kingship and despite an ideological validation, an incompetent king can undermine effective response to the everyday needs of society. The legitimacy of royal power relies heavily on stability within the social order and it would not be too general to assert that the way kings actually exercised their legitimated power was directly influenced by the stability within the social order. Because of the importance of properly exercised power as part of the legitimating process, three features of power will be considered next: first, the manner in which power is transmitted from one king to the next without bringing into question their legitimacy; second, the way in which power was expanded; and, third, the way in which power was limited.*

*The manner in which royal power was legitimately transmitted through the successive reigns of kings functioned similarly in both traditions. Lanka has, of course, associated itself closely with India over most of its history. Wilhelm Geiger shows that Sinhalese symbols of office, modes of consecration and forms of administration practice, were largely Indian in origin. The modes of transmitting power became even more Indian over time.<sup>12</sup> The central ceremonial ingredient was the abhisheka. The ceremony, an important recognition of the power manifest in royal authority, existed even in ancient Brahmanic kingship, but the style and forms of the Sri Lankan version stressed the king's relationship with the social order and the presiding Brahmanic priests, whose function was essentially ceremonial, were phased into the background of the consecration itself. The first abhisheka of its kind was the Asokan supervised conversion of Devānampiyatissa (250-210 B.C.). The items necessary for the abhisheka, the royal ornaments, etc., were said to have been brought by Asoka's envoy Mahinda so that Devānampiyatissa could be properly consecrated.*

*The ceremony was performed in a similar fashion to its Brahmanic counterpart with the notable inclusion of references to the place of the king within the social order, implying that the king was as much responsible to the people as he was to the glory of the dhamma. It is interesting, since it was Brahmanic in origin, that the ceremony by no means had an entirely Brahmanic character. The ceremony had political overtones; during the ceremony, the crown was placed on the king's head by his own hands, not by the Brahman priests. It would appear that the Sinhalese version of the abhisheka had a different purpose which was to affirm the king's political status in relation to his predecessor.*

*The means by which royal power could be extended were commensurate with the king's primary function of protection. Burton Stein suggests that legitimate South Indian power was bifurcated to encompass the ideals of both kṣātra and rājadharmā. Kṣātra refers to direct power over the soil and is synonymous with a king's military prowess; that is, a successful king on the battlefield was the minimum condition for enhancement of royal power. This was equally true, if not more so, for Sinhalese kings where freedom from disorder was of prime importance. Safeguarding the economic infrastructure, which was based on an extensive but fragile irrigation network, made the demand for stability even more important in Lanka. Thus, unless basic economic and political conditions were met, royal power could not be legitimized.*

*The term "rājadharmā" is useful in understanding how South Indian power could be enhanced through ritual rather than territorial incorporation. There is little in the chronicles to suggest that ritual incorporation, in the sense Stein uses it, was central to the enhancement of the power of Sinhalese Kings. This was because Sinhalese kings based their power on*

cakkavatti status as well as bodhisattva-ship. Their recognition as ritual figures of major importance was insured when they became consecrated. The idea of sīma or territorial demarcation does imply ritual incorporation into the greater order of the dhamma, but this act was of benefit to the entire social order and not just the king. The means by which South Indian kings ruled vast territory was through ritual incorporation since the territorial sovereignty of the king was incapable of legitimate rule beyond a small geographical area. The South Indian conception of kingship was essentially based in ritual, in that kings were not only created through ritual but maintained their moral authority by ritual.

Factors involved in the limiting of royal power are functions of the type of royal power that a king exercised in each tradition. In South India, territorial sovereignty was not of major importance and, therefore, effective checks on a king's political power remained localized in the hands of lesser political figures. While political power was appropriately distributed among many throughout the realm, ritual supremacy was legitimately conceded to a single centre. Hence, checks on a king's claim to sacral power lay in the hands of those who gave his sacred power legitimacy, the Brahmins.

The Sinhalese social order entertained an image of sovereignty that both supported and invested restraint on a king's overriding political powers. Even among the four major provinces of Sri Lanka, a functional independence existed which historically promoted some local autonomy. The single most important restraint for Sinhalese royal power was the sangha. A healthy sangha served as an asset to a king's legitimation. A seriously divided bhikkhu community regularly involved the king in disputes that ultimately would weaken his authority.



*The analysis of the idea of power in both a cosmological and actual sense indicates that a king's power, whether Sinhalese or South Indian, was double-sided, combining sacral attributes and political attributes. In both aspects, contingent divinity was conferred upon the king as an agent of the community. It is significant that in the medieval period of Sri Lanka and South India history, kings were given a degree of sacred power that was essentially unprecedented in the traditions out of which they developed. In the South Indian social order, ritual incorporation provided the basis for effective and legitimate kingship. The distribution of political power in South India was such that overarching political power was not necessary for the stability of the social order. In Sri Lanka, political and economic unity was conceded to a single religious and political authority. Hence, political power was necessarily and inextricably linked to the king as the highest human authority of the social order. The fact that, at the highest level, politics and religion were combined in the person of the king, does not mean that politics were not separate from religion. Political sovereignty combined with the idea of the necessity of bodhisattva-ship meant that a Sinhalese king's power was permanently fused into a concern for the sasana, which, in turn, was comprised of the people of Lanka. Thus, protection of the Buddhist religion automatically meant protection of the island so it logically would follow that religious concerns could be translated into larger political concerns.*

## II: Rulers, Ruled and Daṇḍa

*The possession and exercise of force (daṇḍa) is purely a function of kingship and, in this sense, it is a political phenomenon, though the word itself (daṇḍa) has several levels of meaning. According to Louis*

Dumont, danda means "punishment, the power to punish, a kind of immanent justice, a monopoly of legitimate force, in accordance with the universal norm."<sup>13</sup> The final two meanings reflect the ideological and political characteristic of danda. The first of these two meanings - "a kind of immanent justice" - is closely related to the idea of danda existing purely as an expression of dharma. In this sense, dharma and danda are synonymous.<sup>14</sup> Gonda believes that in early Brahmanic literature, such as the Aitareya Brahmana, the king was symbolically represented as the maintainer and staff of dharma. This primary meaning suggests that dharma, as the eternal revealed norms that determine the established order, is bound in a dependent relationship with the king. A king is portrayed as upholding the moral order, and also as the dharmātman, the embodiment of dharma.<sup>15</sup> The śāstra texts are unanimous on this point. The idea that a king not only embodies norms and justice but is responsible for their enforcement, is an important relationship exemplified in several themes. First, since the king exists for the upholding of the dharma, his actions cannot be arbitrary, but, rather, must conform to eternal norms. On this point, Gonda and his student Heesterman, offer different reasoning. Gonda contends that a king's duty is clear: he must uphold the dharma as codified and dictated by the Brahmans since he is an element of the eternal order himself. Heesterman agrees that the king is given authority to create new laws and to uphold the dharma but he faces a dilemma in that he does not know what the dharma is: "Notwithstanding the tall claims made in behalf of the king being dharma incarnate, it is made perfectly clear that in matters of dharma - that is, in practically every aspect of his activity he has no autonomy whatsoever and instead of leading must follow."<sup>16</sup> The king must have his activity determined by the Brahmans.

Heesterman agrees with Gonda that a king cannot act arbitrarily since he is dependent on the Brahmanic lawgivers for his authority. An example of this dependency is danda which, as a staff, is a symbol of wandering and order, and is the link between the community (grāma) for which the king is responsible and the Brahmans (āraṇya) to whom the king must go for his authority. The danda in this sense is a symbol of authority which has to be found outside the king's realm, in the forest, the abode of transcendent and absolute value.

A second theme, part of the relationship between Brahman and Ksatriya, is that a king's actions in the enforcement and promotion of dharma are executed not against but in conjunction with the Brahman: "The king and priest uphold the moral order in the world (dhṛtavrataū)."<sup>17</sup> A third theme is also present in the Āitareya Brahmana. By upholding the dharma, the king is considered raṣṭrabhṛt "sustainer of the realm."<sup>18</sup> The dharmaśāstras take this to mean that the king has both a secular and religious function, to which the concepts of kṣātra and rājadharmā corresponds. The point is that as rājadharmā the king has a limited role and is dependent upon the Brahman for his authority. The final theme expands upon this idea. Gonda states that, "All the duties of the other classes of men are covered by those of their king. All sorts of renunciation (tyāga) are included in them, all sorts of learning are connected with them because they are protected by them."<sup>19</sup> Not only are all individuals dependent upon the king for protection, but the eternal norms, laws and duties belonging to kings are expressly stated to surpass all other manifestations of dharma. An important task of rājadharmā was the promotion and protection of religion by means of his sacred power.

*These themes underscore the importance of the king's relationship with dharma and his necessary dependence on the Brahman. The king must constantly seek out and explore new ways in which his power could legitimately be linked with Brahman authority. The manner in which danḍa was articulated in South Indian kingship was in accordance with these themes.*

*So far it is clear that force, in its symbolic sense, was possessed by the king, as an instrument of dharma. South Indian kingship was based upon norms of sacral kingship. The upholding of the dharma central to this kind of kingship became exemplified in the word "rājadharmā." South Indian kings actually ruled through their sacral qualities rather than from a basis of territorial aggrandizement. The possession of force which, according to the dharma śāstras, was the sole reason for the existence of kingship, was legitimated through the extended sacrifice (śāstra) and was directed entirely to the promotion of religion. The consequence of this was an internalization of danḍa. Danḍa became an instrument for the promotion of religion (dharma) and not for territorial aggrandizement; that is, danḍa as an instrument of dharma found its expression in South Indian sacral kingship in the maintenance of religious life. Hence, danḍa, as part of South Indian sacral kingship, was directed towards the social order in the interest of religion.*

*Political power rested in the hands of many, and, therefore, South Indian kings had no legitimate claim to acts of coercion that were directed to other than religious matters such as internal justice, disputes and conflicts. This was not only because sacral kingship depended upon a ritual basis for legitimacy but also because, realistically, kings could neither sustain nor support the large standing army or bureaucracy necessary for the kind of centralized administration involved in ensuring total*

territorial and ritual control. Political control was left to chieftains. Alliances and oppositional disputes between chieftains were resolved on the basis of ritual allegiance to the king and not on the basis of the pure physical power at the king's disposal.

Danḍa in South India was limited in scope and objectives and directed towards ensuring ritual hegemony in an expression of sacral kingship legitimated by association with Brahmans. This kind of articulation of danḍa existed in South India because danḍa was foremost an expression of dharma having its basis in religious order. Since distribution of territorial authority in South India was divided among smaller units of political power, kingship could exist only as a means of maintaining religious order. This reformulation served to enhance the positions of Brahmans who enjoyed unprecedented secular authority.

The problem arises that if danḍa is purely an expression of sacral kingship, how was the attack and plunder of other communities made possible? One answer lies in rationalizing the king's use of force as an articulation of artha rather than as an expression of dharma. In this sense, and in keeping with Kautilya's definition, danda is defined as the army. On the basis of Dumont's concepts of hierarchical interests, danḍa implies the articulation of artha separate from dharma, in what Dumont calls a secular expression of political theory. This does not mean that dharma and artha as expressions of danḍa are opposed, but, rather, that they are complimentary "in the exercise of force for the pursuit of interest and the maintenance of order."<sup>20</sup> This solution is adequate for understanding Indian kingship in general, but it is inadequate in relation to the realities of the Medieval South Indian period. The history of Medieval South India indicates that booty, etc., was made available to kings by reli-

gious allegiance and ritual incorporation. Wealth was channelled through religious institutions as a way of ensuring a king's ritual hegemony. For example, when the Cholas attacked and subdued Sri Lanka, one of the first things they did was construct a number of Saiva temples on the island. Wealth could then be channelled through these temples as dāna (perhaps with some coercion) in a form of redistribution of wealth. This kind of ritual hegemony ensured alliances between rulers based on religious allegiance, a kind of allegiance that could not but permeate the entire cultural milieu of the community, centred as it was around temples. Each alliance ensured a foundation of physical support (armies) which, once unified, acted as a single body against other alliances. The history of Medieval South India is replete with such alliances and the use of this kind of force.

If the idea of daṇḍa in South India is an expression of sacral kingship that is directed towards the sphere of religion, then Sinhalese ideals of daṇḍa are in fact a reversal of this. In Sri Lanka, daṇḍa is legitimately conceded to a single centre, the king, and is directed externally and territorially in the interest of the social order and the sasana. The idea of daṇḍa takes on a new meaning in Sinhalese kingship without discarding arthaśāstric concepts. In Sri Lankan kingship, daṇḍa is concerned with territorial order and religious order which are considered inseparable. The necessity of maintaining territorial order finds its expression in many forms and may be based upon the idea of protecting the sasana as much as it was upon the aggressiveness of Asokan principles adopted by Sinhalese kings. Nevertheless, the chronicles give a sense of a new doctrine adopted by Sinhalese kings that provides for a repetition of archetypal national heroes. Sinhalese kingship was strongly affected by Kāultilya's Artha-



śāstra and references to his strategems abound in the chronicles.<sup>21</sup> Princes and regents were students of dandanīti.<sup>22</sup> Nationalist attitudes of Sinhalese kingship made the knowledge of dandanīti imperative. "Even if Buddhist conscience did not normally approve of duplicity (dvāidhibāva) or if circumstances did not always require spies (sudhapurusas), no leader could afford to be evasive about the balance of power (asana), the prospect of anarchy (matsyanyāya), or the regularly practised system of alliances (maṅḍala)."<sup>23</sup>

The chronicles declare the king to be the head of Buddhism on the island and the protector of the sasana with one of his central functions as the defence of the relics of the Buddha: "The king is a bodhisattiva on whom the sangha bestowed kingship in order that he may defend the bowl and robe."<sup>24</sup> This conception of kingship implies that there is a blurring of the division between territorial and religious sovereignty since the king is essentially the means by which both are promoted and protected.

### III: The Secularization of Force

The South Indian concept of legitimized danda has its basis in the promotion of religion and the maintenance of norms or fixed rules and laws (dharma). It is argued that such a change in the concept of danda is in keeping with the restructured political functions of South Indian kings and the necessity of ritual incorporation over and above political hegemony. Using established ritual formulas, South Indian kingship, beginning with the Pallavas around the sixth century A.D., succeeded in incorporating the established ritual power of regional chieftains.<sup>25</sup> It was through such incorporation that the legitimate articulation of danda was formed.

At the root of this kind of utilization of force is a principle of South Indian political and cultural structures, the principle of "complimentary opposition."<sup>26</sup> In terms of interpreting the use of danḍa, this principle means that political authority was inextricably tied to opposed yet complimentary social units. The political and ritual functions of South Indian kings was an integrating force with which these units could find common identity and purpose. Whether it be left and right hand castes (vaṅgāi and idaṅgai), peasant chieftains and other peasant chieftains or Bruhmans and cultivators, the internal social oppositions were integrated in a complimentary fashion that gave order and legitimacy to common institutions such as kingship. The oppositional character was integrating rather than disintegrating.<sup>27</sup> What the principle of complimentary opposition means in the use of danḍa is that danḍa could be a coercive tool for resolving conflict between oppositions under the single umbrella of dharma. The importance of this kind of complimentary opposition in the South Indian social order will be treated in a separate chapter.

Perfection of danḍa could only occur with proper anointment in which the king is freed from all sin.<sup>28</sup> The possession of force provides the eligibility for kingship, but it is the sacral character of kingship that legitimates the possession of force. The South Indian conception of kingship was essentially a sacred one. The upholding of the dharma was one of the sacred duties of kings as revealed in the śrūti sources. The emphasis placed on the sacral attributes of kings meant that danḍa was an institution utilized by kings in religious matters. This conception is incomplete unless the integrative function of ritual incorporation is taken into consideration. It is only when these formulations of ritual incorpora-

tion and the notion of dharma based on kingship are combined that a single cogent model of danda articulation can be understood.

Three characteristics best describe the concept of force in South India.

The use of danda is conditional. The idea that danda is conditioned, many at first seem incongruous to other ideas about kingship, but the sacral character of kingship makes it necessary. Secular force is danda only as it is embedded in the sacrifice which South Indian kingship is construed to be. As when a king was consecrated, "a lord of all beings was created a defender of the brahman and the dharma."<sup>29</sup> It is this concept of sacred creation that separates the king from the Brahman and establishes the conditional relationship between king and force. "The Brahman is born divine ... a king becomes divine only by virtue of religious ritual regardless of his birth as a Kṣātriya."<sup>30</sup> Robert Lingat argues that the divinity of kings is given as the reason for obedience to royal orders, therefore the institution of kingship, not the royal person, is deified.<sup>31</sup> Divine status was given to the institution of kingship and not to the king himself. Therefore, danda became a divine, god given, institution of punishment. It remained, however, divine only as long as the king was properly consecrated: "perfection of that force can only occur with proper annointment."<sup>32</sup> The royal sacrifice not only perfects the institution of danda but creates it. The consequence of this was the depersonalization of the institution of kingship making it an extended sacrifice. Although the royal function is conditional upon the sacrifice, the king is not, hence the social origins of a king are not considered important, only that he be properly anointed.<sup>23</sup>

2) The use of danda is limited. The South Indian conception of kingship places an emphasis on the ritual administration of kings: "... the king is the final controlling power in preserving religions and spiritual institutions in maintaining the status quo. He is to see that people follow the dharma."<sup>34</sup> In South India, there is a de-emphasis on kingship from the standpoint of legitimate territorial sovereignty largely because of the autonomy of balanced yet opposed groupings "which zealously cling to their independent identities, privileges and internal governances."<sup>35</sup> The relative self-sufficiency of these internal orders meant that the king had a correspondingly high degree of ritual sovereignty and a smaller amount of territorial sovereignty. The primacy of ritual incorporation over other types of sovereignty defined the kind of authority a king could legitimately claim. It was the bifurcation of the ritual and territorial aspects of rule that limited danda in two ways: it is limited in scope and directed towards ensuring ritual hegemony, as well as in a more abstract way, protection of the dharma; and, danda is limited in its legitimacy. When the fundamental structure of legitimacy is predicated upon the separation of political and ritual sovereignty, the limitations of force can be the only result of this separation. Given the dominant form of political organization in South India, where political authority is necessarily tied to opposed yet limited centres of influence, ritual incorporation is the only way of lending stability to the whole social order.

3) Danda is centripetal; that is, the use of danda is neither expansive nor self-seeking, because the king is only a distant sacral figure in the resolution of local problems. Danda was a dharmic activity, alerting the social order to the religious dominance of the king's administration.<sup>36</sup> This claim derives from the same ideology which made the king

a ritual nexus within the social order. The meaning embodied in the word rājadharmā is relevant to this idea because it denotes a system of fluidity and exchange between surrounding political leaders and the king in a single ritualized system. Grants to temples and the establishment of brahmadeyas symbolically enacted the principle of moral unity.<sup>37</sup> Danḍa, in this context, gave focus to the kings' actions a means of ensuring the internal order.

Medieval Sinhalese conceptions of force present an antithesis to the concepts of South India. Basically, Sinhalese conceptions of force show that the utilization of danḍa was all-encompassing. At the root of this was the status of Sinhalese kings as powerful purveyors of public and religious life. Tambiah and Rahula point out that the Buddhist king as cakkavatti held sway over both the spiritual and secular realms. Sinhalese kings claimed bodhisattva-ship as well as the rank of cakkavatti and the new powerful equation, cakkavatti = bodhisattva, meant political sovereignty was incapable of being conceived apart from its affiliation with Buddhism.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the case of South India, the Buddhist king was considered as important if not more important than the function he performed. As the chronicles relate, rather than there being a depersonalization of the royal function, Sinhalese Buddhism took great efforts to mythologize some of its historical figures. Sinhalese kings provided models for legitimate rule which future kings could emulate. Drawing upon their status as a bodhisattvas, Sinhalese kings played an important role in ritual as well as political sovereignty. Far from being the distant ritual figures as were South Indian kings, Sri Lankan kings were actively involved in the day to day political and ritual activities of the island. On a cosmological level, the centrality of the kings' ritual and political importance is symbolized in his

palace which is considered to be like Mt. Meru, the centre of the universe.<sup>39</sup> The fusion of political and ritual sovereignty into a single authority is exemplified in the tooth relic which was housed in the kings' palace cum temple complex. During the tooth festival, the king was considered to be a ritual officiant of major importance.<sup>40</sup>

The implications of this synthesis were two-fold. First, the association between the dhamma and the sasana was of prime importance. Sinhalese kings who internalized this relationship became active agents within the social order thus mirroring the actions of the Buddha who freed the island from demonic (yakkha) control. The acts of the Buddha, though symbolic, placed the imperative of maintaining order and ensuring the continuance of the sasana within the aegis of a single universal monarch. Danḍa provided the means by which both secular and sacred elements of the Sinhalese social order could be represented and defended. It is in this perspective that one can understand the unconditional character of danḍa. The symbiotic relationship between the social order and the greater universal order was so inextricably entwined that any threat to the former was considered disruptive of the latter. The prototype for this relationship can be found in the Buddha's association with Lanka in which the conquering of the island established the sovereignty of the dhamma over and above all other kinds of sovereignty. Danḍa became unconditional by infusing into it a framework of higher morality. Political power put into practice by Asoka and the Sinhalese kings served as a means toward a higher end; danḍa became a way of creating a just order which constitutes the crux of the Buddhist ideal of kingship; danḍa became infused with a higher moral purpose in an effort to stabilize society so that nibbanna could be pursued properly. The purpose, therefore, of danḍa

was to create a moral order so that "men could freely pursue the great goal beyond that order."<sup>41</sup> Infused with a moral purpose, danda could not be anything but unconditional; nothing was more essential than to prevent humanity from lapsing into a state of anarchy.

Second, danda is unlimited in scope not only because it was deemed a necessity for the purification of the bhikku community, but, also, to defend a nationalist ideal, as exemplified by Dutthagamani who, with a relic on his spear and accompanied by five hundred bhikku(s), vanquished the Tamils declaring: "Not for the glory of sovereignty is this toil of mine, my striving (has been) ever to establish the doctrine of the Sambuddha."<sup>42</sup> The account presents a new principle distinct from those found in the Pali Canon in that, "violence is permissible in the interest of the sasana against those who do not understand the true doctrine and are opposed to it."<sup>43</sup> The re-interpretation of the use of violence is facilitated by the infusion of a higher moral value that links the seemingly contradictory relationship between a king's political behaviour and the ethical ideals of Buddhism. The new attitude had its foremost representation in those kings such as Dutthagamani who were celebrated as warriors and national heroes. In contrast with Medieval South India where kings were celebrated for their involvement in the religious institutions of Society, Sinhalese kings were known more for their military exploits and the nationalist ideal they represented. The story of Dutthagāmaṇī, as with the myth of the Buddha's visits, implied that violence need not be associated with sin. This idea is reiterated in the Chronicles with reference to the later kings, Parākkamabāhu (1183-1186 A.D.), and Vikramabāhu (1111-1132 A.D.), who are hailed as national heroes.<sup>44</sup>



The example of Parākkamabāhu is noteworthy in that descriptions of his exploits reveal the influence of Kautilyan statecraft. All of Parākkamabāhu's actions are justified by his uniting the island under one rule following a Chola invasion and his subsequent defeat of the Chola army. For Parākkamabāhu, the political means of right action, as Kāṭilya states, became identified with the religious means of right action so that there was no conflict between piety and daṇḍa.<sup>45</sup>

With the paradigm of Dutthagamani set forth in the Chronicles, a framework of typology was laid down that was capable of fulfilling, rather than immobilizing, the primary duty of kingship, protection of the sasana. Though dharmaviḥāya, the "conquest by righteousness", may be a preferred mode of protecting the social order, what could be any less righteous in Sir Lankan terms than purifying the island of anarchy even if that process required force? The extent to which daṇḍa was an accepted mode of conquest is further exemplified in the exploits of the warrior/monk Thera-putta-bhaya, one of the many monks who served under Dutthagamani in his conquest of the Tamils. The monk, desiring to return to the sangha after the battle, declares to the king "when a single realm is created, what war is there? I will do battle with those rebels, the passions. Battle, wherein victory is hard to win."<sup>46</sup> This statement makes it clear that when a condition of order is achieved through violent means, the community can safely turn inward to seek personal salvation and triumph over personal disorder. When chaos threatens, however, military force is the proper response. This sequence provides support for the view that violence is a necessary pre-condition to communal stability and that those who wield an iron sword are virtuous.

The virtue of Sinhalese kings characterizes Sinhalese force as centrifugal, the third characteristics of force. The imposing cakkavatti was the moral perpetuator of the tradition; a pivotal character from whom emanated a prestigious, nationalist, self-conceptions. Parakkamabahu and Duṭṭahagāmaṇī exemplify the centrifugal character of force through their actions of unchallenged political and religious sovereignty. Like a centrifuge, these kings separate the elements of the social order which are considered chaotic from those that are not, and, in a sense, purify the island and prepare it for Buddhism. This is made explicit in the chronicles where the Buddhist-state (dhamma-dīpa) is put forward as a tangible reality. "Dhamma" stands for the religious aspect of the state while "dīpa" (island) represents the political aspect. The principle of relationship between the two inheres in the Sinhalese king who plays a dominant role in the constantly recurring purification theme. According to the chronicles, it is the king's purity of mind that channels his virtuous power in a righteous way. It was precisely this understanding that defined the relationship between king, sangha and state. The best example of this is a critical period in Sinhalese history when the Mahāvihāra fraternity, the oldest embodiment of orthodox Buddhism, came under persecution and dispersion by Mahasena (211-301 A.D.). Failure to protect the Mahāvihāra not only meant a loss of royal sanction, but, more importantly, also meant a rupture with the traditional function of the king which is to protect and promote the dhamma.<sup>47</sup> This crisis signified a breach in the relationship between king and sangha. The normal submission by the king to the authority of the sangha was destroyed which meant that the justification and legitimacy of the king's power was brought into question. Thus, the Dīpavaṃsa states:

*An adherent of the thera Singhamitta, the ruthless minister of sona, a favourite servant of the king and with him, Shameless bhikkus, destroyed the splendid Lohapasada, seven stories high, and carried away the (material of the) various buildings from hence to the Abhayagiri (Vihara), and by means of the many buildings that were borne away from the Mahavihara, the abhayagiri vihara became rich in buildings. Holding fast this evil friend, the thera Sanghamitta, and to his servant Sona, the king wrought many a deed wrong.<sup>48</sup>*

*What is called into question is not only the king's status as protector of the dhamma but also his function as cakkavatti. Again, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī embodies the paradigm of proper kingship. He is a warrior king who serves the sangha with countless good acts but uses violent means as a pre-condition to his piety. That the sangha explicitly legitimates such use of force is clear; that they actively participate in violence is unprecedented. It must be remembered although that force is utilized as part of a purification theme, the use of force is usually towards non-Buddhists and for the glorification of the dhamma.<sup>49</sup>*

### Conclusions

*The purpose of this chapter has been to pinpoint the central differences and similarities of the way in which daṇḍa was legitimated and exercised in Medieval Sri Lankan and South Indian kingship by examining the way in which the legitimate use of force is rooted in both ontological and practical concerns. The grounding of force in a transcendent reality was for the Sinhalese and South Indian political traditions a central legitimating process representing a keystone of the politico-religious relationship. The distinguishing feature in the manner in which daṇḍa was legitimized was the way in which its use was grounded in universal tenants. The power of South Indian kings was considered sacred only insofar as it*

was created in the extended sacrifice, which kingship itself was construed to be. The Sinhalese formulation supported an ontological basis in its association with the tathagata. So forceful was this association that Sinhalese kings were both cakkavatti(s) and bodhisattva(s) . In South India, territorial and ritual authority were divided among the king and lesser political chieftains. In Sri Lanka, the king was both a religious and political figure of major importance. The grounding of power in the sacred was not a complete process of legitimation unless it was coupled with responsible action. The ability of a king to convert his sacred character into meaningful and responsible action was commensurate with the legitimacy he gained from participation in ritual.

One of the differences in the two traditions in the actual use of power lay in the South Indian formulation of ritual incorporation in which sacral authority was primary and political sovereignty was secondary. In contrast to this, Sinhalese kings augmented their political legitimacy through their protection and promotion of the sasana. Sinhalese kings enjoyed political power that was equal to their religious influence. These different conceptualizations led to different developments of the ideas on the application of danda in the respective traditions. In South India, danda as coercion is an instrument of religious importance but of little political importance. Danda is limited and conditioned by the very characteristic by which South Indians ruled, a consequence of the political structure in which there is no evidence of a centralized state or the king as its most active agent. In Sri Lanka, the king was an active moral and political figure; hence, the force he wielded was an indication of his widespread, unrestricted powers. The cakkavatti-bodhisattva equation gives impetus

*to the expanded unconditional use of danda in the creation of a Buddhist national state.*

*The role played by ritual in the legitimating process will be considered in the next chapter.*

### CHAPTER III - RITUAL AND LEGITIMATION

#### Introduction

*The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationships between ritual and legitimation in the two social orders by considering the functional dissimilarity of ritual in South India and Sri Lanka. For example, while both traditions uphold the sacrality of kingship, in South India the king is equated with the gods, whereas in Sri Lanka the king is considered a bodhisattva. The significant difference in the two formulations is that South Indian kings obtained their legitimacy through ritual in association with Brahmins. In other words, their legitimacy was entirely dependent upon the separate domain of the Brahmin, and ritual served the purpose of bridging the two realms of power and authority in order to achieve legitimacy for the king. South Indian articulation of the legitimation process witnessed an unprecedented emphasis on the sacrality of the king, such that the South Indian kings ruled through the sacral powers given to them through a process of ritual incorporation which comprised an all-encompassing ideological framework of temple worship, Brahminic secular authority and Royal Siva Cult. The most important aspect of this kind of ritual sovereignty was that political power was considered unimportant; instead, territorial control was maintained in a network of Brahminical institutions, which, in turn, affected ritual hegemony over vast territory. In South India, although the kings were still dependent upon the Brahmin for legitimation, they became powerful religious figures to the point that during the Chola period, they were honoured as gods.*

*In contrast, Sri Lankan ritual activity served two purposes. Ritual made the king a political figure of major importance and a ritual authority independent of the sangha which meant the king was given legitimacy to act as both a political unifier (cakkavatti) and religious authority (bodhisattva). The duality of Sinhalese Kingship was achieved by rituals which reinforced and enhanced the entire structure of the social order involving the king, the sangha and the peasantry in various ways. The king was given the political charge to protect and maintain the reciprocity and cohesiveness between key elements in the society. The king was also associated with the Buddha and was considered to be a bodhisattva making him, in a ritual context, an authority whose legitimacy was conferred by society and the cosmos.*

*Whereas ritual activity by kings in South India was solely a means of reinforcing legitimate rule, ritual activity in Sri Lanka went beyond underwriting royal authority to seek legitimation for the entire social order. The important characteristic of Sri Lankan ritual ideology is the emphasis placed on the king as a legitimate political and ritual figure within a national-Buddhist context. South Indian ritual, on the other hand, placed little emphasis on the overriding political authority of kings, since they ruled effectively through ritual incorporation.*

*This chapter is composed of four sections. The first section begins with an analysis of the modes of consecration of kings in South India and Sri Lanka. In both cases, the Mahābhisheka provides the focus through which differences in ideology and meaning of ritual become clear: the political overtures in the Sinhalese consecration ceremony that are absent in its South Indian counterpart. This essential dissimilarity provides the focus for a second analysis of the forms of ritual through which legitimized*



power is reinforced in the community, the most important of which are the South Indian patronage of Brahmans that replaced many of the sacrificial rites of the later Vedic age, the Sinhalese ideology of merit, and the royal support of the sangha. The third section is devoted to the religious functionaries, the Brahman and bhikku, and the ways in which their religious authority served as a fundamental link between royal power and the community. The fourth section contains an analysis of the ideological framework of ritual in both social orders in terms of concrete institutions and the essential administrative processes revolving around them. The growth of royal temple worship and a Royal Siva cult that sought to elevate the king to a god-like status is germane to the analysis of South Indian ritual hegemony. The Sinhalese festival of the tooth relic, deemed essential to the political aspirations of any ruler who wished to be recognized king of Lanka parallels the ideology of ritual hegemony.

#### 1. The Consecration Ceremony

The consecration ceremony of the king is known as the Mahābhisheka, the simplest of all inaugural performance involving the consecration of a king by the purohita with water.<sup>1</sup> The Mahābhisheka is the central sacrificial rite in South Indian kingship and plays an important role in Sri Lanka as well. Drawing upon Gonda's Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View and Heesterman's The Connundrum of the King's Authority, an explanation of the function of the Mahabhisheka can be developed.

The major thrust of Gonda's essay is the sacrificially attained divinity of the Indian king. The Abhisheka ceremony is said to ritually transform the king, freeing him from asañca or impurity, and freeing him

from restrictions in the performance of religious acts.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the king and his purohita is at the heart of the ceremony. The consecration is dependent on the uneasy relationship between the purohita and the transcendent authority he controls and the king whose power and authority have no legitimacy of their own.<sup>3</sup> The destination between power and authority is based on the idea that the king is clearly a dependent agent within the social order, who must derive his legitimacy from the Brahman. Heesterman believes that this dependency is evidence of the problematic nature of the king's religious and secular ambiguity.<sup>4</sup> He says that, "Kingship remains, even theoretically suspended between sacrality and secularity, divinity and mortality, legitimate authority and arbitrary power, dharma and adharma."<sup>5</sup> The problematic nature of kingship, Heesterman argues, is that the king's authority and legitimacy are derivative and therefore dependent, and, yet, he is expected to act as if he is independent. The Brahman who alone holds the key to religious legitimacy and the king must go to the Brahman to obtain the Brahman's sanction. The theory of sacrifice as it was developed in the Vedic texts has no place for the king per se, let alone for a sacral, divine or priestly king. At best, the king is a yajamāna.<sup>6</sup> The pure, ordered world of the Brahman's sacrifice has no place for the impure and violent world of the king and it is therefore necessary to make the king pure; hence, he is given a place within the sacrifice. The purification process is served by the Mahabhisheka which ritually makes the king a Brahman and rids him of impurity. The relationship between the king and brahman forms, for the purpose of consecration, on an abstract level, a dialectic between the king who is society's (grāma) primary agent and the Brahman, whose realm (āranya) is that of renunciation. The Brahman is master of the realm of transcendence

and absolute value; the king, is master of the realm of power. The consecration ceremony represents the king's association with the āranya although logically he is bound to the grāma. The ceremony is therefore an attempt to solve the problem of separate domains of power and authority.

Ritual, however, does not necessarily solve the problem of separated power and authority but expresses the problem in a series of well-defined liturgical acts, in an ideally ordered world of rationalized sacrifice. "Ritual should make the insoluble at least acceptable without glossing it over."<sup>7</sup> The classical solution to the problem of separate domains of power and authority attempts to give a level of transcendence to the activity of kingship. The classical solution however, has its origins in a pre-classical (pre-Śrāuta) antagonistic festival.

The pre-classical period, reconstructed by Heesterman through a careful analysis of early Vedic literature, provides a formulation of kingship which sought ties not sacrality but to violence. The roots of the consecration ceremony are traced by Heesterman to the transition from a public agonistic festival during the pre-classical period to a closed systematized ritual of the classical period. As Heesterman points out, the process of development was deliberate, necessitated by the inherent destructiveness of the pre-Śrāuta festival.<sup>8</sup>

In the pre-Srauta period, Heesterman argues, the domains of Brahman and Kṣatriya were neither fixed nor was caste ideology in place. Warrior/priests, whose domains included both esoteric knowledge and violence, engaged in war for material wealth in a world of scarcity. The rivalry between the protagonistic and antagonistic groups was likened to an expedition, a battle and/or a potlach festival in which the captured wealth was redistributed.<sup>9</sup> The festival represented an ongoing exchange

of wealth and lives. The antagonism furthered prosperity, but at the cost of death. The complementarity of the life-winning principle and its inherent destructiveness was a constant, never-ending process of construction and destruction, of life and death. The antithetical relationship of life and death seems to be the mechanism whereby stability within the pre-classical society, and, on a larger scale, stability within the cosmos, was maintained.<sup>10</sup>

In the antithetical relationship between antagonist and protagonist, each group derived its identity and meaning from the fact that it stood in opposition to the other. Because they needed each other to maintain equilibrium, they were placed in a state of cooperative tension. The exchange however, was filled with great risk to both sides since there was the implication that someone had to die in order for life to be rejuvenated.<sup>11</sup>

The solution to the never-ending cycle of death and reconstruction presented by the classical ritualists, was to eliminate the inherently high risk involved in the exchange of life for death principle of the antagonistic festival. The solution had to retain the meaningfulness of the exchange since it represented a life-winning formula but it also had to be free of death and the impurity of death. The solution of the classical ritualists, as outlined in the White Yajur Veda and Black Yajur Veda, was to transform the public antagonistic festival into a closed private liturgical set of operations in which no real contest existed and the threat of death was eliminated.<sup>12</sup> In its simplest form, the cyclical pattern was retained as an expeditionary conquering and wandering phase and in proper inthronisation. The virtual endlessness of the cyclical pattern of ritual and inthronisation was encompassed by even more cycles of ritual importance. The expeditionary phase into the āraṇya had, for the king, the symbolic value

of obtained material wealth as well as being the time and place in which legitimacy could be obtained. The expeditionary phase was therefore necessary as part of a life-winning formula and for conferring legitimacy. The cyclical pattern was also problematic in that it made kingship illusory since it had to be renewed on a constant basis. As Heesterman points out, "The śātra (cyclical pattern) repeats itself in an unending sequence that means that the inthronisation should again be followed by another abhisheka, another departure and so forth."<sup>13</sup>

A break in the problematic paradigm represented by the śātra came about when the king, the foremost agent of society, was denied access to transcendent values. "The restructuring which cut up and destroyed the cyclical concatenation, was, of course, not a frivolous undertaking. It was pointedly and systematically done, the purpose being to break out of the endless cycle by establishing a new conception of the transcendent, and thereby of authority."<sup>14</sup> The classical period witnessed the dividing of the domains of warrior/priest into two heterogenous groups. "In order to achieve this, it broke the cycle of violence and by breaking the cycle of violence, it opened the way to free authority and make it unassably transcendent."<sup>15</sup> The resultant problem for the king was that he still desperately needed the Brahman to sanction his power. The Mahabhisheka was the bridge between the two which, by the time of the epic period, has become a rationalized, symbolic version of an earlier, more elaborate, public procedure. Other sacrifices such as the Rājasūya, the Vājapeya and the Āsvamedha<sup>16</sup>, are reenactments of the wandering phase of the cyclic sacrifice. For example, the Rājasūya not only includes the unction and inthronisation, but a chariot race marks a symbolized war expedition in which "the king has to shoot arrows in the direction of a

*ksatriya* posted at the far end of the chariot course."<sup>17</sup> Heesterman calls this a ritualized cattle raid. In addition, the *Vājapeya* is filled with an interval between the unction and a haircutting festival by a symbolic wandering phase. Gonda also points out that *Ásvāmedha* incorporated a wandering phase in which the territory, circumambulated by a sacrificial horse, comes under the ownership of the king by ritually transmitting his divine power to the horse.<sup>18</sup>

As to the antagonistic relationship, the classical ritualists collapsed the bipolar rivalry into one individual, the sacrificer, around whom the ritual pivoted so that he alone could defeat death without actual exposure to a rival. The *śrāuta* ritual of the classical system exemplifies this movement towards closed systematization.<sup>19</sup> Symbolically, the *śrāuta* represents the regeneration of the cosmos, the winning of life over death but without death being present as a participant and the mastering of individual insight. The prototype for the *śrāuta* rite is *Prajapati*, who is symbolic of the internalization of the ritual and who assimilates the weapons of death "so that they have no meaning of their own and can be dispensed with completely."<sup>20</sup> In the transformed ritual, Death is given archaic and obsolete rites; the Soma ritual is retained with which *Prajapati* he makes Death's power ritually impotent by means of *Prajapati*'s insight into metrical equivalences. The result is the elimination of ritual competition. Instead, the ritual is dependent upon abstract, individualized knowledge, yet the rite retains the life-winning formula.

The classical consecration ritual which comes to Medieval South India has its beginnings in a dualistic exchange which is visible in some ways even through the layers of liturgical operations. For example, the action of gift giving in the sacrifice is the means by which the king becomes puri-

fied. The king is reborn a Brahman by the acceptance of those gifts which symbolically represent him.<sup>21</sup> The king is a yajamāna whose impurity is absolved by the officiating Brahman who, in turn, transforms the impurity of the gifts by absorbing the impurity. The yajamāna, his gifts purified, becomes ritually transformed and purified himself. Since death and impurity are assimilated within the ritual, the ritual becomes the domain of absolute purity.<sup>22</sup> This process of exchange symbolizes the life-winning formula to which the classical and medieval ritual practice is directed.

By the time brahmanical institutions were firmly established in South India, the consecration ceremony had taken on an expansive and powerful purpose and meaning. The development of this ideology was two-fold. The notion of sacral kingship took on a new meaning so that the sacral divinity of kings was no longer based solely on their direct participation in ceremonial ritual, but, instead, on the royal function which was considered "equivalent to the celebration of a sacrifice of long duration."<sup>23</sup> As Lingat points out, "It was not the king who had a divine nature but the royal function itself."<sup>24</sup> By the time of the development of South Indian brahmanical institutions, kingship itself is construed to be the extended sacrifice, hence the participation of the king within an elaborate articulation of cyclical wandering becomes a fully interiorized process within the function of kingship. The king needs only proper anointment and he is freed from the consequences of sin and error. The result of this rationalized style of kingship was that only the Mahābhisheka was retained as the remnant of a pre-classical notion of cyclical wandering. The classical royal sacrifices such as the Āsvamedha, Rājasūya and Vājapeya fell into disuse in Medieval South India, not only because of their cost and imprac-



ticality, but more important, because they had been replaced by a concept of sacral kingship which was far more meaningful and integral in shaping the economic and political spheres of the social order. The function of these major royal sacrifices, as a means of constantly renewing the king's legitimacy, became a rationalized part of the function of kingship. In fact, Nilakanta Sastri finds only one example of the royal sacrifice being carried out during the entire Medieval period. In this case, the sacrificer, Rajadhiraja I (1018-54 A.D.) did the very rare Asvamedha as a result of newly obtained wealth following a battle. The poems of the Sangam period make it clear however, that such costly Vedic rituals were more common in that age.<sup>25</sup>

The second development in the legitimation of power through ritual was the gradually greater emphasis placed on kings as munificent yajamāna, and a preference placed on dāna over and above yajña. As Sastri says, "Occasions for such gifts are multiplied not only by the elaborate organization of temples and worship in them, and the studied effort to group all social amenities around the temple as a nucleus; but, by the newer means of obtaining religious merit enjoined on the rich in general and on royalty in particular."<sup>26</sup> The idea of seeking legitimation through gift giving achieved its greatest elaboration under the Chola Dynasty. The concept of kings as distributional centres legitimizing their power through dāna will be discussed in the next section.

The Mahābhisheka was itself a relatively simple ritual. In a description of the consecration ritual which places an importance on the purity of the king Gonda says, "the monarch is supposed to be reborn as the son of the sages who act as priests; now he is vested with sanctity and inviolable."<sup>27</sup> The monarch is "adorned with the royal robes, the sacred

thread and various ornaments and is led to the consecration hall which are furnished with the emblem of empire such as the throne, the ornamental arch (toraṇa) and the wish-yielding tree (kālpa vr̥kṣa).<sup>28</sup> After having been garlanded, anointed and sprinkled with substances, the king then (according to whatever consecration ceremony is being followed) may mount an elephant and circumambulate the city in a ceremony called the Vijāya, or mount his chariot in an unction simply called the Abhisheka. So that the wheels turn thrice in each direction alternately he may just take three steps in the northern direction.<sup>29</sup>

The essential and common characteristic of all the various forms of the consecration ceremony is the idea of securing imperial potency and legitimate power over the earth in a reenactment of the consecration of Indra or Varuna.<sup>30</sup> The Āitareya Brāhmaṇa gives a description of the Mahabhisheka,

anointed with this great anointment Indra won all victories (sr̥aiṣṭhyam) preeminence (atiṣṭhan) supremacy (paramatman).<sup>31</sup>

This is followed by the acceptance of the king by the purohita.

If a (priest) who knows thus should embrace all what is in the universe (samastaparyāya "all encompassing") possessed of all earth (sarvabhūmah) possessed of all life (sarvayasah), from the one end up to the further side of the earth bounded by the ocean, sole ruler (ekaraj), he should anoint him with this great anointing of Indra."<sup>32</sup>

From these passages it becomes clear that the Abhisheka is more than a coronation. It is a highly developed conceptual model for a sacral transformation of human kings to divinities; a model that implies a legitimacy based on the divine nature and purity inherent in the royal function

*in which the Mahabhisheka plays an institutionalized role that insures the proper anointment and recognition by the priests.*

*If the South Indian consecration ceremony emphasizes the sacral character of the king, then the Sinhalese counterpart offers an alternate emphasis, also in keeping with its legitimating process. One interesting aspect of the Sinhalese consecration ceremony, known as the Moli-maṅgala "feast of coronation"<sup>33</sup>, is that it is entirely a brahmanical rite performed by the Brahmans of the king's court. Although in keeping with the Sinhalese ideology style and characterization, the ceremony by no means has a Buddhist character. The actual ceremony, resembling a potlatch more than a solemn sacrifice, was a festival of great pomp with all the regional chieftains present. The same accoutrements were used as were necessary in Indian consecration ceremonies were used, i.e. the diadem, the umbrella, the throne (a pāsada) and a coronation hall.<sup>34</sup>*

*Two differences in meaning identify the Sinhalese version when compared to its South Indian counterpart. The Abhisheka was not deemed to be critically necessary for successful or even legitimate rule in contrast with the South Indian ritual where it was considered crucial; thus, there are three notable instances in the history of Lanka in which kings ruled effectively and legitimately without the consecration ceremony. According to the Cūlavamsa, in 981 A.D., King Mahinda never underwent the Abhisheka ceremony yet retained full control of the sangha and the island. In the case of Vikkamabāhu (1111-1132 A.D.) and his son Gajabāhu II (1132-53 A.D.), the chronicles indicate that neither king was properly consecrated yet this fact did not seriously undermine their authority to effectively rule the island is that both kings enjoyed de facto rule over the island. The theoretical qualifications for kingship did not allow for illegal*

political takeovers, yet according to the Cūlavamsa, Vikkamabahu ruled for 21 years and Gajabāhu II for 22. The de facto status of these kings, and their failure to receive proper consecration stems from the fact that Vikkamabāhu seized the throne from his brother.<sup>35</sup> Usurping of the throne was not known in South Indian history and the example of Uttamachola (1032-1073 A.D.) stands out in this regard. However, there is no recorded example of a Medieval South India king having failed to receive proper consecration and also having ruled successfully. The emphasis Sri Lankan ideology puts on the necessity of a king to maintain order regardless of his consecration status may provide the answer as to why Gajabāhu and his father were not dethroned. An unconsecrated king is better than no king at all.

The second important development in the Sinhalese Abhisheka ceremony is the de-emphasis placed on the sacral character of the king and the de-emphasis of the Brahmans role in ensuring that sacrality. This de-emphasis is balanced by an even greater articulation of the king's political role and his relationship to other political leaders to whom the king looked for support. Geiger, addressing the matter of the consecration, points out that the king "was regarded less in the light of a ruling despot than in that of the chief representative and leader of the people. Himself a khattiya he was the leader of that noble race. To him was committed the welfare of the rest of his subjects."<sup>36</sup>

The conception of the consecrated king as a political figure upon whom the social order was dependent becomes clear in the passages relating to the ceremony. Underlying the priests ritual words is an articulation of a different kind of legitimation. The king seeks sanction to act; sanction not from the Brahman priest, but from the social order itself. The cere-

mony in which the king agrees to protect the community is a means by which a bonded agreement is created between the king, his clans, and the rest of society.

*First a maiden of the nobility (khattiyakana) took with both hands a marine shell which was filled with water from the Ganges river and the apiral of which wound to the right, poured water on the king's head and said: "Oh Majesty, all the clans of the nobility make thee for their own protection and security by this consecration a consecrated king. Rule thou with justice and a pease persisting in the law by thou one who has a compassionate heart towards those of the noble clans, who are filled with sorrows about their sons and the like, and one who had a kind and peaceful heart, and be thou guarded by their protection, defense and wars."<sup>37</sup>*

So much emphasis is placed on the political relationship between king and society that it is said that if he fails to fulfill his duty, tragedy will befall him. A threat is contained in the consecration verse: "If Thou will rule as we said well, but if Thou dost not do so, thy head will split into seven pieces."<sup>38</sup> This implies that the king will lose his head if he does not perform his tasks properly.

The Brahman is clearly displaced in the ceremony since it is a warrior girl who gives the unction and the king places the crown on his own head. This displacement is understandable if it is understood that the Brahman was neither representative of Sinhalese legitimizing values nor an influential minister to the king's court; these functions remained in the hands of the Buddhist monks and their ceremonies that utilized the Buddha relics. The Sinhalese consecration ceremony has become an instrument of reaffirming and articulating political power in a socially acceptable way that was contiguous with imperial institutionalized mores. The ceremony

serves the purpose of reminding the king of his ksatriya duties and his obligations to protect the social order.

The conception of the Sinhalese consecration ceremony as a contractual agreement between the community and the king parallels the development of Buddhist contractual ideas about kingship. The king was motivated by the possibility of losing his head. Whereas the South Indian ceremony emphasizes the sacral character of the king, the Sinhalese version is concerned with the king's ability to rule effectively as part of a society as a whole. Though Medieval Sinhalese kings would have been aware of South Indian variations of the consecration ceremony, it is more likely that the Abhisheka ceremony used by them was closely related to that of Devanampiyatissa. Even though no direct link can be traced from the Mauryan Dynasty to Sri Lanka, the fact that Asoka's missionary, the bhikku Mahinda, is held responsible for Tissa's conversion to the dhamma establishes a "surrogate connection with the earliest of India's great empires."<sup>39</sup> In any event, the symbols and modes of consecration were largely Indian in origin but the content and purpose of the consecration had an altogether different meaning.

## II. Kings as Patrons

This section is concerned with the way kings sought legitimation by means other than the authority engendered through participation in ritual. Three are considered in this section: 1) the way in which legitimation was acquired by the king through the distribution of wealth; 2) the function of the king as a main benefactor and patron of the religious community; and 3) the construction of temples and viharas as a means of renewing legitimation liturgically.

The fundamental aspect of the development of Medieval South Indian kingship that sets it apart from earlier types of kingship was the transition of the legitimation process from the performance of Vedic sacrifices to the more complex concept of redistribution of wealth (dāna), through temple networks and Brahmans. The development of dāna began with the Pallavas, a line of successful and powerful warriors who emerged in the 6th century A.D. and actively participated in the revival of Hindu institutions to a place of dominance after the long ascendancy of Buddhism and Jainism. The Pallava accomplishments include a permanent influence on the style and construction of temples, the development of agriculture based on complex irrigation systems and the patronage of Brahman settlements. Pallava kingship was no less sacral than kingship previously had been, "the king was still anointed ruler whose military prowess was overwhelming and was purified by the Mahabhisheka as depicted in the panels sculpted upon the walls of the vaikunthapurumal temple in Kanchi."<sup>40</sup>

Instead of relying on Vedic sacrifice as a basis for their legitimation, Pallava kings from the sixth century on relied on established ritual formulas (prasāsti). The prasāsti or the recording of gifts or grants to Brahmans (similar to the dāna exchange during sacrifice), provided an inscriptional record which described in all cases how wealth was conferred upon lesser political personages (usually Nadu chieftains) who sought "the assent of the king for his grant."<sup>41</sup> "The portion of the record praising the liberality of the local petitioning chieftain was not much less elaborate in praise of him than verses that praised the reigning king."<sup>42</sup> The method of ritually incorporating the established prestige of chieftains not only enhanced the legitimacy of reigning Pallava kings but also helped establish the temple as a ceremonial expression of the kings yajamāna



function.<sup>43</sup> Sacrifices which accompanied such grants were, on a much larger scale, reenactments of the earlier exchange ritual between priest and king in which the king as a patron required the Brahman in order to give his gifts. In this instance as in the classical formula,<sup>44</sup> the king is both the yajamāna and chief sacrificer.

Coercion was the basis of claim to resources, for chieftains as well as for kings. Coercion or daṇḍa became purified by way of acquisition of resources and their subsequent redistribution through temple donations and gifts to Brahmans in the same way that gifts given by a yajamāna to a diksita during an abhisheka ritual became purified.<sup>45</sup> Since it is the gifts or dāna that represent the coercion necessary to obtain them, the dāna must be purified, and, therefore, provides not only a means of allocating and redistributing resources, but also provides a unique way of sanctioning a king's power and his use of daṇḍa. The conception of Brahmans and kings working in unison to somehow lend stability to the social order is representative of the idea of two integrative yet antithetical groups (i.e. pure and impure) that derive their identity and legitimacy from each other and from the process of exchange.

The means by which resources could be so freely reallocated was provided by the vast agricultural base in South India. The Pallavas were the first of the great South Indian dynasties to successfully enhance the legitimacy of kings by articulating a redistribution system that was based on the protection of agricultural wealth and established ritual formulas. The king's yajamāna function formed a basis of legitimation and exchange from which further agricultural development could occur which, in turn, helped temple construction to take on a powerful and influential role.

*In Sri Lanka, effective royal patronage ensured the legitimacy of a king's rule. The nurturing of legitimation by the king through his patronage of the sangha was directly correlated with his role as protector of the dhamma. The role of the king as patron to the monastic community was based on three elements of the Sinhalese legitimation process. It was the king's duty to ensure the purity and cohesiveness of the sangha. Since the monk was perceived as a merit field, ideally he had to be sans reproche. As Tambiah points out, the "ascetic monk becomes an appropriate intermediary who can reach up to mystical powers associated with the Buddha and the sacred texts and who can, in turn, transfer these powers to the layman in a form that can positively sacralize this life and the next."<sup>46</sup> The king, in this context, is a mediator between society and the monastic community. By remaining pure, it was the king's duty to ensure that the sangha remain a reliable source of merit. Since the entire community had a stake in the sangha's purity, a healthy monastic community helped create legitimacy for the king. In return, the king ensured the growth and effectiveness of the sangha by making available to it monasteries without which the sangha could not flourish.*

*The king also had the duty to protect and further the dhamma and maintain ritual and ceremony, to keep alive the memory of the Buddha and faith in the doctrine's power. Both of these functions "go far beyond underwriting royal authority; they attest to and buttress the entire universe of belief which makes up Sinhalese Buddhism."<sup>47</sup>*

*As in most cases, Asoka provides the paradigm of exemplary kingship. The Dīpavaṃsa sums up Asoka's works with the statement, "as much as the monks desire I give them whatever they choose."<sup>48</sup> Patronage to the religious community seems to have begun with Asoka and was car-*

ried on by Sinhalese kings. Upon the receipt of gifts from Dutthagamani, one of the chronicler-monks writes, "Merit that a man has thus heaped up with believing heart, careless of insupportable ills of the body brings to pass hundreds of results which are mine of happiness; therefore, one must do works of merit with believing heart and giving alms lavishly with a mind freed from the fetters of lust, mindful of the good of beings."<sup>49</sup>

The idea of giving to the monastic community is based as much on the merit a good donor king can receive and the stability derived from that merit as on the merit the sangha can give to the lay community. Such reciprocal exchange enhanced the legitimacy of kings as much as it did the monks themselves: "Even in a society organized along hierarchical lines where overt political power is lodged at the top and where no procedure exists for influencing policy, the recognition that order is essentially indivisible is imperative."<sup>50</sup> The imperative is founded on the realization that ensuring the stability of the sangha ensured the stability of the rest of society. Underlying the formula for social stability was the deeper recognition that effective political control could prove illegitimate if the reciprocal relationship between monarch and monastic community was abused by either side. One factor that allowed the Sinhalese kings to materially provide for the sangha was an elaborate, complex and thriving agriculture. In Medieval Sri Lanka, the construction of technical and complex irrigation systems from the second century on, and the expansion of these complexes into the southern dry zones, accelerated agricultural development, created an abundance of surplus wealth. "Without the agricultural surplus made available by the multitude of irrigation tanks scattered in rich profusion over much of Sri Lanka's dry zone, the enormous investment which the architectural and sculptural splendours of the Anuradhapura

kingdom called for, would scarcely have been possible."<sup>51</sup> By the tenth century A.D., there existed in Sri Lanka a vast array of irrigation works spread over most of the dry zones. The irrigation system is evidence of a prosperous and unified economy that provided the means by which substantial wealth could be imparted to the public and religious sectors in the form of buildings and donations of land. In many ways, effective political and ritual control by kings was indirectly articulated through agricultural development. Government-led hydraulic enterprise was one means by which the king could sustain unproductive regions through projects and donations, thus enhancing his legitimacy in those areas.

In both South India and Sri Lanka wealthy kings were the most substantial patrons of Brahmans and monks. In particular, South Indian kings established and helped settle self-governing Brahman communities (brahmadeyas) as a link between peasant and the king as centres of learning and ritual.

The brahmadeya functioned as a vital hinge in the South Indian social order. Located between the great temple centres and the populous cities of Kanchi and Madurai, the brahmadeyas helped maintain at the local level the ritual institutions vital to the sacral legitimacy of the king. Supported by peasantry and with the patronage of local chieftains and kings, brahmadeyas fostered an integration of Brahmanic values and culture within the peasant community. The involvement between king and Brahman settlements fell within the scope of the kings administrative personnel whose function was solely concerned with the king's ritual activity. The administrative personnel facilitated the ritual activity of South Indian kings in two ways. First, they pooled the vast human and material resources, drawing upon diverse independent and opposed elements of

South Indian society. The resources were typically gifts to Brahmans (dāna) and the "presentation process was homologous to and was very likely considered equivalent to a sacrifice (Yajña)."<sup>52</sup> Second, they kept a normative record of these gifts in the form of stone and copperplate inscriptions, which involved the ruler and his successors and conferred upon him some merit and purity gained in the giving of the gift (prāsāsti).<sup>53</sup>

The net effect of these recorded documents and inscriptions was an enhancement of the king's sacral legitimacy since the records show that the donations given to Brahmans by kings became accepted and purified. The acceptance of the king's gifts by the Brahman is significant because it placed the king, and on a lesser scale the chieftain, at the forefront as the agent for massing resources and lends to the process a sacral legitimacy. In return, Brahmans prospered. For example, gifts of land and houses were frequently offered as inducements to Brahmans to settle where they were wanted. In his analysis of the inscriptions of the Pallava period, Nilakanta Sastri shows that Brahmans were organized into corporate colleges called brahmapūris and ghātikas which were places of instruction as well as libraries filled with Sanskritic texts.<sup>54</sup>

The development of institutions such as the ghātikas and mathas contributed to the ritual involvement of the king within the community. The development begun by Pallava kings and carried on by the Cholas to its logical conclusion in the form of deliberate policy to effect ritual hegemony over most of South India and beyond. In its earliest form however, there is little reason to believe that ritual efforts on the part of kings were acts of a definitive overall policy. If this had been the case, it could be expected that early Pallava kings benefitted from the redistribution of wealth as much in increased territory as in sacral merit which they did not.

There was, however, a stabilizing effect within society as Brahmanic culture became fully integrated with peasant values to give the social order a common and unified ritual focus. This Brahmanic focus not only strengthened the sacral authority of kings but helped legitimize lesser chieftains who had a degree of ritual control within their own territory. The conception of cooperation between groups within the social order implied mutual benefits. As Stein says, "peasant locality leaders did enjoy prominence, precedence and a degree of interaction with Brahmanic learning and ritual, adopting much of this culture as their own in their public and their domestic behaviours."<sup>55</sup> By the very way in which brahmadeyas were placed in the community, Brahmans enjoyed an unprecedented level of secular authority at the cost of giving up a degree of their sacral powers to the king. The evolution away from Vedic sacrificial rites to public temple worship effectively reduced Brahmanic ritual intercession but it was balanced by the Brahman's increased influence within the community. Secular authority to which Brahmans had access came by the way kings defined their sacral authority. Since it was through ritual incorporation that kings lay claim to legitimate rule, the establishment of a close Brahman-peasant interdependence eased the political burden which necessarily entailed exerting direct control over the peasants to ensure their ritual allegiance. The integrative function of ritual incorporation that brought together groups within the social order under a single ritual focus, assigned some secular control to Brahmans and this control gave impetus to the "sanskritization" of the peasantry and therefore allowed the king to enhance his legitimacy through ritual means.

In Sri Lanka, the patronage system was based on reciprocity. The social order was itself a symbiosis that relied on the purity of the sangha

and the legitimacy of the king whose duty was to protect, support and confirm the faith. Historically, the sangha was dependent on the monarch for land grants and irrigation systems. The village grants given to various viharas enjoyed considerable immunities and were not considered to be under the direct jurisdiction of the king.<sup>56</sup> Requisite villages (paccayagama), were required by dictate of the king to provide viharas with the "four necessities" -- seats, garments, food and medicine. These grants, given to the bhikku community, known as sangha-bhoga, were used in conjunction with the practice of labhasīma. "Labhasīma" means that whatever was produced within a community was for the vihara.

The kind of economic, social and political influence assigned by the king to the sangha made the sangha a powerful corporate body within the social order. It was a secular force that no sensible king could ignore.

Support for the sangha was shown by the kings in a more direct way by the admission of members of the royal family into the Buddhist order.<sup>57</sup> The precedent model was provided by Asoka who questioned his minister when told there was no one more generous than he. Asoka asks, "Is there a kinsman of Buddha's religion like unto me?" The reply of Mogalliputta has later implications for all Sinhalese monarchs, "Only he who lets a son or daughter enter the religious order is a kinsmen of the religion and withal a giver of gifts."<sup>58</sup> Again, Asoka provides a paradigm for ideal kingship, that was emulated by many kings in Sinhalese history. Further, Geiger cites several cases where members of the royal family became bhikkus.<sup>59</sup>

The role of the king as patron to the monastic community took a number of forms. In the process not only was the king's legitimacy enhanced by association but royal beneficence was seen as a model to others. In



the process, the dhamma was nurtured and enhanced and legitimacy was extended to the social order itself.

The legitimation of a king's power was not restricted to material redistribution. The king also was actively involved in the construction of temples and stūpas. As in other cases of legitimation, construction of places of worship enhanced the sacral character of South Indian kings more so than it did for Sinhalese kings because in South India temple construction provided a direct focus on the kings through inscriptions detailing their military exploits and wall paintings depicting their religious devotion. Temples, dedicated to vedic gods, greatly multiplied from the 7th century onwards. These buildings, named after a royal epithet, sheltered gods often bearing the names of Pallava kings. Temples, dependent upon a large and varied population in order to function, were a loci of village. As P.V. Kane states,

*The difference between a village and a town (Nagara) was generally that the latter had a temple of high reputation. Attached to it were the priests versed in the Agamas, Brahmins learned in the Vedas, musicians and others. The aggregation of a large population due to the shrine or due to the protection afforded by the port or temple walls gave an industrial bias to town life ...<sup>60</sup>*

Nilakanta Sastri's reference to Chola temple summarizes their importance.

*... Every temple, great or small, held in relation to its neighbourhood exactly the same position that the Great Temple (Brihadisvara temple at Tanjavur) had in the capital. The difference was only one of degree. As landholder, employer and consumer of goods and services as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theatre in short, as a nucleus which gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence ... the medieval Indian temple has few parallels in the annals of mankind.<sup>61</sup>*

It is noteworthy that ancient royal sacrifices such as the *Asvamedha*, prominent in periods prior to the 8th century A.D., are rarely mentioned in temple inscriptions of the Pallavas and Cholas. Instead, kings devoted substantial wealth to the construction of temple complexes such as the *Gongaikondacholapuram* and the *Rajarajesvaram*, both constructed in the 11th century. Even prior to the period of the great temples, South Indian kings were patrons of many temples. For example, *Vijayalaya* (850-87 A.D.), the first king of the Chola dynasty, is known to have constructed over thirty temple complexes along the *Kaveri* River near his capital *Tanjavur*, to consolidate his ritual supremacy. There are three sets of inscriptions that provide proof that *Vijayalaya* patronized the temples to assert sacral authority over the wealthy *Kaveri* river region. The editor of the *Copper Plate Grant* states, "The unidentified *Parakesarivarman* referred to in line 28F appears to be no other *Parakesarivarman* *Vijayalaya*. The statement in our grant that a stone inscription (*sīla lekha*) of his 22nd year, did provide permanent income to a temple at *Kachippedu* is proof and enough to show that he was the first of a new line, *Vijayalaya* had a powerful, long and prosperous rule like any of his powerful successors."<sup>62</sup> Second, the inscriptions of *Vijayalaya* "on rocks which are now in the *Anantisvaram* temple in the western end of town"<sup>63</sup>, near *Chidambaram* provide epigraphical evidence exemplifying the "continued focus of attention by Chola rulers to *Chidambaram* in an effort to secure their own reputations in their attachment to *Chidambaram*."<sup>64</sup> The third set of inscriptions on a pillar in the *amman* shrine of the temple of *Tiruvilnilalai* refer to a gift given by a *Parakesarivarman* of a silver dish used as a vessel for the *sribali* offerings to the Lord. "It can be legitimately inferred that the Lord of this place was his favourite deity by

a slight rewording of the inscription, Udaiyar Tantout tanichevagar; Vijayalaya was the unparalleled, devoted servant of the Lord of this place."<sup>65</sup> It is likely that the temple, though attributed to Vijayalaya, can actually be assigned to a local chieftain, implying that in this period a true Chola style and intent had not yet emerged and that the Chola dynasty had yet to establish total ritual supremacy over lesser chieftains.

Turning from South Indian Temple style and function to Sinhalese involvement in Vihara building, it becomes apparent that ritual engendered in Vihara construction was a public expression of political and religious authority that extends to the community a sense of integration. The erection of the vihara and the corresponding act of boundary laying or Sima, symbolized "the inclusion of the social and political order within the larger order of Dhamma itself ..."<sup>66</sup> The boundaries of the great viharas, such as the Mahāvihara, Marvacatti and Abhayaqīri were all fixed in place by the king himself.

The whole area within the boundary was the inviolable property of the sangha, indicating that the king was not the only sacral figure. Each Vihara contained within it the Ficus religiosa or bodhi tree. The significance of this lies in the importance kingship attached to its presence. The most important bodhi tree was that of the Mahavihara of Anurādhapura. According to the Mahāvamsa, King Devanampiyatissa is said to have brought a branch of the bodhi tree to Lanka from North India during the eighteenth year of the reign of Asoka.<sup>67</sup> For a period of almost 1,000 years thereafter, the bodhi tree became an established part of the construction of any Vihara. The tree was the focus of rituals and festivals incorporating the key elements in the economic well being of society. For example, the chronicles record a festival connected with the irrigation of

the tree celebrating the Sinhalese irrigation system; another focussed on the erection of protective walls; another involved attempts to increase the fertility of the soil. All of these festivals instigated by the king had the function of legitimating his social responsibilities within the scope of the all-encompassing dhamma, symbolized by the bodhi tree.<sup>68</sup> For Sinhalese Buddhists, the bodhi tree was not an object of worship but a symbol of the Buddha's enlightenment. Though, as Geiger points out, actual tree worship was not unknown in Sinhalese culture.<sup>69</sup> Be this as it may, the value of renewing legitimation through the myriad facets of the bodhi tree was not lost by Sinhalese kings.

The most elaborate measure that Sinhalese kings took in this regard was the construction of bodhigara. Often such a house containing the tree was constructed near a vihara and utilized the monks' irrigation system. The chronicles attest that such houses were the objects of veneration. The majority of bodhigara were named for the kings who had them constructed, much like as portrayed in the inscriptions on the gateways of stupa in India.<sup>70</sup>

The Vihara housed dagobas within its demarcated boundary. The dagoba or stupa, was a worship-cum-burial mound which was visited by lay people and cared for by the monks. The three great dagobas of Sri Lanka were the Mahustupa in the Mahavihara, the Abharagiri dagoba and the Jetva, built by Dutthagamani as a crowning achievement in his policy to nationalize Buddhism, incorporated a relic chamber (cetiya) made of bricks and surrounding stone pillars. The meaning of the word "cetiya" is funeral pyre and the term has pre-Buddhist origins as memorials for fallen heroes.

A second great dagoba constructed by Parakkamabahu (called the Damilathūpa because it was built by Tamil prisoners of war captured by the king) was known for its unprecedented massive size. The effect such an imposing relic chamber might have on the population can only be surmized; suffice to say that the majority of dagobas served as the centre of focus in festivals and pilgrimages and were architectural duplications of the Damilathūpa.<sup>71</sup> The king was responsible for the majority of festivals involving stupas which were mostly devotional homages to the Buddha. A similar function was served by the relic and image temples (dhatugara). The dhatugara served as a place of worship for pilgrims and to this end, Parakkamabahu had several constructed along the causeways of the irrigation network in his home province of Rohana. The image-temple like the stupa, served the very real purpose of merit making for the king as well as being a universal symbol of the Buddha's authority. Edward Conze describes the purpose of the stūpa and dhatugara image temples.

*It was because Buddhism assured this harmony with the cosmos on which all social welfare depends that the laity was so eager to support the Order, house its members, and erect fine monuments in honour of their teachings. The world would not have put up for long with a community of monks which would merely turn their backs on those who fed them if they had not given something priceless to the world which it could not get in any other way. The visible manifestations of this concern for cosmic harmony are the magnificent stupas which adorn all parts of the Buddhist world and are the tangible focus of the religion. It was the business of the laity to build those stupas, though only the relics of the Buddha could give them life. The stupas are as fundamental to Buddhism as the four holy truths, and it has been shown beyond doubt that they have a cosmic significance that they are representative of the universe. This "cosmic architecture represents the world as a theatre for the working-out of the Dharma and for the awakening of all beings by its piercing rays." Each stupa is an "imitation" of the life, or rather lives of the Tathagata, i.e. they allowed a whole society to unite in one common celebration*



*and thus had not only great moral, but also political consequences.<sup>72</sup>*

*The construction of circular image-houses (patimegha ghara) round out the efforts taken by Sinhalese kings as patrons to the Buddhist community. Image-houses contained a Buddha figure together with images of the disciples and lesser gods adoring the Teacher. In early Sri Lankan history caves served the same function and were often covered with paintings of the devotees of the Buddha. The image-house was physically large; for example, Vijayabahu is said to have constructed a three storey image-house and then placed an image of the Buddha of equal proportions in it. Usually the erection of an image house was accompanied by a festival glorifying the Buddha which was followed by a ceremony dedicating the image-house to a monastery.<sup>73</sup>*

*The activities of Sinhalese kings in the construction of viharas, stupas and image-houses was considered in the chronicles to be as important as the protection of the sasana itself. As Rahula points out, the constructing of buildings was one of the primary duties of kingship.<sup>74</sup> Asoka actualized rule by dharma through its imperial institutionalization, i.e. Asoka had Mahamātras (ministers of dharma) spread the word of dharma throughout the realm. In partial contrast to this idea, Sinhalese kings institutionalized dhamma almost entirely in the form of buildings. Greenwald and Smith consider such activities by Sinhalese kings as a perpetuation of the Asokan tradition that legitimates royal authority and the whole enterprise of Buddhist activity. In reference to Dutthagamani, Greenwald notes: "Dutthagamani's enterprise is that of actualizing or perhaps condensing the sasana into the form of the stupa itself. Literally and metaphorically, he builds upon that which the Buddha's visits had*

prefigures, and so engages in another, a new kind of sīma setting or boundary establishment."<sup>75</sup> Smith adds, "In order to see the continuity, one must establish distinctions where in reality none exist. The planting of the bodhi-tree and the bringing of relics and the building of stupas to enshrine the relics are ways of making visible, therefore present, what was never absent, though always invisible."<sup>76</sup> Sinhalese kings are portrayed in this light in the chronicles as perpetuations of a tradition. It was not enough to construct a stupa, but, in addition, a king had to build a stupa around a pre-existent relic. Thus, the Mahāvamsa relates how the Mahāstūpa is built at the spot where the Buddha vanquished the yakkhas<sup>77</sup>, and a chapter in the Stūpavamsa details the enshrinement of the relic of the neck bone.<sup>78</sup>

The construction of the Mahāstūpa is portrayed in the chronicles as a perpetuation of the dhamma, in the same way the rolling of the wheel is seen as setting the dhamma into motion. Like all Sinhalese efforts to preserve and carry on the tradition in an institutionalized form, the construction of the Mahāstūpa involved all levels of society from the king to the layman. Even the gods are included when they sanction the building by providing the bricks and decorations.<sup>79</sup> According to the Mahāvamsa, the laying of the first brick was marked by an earthquake, whereupon 400,000 lay persons were converted; 40,000 became stream entrants; 1,000 attained once-returner status; 18,000 bhikkus attained arhantship.<sup>80</sup> The significance of the event is characterized by the chronicles as a renewal of the sasana. The king's ritual function includes a creative capacity as well as a protective role: the message in the chronicles applies to all Sinhalese kings. Legitimation involves a creative and prosperity enhancing function as well as a protective function. Apart from



reflecting the interaction of the social structure, stūpa construction had explicit cosmological symbolism.

According to Buddhist scholars, Sinhalese stūpas represent microcosms; concentrated images of Mt. Meru, that focus the concept of boundary as part of a nationalist ideal. The stūpa is in itself an image of centrality that expressed Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalism. In this context, the king seeks sanction from the process of construction and from the sangha for whom the stūpa is built. For example, following the construction of the Mahāstūpa in the Mahavihara, Dutthagamani seeks consecration saying, "To the Master of the world, to the Teacher, who bears the threefold parasol, the heavenly parasol and the earthly and the parasol of deliverance, I consecrate three times my kingly rank."<sup>81</sup> In this context, Sinhalese kingship is portrayed as the central instrument of continuity. In conjunction with the nationalist sentiment in which the dhamma is rooted, the construction of Buddhist institutions provides a process that legitimates the king as protector and perpetuator.

### III. Brahmans and Bhikkus in the Community

This section is devoted to the special role Brahmins and bhikkus played in institutionalizing their ritual authority. The emphasis is on the brahmadeya and vihara, both of which had substantial secular authority.

#### Brahmadeya

From the point of view of ritual legitimation in South India, the brahmadeya served as an institution that transmitted social, religious and cultural ideology. Moreover, brahmadeya were centres of secular authority and economic power among the peasantry.



The inscriptional record indicates that brahmadeya(s) did not begin to flourish until the sixth or seventh century when Pallava kings began to settle Brahmans in the peasant villages of the plains. Though Brahmans lived among the peasantry prior to this period, there was no concerted effort to settle them as separate groups.<sup>82</sup> An inscription of the eighth century states that the "purpose of the brahmadeya was to provide a reliable source of support to Brahmans for the pursuit of their sacral responsibilities, and the gift (dāna) of arable land."<sup>83</sup> Extensive tracts of arable land provided the means by which a large number of Brahman families could exist alongside peasant villages. It should not be assumed that all Brahmans resided in brahmadeya(s), many lived in prosperous villages which were in the vicinity of temples and in large cities.<sup>84</sup> Brahmadeya(s), however, contributed directly to the stability and legitimacy of royal power by their very substantial influence on the peasantry. The Brahman-peasant relationship of Medieval South India was based upon "the convergence of important interests which came to exist between those who cultivated the land along with their dependents and those who by their sacral functions, possessed a powerful ideological capability."<sup>85</sup> For the Brahmans, an alliance with the peasantry meant a basis for the maintenance and extension of their ritual influence. Moreover, the adoption of devotional, temple-centred forms of ritual by Brahmans, required a new scale of support which wealthy and established kings were willing and capable of providing. The brahmadeya(s) provided integration of the peasantry into a stabilized society. The extended dominance of anti-brahmanical religions in inhospitable town-centres of South India and the subsequent non-peasant Kalabhra control caused the peasant groups to search for greater "ideological coherence as a means of unifying the

*diverse segments of peasant-society against similar threats in the future.*"<sup>86</sup>

*Protection and integration did come by way of the great dynasties, the Pallavas and Cholas, who sought the prestige of association with Brahmans as a means of achieving dominance and stability with rival political leaders. The gains for the peasantry in their association with Brahmans were substantial, especially with respect to their active participation in sacral activity. This increased involvement was precipitated in part by the shift of religious ritual to Brahmanical temples, and by the assimilation of ancient Tamil folk deities, i.e. Murrigan, to vedic gods.*

*The cornerstone of the relationship between Brahman and peasant was the strong economic ties the brahmadeya had with the peasant villages. The economic privileges accorded brahmadeya(s) was due to the importance attached to their ritual activity and to the status Brahmans enjoyed in the community. Early brahmadeya inscriptions indicate that recitation of the Veda, festivals, marriages, and teaching were done for the peasantry by Brahmans in exchange for economic support.<sup>87</sup> Later periods witnessed the growth of brahmadeya(s) as educational centres.*

*Just as important, brahmadeya(s) were repositories of public information, recorded and preserved in Sanskrit. "The great kāvya inscriptions in Sanskrit as well as other languages must be considered as a form of public notice of an essentially non-religious nature notwithstanding their ostensible purpose."<sup>88</sup> Brahmadeya(s) also performed an important educational function and the history of the mathas as superb centres of learning is well recorded. The objective of this education was the transmission of sacred knowledge to Brahman students; hence, the brahmadeya provided a link not only with other brahmadeya(s) but Brahman villages*



and non-Brahman settlements as well. Inscriptions indicate that a typical brahmadeya could contain anywhere between 200 to 400 students of the Veda and about 20 senior scholars of the Veda and prabhanda. These scholars were provided for by grants of considerable size, usually in the form of food allotments.<sup>89</sup>

The presence of royal authority in the brahmadeya is noted in the public records. Usually the king's ritual administrative staff sat in on the mahasābha in matters of the income that was to be allocated by the king for the maintenance and improvement of temples. Despite the usual royal intervention in matters of economics, the brahmadeya maintained its corporate identity and usually the mahasabha governed its own affairs. The cultural and ritual importance of the brahmadeya lasted well into the 12th century when it was almost entirely surpassed by the pervasive temple as a centre for ritual and cultural influence. Until the 12th century, however, the brahmadeya was responsible for the transmission of cultural values and gave form to South India's traditions of education. In turn, the peasant people accorded to the brahmadeya a level of importance in society related to the status it gave to a village as well as because it was considered an integral part of peasant culture. It would be incorrect to assume that brahmadeya(s) functioned independently of royal power. Rather, brahmadeya provided an access for kings to assert ritual control over the peasantry. As part of the Brahmanic cultural link between king and peasant, the brahmadeya was considered to be representative of the king's ritual sovereignty. In this light, the brahmadeya provided a legitimacy for the king's ritual activity. By being incorporated into and supported by growing diversification of Brahmanic influence under the control of kings, the brahmadeya helped bring into the public view an idea

idea of kingship that was deeply concerned with ritual activity and association with Brahmans.<sup>90</sup>

### The Sangha

Sinhalese history reflects the religious involvement by kings in the legitimation process and, at the same time, reflects a tradition of purely secular statecraft. The dualistic nature of Sinhalese kingship provides an insight into the role of the sangha as a religious as well as a political force. Heinz Bechert believes that the integration of the sangha into the political system was worked out within the tradition of rational politics, but that it had to be justified in terms of religious ideology. This was done, Bechert argues, by emphasizing "the need to protect the sangha from decay, i.e. from meddling in 'mundane' activities, the sangha being an institution with purely religious or supra mundane (*lokuttara*) aims."<sup>91</sup> Rules of vināya prevented the sangha from taking part in "mundane" activities, and closed off monastic access to direct public interaction, unlike in South India where Brahmans enjoyed a large degree of public activity. When schisms arose between the various vihara(s) on the island, and the monastic community was incapable of reforming itself, the king was then sanctioned to carry out the dhamma kamma, a purificatory rite based on the rules of the vināya. Part of the oath taken by a Sinhalese king upon his consecration is the willingness to maintain a strong and unified order.<sup>92</sup> Despite less than complete integration into the political sphere of public life, the sangha was capable of significant contributions to political ideology. The most important of these contributions, the chronicles, helped shape a distinct Sinhalese political and religious institution. But the monks made a second contribution in the day-to-day political activity of



kings. The sangha was given prominence in the court of the king as a source of political advice. Bhikku(s) served the king as personal advisors; a passage in the Mahāvamsa relates how one Sinhalese king of the sixth century rules according to the advice of his premier counsel, a monk named Mulatthana.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, the bhikku(s) were kept by the king to act as educators of the royal family, as mediators of dispute and in rare instances as warriors; for example, the 500 monks who marched into battle against the Tamils alongside Dutthagamani. During times of peace when the sangha was unified and powerful, conflicts between king and sangha were almost always resolved by the submission of the king in recognition of the sangha(s) authority.<sup>94</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that the relationship between sangha and king represented a microcosm of bhikku life within the community. The bhikku was sought after as advisor and as a source of merit for the layman. The construction of vihara provided for the sangha(s) well being but it also was a means by which the lay community could openly interact with the bhikku(s). Public activity took the form of festivals and ceremonies performed for the laity by the bhikku(s).<sup>95</sup> Secondly, bhikku(s) were required to preach the doctrine (dhamma desana) which consisted of the recital of the text. Bhikku(s), knowledgeable in the language (Pāli), usually read the scriptures aloud and followed with a commentary in Sinhalese. The transmission of knowledge about the king to the public was a vital mechanism in king-sangha relations; the commentators were highly valued in society and were honoured by kings.<sup>96</sup> Sinhalese kings, aware of the enhancement to their own legitimacy provided by these translations often induced bhikku(s) to translate the sacred texts into the vernacular so that the public would more readily embrace the state religion.<sup>97</sup>

The sangha(s) regulative function (dhamma kamma) provided a legitimate means of extirpating any elements within the bhikku community considered false or heterodox. This regulative function made it almost impossible for the sangha to be fully integrated into the public sphere of Sinhalese life. Nevertheless, bhikku(s) depended on Buddhist laymen, kings included, for their donations. Monks served as merit fields and the ideology of merit helps explain why the larger community openly supported the sangha. As Tambiah points out, the monk is "an appropriate intermediary who can reach up to mystical powers associated with the Buddha and the sacred texts, and who can in turn transfer these powers to the laymen in a form that can positively sacralize this left and the next."<sup>98</sup> Smith adds, "The doing of merit is thus accompanied by the receiving of merit, giving concrete forms to the reciprocity which exists but needs actualizing to have meaning for the participants. As the king is ideally the mediator between the body politic and cosmic realm, so the sangha(s) mediatorial role helps to provide sacral meaning to mundane existence and the human odyssey."<sup>99</sup> The role of monks as mediator is manifest on the four Uposatha days of the lunar month. "On these days, laymen clad in festival garments, visited the temple of the nearest vihara to attend their devotions, to hear the sermon of a thera and decorate the Buddha image with flowers."<sup>100</sup> Festivals like the Uposatha were important to the legitimating process. By paying homage to the Buddha, glorifying the dhamma and reiterating their vows with the aid of the sangha, the participants were reminded of the historical continuity in sangha/laity relations. In a very direct way, the community was incorporated into events which sanctioned and supported the distinct Sinhalese traditions ensuring that the meaning and purpose of unified religious interaction was never forgotten.



The link between laity and sangha provided the basis for the sangha(s) political strengths. The great monastic establishments of the cities, such as the Mahavihara and Abhayagirivihara and those viharas located in the agricultural settlements, were, as it has been pointed out, foci of ritual activities. The Viharas were religious communities that served as centres of learning and educational dissemination and as such, they formed a ritual and ideological network throughout the island. Like the brahmadeya, the vihara were communities of the pure who were the legitimate link between transcendent sacred values and the social order. The vihara benefitted from this role through economic support and close interaction with nobility and the agricultural community.

One of the inherent features of the network of vihara(s) was the decentralized and parochial structure of the network. Regional differentiation was common in early Buddhism in India and this accounted for the long term trend towards diversity in disciplinary rules and ideology. The diversity was common among Sinhalese vihara(s) as well but there appears much less tolerance for the differences in ideology. The purificatory rites of Sri Lanka were in part based upon the necessity for the sangha to remain united since unity was of paramount importance to all aspects of Sri Lankan life. Political authority in Lanka, which was centralized, was constantly attempting to reform and unify the sangha. The problem of disunity and the instability of the sangha posed a problem not only for the community which depended on the sangha but for the legitimacy of the king as well.

On the other hand, in South India diversity and opposition among the Brahman community was both accepted and utilized as part of the legitimizing process. The king had neither the political power nor sanction to



cause the Brahman community to conform to an ideal state religion under the wing of royal authority. At the same time, successful attempts were made by the Chola kings to ritually incorporate political leaders and the peasantry into a system of religious organization that was part of a deliberate policy of ritual hegemony. In spite of all of the political maneuverings of South Indian kings, the Brahman's purity was never questioned nor were they considered to be the creators of an institutionalized process of reform and conformity.

#### IV. Institutionalized Ritual

The three previous sections of this chapter have been an attempt to clarify the dialectic of the relationship between ritual and the process of legitimation. This fourth section continues the analysis but focuses on two specific institutions that represent the way in which ritual functioned as a prime element in legitimating power. The first analysis concerns a development by which Chola kings from the tenth century on, deliberately transformed earlier concepts of ritual incorporation into a Royal Sival Cult which, at its apogee, affected ritual hegemony over all of South India and beyond. Germane to this development is the increased use of pallipaqāi that emphasized the sacral character of South Indian kings and a strong association with the great Saiva temple of Chidambaram.

The second analysis concerns the Sinhalese Festival of the Sacred Tooth (daḷaḍa) which was considered an essential event that sanctioned a king's public authority. Although not a creation of deliberate royal policy, the Tooth Festival was an institution that incorporated the symbols of Buddhism and made them inseparable from political sovereignty. The Tooth Festival is significant in that it is a concrete example of the fusion

of kingship into bodhisattva-ship which makes the king a figure of ritual importance.

### The Royal Siva Cult

The ideology of ritual incorporation in South India witnessed its greatest development during the Early and Middle Chola periods beginning in the tenth century. Building upon conceptions of sacral kingship begun by the Pallavas, the Cholas managed to become the dominant power in the Kaveri river region of Tamilnad. The development of ritual incorporation is significant in that it appears to be the result of a deliberate policy on the part of Chola kings to utilize ritual hegemony as part of the greater process of insuring economic and territorial dominance. The process was aided by the establishment of a Siva cult which effectively displaced indigenous Tamil cults with Pallava styled temples dedicated wholly to Siva in his many forms. One element of this transformation was the popularization of the Siva linga as a royal symbol that focused on the Cholas as ritual figures of great proportion. Another part of the transformation was the forging of an association between the Cholas and the prominent but independent Brahmans of the Siva temple of Chidambaram and the rich tradition it represented. A fourth process was the culmination of Chola efforts, the development of sepulchral temples such as the Rajarajesvaram and Gangāikondacholapūram, that were constructed to honour the dead king and Siva. These premier temples were models of earlier attempts by Chola kings and queens to erect temples that served as funeral tombs, memorials and places of worship. The purpose of these sepulchral temples was to raise the sacral character of the king to new heights and to integrate the social order with a network of Siva temples.

*The beginnings of Chola hegemony can be traced back to an obscure chieftain by the name of Vijayalaya who layed claim to the heritage of the Solar dynasty. The successful conquest of Tanjore by Vijayalaya around 850 A.D. and the founding there of a temple dedicated to the goddess Nisumbahasudani (Durga), were the first steps taken by Chola power to affect ritual dominance in the Kaveri river region. Having secured a niche in the political ascendancy of South India, Vijayalaya set about to establish a "pedigree"; the Chola rulers constructed a mystical ancestry that traced their descent from the sun - at least fifteen names precede that of the Vijayalaya on the Anbilplates.<sup>101</sup>*

*In Sangam literary works, such as the Kalingattupparan, an early Chola king with his commanders is described as being drawn to the South in pursuit of a raksasa in the form of an antelope. Having killed the raksasa along the Kaveri, "the river which brings to the earth in the guise of water, the nectar obtained by gods after churning the ocean of milk"<sup>102</sup>, the king bathed in the river and when he looked for some Brahmans to bestow gifts upon, he found none there. He then summoned many excellent Brahmans from the north (āryavarta) and settled them on the banks of the river, cleared the forest, planted groves of araca palms, laid out fruit gardens and otherwise improved the countryside.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps there is an analogy hidden in the story that reflects the political ambitions of early Chola kings. South India is traditionally divided into four distinct geographical areas.<sup>104</sup> In Tamil literature, they are represented by four succinctly different gods. Tamils of the Sangam age worshipped the gods Mayon (Krsna), the red god Seyon (Subhrahmanyam), Vinda (Indra) and Varuna.<sup>105</sup> "The forest region which is dear to the ocean colored (Krsna), the mountain region dear to red Murrigan, the well watered river*



*region which is dear to Indra and the sandy coast region which is dear to Varuna are respectively known as Mullai, Kuranji, Marudam and Neydai."*<sup>106</sup> This poem, representative of the four regions, is useful in understanding Chola efforts to establish Brahmans along the Kaveri: the Cholas knew that it was necessary that they be associated with the process of providing for Brahmans in the sacred river region; the reference to the clearing of the forests may be analogous to Chola attempts at displacing an indigenous South Indian forest cult-region led by a Blue god with an essentially river oriented culture that was associated with Brahmanic learning, Aryan origins and a vedic god.

A noble mythological background such as this, would have helped to legitimize Chola rule that sought ritual sovereignty over and against their enemies, specifically the Pandyas and Pallavas, who had no claim to an ancestry that traced its origins to the North and to the Sun. Clearly the Cholas wished to be associated with settling Brahmans on the fertile river soil, home of the Vedic god Indra. The desire for Chola kings to sanction a mythology that has South Indian elements, marks their support and need for a royal heritage that had as its roots in both an earlier tradition and South Indian history.

During their lifetimes, Vijāyālaya and his son Aditya I (871-907 A.D.) are said to have built tall stone temples dedicated to Siva, on both banks of the Kaveri from the Sahyadri to the sea;<sup>107</sup> following this, Aditya gilded the roof of Chidambaram with gold seized from his conquests.<sup>108</sup> The temples of Aditya and Vijāyālaya reflect a transitional phase between early Pallava styled temples and a mature Chola first phase style.<sup>109</sup> The Aditiesvaram and Colisvara temple are two of the 37 temples in the Tanjore district alone that first utilized the devokostha, as a means of incorporat-

ing into the temple structure images of Siva in his various forms (Kartikkeya, Dakshinamurti, Gajasura and other Brahmanic gods).<sup>110</sup> The image of Siva as lord of dance (Nataraja) is prominent among the temples of this and later periods.<sup>111</sup> The temples are also noteworthy by the absence of any representation of, or inscriptions to, indigenous gods or goddesses. Scholars of Medieval South Indian history such as Stein and Sastri, perceive these changes in the style of the temple complex as a deliberate and open policy of Aryanization; an attempt to displace the preponderance of indigenous non-Aryan deities and their associated cults. Citing the unpublished thesis of Suresh, Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India, Stein argues convincingly that the majority of Chola temples in the Kaveri river region<sup>174</sup> were identified with the suffix "isvaram." Most of the Saiva temples constructed during the Chola period were named for a king (e.g. Rājarājesvaram); "the remainder ... were named for Siva directly or for goddesses associated with Siva."<sup>112</sup> The second largest number of temples consisted of those named for local deities but whose names were changed to Siva synonyms following the ascendancy of the Cholas. Others retained their original name which was "a way of indicating a Siva deity in the time before the great Cholas."<sup>113</sup>

The reason it was necessary to create "canonical" temples may lie in the fact that these vast and complex institutions were an integral part of the economic operations of the Chola State. This explanation does not appear to be the sole reason, nor can it be said that the Chola kings propagated "Aryan" religion in order to expunge the non-Aryan Tamil religions because that process occurred prior to the Cholas with the Devaram singers. Stein believes that these efforts were made to "encompass independent and localized cultic affinities within an expanding Chola

hegemony."<sup>114</sup> The incorporation of temples constructed prior to the rise of the Cholas and the addition of devakostha figures, was a form of ritual sovereignty in which the lesser gods of chieftains honour the god of the Chola king.<sup>115</sup> Suresh observes that what historians have been able to learn of religion during the Chola period comes from inscriptions from Aryanized temples alone: "It is primarily through a variety of indirect references that other forms of religion of Chola times can be seen."<sup>116</sup> Using the evidence of the predominance of the suffix "īsvaram", Suresh infers a transition from indigenous temples to Chola styled temples. "Kooil represents the earliest stage - fāli the second stage represents the introduction of Brahmanic elements converted to suit native usage and - īsvaram the final stage speak of the domination of canonized temples."<sup>117</sup>

Coupled with the development of aryanized temples under Chola rule was the increase in use of the massive Siva-linga as a symbol of a royal cult. The use of Siva-linga in the temple architecture was an adoption of an earlier pr-Aryan cultic movement. The effect the assimilation had was the emphasis on newly created stone temples housing images of Siva while using the earlier yet still powerful image of the linga.

In essence, the Chola policy to construct and control Siva temples on a consistent and expansionist basis formed the pinnacle of ritual incorporation in South India. The expansionist policy of the Cholas was conditioned by their political astuteness and their piety which was centred on the Royal family and the Siva Cult. The nexus of this kind of ritual ideology was the Rajarajesvaram temple, a funerary edifice with unprecedented political implications.

The idea of sacral kingship in Medieval South India received its most elaborate development under the Chola king Rājarāja I (985-1014 A.D.).



The genius of Rājārāja as a ruler lay in his contribution to the sacral significance of Chola rule, the construction of the Rājārājesvaram temple in Tanjore. The Tanjore (Tanjavur) temple Rajaraja chose to create was intended to be the "greatest Siva Shrine in South India; altogether the creation of Rājārāja's policy."<sup>118</sup> The Tanjavur temple dedicated to Siva as Brhadisvara was constructed during the final years of Rājārāja's reign, "pressed to completion so that it would be a memorial shrine for dying king"<sup>119</sup>, at a place which never before the time of Vijāyālaya enjoyed sacred status.<sup>120</sup> "In the Brhadisvara temple at Tanjavur were established a full display of the manifestations of not only the puranic Siva, but representations of other Vedic and puranic deities, Surya, Vishnu and Brahma."<sup>121</sup> Building upon the Chola policy of "Aryanization" (the displacement of indigenous deities by Vedic deities), Rajaraja methodically created a Chola pantheon to be developed by his successors.<sup>122</sup> It is also clear that Rajaraja intended the temple to be his funerary edifice that presented him on equal footing with the gods who were worshipped at the temple thus making him a god-king and the head of a Royal cult.

The use of temples as funerary edifices (pallipadāi) by Chola kings did not begin with Rajaraja but is deeply rooted in pre-Brahmanical tradition. Raising a shrine over a sepulchre and establishing a linga on it, is a "Saivite adaptation of the Buddhist practice of erecting a memorial. In the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, cāitya vṛkṣa worship is a common practice of honouring a fallen soldier."<sup>124</sup> The motivation to enshrine the bones of the dead may stem from the ancient Tamil practice of erecting hero-stones or perhaps from ancient Vedic means of disposing of the dead. In the Brahmanic period there are references to the construction of the smasana(s) on the bones and ashes of great men.<sup>125</sup> In the Rg Veda,

there are five funeral hymns which refer to both burial and cremation as the two usual methods of disposing of the dead.<sup>126</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to the smasana as "a burial place and sepulchre which is constructed in the form of a tumulus or grave mound."<sup>127</sup> In the Rāmāyana erection of buildings at certain sacred spots were not attributed to common practice but were confined to kings or men of distinction.<sup>128</sup> This fact suggests that construction of buildings over the relics of the deceased was an aristocratic tradition, a symbol of status and power. Other evidence implies that the funerary edifice had a universal appeal. One such application was the use of the hero stone referred to in the poetry of the Sangam age. In reality, it was a tall stone but the people honoured and worshipped it "as if it were a deity."<sup>129</sup> In the Tamil heroic poetry, the king was compared to the gods, implying that worship of pallipadāi was not foreign to South Indian culture.

The impact pallipadāi had on Chola ritual sovereignty was significant. The first known pallipadāi was that of Aditya I: the Adityesvaram constructed by his son Parantaka (907-955 A.D.). Parantaka realized that a funerary edifice sustaining the memory of a dead king in combination with a Siva temple that provided support for a living king would have a tremendous impact on the peasantry who were obliged to view the temple and take part in its Festivals. The Adityesvaram temple fulfilled the function of increased Chola ritual hegemony by incorporating the common traditions of all temples. Festivals and gifts, given in honour of the dead king Aditya, could only have strengthened the sacral power of the Chola throne. Unlike previous efforts at pallipadāi construction, the Adityesvaram guaranteed a high degree of ritual sovereignty by linking the dead king to the gods. This ritual sovereignty translated into increased politi-

cal influence and legitimacy and was a characteristic style of sacral leadership further refined and focused by later Chola kings.

The individual who stands out as one who took full advantage of the concept of ritual incorporation was Sembiyan Mahadevi, the great aunt of Rājārāja I. She devoted her life and wealth to the renovation of early styled brick temples and to temples to which structural and sculptural additions were made and most importantly to the construction of the Umamahesvara temple at Tirunallam (the present day Konerirajapuram). The temple was constructed during the third year of her son's (Uttama Chola) reign and dedicated to her dead husband (Gandaraditya) as a pallipadāi. On the south wall of the main shrine there is a panel carving of Gandaraditya worshipping a linga which represented the main deity of the Umamahesvara temple.<sup>130</sup> Below the panel there is an inscription edifying Gandaraditya. The purpose of the passage and the carving was to establish "the divine honours accorded to royal personages after death and sometimes in their lifetime."<sup>131</sup> The edifying image of Gandaraditya was the first of its kind and intent. For that reason, both Stein and Sastri come to the conclusion that this sepulchral-like memorial was a copy of both the Adityesvaram temple at Malpadi, and the one built by Rājārāja to commemorate the dead King Arinjāya.<sup>132</sup>

The funerary Shrines in which Chola rulers were given divine status acted to "extend the scope of Chola Royal authority within and beyond the Kaveri domain."<sup>133</sup> That this is a deliberate policy is evident in the inscriptions found on the walls of most Chola temples. An inscription in the Adityesvaram refers to a grant of land given during the reign of Uttama Chola for the purpose of maintaining a perpetual lamp in memory of Gandaraditya.<sup>134</sup> An inscription of the third year records the action of

the mahāsabha in receiving land from Sembhayan Mahadevi to support twenty-five more Brahmans.<sup>134</sup> Complete incorporation came about in the eighth year of Uttama Chola's reign when the income of the temple became augmented by expenditures from the royal office which covered "every aspect of temple activity, from the celebration of Sembhayan Mahadevi's birthday and other festivals, to the provision of houses for temple servants, hymnists and others."<sup>135</sup> There was even a shrine dedicated to the royal sculptor who erected the stone temple "under the Royal order of Udaya Pirattayam (Sembhayan Mahadevi)."<sup>136</sup> From the Brahmans who attended to the general management of the temple, to the dyer who dyed the sacred cloth for the idols, the official auditor who checked the temple accounts to the astrologer who prepared the calendar of the day; each individual whose duty was in any way connected to the temple, came under Royal contract and control.<sup>137</sup>

The temple provided spiritual well-being as well as economic welfare. A survey of the fifteen major temples ascribed to Sembhayan Mahadevi show that they incorporated most or all of the ritual characteristics of the temple dedicated to her husband.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, the network of temples she established along with the many others acts to, effect ritual dominance over the numerous peasant villages of the region. Through her devotion, Sembhayan Mahadevi had utilized the concept of dharmic incorporation to strengthen the ties with the peasantry and to provide local chiefs with a strong ritual base for their own local rule.<sup>139</sup> The cornerstone of this ritual hegemony was the Royal Siva Cult for which all temples constructed by Sembhayan Mahadevi were intended.

The Sembhayan built Vasisthesvara temple at Karuntattangvoli provides an example of "an earlier existing temple that felt the impact of

the new movement."<sup>140</sup> The temple is noteworthy in that the number of devakostha figures is increased to include a larger number of manifestations of Siva, especially in his form as Lord of Dance, Natarāja. The number of devokostha figures constitutes the largest compliment of this period prior to construction of the Rajarajesvaram temple by Rajaraja at Tanjavur. The inclusion of Nataraja is significant because that image which is closely associated with Chidambaram began to occur with greater frequency under Sembiyan Mahadevi. This was possibly a Chola attempt to ally with the powerful and independent temple of Chidambaram.

The final focus of this section is on the temple complex constructed by Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra I: the Rājarājesvaram and Gangāikondacholapuram temples. Both temples reflect in architectural style much more of an ideological pattern than the temples of the earlier Cholas. One such architectural element was the massive tank constructed by Rajendra at Ganqaikondacholapuram which symbolically connected the temple with the sacred river Ganga; conquered by Rajendra. The tank was filled with water brought by Rajendra following his victory. Images installed at both temples were not of the type common to contemporary South India. "Brahma and Agni were depicted as old men bearded and pot bellied as they were iconographically represented in contemporary north India and in contrast to the youthful forms these duties usually took in South India."<sup>141</sup> The openness with which the later Chola kings displayed their royal policies is exemplified in the temples which were to become their funerary tombs. The difference between the earlier memorial sepulchres of Aditya and Gandaraditya is that they were less the acts of an institutionalized policy for ensuring a legitimized rule. The process of the transformation of the pallipadāi becomes clearer in the light of the increased legiti-

macy each successive funerary tomb conferred upon a Chola king. In this way, earlier efforts of Parantaka and Sembiyan Mahadevi can be seen as intermediate steps towards a politically mature ideology in which paḷlipadāi were deemed to be essential to the legitimacy of Chola sovereignty. Part of this ideology was the close association the Cholas had with the distinguished Brahmans of Chidambaram which was made a prominent issue in the inscriptions of Rājarāja and Rājendra.<sup>142</sup> In both cases, the kings were requested to do service for the powerful temple of Chidambaram. The inscriptions illustrate that there was some Chola control over Brahmanic learning. Some scholars have construed the close association as a demonstration of "proper regal behaviour (rājadharmā) in accordance with the Chola claim to being one of the solar line of ksatriyas"<sup>143</sup> while others consider close ties with Brahmanic institutions as a means of legitimizing their ritual control. Both interpretations have their basis in the strategic importance of the Chidambaram temple.

During the Sangam period, Chidambaram had virtually no political or religious prominence. However, during the rise to prominence of the Pallavas in Tondaimandalam, the early Chola kings were antagonized by the growing threat of the Pallavas of the northern regions. The capture by the Pallavas of Kanchi, an important military point in the periphery of Tanjore, the Chola capital, would have inevitably lead to the conquest of Tanjore and the defeat of the Cholas. Strategically, Chidambaram lay halfway between Tanjore and Kanchi. For that reason, an adversary of the Pallavas named Koccengam Chola, an early ancestor of Vijāyalaya, was crowned at Chidambaram, and with that, the temple was incorporated into Chola religious culture to the exclusion of the Pandyan. That consecration began a long lasting relationship between the Brahmans of Chidambaram and the Cholas.



*It was an essential part of their legitimacy not only because the temple was important for political reasons but because the Chola kings were crowned there. This fact is given even more weight when it becomes apparent that Chidambaram was an influential independent temple with its own tradition and as such existed outside the hegemony of Chola kings.*

*That Chidambaram was influential in the period prior to and during the Cholas reign is clear. Appar, one of the great devaram singers, spoke of the temple that glorified the great city of Tillai.<sup>144</sup> In his hymns referring to Chidambaram, Appar used the expression "nadantantu natanam" to describe the ecstatic dance of Tillai Nataraja. This form of dancing, also known as ananda tandavu, finds its home at Chidambaram. It is the dance of bliss that Siva used to humble a group of heretical rsis of the Daruka forest. So powerful is this dance "which represents the entire cosmic process of creation and dissolution, that it can only be performed at the centre of the universe."<sup>144</sup> The sthala purāṇa describes a particular incident from Siva's point of view which relates to the centrality of Chidambaram.*

*That day I danced in the forest while Visnu looked on, I saw that the spot could not support me ... But there is a site (manru) which can sustain the dance ... The world is analogous to the body. The left channel (of the subtle body Hainati) goes to straight to Lanka and the right channel (pīnkalai rati) pierces the Himalaya. The central channel (natuvin ati) goes directly through Tillai (Chidambaram) ... the site of the original linga.<sup>145</sup>*

*The passage describes a microcosmic model of the universe. Chidambaram which is viewed by devoted Sivaites as the heart of the universe, locates akasa (ether) within its sanctum sanctorum the chitsabha.<sup>146</sup>*

A second important characteristic of the Chidambaram tradition is the fact that it was capable of overcoming the problem of the universal popularity of Siva. A second myth poses the question, "Why does the devotee need to go to Chidambaram to see his god? Is Siva not present everywhere?"<sup>147</sup> The problem is resolved by Siva performing the dance of bliss for two devoted worshippers, Patanjali and Vyaghrapada, on the road on which they are travelling to Chidambaram.<sup>148</sup> This symbolic resolution may have been a result of the growing diffusion of the Nataraja cult. The Chola family deity was Nataraja indicating that the Cholas were involved in the popularity of the cult, and the fact that the dancing Siva is portrayed on all Chola temples reinforces this point. A third myth involving Siva and Kali tells of how Siva defeated Kali in the fierce dance of pantarankam: "Siva pressed one foot on the ground and lifted the other straight into the heavens. As he danced thus, the world shook, the stars fell from the heavens like scattered pearls."<sup>149</sup> As a consequence of her defeat, a humbled Kali is forced to leave her shrine in the Tillai forest and is given a place in Siva's temples, indicating the manner in which indigenous female deity cults were incorporated into the larger Aryan tradition. The Nataraja myth is a "Fitting symbol for the classical resolution of Tamil mythology which has buried the sacrificial symbolism of an earlier time under a theology asserting the supremacy and eternal life of the God Natarāja, the Lord of Dance, Siva, as unique creator and destroyer; never Himself destroyed."<sup>150</sup>

With respect to Chola ritual incorporation, it becomes clear why Chidambaram, as the centre of the cosmos, was sought after and developed by the Chola kings. The Cholas utilized the particularly salient characteristic of Siva worship of Chidambaram as a focal point and for the sanction

of their policy of ritual supremacy. All Chola kings were crowned at Chidambaram. Thus, Chola political and ritual ideology, that encompassed a myriad of legitimizing features and relied heavily on association with temple worship, gave new meaning to the term, "rājadharmā." Chola policy was no less sacral than the kings that preceded them; rather, the Cholas succeeded in bringing together a number of legitimizing features that allowed for imperialism based on ritual rather than pure force. In this context, it was the king's moral duty as the leader of the kṣatriya(s) to ensure a stable environment, not just as an ideal but as a reality that relied on the sacral aspects of kingship.

#### The Tooth Relic

In Sri Lanka, the conception of legitimate rule is closely tied to the performance and participation in ritual. No ritual was more important to ensuring the legitimacy of the king than the Festival of the Sacred Relic Tooth (Daḷāda Maligava). The legitimacy of a king in his association with the Tooth Relic was based upon two aspects of king's righteous rule. An analysis of these two aspects form the content of this section. The first aspect is the way in which actual physical possession of the Tooth Relic had a legitimating function. If festivals and rituals for the daḷāda were to be performed by the king for the community, it was imperative that the relic be under constant custody of the king. The second aspect is the way in which the performance of the ritual was a symbolic validation of the institution of kingship as a political and national power. The perahara ritual, which is part of the Tooth Relic Festival, represents the interaction of society on a microcosmic level that confers legitimacy upon the unity of

the social hierarchy as a mechanism for perpetuating stability and security.

The Dalada as a Symbol of Sovereignty

Since the time when it was brought to Sri Lanka by Siri Meghavanna (301-328 A.D.), the Tooth Relic has been considered an indispensable possession of the country's legitimate ruler. The position the king held in relation to his possession of the dalāda is illustrated in this passage from the Cūlavamsa:

Since the Lord of men (i.e. the king) had heard from foolish people outside (of the Buddhist order) that great evil would befall if he were to place the relic in a new temple, he gave orders that this should be done by others and betook himself thence to another town. While he sojourned there the dignitaries assembled and together with the caretakers and other people, they tried with all their might to open the reliquary. But although they tried the whole night long they did not succeed. The dignitaries went thither and told the matter to the Great King. When the King heard that, he came in haste to the splendid town and after the Ruler had reverently made offerings with all kinds of flowers, with lamps with incense and the like and shown his reverence, he took hold of the lock and at once opened the reliquary without difficulty.<sup>151</sup>

According to legend, the Tooth Relic was the eye tooth of the Buddha; first in the possession of Indra who then gave it to the Sinhalese so they could honour its magical properties.<sup>152</sup> According to the Māhāvamsa, King Sirimeghavanna accepted the tooth relic and housed it in a building previously erected by Devanampiyatissa on demarcated land (rāja vatthumi) located near the royal palace in Anuradhapura.<sup>153</sup> From then on, the relic was considered to be a symbol of the king's sovereignty. In accordance with this association, the Māhāvamsa and Cūlavamsa record

successive efforts taken by kings to incorporate the Tooth Relic into Sinhalese society as a symbol of their power. Possession of the dalada became, over time, a prime requisite for legitimate rule. The Mahāvamsa indicates that the sacred relic was moved according to the movements of new governments; when a king was defeated by his enemies the relics then became their possession. For example, Parakkamabahu led a successful campaign against Tamil rebels situated in the southern province of Rohana and as part of his strategy to claim sovereignty over the entire island, he had the relic enshrined in the capital of the defeated rebels (pulatthina-gara). From the beginning, the relic was the object of reverence by kings, and, thus, kings layed claim to sovereignty by capturing it and wars for political domination were conceived as wars for the retrieval of the dalada. The dalada was foremost a symbol of de facto rule for Sinhalese kings. Parakkamabahu was compelled to recapture the relic for "without the dalada, his right to sovereignty remained imperfect and challengeable."<sup>154</sup>

When Sri Lanka came under control of the Tamil King Magha, the Monks hid the dalada in the mountain of Kotnali in central Sri Lanka. The following king, a Buddhist by the name of Vijāyabāhu III (1233-6 A.D.), having again secured the dalada, built a fortress in order to protect the relic and his sovereignty.<sup>155</sup> This historical fact underlines the transition in the meaning of the relic in Sri Lanka from its early history to the later years following the collapse of the Anurādhapura kingdom. The relic went from being an object of necessity for Buddhist sovereignty over which wars were fought, capitals were shifted and kings were defeated, to having a far deeper meaning as an object of devotion. The dalada became an institutionalized element from the early Medieval period onward in which each

king was "anxious to surpass his predecessors in devotion and prodigality."<sup>156</sup> The dalada became fully incorporated into a festival-like victory tour taken by the king as a reenactment of the Buddha's mythological conquest of the island that helped to reinforce the king's own position vīs-a-vīs the outlying political powers.<sup>157</sup>

An essential part of the institutionalization were the measures taken by Sinhalese kings to ensure the safety of the relic. The Temple of the Tooth, fortress-like and protected by a moat and guards formed the eastern flank of temple-palace cum fortress complex. The king's palace was situated in the north of the temple and it is to the north that the cakkavatti(s) wheel of righteousness first turns as he begins his dharmaviṭaya. Incorporated into this complex are the smaller shrines of the Hindu pantheon clearly in a place of dependency in relation to the main temple, implying the superiority of the dhamma over the gods. Some distance away from the king's palace were two monasteries straddling either side of the dalada temple, symbolic of the active interests the sangha shared in the politics of the kings.<sup>158</sup>

Many Buddhist scholars have observed that the Buddha was perceived by the Sinhalese as a divine being, whose relics were "repositories of power and divine authority."<sup>159</sup> In reference to this conception, Seneviratne notes that the building housing the relic (devale), was dissimilar in architectural style to other Sinhalese temples and was more like a vihara in design.<sup>160</sup> The Cūlavamsa refers to the Temple of the Tooth as a place descended from the world of the gods.<sup>161</sup> Using this evidence, both Seneviratne and Tambiah believe that because there was an emphasis placed on the relic as a sacred object, there was a deliberate attempt to close off the most sacred of rituals of the tooth relic to the public, effectively making



the rituals a private ceremony open to monks only; hence, the vihara styled temple. The sacredness necessary in the operations of rituals involving the Tooth Relic meant that only the highest status groups could be involved in the ceremonies. The king, a bodhisattva, the highest status individual in Sri Lankan society, was therefore a ritual officiant who presided over all rituals of the dalada.<sup>162</sup>

The presence of the king in the ritual was considered to be a necessity for its proper functioning. The most conspicuous example of the king's participation in the ritual is the *Asala Perahara*; literally, the "procession of July-August."<sup>163</sup> The ritual, still continued in the modern era, begins with the planting of four poles called kap which mark the perimeter of the Tooth Relic in a manner similar in meaning and intent to the act of sīma.<sup>164</sup> Following the planting of the kap, the king circumambulates the poles carrying the sacred Tooth Relic on his temple elephant. The circumambulation is a symbolic proclamation of the king's physical dominance and sovereignty over the island. In keeping with the abstract representation of a victory tour or tour of righteousness in the circumambulation, the Cūlavamsa makes explicit reference to this part of the ritual as a ceremonial version of the wars waged in the name of dhamma with the aid of the relic:

The great king ... marched around the town his right side turned towards it, thus making it known that the realm bereft of a king had a king again.<sup>165</sup>

Seneveratne elaborates, "By circumambulating the city, the king who sometimes rode in the *Perahara* directly or through his officials who represented him in the *Perahara*, was gaining symbolic control over the city representing the larger kingdom. In conducting the Sacred Tooth Relic and

the insignia of the gods in the Perahara the king was summoning the aid of these sacred objects in his attempt at gaining symbolic control."<sup>166</sup> By circumambulating the kap, the king was also circumambulating the city. "The kap at one extreme of meanings symbolized the 'center' circumambulation of which was also a circumambulation of the city. At the other extreme of meanings, they symbolized fertility and prosperity and the perahāra was an attempt to "capture" those benefits also."<sup>167</sup>

In essence then, the perahāra, as an expression of the claim to resources on the island, shared many similarities with Brahmanic consecration ceremonies, such as the Rājasūya which was also a symbolic reaffirmation of the king's sovereignty cloaked in an abstract version of an expeditionary conquest. The legitimacy of a king's authority in both cases found its manifestation in a ritual that was a politically meaningful expression of a king's protective capacity. That the Perahāra emphasized the political legitimacy of the king is made clear in the medieval form which consisted of the king's army in regalia, including the artillery department and the elephant cavalry. These representations "would have undoubtedly given the Perahāra the look of great military advance."<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the king who was himself divine was in a sense capturing the city "with the weapons of the gods assisting him."<sup>169</sup>

Juxtaposed with the military character of the circumambulation was the water cutting ceremony which followed; symbolic perhaps of the cleansing of the sword following the defeat of the enemy by the king or even the Buddha's defeat of the yakkhas.<sup>170</sup> Implicit within the water cutting ceremony is the depiction of final victory of good, clearly associated with the Buddha, and evil associated with non-Buddhist forces. As in other examples of the Sinhalese legitimating process, the festival under-

scores both the growth and stability that arises from the act of violence and the reliance upon the dhamma of genuine sovereignty. The participation of the king as bodhisattva allows for the integration of these two disparate elements in such a way that the legitimizing of power is given a nationalist focus and a militaristic fervour.

#### The Tooth Relic Festival as a Microcosm of the Social Order

The annual Tooth Festival was the pre-eminent ritual representation of the social order in Sri Lanka. Seneveratne argues, in a very convincing way, that the perahara was a ritual organized along the principles of Sinhalese society that sums up, "the kingdom's social, political, economic and religious systems."<sup>171</sup> All the levels of society from the king to the peasantry, from bhikkus to merchant, were represented in the ritual. The Cūlavamsa describes the events following the circumambulation in which participants return to the temple according to their predetermined status in society.<sup>172</sup> The open and active participation of all levels of the social hierarchy helps place on a microcosmic level the integration of the whole social order on a level of reaffirmation and stability. The individual and all groups within the social order are placed within the context of cooperative action formed by the backdrop of the Tooth Relic Festival which symbolized the Buddha's authority that transcends them all. The participation is a way of working out the structural tension between classes by essentially absorbing them into something bigger than themselves. "National" sentiment is given pre-eminence over all other institutions by involving all levels of the social order in the festival; this sentiment is evident in the circumambulation parade in which the king ritually engulfs the rest of the kingdom and so incorporates the participants in the

great order of the dhamma. The actual procession consists of representatives of the king at the beginning and end of the procession while in between:

*All participants from ministers at the top of the low castes who performed menial functions were represented, so to say in their true form, that is carrying the sings - dress symbol or other markets - of their status while also taking sections of the spectacle according to status.<sup>173</sup>*

*The involvement in the festival of all levels of society and the implicit recognition of the king as a ritual participant of importance as indicated by his leading the procession, symbolizes the recognition of the king's legitimate sovereignty. Actual participation is a direct sanction of his power.*

*Finally, the festival was held on an annual basis and lesser political leaders, i.e. provincial cheiftains, etc., were compelled to participate in the festival on a regular basis. "Fear of mystical repercussions prevented the dīsava (chiefs) from taking such a drastic violation of faith as refusing to attend the greatest festival of honour of such a mystically powerful object."<sup>174</sup> Possible threats to the king's sovereignty in the form of rebellious cheiftains were circumvented by the festival itself. In this way, a political rival was forced to recognize the king's authority by his attendance at the festival and by his participation in the festival. The annually renewed legitimacy of the king was therefore given an extra basis of support by this very salient characteristic. More than any other kind of ritual the Perahara had explicit political meaning. In Sri Lanka, the Tooth Relic was a symbol that expressed political sovereignty as, "incapable of*

*being conceived apart from its affiliation with Buddhism, its sponsorship and protection.*"<sup>175</sup>

### Conclusions

*The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the relationship of ritual and legitimation in Medieval South India and Sri Lanka. In both traditions, ritual was part of a greater legitimizing framework that involved the king, religious institutions and the peasantry.*

*In South Indian kingship, it is useful to conceptualize ritual legitimacy and political legitimacy as two distinct spheres. South Indian kings, especially the Cholas, were rulers who had great ritual powers but who were politically limited leaders. They were forced by the reality of political configurations to create alliances with chieftains who, in return for the political independence given to them, recognized the king as ritual sovereign. It was through the dominance of the king's sacrality, which clearly equated him with the gods, that South Indian kings were capable of ritually incorporating lesser chieftains and their territory.*

*South Indian kings were effective ritual developers, active in the support and creation of brahmadeya, the construction of temple networks and temple complexes, and in the development of a new pantheon of deities. The use of prāsāsti in the inscriptions of temples was a well developed means of exacting tribute from local chieftains. By means of prāsāsti, which focused on the king's sacral power, a way was developed to ensure that territory would become physically and ritually incorporated into a network of temple based communities.*

*The net effect of these institutional developments was the elevation of the king's sacrality to a place of unchallenged dominance. Chola kings*

developed and perfected the means of ritual incorporation through the use of pallipadāi which established a special use for temples as both funerary edifices and places of worship. More than any other Medieval Indian dynasty, the Cholas were effective and powerful ritual leaders. The use of pallipadāi, funerary temple-tombs, is unknown elsewhere in Indian history and it is to the credit of kings such as Rājārāja and Rajendra that they were capable of utilizing this concept as part of an overall scheme of effective rulership.

Facilitating the incorporative process was the idea that kings were munificent yajamāna. South Indian kings were portrayed in the inscriptions as givers of dāna to Brahmans. The inscriptional records of the gift of land and wealth indicate that royal protection was an insured benefit to both Brahmans and their temples as part of the exchange and recognition of the king's ritual authority. The process of massing material resources, channelling the wealth through temples in the form of dāna and tribute, and then consequently redistributing it, had an impact on the material welfare of all South Indian society.

First, the application of tribute drew upon all sectors of society; an exchange of resources for a common ideological and ritual focus. Brahmans participated in the festivals and sacrifices of the temple and acted as centres of brahmanic dissemination; the peasantry provided resources in return for ritual cohesiveness and education; local chieftains gained a degree of political autonomy through the recognition and tribute they gave to the sacrality of the king.

In contrast to the South Indian emphasis on the sacrality of the king, Sinhalese ritual, as exemplified in the Tooth Relic Festival and the consecration ceremony, stressed the king's ability to provide political



stability within a framework of a Buddhist ideal social order. The Sinhalese consecration ceremony was formulated on the supposition that the king was both a cakkavatti and bodhisattva who had the political task of maintaining the unity of the island and the religious task of ensuring the stability and growth of Buddhism. This premise stressed the political vow taken by the king who, as chief ritual celebrant and world conquerer, had to uphold and maintain the dharma. The striking difference in this formulation, in comparison to South Indian kingship, is that Sinhalese political unity was considered inseparable from its religious unity. Sinhalese ritual activity therefore served two purposes: to make the king a perpetuator of the political order, and to make the king a religious authority who was closely associated with the Buddha.

Supporting bhikku(s) and Brahmins was an essential part of the nurturing of legitimation. In both traditions, religious institutions served as a connecting link between the peasantry and the royal office. It was through the open and active support of the religious community that kings became supported by the peasantry. The bhikku(s) and Brahmins educated the peasantry in values and ideology sympathetic to the king's political authority. The development of brahmadeya led to a higher degree of secular authority previously not enjoyed by Brahmins. In Sri Lanka, the major monasteries were influential educators and landlords in the peasant community. The brahmadeya was a dominant factor in bringing all elements of the social order into a level of ritual integration. The sangha also provided an ideological perpetuation of certain social ideals that contributed to the development of a strong monastic policy of Sri Lankan national Buddhism.

*Efforts taken by Chola kings to elaborate upon basic institutions of ritual incorporation suggest that the South Indian ritual legitimizing process was flexible and adaptable, and new conceptions of ritual could lead to more ambitious heights than previously possible. Drawing upon essential parts of the legitimizing process, Chola kings developed a strategy of ritual hegemony that insured dominance over vast geographical areas. The Sri Lankan conceptualization of the ritual that legitimized kingship seems to be remarkably different from that found in South India. The design of Sri Lankan ritual differs in that it emphasizes certain schism-preventing mechanisms that maintain and perpetuate the state. Virtually all aspects of kingship and rituals involving kingship revolve around the fear of disorder and disruptive forces. Sri Lankan ritual is rooted in this concern. On the other hand, South Indian ritual that involves kingship emphasizes integration and incorporation. It will become evident in the following chapter that ritual integration through kingship provided the South Indian political order with stability. Intense rivalry and dispute was worked out at the level of ritual integration. The ritually incorporative kingship of South India provides the focus for balanced and opposed internal groupings.*

## CHAPTER IV - LEGITIMATION AND MODELS OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

### Introduction

*The purpose of this chapter is to examine the process of legitimation in both cultural traditions with respect to the way in which legitimizing power, as a means of obtaining a secure and stable social environment, is related to modes of political organization. The Sri Lankan conceptualization of political organization appears to be a break from the political and religious ideals of South India. The pattern of Sri Lankan statehood is different in that it is centered around a nationalist and ethnic ideal that is schism-preventing. Virtually all aspects of Medieval Sri Lankan politics revolve around the necessity of order and security and the fear of disruptive alien forces. This perspective is in contrast to South Indian conceptions of political organization which can be called decentralized, pyramidally segmented and oppositional. The segmented form of political organization is based on various levels of social and political groupings which stand in opposition to each other but give stability to the state as a whole by the identity, legitimacy and meaning they derive from their opposition, in marked contrast to the Sri Lankan political theory where disunity and internal opposition is considered tantamount to chaos.*

*In the South Indian segmentary style of political organization, there are two kinds of centres in the conceptual and empirical sense. Legitimate authority is based upon both effective ritual sovereignty and effective political sovereignty. The two need not be coterminus. In Sri Lanka, legitimate authority is also based upon ritual and political sovereignty but*

they are inseparable and have only one conceptual and empirical centre, the king.

As to the first centre, the Medieval South Indian segmentary state exists only as a state insofar as the segmentary units comprising it (nādu) recognize a single ritual focus, the sacrality of the king. The recognition by the nādu (which are themselves centres in the political sense) provides ritual legitimacy for themselves through association with the king. In a segmentary state, political control is appropriately distributed among the many nādu throughout the system with ritual supremacy legitimately conceded to a single centre. Ritual incorporation provides the ritual focus for balanced and opposed internal groupings. In the Sri Lankan state there is an absorption of localized chieftainships, even on an abstract level such as the Tooth Relic Festival, so that some of their political autonomy and most of their ritual control is lost to a ritual and political centre as representative of a political whole.

This chapter contains three sections which seek to identify and explain several features of political organization in Medieval Sri Lanka and South India as they relate to the process of legitimizing power. The political organizations determine the relationship between legitimizing values and the effort to make a secure and stable social order. The first section is devoted to revealing some of the major historical realities that contributed to the development of political organization in both traditions. Of primary concern are the role of ethnic antagonism in influencing conceptions of the state, the role of the peasantry in stabilizing society, and the development of complex irrigation systems that made the growing economies even more prosperous. The second section is devoted to a presentation of two models of political organization for South India and Sri Lanka outlining their

*essential similarities and differences. The third section continues with the analysis to put into perspective the historical realities when the two models come into contact and conflict with each other as claimants of political authority. The collapse, the invasion and subsequent destruction of political unity and legitimacy in Sri Lanka will underline those realities.*

#### *1. Historical Contributions to Political Organization*

*To be considered effective, a political system, as a social arrangement involving more often than not relationships among social groups of different ethnicities, should have away of articulating ethnic relationships. At the core of ethnic relationships in South India and Sri Lanka is a political system that reflects the relationship between two groups, those of Indo-Aryan descent and those of Dravidian background. It is not the intent in this section to analyze the earliest migrational movements of the Aryan culture into South India and Sri Lanka; rather, it is the nexus of Dravidian and Aryan ethnicities which provide a fundamental defining characteristic for Medieval South India and Sri Lanka and it is to this relationship the section is addressed.*

*Both Sri Lanka and South India have been multi-ethnic societies from very early in their recorded history.<sup>1</sup> The major distinguishing social characteristic between Sri Lanka and South India is the way in which their ethnic components have been and are related. Sri Lankan medieval society was essentially a pluralistic society "in which tension between ethnic or other distinctive groups is a main feature."<sup>2</sup> Medieval South India was a multi-ethnic society (a conception which emphasizes integration and cooperation).<sup>3</sup>*

*The Medieval period of South India history, beginning with the Pallavas, was characterized by numerous and mature sub-cultures. "The Sanskrit language and ideas derived from its texts were balanced by non-Sanskritic cultural elements in South India."*<sup>4</sup> *The process of Sanskritization of South India, however, began well before the rise to power of the Pallavas, and there is evidence to suggest that the social religious and political categories associated with Sanskrit culture were utilized in the literature and inscriptional records of the pre-Pallava Age.*<sup>5</sup> *A study of early Tamil literature of the Sangam age indicates that Tamils were receptive to the new ideology and change that the Aryan peoples brought with them. At the same time, the Aryan's, in addition to cultivating their own Sanskrit idiom, were "willing to accept local customs and incorporate them as part of the new composite social order they evolved and to find more or less suitable places in their elastic pantheon for the many godlings and goddesses cherished by the pre-Aryan people."*<sup>6</sup> *The relationship between the two traditions of Sanskrit and Dravidian was "so inextricably interwoven as to defy disaggregation into autochthonous, interacting phenomena."*<sup>7</sup>

*The secular role of Brahmans in their close ties with the peasantry formed an important link between Dravidian and Sanskrit culture. "The cultural role of Brahmans in medieval South India ... is not that of an exogenous influence upon essentially Dravidian societies of Tamilians, Kannadigas or Telegus. Brahmans were as integral to these respective traditions as were non-Brahmans."*<sup>8</sup> *Of prime importance in this relationship were the brahmadeyas that served as educational centres for the peasantry as well as for the elite. What level of integration the brahmadeya did not create, the establishment of the network of temples did. The*



comprehensive role of the temple in village life as an effective means of ritual incorporation served not only to enhance the legitimacy of chieftains but as centres of religious and devotional allegiance for the various sub-groups of South India.

The interrelated cultural and social elements of South India had a direct influence on South Indian political arrangements. Within the various political centres of South India the localized sub-regions were capable of being linked by dharmic incorporation. "South Indian kings and dynasties were symbols of authority and legitimacy for a vast number of chieftains throughout the macroregion."<sup>9</sup> The chieftains, like the peasantry, were linked to the king through ritual incorporation as attested to by the many thousand of prāsāstis within the region. A significant characteristic of this kind of polity is that conflict between opposed internal groupings was not resolved through the application of danḍa, but through the common and shared focus that ritual sovereignty provided. Political power was retained and exercised by the Nādu cheiftains for their own domain. Each of these domains maintained an individual identity while being part of a greater ritual milieu. It was not uncommon that these domains, identified by their clan heritage, stood in opposition to similar groupings of different clan heritage. This oppositional character should not be construed to be based upon ethnic differences, but, instead, as being based upon clan lineage structures wherein each group identified themselves as in opposition to others, and, therefore, derived meaning from this relationship but also recognized overarching ideological and ritual similarities. "These structures include opposition between families of chiefs and the dominant castes from which they had emerged, between locally dominant landed groups and subordinate ones, between agricultural and non-agricultural

groups, between established castes of locality and newcomers or outsiders and among sects and cult groups."<sup>10</sup> The important point is that the oppositional character had a stabilizing and integrative effect on South Indian society and that this oppositional character took place within the system at levels other than that of distinctive ethnic differences between groups.

In the medieval period of South Indian history, and especially during the time of the Cholas, confrontation between groups at the level of ethnicity was effectively minimized and assimilated by the even more prominent social and agricultural groups whose essential identity was never usurped or assimilated into the social order as a whole. Though South India was multi-ethnic, tension between these groups never rose to the same levels it did in Sri Lanka because cultural differentiation was channelled into other more suitable social elements. Preservation of the clan-styled oppositional character mitigated against instability, based as it was upon cooperation and interdependence in the recognition of the ritual sovereignty of the king who was considered to be the authoritative source of ritual cohesiveness.

Medieval Sri Lanka presents a picture of political organization where ethnicity was a fundamental point of division in society. From the earliest period of the recorded history of Sri Lanka, the Island was composed of a recognizable Dravidian component that was not sufficiently powerful to alter the basic Aryan character of the population.<sup>11</sup> It is assumed that the earliest Indo-Aryans brought some form of Brahmanic learning to Sri Lanka, but all of that was transformed by the rapid spread of Buddhism which was an effective cultural and political factor in the unification of the island. To some extent, both Brahmanism and Dravidianism had their influence in



the process of political ideology, but at the heart of Sri Lankan social arrangements was the Buddhist concept of the state, the ideal social order and the constant Buddhist-Tamil confrontations. Beginning with the mythic visits of the Buddha and then with *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*, the central theme of Sinhalese political history is the Buddhist king's attempt to instill order and unify the island in opposition to non-Buddhist invaders. This characteristic is described in *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*'s triumph over the Tamil King, Elara. "*Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*'s triumph was nothing less than the consumation of the island's manifest destiny, its historic role as the bulwark of Buddhism. The southern kingdom, ruled by the Sinhalese Buddhist, had prevailed over the northern kingdom, ruled by a Dravidian usurper, who despite all his admirable qualities as a man and a ruler, was nevertheless a man of 'false' beliefs."<sup>12</sup>

Internal threats to the unity of the island were construed by Sinhalese kings to be of Tamil origin and measures were taken by kings to curb the power and influence of the island's Tamil courtiers and army commanders. Externally, South Indian pressures constituted an element in the alienation of minority Tamils from the Sinhalese Buddhists. With the rise of the militant Hindu Pallavas in the sixth century, ethnic and religious antagonisms culminated in the virtual termination and cutting off of religious and cultural links between the Sinhalese and mainland Hindus. The elimination of Buddhism from the mainland had the powerful effect of isolating the Buddhist island and heightening the ethnic identity of the Tamils on Sri Lanka, which they sought to assert culturally and militarily. "Thus, the Tamil settlements on the island became sources of support for South Indian invaders, the mercenaries a veritable fifth column; Sri Lanka from being a multi-ethnic society became a plural society in which two

distinct groups lived in a state of sporadic tension."<sup>13</sup> The isolation of Sri Lankan Tamils was both cultural and regional. Outlying areas remained pockets of Tamil resistance to Buddhist authority. The reality of opposition between two asymmetrical non-integrated groups was the dominant basis for the aspirations of rulers who wished to establish control over the island in outlying regions.<sup>14</sup> Sinhalese kings, faced with a constant struggle against particularism and self-interest, developed administrative mechanisms that were capable of unifying the island politically, if not ideologically.<sup>15</sup> These administrative provinces, over which the central capital exercised legitimate control, were the political instruments of kings, but they were also given and conceded a measure of independent authority. This trade-off had the symbolic and political function of representing the unity and cooperative character of the island, while recognizing regionalized needs and differences. In Sri Lankan history, the means by which ethnic and religious conflicts were resolved was essentially through political confrontation not assimilation. The dominant non-integrated oppositional character of the Sri Lankan society was demarcated along the lines of ethnic and religious differentiation. Overarching ideological integration was based at the core of political power and politicized ritualism where the authority for stability was conceded to a single individual, the cakkavatti-bodhisattva. Nowhere is this relationship more clear than in the Sinhalese conception of danda. Danda in Sri Lankan ideology was considered equivalent to the protection of the sasana, i.e. Buddhism. The Tooth Relic Festival represents this ideology on a yearly basis in which legitimate use of force, as portrayed by the king's curcumambulation of the city, is considered equivalent to the celebration of and protection of

*the symbols of Buddhism and symbols of a normalized nationalist sentiment to the exclusion and, or absorption of, Tamil/Hindu elements.*

*There are profound differences in Medieval Sri Lankan and South Indian methods of conflict resolution. The integrated oppositional character in South Indian culture was of a different structural nature than that of the non-integrated oppositional character in Sri Lankan culture, therein, the disparate interests of groups were integrated through a common religious and ritual base. In Sri Lanka, ethnic minorities who clung to their individual identities could not realize full cultural integration without losing their identity. Hence, the oppositional character of Sri Lankan life was faced with the dilemma of total absorption, which is clearly what the chronicles speak of. In the later medieval period, when Buddhism was firmly established, political and religious ideology, was dominated by Buddhist thought that stressed interdependence and nationalist 'zeal', and "displayed an openness to Hindu institutional forms and devotional practices absorbing or converting them in the process."<sup>16</sup> However, even to the more antagonistic elements of Tamil expansion, open hostility was the prevailing political response. This response had been "cultivated under *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī* and was writ in Sinhalese political tradition, the Tamils were Lanka's natural enemy."<sup>17</sup> Since the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka was one of national scope and intent, properly legitimated authority was characterized by political measures that were capable of maintaining order on a pan-island basis. Such measures were indicative of the common ritual; political arrangements of legitimated political power in Sri Lanka and South India as shaped by each tradition's respective ability to absorb ethnic and cultural differences. This salient characteristic of*

medieval political systems helps in comprehending the variable success and failure of the political system in response to change.

### The Peasantry

The most enduring feature of South Indian and Sri Lankan society was the firmly established peasant culture. The importance of the peasantry in South India was the evolutionary formulation of an agrarian order that was responsible for the large source of wealth and alliances between the peasantry and the Brahmans. In South India, medieval kingship assumed, rather than created, an agrarian order dominated by the peasantry<sup>18</sup>, while in Sri Lanka the peasantry was not as firmly established and that the monastic community enjoyed a dominant position vis-a-vis the peasantry.<sup>19</sup>

The two distinctive features of the South Indian peasantry was the well established social hierarchy of which it was composed, and of the Brahman-peasant alliance. According to the Silappadikaram there was, within the peasantry, an ordering of social groups, composed of Ulavars or cultivators who were regarded as the first people. Beneath the Ulavars, also called Vellalar and Karalar, were ranked cowherds and shepherds, (āyar and kovalar) hunters (veḍar), various artisan groups, armed men (padaiyacciar), and, in the lowest stratum, fishermen (valaiyar) and scavengers (pulaiyar).<sup>20</sup> The competitive interaction between these peasant groups was responsible for the various alliances between the subordinate and superordinate peasantry and non-peasants, usually based on a demand for part of peasant production. These alliances within the peasant groups and between peasants and non-peasants translated directly into political stability for the sub-regions that came under the control of



chieftains. The Brahman-peasant alliance contributed to the overall development of peasant culture and insured the dominance of the peasant values and peasant style economy. This was because the reciprocal advantages the Brahmans and peasants shared in the very basic exchange of agricultural wealth with religious education, ritual status and sacral and ritual activities, outstripped the advantages of any other kind of alliance between dominant groups and therefore became entrenched as part of the social order.<sup>21</sup> In view of this, the South Indian peasantry can be understood as playing a vital role in the stability of the various sub-regions of which overarching political power itself was incapable. Stein argues: "The achievement of dominance by peasant peoples over others in South India and the firm establishment of those social and cultural forms reflecting and supporting this dominance must be considered one of the most important developments in South Indian history."<sup>22</sup>

A study of the agrarian order in Sri Lanka portrays a picture of the peasantry in which peasant culture was tempered by the growth of various dominant religious and state institutions; specifically, the development of private property rights known as panunu or parāveni.<sup>23</sup> The distribution of privately owned land led to the domination of landholding by religious institutions, most frequently independent monasteries. Inscriptional evidence suggests that the scheme of land grant to monasteries, later known as dīvel, led to the eventual ownership by the monks of a vast number of estates, irrigation works and properties that were independent of the king's claims.<sup>24</sup> Land grants given to the monasteries belonged to the monks of that institution and not to the sangha. The significant difference in the development of monastic landlordism and the development of brahmadeya was the relative independence given to the Sri

Lankan peasantry who worked the land of the monasteries. Unlike in South India, Sinhalese peasants who worked the land of religious establishments were not required to provide services to the king: "the grants of immunities from services due to the king implied that these obligations were to be performed for the monastery instead."<sup>25</sup> In return for services provided by the peasantry, the monasteries acted as judicial and fiscal authorities to the exclusion of royal officials.<sup>26</sup> Aside from the administrative independence the dīvel enjoyed, the peasantry also were granted certain immunities from compulsory service to the state (rājakriyā). The peasantry who worked for monastic landlords were essentially politically isolated from other peasant population. While a large population of peasants lent their support to the maintenance of royal lands, a similar population was strongly allied with their spiritual preceptors, the monks. The asymmetrical relationship the monastic peasantry had with the other non-monastic cultivating groups, could be described as one of non-interdependence in that a regular portion of monastic peasant production went towards the gradual accumulation of monastic wealth and power and was not shared with the state or the larger peasant community.<sup>27</sup> The self-sufficiency of the monasteries was enhanced by those individuals who worked the land, the peasants, who became firmly entrenched in an alliance with the monks, while others, who were excluded became identified with the conquering elite. The challenge monastic landlordism presented to the secular power of Sinhalese kings should not be interpreted as political aggrandizement. The secular power enjoyed by monks was altogether a policy of the king's need to protect the sangha and was an effect of the maturing of Sri Lanka's hydraulic culture, whereby monastic private

*properly became the most effective element in the maintenance and growth of a complex irrigation system.<sup>28</sup>*

### Hydraulic Civilizations

*This is not the place to discuss in detail the history of the irrigation systems in Sri Lanka and South India. Suffice it to say that by the medieval period both were fully mature irrigation civilizations and because of this, both systems were by their very nature vulnerable to imbalance and instability.*

*In Sri Lanka, as in South India, the physical region was composed of dry zones which were independent of the network of irrigation systems, and wet zones which had a relatively self-sufficient supply of water from the various river systems. Sri Lanka was predominantly an island wholly dependent upon the development of irrigation systems since its two major agricultural and cultural centres, Anvradhapura and Polonnaruwa, were located within dry regions. In fact, all but one-quarter of the land mass of Sri Lanka was dependent upon a complex irrigation technology. For the reason of necessity perhaps, despite its relatively small size, Sri Lanka developed hydraulic technology that surpassed that of South India, rivalling some of the greatest hydraulic civilizations of the world. Nowhere else in "the pre-modern world was there such a dense concentration of irrigation facilities at such a high technical level."<sup>29</sup>*

*The development of the irrigation system in Sri Lanka was carried out at two levels. There were irrigation enterprises led by the king's administration and there were local initiatives performed by the monasteries and the peasantry. "Indeed, in all parts of the dry zone, while major irrigation schemes were largely matters of state enterprise, such local*

*initiatives, communal, institutional (especially monastic) and even individual, were responsible for the construction of a multitude of smaller reservoirs and village tanks which conserved water from the seasonal rains for agricultural development in their locality and which existed concurrently with and independent of the main irrigation complexes."*<sup>30</sup> The state development and regulation of a complex irrigation system implies an administrative structure that represented the king's interests in the exploration of agricultural resources. Clearly, the state utilized a number of public works to increase large scale irrigation that ensured an increase in the production of crops.<sup>31</sup> There is, however, no evidence of a rigid bureaucracy and highly centralized administrative system; instead, for much of the localized public works, administrative duties were delegated to the monasteries in exchange for which the state maintained a smaller administration and concentrated on the construction of large pan-national irrigation systems. The fact that power devolved on monastic institutions reflects the division of labour is seen here as the ideal of reciprocity inherent in Buddhist ideology. The political trade-offs did not weaken a king's authority but enhanced it in a system that was fluid, dynamic and capable of change. In essence, the sharing of hydraulic development underscored the Buddhist assertion that the state was not an end in itself but a means of stabilizing and developing the social order in the most efficient way possible.

*The paradox of this relationship is apparent in that irrigation civilizations in general are "critically vulnerable to natural disaster and foreign invaders. Such a society is like a complex machine with an extraordinarily delicate mechanism. It could function with amazing efficiency*

*but just as easily breakdown if maintenance were neglected or as the result of some seemingly unmanageable damage to the mechanism."*<sup>43</sup>

*In contrast to the complexity and vulnerability of the hydraulic technology in Sri Lanka, the South Indian irrigation system was less complex and more reliable. Most important, the role of the state in developing and enhancing the irrigation system appears to be minimal in comparison with the highly complex state-led projects of Sri Lanka. This difference is apparent in several ways. First, the significant South Indian agricultural territories were brought to their developmental maturity long before the areas became centres of cultural concentration and well before the rise of the Cholas and Pallavas.<sup>33</sup> In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, irrigation projects were still a major developmental process into the tenth century.<sup>34</sup> Second, South Indian irrigation development was patterned after large scale tank irrigation systems in highly concentrated areas, the products of local peasant initiative capable of supporting dense population.<sup>35</sup> Sri Lankan agricultural development was necessarily tied to the construction of canals through sparsely populated areas and the use of the pit valve, which was capable of providing full wet cultivation over greater areas, but was inherently more vulnerable to breakdown than tank irrigation.<sup>36</sup> Third, the South Indian cultural core of Tamilnad was essentially a wet zone supported by the flooding of the great rivers, the Kaveri and the Kistna-godavari. This area constituted a "primary zone of influence over the propinquitous interior upland in the same way that the Gangetic plain did for major portions of northern India."<sup>37</sup> The fertile area of the Kaveri river region provided a cultural link to the arid regions of South India. It was there that the Saiva saints and the bulk of temple worship predominated. In contrast, Sri Lankan cultural and political centres were*

*from their inception located in the dry zones of north-eastern sections of the island; hence, the complex hydraulic system that branched out from this area required a political system capable of managing it. From these comparative differences, it becomes apparent that the development of a reliable wet cultivation system could play a role in the development of a political structure that, in turn, could reflect the needs of the agricultural community.*

*In Sri Lanka in particular, the development of a complex irrigation system was tied to a complex structure of state political relations necessitating alliances and delegation of authority. This structural development is apparent in the political makeup of Sri Lanka. In South India, irrigation systems management was one of localized interest and initiative wherein delegation of political authority was usurped by the predominance of the alliances of the various localities.<sup>38</sup>*

*Three conceptions have been presented in this section in order to understand the political structure of South India and Sri Lanka. Conflicts in Sri Lanka between various groups and rivalry between ethnicities were articulated and managed through political mechanisms and institutions. Rivalry between various groups in South India was embedded in the maintenance of their various milieus identified within the culture milieu that still recognized a single ritual authority. Overall political control was necessary to the stability of Sri Lankan society as exemplified in the state-run irrigation systems. The development of monastic landlordism, however, suggests that the peasantry was not linked to a comprehensive state administration as would be expected in a society that stressed unity and security. The fact that in medieval Sri Lanka the scope of ritual supremacy often could be greater than that of political authority suggests also*



that the controlling aspect of Sinhalese kingship was subject to breakdown, not as a result of loss of legitimacy, but because of limitations in the king's power.

In contrasting this key concept with the South Indian political structure, it is necessary to recognize that the idea of imbalance between political and ritual sovereignty was a normal characteristic of South Indian kingship. Such an idea was considered dangerous to the stability of Sri Lanka. The tenuousness of the Sri Lankan political order made it imperative that political and ritual control be synonymous in a single conceptual and empirical centre. The delegation of authority to the sangha may be a reflection of the secular power of the sangha, but it may also point to an overt problem in maintaining political centrality in Sri Lanka. Given some of the structural similarities and differences, it is now necessary to consider the relationship between legitimated power and political arrangements in Medieval Sri Lanka and South India.

## II. Two Political Models for Analysis

This section is an examination of the contrasting characteristics of the political arrangements in Medieval Sri Lanka and South India. While both states may be termed "feudal polities" the term "feudal" is really neither accurate nor descriptive enough to justify its use to describe political differences and similarities. While the term "feudal" can at best define the linkages between king and subordinate authorities, it cannot elaborate upon the more unique characteristics of political arrangements in South India and Sri Lanka.

An important characteristic that differentiates Sri Lankan political ideology from that of South India is territorial sovereignty. Territorial

sovereignty in Sri Lanka is, at least ideally, recognized as one of the fundamental elements of a comprehensive Sinhalese political philosophy that is considered an essential part of the legitimized authority of Sinhalese kings. Ritual supremacy and political sovereignty can be considered equivalent, just as the king is idealized as cakkavatti (political leader) and bodhisattva (spiritual leader). This singular sense of territory is connected to nationalist religious ideal and to the necessity of protecting the sasana. It should be recognized that in Sri Lanka there is an idealized conception of individed territoriality where political centrality is important.

The South Indian contrast is explicit: there is a dual sense of territoriality, both political and ritual. The emphasis each tradition gives to the notion of singular and dual levels of territory is of crucial theoretical and empirical significance. Utilizing some of the themes of Aidan Southhall's analysis of the East African society, the Alur, and Burton Stein's continued analysis of those themes, as they apply to South Indian political arrangements, a comprehensive definition of South Indian and Sri Lankan political arrangements can be attempted.

The inscriptions of the medieval period indicate that political arrangements in South India during the reign of the great dynasties, the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Pandyas, were pyramidally segmented. Burton Stein, in his work, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, defined the pyramidally segmented state as comprehensive units of political organization of ascending order linked to each section for various purposes (i.e. village, locality, supra-locality and kingdom) and opposed to other similar units (e.g. one section of a village against another for other purposes).<sup>39</sup> This kind of political order, Stein argues, contrasts with the pyramidally hierarchical state which the Sri Lankan political order closely

*resembled, wherein a single unit of political organization exercises territorial sovereignty through a political and ritual centre. The words "closely resembled" are used because, though the Sri Lankan political order idealizes a fully unitary state of which pyramidally hierarchical organization is preeminent, there is evidence that indicates that political institutions were not fully developed enough to achieve a scope of total unitary integration; that is, the Medieval Sri Lankan political order exhibits arrangements at certain institutional levels that can be called "transitional" from partial independence to full unity, while other levels such as the religious and ritual levels exhibit certain "schism-preventing mechanisms" that call for unity and interdependence.*

*Five characteristics apply to both the pyramidally segmented state and the pyramidally hierarchical state: 1) In the South Indian segmentary state, territorial sovereignty is dualistic; that is, there is both ritual sovereignty and territorial sovereignty.<sup>40</sup> South Indian kings ruled through their ritual supremacy as the basis for the recognition of and legitimacy of their authority. The extent of ritual control and the corresponding ritual administration defines the territory of the state so that there can be a substantial gap between the extent of political sovereignty and the extent of ritual sovereignty. Southall states that, "Ritual supremacy is often accepted where political control is not and segmentary states may characteristically be more highly centralized ritually than politically."<sup>41</sup> In the Sri Lankan pyramidally hierarchical state, the scope of ritual supremacy and political control constitute the same territory in a conceptual sense. The dual sense of territorial sovereignty in South India which is a ritualistic sort on the one hand and political on the other, is part of its normal operation.<sup>42</sup> In Sri Lanka, however, if territorial and ritual*



control do not coincide, then its political nature can be said to be either in a state of decay or rebuilding. The idea of unity is exemplified in the paradigm of Sinhalese kingship having both a political role (cakkavatti) and ritual role (bodhisattva). This concept is what Tambiah calls "political sovereignty with Buddhist affiliation."<sup>43</sup> In South India, political sovereignty is appropriately distributed throughout the realm, but the king remains a ritual sovereign and it is through this claim that the king controls vast territory. The Sri Lankan fusion of ritual and political aspects of rule at the highest level is the most important basis for a Sinhalese king's claim to legitimacy. The king's role as ritual authority is interwoven into his role as political protector so that ultimately the job of protecting both the religious order and the social order becomes synonymous. Therefore, failure to protect the sasana is automatically construed as the failure to protect Sri Lankan society. Alternately, proper protection of the sasana could only mean enhanced political legitimacy.

2) The second characteristic of the South Indian segmentary state is the recognition that subordinate local chiefs recognize the king as a ritual sovereign and appropriately pay tribute to him in return for ritual services, such as temple management. The chiefs, though they recognize the king as a ritual authority, do not recognize him as a political authority: "the political power remains in their hands."<sup>44</sup> This conception implies that political legitimacy for the king is lacking in the segmentary state. Since legitimacy can only be understood in terms of ritual control, the king does exercise limited political control but entirely in his own sub-region where his political legitimacy is considered equivalent to that of chieftains in other sub-regions.<sup>45</sup> The subordinate sub-regions each with their own political management are bound together in their joint recognition

of the ritual sovereignty of the king. In recognizing a central ritual authority (the king), the constituent chieftains who are themselves centres of political control, legitimize the entire composite of segments as a state.<sup>46</sup> Stability is derived from a central ritual focus.

In Sri Lanka, kings were the focus for political and ritual subordinates. Legitimacy was conferred upon the king as the most important political and religious figure. In Sri Lankan politics, there was a degree of recognition by lesser chieftains that the king was an active pan-national political figure. Chieftains were willing to openly support and grant the king major claims over territorial rights. For example, the king claims "a share of the produce from all occupied and cultivable land."<sup>47</sup> The king also had the power to draft peasantry into the army and tax the people for the construction of major irrigation systems. This kind of payment (dīvel) was not only for the construction of canals but their protection as well. Some vital land was immune from the king's political control. Monasteries, for example, were granted a status that freed them from royal service and taxation. In other areas, usually uncultivable territory, chieftains allied with South Indian kings occupied the land.<sup>48</sup>

In the pyramidally hierarchical state, political control is not equally distributed throughout the system; the king is far more politically powerful than those chieftains in outlying areas. 3) This is most evident in Sinhalese concepts of danda (the third characteristic of rule) which were considered in chapter two in comparison with South Indian ideas of danda. The Sinhalese conception of the monopoly of force indicates that a king's army was maintained through a wide geographic area, usually the island and beyond. The interesting characteristic of Sinhalese concept of danda, was its appreciation in defending the island as a political instrument enhanced

by religious sanction as in the example of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. In the South Indian segmented state, force was essentially a-political in that kings could not lay claim to the use of force beyond their own political boundaries. Instead of force being understood in territorial terms, it was understood as an instrument of ritual hegemony, a way of ensuring through coercion that ritual allegiance was maintained and expanded.

4) The fourth characteristic of the segmentary state is that "several levels of subordinate force may be distinguished organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority. The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model, the latter being a reduced image of the former."<sup>49</sup> In the Medieval South Indian segmentary system, the basic "segments" were nāḍus under the leadership of chiefs. In the Chola period, these personages held titles such as Udaiyar, Arasar Mummudi and Muvendavelar.<sup>50</sup> Within the nāḍu, social units, balanced or complimentary opposition conceded to a "chief" a degree of executive authority, political and ritual power.<sup>51</sup> Stein points out that opposition within a nāḍu was crucial to its political legitimacy and survival. Opposition forces were crucial in two ways: first, they limited the power of the chief and preserved individual demands and internal regulations; second, internal opposition forces strengthened the office of the chief by assuring him support for protection of the nāḍu from external aggression. The nāḍu was representative of the legitimate kind of political authority found at all levels of the hierarchy, although at each successive level there is ritual control over an increasing constituency. Within the various segments of the state a specialized administrative staff operated to ensure the ritual legitimacy of the king. The reason for this type of staff pertaining only to the ritual sphere, was because the king as a sacral figure has some terri-



torial sovereignty only as long as his ritual position was reinforced. The durability of the South Indian segmentary state was, in fact, dependent on the sacral character of its kings.

In Medieval Sri Lanka, the position of the king with respect to the outlying regions was one of dominance, reinforced through kinship, ties to the ruling elite and mitigated by proprietary rights over land and irrigation networks.<sup>52</sup> The smallest unit of administration was the gāma under the control of gāmikas. Gāmikas regulated village life through the institutional arrangement called nīyamatana (council affair meetings) which gave a limited degree of political independence to the village community. At the gāma, district and provincial level, individuals were part of a centrally controlled system of compulsory service (rājakrīya). Rājakrīya usually involved militia service and "gratuitous services on public works such as the construction of roads, bridges and tanks."<sup>53</sup> Rājakrīya formed a vital obligatory link between the king and those who served under him. The system was dependent upon the king's legitimate claim to cultivatable land. The obligation of service as a condition of working the king's land formed a framework for perpetuating the king's centralized authority over the Sinhalese, except for the Monastic landlords. Monasteries that were exempted from rājakrīya gained absolute ownership over their land and enjoyed considerable secular power within their territory.

The control and administration of the island by the king was articulated through a complex clan structure based on the kṣatriya lineage that could be traced back to the Sakhya clan of the Buddha. This claim of direct ancestry of the Buddha laid the path for the king's claim of direct ownership of the island (dakapatha).

Historically, the island was divided into four major political units or provinces, Uttaradesa, Pacimadesa, Pachinadesa and Dakkhinadesa, which were administered by the king's sons. Corresponding to the provincial divisions were three administrative units known as rāta. Rājarata comprised the unit run by the capital city Anuradhapura; Mayarata was entrusted to the heir (mahaya); Rohanarāta formed the outlying southern administrative unit. The importance of the administrative cohesiveness the island required was evident in the prominent position given to the king's administrative authorities (the pramukha(s)). The pramukha(s) or chieftains were higher in status than the gāmika and enjoyed proprietary rights. This was because the pramukha(s) were closely connected by kinship ties to the king and most acted in the king's interests.<sup>54</sup> It is noteworthy that opposition to the king's political authority was articulated at this level through pramukha(s) rather than at successive lower levels of the hierarchy. The pramukha(s) were a factor in both the strength and weakness of the king. Conflicts surrounding the king's legitimacy took on the character of dynastic disputes and internal infighting. However, the inviolability of the king's status as bodhisattva was rarely challenged by the pramukha.

Sri Lankan kings were well aware that effective statcraft and tyranny need not be synonymous. The evidence for this is found in the chronicles which describe methods such as intermarriage and royal land grants used by Sinhalese kings to incorporate the pramukha(s) into their fold. The recognition pramukha(s) gave to the king as a central political figure is evident in the unchanging focus on Anuradhapura as an administrative and ritual centre for the island. For all the medieval period up until the invasion and takeover by the Cholas under Rajaraja I when the

capital was shifted to Polonnaruva, Anurādhapura was the established home for the palace temple complex, the relics, and the administrative structure which controlled the irrigation systems.<sup>55</sup>

5) The final characteristic of the segmentary state is that "the more peripheral a subordinate authority is, the more chance it had to change allegiance from one power to another."<sup>56</sup> This characteristic is an important factor in the legitimation of power in South India where ritual sovereignty rather than political power maintained the legitimacy of the king on the peripheries of the region. The Nadu chieftains in those outlying regions maintained political control over their constituents. Nevertheless, a central office could be established in regions with a symbolic purpose of representing the unity of the people and the land.<sup>57</sup> In association with the specialized administration staff that ensured territorial units there was a corresponding administrative staff whose purpose was to maintain the ritual dominance of the king at all segmentary levels. In a segmentary state, stability and growth of the system is denoted by this salient characteristic. Stein states, "This kind of separation of authority and power ... is extremely difficult to bring under unitary rule (i.e. Sri Lanka) from above or to alter from below because political authority is inextricably tied to opposed localized segments."<sup>58</sup> The segmentary state is not a politically organic whole but is arrangement in which "local units - segments - retain their essential being as segmental parts of a whole"<sup>59</sup>, but which are unified and dependent upon ritual incorporation for focus and identity. Medieval Sri Lanka, which exhibited some characteristics of the unitary state, had one historical example of an independent subordinate entity, the province of Rohana. Rohana was geographically the further from the administrative centre of Rājārāta. Historically, there

are four reasons why Rohana was prone to undermining the political cohesion of the island. First, Rohana was the focus of repeated attack from South Indian armies. Second, in the "absence of instant communication and constant surveillance, the most distant province, Rohana, tended to promote a functional independence from Anurādhapura."<sup>60</sup> Third, Rohana served as a base for Tamil mercenaries whose allegiance to South India was a politically ambiguous problem for the Sinhalese kings. Fourth, Rohana was notorious for its sense of local patriotism "which made rulers of Rohana jealously protective of their local interests and identity."<sup>61</sup> These factors made Rohana the most difficult of the four provinces to control. The idea that some political independence was given to outlying regions suggests that the Sri Lankan political system was caught in a state of transition between the need for a politically cohesive island and the reality of being incapable of enforcing total subordination upon outlying political authorities. On the other hand, the non-integration of Rohana into the political fold of the island does not imply that there was no reciprocity between Rohana and Anurādhapura. As in other provinces, the pramukhas were active in their patronage of the sangha and other ritual activity.<sup>62</sup>

Astute Sinhalese kings, who recognized the particularist character inherent in the political structure of the island, exploited the fact in order to balance factional elements. The idea was not unknown to South Indian kings either, who maintained their ritual sovereignty by means of strategically chosen Nadu allies. Successful Chola kings, for example, subjugated their Pandyan enemies by balancing the political power of their own Nadu allies against those of the Pandyas.

*The characteristics of the Medieval South India state, outlined above, pertain to a social order where internal yet balanced groups zealously cling to their independent identities, privileges and internal groupings.<sup>65</sup> Given the enduring and ancient political independence within the segmented state the only possible extra segmentary integration which could occur would be of a ritual sort.*

*In Sri Lanka, the linking together of relatively self-sufficient provinces and the absorption of those provinces was a political reality. Two reasons why supra-local integration into the greater political unit was possible in Sri Lanka were: 1) the politically charged role of the king as cakkavatti; and, 2) the tight familial structure between members of ruling class and their property rights over the land. The fundamental characteristic of legitimated kingship in Sri Lanka was the king's ability to incorporate both factors into a stable and ordered environment. The inviolability of Sinhalese kingship can be measured as much by its success at achieving the political integration of its pramukha(s) and their provinces into an organic greater whole, as by the king's status as a universal conquerer. Historically, the problem of political disintegration was a constant threat to Sinhalese kings' legitimacy. In the next section, an analysis of the Sri Lankan relationship with South India will underline the tenuousness of the king's legitimacy in light of invasion and collapse.*

### III. Sri Lanka and South India Conflict Analysis

*The political orders of South Indian and Sri Lanka are well contrasted in the events that witnessed the spread of Chola dynastic hegemony beyond mainland India into the island of Sri Lanka, and the eventual breakdown of Chola influence in Sri Lanka. Historical events that include*

the period of Chola supremacy over the island indicate two important characteristics of the political orders of Sri Lanka and South India; they are: 1) The importance ritual sovereignty had for South Indian kings in asserting control over conquered territory. (This includes the manner in which Chola authority was enhanced and legitimated through proper and effective ritual control); 2) The physical transformation of the Medieval Sri Lanka state in its attempt to adapt to fundamental political disintegration. The importance of this characteristic is exemplified by the breakdown of legitimized Sri Lankan kingship as a consequence of ideological disunity.

Chola control on the island of Sri Lanka lasted about 77 years (A.D. 933 - A.D. 1070). Early inscriptions in the Kaveri region around A.D. 907 indicate that conflicts arose between the Cholas and Sinhalese. The inscription states that the Chola king Parantaka I (A.D. 907-955) is said to have repulsed a combined force of Pandyas and Sri Lankans at Vellur. The Cūlavamsa provides a vivid account of that and succeeding battles.<sup>66</sup> After having successfully driven back the Pandyan and Sri Lankan invaders, Parantaka set about to capture Rajasimha, the Pandyan king who had taken refuge on the island. The march against the Sri Lankan army proved difficult and Parantaka's effort to secure the Pandyan crown ended in failure.<sup>67</sup> The Cūlavamsa records a later effort to invade the island by Parantaka's grandson Surdara Chola (957-973 A.D.) who made every effort to control the island in a struggle with the Pandyan king, Virapandya and the Sri Lankan king, Mahinda V.<sup>68</sup> Sundara Chola's army was neither powerful enough, nor were his alliances with the chieftains strong enough for him to wage a long drawn out campaign against the



Sinhalese. Ultimately, Sundara Chola was forced by the weakness of his political alliances to acknowledge Sri Lankan control over the island.

Up to this period, relations between Chola hegemonic power and Sri Lankan defensive forces can be described as exhibiting all the characteristics of states seeking a balance of power. This kind of political interaction is likened to a chandelier. The two kingdoms of South India, the Cholas and the Pandyas, competed for dominance in the prosperous agricultural river regions of what is now Tamil Nadu. Each kingdom, allied with chieftains over which they had various degrees of ritual suzerainty, sought and achieved dominance over the whole South Indian peninsula. Sri Lankan kings played an important role in the conflicts between Pandyan and Chola kings since the Sri Lankan it was in their hands but the balance of power. For example, Medieval South India was witness to a constantly fluctuating balance of power. When a Pandyan invasion of the island seemed imminent, an alliance of Cholas and Sinhalese developed, then a Pandyan and Sinhalese alliance developed against growing Chola dominance. The significance of this precarious balance was that no single power was capable of achieving complete superiority over its enemies. The precarious balance of power translated into the possibility of a degree of stability enjoyed by all three powers. Not surprisingly, the period of major conflict between the Cholas and Sri Lankans was also a period of increased commercial trade and economic expansion. The powerful Chola King Rajaraja I (985-1014 A.D.) emerged during this period of political conflict.

According to epigraphical evidence, Rājarāja I is said to have successfully attacked and subdued Sri Lanka.<sup>69</sup> On the basis of the data available from the Cūlavamsa, Rājarāja acquired sovereignty over Sri Lanka during a period (A.D. 981) in which Mahinda V, the Sri Lankan

king, was politically weakened by rebellious forces. Taking advantage of this condition, Rājārāja sacked the temple palace complex at Anuradhapura with the intention of establishing sovereignty over the island, and made the centrally located city of Polonnaruva the new capital, renaming it Jananatha. The destruction of Anurādhapura marked the beginning of a deliberate Chola policy to undermine the effective ritual base to which a potential rebel Sinhalese king could lay claim. Not only did Polonnaruva provide an administrative base from which Chola dominance could be established, but it also provided a new Chola ritual base as well.

During Rajaraja's reign, great effort was taken to establish and recognize the system of government in Sri Lanka.<sup>70</sup> Evidence that indicates Rajaraja institutionalized ritual hegemony over the island. Rājārāja, and his successor Rājendra, began the construction of Śaiva temples that borrowed heavily from the architectural style of the second phase mainland Chola temples. Two of these stand out in particular: the stone temple of Siva constructed in Polonnaruva around A.D. 1009 and the Rājārājesvara temple constructed in Mahatitthal in honour of the Chola king.<sup>71</sup> Villages such as Rājārājapura were renamed after the king, while other villages were bestowed upon Br̥hadisvara temple at Tanjavur.<sup>72</sup> It is most likely the economic wealth produced by these villages was slated for support of temples back on the mainland.

Rajendra I (1012-1044 A.D.) attempted to enhance the establishment of Saiva ritual influence through the construction of more temple complexes. The Chola king, however, relinquished some of the control his predecessor had gained. According to the Cūlavamsa, ten years into Rajendra's reign (A.D. 1029), there were a series of national rebellions in Sri Lanka against the Cholas which forced the Chola army to vacate the

southeastern part of Rohana province and retreat to the mainland.<sup>73</sup> The rebellion was headed by Kassapā (1029-1044 A.D.), the son of Mahinda V (known as Vikkamabahu). Upon the death of Vikkamabāhu, hailed as a national hero who died fighting the Chola enemy, Rājendra's son the Rajakesarivarman Rājadhīrarāja (1018-1054 A.D.) seized the Sri Lankan crown and relics in an all-out attack on the capital. Rājadhīrarāja failed, however, to capture a newly established pocket of Sinhalese resistance in the province of Rohana, opting instead to support Polonnaruva which was a regime of Sinhalese kings faithful to the Chola cause. The Cūlavamsa relates the succession of weak Sri Lankan puppet kings that followed upon the death of Vikkamabahu, lamenting that the country was open to attacks from sea-faring mercenaries seeking wealth and power.<sup>74</sup> From the period of Rajendra onwards, the construction of Hindu temples by the Cholas became an accepted way of securing and stabilizing territory. The temples were inscribed with the typical form of prasāstis as a means of ensuring tribute and by incorporating locality chieftains (i.e. pramukhas) into the suzerainty of Chola rule and the maintenance and construction of temples.<sup>75</sup>

An inscription of the year A.D. 1055, which corresponds to the dates of Rājendra II (A.D. 1052-65), relates the events that led to a concerted effort on the part of Rājendra II to quell the growing resistance of Vikkamabahu and his grandson Vijāyabāhu (1055-1111 A.D.) who made the southern city of Kataragama their capital. When Kataragama was attacked by the Chola army, the city fell but Vijāyabāhu was not killed. He was able to flee, rally his rebellious forces and eventually establish strong alliances with the sympathetic Burmese. With the economic aid of Burmese kings, Vijāyabāhu secured the two southern provinces of Dakkahinadesa

and Rohana. Through trade connections between Vijāyabāhu and the Burmese kings, the Sinhalese refitted their armies and managed to achieve political dominance in the two regions. Within two years of his father's death, Vijāyabāhu succeeded in recapturing the city of Polonnaruva, defeating the main bulk of the Chola army under the Chola king Virarajendra (1063-1069 A.D.). Despite efforts to crush the Sri Lankan rebellion, Virarajendra was not able to do so because much of his army was involved in a conflict on the mainland with insurgent Chalukya chieftains. The reign of Virarajendra and his grandson Kullotunga (1070-1122 A.D.) marked the end of Chola rule in Sri Lanka.<sup>76</sup>

The Cūlavamsa hails Vijayabahu as the king who delivered his country from the foreign yoke, thus placing him in the same category as the ancient king, Dutthagāmanī. The actual struggle involved the suppression of a Chola-inflamed rebellion in the south, and a two-pronged attack on Polonnaruva and Anvrādhapura. The re-establishment of Polonnaruva as the capital in A.D. 1073 by Vijāyabāhu marked the beginning of a new Sri Lankan era and the decline of Chola ritual hegemony in Lanka and elsewhere.<sup>77</sup> Vijāyabāhu made efforts to maintain a show of friendliness with Kullotunga, but, at the same time, he established strong stations of defence on the western sea coast. Vijāyabāhu also completed matrimonial alliances with Pandyan and Chola rulers in order to consolidate his political alliances with the Tamil pramukhas on his island. The increased political power of Vijāyabāhu formed the basis for a movement towards governmental centralization that lasted well beyond his death in A.D. 1111.<sup>78</sup>

It is clear that the constant invasions of Sri Lanka by Chola kings created two political aberrations: 1) During the rule of Rājārāja I, the conquest of Sri Lanka brought the island within the political control of

*Chola hegemony. However, in keeping with the concepts of ritual control, which proved successful on the mainland, Rajaraja and his successors left the local governmental practices intact, exacting only annual tribute, supplies, men and money. The prásāsti, inscriptions of the temples constructed in Sri Lanka by Chola kings, support this conclusion.<sup>79</sup> The ritual action (or perhaps political inaction) taken by Chola kings (or perhaps political inaction) left the island as a relatively unintegrated part of the Chola empire and gave Sri Lankan administrative practices some legitimacy in the southern provinces. 2) By allowing the Sri Lankan state to grow or shrink according to the degree of Chola control on the island (Rājaraḡa's authority extended only to Polonnaruva and Rajendra's authority excluded Rohana), Chola sovereignty allowed some Sri Lankan political practices to survive. Ultimately, the unconquered territory left by the Cholas proved to be the centre for rebellion against them, spurred on by centuries of national-religious sentiment. Judging from the kind of political system the Cholas were using (restricted territorial sovereignty towards the periphery moving to ritual hegemony), the failure to eradicate alien modes of political administration in conquered territory was one of the central causes of Chola political collapse. In addition, Chola ritual incorporative techniques failed to take hold of and sway Buddhist-nationalist ideology. If the conception of the segmentary state appears to be problematic with respect to maintaining conquered territory, it is perhaps because of an over-emphasis on ritual control is at the centre of the problem. This problem, it is argued, can account for the eventual decline of the Chola empire.*

*Following the Chola collapse, several Sinhalese political developments helped to establish a unified state that made it even more difficult for*

Chola hegemony to regain lost territory. These developments include: 1) an effort to strengthen regional alliances with local pramukhas; 2) the maintenance of predominately agricultural based economics which included the selective process of diversifying the economic structure; 3) the isolation of the sangha from political involvement coupled with supervision of sasana affairs in order to stem growing religious plurality; and 4) the crushing of political regionalism and resistance in all of Sri Lanka.<sup>79</sup>

If anything, the Chola invasion of Sri Lanka gave new meaning to the centralization of state affairs. Efforts were made by Vijāyabāhu and Parakkāmbāhu to stem the rising independence of Sri Lankan chieftains who had, under Chola dominance, gained some freedom. The political brought about by the Chola invasions created economic insecurity whereby Vijayabahu stratified control over the land, instead of consolidating it under a few chieftains. The practice of distributing large parcels of land reduced the number of dynastic wars that were crippling the political unity of the island and destroying the base for the king's legitimized rule.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast, the ideal of total political incorporation of local chieftainships could not occur in South India under Chola rule. Instead, king-chieftain collaboration was practised, which meant conquered land was regionalized but not nationalized. The significance of the differences in the political arrangements between the two states is apparent only at the political level. In South India, great local chieftains attained a status of dominance only slightly less than that of kings. Such an almost even balance of power would have been disastrous to political unity in Sri Lanka. In the South Indian state, flexibility and segmentation were admirably adapted to expansion and division. The Sri Lankan state, on the other hand, functioned efficiently only when political and religious



unity was established as a cohesive and inseparable application of Sri Lankan ideology.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusions

This chapter outlined two models of political organization: the pyramidally segmented state of South India, and the pyramidally hierarchical state of Sri Lanka. The concept of political order implicit within these models serves as a good point of departure to understand the legitimation process. In South India, political order did not need to be pan-national. In fact, it was limited by a number of segmentary forces whereby internal opposition between groups allowed for the retention of the individualism of the various segments. Because ritual sovereignty was unrestricted, it provided the legitimating focus for a king who was limited in political power. The Sri Lankan political experience, historically concerned with national order, exemplifies a system in which political sovereignty was integrated into a national ideal. This is not the case in Medieval South India.

Sri Lankan concepts of power and authority are inseparable because in Sinhalese political ideology, the king was equated with a bodhisattva. The state was an absorption of local identities into a greater political body. Sinhalese Buddhism provided the focus for such the ideology in the association of the ultimate sanction, the claim of dhamma with Sinhalese kingship. From the Sinhalese viewpoint, Lanka was an island conquered by the Buddha in order to be "fit for human habitation,"<sup>81</sup> a dangerous claim since Sinhalese nationalism often construed political order and stability as synonymous with religious and ethnic intolerance.

The very important distinctions between ritual and political authority in the concept of the segmentary state lead to the expectation that an expanding ritual system, as represented by the Chola hegemony, would exhibit the characteristic of all-encompassing overarching ritual integration. The evidence of temple construction on the island and the use of praśāstis support this conclusion. The evidence also suggests that ritual incorporation alone did not suffice as a means of securing a stable ally. The problematic nature of ritual incorporation is that it gives outlying segments (such as Sri Lanka) a degree of internal independence that can turn against the foci of authority. This factor of inherent instability and independence is the means by which former allies become rebels in their own land. Despite the problematic nature of ritual incorporation, South Indian kings, especially the Cholas, brought to the forefront a number of deliberate institutions that insured legitimate rule. One was the sacralization of the royal lineage through the use of pallipadāi and use of canonic Siva-linga temples. Another was the elaborate technical process of praśāsti, but the South Indian kings whose inscriptions do not so much portray a unified social order as the religious powers that created that order, transcend the means of ritual incorporation.

In contrast, the Medieval Sri Lankan political system presents an inherently precarious relationship between the king and his legitimacy through the idiom of fashioning a unity of both the political and the religious realms. Because the political and the religious are inseparable in a unity of mutual legitimation, the unity cannot endure challenges without the balance being radically affected.

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