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KINSHIP AND RITUAL IN A

SOUTH INDIAN MICRO-REGION

by

Anthony Good

A Thesis presented for
the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy at the
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ABSTRACT

Fieldwork carried out in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, South India, has led to the delineation of a 'micro-region' of three agricultural villages. This micro-region acquires its sociological unity by virtue of a system of inter-caste relationships and prestations which embraces all these villages and which manifests itself equally in the religious, economic, political and administrative spheres. In particular, the various specialist caste-groups perform their respective services for clienteles made up of all or part of the population of the micro-region concerned.

One aspect of each specialist's duty is his role in the life-crisis rituals of his clients. These rituals are themselves subsequently re-examined from the opposite perspective, namely with reference to the intra-caste relationships which they bring into play. Particular attention is paid to female puberty rites and to marriage; these are considered as a single ritual complex, concerned with caste purity and the legitimation of off-spring.

The phenomenon of marriage between a man and his elder sister's daughter is examined. There is a discussion of the problems which this practice raises for the conventional view of the 'Dravidian' marriage system, and an alternative structure is suggested for the kinship terminology in the present case.

It is argued throughout that the problems being considered are best approached from a sociological, structural perspective, and a three-level model of social reality is adapted for this purpose. As a complement to this, the study concludes with a critique of the recently-advanced 'cultural' and 'ethnosociological' approaches in South Asian anthropology.

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PREFACE

The thesis which follows is based upon 15 months of fieldwork in South India. My initial intention had been to produce an account consisting of three parts: (i) a general introduction to the locality, followed by a study of inter-caste prestations and leading to the identification of a 'micro-region' composed of three villages; (ii) an account of intra-caste relationships in life-crisis rituals, again with a focus on prestations, paying particular attention to female puberty and to marriage with the elder sister's daughter; (iii) an examination of temple festivals, particularly those at 'village temples', seen as encapsulations and re-affirmations of the social order described in the earlier parts .

I began with the desire to give the fullest possible amount of ethnographic detail, on the grounds that much data of this kind would never otherwise see the light of day, and would not be available to others for future comparative study. It soon became clear that this aim was incompatible with the overall schema outlined above, given that a work of manageable proportions was called for. It was therefore necessary to compromise by, on the one hand, omitting after all some of the less pertinent ethnography and, on the other hand, abandoning the projected part (iii) . I was particularly sorry about this, the more so as it was during the main Terku VaNDānam temple festival that I first experienced a mutual personal involvement with the community upon which I had foisted myself. The study of such events had moreover been one of my prime aims in

carrying out the research. However, an account of even the simplest of the festivals which I witnessed would not only be spatially extremely demanding, but would also require a prior knowledge on the part of the reader, of the material contained in the two extant parts of the present work.

As finally constituted, the thesis contains two parts of six chapters each. Each chapter is divided into sections and, where necessary, sub-sections: cross-references are made by indicating the relevant section (e.g. 9.1) or sub-section (e.g. 3.6.1) number in all cases. The general lay-out, including all discussions and analysis, uses double-spacing, but a closer format has been employed for passages of ethnographic description, as well as for quotations (which are also indented). Citations of the work of other authors are notated in the usual manner.

The names of informants are given in association with all quoted comments or data. As regards the structure of personal names, it should be explained that those of adult males consist of: an initial, not given below, which abbreviates their father's given name; their own given name; and finally their caste title. The latter is usually the name of the caste as given in Table 1.1, but Scheduled Castes (1.4), Barbers and Washermen do not use their caste title, while Maravar men use the title 'Tēvar'. The names of adult women all bear the suffix -ammaL; they do not employ the caste title .

I have included in Chapter 1 some of the material conventionally relegated to the preface, such as details of the selection of the village, the living conditions enjoyed by the

author, and the attitude towards him of the studied population. This has been done from a conviction that such facts are themselves of empirical relevance in a discipline which treads so precariously the borderline between subject- and objectivity.

It is my pleasant duty to express thanks to my successive supervisors, Dr Nicholas J. Allen (now of the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford) and Miss Milada Kalab, for their many discussions, and for their advice and encouragement. I also thank Professor Sunderland and the other staff members of the Dept. of Anthropology at Durham, for their teaching, guidance and interest during this work and the Diploma course which preceded it. Particular thanks go to Brendan Quayle and Peter Phillimore, my fieldwork contemporaries, for their eagerly-awaited correspondence while in India and their interest and friendship back in Durham.

In India, Mr Palanipurugaperumal Chettiar M.A., my research assistant, played an invaluable role during the first half of my fieldwork. Without him, the collection of data would have been far more time-consuming, and in some respects impossible. My gratitude goes to Fr. Thomas Malayampuram S.J., Director of the Tirunelveli Social Service Society, for his wholehearted assistance to one whose work could be of all too little direct benefit to his own efforts. Nor can I forget the help of Br Job, my guide and advisor in the selection of a fieldwork location.

My thanks to all the residents of Terku Vaṇḍānam, Vaḍakku Vaṇḍānam and Kalinḱapaṭṭi, and especially to our landlord Mēkalinḱa Kōṇār; his son, my friend Saṅkarapāṇḍi; Vijayā and Ravi; and my sittappā, Suppaiyā Kōṇār. Our many other

friends cannot all be mentioned here, but their names will recur in the text which follows.

This fieldwork was carried out while I was in receipt of a Conversion Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, who also provided my travelling expenses. I thank the Staff Research Fund, University of Durham, for a generous grant towards other research expenses, including the salary of my research assistant.

Finally, I acknowledge the contributions made by my wife Alison and daughter Emily, especially during our stay in India. The conventional nature of this acknowledgment should not obscure its sincerity: Alison bore the same extremes of climate as myself, organised our household under trying and unfamiliar conditions, and still found time to contribute towards the collection of data. Most importantly, it was her presence and support which enabled me to continue: without her, the work described below would never have been accomplished.

Congleton,

July, 1978 .

THE transliteration OF TAMIL WORDS

Tamil words have been subjected to letter-by-letter transliteration according to the following scheme:

Vowels :

அ	a;	ஆ	ā;	இ	i;	ஈ	ī;	உ	u;
ஊ	ū;	எ	e;	ஏ	ē;	ஐ	ai;	ஒ	o;
ஓ	ō;	ஔ	au.						

Consonants :

க	k;	ங	ñ;	ச	s, c;	ஞ	ñj;	ட	D, T;
ண்	N;	த	d, t;	ந	n;	ப	p;	ம	m;
ய	y;	ர	r;	ல	l;	வ	v;	ர	R;
ள்	L;	ர்	r;	ன	n.				

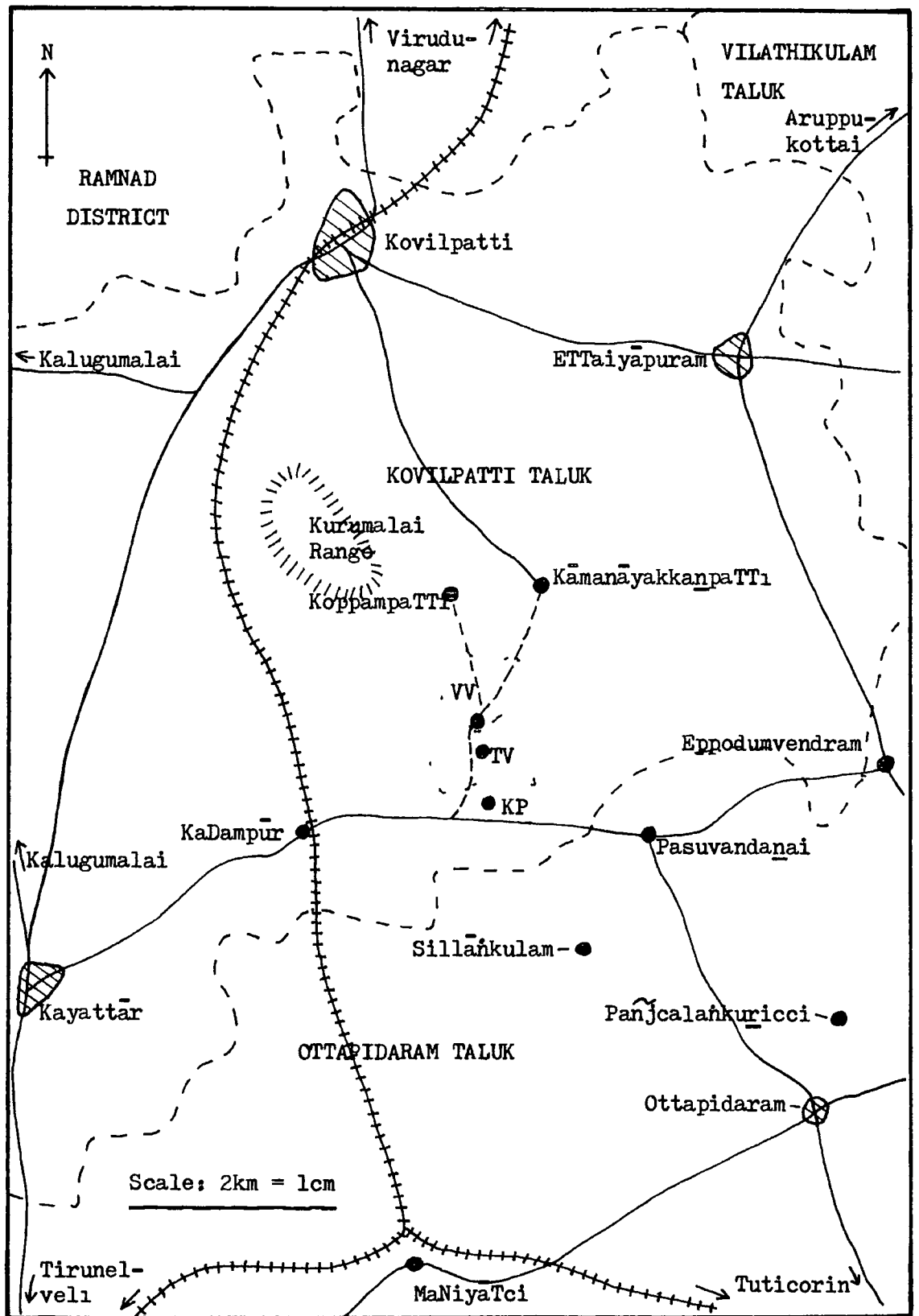
Grantha letters (derived from Sanskrit) :

ஜ	j;	ஷ	sh;	ஸ	S;	க்ஷ	ksh.

This is the same transliteration scheme as that used by Beck (1972), except that certain consonants have been given alternative English equivalents as an aid to pronunciation. Occasionally, too, an 's' has been suffixed (but not underlined) to denote a plural usage. Capital letters, unknown in Tamil, have been used for proper names; to avoid confusion, it should be remembered that the letters ட, ண, ஞ, ள and ஸ never appear at the beginning of Tamil words.

This scheme has been criticised by Hockings (1973:146) on the grounds that it deviates from the widely-used system due to Burrow and Emeneau (1961) . I have retained it because it presents fewer typing problems; in any case, one system is as arbitrary as another, and the main point is that one should be

internally consistent. For this last reason, I am utterly opposed to Hockings' suggestion (ibid) that phonetic rather than graphemic transliteration should be used (e.g. grāmam instead of kirāmam, to render கிராமம்) . Tamil is an ancient literary language with well-established spellings, and should be treated with the precision which it merits (cf. Allen 1976) . To do otherwise would, in any case, only lead to ambiguity. Hockings' other claim, that not one of the graphemes in Beck's list is correctly transliterated (she writes க, i.e. 'ka', instead of க், 'k', etc.) is pure pedantry .



Map of Kovilpatti Taluk

PART ONE

INTER-CASTE PRESTATIONS IN A TAMIL MICRO-REGION

CHAPTER 1 : THREE VILLAGES

1.1 Village Selection

The fieldwork upon which the following account is based was carried out in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu during the period June 1976 to August 1977, inclusive. Tamil Nadu forms the south-eastern tip of the Indian peninsula, and prior to my arrival in India I had decided that if possible I would like to work in the Districts of Tirunelveli or Ramanathapuram¹, in the extreme south of the state.

Little detailed anthropological or sociological work has been carried out in this area². However, Dumont spent a short time in the region, collecting comparative data to supplement his main study in Madurai, which lies about eighty miles north of my eventual location. His published reports (Dumont 1957a, 1963), though self-confessedly incomplete, indicate a high degree of local idiosyncrasy and variation in social and cultural forms.

Beyond this vague geographical preference, my main fieldwork aims were the study of ritual, kinship and ideology³. I was advised by an Indian colleague that it would be better to go to a wholly rural area for this purpose, if possible one

1. A District is an administrative sub-division of a state. In these cases, the anglicised spellings Tinnevely and Ramnad are often encountered, especially in older works.

2. The available ethnographic literature dealing with Tamil Nadu generally, will be discussed briefly in (2.5).

3. By 'ideology' I mean, in this instance, the consciously-

remote from road and rail. He reasoned that the anti-Brahman bias of the then recently-deposed DMK⁴ ministry in Tamil Nadu might well have led to the abandonment of rituals and other practices which were felt to be 'Brahmanic' in origin, especially in those areas where ease of communication would have facilitated the activities of DMK party workers. As it turned out, he had probably over-estimated the extent to which the DMK had succeeded in altering ritual behaviour. Nonetheless, I had no cause to regret my decision to select a fairly out-of-the-way area.

By the time we arrived in Tirunelveli town, I was still without local contacts and had no more specific location in mind. For the sake of convenience, I set out to look for a suitable village, not out of any conviction that 'the village' was necessarily the most suitable unit with which to work, but simply because it was the administrative unit about which most data were available to me.

In view of the position to be taken up later, I should clarify straight away that in this work the term 'village', when used without additional qualification, refers to a named centre of population, or 'settlement', and the land associated with it. No a priori conclusions are drawn as to the socio-

held belief systems of the people, as expressed in folk-taxonomy, myth and cosmology. I found little information on these topics however, and one of the aims of Part II of this work will be the development of a view of ritual which sees it, in this particular ethnographic context, as concerned above all with social structure.

4. DiraviDa MunniTira KaRakam, or Dravidian Uplift Party.

logical status of such an entity. Administrative uses of the term 'village' will be dealt with in (2.1), while a full sociological discussion of the 'village study', its implications and applicability to the present case, will be undertaken in Chapter 4.

Almost immediately after arriving in Tirunelveli, I was lucky enough to meet the head of a Roman Catholic development programme which covers the north-western half of Tirunelveli District, the diocese of the Bishop of Palayankottai. This programme was conceived and run entirely by Indians, mostly clergy, though it was largely financed by charities from abroad.

In charge of this organization, in his capacity as Director of the Tirunelveli Social Service Society (T.S.S.S.), was Fr. Thomas Malayampuram, S.J. He had commissioned, during the previous year, a social survey of some 34 villages which had been selected for special development projects under the so-called Kovilpatti Package Programme⁵. As he very kindly made the results of this survey available to me, I was able to select promising sites for fieldwork and to visit these in the company of Br. Job, a social worker well-known to the people.

I am not a Catholic, and in any case I was rather apprehensive about being introduced into a (Hindu) potential fieldwork location under the aegis of a Christian church. I delayed for some time, trying to decide whether to proceed in this way,

5. The criteria for selection were relative isolation, and the absence of facilities. For convenience, the villages tended to be close to Catholic churches, but religion was not a primary consideration in their selection.

but in the event I went ahead because I could see no obvious alternative way of getting either the kind of initial data I needed or an introduction into a village through someone known and respected there.

I never regretted this decision. The convenience of the arrangement, the goodwill felt by the people towards Br. Job, and his great practical help in eventually arranging accommodation and the provision of facilities, more than offset any temporary confusion there may have been over the purpose of my proposed stay. I had made it clear to Fr. Malayampuram that, depending upon my reception in the village, I might be forced to have little to do with his local social workers. In fact, the good monsoon just after our arrival in the village, and the bumper rice harvest which ensued, caused the social workers to transfer their main efforts to other parts of the district, but even had they been more in evidence, the warmth of our reception was such that this would have caused us no problems.

In selecting a village I was guided by a combination of theoretical and practical criteria. First of all, size was important: I sought a village with a total population in the range 750 - 1,500, on the grounds that this would constitute a group large enough to furnish a substantial and varied body of data, but at the same time small enough to be manageable. Such a village would, according to the decennial census, be of average size or a little below, taking the region as a whole (2.1). For related reasons I was interested in finding a village with a varied group of castes. I preferred, though

this was not hard and fast, the idea of working in a village without a Brahman community, on the grounds that such villages, though much the more numerous in the region to be studied (Pate 1917:373), had so far received a disproportionately small amount of attention in the ethnography of Tamil Nadu.

There is no recent source of official data on caste composition at the village level, apart from the listing in the census of the numbers of so-called Scheduled Castes and Tribes, both of which are singled out because they receive special preferences in the matters of scholarships and government jobs ⁶. The Scheduled Castes are those groups traditionally known as Untouchables or, following Gandhi, as Harijans. There were no members of any Scheduled Tribe in the area finally chosen. The T.S.S.S. survey was little better as regards data on caste, but Br. Job's personal knowledge, supplemented by our visits to the villages in question, provided enough information for me to reach a decision.

As already mentioned, I wished to find a relatively remote village in which ritual behaviour had changed little. This desire was somewhat tempered by consideration of the possible practical problems in looking after our small daughter, then less than one year old, in too isolated a location.

Tirunelveli was one of the first areas of India to be

6. A further statutory category, the Backward Classes, receives similar privileges. No census data are available for this group, membership of which seems to owe as much to political weight as to consistently-applied socio-economic criteria.

influenced by Christianity. St. Francis Xavier worked there in the 16th century and Protestant activity began less than 100 years later. Because of my interest in ritual I wished to study a Hindu village, however, and fortunately the Kovilpatti Package Programme survey embraced villages ranging in religious composition from 100% Roman Catholic to 100% Hindu.

I eventually selected the village of Terku VaNDānam ⁷ as the site for my work. This decision was founded upon several visits there, and upon discussions with Fr. Malayampuram and Br. Job as to which villages were likely to be welcoming and co-operative. The village met my general requirements as to size and caste composition, it was effectively entirely Hindu (but see 1.5), and it lay some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the nearest road. There was the added advantage of the availability of a small but centrally-located house.

Terku VaNDānam (henceforth TV) lies close to the southern boundary of Kovilpatti taluk (2.1), to the north of the minor road which runs from the National Highway at Kayattār in the west, via KaDampūr with its railway station, to the State Highway at Eppodumvendram in the east (Map 1). Every couple of hours, an ancient and usually over-crowded bus passes along the road, destined ultimately for Tirunelveli, Tuticorin or ETTaiyāpuram. This road is tarred, but the cart track which links it with TV is paved with stones, sand and (after even the slightest rainfall) mud.

7. Terku means 'south', and vaNDānam, 'pelican'. Unless specifically stated, dictionary meanings come from Fabricius (1972), henceforth abbreviated as 'JPF'.

This track skirts a second village, KaliṅkapaTTi⁸, which lies only a few hundred yards from the paved road, due south of TV. The same track continues beyond TV to VaDakku VaNDānam⁹, a mile to the north. Beyond that again, lesser tracks lead to the villages of KamanāyakkappaTTi and KoppampaTTi, from which there are buses to Kovilpatti town.

Both KaliṅkapaTTi and VaDakku VaNDānam (henceforth KP and VV) were included in the Kovilpatti Package Programme, and I visited both at the selection stage. Neither was in itself suitable for my work, VV being 50% Catholic and KP, though entirely Hindu, being too small. Nevertheless, it did occur to me at this early stage that an added advantage of TV was that if my work there progressed well, it could later be extended to cover these two villages, which contained different castes and in one of which it would be possible to study the effects of Christianity upon social life.

As things turned out, this extension proved essential, as the three villages were intimately connected at a variety of levels. Taken together, in fact, they proved a much more natural unit of study than any one of them treated in isolation. The first part of this work, after a general introduction to the ecology, history and administration of the region, will aim to show just why this was so. This

8. PaTTi means 'village', while kaliṅka means 'sparrow' but is also, more plausibly given the Telegu origin of KP's most numerous caste, the name of a coastal region of Andhra Pradesh.

9. VaDakku means 'north'.

demonstration will in turn be a vehicle for bringing out a number of basic features of the social organization, mainly at the inter-caste level.

1.2 Conditions of Fieldwork

I first visited TV in July 1976, and we moved there in August, spending the first few nights in KP in fact, as our house was not quite ready. We travelled from Madurai to KaDampur by train, and thence in several bullock carts to our destination

In between my selection of the village and my eventual move there, I had acquired an assistant-cum-interpreter, a sociology graduate of Madras University, but the son of a fairly well-to-do farming family from Usilampatti, a town near Madurai. This man, PaRanimurukan (pronounced and henceforth to be written as Palanimurugan), also arrived with us. He stayed with me until the end of March, 1977; thereafter I worked without an interpreter until we finally left TV in mid-August 1977.

Within a few days, we had moved into our house, or rather our portion of it, for it was half occupied by our landlord, and his son, daughter-in-law and grandson. We had two rooms to ourselves and shared the verandah. As time went on, this arrangement proved its value, for we became more and more like members of the family, exchanging small gifts and gossip. I became very friendly with the son, SaṅkarapāNDi, to whom I owe a good deal of the less 'factual' data presented below. Having been rather wild in boyhood, he had had no formal education, but had taught himself to read and write. By

contrast his wife Vijayā, though only 18, was one of the best educated people in TV . She had been brought up in a town, where she had had 9 years of schooling. Like virtually everyone else in TV ¹⁰ she spoke no English, but she did know many English words and between them she and her husband became recognised experts at communicating with the vellai-kkaran ('foreigners', literally 'white men') .

Their small son Ravi was a few months younger than Emily, with whom he was soon great friends, while our landlord Mēkalīṅka Kōṇār, though rather austere and withdrawn on the surface, displayed great fondness for the two children and showed himself to have considerable knowledge of the details of village social life. He was, indeed, much in demand as an arbitrator for small, interpersonal disputes.

Certain arrangements had been made before our arrival, in accordance with Br. Job's ideas of how we ought to behave. We found a pit-latrine under construction at the edge of the village, the only one in TV and a never-ending source of ribaldry for the groups of women whom we had to negotiate on our way to and fro . A widowed neighbour, the irascible and erratic Saṇmukattammāl (Kōṇār, T2) ¹¹, had been engaged to fetch us water morning and evening from the well, and a temporary electricity supply had been set up using a lengthy

10. The TV Panchayat President spoke good English, as did the brother of the TV KarNam . The former had studied to graduate level, while the latter had served in the army .

11. Each house has been assigned a code, comprising a letter to denote the village, and a number. This should help cross-reference; personal names are too common to be definitive .

extension cord from Cellaiyā PiLLai's shop (T5). Later, using our rental payments, our landlord installed a permanent electricity supply in both halves of the house.

We commissioned one of the Carpenters ¹² to construct a table and bench, and purchased 3 chairs in Tirunelveli, for the house, like most others, was devoid of furniture. Separate accomodation was found for Palanimurugan, who took his meals at the shop (T5).

Both village Washermen came to arrangements with us, one washing my shirts and the other dealing with trousers, saris, etc. Unlike the other villagers (5.9.2) we paid entirely in cash for these services. We bought eggs too, from anyone who offered them, but the supply was erratic. Milk was not available and we had to go as far as Madurai to be reasonably sure of finding powdered milk in the shops. The food-stuffs available in the village shops were very limited in both quantity and variety, the more so as, unlike most others, we had no personal store of food-grain and lentils. We therefore had to go at least as far as KaDampūr every week, and to Madurai once a month, simply to keep ourselves provisioned.

We were of course objects of the greatest curiosity, especially when we first arrived. In this early period, we found the almost total lack of privacy a great strain: even at the end of our stay, our arrival in any part of TV other than our immediate neighbourhood was enough to encourage the

¹² When occupations are written with an initial capital letter, this indicates that I am speaking of those whose caste-based occupational speciality is in question

appearance of a great crowd of children. Curiously, this effect was less pronounced in VV and KP, even though we were seen there less frequently.

As for the purpose of our stay, most people showed surprisingly little curiosity even when I visited them to ask questions. A few people in VV wondered if I had anything to do with the Family Planning Campaign, which was little in evidence in the area, but about the excesses of which in other places they had no doubt heard. If asked, I explained that I was studying their customs with a view to writing a book: this was generally accepted as a reasonable and worthwhile activity.

We naturally sought to become assimilated into village life, though without forcing ourselves against peoples' wishes. One quite accidental development which furthered this aim was our paramedical activity. When our landlord came down with malaria, we gave him aspirins which brought down his fever. From this there gradually grew up a kind of informal surgery, morning and evening, as my wife treated whatever injuries and ailments fell within the scope of our limited medical chest and even more limited knowledge. Though restricted to aspirins, antiseptics, bandages and sticking-plasters, we managed to treat a high proportion of the most common complaints to the apparent satisfaction of our patients. The nearest 'western' doctor was in KaDampūr, and his closest homeopathic counterpart lived in KoppampaTTi. In either case, the 10 mile round trip involved at least half a day off work. In addition to the doctor's consultation fee, the cost of the

medicines ¹³ and possibly bus fares. Our treatment was on the spot and, most importantly, it was free. Looking back, it is clear that our activity in this field was seen by villagers as our main raison d'être: at the function held in our honour shortly before we left, it was to this that every speaker referred at most length.

Secondly we were seen as photographers who, again without asking a fee, would attend weddings, funerals and other festivals and take whatever pictures were required.

In our own neighbourhood, we gradually acquired 'kinship' links (16) with some of the Kōnār who formed the majority of our neighbours. These arose through one of the older men (Suppaiyā Kōnār, T120), who was so assiduous in his attentions to our daughter Emily that people began to tease him, saying that he was Emily's tāttā (grandfather). From this starting point, it became possible to work out our own relationships with Suppaiyā and his family.

This mutual use of kinship terms did not progress beyond being a joke in most cases, though had we stayed longer such usages would no doubt have spread. It was in fact something of a problem for most people to know how to address us, for a junior is addressed by name, which would have been thought inappropriate to the high degree of respect which we were accorded, especially by the men, while seniors are addressed by means of real or conventional kinship terms which were also

13. The villagers set a high store by injections. Any successful doctor must be prepared to give injections for almost any complaint, or the patient will feel that the visit was a waste of time

felt, at least in the beginning, to be inapplicable to such complete outsiders. The most general solution to this difficulty was the use of teknonymy: my wife and I were addressed as Emily-ammaL and Emily-appa, that is as 'Emily's mother' and 'Emily's father' respectively (see also 1.6).

At village festivals, we were sometimes asked to contribute financially, sometimes not. I voluntarily took part in the auction which is held to finance the festival at the Aiyana^r temple. Most temple festivals involve a procession around the village, and when this reached our door our obligations were the same as those of any other villager: like them, we received holy ash in return.

Two days before we left, the village held what was described (in English) as a "tea-party". There was the usual paraphernalia, common to all festivals, of a pantal, or ceremonial bamboo shed, and a "radio" (actually a record-player or tape-recorder relaying highly-amplified Tamil film music for 24 hours without a break); there was a meal for ourselves and some senior villagers; and there was the presentation to us of a bronze statuette of a dancing Siva. The whole function cost an amount, raised by voluntary subscription, equivalent to the donation of one day's wage labour by every household in TV.

This moving degree of generosity is, I hope, an indication of the extent to which we were accepted into the village. Another pointer in the same direction was the gradual adoption of the inclusive form of the first person plural pronoun:

people began to speak to me of nama ūr ("our - including the listener - village") rather than of eñkaL ūr ("our - excluding the listener - village"). As indicated below (4.2), the quality of my data on land-holding also suggests a fairly high degree of acceptance.

This section as a whole, and particularly these final points, has been included because it is my belief that not only the quality of one's data, but the subjects covered by it and even the analytical framework within which it is presented, derive ultimately from the people studied, and from their attitudes toward the ethnographer. This being so, it seems incomprehensible that so many field-workers should have failed to indicate, when writing up their results, the objective and subjective conditions under which they were obtained.

1.3 Methods of Data Collection

For similar reasons, it is necessary to say a little about how the data were obtained, even though no particularly unusual or sophisticated techniques were involved. For instance, no formal questionnaires were used, though questions were of course sometimes put in accordance with a general plan, notably in the collection of the data on property-holding, and on kinship usages.

A considerable proportion of the data obtained, representing in all some 4 months of fieldwork, was in the form of genealogies. My assistant and I worked in accordance with the general schema outlined in "Notes and Queries..." (pp 54-5),

modifying the details of the procedure in the light of our own experience. Indeed, many of our first informants had to be revisited to collect missing information, once the time had come to fit all these ego-centred genealogies into a single, caste-wide network ¹⁴.

As recommended by "Notes and Queries..." (pp 79ff) kinship terminologies were collected using the genealogical method. This was generally carried out in two stages: genealogies were recorded first, and it was only some time, often months, later that the kinship terms were elicited by asking Ego what terms he used for a series of alters identified by their personal names rather than by any known genealogical connection with Ego. On balance this two-stage method is probably more reliable, as informants' answers with respect to kinship usages are uninfluenced by, and hence provide a check upon, what they have already said with respect to genealogy.

Some informants were also asked theoretical questions of the type: "What term do you use for your mother's brother's daughter?" This method tends to be less reliable than the genealogical one, but it is quicker to apply because all desired genealogical specifications can be covered with every informant. It does not seem to have been realised that these two methods are in fact complementary, in that different types of information are obtained by them. The terminological and socio-structural situation in these villages was such as to

¹⁴ In almost every case, each individual caste-group was also a group of closely-linked kin, fitting on a single genealogy

render these differences and complementarities particularly clear-cut (Chapter 10).

Much of the genealogical data were collected in the early stages. My assistant asked the questions and we both wrote down the answers so that we could later compare notes and eliminate errors. We also undertook the collection of the 'theoretical' terminological data jointly, while the genealogically based data were collected by me after his departure.

As for festivals and life-crisis rituals, I soon abandoned any attempt to find out in advance any details of what was to happen. I used the conventional techniques of participant observation, supplemented by the subsequent interviewing of important actors and knowledgeable informants. In such cases, as in all others, as much as possible of the information was recorded in Tamil.

This leads to the final question considered here, that of my linguistic competence. This again is a matter on which fieldworkers have tended to be reticent, yet its relevance can scarcely be doubted. In my case, I had had several months practice before setting out, using a taped course of basic colloquial Tamil very kindly supplied by S.O.A.S. This proved useful in that I could make myself understood to others right from the start, but the local accent was very strong and at first I found it utterly incomprehensible, being unable to distinguish even the sounds, let alone their meanings.

This state of affairs underwent a gradual change: the

collection of genealogies, with its regular repetition of similar questions and answers, provided me with my first foothold in the Tirunelveli dialect ¹⁵. I also spent some time each day following a published course of lessons (Shanmugam Pillai 1971, 1968) with the help of Palanimurugan.

I cannot claim ever to have attained full fluency in the sense of being able to follow, say, an argument in full flow. On the other hand I could hold a satisfactory conversation for hours on end, with people I knew well who were aware of my limitations. In short, although it would be foolish to deny that my linguistic competence placed some limitations on my work, I do not believe that the data which I actually collected were rendered defective or incomplete for that reason.

There are of course areas of study in which any language problems could have a serious effect: the collection of myths is clearly one such. It is my view that myth and theology play little part in the society under investigation, but it is worth at least posing the question of whether a native Tamil-speaker might not have unearthed more material of this type than I was able to do.

1.4 Caste Composition

As is usual in this part of Tamil Nadu, the 3 villages are made up of nucleated settlements surrounded by agricultural land, with the proviso that each Untouchable caste occupies a

¹⁵ For a linguistic account of this dialect, see Kamatchinathan (1969) .

separate quarter some distance from the settlement proper. Within the main settlement, which is criss-crossed with streets running north-south and east-west, most castes occupy a fairly discrete block or quarter. The only significant exceptions to this rule in TV are the Nāyakkar and Pillaimār .

The most striking feature of the spatial lay-out of the village is thus, as in most other areas of social life, the division of the population into castes. For the moment, a caste (or jāti) may be defined as an endogamous and occupationally-specialised group occupying a more-or-less agreed niche in a status hierarchy based upon purity and pollution. As already mentioned, the empirical situation in the present case is that most caste-groups are also groups of genealogically-traceable kin, but this is not an inherent feature of caste identity.

Table 1.1 gives some basic information on the caste composition of the 3 villages, in terms both of population and number of households ¹⁶. The castes are listed in order of population size for each village.

One problem in carrying out a census of this kind is that the population is surprisingly unstable. It is, for example, much larger at harvest time, when whole families return to houses which are otherwise occupied by only a few members. In addition, it is quite normal for people to spend long periods, months or even years at a time, with close relatives in other villages. This is especially true of children, and of newly-

16. A 'household' will be defined throughout as a separate cooking unit, maintaining its own hearth. In most cases this will also correspond to a separate land-holding unit, too .

Table 1.1 : Census Details

Caste	Trad'l Occupn.	No. of H-holds	Pop'n	Av. H-h Size	% of Pop'n
<u>Terku VaNDānam :</u>					
1 KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maṛavar	Watchmen, Thieves	54	284	5.3	34.8
2 Sānpākkamār Paṛaiyar	Agric. Labourers	27	129	4.8	15.8
3 Kammāvar Nāyakkar	Farmers	19	93	4.9	11.4
4. Sivi Idaiyar Kōṇār	Shepherds	19	92	4.8	11.3
5 PiLLaiṁmār :					
(a) Saiva Vēllālar	Farmers	5	34		
(b) Umaiṇōru Kurukkal	Farmers (Priests?)	6	34		
(c) KoDikka PiLLai	Betel-vine Growers	3	10		
(d) Kotta PiLLai	Farmers	1	5		
(e) Ōṭuvār	Temple Priests	1	3		
		—	—		
6. Taccan Āsārī	Carpenters	16	86	5.4	10.5
7. Vāṇiya Ceṇṇiyār	Oil Merchants	6	30	5.0	3.6
8. Kollan Āsārī	Blacksmiths	5	28	5.6	3.4
9. Serman Vēlār	Potters, Priests	4	25	6.2	3.1
10 Sannivāṇ KavunDar	Farmers, Priests	4	15	3.8	1.8
		2	12	6.0	1.5

Table 1.1 : Census Details (cont'd)

Caste	Trad'l Occupn.	No. of H-holds	Pop'n	Av H-h Size	Pop'n %
<u>Terku VaNDānam (cont'd) :</u>					
11. PāNDi VaNNār	Washermen	2	12	6.0	1.5
12. PāNDitar	Barbers	1	6	6.0	0.7
13. Tattan Āsārī	Goldsmiths	1	2	2.0	0.3
14. TīNDā VaNNār	Washermen/Barbers	1	2	2.0	0.3
		<u>161</u>	<u>816</u>	<u>5.1</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u>VaDakku VaNDānam :</u>					
1. Christian NāDār	Toddy-tappers	91	389	4.3	53.5
2. Anjca PaLLar	Agric Labourers	28	158	5.6	21.7
3. Kampalattar Nāyakkar	Farmers	11	64	5.8	8.8
4. TōTTi Cakkiliyar	Scavengers, Shoemakers	13	57	4.4	7.8
5. Sivi Idaiyar KōNār	Shepherds	7	28	4.0	3.9
6. PāNDi VaNNār	Washermen	1	9	9.0	1.2
7. MaNiyakkārār Maṛavar	Watchmen, Thieves	2	7	3.5	1.0
8. Sāmpakkamār Paraiyar	Agric. Labourers	1	7	7.0	1.0
9. Maruttuvar	Barbers	1	4	4.0	0.6

Table 1.1 : Census Details (cont'd)

Caste	Trad'l Occupn	No. of H-holds	Av H-h Pop'n	Size	% of Pop'n
<u>VaDakku VaNDānam (cont'd) :</u>					
10 Headmaster	-	1	3	3 0	0.4
11 Catholic Priest	-	1	1	1.0	0.1
		<u>157</u>	<u>727</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u>Kaliḥkapāṭṭi :</u>					
1. Ayōtti ReDDiyār	Farmers	29	158	5.4	52.7
2. KoNDaiyaṅkōṭṭai Maṇavar	Watchmen, Thieves	12	49	4.1	16.3
3. Saiva Ceṭṭiyār Vēḷḷālar	Merchants	5	27	5.4	9.0
4. Kottu ReDDiyār	Farmers	4	17	4.2	5.7
5 Puḷavar	Temple Drummers	5	15	3.0	5.0
6. PāNDi VaNNār	Washermen	2	12	6.0	4.0
7 Telunku Āsāri	Goldsmiths	1	6	6 0	2.0
8 Kammāvar Nāyakkar (Teachers)	-	1	5	5.0	1.7
9 PāNDitar	Barbers	1	4	4.0	1.3
10. Aiyar Brahman	Priests	1	4	4.0	1 3

Table 1.1 : Census Details (cont'd)

Caste	Trad'l Occupn.	No. of H-holds	Pop'n	Av. H-h Size	% of Pop'n
<u>KaliñkapaTTi (cont'd) :</u>					
Il. Govt. Seed Agent	-	1	3	3.0	1.0
		62	300	4.8	100.0
For the Three Villages as a Whole :		380	1,843	4.9	

Note :

The 1971 Census (Govt. of India, 1972B: I, 64-5), based on data collected in 1966, gave the following figures :

Village	No. of H-h	Pop'n	Av. H-h Size	No. of S-C
Terku VaNDānam	140	705	5.0	116
VaDakku VaNDānam	171	772	4.5	173
KaliñkapaTTi (listed as Kumaraapuram)	66	294	4.5	1
	377	1,771	4.7	290

Table 1.1 : Census Details (concluded)

Note (cont'd) :

The figures for VV and KP seem reasonable overall, given the time lapse, but it is not clear why the population of TV should have been recorded as so much lower in 1966, especially when the subsequent trend has been one of nett emigration (4.2). One can only conclude that the official census was in error. In the above table, 'S-C' stands for Scheduled Caste (1.1), and castes TV 2, TV 14, VV 2, VV 4 and VV 8 come into this category.

married wives, who return frequently to their natal homes. The question then is, what criteria are to be adopted in working out the size of a household when several of the householder's children spend most of their time elsewhere, or when the child of a relative is almost permanently resident? Any answer will necessarily be arbitrary. In the present case, only the occupants of the household at the time of the door-to-door census itself ¹⁷ have been included in Table 1.1.

Quite apart from this, not all of the people listed in the census can be regarded as 'villagers' for sociological purposes. That is, not all households are fully, permanently integrated into village life, generally because their work involves at least the possibility of transfer elsewhere and because most if not all have relatives and property in some other place. The VV Parish Priest and Headmaster evidently fall into this category, as does the nun who is sometimes resident in VV (not included in the census). In KP, the Government Seed Agent has duties over a wide area, lives in a rented house, and is clearly only peripheral to village life: the same may be said of the Nayakkar family, of which both husband and wife are school-teachers, she in KP itself and he in a nearby village. As employees of the Panchayat Union School Board, they are liable to frequent transfer as a matter of policy. The Brahman family in KP arrived during our actual census: they opened a shop on rented premises, and had no Priestly or other role in village life apart from this.

17. This was carried out in Sept-Oct 1976 for TV, in Dec. 1976-Jan. 1977 for KP, and in Feb-Mar 1977 for VV.

In TV, one Nāyakkar household of 4 persons was headed by an Electricity Board employee, whose job it was to maintain Electric pumpsets and other installations over an area of several villages. Though distantly related to the TV Nāyakkar, and living for that reason in a house owned by the TV Munsīp, himself a Nāyakkar, they too were marginal in the sense that their own house and lands were elsewhere. They were in fact replaced before the end of my fieldwork, by a Maravar family who were also outsiders (and not included in the census).

It could be argued that such households should be excluded from the census totals and averages, as they are not full members of the village in a social, ritual or economic sense, unlike the remaining large majority who make up the social community proper. I have chosen to include them in my own calculations however, on the grounds that every village contains a few such families, for whatever reason. Once again whichever choice one makes is to some degree arbitrary.

Another point which needs to be made here is that the Paraiyar (caste group TV 2¹⁸), the Paḷḷar (VV 2) and the Cakkiliyar (VV 4), are Untouchable groups whose settlements are spatially segregated (but see 5.5.1 for the case of VV 8).

The question arises as to how typical this caste composition may be taken to be. One is not necessarily interested in selecting a village with a statistically-average distribution of castes, but the significance of one's

18. The caste code numbers, here and subsequently, refer to the numbers assigned in Table 1.1 .

data is nonetheless affected by such considerations. For example, the presence of an unusually large or small proportion of key groups - Brahmans, Artisans, Untouchables, Christians, and so on - is bound to have implications for all spheres of social life. It is therefore interesting to compare the caste composition of the 3 villages, taken as a whole for reasons to be dealt with in Chapter 5, with that of Tirunelveli District generally.

There are no recent official statistics with which such a comparison may be carried out, because full caste data were not collected after the 1921 census. It is with earlier figures, then, that comparison must be made.

Each census met with problems in the definition and nomenclature of caste, and each Census Commissioner solved these in different ways. Moreover, certain caste groups such as the Nāḍār strove to raise their general position in society by means of changing their caste title (Hardgrave 1969:133-6) and such tendencies became more widespread as time went on (Baker 1975:222-6). Data from several censuses are therefore taken into account in the comparison included in Table 1.2, in the belief that they give a truer picture when taken as a whole. The 1871 census is not usable, however, as it lists people on the basis of occupation even though it confusingly attaches Tamil caste names to these empirical categories (Cornish 1874:II, 108-30).

A further source of error which must be mentioned is that the boundaries of Tirunelveli District changed somewhat

during the period in question (2.1). There have been more changes, notably the addition of Shencottah Taluk, since Independence. As the figures to be compared are percentages and not absolute totals, such variations should not be too significant, however.

In order to compare the village data with the District Census it has been necessary to group together certain of the village caste-groups under a single heading. This has been done, not on ethnographic grounds, but because the evidence is that these assimilations were carried out on the census data themselves.

Thus the two groups of Maravar, the KoNDaiyañkōTTai (TV 1, KP 2) and the Mañiyakkārar (VV 7) are taken together as 'Maravar'; the various PiLLaimār (TV 5) and the Saiva CeTTiyār VeLLālar (KP 3) have been combined under the heading 'PiLLai'; the Āsārī caste-groups (TV 6, 8 and 13, and KP 7) have been listed together; the PāNDitar (TV 12, KP 9) and the Maruttuvar (VV 9) are listed together as 'Barbers'; and the TīNDā VaNNār (TV 14) have been included with the Paraiyar (TV 2, VV 8).

Even then there are some inconsistencies among the sets of census data, which for some reason seem most acute in connection with the castes of Telegu origin, particularly the ReDDiyār and Nāyakkar. Thus in the 1901 census many of these groups seem to have been classified as 'Baliya', which is both the name of a Merchant caste in its own right (Thurston 1909: I, 134) and that of a sub-caste of the mainly agricultural 'Reddī' or 'Kāpu' (ibid:III, 227).

When all of these problems have been taken into account,

Table 1.2 : The Caste Composition of the Micro-Region
as Compared to Tirunelveli District as a Whole

Caste	Population	Proportion of Named Castes (%) ^c
(1) 1891 Census (Stuart 1893:358-77) :		
1. Shanana	278,887	19.2
2. Maravan	188,977	13.0
3. Reddi, Kapu ^a	35,151	2.4
4. Pallan	219,515	15.1
5. Paraiyan	101,510	7.0
6. Vellalan	175,882	12.1
7. Idaiyan	97,115	6.7
8. Kamma	49,615	3.4
9. Tottiyana ^a	31,494	2.1
10. Artisans ^b	78,481	5.4
11. Chakkiliyan	34,744	2.4
12. Vannan	25,723	1.7
13. Vaniyan	46,527	3.1
14. Kusavan	11,794	0.8
15. Occhan	1,410	0.1
16. Ambattan ^e	21,869	1.4
17. Brahman	59,878	4.1
18. Unsp. Christian	109,910	-
19. Others	347,612	-
Total ^d	1,916,095	100.0
(11) 1901 Census (Madras Govt 1905:6)		
1. Shanana	293,792	19.8
2. Maravan	210,764	14.2
3. Kapu	13,958	0.9
4. Pallan	233,808	15.8
5. Paraiyan	103,430	7.0
6. Vellalan	190,053	12.8
7. Idaiyan	106,965	7.3
8. Kamma	41,829	2.8
9. Tottiyana	13,998	0.9
10. Kammalan	83,154	5.6
11. Chakkiliyan	37,003	2.5
12. Vannan	25,692	1.7
13. Vaniyan	29,260	2.0
14. Kusavan	14,172	0.9
15. Occhan	1,763	0.1
16. Ambattan	23,598	1.6
17. Brahman	59,949	4.1
18. Unsp. Christian	159,213	-
19. Others	315,331	-
Total ^d	1,957,732	100.0

Table 1.2 : Caste Composition (cont'd)

Caste	Population	Proportion of Named Castes (%) ^c
(iii) 1921 Census (Boag 1922:Part II) :		
1. Nadan	258,553	18.8
2. Maravan	231,853	16.7
3. Kapu	36,322	2.6
4. Pallan	196,148	14.3
5. Paraiyan	79,691	5.7
6. Vellala	145,339	10.5
7. Idaiyan	101,873	7.4
8. Kamma	56,868	4.1
9. Tottiyar	15,703	1.2
10. Kammalan	88,556	6.4
11. Chakkiliyan	21,219	1.6
12. Vannan	29,254	2.1
13. Vaniyan	23,857	1.7
14. Kusavan	10,758	0.8
15. Occhan	not listed	-
16. Ambattan	22,994	1.7
17. Brahman	60,998	4.4
18. Unspec. Christian	192,350	-
19. Others	219,976	-
Total ^d	1,792,312	100.0

Notes to Table 1.2, parts (i)-(iii) :

The caste names given are those used in the census concerned, unless otherwise stated below. Groups 1-17 have been so constituted as to correspond to caste-groups 1-17 as found in TV, VV and KP.

- a. Many of these people are listed as 'Baliya' in the subsequent census.
- b. This group also includes those listed in the census as 'Carpenters', 'Blacksmiths' and 'Goldsmiths'.
- c. Only categories 1-17 are taken into account here.
- d. This excludes the Muslim population of the District.
- e. The total excludes those Ambattan listed as Muslims.

Table 1.2 : Caste Composition (concluded)

(iv) Micro-Region Census 1976-77 :

Castes	Population	%	Average % in Govt. Censuses
1. NāDār (VV 1)	389	21.1	19.2
2. Maravar (TV 1, KP 2, VV 7)	340	18.4	14.6
3. ReDDīyār (KP 1, 4)	175	9.5	2.0
4. PaLLar (VV 2)	158	8.6	15.1
5. Paraiyar (TV 2, 14, VV 8)	138	7.5	6.6
6. PiLLai (TV 5, KP 3)	125	6.8	11.8
7. Kōnār (TV 4, VV 5)	120	6.5	7.1
8. Kammāvar (TV 3, KP 8)	98	5.3	3.4
9. KampaLattar (VV 3)	64	3.5	1.4
10. Āsārī (TV 6, 8, 13, KP 7)	63	3.4	5.8
11. Cakkiliyar (VV 4)	57	3.1	2.2
12. VaNNār (TV 11, KP 6, VV 6)	33	1.8	1.8
13. CeTTīyār (TV 7)	28	1.5	2.3
14. VēLār (TV 9)	15	0.8	0.8
15. Pulavar (KP 5)	15	0.8	0.1
16. Barbers (TV 12, KP 9, VV 9)	14	0.8	1.6
17. Brahman (KP 10)	4	0.2	4.2
18. -	-	-	-
19. Others	7	0.4	-
Total	<u>1,843</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

there must necessarily be serious reservations attached to any conclusions drawn from Table 1.2 . Nevertheless it seems reasonable to infer that the 3 villages taken together are fairly typical of the region as a whole. All of the 10 most numerous caste-groups according to the census data (and making allowances for the confusion over the Telegu castes) are found in one or more of the villages. Moreover, there is in most cases a remarkable degree of correspondence between the two sets of percentages listed in part (iv) of Table 1.2 .

On the other hand, comparison of Tables 1.1 and 1.2 shows that the caste compositions of the individual villages differ greatly from the overall average. But the official figures should not be taken to imply that, if one were to divide the total population of every caste by the number of villages in the District, one would thereby arrive at a meaningful idea of a typical village population. For the castes are not evenly spread, and this is true for the most numerous castes just as much as for the smaller ones. For example, NāDār and Maravar are rarely found in the same settlement: they are traditional enemies (Sunder Singh 1961:13) whose mutual hostility has manifested itself right up to modern times (Hardgrave 1969: 109-20). This all goes to support the thesis advanced in Chapter 6, that the 'micro-region' made up of the 3 villages is a more meaningful entity than the 'village', and it suggests that this may be the case in south Tamil Nadu generally.

Using the data of Table 1.1 it is possible to calculate that the mean household size over the 3 villages is 4.9

persons (see fn 16 above). Taluk-level data on this matter are available in the government censuses, which show that in 1881 Ottapidaram Taluk, to which the villages in question then belonged (2.3), had a mean household size which was also 4.9 (McIver 1883:285); the same figure was reported in 1901 (Francis 1902:Part II, 8). The most recent census gives a mean size of 4.5 for Kovilpatti Taluk (Govt. of India 1972b: I, 2), while the sample survey carried out by T.S.S.S. (1.1) arrived at a figure of 5.4. In none of these cases is it clear what definition of 'household' has been used.

The normal, and normative, household is made up of a simple nuclear family of a husband, his wife and their children. Married sons may continue to live in their father's house at first, but once all his children are married it is usual for the father to partition his landed property and for the sons to take up separate residence.

1.4.1 Caste Hierarchy

A number of authors (for example, Marriott 1959, 1968; Kolenda 1959; Dumont 1972) have developed or used various sophisticated techniques for the quantification or presentation of the minutiae of interactive and attributive caste ranking. As far as southern India is concerned, these approaches reach their highest development to date in the impressive array of scalograms and matrices constructed by Beck (1972:154-81). I went into the field with the intention of repeating the types of investigation described therein, but it soon became apparent that this would not be possible.

Mayer (1960:33-41) long ago distinguished between the different degrees of acceptability of kaccā (boiled), pakkā (fried or parched) and uncooked foodstuffs. Beck was able to carry this further by displaying caste hierarchies for the exchange of cooked rice (1972:163), curd (ibid:165) and betel (ibid:169), and for the removal of eating leaves at the end of a meal (ibid:166). The order in which the various castes were served with food was also regulated (ibid:5, 173). Quite apart from these dietary considerations, there were rules governing the entering of houses (ibid:160), and orders of precedence on ritual occasions such as temple festivals (ibid:175).

Of these various contexts, only the last is of any consequence in the present case. At weddings and puberty ceremonies, "all" castes are fed by all others in no fixed order, and as individual households rather than in caste-based groups or lines ¹⁹. In TV this is true for all except the VaNNār and PāNDitar (TV 11 and 12), who are given food to take home, and the Untouchables (Paraiyar, TV 2; Cakkiliyar, VV 4), who are fed outside the house afterwards if they choose to come.

No distinctions are made between the different types of food either, and while parched grain or fried foods such as muruku ²⁰ are the items most commonly offered to visitors of whatever caste, this merely reflects the fact that people have little cause to eat full meals in fellow-villagers' houses.

19. This seems to have been so for 50-60 years at least, as far back as my informants' memories went. On the other hand, I was told that the PiLLaimār sub-castes (TV 5) did not inter-dine until more recently.

20. A savoury made from lentil-flour, shaped like a pretzel.

At wedding feasts the meals are always vegetarian in nature, comprising boiled rice and curried vegetables, perhaps followed by payasam, a sweet made with noodles. In other words, the food is of the kind found elsewhere to be the most restricted in its acceptability (Mayer, loc. cit.), and yet even so no limitations apply to the majority of caste-groups.

As for house visiting, only the Cakkiliyar cannot enter the actual dwelling-houses of 'clean' castes in TV, although even they may come into the courtyards if they have business there. Paraiyar can enter houses and may even be fed there, although in that case they will eat on the verandah rather than inside ²¹. If sitting on the verandah of a clean-caste house, a Paraiyar will always sit on the floor, if possible lower down than his non-Untouchable companions. 'Clean'-caste men may well be sitting on the floor too, but unlike them a Paraiyar will never sit on a bench or chair even if one is unoccupied.

The idea that bodily impurity can be acquired by contact with Untouchables is certainly present ²², but I know of no instance of anyone actually purifying themselves as the result of such an event. Social forms emphasise the avoidance of contact: a shop-keeper giving change, for example, will toss the money into his Untouchable customer's hand, or drop it into his basket. Provided that this 'etiquette' of non-contact is observed, I would surmise that an actual, accidental contact

21. This happened in the case described below (5.9.6, example B).

22. 'Untouchable' translates directly the Tamil phrase toDu kuḍātu, literally '(one who) should not be touched'.

would not be taken seriously. We often treated Paraiyar for cuts or other wounds, and it was never suggested that we ought to bathe or take any purificatory measures afterwards. This contrasts with the situation after a funeral, when I was told that I should bathe before returning to the settlement.

Under certain circumstances Untouchables may be treated with respect: this is particularly true of Musicians at temple festivals. On other occasions, caste may be ignored altogether. On General Election day in March 1977 for example, a coffee stall was set up in TV by several Kōnār men, and anyone who had come to vote at the local polling-booth, whether from TV itself, from VV, or from KP, was able to go and have a cup or two of free coffee afterwards. Untouchables, including Cakkiliyar, were served cheerfully, out of the same cups as everyone else (which were of course rinsed out after every drinker). The coffee had been paid for by the All-India Anna DMK, one of the main parties

On only one occasion in the entire year does the caste hierarchy manifest itself in any more complex form than the three-fold division into 'Clean' castes/Barbers and Washermen/Untouchables²³. This happens at the Ammān kōvil²⁴ festivals in TV and, to a lesser extent, KP, when the villagers cook poṅkal²⁵ in front of the temple. This they do in rows, caste

23. This is so from the 'clean-caste' viewpoint: the various Untouchable groups never regard themselves as a single entity

24. This is the temple (kōvil) of the Ammān, or village goddess.

25. Poṅkal is boiled rice cooked in a special, ritualised way, and using the rinse water which is usually poured away. The cooking of poṅkal is a major rite at all temple festivals.

by caste, with the higher castes placing themselves closer to the temple. Indeed, the one vegetarian group in the village, the PiLLaimār (TV 5), actually cook poṅkal on the raised plinth of the temple itself (see also 1.5). The hierarchy which I observed on that occasion (as far as it went, for not all castes were represented) is illustrated in Figure 1.1. This figure may be compared with Table 1.3, which gives the consolidated results of an enquiry into caste ranking carried out among 10 informants in TV.

These informants comprised 3 Kōṇār, 2 Maravar, 2 PiLLaimar, and one each of Vēlār, Kollan Āsārī and PāNDitar, all of them men. They were simply asked to rank the castes in the village, and were not prompted. Hence some informants did not include all castes in their lists.

Whereas several informants were able to state the rank order of the individual Āsārī groups, only the PiLLaimār themselves could rank the various PiLLai sub-groups. The agreed order, using the code numbers from Table 1.1, was : (e), (a) and (b) ranked equally, (c), and (d).

I am well aware of the deficiencies in method, as well as in sample size and composition, inherent in the above. However, the ranking does correspond to the state of affairs during the only behavioural manifestation of elaborate hierarchical separation, namely the temple festival. In view of the empirical unimportance of interactive ranking in daily life, I did not pursue the matter further.

In the cases of VV and KP even smaller samples were used, for the same reason. In each case 3 men of different castes

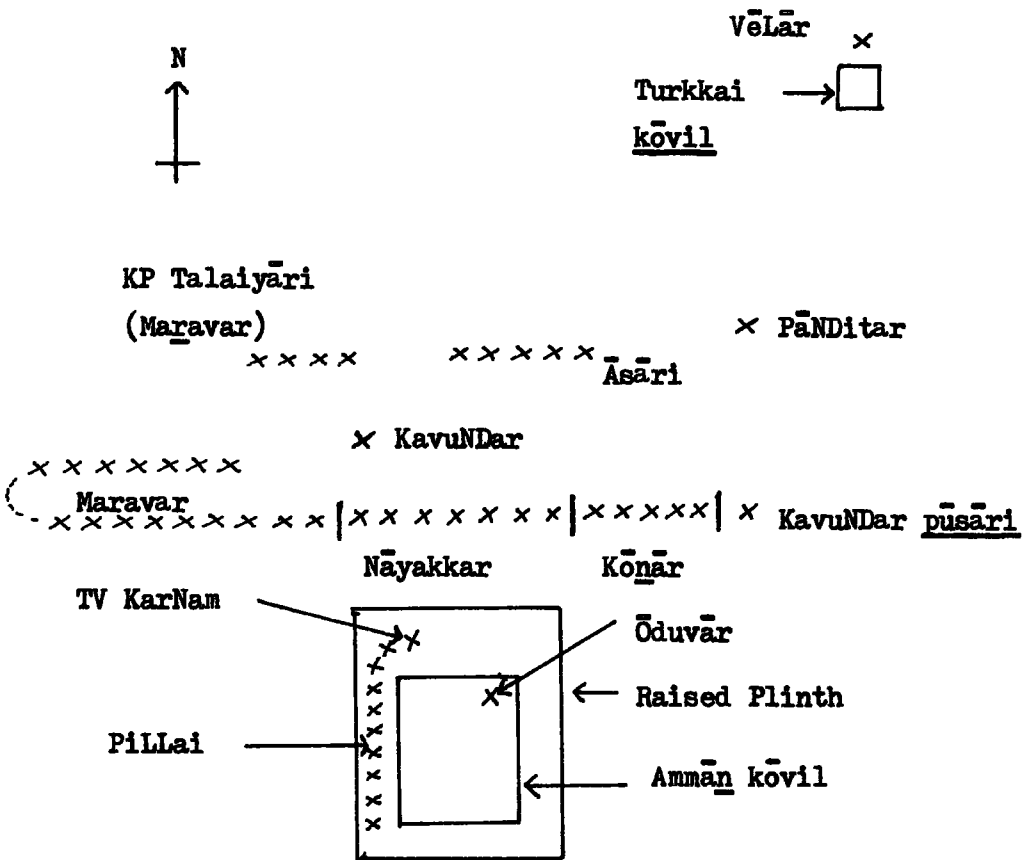


Figure 1.1 : Positions of Poŋkal Pots at the TV
Amman-Temple Festival

were interviewed, and in each village there was complete agreement except on one point: in VV my NāDār informant ranked his own caste first but agreed in all other respects with my VaNNār and PaLLar informants, while in KP the Ma_ravar informant put his own caste first but otherwise agreed with my GeTTiyār VeLLāLar and Ayōttı ReDDiyār informants. Similar tendencies were observable in TV, but did not affect the overall ranking. The caste hierarchies for VV and KP are presented in Table 1.4 .

There will be little cause to refer to these systematic ranking orders in what follows. Caste ranking clearly plays

Table 1.3 : Caste Hierarchy in TV According to
Informants' Statements

Caste	P	N	M	K	V	K	T	K	T	C	V	P	P	T
1. PiLLai	-	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{8}{1}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{6}{2}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
2. Nāyakkar		-	$\frac{7}{2}$	$\frac{9}{1}$	$\frac{5}{3}$	$\frac{7}{1}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
3. Maravar			-	$\frac{6}{2}$	$\frac{5}{3}$	$\frac{7}{1}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
4. Kōnār				-	$\frac{5}{3}$	$\frac{5}{3}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{10}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
5. VēLār					-	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{7}{1}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$
6. KavunDar						-	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{8}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
7. Tattan Āsāri							-	$\frac{3}{0}$	$\frac{3}{0}$	$\frac{5}{1}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
8. Kollan Āsāri								-	$\frac{3}{0}$	$\frac{5}{1}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
9. Taccan Āsāri									-	$\frac{5}{1}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
10. VāNiya CeTTiyār										-	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
11. VaNNār											-	$\frac{8}{1}$	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
12. PāNDitar												-	$\frac{9}{0}$	$\frac{9}{0}$
13. Paraiyar													-	$\frac{1}{0}$
14. TĪNDā VaNNār														-

Notes : The table is based on the statements of 10 informants (see text). The number of informants who ranked the caste named in the row above that named in the column, is given above the horizontal line in each case; the number ranking them lower than that in the column, is given below the horizontal line. Thus, for example, 6 informants thought that Maravar ranked above Kōnār, while 2 ranked Kōnār higher. Not all the informants ranked every caste in the list.

Table 1.4 : Caste Hierarchies in VV and KP According to
Informants' Statements

<u>(a) VaDakku VaNDānam</u>	<u>(b) KalikapaTTi</u>
1. Nāyakkar	1. Saiva CeTTiyār VeLLālar
2. Kōṇār	2. Kottu ReDDiyār
3. MaNiyakkārar	3. Ayōtti ReDDiyār
4. NāDār	4. PāNDitar
5. Maruttuvar	5. VaNNār
6. VaNNār	6. PuLavar
7. PaLLar	
8. Cakkiliyar	

a smaller part in interaction than is usually the case in Indian villages, or perhaps it would be truer to say that it leads to less separation than is usual. Caste is of course an essential component of many interpersonal relationships, as Chapter 5 will demonstrate. Nevertheless, my impression was that many inhabitants of TV were proud of the fact that they ate together and visited so freely: my questions about caste ranking were greeted with amused condescension - "You won't find any of that here".

Nevertheless it is surely significant that my informants were able to attain such a degree of unanimity. When they did disagree this was usually on the basis of conflicting ritual criteria. The VēLār and KavunDar are good illustrations of this, as the two groups about which there was least agreement.

A few informants ranked the KavunDar much higher than their eventual 6th place in Table 1.3, on the grounds that "most of them are Priests". The VēLār were ranked first by two informants on the grounds that they were Priests, and formerly took water only from Brahmans. By contrast, one informant ranked them as low as 10th, for the rather curious reason that they eat meat, a characteristic which they share with all the castes above them except for the PiLLaimār.

Hierarchy is present in all relationships in a less formalised way. Whether those interacting be male and female, senior and junior, or members of different castes, their relative rank inevitably intrudes through the medium of the language, which assumes that differences in rank are universal. A younger person addresses a senior by a 'kinship' term (1.6), while the elder reciprocates with the other's personal name. Similarly, the gradations of the second person singular pronoun, whereby nī is used to a woman, a junior or an inferior, and nīnkāl to a man, a senior or a superior, inevitably require both parties to make a mutually-acceptable assessment of their respective rankings.

1.5 Religion

Reference to Table 1.2 reveals the presence in the census data of a steadily increasing number of persons who had themselves registered simply as 'Christians' of unspecified caste. Where caste was specified, those concerned have been listed along with their Hindu caste fellows in my table, but there are undoubtedly a large number of people of NāDār, Paraiyar and PaLLar origin who have not been included under these various

caste headings in my table. The numbers of Christians belonging to the other relevant groups in Table 1.2 are probably very small, because conversion to Christianity largely occurred at the level of the local caste group rather than at that of the individual worshipper, and seems to have been characteristic of certain specific (usually low status) caste groups to the exclusion of the majority.

In the present case, then, it is not surprising to find that religious differences coincide with caste boundaries. The NāDār in VV are without exception Roman Catholics, and there is a Catholic parish church in the village, built and financed by the villagers themselves. Since 1964 there has been a resident parish priest, towards whose upkeep some land has been donated (Table 4.1).

Of the rest, one Kōṇār woman in VV is of Christian origin, though her husband is a Hindu. One Paḷḷar house is decorated with Christian religious art (it was built with a loan from T.S.S.S.), but the owner denies knowledge of the significance of the pictures, and is indeed the pūsāri (temple priest) at the shrine of the caste deity.

In TV one family of Paraiyar (T65) profess Christianity, the women wearing a Christian-style tālī or marriage necklace. They were converted during the time which the household head spent as a foreman on a Kerala plantation. They do not as far as I know practise Christianity to the extent of attending church. A schoolteacher, Suppaiyā Kōṇār (T84), a solitary man with much less prestige and respect than one would normally expect considering his occupation, also claims to be a

Christian, and has given Christian names (AntōNisāmi and Mēri) to two of his children. They attend village festivals along with everyone else however, and in this case too I have no knowledge of any church-going. His wife Pēcciyammāl makes no pretence of Christianity.

These borderline cases apart, it is true to say that all non-Nāḍar in all three villages are Hindus . In practice, for the vast majority, this means that they are Saivites, worshippers of the god Siva (Shiva) in one form or another . Overall then, the religious composition of the micro-region reflects that of the area as a whole, for the 1881 census reported that Ottapidaram Taluk contained 227,500 Saivites and 46,085 Vaisnavas (worshippers of the god VishNu); there were 57 'other Hindus', 4,740 Muslims and 17,974 Christians, two-thirds of them Catholics (Cornish 1874:II, 292, 297, 302) .

One point to be noted from Table 1.1 is the virtual absence of Brahmans. The one Brahman family in KP arrived during our census and are shop-keepers with no priestly aspirations and little involvement in village life. The overall situation is typical of south Tamil Nadu (Pate 1917:373), and the relatively high percentage of Brahmans listed in the District censuses (Table 1.2) arises because of the concentration of Brahmans along the valley of the Tambaraparni river, and especially in the temple town of Tirunelveli itself (Dumont 1957b:84) .

This point is an important one, because most of the published data on south Tamil Nadu deals with villages in

which Brahmans are either the largest caste and major land-holding group (Gough 1955a, b; 1960; Beteille 1971), or at least on equal economic terms with the dominant caste (Beck 1972) ²⁶. Whatever its ethnographic interest, this is an atypical situation in that most villages in the region contain no Brahmans ²⁷.

There is a corresponding dearth of temples dedicated to the 'Brahmanic' deities of the Tirimūrttikal (or Mummūrttikal, lit. "the 3 gods", Ziegenbalg 1869:3-5), namely Siva, VishNu and Pirāma (Brahma) (Pate 1917:373) . Instead, the two major temples in each village are usually, as in the case of TV, those of the village goddess or Ammān, and the god Aiyanār (Dumont 1959; 1970) . Every village normally has at least one temple dedicated to Pillaiyār (also known as Ganesh and Vināyakar), the elephant-headed elder son of Siva, who is propitiated at the start of festivals and at other auspicious ritualised beginnings. There will also be a variable number of caste and family deities, each with their own temple.

There will not unfortunately be space within the context of the present work to go into the details of temple worship. In order to give some idea of its scope and nature within the micro-region, therefore, Table 1.5 and its associated figures list the temples and churches found within the area, and give data on the pantheons present in the various shrines, details of

26. For a discussion of the concept of 'dominance' see (4.5) and (4.6) .

27. There were once two Brahman households in TV (2.4) .

the incumbent Priests and the pattern of worship, and an indication of the size and constitution of the congregation. The sāmiyāDi (those possessed by a temple deity) are listed, for the multi-caste temples, in (5.9.3) .

For most of the Hindu temples, their Saivite affiliations are more readily discernible in ritual forms, such as the use of holy ash (vipūti, made by burning cow-dung), and the marking of the worshippers' foreheads with a spot or vertical line of ash or poTTu (a black or red cosmetic), than in the apparent identity of the deity worshipped.

Vegetarianism is another Saivite characteristic: the distinction between vegetarian and meat-eating castes appears only at the times of temple festivals, when animals are sacrificed. Meat is not normally available on other occasions. The Tamil term for vegetarian food is saiva sāppāTu, "Saivite meal", and Saivite and Vaisnavite are frequently opposed as vegetarian to meat-eater, and as teetotaler to drinker, a distinction which is particularly clear-cut in parts of Andhra Pradesh (Mudiraj 1970:282) .

Not surprisingly then, higher castes tend to be vegetarian in the present case. It goes almost without saying that this is so of Brahmins, while of the other castes the Saiva VēLLālar (and indeed the PiLLaimār in general, TV 5) and the Saiva CeTTiyār VēLLālar (KP 3), as their names suggest, abstain from both meat and eggs. All other castes, even those who are Priests to vegetarian deities²⁸, eat meat and eggs. For most

28. I refer here to the VēLLār (TV 9) and KavunDar (TV 10), who

of them chicken and mutton are the only acceptable meats, the latter being considered the more desirable. Some K.K. Maravar (TV 1) eat pork, though not 'officially', while the Untouchables eat both pork and beef, at least according to high-caste stereotype. Likewise, the Cakkiliyar are said to eat the flesh of dead livestock, for which they act as scavengers.

Religion is not a thing set apart, but an aspect of all social activity. Its role in agriculture will be discussed in Chapter 3, while the religious connotations of economic life in general will be dealt with in Chapter 5. The religious, or more precisely the ritual aspects of family life, particularly in connection with life crises, will be touched on in the next section of the present chapter, to be dealt with more fully in Chapter 5 and Part II.

One final remark at this stage may serve as a general introduction to the themes to be developed in these other places. For the villagers with whom this study is concerned, the ritual and prestational aspects of religion far outweigh the theological and cosmological in importance. If we adopt Geertz's view of religion as constituting both a 'model of' and a 'model for' reality (1966:7), then the reality of which the religion of these three villages constitutes a model, is a primarily sociological one, in which the rights and obligations

are Priests at the Aiyānār and Perumāḷ temples respectively. Actually, the question of vegetarian deities is a complex one: my data suggest that both the Ammān and Aiyānār have a dual aspect, eating only vegetarian food inside their respective temples but emerging (with some doubt in the case of Aiyānār) to eat a meat offering laid out in the entrance hall (mandapam)

Table 1.5 : Temples Within the Micro-Region

A. Terku VaNDānam1. Amman Kōvil (see Figure 1.2)

The main deity is the 'village goddess' VaDakkuvācelviyamman. The ending -amman is used for goddesses and should not be confused with the suffix -ammaL ('mother') added to the names of adult women (Dumont 1957b:389; 1959:79, fn 14) . This particular name is probably a contraction of VaDakku Vāsal Celli Amman, 'Lady of the North Gate' (Dumont 1957b:385) . Such temples always face north.

The inner shrine is guarded by two Vīran ('heroes') named Vīrappattira (Virabhadra) and Vairavan, who face north. There is also a PiLLaiyar within the building. Outside there is a veTTu-kal ('cutting stone') on which a kid-goat is sacrificed and to which the goddess comes to eat meat (see fn 28 above and 5.8) . There is a south-facing guardian nearby, named Kātta Vāravan .

Several hundred yards to the north is the spot at which the goddess VaDakkatti Amman is propitiated at the start of the annual festival. There is no actual shrine. In between this and the main temple are three puDam (truncated square pyramids) on a plinth. One is an anointing stone, and the others represent SoDalai (Siva as present in the cemetery) and Vairavan. Both face south.

The pūsāri (Temple Priest) is Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105), but SoDalaiyā PiLLai from ETTanāyakkanpaTTi officiates at the SoDalai shrine. There is daily worship of a perfunctory kind in the Amman Kōvil at dawn and sunset. The annual festival takes place in Paṅkuni (March-April), the main events centering on the third Tuesday of that month. The congregation comprises the entire 'touchable' population of TV and their descendants elsewhere.

2. Turkkaiyamman Kōvil (see Figure 1.2)

This goddess has no permanent shrine. One is built out of mud during the Amman festival (cf. A1) . It faces north.

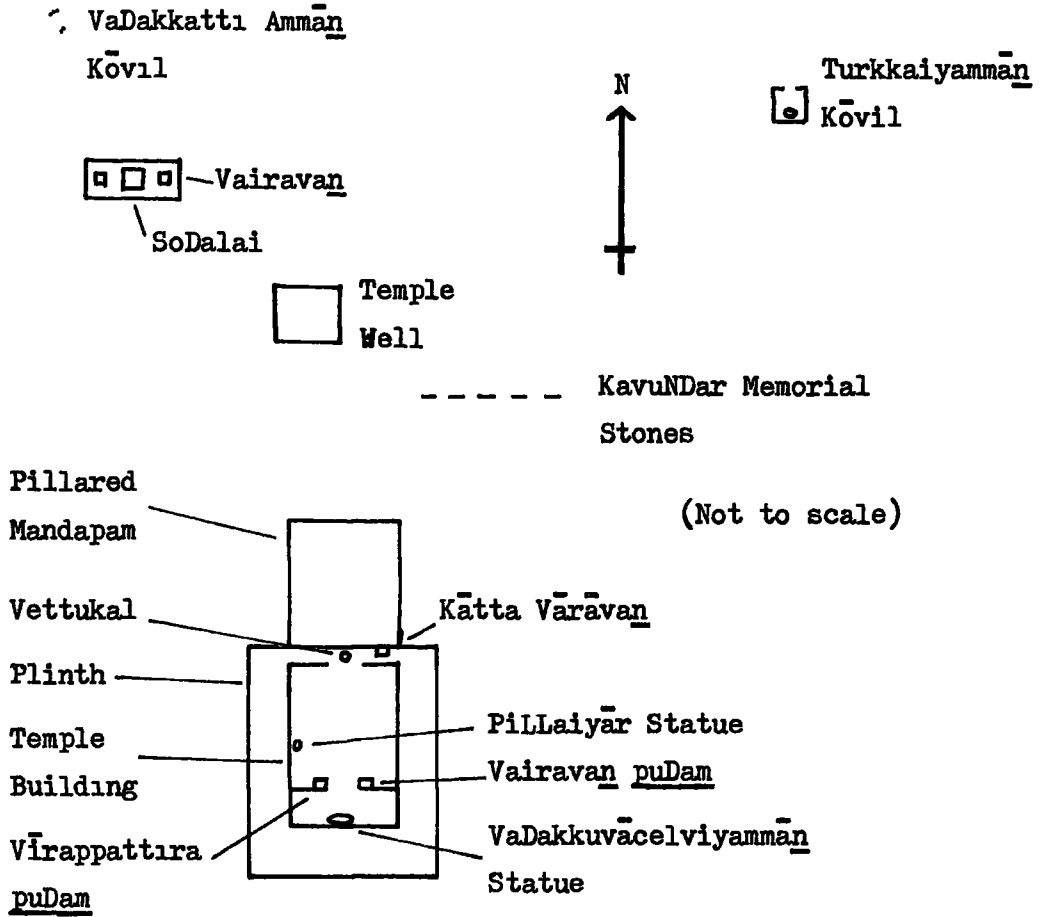


Figure 1.2 : The Amman and Turkikai Temples

The pūsāri is AruNācala VēLār (T113), and only he and his relatives worship there (see also Figure 1.1) .

3. Main PiLLaiyār Kōvil

This temple contains only the deity PiLLaiyār, known also as Ganesh and Vināyakar, the eldest son of Siva. It is located just beyond the ritual boundary of the village (a spot on the bund of the TennakkuLam tank - 3.2 - which is marked by a small stone or ellaikal), and faces east. The pūsāri is Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105), and worship takes place on all important festival days, as well as at the beginning of auspicious events such as the festivals at the other temples, weddings, puberty ceremonies, etc. There is a special pūja ('service') on Vināyakar Caturtti, the 4th day of ĀvaNī (Aug-Sept) . The congregation varies according to the nature of the event.

4. Minor PiLLaiyār Kōvil

This is located to the west of the settlement, facing east, and is identical in structure to A3 above. It was built privately by a now-departed PiLLai family, and there is now no pūsāri and no worship.

5. Māriyamman Kōvil

This lies within the Paraiyar quarter, facing north. The temple has low mud walls and contains a puDam representing Māri herself. Flanking the entrance are her two guardians Vairavan and PālakirushNan, and some 6' away from it, facing south into the shrine, is Karuppasāmi, Dumont's (1957b, 1959) "black god". All three take the form of puDam.

The pūsāri is Kurusāmi (Paraiyar, T148) and the festival is held on the Friday night following the TV Amman festival (A1). There is no worship at other times. The congregation consists of the Paraiyar community in TV and their relatives elsewhere.

6. Aiyanār Kōvil

The temple is beside the road to KP, below the bund of the large tank (3.2). It faces east. Within the temple are a number of deities, of whom not all the names are known even to the pūsāri, AruNācala VēLār (T113). The main image (the lower half of a stone statue to which a clay head is added at festival times) is both Aiyanār and ValaduDaiyār Aiyanār: people say iraNDu sāmī ānāl onrutān ('two gods but only one'). He is flanked by (on his left hand) PorkoDiyan (?) and (on his right) one of his wives PūrNavaLLi (the other, PuDkalai - Dumont 1959: 86, fn 22 - was not mentioned) and a PiLLaiyār statue. Facing the row of deities are 2 stone bulls (nandi), the vehicles of Siva. Outside the front door of the shrine are several bells, hanging above the pālipiDam ('altar', lit. 'sacrifice table'). This last is a stone some 3' high, with a square base and a circular top. Some yards away to the east, and facing into the shrine, is a small rectangular stone representing Karuppasāmi, and to the south-west of that a similar stone, on a plinth, denotes Pēcciyamman. She faces north. Finally, to the south of the temple building, and virtually ignored, are several tiny

statues facing east, one of which is of SoDalaimāDasāmi.

Worship takes place on important Hindu holidays, and the main temple festival is held on Paṅkuni uttiram, the full-moon day of that month (March-April). In 1977, this fell on the Saturday following the Ammān festival (A1), immediately after the Māriyamman festival (A5). The congregation is drawn from KP as well as TV, and the temple is also the kuladeyvam ('family deity') shrine for people of various castes from further afield. For example, the stone mandapam (pillared entrance hall) which contains the pālipīḍam had been built in 1951 by a Ceṭṭiyār family from Kovilpatti, unrelated to the TV or KP Ceṭṭiyār.

7. KaraiyaDi Maḍan Kōvil

This is located below the bund of the Tennakulam (3.2), north-east of the settlement site. It faces east and contains only a rudimentary mud puḍam representing the eponymous deity, whose name (literally 'elephant demon') is also an epithet of Siva in a polluted or poisoned form (JPF:219). This would fit in with the fact that the deity visits the cemetery during the festival.

It is an Āsāri (mainly Blacksmith) kuladeyvam shrine. The pūsāri is Kandasāmi Āsāri from Mīnāṭcipuram, and the worshippers mostly come from outside the region. The annual festival is on Paṅkuniuttiram, the same day as that of Aiyanār (A6).

8. Ceṭṭiyār PiLLaiyār Kōvil

Immediately to the south of A7, and also facing east, is a PiLLaiyār temple which belongs to the local VāNiya Ceṭṭiyār caste-group. It has no pūsāri and worship only occurs before Ceṭṭiyār life-crisis rites.

9. PattirakāLiyamman Kōvil (see Figure 1.3)

This is another Āsāri kuladeyvam shrine, located below the bund of Tennakulam, further away from the settlement than A7. PattirakāLi (Bhadrakali) herself, a female statue with 4 arms and a trident, faces east within the sanctum sanctorum, outside which there is a pālipīḍam altar and a heart-shaped omakuṇḍam, 'a hole for a sacrificial fire (homam)' (JPF:169). There are

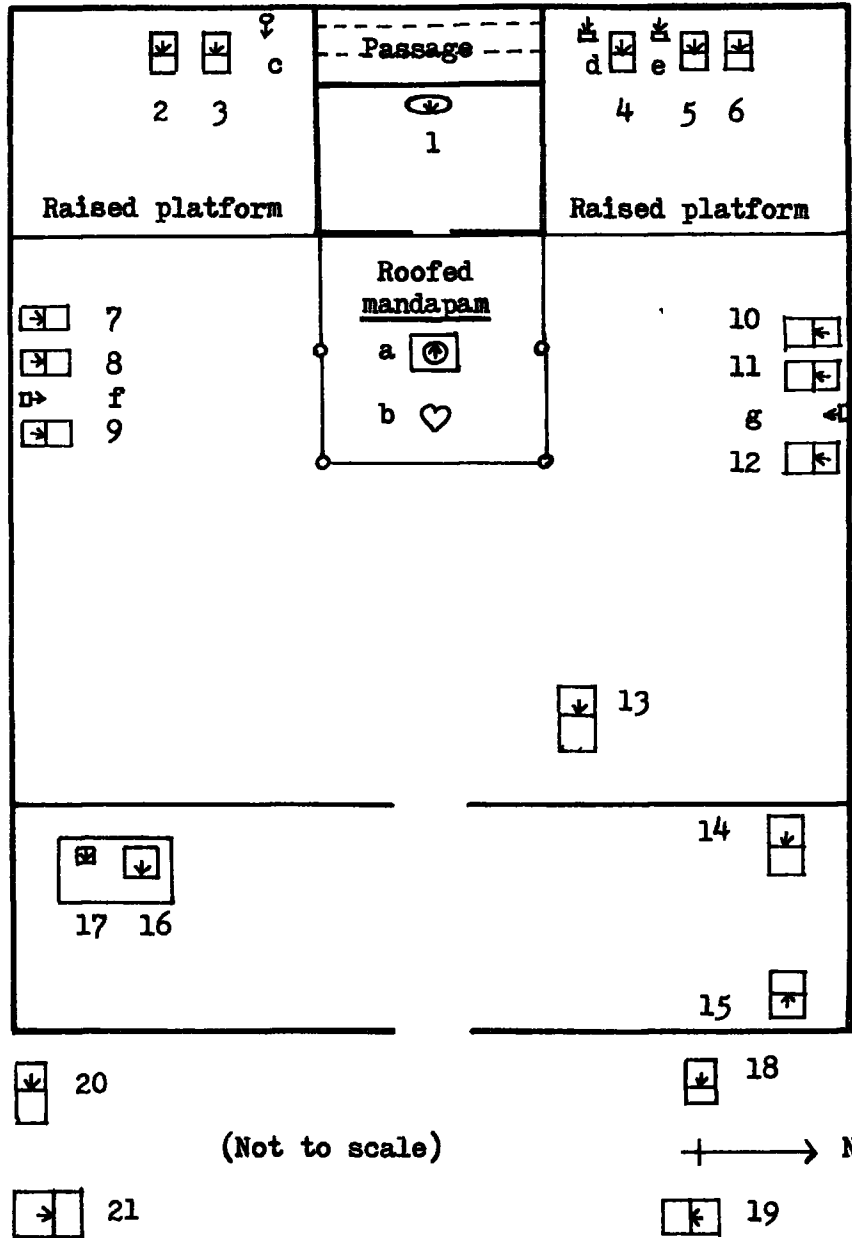


Figure 1.3 : The PattirakāLiyamman Temple in TV

21 deities altogether, the conventional number for a kuladeyvan shrine, and these are made up as follows, the numbers referring to Figure 1.3 : - 1) PattirakāLi herself; 2) and 3) Sanniyāsi and Sanniyāsi Tampiran, 2 Saivite ascetics or temple overseers (JPF:486), represented by puḍam some 2' high; 4) ?; 5) and 6) Māḍan and Māḍatti, male and female 'devils' or 'imps' (JPF:789); 7), 8) and 9) Kannimar PāṇDarkal ('virgins with earthen vessels',

JPF:222, 686), all 2' high puḍam; 10), 11) and 12) Tuṣi VēTTaikkārar, a 'detachment of hunters' (JPF:548, 903), all 2' high; 13) Pālavēsam, a 'disguised protector or guardian' (JPF: 691, 902); some 3' high; 14) vaNNārmāḍan (2'); 15) Ilaṭasannyāsi, a 'monk or beggar from North India' (JPF:87), 2' high; 16) and 17), on the same plinth, Māḍasāmi (15') and Pēcciyammān (3'); 18) Karuppasāmi (5'); 19) Soḍalai (5'); 20) Sāshtar (another name for Aiyanār - JPF:375) (3'); 21) Uttanḍarāyan (10'), a 'fierce, cruel king' (JPF:81, 109). In each case, the small arrow on Figure 1.3 indicates the direction in which the deity is facing, i.e. it points towards the side on which the various offerings are put.

Apart from these 21 deities, there are various other features in the temple, marked on the figure by letters, as follows: a) the pālipiḍam; b) the omakuṇḍam (see above); c) a small statue of Pillaiyār; d) a Nāka, or snake statue; e) the king of the Nāka, Nākarājan; f) another Nāka; g) a sculpted female figure, in relief on a flat stone.

The pūsāri is Sakkaṇṇā (Jagannath) Āsāri from Tittampatti, and the shrine houses the family deities of some 75 Āsāri talaikkaṭṭu ('household heads', JPF:491) from several parts of the District, including Carpenters, Blacksmiths and Goldsmiths. The temple trustee (Tarmakarttā) is Aruṇācala Āsāri (Carpenter, T48), whose father was partly responsible for restoration work on the temple some 60 years ago, according to an inscription on the door of the main shrine. The festival takes place in Āni (June-July), but is not held every year in practice. There is a reconsecration in the previous month, and a subsidiary rite in Pahkuni.

10. Perumāḷ Kōvil

This Vaisnavite temple is to the west of the settlement, facing east. It is a ramshackle hut of stone and mud, with a thatched roof. Inside are 3 deities: Perumāḷ (KirushNa) is flanked by his wives Ilakshmi and UrukumaNi (Rukmani). In front of the temple is a stone pillar or kampam.

The pūsāri is Kurusāmi KavunDar (T7), and the only worship occurs during the annual festival there, a one-evening event in Purattāsi (Sept-Oct). The congregation is the entire 'clean-caste' population of the village.

11. KāLasāmi Kōvil

This temple is in the fields due south of the settlement, facing east. It is reconstructed for each festival. Within the shrine enclosure, facing east, is a low mud rectangle representing Pēcciyammān, flanked by 2 puDam, both of which are said to be KāLasāmi. On each side of the entrance there is a small puDam, Karuppasāmi at the south and Vairasāmi at the north. Facing into the shrine from some yards away are 3 more deities in a row. From the south, these are: a round mound representing MuNDivīran ('shaven-headed god', JPF:808), and 2 puDam representing Pālavēsam and Muttuvīran.

The pūsāri is LakshmaNapperumāl Tēvar (T77), the Talaiyāri of TV (2.3). The only worship takes place during the temple festival on the last Friday of Āni (July); in practice it does not occur every year. The congregation consists of some 12 families of K.K. Maravar from TV and Sillāñkulam. KāLasāmi is Aiyanār's commander-in-chief (just as the Talaiyāri, as village policeman, is the assistant of the Munsīp) and much of the ritual takes place at the Aiyanār temple (A6), involving the VēLār pūsāri.

B. VaDakku VaNDānam

1. St. Xavier's Church

This building of typical Indo-Portuguese style faces south from the heart of the NāDār quarter. The Priest is Fr. N̄jānappirākasam (V1), and the main Festival of St. Xavier is in December. There are regular masses daily, and the congregation consists of the entire NāDār community in VV and their relatives elsewhere.

2. KurusāDi Kōvil

This is a Christian chapel to the west of the settlement.

It faces east. According to the Parish Priest, kurusaDi means 'protector of the village'. It was built near the demolished Siva temple (2.4) because people believed that there were devils there. Prayers are held there every Tuesday night. The chapel is dedicated to St. Michael, and there is a full mass there on St. Michael's day (Sept-Oct). The congregation is as for B1.

3. Turkkaiyamman Kōvil

This unfinished stone structure faces north, near the southern entrance to the 'clean' Hindu quarter of VV. It is little used and there is no annual festival, though the incarnated Untouchable gods worship there during their own festivals. The pūsari is AruNācala Vēlār (T113).

4. Aiyanār Kōvil

A small temple to the west of the VV settlement. The pūsari is AruNācala Vēlār (T113); no regular worship.

5. Kāliyamman Kōvil

This small mud shrine is situated within the PaLLar quarter, facing north. Within the rectangular walls is a small puDam representing KāLi; outside the entrance is another representing Vairavan. A third, representing Muniyasāmi, faces south into the temple.

The pūsari is Vēylmuttu (PaLLar, V176), and worship occurs at the very beginning of the festival at the Muniyasāmi temple (B6 below). The congregation is the same as for B6.

6. Muniyasāmi Kōvil (see Figure 1.4)

This temple lies below the bund at the north-western corner of the Tennakulam tank. There are 9 deities, arranged as in Figure 1.4, to which the following numbers refer :

1) ISvariyanman and 2) Pēcciyamman, two 7' high puDam on the same plinth; 3) Seyvan, a small stone shaped like a corrugated cylinder; 4) SoDalaimāDasāmi (8'); 5) Karuppasāmi (8'); 6) a puDam some 8' tall, with a sculpted martial figure of Muniyasāmi in front of the southern face; 7) Muttukaruppasāmi (5' tall);

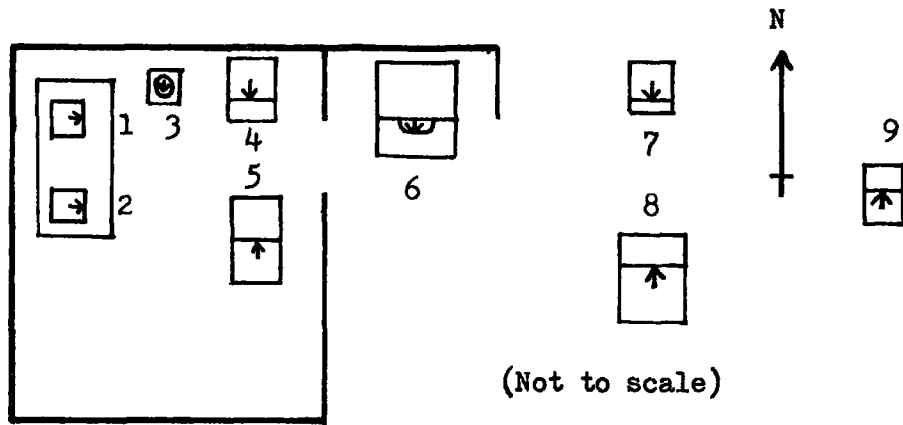


Figure 1.4 : The Muniyasāmi Temple in VV

8) MāDasāmi (I was also given the name SoLLimāDan) (6') ;
 9) Vairavaṇ (2') . The pūsari is Vēyilmuttu (V176), and worship takes place only at the annual festival, on the last Friday in Cittirai (May) . The congregation is the entire PaLLar caste-group in VV and their relatives elsewhere.

7. KāLiyamman Kōvil (see Figure 1.5)

A second KāLī temple is located within the Cakkiliyar quarter. It consists of a number of cement puḍam, unroofed but in exceptionally good repair, on a two-level plinth. On one level are the deities: 1) KāLiyamman and 2) Turkkai, while on a slightly lower level are: 3) Pēcciyamman; 4) VaDakkaTTiyamman; and 5) Irākkacchiyamman . The pūsari is SaNmukam (Cakkiliyar, V185), worship takes place annually in Cittirai (April-May),

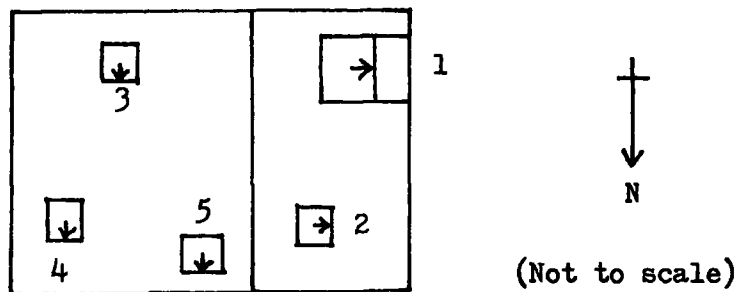


Figure 1.5 : The Cakkiliyar KāLiyamman Temple in VV

and the congregation is the Cakkiliyar caste-group in VV together with their relatives elsewhere. There was no festival in 1977 because the community could not afford the 2 goats which must be sacrificed during the rites (Māriyappan, V189).

8. Muttuvīraṇ Kōvil

Like the PaLLar, the Cakkiliyar have a KāLi temple within the settlement and the shrine of a male deity out in the fields. This time the shrine is dedicated to Muttuvīraṇ, and the temple lies to the south of the Cakkiliyar settlement. There are several other deities, including MāDasāmi and Vairasāmi, but I do not know which is which. The pūsāri is Saṇmukam (V185), and the details of worship and congregation size are exactly the same as for B7 .

C. KaliṅkapaTTi

1. Ammaṇ Kōvil

This temple lies at the northern edge of the KP settlement, facing north. It is dedicated to KāLi, a statue of whom occupies the inner shrine room of the stone temple. This main shrine is flanked by the guardians Vīrappattira and Vairavaṇ, as puḌam. Outside the front door is a PālipiḌam altar, and a little further away is a large east-facing puḌam of Karuppasāmi. The pūsāri is Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105), who performs pūja on festival days throughout the year. The main temple festival centres on the 3rd Tuesday in Cittirai (April-May). The congregation is the entire population of KP and their relatives elsewhere.

2. Turkkaiyammaṇ Kōvil

This shrine lies beside the KāLi temple (C1), also facing north. It is much less elaborate and has to be partially rebuilt for the annual festival, which is normally the only occasion on which it is used. This coincides with the festival for KāLi. Within the low mud walls is a small puḌam representing the goddess, and just outside is an even smaller pyramid described by the pūsāri as the polipuḌam, literally

'rising or abounding puDam', but probably merely a corruption of pālipiDam . The pūsari is AruNācala Vēlār (T113), and the congregation is the same as that for C1 .

3 PiLLaiyār Kōvil

This stone building, identical in appearance and lay-out to the PiLLaiyār temples in TV (A3 and A4), stands at the western end of the main village street, facing eastwards along it. It contains PiLLaiyār only. The pūsari is Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105) and worship occurs in the same fashion as for A3 . In front of the building are two entwined trees, a Margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*) and a *Thespesia populnea* (Dumont 1957b:44), which are worshipped by couples desiring to have children .

Note : This Table does not include several minor places of worship, usually consisting of a small rectangular stone or a roughly-hewn dolmen . These represent deceased relatives, the victims of disease and childbirth (see also 7.2) respectively. These have been excluded, not because I disagree with Aiyappan (1977) that the 'human' and the 'divine' make up a single continuum, but because they are worshipped by individual families (albeit on communal festive occasions) and so do not call for consideration in the present work .

of functionaries are of more interest than the theological implications of their functions. Under such circumstances religion is clearly also a model for social behaviour, in a very direct way. If, finally, we can indeed define religion as that which deals with the sacred (Durkheim 1915:37), then it is in the social organisation that sacrality is to be found.

1.6 Kinship

An understanding of the modalities of kinship, marriage patterns and family organisation is fundamental to any analysis of South Indian society. This is clearly the case in such matters as the importance of the laws of inheritance in the context of a society in which there is relatively little in the way of a market for the most important form of personal property, land. It is equally true, as we shall see, of all other aspects of social, political, economic and religious life.

The most distinctive features of South Indian kinship structure are the predilection for so-called 'cross-cousin' marriage, and the setting of this within the normal, pan-Indian framework of caste endogamy. Taking the latter point first, there are only 4 cases of cross-caste marriage among the 380 households listed in Table 1.1 :

(1) the VV headmaster and his wife (V4); he is probably from a Scheduled Caste, she is a Nayar. As educated Christians, they are ideologically opposed to caste. They do not originate in the area.

(ii) a PuLavar man with a Nāyakkar wife (K21) . They were married in Madras, where different standards apply (Wiebe 1975:

67), while he was employed there as a cook.

(iii) a Nāyakkar household (V154) which has, following a marriage in the previous generation into a Maravar family, perpetuated this alliance by means of an otherwise terminologically correct marriage into that same family in the present generation.

(iv) a Kōṇār man with a Nāyakkar wife (T119), the reasons for whose union I did not discover. The husband had applied unsuccessfully for the cash 'reward' which the government offers to those undertaking cross-caste marriages.

In cases (ii)-(iv) the children are explicitly regarded as belonging to their father's caste. When I raised this matter in connection with the daughter in case (iv), Suppaiyā Kōṇār (T120), a very distant relative with no particular motive for wishing to make the best of things, waved my questions aside: "Any one of us would marry her".

There are however many cases of men having 'concubines' (as my assistant described them in English). The Tamil term is vaippāṭṭi, literally 'set aside grandmother', perhaps in recognition of the fact that the women concerned are usually widows. The word covers a range of situations, from virtual prostitution to de facto marriage. For example, the TV KarNam has a publicly-acknowledged second family in KP, by a ReDDiyār woman. She is not a widow, nor had she entered into the liaison for reasons of poverty, as her father had been Panchayat President until his death and the family has plenty of land. On the other hand, she is a partial cripple and hence perhaps unmarriageable. The KarNam seems to prefer her company to that of his 'official' wife, and spends much of his time in KP. When her eldest daughter reached puberty, he was present quite openly in the role of father and was clearly accepted as such

by her ReDDiyar relatives. This is an extreme case though, and such relationships are much less open as a rule, so that I cannot be sure that I know of every liaison even as far as TV is concerned. However, every man of any standing, as well as some who have none, is at any rate reputed to have at least one past or present liaison outside marriage, usually with a woman from a different caste.

Turning now to 'cross-cousin' marriage, this conventional description is misleading in several ways. In the first place, it is not the case that everyone marries an actual, genealogical first, second or nth. cross-cousin, but that the spouses would normally, prior to the marriage, have referred to each other by the 'kinship terms' which they would also apply to such a cousin. Should the pre-marital relationship be unknown or non-existent, the marriage would be assumed to be between persons in these categories, and they and their relatives would select kinship usages in accordance with this assumption. In short, there is a terminological category which we might translate, for present purposes, as 'potential spouse', and which is applied to some persons who would be recognised in normal English usage as cousins (MBC, FZC²⁹), to others who would be denoted by other terms (GE), and to many who would scarcely be recognised as related at all (GEGE_{os}).

The frequency of genealogical first cross-cousin marriage

29. I propose to use the following notation: F = father; M = mother; P = parent; S = son; D = daughter; C = child; B = brother; Z = sister; G = sibling; H = husband; W = wife; E = spouse; e, y = older or younger; ms, ws = man or woman speaking; os, ss = opposite or same sex relative to Ego.

may in fact be relatively low (Beck 1972:253, Table 5 9) ³⁰. As Beck's comparative study shows, and my own data bear this out to such an extent that it will be necessary to devote the whole of Chapter 10 to the subject, marriage with a genealogical eZDy is empirically more frequent than either patrilineal or matrilineal cross-cousin marriage in many cases.

This represents another failing in the conventional characterisation of the area in terms of 'cross-cousin' ³¹ marriage. Moreover, the kinship terminology is a symmetric prescriptive one of the type somewhat unfortunately described by Needham as "two-line" (1971b:ci) . According to the accepted view this terminology presupposes - 'prescribes' in the refined sense of that term now suggested by Needham (1972) - marriage with a 'cross-cousin'. The individual kinship terms are normally said to be specific with respect to generation (Dumont 1953a:34) . In such a context, an 'oblique' marriage with an eZDy raises certain terminological problems, not least for succeeding generations. The ways in which these are resolved will be discussed in Chapter 10 .

As a generalisation, it can be said that in the present case marriage is virilocal, though there are examples of sons-in-law living in their WF's village and though some groups (Barbers, Washermen) state a vague preference for neo-local

30. These and other data are reproduced in my Table 10.5 .

31. Henceforth I will write 'cross-cousin' in inverted commas when referring to the Tamil 'kinship term', and without commas when speaking precisely and genealogically.

residence which perhaps results from the nature of their occupations, for which demand in a given locality is limited. Inheritance is from father to son as far as landed property is concerned, and women receive a marriage dowry as their share. The partition of land does not normally occur until all the children are married and all the sons "know their way in the world", i.e., have children of their own. These points will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9 .

As for descent-group structure, the Maravar (TV 1, KP 2) have exogamous units called kilai ('branches') ³², membership of which is acquired from the mother. This rules out ZD marriage, as MB and ZD belong to the same kilai. The Ayōtti Reddiyar (KP 1) and Cakkiliyar (VV 4) also have kilai, but these are patrilineal: those of the Cakkiliyar are exogamous moieties. For the rest, individual informants from most other castes described their own caste as made up of units with generic titles such as kulam and kōttiram (Sanskrit gotra). These terms are used by North Indians and Brahmans to refer to exogamous units, but in the present instance many people described them as being endogamous. These points will be discussed in more detail below (9.4) .

In most castes, widows are not allowed to remarry, and I met only one (Christian) example of this happening. Widowers usually do remarry ³³. Polygyny, most commonly of the sororal

32. There are higher-order units too (9.4.1) .

33. As a result there are few widowers. On the other hand, there are several cases of households containing 2 generations of widows (T2, T10, T30) .

type, is still practised. There are 3 polygynous households in TV at present, all of them Maravar (T12, T68, T83), but the practice is by no means confined to them, as my genealogies show. One of these is a case of sororal polygyny³⁴. This usually arises when the first wife is childless, but such is not always the case, and indeed the first wife in this example had borne 4 children including 3 sons, before being joined by her younger sister. The first wife's consent is necessary.

Of course, there is more to kinship than marriage, and it will also be necessary to examine the roles of certain categories of kin at other life-crisis rites and in day-to-day life, with special emphasis on the rights and duties which they must fulfil with respect to each other, and the prestations which they exchange. Birth (Chapter 7), puberty (Chapter 8) and death (Chapter 11) are not only crucial events in the life of the central participant, but also occasions on which their relatives, and indeed their fellow-villagers of other castes, must discharge their pre-determined obligations. Other occurrences, from the unique and unforeseen (arrest, illness) to the completely routine (co-operation in agricultural and domestic chores) also bring kin relationships into play.

Outsiders are assimilated, as in many other societies, by the device of addressing them by means of 'kinship terms': it would indeed be disrespectful to address an elder, whether outsider or group member, by his personal name. In this way,

³⁴. The second marriage is described in (9.11) .

a usage is extended beyond one group, however defined, to apply to a person who is outside it, thereby of course setting up a wider group.

To illustrate this point, let us consider first of all the fact that in most cases all members of a given sub-caste group within a single village refer to each other by means of kinship terms whether or not they are genealogical relatives whose exact relationship can be specified. But in a certain sense, all members of that sub-caste, whatever their place of origin, may be seen as relatives. If therefore a previously unknown member of the sub-caste were to visit the village, and especially if this person were to marry a villager, he or she would be assumed a priori to have an appropriate relationship to the local caste-group. All members of that caste-group living in the village would then, on that basis, select the correct terms for use to the erstwhile outsider and his or her genealogical relations.

'Kinship terms' are also used in inter-caste contexts and adult villagers normally address one another in this way with a fair degree of consistency, the terms chosen depending upon relative age. It has already been mentioned (1.2) that I and my family were incorporated in this way. More formally, the relationship between the Barber or Washerman and his various clients is likened to that between children and their parents, and is expressed by the use of appropriate 'kin terms' (5.9.1) .

Even the relationship between man and god may be included here. It is not that kinship terms are often used in worship,

though they may be, especially in cases where the entity being worshipped is a deceased person standing in a known genealogical relationship to the worshipper ³⁵. One more commonly encounters the reverse procedure, when the lower castes, and particularly the Cakkiliyar, use the term of address sāmi ('god') to higher-caste persons, in situations where others would employ a 'kinship term'. This illustrates the fact that gods and men form part of a single continuum of being (Aiyappan 1977:99-102; Ostor 1971:28) and that, as the hierarchical gap between two castes widens, it becomes equivalent, in the limiting case, to the gap between man and god.

In a whole range of contexts then, from family, through kin-group, sub-caste, caste, village, shared humanity and finally mere participation in the same order of creation, the use of the 'kinship metaphor' enables two members of different 'lower-order' groups to enter into a relationship as members of the same 'higher-order' group. The kinship metaphor is thus a model ('code' would be the current term among the Chicago school; David 1977a:passim) for all kinds of inter-personal contact, while the 'kinship term's' lack of dependence upon context and its focussing upon a relationship rather than upon the identities of the two poles thereby related, are typical of the relativity of Indian society as a whole.

In view of its importance, kinship will be dealt with at

35 An example of this in the pan-Indian context would be the Brahman's worship of his ancestors or, less specifically, the Hindu son mourning his father. In the present case, the worship of those killed by disease, and of women who died in childbirth (7 2), may be added

length in Part II . That discussion will concentrate on the more conventional connotations of 'kinship', and these introductory remarks are intended to set the accounts of economics and of the wider inter-caste and inter-village orders of social relations into their correct context. As has just been argued, behaviour in these wider spheres is to some degree predicated on behaviour in the field of intra-caste 'kinship'. I am not saying that the genealogical usages of what we call 'kinship terms' are a priori primary or more essential (see the warnings by Needham 1971b:xxxv, cvii), still less that there is an 'extension' in the Radcliffe-Brownian sense whereby a 'classificatory' kinship usage is seen as somehow grounded on the genealogically-closest relationship to which it is applicable (1950:9) . There is indeed an 'extension', but in the sense of the logician ³⁶, whereby this occurs not from an origin but across a semantic space.

The phrase 'kinship metaphor' used above seems particularly apt in that what we are here forced to call 'kinship' only resembles what we in our society understand by that term ³⁷. It seems clear that all the usages mentioned above will add their resonances to the meanings of the various 'kinship terms'; nevertheless, it would seem that in the present case the

³⁶ Extension: "extent of the application of a term or the number of objects included under it" (Chambers 1973:462) .

³⁷. Metaphor: "a figure of speech by which a thing is spoken of as being that which it only resembles..." (Chambers 1973: 824) . In this sense, all these usages are metaphoric with respect to our own .

genealogical usages are empirically the most important ³⁸, and that in this instance the narrower usage influences the wider just as, in the case of religion, the apparently secular social structure influences the sphere of the sacred.

38. As opposed to the familial, the narrowest usages of all.

CHAPTER 2 : THE CONTEXT: HISTORY, ADMINISTRATION & ETHNOGRAPHY

2.1 General Introduction

Tirunelveli District lies in the extreme south of the state of Tamil Nadu (formerly known as Madras State), and stretches to within a few miles of Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula. The District is bounded on the west by the mountain range known as the Western Ghats, which rise to more than 8,000 feet and cut it off from the full effects of the Southwest monsoon. These mountains are visible, some 50 miles to the west, from the slightly elevated common grazing land to the west of the TV settlement. During the period from June to August the monsoon falls on the western slopes of these mountains, which lie within the neighbouring state of Kerala, but although vast banks of cloud hover round the peaks, it is rare for the rainfall to spill over into Tamil Nadu. Instead, the District depends for the bulk of its rainfall upon the Northeast monsoon, the main features and consequences of which will be discussed in (3.2) .

To the east, Tirunelveli District stretches to the sea, and includes the port of Tuticorin, for long a prize contended for by the Portuguese, Dutch and British (Caldwell 1881:78, 83). In between the land is only very slightly undulating, and the only hill visible from TV, other than the Ghats, is the 800 feet high Kurumalai about 10 miles to the north. Even these small irregularities disappear as the sea is approached. The littoral region is a slightly inclined plain, shelving so gently towards the coast that the 250-foot contour is as much as 30-40 miles

inland (Spate and Learmonth 1967:776) . The most characteristic vegetation is the quick-growing thorn bush and the palmyrah palm, the latter being it seems almost a symbol of the Tamil people, its bizarre outline on the sky-line a sure index of their presence.

A District is an administrative sub-division of a state, originally demarcated for revenue-gathering purposes and under the charge of a government official appropriately named the Collector. There are 14 such Districts in the state.

Tirunelveli District as a whole has a population of 3,200,515 (Govt. of India 1972b:I, 2) . The major urban centres in the District are: 1) the Tirunelveli-Palaiyankottai complex, with a total population of almost 250,000; 2) the port of Tuticorin with a population of 155,310 . In addition, the towns of Kadayanallur, Kovilpatti, Tenkasi and Vikramasinghapuram have populations in the range 40-50,000 . However the majority of the population, the 2,171,019 who are classified as rural (ibid), live in the 974 villages (ibid:x) of the District. This would appear to indicate a typical village population of just over 2,000 , but in fact the distinction between town and village maintained by the census is based on administrative rather than sociological or demographic criteria, and under the rubric of 'village' are included a number of large settlements which might sociologically be better regarded as small towns.

Each district is further sub-divided into taluks, a taluk being administered by a Tahsildar who is subordinate to the Collector. Tirunelveli District consists of 13 taluks and the Kovilpatti Taluk, site of the present fieldwork, is one of the

most northerly. It is bounded on the north by the District of Ramanathapuram, and on the other three sides by other taluks within Tirunelveli itself.

The Taluk takes its name from the town of Kovilpatti, a centre which contains several large textile mills and match factories. About half of all Indian matches are made in this region (Hardgrave 1969:151) and some villages have small match factories. The industry is largely in the hands of members of the Nāḍar caste (ibid). Apart from the above, there is no industry of any consequence within the Taluk.

The population of Kovilpatti Taluk is 221,460 (Govt. of India 1972b:I, 2), of whom 75,864 (34.2%) are classified as urban. This total is made up by the populations of 4 urban centres: Kovilpatti (48,509), ETṬaiyāpuram (10,741), Kalugumalai (9,507) and Kayattar (7,107). KaDampūr (4,029) was treated as urban in the 1961 census, but had been reclassified as a village by 1971 (Govt. of India 1972a:xvii): sociologically speaking, it was certainly urban, with a large temple, a railway station, and a shopping and trading centre which served a considerable hinterland.

The 145,596 inhabitants of the Taluk who are classified as rural live in a total of 102 'Revenue Villages'¹ and are divided among 80 kirāṁam pañjāyattu or Gram Panchayats (Village Councils) (Govt. of India 1972b:54-72). This gives an average

1. A 'revenue village' is a unit demarcated for taxation purposes and is hence equivalent to the area of authority of a Village Munsīp (2.3): confusingly, the name Kirāṁam Munsīp is often given to this official. It does not necessarily form a separate kirāṁam, as 2 revenue villages sometimes make up a single Panchayat.

population of 1,427 per revenue village and 1,820 per kirāṁam. The median figures of 1,253 and 1,611 probably give a truer picture though, because apart from a few large "villages" like KaDampūr settlements tend to be small: 37 revenue villages and 13 kirāṁam contain fewer than 1,000 people.

2.2 History

The study of the early history of Tamil Nadu is made difficult, as is generally the case for India, by sources which do not distinguish the ideal from the real, or the mythological from the actual. There is also considerable doubt over the dating of particular events, a state of affairs rendered more difficult by the exaggerated claims of some modern Tamil writers. Thus, while the various literary classics of the 'Sangam period', from which most information on early social life is drawn², are generally assigned to the first 3 or 4 centuries A.D. by reputable historians (Nilakanta Sastri 1966:115; Pillay 1975:106; Basham 1967:464), the more populist view posits a date as far back as 500 B.C. (Pillay 1975:104). The Grammar Tholkappiyam, which codifies the poetic, grammatical and social principles embodied in the Sangam literature, has even been claimed to date from 700 B.C. (Ilakkuvanār n.d.:11) when in fact it can almost certainly be assigned to a period later than that of the Sangam writings (Basham 1967:464).

Chronology apart, the literature is open to a variety of

2. These consist principally of the 8 anthologies, Ettuttokai, and the 10 idylls, Pattupāṭṭu, which together include the work of 473 different poets (Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden 1976:1-2).

interpretations with respect to the origins and antiquity of the caste system in the Dravidian south of India. Here matters are made more complicated by modern political events, notably the growth of the anti-Brahman movement in Tamil Nadu which culminated in the accession to power of the DMK government in the 1967 Madras State elections. The ideology of this movement was a pro-Dravidian, anti-Aryan one, a stance made the easier to put across by the fact that the DMK leaders included writers and film-stars with huge publics. The ceremonies of the Brahmans were anathema to the DMK, which urged, for example, the adoption of a civil form of marriage to replace the more or less Vedic one commonly followed. In addition, the caste system was seen as an Aryan, Brahmanic imposition, foreign to Dravidian culture.

This general movement of Dravidian cultural nationalism did not fail to leave its mark on the field of scholarship. Writers set out to demonstrate the absence of caste organization in the early literature, and such has been their enthusiasm for this task, so cavalier their treatment of the evidence ³, that one is sorely tempted to reject their arguments in toto. The question, however, remains open.

For present purposes, it is enough to know that the caste system has certainly been operative for many centuries in that region which falls within the modern state of Tamil Nadu, a region which, for 2,000 years up until the 16th century, was largely in the hands of the Chera, Chola and Pandyan dynasties. These were said to have descended from 3 brothers, who ruled

3. Ilakkuvanār, for example, explains away the tiresome tendency of the Tholkappiyam to discuss the caste system, by regarding all such references as later interpolations (n.d.:15,257).

from the port of Korkai (near the mouth of the Tambaraparni river in Tirunelveli District) but who eventually split up to hold sway in different areas. Thus the Cheras, who disappeared at an early date, controlled the west (perhaps the modern state of Kerala - Basham 1967:94), the Cholas the region around Thanjavur and Tiruchchiruppalli (Nilakanta Sastri 1966:130), and the Pandyan the area including Madurai and the three southern districts of Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari (Hardgrave 1969:12).

The influence of these three monarchs⁴ did not extend throughout the land, however. From the earliest times there were subsidiary rulers known as Vēl ('lance') Chieftains (Nilakanta Sastri 1966:121), and by the 16th century these 'auxiliary powers' had come even more prominent as a result of the instability caused by Muslim incursions (Rajayyan 1974a:2).

The major South Indian dynasty of the time, that of the Nāyakkars of the Vijayanagar Empire, was so threatened by the hostile powers on its northern and western frontiers that it was found politic to afford some degree of recognition to the auxiliary powers in the south. These were granted considerable independence in return for the payment of tribute and a nominal subordination (ibid:5-6).

The political upheavals continued through conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, civil wars, and the arrival of the various European powers (ibid:13-6). By the second half of the 18th century there were 48 auxiliary chiefdoms in the south of Tamil Nadu, controlled by Nāyakkars or Maravar chiefs (Kadhirvel 1977:30),

4. If indeed there were only three at any one time. Nilakanta Sastri (1966:120) postulates frequent overlaps in the reigns of members of these dynasties, perhaps in different places

and in the present-day districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli there was scarcely any land which was not under their effective control (Rajayyan 1974a:3) .

Contemporary British writers referred to the auxiliary chieftains as Poligars, a term deriving from the Tamil pālaiya-kkaran, meaning the chief of a pālaiyam or armed camp. By extension, this latter term also came to mean the area ruled over by a Poligar. The sizes of the pālaiyams varied from that of Ramanathapuram, which could put 30-40,000 armed men into the field (ibid:21) to that of MaNiyaTci, which covered a mere 12 square miles (Pate 1917:386) .

The Poligars kept some land for their own use and also gave out land to their followers, who were thus farmers rather than primarily soldiers (Rajayyan 1974a:21) . Both the Poligar and his followers employed "Pullers" (ibid:22), i.e. members of the PaLLar caste, to carry out the actual cultivation. Each pālaiyam also contained village communities with their own officials, village or caste councils, and individual traditions.

The Poligar was an absolute ruler within his territory, in both a civil and a military sense, maintaining an army, a government and associated ministers, observing royal ceremonial, undertaking irrigation works and sponsoring cultural and religious activities (ibid:23) . His revenues derived from land rents and duties, which were usually paid in kind (ibid:25) . In his turn, he was liable to pay tribute to the sovereign power and had, of course, also to reward his followers (ibid:27) .

Sporadic guerilla warfare was waged by the Poligars,

against the various Muslim invaders, against the British, and also among themselves. This culminated in the rebellions against the British in the period 1799-1801, which were led by the Poligar of Pañjcalañkuricci in Tirunelveli district. After the execution of the Poligar, VīrapāNDiyā KaTTapōmma Nāyakkar (Kattabomman), the fight was continued by his deaf-and-dumb brother Ūmatturai (Oomadurai) (ibid:Chap. V) . These two have become semi-mythical folk heroes in Tirunelveli, the subjects of innumerable poems, songs and dramas. In some of these history is turned on its head, and Oomadurai and his followers defeat the British invaders (Caldwell 1881:207-8) . A drama based on the life of Kattabomman is performed during the TV Amman festival.

Those Poligars who had been involved in the rebellions were executed or stripped of their lands, which were granted by the British to those Poligars who had supported them. Most notably, Kattabomman's arch rival ⁵ the Poligar (or ETTappan) of ETTaiyāpuram emerged with a greatly enlarged pāLaiyam (Rajayyan 1974a: 101) .

Having quelled the rebellion, the British undertook the reform of the Poligari system. The loyal Poligars retained their lands but were converted into samīndār, 'landlords or proprietors'. As such, they lost their military and judicial rights, except for ceremonial purposes, and their forts were destroyed (ibid:112-3) .

The samīndāri of ETTaiyāpuram was granted to the former

5. Kattabomman belonged to the Tokkalava sub-division of the KampaLattar Nāyakkar caste (Pate 1917:392), while the ETTappan was from the Sillavar sub-division (ibid:377). These sub-castes seem to have been in competition throughout the district.

Poligar of that territory under a Deed of Permanent Settlement dated 1803 (Pate 1917:273) . It consisted originally of 185 villages, 79 of which had formerly belonged to Pañjcalakuricci pālaiyam (ibid:374) . It subsequently grew by purchasing villages from other estates, until by 1917 it comprised 422 villages in a total area of 647 square miles, mostly within the then Taluk of Ottapidaram: this made it the largest samindāri in Tirunelveli District. By this time it certainly included the 3 villages presently under study, which formed part of its south-western boundary (ibid:frontispiece; Suppaiyā Kōnār, T120).

At that time, these villages lay immediately adjacent to the small samindāri of KaDampūr, centred on the present-day town, which consisted of 13 villages in 1917 and whose samindār was of KoNdaiyakkōTTai Maravar caste (ibid:378) .

Under the samindāri system, the village farmers paid their annual land revenues to the samindār, according to the assessed rate for their lands. The samindār was himself assessed to make a contribution to government revenue. This contrasted with the mirāsudāri system, common in northern Tamil Nadu, under which villages as units, or more usually a dominant caste-group therein, were collectively responsible for the payment of revenue (Djurfeldt & Lindberg 1975a:56-8); and with the oRaṅku system found in parts of Tirunelveli, under which the assessment depended on the current price of grain (Dutt 1956:II, 94-5). In general, dues were supposed to be fixed at half the actual or economic rental for the land, but in practice almost the whole of this rental was taken during the latter half of the 19th century (ibid:II, 98). Later on, however, land revenues became much less important: they

scarcely increased at all after Independence (Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:157) and inflation has reduced them to the level of minor expenses (see 3.3) .

The samīndāri system was abolished in 1951 (Dumont 1972: 215) and the advent of Panchayati Raj - a political order based on the democratic use of power by a village council or panjāyattu - gave rise to the political, judicial and administrative links between village and government which are found today.

2.3 Recent History and Administration

The samīndāri of ETTaiyāpuram was for much of the 19th century a part of the Taluk of Ottapidaram (Stuart 1879:101) . In 1910 there was a re-organisation whereby the Taluk of Sattur, minus Kovilpatti town and its environs, became part of the new District of Ramanathapuram. At the same time, some 20 villages, together with the town of Tuticorin, were transferred to Srivaikuntam Taluk from Ottapidaram. The remnants of Ottapidaram, plus Kovilpatti town, formed the new Taluk of Kovilpatti (Pate 1917:2) . The present Kovilpatti Taluk is a much smaller unit though, because it was later split into three to give the present taluks of Kovilpatti and Vilathikulam and the 'Independent Sub-Taluk' of Ottapidaram.

Until 1960 the area was directly administered by the government, through a Local Development (L.D.) scheme operating under the aegis of a District Development Council (D.D.C.) (Savarimuttu Nāḍār, V83) . With the introduction of Panchayati Raj, a three-tier system came into being:

"Three statutory institutions, the village panchayat, the panchayat union council, and district development council, and two kinds of authorities the executive and inspecting officials and the popular (sic) elected members have been established " (Saraswathi 1973:I, v)

As for the composition of these bodies, the village panchayat (kirāṁam pañjāyattu) was entirely elected by secret ballot, the first elections under the 1958 Madras Panchayat Act being held in 1960 (Savarimuttu Nāḍār, V83) . Elections are on a ward basis which, given the noted tendency of caste-groups to reside in discrete blocks (1.4), permits the election of a panchayat committee which is heterogeneous in composition. There is statutory provision for the election of Scheduled Caste members in a proportion which depends on their population, and for the election, or failing that the co-option, of a woman member (Beteille 1971:147-8) . Each kirāṁam pañjāyattu has a President, the method of whose election has varied. At certain times he has been elected by the members themselves, from among their number, but at present he is elected by the direct vote of the electorate as a whole (Saraswathi 1973:I, 98; Māḍasāmi Tēvar, T31) . The panchayat members hold office for 5 years normally, but the government may extend their term, and indeed elections were more than 2 years overdue by the time I left the field.

The President has executive powers too, but neither he nor the other members receive any salary or remuneration whatever (Saraswathi 1973:I, 8-9) . Their duties include the construction and upkeep of roads, the provision and maintenance of drinking-water and electricity supplies, drainage, education, broadcasting, social services, and hospitals and dispensaries (as enumerated by

Savarimuttu Nāḍār, V83) . For these purposes, funds are derived from the house and vehicle taxes (3.3) and from a share of 15-20% of the Panchayat Union Cess (3.3) . For VV, these realise Rs 1,500/-, 200/- and 1,000/- respectively (£1 = Rs 15/- in early 1977) . In addition, the government gives a 'matching grant' equal in value to the house tax, and there is also a toṛil vari ('trade tax') on shopkeepers and merchants. The amount raised by the latter is trivial for a small village, and comes to some Rs 50/- in VV .

One member of each kirāṁam pañjāyattu, in practice the President, also belongs to the Panchayat Union Council (P.U.C.), a body which also co-opts 3 women and 3 members of Scheduled Castes, if such are not already included among its members. The local M.L.A.s (Members of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly) are members too, but have no voting rights (Béteille 1971:148) . The P.U.C. meets monthly: it elects its own Chairman, and although once again no-one is paid, the Chairman receives a fixed travelling allowance of Rs 250/- .

There are 2 P.U.C.s in Kovilpatti Taluk, and the studied villages form part of the Kayattār P.U.C. . The VV President is Vice-Chairman of this body, and when the Chairman was removed under the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) rules during the period of the emergency declared by Mrs Gandhi, he functioned as Acting Chairman (Savarimuttu Nāḍār, V83) .

The P.U.C. thus contains the elected officials of the 'second tier' of the administration. The executive and inspecting staff are organised slightly differently, into Blocks. In the present case, the Kayattār and Kovilpatti

P.U.s are combined into a single Block, the overall economic and social development of which is in the charge of a Block Development Officer based in Kovilpatti. The responsibilities of the P.U.C. and Block officials cover the same range of topics as those of the kirāṁam pañcāyattu, in addition to the control of agricultural extension work and animal husbandry. They also dispense government funds for the construction and upkeep of roads.

Also in Kovilpatti is the Tahsildar, the chief revenue official of the Taluk. He is subordinate to the Collector, the senior revenue official of the District, who is based in Tirunelveli Town. As a member of the 'third tier' of the administration, the Collector is ex officio Chairman of the District Development Council, which also includes the local M.P.s (Members of the Union Parliament in New Delhi), the M.L.A.s, the Chairmen of the P.U.C.s, the Presidents of Co-operative Banks, and (with no voting rights) any planning officers nominated by the government (Bétéille 1971:148) .

The officials and statutory bodies enumerated so far are all more-or-less recent creations of the democratic-bureaucratic modern state. There is another set of officials however, who represent the government within the village but who are nevertheless the traditional village administrators formerly responsible to the samīndār (Rajayyan 1974a:24) . They now receive government salaries but are by and large recruited in the traditional way, namely through paramparai, succession from F to S . This is still virtually automatic provided that the heir possesses certain minimum qualifications (educational, for

example), and in the villages under discussion all these officials except for the KP Munsīp acquired office in this way ⁶.

The Kirāmam Munsīp's duties include the collection of the land and other revenues, and he also has some minor judicial powers. In addition, as the local representative of the revenue administration, he is responsible, in consultation with the kirāmam pañcāyattu, for the control of the irrigation tanks. The decision as to when to open or close the sluice gates and the minor channels is theoretically his responsibility, as is the opening of the main flood-gates if there is danger of the tank embankment (or bund) giving way ⁷.

There is also a KarNam or Land Accountant, who keeps the register of land-ownership, and records changes brought about by inheritance or sale. The revenues collected by the Munsīp are assessed on the basis of this register. The KarNam is usually a member of the Pillaimār group of castes, and this fact is recognised in the normal title by which he is known to the villagers; he is referred to as the KaNakkuppillai, 'Accountant Pillai'.

Finally, there is the Talaiyāri, who is an assistant to the Munsīp and also a kind of traditional policeman. In this part of Tamil Nadu, the Talaiyāri is usually a Maravar (Thurston 1909:V, 27-32) and his residual judicial duties are a relic of the days

6. In the other cases, the heir was not always the eldest S (4 7.3) .

7. In practice, villagers usually took matters into their own hands. In October 1976, discussions were still going on when some Maravar men opened the main gate on their own initiative.

when the Maravar, like the Pīramalai Kaḷḷar studied by Dumont (1957b), operated a kind of protection racket, installing themselves in villages as paid kāvalkāṛ ('watchmen'), to guard the village against the depredations of 'watchmen' from elsewhere (Rajayyan 1974a:30-2) .

At present the salaries paid to these officials are Rs 130/- per month for the KarNam, Rs 118/- for the Munsīp and Rs 105/- for the Talaiyāri. There is also a 'dearness allowance' tied to the cost of living, which works out at about Rs 10/- p.m. . (Kumārasāmiyā Piḷḷai, T41; Vēlccami MaNiyakkārar, V142). The KarNam and Munsīp are not permitted to stand for election to the kirānam pañjāyattu ; by contrast, the KP Talaiyāri is also a member of the local pañjāyattu .

The distinction between these traditional officials and the newly-created post of Panchayat President is clearly marked on the ritual plane. Thus, while the Munsīp, KarNam and Talaiyāri all have well-defined rights and duties, and receive specified prestations, during the course of village temple festivals, the President is involved merely as an honoured guest with no recognised privileges (5.8) .

The incumbents of these various offices, and the spatial extents of their individual powers of competence, will be dealt with in Chapter 4 .

2.4 Village History

In the two previous sections, the account of the general history and present administrative structure of the region was based largely on published sources, and with few exceptions the

remarks made therein would be applicable to any village or group of villages in the area. There remains the question of the history of these three, particular local settlements, and on this topic I have only the evidence of a few local inscriptions and the statements of some of the older inhabitants.

It has already been mentioned (2.2) that all the villages formed part of the samīndāri of ETTaiyāpuram, at least by 1917. Local informants, whose memories and knowledge go back somewhat further, confirm this. The samīndār was a Nāyakkar, but within TV the major land-holding group had long been the PiLLaimār. The impressive entrance and massive construction of what is now the school building, and the extensive, largely ruined courtyards and buildings which surround it, bear witness to the wealth of its former owners, while the inscription muttamirakam ("the 3 kinds of Tamil", i.e. prose, poetic and dramatic Tamil) over the doorway of a ruined house within the courtyard, testifies to their cultural pretensions

Above the eastern door of the school there are 2 inscriptions. One is purely an invocation, while the other describes how the relatives of the TV KarNam Vināyakam PiLLai decided to construct a maḍam or pilgrim's rest-house. It is stated that the work on this building was ritually inaugurated at 11¼ hours⁸ on the 3rd day of Paṅkuni in the year of 1785 (expired) in the Sālivākanaṇ era⁹, which was also year 1039 in the Kollam era¹⁰. The name

8. The Tamil day (naL) begins at sunrise. One naL contains 60 hours (nārikai or maNi) of 24 minutes (nimisham) (Arden 1969:316).

9. Possibly the Saka era, which began in 78 A.D. (Basham 1967:496).

10. The Kollam era of Kerala began in 825 A.D.: Basham is wrong

of the year is given as Urutarokakkārī¹¹. The various systems of reckoning agree, making allowance for the fact that years begin at different times, and remembering that dates are given sometimes in terms of the current year and sometimes in 'expired years' (Basham 1967:496) On this basis, we can say that the inscription refers to 1863-4 A.D. .

The rest-house was presumably intended for visitors to the nearby Ammān Kōvil. It is an impressive structure with stone pillars, walls of stone and good quality brick, and a masonry roof. There is an inner shrine chamber with a figure of the god SuppiramaNīyār (Murukan), which was formerly a private temple.

I was told (SaNmukasundaram PiLLai, T159) that these buildings had belonged to the PiLLai family mentioned in the inscription for 3 generations. The owners had been "like samīndārs" in that they owned so much land. In the final generation there had been no sons, only a D named KalyāNiyammāl. She had married one Ponnappa PiLLai and they had had 5 S and 2 D. This in-coming son-in-law had gradually lost (sold?) the property and the last members of the family had left 10 years ago.

The buildings had then belonged to the Ammān Kōvil for about a year, and for the past 9 years had been the property of Suppa Nāyakkar (T158)¹². According to a faded notice, a Jilla

in saying (1967:496) that this era is extinct. It is used often in present-day Tamil Nadu, on calendars, wedding invitations, etc.
 11. Tamil years are named according to a 60-year recurring cycle (Arden 1969:318) . This name corresponds to Uruttirōrkārī, which was 1923-4, 1863-4, 1803-4, etc.

12. He is the former Munsīp of TV, now retired and almost blind.

PōrDu PāDasālai ('Taluk Board School') had been set up there on 10 September 1954 . The building is now the site of the school managed by the Kayattār P.U.C., which leases it from Suppa

At the time the inscription was written there were many families of PiLLaimār in TV: now ellārum pōyāccu ("all of them have gone", a typical piece of Tamil hyperbole; Suppaiyā Kōnār, T120) . At that time the PiLLaimār were split into 6 sub-castes, who did not interdine or attend each other's weddings (Suppaiyā Kōnār, T120; Ārumuka Ōduvār, T105) . Nowadays, not all these groups remain, and those that do will interdine and claim that they would also intermarry.

One informant, an 'Indian-style' doctor from KoppampaTTi, told me that the well-known "freedom fighter" V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, who broke the British monopoly of shipping in South Indian ports, was a native of TV . He said that the initial 'V.' stood for 'VaNDānam'. Chidambaram Pillai is usually said to have been born in Ottapīdaram.

Until 50 years ago, there were also 2 Brahman households in TV: one was house T18 and the second stood to the north of this, where there is now a drinking-water well. Neither family had any Priestly duties or aspirations. Until much more recently there were 2 Ayōtti ReDDiyār households (T20 and the site of T22); there are inscriptions near the PerumāL Kōvil which mention them. There were also 2 households of Teluṅku Āsārī of the taccan vēlai (Telugu-speaking Carpenters), and 1 household of Saiva CeTTiyār. This latter group, who were not of the KP sub-caste, occupied the site of T1 until about 1963 . Balancing these departures, there seems to have been an increase in the numbers of Maravar.

Suppaiyā Kōṇār (Tl20) said that when he was a boy (some 60 years ago) there were at most 20-30 Maravar houses. Now there are 54 (Table 1.1), and the area of Maravar occupation seems to be extending gradually northwards within the settlement.

My detailed historical information on VV is limited to the Christian community. However there is one piece of evidence which must refer to a much earlier time. I refer to the statue, described by VV villagers as Moṭṭaiyasāmi ('the bald god'), which stands beside the track to Koppampaṭṭi just to the north of the settlement, and which is apparently all that remains of a "Siva temple" that was long ago pulled down (presumably when the NāḌār were converted). It is not clear why this one deity should have been left, but it is identifiable, despite considerable weathering, as either a Buddha or a Jaina Tirthaṅkara.

Buddhism began to disappear from Tamil Nadu around the 9th century A.D. (Basham 1967:267), while Jainism remained until the early Middle Ages (ibid:292). Jainism subsequently suffered severe persecution, and it has been suggested that the kaRuvērral ('impaling') ceremony at many temples in the region, is a symbolic representation of this persecution (Pate 1917:100, 373)

In any event, the statue is evidence of the considerable antiquity of the settlement. For the more recent period, the Parish Priest had sought in vain, both in VV and in Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi, for information on the early days of the Christian congregation. What little he had been able to find is included in the following account.

It is known that Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi was one of the earliest centres of Roman Catholicism in South India. There was a

congregation there by 1666, and it was probably founded in 1660. The church there contains a stone proclamation bearing this date, signed by Jakavīra ETTappā Nāyakkar (the title of the Poligar of ETTaiyāpuram) and authorising the setting-up of the congregation (Caldwell 1881:236) .

As the VV NāḌār are close kin of the Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi group, the Parish Priest is inclined to think that the date of VV's conversion may also be early. The oldest men in the village have no knowledge of any date for this, and the names of their grandfathers, as collected in my genealogies, are without exception those of Christians. This would indicate a date of conversion prior to 1850 .

The first resident missionary in Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi was one Fr. Borghese, and Fr. John de Britto was permanently resident there from 1683¹³. The celebrated Fr. Beschi, missionary and Tamil grammarian, worked there briefly in 1711 (Pate 1917:90). As far back as records for VV exist, it was part of the parish of Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi, under the same priest.

Construction of the VV church began in 1886, on land given by the villagers. They also undertook all the construction, and the building was completed in 1905 . The school also dates from that year: it began with 49 pupils. At that time there were 553 Catholics in VV¹⁴.

The church continued to form part of the Kāmanāyakkanpaṭṭi parish until 1964, the priest visiting VV only from time to time.

¹³ He was executed by the Poligar of Ramanathapuram in 1693 (Kadhirvel 1977:44) .

¹⁴. There was much emigration subsequently (cf. Table 1.1 & 4.1:2)

The villagers wanted their own priest however, and offered to build a presbytery and bear a large share of the priest's upkeep. Accordingly, 10 acres of land were given to the church, the proceeds of which cover the priest's living expenses.

The school is now funded by the government, which pays the teachers' salaries and gives a twice-yearly maintenance grant. It takes children from other villages (including TV and KP) for Grades 6 to 8, because most village schools teach only up to Grade 5. Only 9 children from TV (including 1 girl) and 2 from KP actually attend ¹⁵. Hindu children do not attend the school services in the church.

It would seem that the Nāḍār have always formed the majority of the population, if anything even more so in the past. The most powerful family in the village at present is that of Visuvāsa Nāḍār (V73), who amassed his wealth through money-lending. He has now partitioned the property among his 4 sons (V71, V77, V83 and V115), one of whom is the Panchayat President.

2.5 The Ethnography of the Region

There is a considerable body of ethnographic writing on Tamil Nadu, some of it dating back a century or more. It may be useful at this early stage to mention some of this material, in particular those sources most often referred to below. This discussion must necessarily be brief, and so will appear unduly

15. The total enrolment in the TV school is 114 (70 boys), according to the register, but this is entirely fictional as it includes many children who have left the village or died.

dismissive in some cases. To counterbalance this, I should say at the outset that works are only included here because I have found them, for one reason or another, more than usually useful.

Early works, we may assume, contain material collected mostly by discussion, with little or no observation. It would be hard to imagine, for example, that a missionary such as Bishop Robert Caldwell, whose "Religion of the Shanars" ¹⁶ was first published in 1849 and later reprinted in Ziegenbalg's "Genealogy of the South Indian Gods" (1869), could have actually witnessed the exorcisms and "devil-dancing" which he describes, and indeed he specifically states that he did not (Caldwell 1869:169), adding that the presence of a missionary would have been thought detrimental to the performance.

Be this as it may, there is much of value in Caldwell's writings, particularly his major work, "A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely" (1881), which has been used as a source by almost every subsequent writer, notably by the authors of the District Manuals. The earlier of these, Stuart's "A Manual of the Tinnevely District", appeared in 1879, while Pate's "Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevely, Vol I" was published in 1917. Additions and corrections to the latter were included in Volume II (Krishnaswami Ayyar 1934). Unlike Caldwell, these authors had the advantage of being able to draw on the ethnographic details published in the reports of the various Government Censuses (1871 and decennially thereafter).

Turning now to works more avowedly ethnographic in nature, much of the same material, together with a great deal more, was

¹⁶ This caste are now usually known as the Nāḍār.

collected by Edgar Thurston and his assistant K. Rangachari in their monumental compilation "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" (7 volumes, 1909) . This covers the then Madras Presidency, embracing not only the present-day state of Tamil Nadu, but also Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. In the fashion of the time, it is a rag-bag of unorganised material ¹⁷, the castes being dealt with separately in alphabetical order, with no attempt at an overall synthetic framework. Nevertheless, it remains an indispensable source of material.

It would in fact be impossible to write an exhaustive work of ethnography on the region in question, such is the extent of local cultural variation. Moreover, none of the above works, valuable as they are, make any claim to provide a sociological view of South India. Those arm-chair sociologists who did write on India during this period, most notably Weber (1967, first published 1920) and Bouglé (1971, first published 1900) did so in the light of largely North Indian ethnography and using only Sanskritic texts. The first to attempt a sociological analysis of South India was Hocart (1968, first published in French 1938), whose discussion was his usual blend of keen insight (the Barber as impure Priest, 1968:11) and wholly misguided synthesis (the incorrect ranking of the 4 varna based on Buddhist, not Hindu, ritual, *ibid*:23-6) .

Basically, any such attempt was premature until there were available a number of detailed, sound, sociologically-inspired monographs on particular regions or communities in South India, which could illustrate the ways in which local variations in fact

¹⁷ Thurston's "Ethnographic Notes..." (1906) suffers even more from a lack of even the most rudimentary arrangement of material.

form perfectly consistent, widespread structural patterns. This pre-condition has only begun to be fulfilled in the last 20 years, and from this point on the volume of literature is such that the remaining remarks will be confined to Tamil Nadu: Srinivas's work in Coorg (1952) and Rampura (1955, 1959) falls just outside this area, as does the large body of ethnography dealing with Kerala, though some of this will be referred to below.

First into the field in Tamil Nadu was Dumont, who worked near Madurai in 1949-50, and whose major monograph "Une Sous-Caste de l'Inde du Sud" appeared in 1957. It has never been published in English¹⁸. Rather strangely, in view of Dumont's later insistence on the need to see 'caste' as a total system (1972:72), he restricted this monograph to a single sub-caste, the Piramalai Kallar. The author subsequently acknowledged this to have been a "somewhat primitive" approach (Dumont 1966b:327); nonetheless, we see in it the first intimation (or perhaps the cause) of his views on the integrating role of the 'dominant caste', as opposed to the 'village community' as a whole (45). His book was not only narrower than the 'village study' in focussing on a single, if overwhelmingly predominant sub-caste, but it was also broader in that it constituted in part the study of a region, the Kallarnadu ('Kallar country')¹⁹. Dumont's other fieldwork at that time, in Tirunelveli District, was piecemeal but sufficient to rouse my own interest in the area (Dumont 1957a, 1963).

18. The present author has prepared a manuscript translation of this work, whose non-appearance in English is due to its size (Dumont 1966b:328); an ironic commentary on publishing economics.

19. Cf. Dumont 1957b; Kolenda 1966:337.

At almost the same time, Gough carried out fieldwork in Tanjore District to the north of Madurai, the results of which appeared in a series of papers with considerable overlap in content (1955a, b; 1956; 1960). This was a village study of the then-conventional 'Africanist' type, as was the subsequent work of B  teille (1971) in the same region. The writings of both authors suffer, to my mind, from their propensity for condensed generalisation at the expense of precise detail, a synthetic procedure which renders critical appraisal impossible.

The only full monograph to live up to the standards of rigour, detail and analytical perspicacity set by Dumont, is Beck's "Peasant Society in Konku" (1972). This deals with a part of Coimbatore District, north-west of Madurai. The clear, locally-held view of Konku as a systematic territorial unit with well-defined divisions and sub-divisions, caused her to adopt what she calls a "chinese-box approach" (ibid:1), in which the village is analysed not as an entity in itself but as a relatively low-order sub-division within the regional system seen as a whole. My own analysis will also attempt to transcend the village as a unit of analysis, but in a different way, as dictated by my own field data (Chapter 6).

Beck's other main concern was with the division of castes into two over-arching groups, idankai and valahkai or 'left-' and 'right-hand' respectively (1970, 1972). About this I am less whole-heartedly enthusiastic, for while she certainly shows that this opposition is of contemporary importance and not, as had been assumed, an extinct curiosity, the data seem to have been rather forced on occasion. The notion of the 'body-social'

which she develops from this is, moreover, her own, and is not given by the data themselves (Obeyesekere 1975:464)

Two recent monographs by Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975a, b) deal with a village just to the south of Madras City. Both contain a wealth of detail, and the discussion of the failure of western medicine in an Indian context (1975b) is especially interesting. But these books are written from a perspective which, while avowedly eschewing 'vulgar' Marxism in favour of Godelierian theoretical preambles, nevertheless spices up the text with references to 'the stomachs of the poor' being 'beaten' by a "largely parasitic ruling class" (1975a:165). As this quotation implies, caste is merely epi-phenomenal to a class-based analysis.²⁰ Furthermore, the economic calculations which buttress the argument are questionable: their Tables 5.11 and 5.12 (ibid:159, 163) can easily be refuted using material in the text. The whole exercise is a priori suspect in view of the unreliable nature of the figures used: to give only one example, the classes are defined partly on the basis of size of land-holding (ibid:166), despite the fact that it was possible to account for only 40% of the total cultivated area in their data on land ownership (ibid: 82).²¹ I shall have little cause to refer to notions of class below, so it is appropriate to mention here that I found them of no value in my own analyses. There are wealthy individuals, yes, but they interact as members of different castes, or as holders

²⁰ The castes are not even properly identified (1975a:73).

²¹ As an analytical exercise, this part of the book is redeemed only by the charmingly naive way in which the authors wear their hearts on their sleeves. One receives the impression of earnest

of offices, and their interests are as likely to diverge as to converge (competition for labour, threshing-space, etc.) .

Though written in a different discipline, Hardgrave's (1969) "The Nadars of Tamil Nadu" contains valuable material on the social structure of Tirunelveli District in general and the NāḌār community in particular. Alone among the works mentioned here, his seems to have made some impression locally. Several NāḌār in the neighbouring small towns were aware of it, and one cotton merchant in KaDampūr had actually read it.

I have not mentioned the more specialist literature, such as that on kinship, in more than passing fashion above. Nor has there been space to back up my apparently high-handed bestowal of praise and criticism with particular examples or hard facts. The above is intended purely as a guide to the relevant literature and as an indication of my general orientation. Many of the points raised by these writers will be dealt with in more detail below, at the appropriate stage.

I have also neglected a number of interesting writers (e.g. Barnett 1976) whose work does not pertain directly to my own data. For similar reasons, I have not discussed the celebrated pioneering work among local tribal populations by Rivers (1906) and Emeneau (1967). To close this section, though, I should mention the only other person (to my knowledge) to have done intensive fieldwork in Tirunelveli District. Ms. Charlene Allison, of Washington State University, Seattle, worked among the Saiva Pillai of Tirunelveli Town during 1976; at the time of writing, none of her material is available in print.

young Scandinavians coming face-to-face with 'disease', 'dirt' and 'poverty' and trying to explain it all away as someone's fault

CHAPTER 3 : AGRICULTURE

3 1 General Data on Soil

There are two types of soil in Tirunelveli District: red soil, locally called sival, and 'black cotton soil', known to geographers as regur (Spate and Learmonth 1967:95) and to the villagers as karisal. The bulk of Kovilpatti taluk consists of the latter (Sampath and Ganesan 1972:107) but sharply differentiated outcrops of red soil also occur. In fact, the settlement and common grazing land in TV are of red soil; the cultivated area in all three villages is, however, almost entirely black cotton soil.

This soil is a type of clay with good water-holding capacity. It forms a glutinous mud when wet, and on becoming dry undergoes 'self-ploughing', or cracking and fragmentation into dust (Spate and Learmonth 1967:99). Unfortunately, its high coefficient of expansion on wetting impedes the penetration of water to lower levels, and the loss of rainfall through 'run-off' is considerable (Sampath and Ganesan 1972:106). It lacks organic and nitrogenous materials (ibid:106; Spate and Learmonth 1967:780) and so the use of manures and fertilisers is important.

3 2 Irrigation

There are no perennial rivers in the taluk, and so agriculture depends entirely on rainfall, which averages 765mm per annum. About 450mm of this falls during the period of the North-East monsoon, from October to December, and it is quite usual for 100mm or more to fall on a single day (Sampath and Ganesan 1972:

106) Such heavy falls bring about considerable erosion because of the low permeability of the soil. On the other hand, where there are 'tanks' (kuḷam), as the rain-fed irrigation lakes are called, such heavy downpours can fill these up overnight with enough water to last for several months of agricultural work by the entire village.

Rainfall is, however, always highly localised and generally unreliable and there had been 3 years of drought prior to my arrival. Table 3.1 shows the annual rainfall recorded over a number of years at the Agricultural Extension Office of the Kayattār Panchayat Union, near Kayattār town. This gives some idea of the seriousness of the situation. Moreover, few villages in the black cotton soil region actually have tanks (Spate and Learmonth 1967:779) because of the nature of the landscape.

A usable tank must have a considerable catchment area of waste land and must be sited in a natural irregularity of a kind rare in such flat country (*ibid*:232). Its overall area and depth are enhanced by the building of an earth dam, or bund. Such earthworks are liable to erosion and breach, and require constant maintenance. The bed of the tank must also be desilted regularly. These operations are in theory the responsibility of the government, in whom control of all irrigation works is vested. In the present case, desilting was done by the villagers themselves, as the silt was valuable for the manuring of land.

There are, somewhat atypically, 3 tanks within the region of study. One lies between TV and VV, and indeed virtually cuts TV off from the main cart-road when full, in addition to isolating the school, the Amman̄ Kōvil and a few houses from the village

proper. Rights in this tank, which is known as TennahkuLam ('coconut tank'), are shared by TV and VV . When full it holds enough water to irrigate the land between these villages for 2 months. South of TV, to the west of the main cart road and stretching south beyond KP, is a huge shallow tank known as PeriyakuLam ('big tank') . Rights in this are held solely by TV, and KP has no access to tank water.

There is a third, very small tank to the east of VV, which waters a little land belonging to that village. It acts as an overflow for the water which passes over the main gates of TennahkuLam when the latter is full. Indeed, all these tanks form part of an extensive system of water-courses stretching all the way to the sea. In addition to water from their own catchment areas, they receive overspill from full or breached tanks further inland, and in turn pass their own overspill on down towards the coast. There is even a connection between the northern sluice-gate of PeriyakuLam (and its associated emergency overflow channel), and the southern end of TennahkuLam.

Below the tanks, water is carried to the fields by a system of channels emanating from regulable sluice-gates in the bunds. TennahkuLam has 2 such gates and PeriyakuLam 3, one of which operates only when the tank is almost full. In fact the land served by this last, immediately south of the TV settlement, had received no tank water in 1975 and 1976 (Kurusāmi Kōnār, T79) .

From the sluices, the water passes to the individual fields through a network of major and minor channels. There is no system of water-division of the kind reported for Sri Lanka (Leach 1961a;

Table 3 1 : Annual Rainfall in Kayattār Panchayat Union

Year	Rainfall (mm)	Year	Rainfall (mm)
1965	794.6	1971	864 2
1966	708.2	1972	721 4
1967	551 2	1973	483.8
1968	738 1	1974	374 9
1969	744 6	1975	279 2
1970	437.8		

160-5; Yalman 1971:252) and ownership was traditionally vested in land rather than water

The main channels are government-owned and must not be tampered with, but the side-channels are blocked (with mud), partly blocked, or unblocked by the landowners themselves as required. One would imagine this to be a fruitful source of disputes, and indeed a murder which had taken place in a nearby village two years before my arrival, had reportedly had such an argument as its origin. I never became aware of any quarrels in TV on this account, but 1976-7 was a good period for rainfall and there was enough water in the tanks for everyone. Under more adverse conditions it becomes a distinct advantage to have land close to the tank or, failing that, the power and influence to assert the priority of one's own claims (Palanimurugan)

There is another source of water, though it too is ultimately dependent on the local rainfall. This is the irrigation well (kiNaru), and ownership of a well enables a farmer to keep his land under cultivation throughout the year. It also entails

some expense, because the water has to be raised, often from a considerable depth. Traditionally this requires the almost permanent employment of a labourer and 2 bullocks, who raise the water in a kavalai (or kamalai), a metal bucket with a leather tube in the bottom. The ropes of the bucket are so arranged that while the device is in the water and when it is being raised, the tube is bent double and thus closed. The tube straightens as the bucket reaches the top, and the water flows out through it into the irrigation channel. The bullocks are then led backwards up the specially constructed ramp, so that the kavalai is lowered back into the well.

Increasingly this work is being done by electric pumpsets, but in either case well-irrigation is costly and is only an economic proposition ¹ for fairly large holdings, say 10 acres or more (Spate and Learmonth 1967:233). Nevertheless, the number of wells has increased greatly over the past 20-25 years, as a result of government loans (Kurusāmi Kōnār, T79; 4 2).

3 3 Land: Classification and Taxation

The incidence of tanks gives rise to a two-fold classification of land, made by the government for revenue purposes but deriving from that traditionally made in samīndāris and villages. There is land which is watered by a tank and land which is not: these are known respectively as 'wet' and 'dry' in

1. It is, however, doubtful whether strict economic criteria, reducing 'income' and 'expenditure' to cash equivalences, are applicable to a basically subsistence economy (Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:142-6).

English, nanjcaḷ and puñjcaḷ in Tamil. It should be added that land may be classified differently by the government and the villagers, so that land officially classed as 'dry' may well come under tank irrigation during a year of good or even average rainfall ² It is obviously to the farmer's advantage to have as much of his land as possible classified as 'dry', for his taxes are thereby kept low

These taxes are made up of several components For dry land there is a basic levy, depending on the type of soil, of Rs 0/81, 1/12 or 1/69 per acre (Turairāḷ ReDDiyār, K48). The middle rate is the one applicable in this area. To this must be added a cess levied by the Panchayat Union, in this case Rs 2/05, and a government cess of 45 paise per rupee on the basic levy, i.e. of 50 paise in this case The total dues thus work out at Rs 3/67 per acre (Srinivāsaperumāḷ Nāyakkar, VV Munsīp; Turairāḷ ReDDiyār gave Rs 3/92) .

For wet land the basic rate is Rs 5/- per acre: again this is subject to a government cess of 45 paise per rupee, or Rs 2/25, and there is a water cess of 35 paise per rupee, or Rs 1/75 in all. There is a Panchayat Union cess of Rs 10/25 . In the final summation, the figure of the basic dry land levy is deducted, so that the total duty amounts to Rs 18/13 (Srinivāsaperumāḷ Nāyakkar) .

It was announced in the press that land dues were to be wholly or partially waived for 1976-7 This decision was never carried out however: the village Munsīps were left to collect taxes as usual, and the announcement had doubtless been intended as pre-election publicity.

Land irrigated by a well is classed as 'garden' (tōTTam) Wells are usually situated on land which would otherwise be dry,

2. Recent work (1976) done in raising the bund of Periyakulam had brought a section of distant 'dry' land under tank irrigation (Muttuccāmi Tēvar, T78)

and indeed gardens are taxed at the same rate as dry land. There is an extra levy however, depending on the nature of the crops grown, and which is in effect a tax on the ground water used. The levy, which was collected for the first time in 1977, is Rs 1/- per acre for plantains, sugar-cane and turmeric, and Rs 12/- per acre for cotton, groundnuts and chillies (VV Munsip) .

Two other types of land should be mentioned. Fallow land, tirvai erpaDattarisu, which the owner does not wish, or for some reason is unable, to cultivate, is subject to tax in the normal way. Finally, there is purampokku or waste land. By definition this is not used for agriculture, but villagers may own trees on such land, in which case there is an annual levy of 2 paise per palmyrah tree (Panaimaram) and Rs 3/50 per tamarind tree (Puliyamaram) . Trees on one's own land are not subject to tax. Few even among the Nāḍār keep trees to any extent, and the main use of purampokku is as pasture, used in common by the whole village (VV Munsip; Kumārasāmyā Pillai, T41)

To complete the list of taxes, there is a house tax of Rs 1/- per Rs 100/- value, plus a cess of 5 paise per rupee. A typical house might be valued at between Rs 1,000/- (thatched) and 4,000/- (tiled) (cf. 4.4) . There is also a duty on bullock carts and bicycles, of Rs 1/60 and 1/20 respectively per half-year (VV Munsip) . Certain of these levies are used to finance the work of the village panchayat (Savarimuttu Nāḍār, V83; cf 2.3) .

3.4 The Agricultural Year

The major, or at least most highly prized cereal crop is paddy (nel), which is grown on wet or garden land during the

monsoon period ³. The fields are ploughed and sown in PuraTTāsi (Sept-Oct) and harvested in Tai (Jan-Feb) .

If there has been reasonable rainfall during the monsoon, as there was, locally at least, in 1976-7, then it may be possible to grow another crop during the subsequent hot season, thereby taking advantage of the sometimes considerable but even more erratic showers during the South-West monsoon period. Cotton is a favourite choice, because it is a cash crop and ensures, for a minimum of physical labour, a small but steady daily income over several months. It is planted straight after the paddy harvest and yields for 2-3 months in the May-July period.

Farmers with garden land can operate a three-crop system, growing say paddy, then cōlam (Jowar) or kampu (Bajra), and finally kēppai (Ragi) . The last three are all types of millet, which are eaten as cereals but regarded as inferior to rice. At either the second or third stage cash crops such as onions, chillies, plantains, groundnuts, etc., may be substituted. A few farmers grow sugar-cane too, but this takes 1½ years to mature and so cannot be regarded as part of normal crop rotation. Only the larger landowners can afford to forgo the earning capacity of a portion of their land for such a long period.

On genuinely dry land rice cannot be grown even during the monsoon, and the main crop will then be Kampu or Cōlam, usually intersown with pulses of various kinds. Cotton may also be grown, either in the hot season as on wet lands (though with less

³ One index of its importance is the number of common words referring to it: the plant itself is nel, and the grain arisi. If husked and parboiled, it is called puṛuṅku, and when boiled for eating it is sōru (ponkal at a temple) .

success) or as the major crop during the wet season. The cultivation of the most important crops will be discussed in more detail in (3.6) .

3 5 Organisation and Remuneration of Agricultural Labour

Before considering the methods employed by the farmers, it will be necessary to say something about the ways in which the farm labour force is recruited and rewarded. The farmer and his own nuclear family constitute a pool of unpaid labour ⁴, but it would be far from the truth to imagine that land-holdings are normally worked by discrete household groups. Many holdings are too small to provide subsistence and even the larger ones do not as a rule require full-time attention, so that the surplus labour of most families becomes available on the wage-labour market. Even so, year-round work is not available to all, because there are only a very few holdings which are too large to be, in principle, worked by a single family ⁵.

Several other factors militate against a situation in which each small-holding is self-sufficient. For example, customary restrictions assign some duties to one sex only. Moreover, it is normal for certain tasks performed by women, such as weeding,

4. Unpaid in the sense of wages given in return for work: in a subsistence economy, however, subsistence is itself a form of payment (see also 3.2, fn 1) .

5. Few farmers are rich enough to eschew labour altogether, in favour of supervision. Others may have sources of income which keep them occupied away from their land, of course. One sign of wealth is that wives are no longer required to do agricultural work.

transplanting and cotton-picking, some such as hoeing which are carried out by men, and others which are not sexually specific such as harvesting, to be undertaken by large groups rather than individuals or families. In such ad hoc groups, some may be working on their own land or that of a close relative, but most will be paid. The group will complete, usually in one day, the work on a single holding, and on the following day other ad hoc groups will form to work on other holdings. Those who yesterday worked unpaid as landowners, will today be paid labourers on someone else's land.

This applies equally to ploughing, an individually performed and quintessentially masculine activity ⁶; those who have bullocks and ploughs will hire themselves and their equipment to others, in addition to working on their own land ⁷.

There is thus a continuum, stretching from, at one pole, the rich farmer whose womenfolk do no agricultural work and who merely supervises on his own land, working neither on it nor on anyone else's to, at the other pole, the landless labourer whose entire subsistence derives from work carried out on the land of others. The vast majority occupy an intermediate position (3 7, 4 2) . For the present we will speak of 'landowners' and 'labourers', bearing in mind that such distinctions are by-and-large temporary and reversible.

Labourers, then, may be paid in cash or in kind. It is clear that payment in kind is the basic standard in most cases,

⁶ In VV, as a graphic illustration of labour scarcity, people said that "even ploughing is done by women": this was not really true.

⁷ The PiLLaimār (TV 5) are said to regard ploughing as demeaning

to which cash payments are referred ⁸ Thus the normal rates of pay for most tasks are, for male labourers 2 paDi (= 3 pakka, equivalent to about 3 kg) of millet, and for female labourers, 1 paDi. This is for a working day which is nominally 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., but shorter in practice ⁹. These amounts remain constant, whereas cash payments fluctuate according to the prevailing market price of the grain.

In November 1976, men were receiving Rs 3/- if paid in cash, and women Rs 1/25, in keeping with the then market price of Rs 125-130/- for 100 kg of Kampu or CoLam. In the previous year, before the introduction of direct Presidential Rule in Tamil Nadu as a result of the state of emergency, millet had been selling at Rs 200/- per 100 kg in a flourishing black market, and wages had been correspondingly higher. Even then they had been below the 'minimum' daily wage fixed by government, which at that time was Rs 6/- for a man and 4/- for a woman. In late 1976, the newspapers trumpeted the fact that Mrs Gandhi, during a whirlwind tour of South India, had decreed that women should henceforth be entitled to the same minimum wage as men. Needless to say, this had absolutely no effect in the villages, where most were wholly unaware of the existence of minimum-wage legislation, and where the vast majority could not, in any case, have afforded to pay them.

(Thurston 1909:VII, 370-1; Djurfeldt & Lindberg 1975a:111) but this was far from universally true in TV.

8. This does not apply to KP, where cash crops (cotton) are more common: wages there are Rs 3/- (men) and 1/50 (women), in cash.

9. Men may be engaged by the week for 15 pakka plus noon coffee.

In fact, the effect of Presidential Rule and the ending of the black market had been to depress the incomes of villagers. The reductions in grain prices not only reduced the financial returns to those land-owners who sold their crops, but also reduced the cash value of a day labourer's wages. This subsidisation of the urban population at the expense of the farmer is a familiar theme in Indian politics (Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:281): it arises partly from self-interested calculation and partly from well-intentioned ignorance.

To return to the local situation, there seems to be a system of equivalences, whereby produce other than millet may be given as wages. Paddy is sometimes given, in the same quantity as millet, but in other cases the amounts are different. In September 1976, the TV President was paying women workers a daily wage of 2 paDi of KudiraivaLli ('Horse gram') instead of 1 paDi of millet.

So far we have been dealing with standard rates of pay, as they are found in TV and VV . Certain tasks are paid at different rates, however, and we must now deal with these exceptions.

Firstly ploughing, which, when the worker provides his own bullocks (or, very rarely, buffalo) and plough, is paid for at the rate of Rs 10/- per 8-hour day, or its equivalent in kind, the cash payment being the basic standard in this case. This does correspond to the official 'minimum' rate for the job (Palanmurugan) . If the ploughman uses animals and equipment supplied by the landowner, however, he is paid at the standard rate already discussed. Men paid to raise well-water using a kavalai receive, if providing their own bullocks, Rs 12/- for a 12-hour day (Viraccāmi Tēvar, T34) .

Women engaged in transplanting receive more than the usual wage. In the case discussed below (3 6 1) for example, they were paid Rs 2/- per day plus coffee at noon, a wage which seems to be normal for this work, and which perhaps reflects the increased demand for labour at this time of year. Weeding, which is just as hard physically but which does not have to be completed within a particular, short time-span, is paid for at the standard rate.

The demand for labour and the longer hours of work at harvest time also serve to increase rates of pay. Male workers involved in carrying the crop to the threshing-floor, and in the threshing and winnowing, receive 4 paDi of paddy (not millet) daily, for 12 hours work. This yields just over 3 paDi of husked rice. The Cakkiliyar, who are regarded as specialists in winnowing, receive 3-4 paDi for a mere 5-hour day during the harvest period.

The discussion so far has centred on the various rates of pay received on a daily-wage, or kūlī, basis by individual labourers. There are two other ways of organising and recruiting labour however, the contract group and the permanent labourer or paDaīyaL.

Under the contract system, a piece of work is done for a previously-agreed fee, irrespective of the length of time taken. A group of workers may negotiate such a contract en masse (Type A), or alternatively an individual may arrange one, undertaking to recruit the labour-force, organise the work and make the individual payments (Type B).

Type A : On 14-15 November 1976, a group of 13 men undertook to prepare for ploughing 1 acre of garden land belonging to PālasuppiramaNīyan (kōnār, T17), on which paddy was to be grown. The work involved clearing fodder from the field and then hoeing it twice. Of the men involved, 8 were Paraiyar (1 of these came from another village), 3 were Maravar, and there was one

Kōnār and one Nāyakkar ¹⁰. The agreed price was Rs 120/- .

Under this system, people tend not to work so hard, and of course no-one will start until all his fellow contractees have arrived. On 15 November it was 10 a.m. before the entire group had appeared, and no work was done before then. The Untouchable and other workers sat waiting in separate groups at opposite ends of the field. When the work did get under way it was supervised by the landowner.

Type B : MāDasāmi Kōnār (T98) negotiated, on his own, a contract to harvest a 50 acre block of paddy belonging to the TV Munsīp's family. Work began on 6 January 1977, and MāDasāmi had engaged 25 people (18 women) to carry out the work of harvesting and transporting the grain to the threshing-floor. The group included a high proportion of people who were neighbours of MāDasāmi: he said that he had not gone out to recruit people, but had given employment to anyone, man or woman, who had come to ask for it, irrespective of caste.

The overall rate of pay was to be 2 paDi per worker (unaffected by sex in this case) and MāDasāmi would himself receive 2 paDi. He did not have to do any physical work, but supervised throughout. His contract with the Munsīp had agreed on a payment of 2.5 paDi of paddy per 10 cent field. This meant that, in order to obtain the 52 paDi needed to recompense the recruited workers and himself, a total of $52/2.5 = 21$ fields, or 2.1 acres, would have to be harvested each day. Each field took about 20 minutes to cut, and by mid-afternoon some of the workers had begun carrying head-loads of the crop to the threshing floor, while others carried on reaping.

Turning now to the permanent labourers, there are no hereditary relationships between families of landowners and labourers, of the kind described by Epstein for Mysore (1962, 1967) and Beck (1972) elsewhere in Tamil Nadu . Workers

10. Such mixed groups, in which several castes including Harijans work together, are the norm for both men and women.

are often employed regularly over a period of years, but the relationship may be severed if either party wishes it.

Table 3 2 lists those land-owners and labourers who are involved in permanent arrangements of this kind. A total of 12 landowners and 46-7 workers are concerned: the Table does not include cases where children or adolescents, often more-or-less distant relatives of the employer, live semi-permanently with the employer's family and perform various agricultural and/or domestic tasks. There is always a significant but variable population of such people, and the boundary between employee and relative is impossible to draw. All are excluded from the Table, in favour of unequivocal paḌaiyaḷ relationships.

The Table also indicates the mode of payment, as stated by one or both of the parties involved. Answers have a tendency to vary according to the season, however, because permanent employees normally receive 1/7 of 'dry crops' (millets), but are paid in cash or kind on a daily, weekly or monthly basis when working on paddy or cash crops. If paid on a daily basis, even permanent labourers will get no wages on days when their services are not needed. They are, however, free to work for others on such days: the contract group A discussed above included Nainār (T132), Āttimuttu (T145), Kurusāmi (T148) and Ponnuccāmi (T147), four Paraiyar who are all permanent employees of others.

Some workers named in the Table could not be identified because the landlord gave nicknames rather than those appearing in my census data. Nonetheless, it is possible to say that at least 22 of the 37 who are named, come from Untouchable castes. In all, I estimate that two-thirds of the permanent labourers are Harijans.

Table 3 2 : Permanent Agricultural Labourers and their Payment

Landowner	Labourer	Payment
Nallaiyā Kōnār (T16):		
	SaNmuka Kōnār (T15) (part-time manager)	Rs 60/- p m.
	Vīraccāmi Tēvar (T22) (manager)	Rs 30/- + 15 <u>marakkāl</u> of millet p m.
	Pēccimuttu Kōnār (T86)	Rs 100/- p.m.
	Muttaiyan (T131)	Rs 2/- daily + 1/7 crop
	Sērvan (Cakkiliyar, V195)	2 <u>pakka</u> p d. + 10/- p.m.
PālasuppīramaNiya Kōnār (T17):		
	Turaiṛāj Tēvar (T72)	Rs 3/- daily
	Cellaiyā Kōnār (T86)	"
	MuttukirushNa Kōnār (T119)	"
	Kāḷimuttu (T142)	"
	Muttan (V191, Cakkiliyar)	", or 6 <u>paDi</u> at harvest time
MāDasāmi Tēvar (T31):		
	Māriyappan (T146)	1/7 of crop
Suppaiyā Tēvar (T74):		
	Cellaiyā Tēvar (T128C)	1/7 of crop
	Nainār (T132)	"
	Ponnuccāmi (T147)	"
LakshmaNapperumāḷ Tēvar (T77):		
	Muttaiyan (T155)	1/7 of crop
Perumāḷsāmi Nāyakkar (T158):		
	Murukan Tēvar (T76A)	Rs 3/- or 2 <u>paDi</u> p.d.
	MāDasāmi Kōnār (T86)	"
	SaNmukam (T138)	"
	Sivanān (T139)	"
	Muniasāmi (T139)	"
	Kāḷimuttu (T140)	1/7 of crop
	Kurusāmi (T148)	Rs 3/- or 2 <u>paDi</u> p.d.
	Iṛamacandira Nāyakkar (T161)	"

Table 3.2 (cont'd)

Landowner	Labourer	Payment
<u>Cēsukanī NāDār (V71):</u>		
	Suppaiyā Tēvar (T13)	15 <u>paDī</u> p.w. + coffee
	Cellaiyā (V164)	"
	Ammavāsī	"
	Karuppasāmī	"
	Taṅkavēlu (V180)	"
<u>Sūsaikanī NāDār (V77):</u>		
	4-5, names not known	"
<u>Savarimuttu NāDār (V83):</u>		
	4-5, names not known	"
<u>AntōNimuttu NāDār (V115):</u>		
	SaNmukam (V192)	Rs 3/- or 3 <u>paDī</u> p d.
	KirushNan	"
	Nandan	"
	ARakirī	"
	KōvilpiLLai	"
	Munīyan (V183)	"
	SinnāNDī	"
<u>SrīnīvāsaperumāL Nāyakkar (VV Munsīp):</u>		
	Murukan Kōnār (V151)	3 <u>pakka</u> or 2 <u>paDī</u> p.d.
	Muttaiyan (V167)	"

3.5.1 Pastoralism

Many villagers have herds of goats and sheep, and these, together with the buffaloes and cows, have to be taken out to graze in the morning and returned to the village at night. The goats and sheep, in fact, are only brought back to the outskirts of the village except in wet weather, and may be kept in the

fields overnight at certain times of year. Indeed, this is a major source of income, especially for Kōnār, because the owner of the animals is paid for allowing them to manure the land in this way. For example, Suppaiyā Kōnār (T120), who has 100 goats, charges 1 paḍi of paddy per 20 goats per night, and collects his payments at harvest time.

In most cases, animal herds are looked after by young children during the day and by older boys overnight. Usually the owner's sons or other close relatives will do this, so that payment is not required. At one period of the year, however, just after the paddy harvest, most TV goats were being kept on the Munsīp's lands in 2 flocks, one to the north of the village and one to the south. He paid the owners $3/4$ paḍi of grain per 20 goats per night, and also employed 2 men to watch over the herds at night. They were Kuppūsāmi Kōnār (T81) and Muttaiyā Tēvar (K8), who each received Rs 4/- daily.

3.5.2 Other Payments

So far we have been concerned with payments which might be described as 'dyadic', in that they involve two parties, usually a landowner who employs and a labourer (or group) who is employed. This by no means exhausts the question of the organisation and reward of labour however, even within the sphere of agriculture. There is a whole series of payments which may be called 'communal', in that they involve, in the person of the recipient, someone who is not simply an employee, but who, by virtue of caste, training or inheritance, occupies a particular social niche with well-recognised rights and obligations. In short, and using the term in its broadest sense, the recipient is a

member of a service group, whose remuneration derives ultimately from the community as a whole, even though he may receive it in the form of small payments from individuals.

Such payments will be dealt with later (Chapter 5) because, as I hope to demonstrate, it is not possible to regard them as purely 'economic' transactions, even though they may involve a greater or lesser 'economic' component in the substantivist sense, in that they are concerned with the means of production, consumption and exchange. This extra, non-economic element is not absent from 'dyadic' payments either, but these are largely 'economic' in the villages in question at the present time: that is, they are substantively economic even though they are not all formally subject to analysis in terms of market pressures or 'economising'.

3.6 Agricultural Techniques

3 6.1 Paddy (Nel)

The rice grown in the villages under study may be either a local species (the name of which was kuruvai kulaiyan) or, increasingly, one of the newly-introduced high-yielding varieties such as I.R.8 or, especially, I.R. 20 .

Handsowing : Cultivation begins in the month of PuraTTāsi (Sept-Oct), though an initial ploughing of the land may be carried out in Vaikāsi (May-June) or Āni (June-July) . The land is ploughed several times until good tilth (paNpaDattu) is obtained. This may call for up to 6 ploughings by a pair of bullocks, dragging a traditional-style wooden plough, but with a steel share. Ploughing is always men's work, but women often

follow on behind, dragging branches over the newly-turned earth to smooth it out.

Before sowing, about 30 cart-loads of manure (at Rs 5/- per load) and some chemical fertiliser should ideally be applied. It seems to be normal government policy to issue crop-loans to farmers at this point in the year.

In 1976, these loans were distributed on 15 November, when Rs $2\frac{1}{2}$ crores (25 million) out of a total of 5 crores ear-marked for Tirunelveli District, was handed out (Indian Express news item, 7 December 1976) . The Panchayat Board office in TV was a distribution point for 6 villages, including VV but not, for some reason, KP, although the latter is part of TV kīramam.

Loans were given at the rate of Rs 100/- per acre of land, subject to verification by the KarNam's register. Half of this was in cash and the rest in the form of fertiliser. The interest charged when the loan was recovered at harvest-time was to be Rs 1/25 per Rs 100/- : in previous years it had been 70 Paise. I was told that not all Districts received loans of this kind.

The seed is broadcast by hand, and 12 marakkāl of kuruvai kulaiyan, or 6 marakkāl of I.R. 20 are required for 1 acre ¹¹. I.R. 20 seed costs Rs 8/- per marakkāl. After sowing, the land is ploughed twice more.

All this is done before the onset of the monsoon: the tank will normally not contain any water at this time, so there will of course be none in the fields. The growth period of handsown paddy is 140-150 days, the exact time depending on how soon water becomes available.

Germination takes 4-5 days, and the first weeding is usually carried out after 25 days, with the field still dry. It is done exclusively by women, and calls for 60-80 woman-days each time. 25 kg of urea are normally applied after the first weeding.

Transplanting : Alternatively, seedlings may be transplanted

11. All figures in the rest of this chapter apply to 1 acre plots unless otherwise specified.

by those farmers who have early access to water, from their own wells. The actual transplanting takes place in Aippasi or Kārttikai (November) when the seedlings are 25 days old. One acre of land requires a 10 cent nursery, equivalent to 6 marakkal of I.R. 20 seed.

Land used for transplantation is usually that subject to a 3-crop annual cycle, and so the previous crop will be harvested while the seedlings are growing. The stubble cannot be ploughed without first being flooded and broken up manually, using hoes (maNveTTi). After this, the land is ploughed twice, and then some green fodder or straw is trodden into the flooded field on the day on which transplantation is to take place.

Transplantation calls for 30-40 women workers, and unlike handsowing it involves some ritual. Neither handsowing nor transplanting take place on a Saturday, which is inauspicious for the purpose: Saturday is "paddy's birthday" (Ponnaiyā Tēvar, T67) .

On 7 November 1976, transplantation was carried out on a half-acre of land owned by Ponnaiyā Tēvar (T67), the F of the TV President. Work began at 9 a.m., when extra water was let into the bed of seedlings, to a depth of 2" . One man was involved in regulating the flow of water into this plot and into the field to be planted. By this time of year, PeriyakuLam was full, and all the water used came from the northern sluice of this tank, not from Ponnaiyā's well.

A group of 10 women had been engaged, 6 of them Paraiyar from TV and the others Harijans from KōvīndampaTTi, of different caste. They began by plucking the seedlings and tying them into small bundles using strips of palmyrah leaf. Each bundle of I.R. 20 roots was washed clean of soil and laid aside.

By 11.30, 2 of the women had begun to carry the bundles of

seedlings to the field, where they were distributed over the area to be planted. At 12.30 everything was ready, and the water level in the field was lowered, the male labourer making a small aperture in the surrounding mud bank, near the north-east corner.

An un-named ritual followed in this same corner: it should always be held somewhere on the eastern side. A pile of mud a few inches high was set up in the corner, surrounded by water. A circle of seedlings were planted around it. This was done by one of the women; anyone can do it. Some betel leaves were laid on top of the mud, and on them was placed a rounded mound of turmeric paste (mañjcaL) with a few grasses stuck into it. As in many ritual contexts, this represented the god PiLLaiyār, the deity of auspicious beginnings.

Three seedlings were looped over the top of the PiLLaiyār, with both ends in the water, to form a kind of domed roof, and turmeric water (mañjcaNir) was sprinkled over it. The landowner's wife then planted 3 seedlings near to the little shrine, each planting being accompanied by a kuravai, the ululating cry made by women at all significantly auspicious points in ritual. Betel leaves were then distributed to all those present.

The owner's wife had brought coffee, which the women then drank out of folded palmyrah leaves. Meanwhile the male worker was broadcasting 'complex' fertiliser over the field by hand. Finally the women began the task of planting each individual seedling in the field. They started at the opposite, western edge and as usual there was no attempt to plant the seedlings in straight rows, as would be necessary in the 'Japanese' method of rice cultivation.

Weeding is less laborious in the case of a transplanted crop, and only 10-15 women are needed. After this weeding, 20-25 kg of urea are broadcast by hand. The growing period for transplanted paddy is 100-110 days after transplantation, or 125-135 days altogether. It is thus slightly quicker-growing

than handsown paddy, but unlike the latter it needs water throughout the first 25 days, and a larger total input of water is required. There should always be at least 2" of water in a field of transplanted seedlings.

The Growing Crop : Whether handsown or transplanted, paddy is weeded twice more, and fungicides and pesticides are sprayed twice ¹². Those who can afford it rent a mechanical sprayer attached to a rucksack frame, which is available from the P.U.C. for Rs 2/50 per day, and operated by a Paraiyar man.

Water is kept in the field throughout, once it has been introduced, until the final 15 days (i.e., until after the grain has formed) . The field is then left dry during the ripening period, which reduces the incidence of fungal infection and prevents crop-loss when, as often happens, the laden plants fall to the ground under their own weight.

Harvesting : This is done in Tai (Jan-Feb) or Masi (Feb-Mar) . In a few cases, harvesting is preceded by a ritual in one of the village temples.

On 12 February 1977, the following pohkal took place at the Aiyānār temple ¹³. Its pūsāri AruNācala Vēlār (T113) officiated, assisted by his yBS, a young man from Tuticorin whose paddy was to be harvested next day.

12. Chemical additives in general use were: pesticides - Endrin and Rogar; fungicides Dythane 298 and BHC 10%; chemical fertilisers- Urea (46% Nitrogen), Complex (either 15 or 17% of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium). Urea cost Rs 98/- and Complex Rs 102/- for 50 kg, less than the price prior to President's Rule

13. Pohkal offerings of boiled rice are central features of temple worship; by extension, the word is used for worship in general.

Two pots of poṅkal, one plain and one sweetened with jaggery (crystallised palm syrup) were cooked inside the temple in the late afternoon. Four coconuts were broken by the pūsāri and laid before the deities Piḷḷaiyār and ValaduḌaiyār Aiyanār (Table 1.5). Two cakes of polished rice (mōcciyavilakku, 'rice-lamp'), hollowed in the centre to contain some oil and a burning taper, were set in front of the goddess Purnavaḷḷi. Three portions of ponkal were put onto plantain leaves by the yBS, and placed in front of the 3 main external deities, in the order: 1) PalipīḌam; 2) Pēcciyammān; 3) Karuppasāmi. (see Table 1.5, A6) .

Both officiants tied cloths around their waists. The pūsāri took a camphor lamp in his right hand and his bell in the other. A group of Vēḷār children rang the bells which hang in the mandap outside the temple, the pūsāri rang his bell, and the rest of the small audience worshipped with palms together. Ringing his bell continuously, the pūsāri passed the lamp round clockwise in front of the deities Purnavaḷḷi, Aiyanār and PōrkoḌiyān. Then he went outside and did the same for the 3 external deities, in the above order

After returning to the temple, the pūsāri waved burning ash in front of Purnavaḷḷi et al, and also over the two statues of bulls which face the deities. All the bells stopped and the pūsāri prostrated himself 3 times facing north. The audience ceased worshipping, and ash and poṅkal were distributed to all those present.

There was nothing special about this pūja to connect it in any way with the imminent harvest. Services of similar structure are carried out on numerous occasions during the year, for individual sponsors and for a variety of reasons.

The paddy crop is cut 4-5" above ground level, the stalks being grasped in the left hand and half-cut, half-sawed with a sickle (panna arivaḷ or aruvaḷ; 'straw paddy-handful sword') held in the right. Both men and women take part. The reaping is usually done in the mornings and the crop is carried to the

threshing-floor during the afternoon.

Both TV and KP have threshing-floors immediately to the west of the respective settlements. In the case of TV, this area is also used as a site for stacks of straw and animal fodder. In KP, where houses tend to be more elaborate, the stacks are transferred to the farmer's own courtyard for storing. VV lacks a well-defined threshing-floor. There is a small one to the east of the Cakkiliyar settlement, but as it is so remote from the main village it is inconvenient to use

Before threshing, the ground is prepared by being swept and sprinkled with water, to remove small stones and dust. It is spread thinly with cow-dung. A plaited rope of paddy-straw is used to grip the sheaves, which are beaten against the ground several times, later to be spread out in a circle and trodden by bullocks.

Chaff and small stones are subsequently removed from the grain using a fan-shaped winnowing-basket, which is held high above the head and slowly poured so that the chaff and dust blow aside and the stones are left behind. This task, which is performed by both men and women, is carried out in early evening, as there is usually a breeze at that time.

It is said that "only" Cakkiliyar perform this duty. This is not in fact the case, but they are certainly very heavily involved in winnowing, which is regarded as a traditional speciality of the caste.

From my observations, the actual threshing is done only by men, but I do not know whether this is the result of any prohibition. It is clear, though, that there are no restrictions on women entering the threshing-floor, of the kind reported for Sri Lanka (Leach 1961a:262) .

Paddy yields are generally of the order of 10-12 koTTai per acre for a handsown crop and 12-15 koTTai for a transplanted one. In terms of weight, this is equivalent to an average yield of 1,100-1,320kg or 1,320-1,650kg respectively (1 koTTai = 110kg) .

In 1976-77, for example, Suppaiyā Kōnār (T120) obtained 45 72kg-bags of I.R. 20 paddy from his 28 marakkāl (2.3 acres) of handsown wet land¹⁴. This rather high yield of 1,391 kg per acre reflects the generally good monsoon conditions prevailing during that growing season.

Economics : The total costs of paddy cultivation, as stated by informants, are given in Table 3.3. The price of paddy at harvest time is generally about Rs 80/- to Rs 100/- per kōTTai. In January 1977, the village merchants were giving the farmers a price of Rs 80/- for a 70 kg bag of paddy, equivalent to Rs 120/- per kōTTai. By the height of the season, the price of a bag had fallen to Rs 75/-. Such transactions are unofficial, as the farmers are dealing neither with the governmental procurement agencies, nor with licensed merchants. In either case, the official price of paddy would have been lower than that which they actually obtained.

Table 3.3 : Costs of Paddy Cultivation

Item	Handsown Crop (Rs per acre)	Transplanted (Rs per acre)
Ploughing (and hoeing)	80/-	120/-
Transplanting		80/-
Weeding	100/-	30/-
Seeds	60/-	60/-
Urea, 25kg	45/-	45/-
Manure and Fertiliser	150/-	150/-
Pesticides and Fungicides	40/-	40/-
Total Cost	<u>475/-</u>	<u>525/-</u>

14. A marakkāl is both an area of land and a volume of grain (see 4.2 and Appendix) .

The principal merchants in TV were Muniyasāmi Tēvar (T34) and, especially, Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5), both of whom are also shop-keepers. Muniyasāmi also deals in millet from KP, and employs a bullock-cart and driver from there, but where paddy is concerned both use the services of Kurusāmi Tēvar (T12) and Kurusāmi Nāyakkār (T38), who transport the rice which the merchants purchase to KaDampūr, a distance of some 6 miles, in their carts. These two drivers charge Rs 1/- for each bag of paddy.

In KaDampūr, the paddy is husked and parboiled in a small factory: husking costs Rs 3-3/50 per bag, and parboiling about one rupee more. The rice is then transported by lorry to Tuticorin, at a cost of Rs 2/- per bag, and is there sold for about Rs 190/- per 100kg .

So the merchants were buying 140kg of paddy for Rs 160/-, and selling the resulting 100kg of rice for Rs 190/-. After deducting Rs 4/- for transport, and Rs 8-9/- for husking and parboiling, the residual profit is clearly very close to the Rs 20/- estimated by Cellaiyā PiLLai. Put another way, he made a profit, at that time, of about Rs 10/- per bag of paddy. If this seems high, it must be remembered that the venture was a speculative one; for one thing, he was unlicensed, and for another, there was always the risk of government intervention to bring prices down by compulsory procurement, which would leave him with a heavy loss on any stock which he held. To give some idea of the scope of his operation, the 2 carts were each taking some 10 bags of paddy to KaDampūr daily in mid-season.

There is no doubt that the farmers got a better price for their paddy in this way. By way of comparison, the government procured all paddy in Tanjore District, a much more fertile area

with a large-scale riverine irrigation system, and the price in 1976 was Rs 54/- for 57kg, equivalent to Rs 66/- per 70kg bag.

The paddy crop also yields straw, which can be used as fodder or sold. Suppaiyā Kōṇār (T120) sold a lorry-load of paddy straw for Rs 500/-, so the value of this part of the crop is not inconsiderable.

(Information in this sub-section was obtained from Kurusāmi Kōṇār (T79), PālasuppiramaNiyān (T17), Perumālsāmi Nāyakkar (T158), SaNmukasundaram PiLLai (T159), Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5) and Suppaiyā Kōṇār (T120) .)

3.6 2 Kampu (or Bajra)

This cereal is known in English as 'spiked' or 'pearl' millet (*Pennisetum typhoidum*) . It is a dry crop and is sown by hand.

The land is first ploughed 2-4 times, starting in ĀDi (July-Aug), and the sowing is best done in PuraTTāsi (Sept-Oct). If grown as the second crop on garden land, however, it is sown in Māsi (Feb-Mar), after the rice harvest. For 1 acre, 3kg of seed are needed, at a total cost of Rs 6/- for the local and 20-25/- for the high-yielding varieties. The land is ploughed once more after sowing.

No manure or fertilisers are added as a rule, though a few farmers apply 20 cart-loads of manure or cow-dung beforehand. Weeding is done after 3-4 weeks and requires 20 women workers. The growing period is 100-120 days, and harvesting begins in Tai (Jan-Feb) on dry land. Only the head of the plant is cut, as the straw is thought to be bad for cattle, and the grain is separated by being beaten with sticks and trodden by bullocks. No rituals are involved at any stage.

Total costs work out at Rs 100-150/- per acre, plus another 100/- if manure is used. Yields are usually in the range of 2-3 kōTTai per acre, depending on the variety grown. At harvest-time the market price is about Rs 100-150/- per kōTTai; as usual, it rises at other times, benefiting those who can afford to wait. (Ponnaiyā PiLLai (T11), Suppaiyā Tēvar (T83) .)

3.6.3 CōLam (or Jowar)

This millet has the botanical name *Sorghum vulgare*; the locally-grown variety is called KōvilpaTTi neTTai ('Kovilpatti tall') (Cellaiyā PiLLai, T5; Muttaiyā Tēvar, T76A) .

If grown on dry land it is sown in PuraTTāsi, preparation of the land having begun in ĀDī with 3 or 4 ploughings. It is handsown, at a rate of 3-4kg (3 paDi) per acre (cost, Rs 12/- per kg) . Alternatively, if grown on garden land, cultivation begins in Tai or Māsi, after the paddy harvest. The land is then ploughed 4-5 times, 20 cart-loads of manure are applied and, if sufficient water is available, the field is marked out prior to sowing into small mud-walled beds with linking irrigation channels, so that these may be filled individually as necessary. In this case transplantation may occur, a 10 cent nursery being prepared from 4-5kg of seed. Transplanting calls for 25 women workers, and weeding for 20 . Powder pesticide is thrown on the tops of the plants during grain formation.

The total growth period, by any method, is 110-115 days, and the 7' high crop is harvested in Tai (if grown dry) or in Cittirai or Valkāsi if grown on garden land. Harvesting and grain separation are carried out as for Kampu. No rituals are involved at any stage.

For the dry crop, cultivation costs total some Rs 200/-, and yields are in the range 5-6 kōTTai . For garden plots, the corresponding figures are 4-500/- and 9-14 kōTTai . The market price of CōLam is about Rs 120-150/- per kōTTai .

3.6.4 Kēppai (or Ragī)

This cereal, known locally as Sārātā (a name of the goddess Sarasuvati), has the botanical name *Eleusine Coracana* .

It is grown only on garden land, as a second crop, and is sown in Māsi/Pahkunī (March) . Occasionally it is chosen as a

third crop after Kampu or CōLam, in which case it is sown in Vaikāsi or Āni (June) .

The land is ploughed 2-3 times, and 20-30 cart-loads of manure are applied. The crop is usually transplanted: the making of irrigation beds calls for 10 men, and 30 women are needed for the actual transplantation.

A 1 acre field entails the preparation of a 10 cent nursery, grown from 5 paDi of seed. The total cost of the seed is Rs 10/-. Transplantation is done when the seedlings are 15-20 days old. No rituals are involved at any stage.

Weeding requires 15-20 women: it is followed by the sowing of 25-35kg of urea. Pesticides are sprayed twice. The total growth period is 100-110 days, and water is required, if possible, every 7 days until the final fortnight. Harvesting and grain separation are done as for Kampu. Table 3.4 gives a breakdown of the costs of cultivation (PālasuppiramaNīyan, T17: LakshmaNappērūmāL Tēvar, T77) .

Table 3.4 : Costs of Kēppai Cultivation

Labour: ploughing, 4 days @ Rs 10/-	Rs 40/- per acre
bed formation, 20 man-days @ Rs 3/-	60/-
transplanting, 30 women @ Rs 1/50	45/-
weeding, 20 women @ Rs 1/25	25/-
Manure and Fertiliser	100/-
Seeds and Dressing	50/-
Electricity (for pumping water from the well)	90/-
Others	50/-
Total Cost per Acre	460/-

3.6.5 Pulses (Payiru)

Various pulses are grown intersown with CōLam on dry lands, during the monsoon period. These include moccai payiru (Lablab

vulgaris), avarai payiru or beans (*Dolichos lablab*), and Red Gram or tuvarai payiru (*Cytisus cajan* according to JPF:543; or *Gajanus indicus* according to Beck 1969:567) . The different heights of the two crops make the practice possible. After harvesting, the pulses are separated by being beaten with sticks.

Other pulses, such as Horse Gram, kudiraivaLLi or koLLu (*Dolichos uniflorus*) are sometimes grown unmixed. Black Gram, uLundu payiru , is sometimes intersown with cotton on dry land. (Cellaiya Pillai, T5) .

3 6.6 Cotton

Several varieties of cotton (parutti) are grown locally. They include karunkanni sinna ilai parutti ('black virgin small leaf cotton'), which is one of the types of cotton known as the 'Tinnies' (Sampath and Ganesan 1972:61), Varalakshmi parutti or 'long stable cotton', and N.G.B., a modern, high-yielding type.

If cotton is grown on dry land during the monsoon period, the land is first ploughed 3-4 times in ĀDi, and is handsown in PuraTTāsi or Aippasi (Oct) . One acre requires 5kg of seed, the price of which is Rs 2-2/50 per kg . Pulses such as Black Gram are sometimes intersown, as is coriander (malli) . Alternatively the crop may be sown un-mixed on wet land, in Māsi, in which case it will be harvested in the summer months

Little if any manure or fertiliser is added, but the field is weeded after 20-25 days, 10-15 women being required. Harvesting consists of picking the kapa (seeds) off the plants in the mornings, and leaving them to dry in the shade. The harvest begins after 100 days, and may continue daily for up to 80 days thereafter, with a total yield of 200-250kg per acre. The total cost of this method of cultivation is about Rs 200/-.

The Varalakshmi variety may also be grown on garden land,

which is first ploughed until good tilth is obtained. Some 30 cart-loads of manure are added, and beds are made. No side crops are sown, and only 1 kg of superior seed (Rs 65-125/-) is needed. Sowing is done so that the plants are placed in rows 45cm apart, with the plants at intervals of 15cm.

Weeding is done thrice, and requires 40-50 women. After 40 days, urea and fertiliser are added, and pesticides are sprayed every 15 days. It is important to supply water every 7-10 days during the 100-day growing period. On large plots, there is sometimes a simple ritual prior to the commencement of the harvest.

Thus, on 30 December 1976, the day before cotton-picking was due to start on a plot owned by Nallaiyā Kōṇār (T16) near to KP, a poṅkal was prepared in the field itself by the family of his manager SaNmuka Kōṇār (T15). Portions of the poṅkal were given first-of-all to the women who would be picking the crop on the following day.

In this method, costs of cultivation run as high as Rs 1,000-1,500/- per acre, but the yields are increased to 10-15 quintals (1,000-1,500kg). The price fetched by the cotton may rise as high as Rs 500/- per quintal, but there are wide and rapid fluctuations. Moreover, most people sell their cotton in small lots to the village merchants.

In June 1977, Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5) was buying 5kg lots of karuḥkanni for Rs 17/50, and of Varalakshmi for about Rs 20/-. He resold this in KaDampūr for about Rs 4/- per kg, though in the previous year at the same time the price had been Rs 5/- The N.G.B. was fetching Rs 7/- per kg in the summer of 1977.

It has already been mentioned (3.4) that the main advantage of cotton as a cash crop, as far as the majority of small growers are concerned, is that yields continue over a period of time. For those with small plots, pickers are not hired in the above way. Instead, the crop is harvested by the women of the household with

one or two friends, who are recompensed with a share of the picked crop, as much as can be tucked into the pleat in front of their sēlai (sari) .

Cotton seed is used as currency, especially during the summer months. Many people take small baskets of it to the village shops, there to have it weighed and exchanged for an equivalent weight of produce. The price obtained in this way, if converted to cash terms, is much less than they could expect to get by selling in bulk at the end of the season. Nevertheless, this liquidity of cotton seed is a great advantage in an economy where cash is scarce and credit expensive (SaNmuka Kōnār, T15; PālasuppiramaNīyan, T17; Ponnaiyā PiLLai, T11; Cellaiyā PiLLai, T5) .

3 6.7 Chillies

The cultivation of chillies (miLakāy) begins in Māsi (Feb-Mar) or Vaikāsi (May-June), depending on whether the crop is to be grown at the 2nd or 3rd stage of the annual cycle

The garden land is well ploughed, 50-60 cart-loads of manure are applied, and the seedlings are transplanted, a 1 acre field needing 5 cents of nursery, equivalent to 1 kg of seed (Rs 50/-) Chillies are grown as a mixed crop with kattarikāy (Aubergines), veNdaikkāy (Lady's Fingers) or castor

For transplanting, 15 women are needed, while the 3 weedings require a total of 40 woman-days. After each weeding, chemical fertilisers are added, and pesticides are sprayed every 15 days

The plants begin to yield after 90 days, and continue to do so for up to 2 months. The chillies are picked, and spread out in the sun to ripen and dry. Total yields are of the order of 3-5 quintals per acre. The total cost of cultivation is Rs 800-1,000/-, and the market price is about Rs 4-600/- per quintal

3.6 8 Plantains

Plantains (vaRaippaRam), of which there are many varieties, are the only fruits grown locally, except for a very few mangoes and coconuts which are retained by the producers for their own consumption.

Some farmers plough the land first, others do not. Plantain seedlings are transplanted in Tai (Jan-Feb), and an acre of land requires about 1,000 small trees, set 3' apart. Some manure is spread just before the transplantation; the entire operation calls for about 20 men. Vegetables can be grown in between the rows of plantains.

Although plantain seedlings are grown on garden land they need water only every 5-7 days. Weeding, followed by the application of 150kg of complex fertiliser, is ideally done 3 times and requires a total of 30 man-days. Pesticides are sprayed if necessary

The trees take 12 months to grow and the total cost over this period is about Rs 1,500/- . Each tree yields 60-70 fruits worth about Rs 5/- altogether, and the leaves may also be sold from the 7th month onwards. They are used as dining plates in restaurants, or when serving guests in the home. The intersown vegetables may yield up to Rs 5-700/- (Kurusāmi Kōnār, T15) .

3.6 9 Tubers

Tubers (kīRaṅku) are cultivated in dry lands, starting in PuraTTāsi (Sept-Oct) .

The land is ploughed 4 times, and 10 cart-loads of manure are applied, with no other fertiliser or pesticide. Beds may be formed, depending on the availability of water, which should be supplied every 15 days. For a 1 acre field, a 15 cent nursery is prepared in ĀDi, using pieces of tuber, not seeds. These are transplanted 3 months later; the nursery plants are cut into

small pieces some 6-9" long and are pressed into the ground. About 40 women are needed for this. Weeding is done once and calls for 20 women.

The total growing period is 100-120 days, and the total cost of cultivation works out at Rs 400/- per acre. Harvesting starts in MārkaRī (Dec-Jan) and the yield is about 5,000kg . The market price is 30 paise per kg (IrāmākīrūshNa Kōṇār, T80) .

3 6.10 Other Crops

Onions and tomatoes are both grown in small quantities on garden land, usually as cash crops. Some groundnuts are also cultivated Two farmers in TV grew sugar-cane, a crop which needs 18 months to mature and which requires, if possible, regular watering throughout that period Sugar cultivation is encouraged by various government subsidies, but overheads are high A 10 acre plot on Nallaiyā Kōṇār's (T16) land was affected by the then-routine power cuts, which prevented the full-time use of the pump-set at his irrigation well and led to the crop getting less than the ideal amount of water. Moreover, although he had his own extracting and refining equipment, the eventual profit was very much less than had been hoped .

CHAPTER 4 : DOMINANCE

4.1 The Distribution of Property

In this chapter I propose to examine the analytical utility of the concept of 'dominance' . Srinivas (1955:18) has analysed the social structure of a village in the South Indian state of Mysore (now Karnataka) by showing how this structure is founded upon the existence in the village of a 'dominant caste'. In the words of Srinivas's classic definition:

"A caste may be said to be 'dominant' when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can more easily be dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low " (ibid)

This notion of 'dominance' was seen by Srinivas as crucial to an understanding of inter-caste relationships and village unity (ibid:17-8) . The theoretical issue will be discussed below (4 5), but first of all the relevant data must be made available. Information on the numerical standing of each caste group (Table 1.1) and on the place of each in the local caste hierarchy (1 4 1) has already been given. I now present, both as a supplement to the discussion of agriculture in Chapter 3 and as an introduction to the treatment of 'dominance', some information on the economic positions of the various local caste-groups.

In the present context, agriculture (directly or indirectly) is so clearly the major economic activity of these villagers that their relative economic standings may be judged, albeit with

reservations in a few cases, by comparing their holdings of land and livestock. The other significant indices of wealth, namely housing and mercantile interests, will also be considered.

4.2 Land

Land represents the main economic resource required by most villagers, as the 1971 Census data illustrate :

At the time of the census (1966) there were 367 'workers' in TV. Of these, 279 (76%) were 'cultivators' or 'agricultural labourers', and 42 (11%) worked mainly with livestock. Another 22 (6%) worked in 'household industry', but this includes the Carpenters and Blacksmiths who provide essential ancillary services for the farmers. In KP there were 173 'workers', including 151 (87%) 'cultivators' and 'labourers' and 5 (3%) concerned with livestock. VV was said to contain 286 'workers' (for some reason, all were listed as male), of whom 202 (71%) were agriculturalists, 18 (6%) pastoralists and 4 (1%) involved in 'household industry'. In every case, the balance may easily be accounted for by shop-keepers, Washermen, Barbers and Priests (Govt of India 1972b:I, 64-7).

Table 4.1 gives details of the holdings of land on a caste- and village-wise basis. These data were gathered from every single household, using a set series of semi-formal questions.

Units : The data in Table 4.1 and elsewhere are expressed in acres and cents, a cent being one hundredth part of an acre. The acre is a unit with which most villagers are perfectly familiar, for it is used in the KarNam's register of land-holdings, but it is found side-by-side with a variety of local units, and my informants sometimes used one system, sometimes the other.

There are many local variations, and the indigenous system described here differs from that found by Dumont in the Madurai region (1957b:87), which is in turn unlike that in Usilampatti,

not far from where Dumont worked (Palanimurugan) . There are even examples below of units the use of which is confined to one of the villages under investigation.

The unit employed depends upon the type of land. Wet land is measured in marakkāl, there being 12 to the acre (Suppaiyā Kōnār, T120; SaṅkarapāNDi Kōnār, T1) . The marakkāl is also a measure (by volume) of grain, and as it takes 12 marakkāl of the traditional variety of paddy to handsow 1 acre (3.6.1), it is clear how the two usages arose: 1 marakkāl of land requires 1 marakkāl of seed paddy.

Dry land is measured in terms of the kurukkam ('diameter', 'intersection'), which is equivalent to 97 cents. Garden land has no special unit and is quoted in kurukkam or acres.

One KP informant stated that 4 kurukkam made up 1 saṅkali, while in VV small areas of dry land were often quoted in terms of vāykkāl ('channel', 'water-course'), there being 200 vāykkāl in 1 kurukkam .

A comparison of Tables 1.1 and 4.1 reveals a fair degree of correspondence between the size of a caste-group and the amount of land which its members control. In saying this, allowance is made for the fact that there are, in a number of cases, clear reasons why particular groups should deviate from the mean.

First of all, the various service groups, comprising the TV Āsāri (TV 6, 8 & 13) ¹, the VaNNār (TV 11 & 14, VV 6 and KP 6), the Barbers (TV 12, VV 9, KP 9), the Paraiyar in VV (VV 8), and to some degree the VēLār (TV 9) and Cakkiliyar (VV 4), all have, as groups, sources of income other than the direct labour of themselves or their employees on the land (5.9) .

Migration to the towns has distorted the picture for other caste-groups. In TV a number of CeTṭiyār families, including some with little or no land, left during the drought, leaving

1. The KP Āsāri (KP 7) do not follow their traditional calling; they are farmers.

Table 4.1 : Land Holdings

Caste ^a	Land (acres)	Acres/ H-h	Acres/ Person	% of Total	Landless ^b H-h
<u>Terku VaNDanam :</u>					
1. Maravar	273.11	5.1	1.0	29.3	7
2. Paraiyar	16.40	0.6	0.1	1.8	12
3. Nāyakkar	343.24	18.1	3.7	36.7	3 ^c
4. Kōnār	126.78	6.7	1.4	13.5	1
5. PiLLaimār	77.55	4.9	0.9	8.3	3
6. Taccan Āsāri	17.20	2.9	0.6	1.8	-
7. CeTTiyār	54.25	10.9	1.9	5.8	-
8. Kollan Āsāri	10.30	2.6	0.4	1.1	-
9. VēLār	4.50	1.1	0.3	0.5	-
10. KavunDar	11.00	5.5	0.9	1.2	-
11. VaNNār	-	-	-	-	2
12. PaNDitar	-	-	-	-	1
13. Tattan Āsāri	-	-	-	-	1
14. TīNDa VaNNār	-	-	-	-	1
	<u>934.33</u>	<u>5.8</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>VaDakku VaNDanam :</u>					
1. NaDār	493.35	5.4	1.3	74.5	10
2. PaLLar	69.35	2.5	0.4	10.5	8
3. KampaLattar	48.60	4.4	0.8	7.3	2
4. Cakkiliyar	15.35	1.2	0.3	2.3	5
5. Kōnār	11.65	1.7	0.4	1.8	3
6. VaNNār	-	-	-	-	1
7. MaNiyakkārar	6.00	3.0	0.4	0.9	-
8. Paraiyar	-	-	-	-	1
9. Maruttuvar	8.20	8.2	2.0	1.2	-
10. Headmaster	-	-	-	-	1
11. Catholic Church	10.00	-	-	1.5	-
	<u>662.50</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>0.9</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>31</u>

Table 4.1 (cont'd)

Caste ^a	Land (acres)	Acres/ H-h	Acres/ Person	% of Total	Landless ^b H-h
<u>KaliñkapaTTi :</u>					
1. Ayōtti	390.50	13.5	2 4	61 4	1
2. Maravar	26 05	2.2	0.5	4 1	2
3 Saiva CeTTiyār	89 00	17.8	3.3	14.0	-
4. Kottu ReDDiyār	104.90	26.2	6.2	16.5	-
5 PuLavar	12.75	2.5	0.9	2.0	1
6. VaNNār	9.00	4.5	0.8	1.4	-
7. Teluñku Āsarī	4.00	4.0	0.7	0.6	-
8. Schoolteacher	-	-	-	-	1 ^c
9 PāNDitar	-	-	-	-	1
10. Brahman	-	-	-	-	1
11 Seed Agent	-	-	-	-	1 ^c
	<u>636.20</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>8</u>

Notes :

a. The full names of the castes are given in Table 1.1, where they are numbered as here

b. The figures given for 'landless households' exclude those headed by married sons whose fathers have yet to partition the property. If there is no property to be partitioned, however, the households of both F and S have been included. Widows living separately from land-owning sons have also been excluded.

c. Each of these totals includes 1 household which has land outside the area of the present study.

behind those with a larger stake in the land. In two other cases, a single member of a CeTTiyār family has been left behind to watch over the family land. The NāDār in VV have lost large numbers through emigration, while it would seem that migrations from KP have affected the Ayōtti ReDDiyār and Maravar most of all

These statements are based on a comparison of my own census data with the results of a census carried out in 1971 by the Malaria Eradication Programme. This reveals that during the period 1971-6, the following complete households left TV: 7 Taccan Āsari, 5 CeTṭiyār, 4 PiLLaimār, 3 Paraiyar, 1 VēLār and 1 Nāyakkar. In addition, 2 VaNNār families departed and were replaced by 2 others; other new arrivals were Maravar (2) and Nāyakkar (1). From KP, 11 households emigrated during this period: 3 Ayōtti ReDDiyār, 3 Maravar and one each of PiLLaimār, Teluṅku Āsari, MaNiyakkārār, Saiva CeTṭiyār VeLLāLār and Mēstiri. Two Maravar households arrived, together with the seed agent, the teacher and the Brahman. I have no comparable data for VV, but people say that over a 70 year period 250 households of NāDār have emigrated, mostly to Virudunagar in Ramanathapuram District, a NāDār stronghold (Hardgrave 1969:130).

In general these data support the conclusion that it is the 'service castes', the artisans and mercantile groups (the NāDār fit this description nowadays) whose traditional occupations are not directly agricultural, who are most likely to leave during periods of scarcity. Many of these groups would have been mobile even in the traditional system. For farmers on the other hand, it makes more sense to remain in the village where, except in unusually bad years, they can at least be assured of eking out a bare subsistence (on the rationality of such behaviour, see Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:136-46). There is, for example, little evidence of urban migration by Maravar: indeed, they seem as a group to prefer village life (cf. Dumont 1957b:12 for the analogous Piramalai KaLLār).

Some other points must be made concerning particular sets of data in Table 4.1. The land-holding of the TV Kōṇār seems above average because of 2 households (Tl6, Tl7) which own between

them almost 70 acres of land. The remainder are, on the whole, below average for TV; this provides a truer picture, given that their main occupation (and preoccupation) is pastoralism. In the same way, the VV NāḌār data are greatly influenced by one family of a F and four married sons (2.4), who own altogether 158.5 acres of land. For the rest of the NāḌār community, the average holding is 3.9 acres per household and 0.9 per person.

As for the TV Nāyakkar (TV 3), the bulk of their land belongs to a single family, made up of 29 individuals in three households (two of them extended ones) (T43, T158, T158A) . Among them is the village Munsīp, who gave the total holding of the family as 44 acres (in itself the largest in TV) . But the Munsīp, as the official in charge of the collection of land revenue, clearly has both a financial interest in belittling the size of his holding, and a position which would enable him to do so successfully . In contradiction to his claim, two experienced Kōṇār informants estimated his lands at about 232 acres, made up of 40 acres wet, 142 dry and 50 garden land ² . I have used this larger figure in Table 4.1 . For various reasons, I do not think that I was seriously misled by any other informants.

Whatever the exact position, the Nāyakkar are certainly well above average in the amount of land which they hold, though for the remaining households in the caste-group the averages fall to 7 0 acres per household and 1.7 per person. As in the earlier cases, this demonstrates how misleading average figures can be when dealing with samples of the size of those in Table 4 1:one or

2 The coincidence of numbers suggests another possibility, that through a misunderstanding the Munsīp mentioned only his wet land.

two wealthy households may distort the entire picture (see also 4.7.4) .

Some generalisation is possible though, as the case of the Paraiyar (TV 2) shows. Under the traditional system they would not have been expected to own any land at all: they would have made up the agricultural labour force for the land-owning castes, a role fulfilled par excellence, in this region, by the PaLLar (Rajayyan 1974a:22) . More than half the Paraiyar households own some land at present, but the biggest land-owner in the group (T65), who bought his land from the proceeds of work on a Kerala plantation, owns a mere 3.5 acres. This does not even raise his household to the average level for the village as a whole. Of the rest, 11 Paraiyar men (not all of them landless) work as regular labourers for land-owners (Table 3.2) . The others take daily work when they can find it.

The situation of the VV Untouchables is less extreme. The PaLLar (VV 2) do have below-average holdings, but their overall economic position is clearly much better than that of the TV Paraiyar. This is also attested to by the size of their livestock holding (Table 4 3) and the quality of their housing (4 4) . Even the Cakkiliyar (VV 4), the lowest-ranking of all the groups under consideration, own on average more land than the Paraiyar.

Like the Paraiyar, these VV castes would probably not have owned land in the past. Yet the present situation, in which a majority of households in all 3 sub-castes owns land, is not a new one. Every informant was asked whether his land had been inherited or acquired, and it was found that the over-whelming majority of householders had inherited at least part of their present holding.

The Paraiyar are again the odd ones out; only 4 acres (24%) of the land entered against their name in Table 4.1 had been inherited. Unfortunately, I neglected to ask how this (in percentage terms) spectacular increase in landownership in this generation had come about.³ For the Pallar, 20.95 acres of land (30%) was acquired by the present owners, while the figure for the Cakkiliyar was 4.75 acres (31%).

The total area of 'acquired land' in TV works out as 155.45 acres, 16.6% of the total recorded in Table 4.1. The corresponding figures for VV and KP are 138.65 (21%) and 289.4 (45%). The high figure in the latter case is attributable to 2 Kottu Reddiyar households (K48 and K50), which settled in the village in this generation and purchased a total of 94.4 acres of land. There are a surprising number of large transactions; altogether, 15 households in the 3 villages had acquired 10 or more acres, thereby accounting for 309.1 acres of the acquired land. In all, 113 households have acquired some land in the present generation, though most of these also inherited some land.

Land prices are low, for several reasons. In the first place, the prolonged drought had naturally brought prices down. Then again, land increases in value, other things being equal, if it lies close to a motor road. This reduces the cost of transporting produce for sale, and also makes the land more attractive to town dwellers with money to invest, for whom it is more accessible. In the present case, it happens that the land (in KP) closest to the road is also by far the least productive, because there is no irrigation. As a result there has been little outside buying.

In October 1976, just before the end of the drought, land in TV was fetching the following prices: wet, Rs 1,250/- per acre;

3. In saying this I am assuming that the land was acquired from non-Paraiyar. Unfortunately I have no data on the identities of the sellers in land transactions.

dry, Rs 100-150/- per acre ⁴. In KP, dry land fetched 350-500/- depending on its location. By March 1977, after the good harvest, wet land in TV had gone up in price to 5,000/- per acre

These figures may be compared with the situation in Usilampatti (Madurai District), a much more accessible area around a fair-sized town. Dry land there fetched Rs 500/- per cent, and so was more than 300 times as expensive as equivalent land in TV (Palanimurugan). As long ago as 1966, Beck found a minimum price of Rs 4,000/- per acre for even the worst land in rural Coimbatore District (1972:286).

Other fieldworkers have commented on the notorious unreliability of land-ownership data in South Asia (Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:82). In view of the fact that the data in Table 4.1 are used in the argument both here and subsequently, it is important to apply some sort of check as to their validity. This is possible by taking into account the figures in the KarNam's land-registers, together with the 1971 Census results.

I was not able to consult the KarNams' registers in detail. When I first asked about them in TV, both the KarNam and the Munsip claimed that the other had possession of them. Later on, when they would probably have been willing to let me study them, I had realised that their value would be very limited, for many changes in ownership had not been registered. I did, however, consult them to obtain total land areas for each village.

The data in both the local register and the District Census Handbook relate to the individual villages separately, but it is not possible to compare them with Table 4.1 on that basis. Many

4. All these figures are based on general statements by informants and I have no data on particular transactions.

residents of TV own land in VV or KP and vice versa: such land would appear under one village in Table 4.1 and under another in the official statistics. It is therefore necessary to compare the figures for the three villages as a whole ⁵.

A total of 2,233 acres of land is accounted for in Table 4.1 . Various additions must be made to this figure. Some 26 acres of land in TV is listed in the KarNam's register as tīrvai ērpaDat-tarisu: this is fallow land, cultivable but not at present cultivated, which is largely owned by outsiders who have bought it as an investment, or which is the subject of litigation. Some 95 acres of land in VV is owned by residents of the neighbouring villages of PuduppaTTi and KoppampaTTi (Savarimuttu NāDār, V83): this includes the 45 acres owned by the Munsīp-cum-KarNam, who no longer resides in VV . Taking these additions into account, the 'total declared area' of owned, cultivable land in the three villages works out as 2,354 acres .

The 1971 Census gives the total areas of the villages as: 2,223 acres for TV, 1,433 for VV and 1,571 for KP (Govt of India 1972a:28-9) ⁶. The corresponding figures in the KarNams' registers are 2,225, 1,434 and 1,562 respectively. The two sets of data, which derive from different sources (Govt of India 1972b:I, vii), are thus in good agreement .

In each case, these totals include the areas occupied by the settlement itself, by irrigation tanks and pools, and by common grazing land and uncultivable waste. If we confine ourselves to land used for cultivation, this is given in the Census as 1,099 acres in TV, 459 in VV and 1,097 in KP: 2,655 acres in all (Govt of India 1972a:28-9) .

It is with this last figure that the 'total declared area' should be compared. Such a comparison reveals that no less than

5. All land owned by local residents but located outside the area has been excluded: there was in any case only a few acres of this.

6 Land data in the Census are given in hectares. The figures have been converted using the factor: 1 hectare = 2.47 acres .

89% of the cultivable land in the three villages has been accounted for in my local census. This is a gratifyingly high proportion, and the remainder may easily be explained by emigration, and cases in which one or more of a set of brothers has left the village, temporarily or permanently, leaving a relative to work the land but not necessarily, since he does not own it, to declare it in response to our questions.

Djurfeldt and Lindberg are, as far as I know, the only other fieldworkers in the area to have presented detailed land-holding figures in this way. They were able to account for only 40% of the cultivable land in Thaiyur Panchayat, and although certain local peculiarities no doubt contributed to this, such as the proximity of Madras and the large number of absentee landlords, the authors comment that they "failed to establish an image of (themselves) as research workers" (1975a:81-2) . They were suspected of being 'tax-' or 'aid-agents'. By contrast, though my motives were doubtless poorly understood, I did not seem to be suspected of any ulterior purpose: in the early stages this may well have owed much to the presence of Palanimurugan, who had his own perfectly intelligible reasons for taking an interest in local farming conditions.

If, as Myrdal has stated (1968:1056)(as quoted in Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1975a:82), land ownership is "among the best guarded secrets of the South Asian economies", then the success of the land census in the present case may be an almost quantitative indication of the degree to which we were accepted and of the extent to which these and other data may be relied upon.

More detailed comparisons using the land data are not particularly fruitful. For example, my raw data classify each land-holding into 'wet', 'dry' and 'garden' although these details have not been included in Table 4.1. The 'total declared area' of wet land works out at 271 acres. The 1971 Census lists 155 6 acres of tank-irrigated land in TV and a further 42 in VV (Govt of India 1972a:28-9), while the corresponding figures in the KarNam's registers are 200.2 and 44.3 acres. The total area of wet land is thus given as 197.6 or 244.5 acres by these two official sources, both of which report a figure which is lower than my 'total declared area' of wet land. Possible reasons for this discrepancy are discussed in (3.3, fn 2).

The more detailed figures do permit the making of one important comparison, however. Table 4.1 seems to show that the average household in KP is much better off than its counterpart in TV and VV, in that it holds twice as much land. This is misleading however, and to demonstrate this point Table 4 2 gives a detailed breakdown of land-holdings in the three villages, showing the proportions of wet, dry and garden land in each case. The figures for TV include the fallow land, and the VV totals include the holdings of outsiders.

These data are not directly comparable with the 1971 Census for the reason already stated, namely that my data refer to villagers and the official figures to villages. Moreover the '1971' figures refer to 1966, since when many more wells have been sunk (MāDasāmi Tēvar, T31). Nor is the table comparable with the KarNams' registers: the latter conflate dry and garden land because the two are taxed similarly (3.3).

It is obvious from the table that KP residents control much lower proportions of both wet and garden land than do residents of the two other villages. Bearing in mind what has been said about

Table 4.2 : Distribution of Land Types Among Local Landowners

Village	Total Land (acres)	Wet (acres)	% of Total	Dry (acres)	% of Total	Garden (acres)	% of Total
TV	960.3	180.5	18.8	674.4	70.2	105.4	11.0
VV	757.5	78.3	10.3	491.0	64.8	188.2	24.9
KP	636.2	15.2	2.4	598.8	94.1	22.2	3.5
	2,354.0	274.0	11.6	1,764.2	75.0	315.8	13.4

cropping patterns and the potentialities of the various types of land, it is clear that the residents of KP are, despite their large holdings, actually the worst off of the 3 groups. This is borne out by observation, for even in 1976-7, when the monsoon was satisfactory and the residents of TV and VV raised bumper paddy crops, there were fields in KP which failed to produce even a single 'dry' crop of millet.

Table 4.2 also gives some idea of the relative numbers of wells in the villages, bearing in mind that a well can irrigate only a certain maximum area of land. My data on wells are not entirely satisfactory, because many of them are partitioned among large numbers of agnatic kin, distant relatives or even non-relatives (as many as 22 in one instance). We always asked whether wells were individually owned or partitioned, but replies were not entirely consistent. For what they are worth, my data indicate that TV residents own 37 irrigation wells, of which 19 have electric pump-sets. The KarNam's register lists 39 such wells, and 26 pump-sets. In VV my census found 60-65 wells, with

1 oil-powered and 26 electric pump-sets. KP contains only 11 wells and 6 electric pump-sets.

In order to sink a well and/or install a pumpset, most farmers need to borrow money. To gain a government loan 5 acres of land must be mortgaged. For a well, Rs 5,000/- is needed, and a pump-set will cost another Rs 10,000/- . The loan is repayable over 7 years at an annual interest rate of $8\frac{1}{2}\%$ (Palanimurugan) .

4.2.1 Tenant Farmers

The above discussion has ignored the distinction between land which is owned and land which is leased. Table 4.1 deals with the areas of land 'held' or 'controlled' by the various caste-groups: it classifies the land according to the caste of the person who actually works it, either directly or as a supervisor, and it ignores the caste of the actual, legal owner

As justification for this, Beck's discussion of dominance (1972:15-6) may be cited: it will be returned to below (4.6) . It seems reasonable on general grounds too, for in all the cases discussed below except one, the landlord lives outside the area, and he generally has no kin in the village in question. I have excluded from consideration cases of men working the land of their emigrant brother(s) or other close kin; in such cases, families come to some agreement over the sharing of the harvest, in cash or kind, but this cannot usefully be regarded as formal tenancy

Examples of tenancy are few, and the forms which they take are various. I give details below of the only examples of which I am aware. Not all of these are regarded locally as 'true' tenancy, the Tamil term for which is kuttakai .

Example A : Kuppūsāmi Kōṇār (T81) oversees some land owned by Ponnaiyā Kōṇār, who lives elsewhere and who is WF to Nallaiyā Kōṇār (T16) He has done this for the past 4 years, but is not a real tenant and does not bear the costs of cultivation or carry out the ploughing and planting He merely looks after the growing paddy, which means in practice that he regulates the flow of water into the field, a task requiring no more than a few minutes work each day. In return, he receives one or two bags of paddy from the owner at harvest time.

Example B : Kurusāmi Kōṇār (T79) has been the tenant of 1.5 kurukkam of wet land (N.B., he used the 'wrong' unit) for the past 6 years. The owner (caste unspecified) lives in Koppampatti. He provides all the expenses, giving the seed and fertilisers, paying for the weeding, and paying the annual land taxes. Kurusāmi is responsible only for the control of water in the field, and for this he receives 1 kōTTai of paddy out of a total yield which is usually about 10 kōTTai .

Example C : Suppaiyā Tēvar (T74) leases 1 acre of wet land from a Brahman resident in Pasuvandanai. He has held this land for about 10 years Suppaiyā provides all the expenses of cultivation, seeds, ploughs, fertiliser, transplantation and weeding costs, etc. The land-owner pays the land tax and cess. The owner only visits TV at harvest-time, when the grain is divided on a 50-50 basis. The straw is kept by the tenant.

Example D : Kurusāmi Kōṇār (T15) has been the tenant of an Ayōtti ReDDiyār family for the past 53 years. The land-owners used to live in TV, but long ago migrated elsewhere. The owner meets all the expenses of cultivation, and also pays the tenant a sum sufficient to meet his living expenses He gives extra money when there are marriages or funerals in the tenant's family, and has given several acres of land to Kurusāmi's married S, Saṇmuka Kōṇār (also T15) . A well was dug on this land some 25 years ago, so there are now 3 crops per year and the landowner comes every 2-3 months to inspect progress. The tenant takes no share of the crop, but part of the land has been set aside for his exclusive use (in addition to that now owned by his S) The tenancy involves 10 acres of land, a mixture of wet, dry and garden.

Example E : MunīyāNDi (PaLLar, V165) rents 20 marakkāl of wet and garden land from Nīkkalāmuttu NāDār (V96). That, at least, is how the tenant describes the arrangement: the 'land-lord' is in fact dead, and the land is held by his widow Sūsaiyammāl, as the eldest son is still in his teens. MunīyāNDi also rents the well and electric pump-set on this plot. He pays an annual rent of Rs 1,000/- and meets all the costs of cultivation, including the electricity bills.

There does not seem to be any general pattern in these examples. The amounts of land involved are fairly small except in example D, which is also the only really long-standing arrangement and the only one to appear traditional in form. It is possible that this degree of paternalism, enduring through several generations, was once the local norm, but in the absence of more evidence it is impossible to be sure

One thing which all these tenants have in common is that every one of them is a land-owner in his own right. Indeed, Suppaiyā Tēvar (T74) is one of the wealthiest men in TV, while SaNmuka Kōnār (T15) is a member of the TV panchayat. None depend entirely upon the land which they lease, therefore: this underlines the relative unimportance of tenancy to the economy.

4.3 Livestock

The animals owned by each caste-group are listed in Table 4.3, and Table 4.4 gives typical local prices for animals and agricultural equipment. As the livestock figures are liable to seasonal fluctuation, it is relevant to note that these data were collected at the same time as the door-to-door census data (14, fn 17). A few months later, after the various temple festivals, there would have been fewer goats and chickens

There is little to be gained from a detailed analysis of the two Tables. As would be expected, the Kōnār, who are traditionally Shepherds, own a disproportionately large percentage of the sheep and goats (over 50% in the case of TV) .

Bullocks are used in pairs for ploughing and it may be assumed that a farmer will have one plough for every two bullocks and that in many cases he will also have a cart. The Kōnār and Nāyakkar holdings of bullocks and buffalo are inflated by, respectively, 2 and 3 exceptionally rich households. Even then the Nāyakkar figures are certainly too low, because the evidence of my own eyes was enough to show that the TV Munsīp had under-estimated his family's holding.

The donkeys all belong to Washermen, who use them to carry laundry to the nearest tank or pool, especially during the hot season when this may involve a considerable journey.

The low holdings of the PiLLaimār in TV are worthy of mention. Few PiLLai households keep chickens, as they do not officially eat either meat or eggs (1.5) . They are also said not to till the soil themselves (Thurston 1909;VII, 370-1), and although this was not entirely true of TV, there were several well-off PiLLai households which owned neither plough nor bullock.

Villagers were amused at being asked about their chickens and replies were mostly approximate. As far as they are concerned the important categories of livestock are those referred to under the general headings of āDu and māDu, goats and cattle. Indeed, the collective noun for livestock is simply āDumāDu . Under the rubric of āDu come both semmari- ('red') and veLL-('white') āDu, sheep and goats respectively. The association of colours is therefore the opposite of what one might expect but is consistent

with the fact that mutton and goat-flesh are classed as 'heating' and 'cooling' foods respectively ⁷. The māDu include pasumāDu (cows), erumaimāDu (buffalo) and erutumāDu (or simply māDu, bullocks, oxen) I came across one collective term: 20 āDu are equivalent to 1 moy ('company', 'crowd' or 'list') .

One final comparative point may be made in connection with Table 4.3 . The residents of KP have above-average holdings of land, as we saw, but Table 4.3 shows them to have below-average numbers of animals. Both deviations from the norm may be explained in the same way, with reference to the quality of the land. Bullocks are most important in the preparation of rice land, which must be ploughed many times in the few crucial weeks prior to the monsoon (3 6.1) . By contrast, dry land needs little ploughing and work is not concentrated into a short period; there is therefore less urgency, and less need for each farmer to keep his own ploughing team. Instead, someone else's animals may be hired when their owner has finished work on his own fields. As for pastoral animals, there is little grazing land near KP, and this, coupled with the absence of pastoral castes in the village, may account for the smallness of the herds of cows, buffalo and goats.

4.4 Housing and Other Property

There is a great variety of styles of architecture and lay-out in these villages . Some differences are broadly congruent with caste boundaries: thus the Ayōtti ReDDiyār have larger, more elaborate houses than any other group . The Pillai in TV, too, have as a group better quality housing than their current

7. For these properties, see Beck (1969:567) .

Table 4.3 : Livestock Holdings

Caste ^a	Bullocks	Cows	Buffalo	Sheep, Goats	Chickens	Others
<u>Terku VaNDānam :</u>						
1. Maravar	46	24	14	166	206	2 pigs
2. Paraiyar	2	5	7	27	23	1 pig
3. Nāyakkar	17	10	9	51	93	-
4. Kōnār	19	13	13	385	94	-
5. PiLLaimār	2	6	8	21	25	-
6. Taccan Āsāri	1	-	-	-	6	-
7. CeTTiyār	4	-	1	30	9	-
8 Kollan Āsāri	1	-	-	1	5	-
9 VēLār	2	-	1	3	3	-
10. KavunDar	3	-	-	55	12	-
11 VaNNār	-	-	-	-	3	4 donkeys
12 PāNDitar	-	-	3	2	10	-
	<u>97</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>741</u>	<u>489</u>	
<u>VaDakku VaNDānam :</u>						
1. NāDār	101	31	30	284	235	1 pig
2. PaLLar	18	1	7	125	49	8 pigs
3. KampaLattar	10	14	4	142	25	-
4. Cakkiliyar	-	-	5	-	11	8 pigs
5. Kōnār	2	-	-	155	22	-
6. VaNNār	-	-	-	-	-	3 donkeys
11 Catholic Church	-	-	-	-	6	8 pigeons
	<u>131</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>706</u>	<u>348</u>	
<u>KaliñkapaTTi :</u>						
1 Ayōtti	22	3	5	74	110	-
2. Maravar	3	1	2	22	10	-
3. Saiva CeTTiyār	2	1	1	6	-	-
4. Kottu ReDDiyār	2	5	5	-	20	-
6 VaNNār	1	-	-	2	11	2 donkeys
7. Teluñku Āsāri	-	-	-	1	-	-
	<u>30</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>151</u>	

Note a : Only castes with animals are listed.

Table 4.4 : Market Prices of Livestock and Farming Equipment

Item	Price (Rs)
Adult Bullock	350-500/-
Buffalo	250-300/-
Goat	50-75/-
Sheep	40-70/-
Plough	30-40/-
Bullock Cart (new)	1,300-1,500/-
Passenger Cart	1,000/-
Lightweight 'Race Cart'	400/-

economic position in other spheres would lead one to expect ⁸.

Whatever the style, the basic construction materials are the same. Large boulders, roughly shaped, are used for the base (which is usually raised several feet above ground level) and the lower parts of the walls. Door-steps and door- and window-frames are often made from cut stones brought from elsewhere. The upper walls are of home-made brick or smaller stones, held together by cheap, poor quality cement. Better cement is used for the final facing of the walls, which are then whitewashed, and floors, on which are traced geometric patterns of no apparent significance. The windows have wooden shutters set behind metal bars, and the front doors are elaborate and heavy, their massive cross-beams bearing pointed brass studs.

Apart from overall size, the most significant feature of a house is the type of roofing material used. Poorer people erect a wooden scaffolding, over which are placed many layers of dried

8. A poor Pillai is likely to have better housing than even a wealthy Maravar.

palmyrah leaves. The houses of wealthy families, on the other hand, are built with properly-shaped wooden struts and are tiled in the conventional British way ⁹.

Apart from this, there is considerable variety. Animals may be kept in part of the main building or in sheds, the house-site may be a walled courtyard or an open area, and the cooking hearth may be in the main building or in an outhouse. The only generalisation possible in the last instance is that a hearth is normally located at the south-eastern corner of the room in which it is situated.

Because of the poor quality of the materials used, houses deteriorate quite quickly. The plaster flakes off the outer walls, and subsequent rains wear channels through the cement and stones of the inner fabric. If the house has a thatched roof, this must be replaced every 3-4 years. Within even the best-built houses, rats and ants are continually eroding the walls, and cement must be applied regularly to the affected spots.

There are not usually any chimneys or other efficient means for removing smoke from the hearth. In a thatched house, it seeps out through the roof, whereas tiled houses have gaps between the tops of the walls and the roof beams. In such houses, a tile is often removed from the roof during the dry season, so as to let in more light and provide an exit for the smoke.

As a rough index of the quality of housing, we recorded whether a house was tiled or not; partially-tiled houses and

9. A few houses, including most of the few with upper stories, are of the type described locally (in English) as "buildings", that is, they have more substantial masonry and flat roofs.

'buildings' were included with the tiled group. In TV, a total of 80 houses come into this category ¹⁰. They are occupied, and in most cases owned ¹¹, by the following castes: Maravar 26, PiLLai 15, Nāyakkar 11, Kōnār 10, CeTTiyār 6, Taccan 5, Kollan 4, Paraiyar 2, VaNNār 1. In VV there are 67 such households, including those of the parish priest and headmaster. The others are occupied by: NāDār 44, PaLLar 9, Kōnār 5, Nāyakkar 5, and MaNiyakkār 2. In KP there are 47 such houses, including all 33 households of the two ReDDi sub-castes, together with Saiva CeTTiyār 5, Maravar 3, PuLavar 2, VaNNār 2, the teacher and the seed agent.

Typical prices for the construction of a house, not including the substantial input of labour by the householder's own family, are given in (3.3).

A few wealthy families have domestic electricity supplies installed. There are 12 such households in TV, made up of Kōnār 4, Nāyakkar 3, PiLLai 3, and Maravar 2. In VV, where there is a piped-water supply with taps at street corners, installed with aid from T.S.S.S., a few houses have private taps. Other indices of wealth are the possession of radios (9 in TV), bicycles and, in the cases of Perumālsāmi Nāyakkar (T158) and Sūsaikani NāDār (V77), motorcycles.

10. A 'house' is here defined as that part of a building, occupied by a household as defined in (1.4, fn 16). A single structure may thus contain 2 or more 'houses'.

11. There is little rented housing. In TV, 5 Maravar, 2 VaNNār, 1 Nāyakkar (rented shop) and the Electricity Board worker are tenants; of the landlords, 3 are PiLLai, 2 CeTTiyār and 1 Nāyakkar. The VaNNār occupy village housing (5.9.2). In VV, 9 NāDār and 1 Paraiyar household are tenants, all of NāDār landlords. In KP, 2 Maravar, 1 PuLavar and 1 Brahman are tenants of ReDDi landlords. Rents are very low; even we paid only Rs 20/- per month.

4 5 The Dominant Caste

The notion of 'dominant caste' was introduced in (4.1), in the words of Srinivas's original definition (1955:18) . The existence of such a caste is, Srinivas says, brought out in the settlement of disputes.

"The leaders of the dominant Peasant caste in Rampura administer justice not only to members of their own caste group, but also to all persons of other castes who seek their intervention." (ibid)

Not only is the use of urban law-courts disapproved of, but even the individual caste courts of non-dominant castes are subordinate, in the last resort, to the caste court of the dominant caste. The latter body may overturn the ruling of a caste court, though with due regard for the peculiar customs of the people involved (ibid:19).

So for Srinivas, although numerical strength and economic and political power are necessary conditions for dominance, the actual diagnosis of such a situation depends primarily on the judicial sphere. For him, moreover, the concept of 'dominance' does not render the notion of 'village solidarity' in any way problematic; quite the reverse,

"The village may, then, be described as a vertical entity made up of several horizontal layers each of which is a caste." (ibid:33) "(The elders of the dominant caste) are the guardians of the social and ethical code of the entire village society They represent the vertical unity of the village against the separation of caste." (ibid:34)

Two tendencies seem to be at work here On the one hand, Srinivas is operating within the context of the received wisdom of

the time, whereby a village is taken to be an equilibrated and functioning community which may be studied in virtual isolation. On the other hand, the most prominent feature of the Indian village is the divisive nature of its segregation into caste groups. In order to restore its "vertical unity", the concept of 'dominance' is introduced.

The volume containing Srinivas's paper was reviewed at some length by Dumont and Pocock (1957a) ¹². Their criticism of the apparent over-emphasis on 'the village' as the unit of analysis was that India as a whole was, at one level, the unit of study: "... India is one." (Dumont 1957c:9, author's emphasis) . We may desire to understand what goes on in a particular village, but it is impossible to do so without a knowledge of what the various castes 'stand for' in the wider Indian tradition. The position of the Brahman, for example, is incomprehensible without such knowledge (Dumont and Pocock 1957a:25) .

Most fieldworkers, even at that time, did of course take account of the all-India tradition: certainly Srinivas did so. Bailey, however, claimed that at least in theory this was not necessary:

"A valid sociological understanding can be achieved, given certain problems, by making abstractions immediately from behaviour or from other non-verbal information, and by using only our own concepts and evading the ideas of the people (supposing they have any ideas, which is not always the case)." (1959:90)

12. Francillon's (1976) bibliography of Dumont does not include this paper, which may therefore be attributable to Pocock alone .

Yet to disregard the ideas of a people would preclude any form of communication with them, as their speech necessarily contains such ideas. Social interactions could then only be studied in ways analogous to those used for molecular collisions: they would be merely physical processes devoid of intrinsic meaning, expressible only in numerical terms. In fact, of course, Bailey uses indigenous ideas throughout his work:

"... I use the word 'caste'... to translate the Oriya word jati... " (Bailey 1957:xv)

The very titles of his books (e.g. "Tribe, Caste and Nation", 1960) make use of them; it is hard to see what "problems" could be studied otherwise.

Few would have subscribed to Bailey's extreme views, one feels, even in the heyday of the village study. Nevertheless, the history of anthropology did predispose fieldworkers to view the village as a sociologically isolable entity. Dumont proposes another contributory factor arising from the history of India itself. He discusses in detail the writings of 19th century British administrators in India and shows how their strangely uniform conceptions, which they express in almost identical words, can be traced to a single source, Wilks's "Historical Sketches" (1810)(Dumont 1966a:71; 1970:115-6) .

Wilks saw 'the village' as primarily a political unit, governed by a headman and 12 officials; the relevant passage (1810:I, 139; cf. Dumont: *ibid*) was repeated so many times in the works of others that, says Dumont, it assumed the status of an administrator's myth.

In such accounts the village is persistently described as a

'republic', a 'commonwealth', or even a 'state', yet because the writers were administrators in close touch with the realities of the situation, they were also aware that: 1) the village had always been subordinate to external political power; 2) within it, the rights of the inhabitants were not equal: there was often a group with a superior right (the as yet un-named 'dominant caste') (Dumont 1966a:74-6; 1970:119-20) .

There is a type of village known as mirāsudārī (2.2) in which land is held jointly by the land-holding group. When this was discovered by the administration of the time it gave rise to a second viewpoint: the village was seen as essentially a "body exercising joint rights in the territory" (1966a:76; 1970:120) . Yet once again those contemporary writers who were on the spot - Elphinstone (1838) and Ellis (1852) - were perfectly aware of the two points made above: that they did not emphasise the unequal nature of the "joint rights" of the different caste groups in the village was probably because, writing when they did, such inequality seemed only natural to them (1966a:75; 1970:119) .

On the other hand, the emphasis having once been placed on the unifying aspects of village society, there was the danger of an idealisation of these and a corresponding neglect of others, especially among writers lacking first-hand experience of India. Dumont shows how this did in fact happen in the works of Maine (1890, 1906) ¹³ and Marx. Moreover, like Durkheim (1897), these authors saw the Indian village as a survival: its laws (for

13. Maine visited India after writing his "Ancient Law"; for the development of Marx's views on India, see Thorner (1966) .

Maine), its economy (for Marx) and its family system (for Durkheim) were taken to exemplify idealised earlier stages in the development of modern, western society. These writers could not see that Indian villages were present-day "structural facts rather than prehistoric survivals" (Dumont 1966a:89; 1970:132) .

This all happened long ago yet the ideas being criticised are still current. This, says Dumont, is because there is yet a third stage in the administration's attitude towards 'the village'. During the freedom movement and after Independence, the village became an ideologically-valued entity.

"... Indian nationalists, relying on the descriptions and scruples of the British of the first period, constructed for themselves an idyllic picture of the village community as a secular and democratic institution - did it not have the assembly, the famous village panchayat? - which only the British domination ruined irremediably." (Dumont 1972:204) ¹⁴

The movement known as Panchayati Raj (village self-government), which was touched on in (2.3) , had this notion as its basis. It is hardly surprising to find that the anthropologists of the period were not immune.

In opposition to this trend, Dumont and Pocock argue that:

"... India, sociologically speaking, is not made up of villages." (1957a:25)

By this they mean that it would be false to set up a contrast between 'Indian civilisation' and 'the village' as macrocosm

¹⁴ Evidence for the village (as opposed to caste) panchayat is in fact slender and localised (Dumont 1972:216) .

and microcosm (ibid) . The village is purely an empirical, substantive entity, not an isolable level for sociological analysis. It is true that the idea of 'the village' is held by the administration and in the minds of the villagers, but when the latter speak of a village by name, they frequently mean, in practice, only their own caste-fellows residing there ¹⁵.

Turning to Srinivas's (1955) paper in particular, the 'loyalty' which he says the inhabitants of Rampura feel towards their village, is not loyalty to the village as such, but to the dominant caste 'Inter-village' disputes are in fact disputes between the dominant castes of the villages concerned, each being supported by its various dependant castes (Dumont and Pocock 1957a) Within the village, the important units for political action are factions, headed by patrons from within the dominant caste, and whose clients are drawn from a cross-section of village castes (Srinivas 1955:31) . In both cases, the social segments owe their existence to the modalities of unity and disunity within the dominant caste ¹⁶

Dumont and Pocock follow Hocart (1958:8) in correlating the position of the dominant caste with that of the king in an Indian royal court. They add:

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15. Dumont and Pocock implied that people always mean this (1957a: 26) . Bailey took them to task for this (1959:93), and they admitted that "We exaggerated for the sake of emphasis" (Dumont and Pocock 1960:88) . In fact, their conclusions seem more acceptable than their intervening arguments, which suffer from the ambiguities of status so characteristic of 'cultural' explanations (Chapter 12) .
16. Gough's work provides an example of an 'inter-village' dispute of this type (1960:46; see also 4.6) .

"... the masters par excellence are the members of the dominant caste, and only after them do the village servants serve others and each other " (1957a:31)

In short, Dumont concludes that territory is only a secondary factor in Indian social organisation: the primary and fundamental factors are caste and kinship (1957c:18; 1970:14) . This position has been criticised by Bailey: he agrees that Srinivas's notion of village 'loyalty' is unfortunate in that it is a psychological rather than a sociological concept, and for that reason Bailey sees the presence or absence of such emotions as having nothing to do with the social reality, or lack of it, of the village: "That (social) reality lies in relationships... " (1959:94, my gloss) , and these unifying relationships are economic and political in nature (ibid) . Dumont and Pocock take the view, says Bailey, that it is not necessary to treat the village as an entity in its own right because it is "subsumed in kinship and caste". Yet they admit that the dominant caste is divided on a village-by-village basis, thereby restoring reality to that very entity (ibid:95) .

In reply, Dumont and Pocock reiterate that the village is to be seen as secondary, not as wholly subsumed: they point out that, in order for there to be a village-by-village division of the dominant caste, there must first-of-all be a caste, and a caste system (1960:88) . For the dominant caste to have inter-village relationships, one might also add, there must first-of-all be relationships Caste and kinship are therefore logically prior to locality.

The three points of view may be summarised as follows. At one extreme, for Bailey the village is real and that empirical

reality lies in the economic and political sphere (1959:94) . Srinivas sees the village as "solidary": it is as though it exists only on the moral or emotional plane, becoming realised through the agency of the dominant caste. At the other extreme, Dumont and Pocock regard the village as a myth, a mistaken idea. It is mistaken because such reality as the village does possess is a purely physical one, upon which are imposed the various modalities of caste, kinship and, finally, residence

On intellectual grounds I find myself most in sympathy with this last view: neither Bailey's substantivism, his reduction of the social to the economic, nor Srinivas's psychologism, his expression of the social in terms of the emotional, seem to me to take account of the qualitatively distinct nature of sociological data. It is necessary to recognise, though, that Dumont and Pocock are making assertions, not conducting an analysis. It is clear that Dumont's own fieldwork must have influenced his views (2.5), but the concept of 'dominance' had not been introduced at that time, and his own data are not analysed in terms of it (1957b).

On purely demographic grounds, one would not expect to find a dominant caste in every village (but see 4 6) . There must be transitional cases at least, villages in which one dominant group is in the process of replacing another. Remembering Dumont's strictures against the doctrine of 'survivals' (above), we must analyse these too as "structural facts". The question must then be: granted that one rejects Bailey's materialism, what then is to replace the dominant caste as the unifying agency in cases such as this? Is there, indeed, any unifying agency at all?

4.6 The Concept of Dominance Refined and Applied

The answers to such questions seem, paradoxically, to lie in a more whole-hearted application of the principles which Dumont himself has enunciated in other contexts. This point will be taken up in Chapter 6, but in the meantime it is still necessary to consider 'dominance' in a little more detail. The definition by Srinivas has been quoted, but the concept is even more crucial to Dumont, who therefore subjects it to close scrutiny.

Several factors are involved; the first is that of number. Srinivas (1959:4-5) argues that a dominant caste needs to be able to defend its position, to "put men into the battle lines" (Dumont 1972:206), and certainly one commonly finds that the two largest caste-groups in a village are: 1) that group which owns the most land; 2) that which provides the bulk of the agricultural labour force (ibid) . Yet this need not always be the case, and a small but economically-powerful land-owning group would not lack supporters if it came to an inter-village conflict.

The second factor which must be examined is that of power. Dumont points out that such power is only relative, because the rights of the government are and were pre-eminent (ibid:205) . This is true of both economic and political power, although in India governments have usually been primarily concerned with the former.

Beck has proposed a definition which avoids the problems raised in both these connections For her, the 'dominant caste' is:

"... the sub-caste community that controls a majority of the local labour force in a given area." (1972:15, my emphasis)

This avoids postulating a large dominant group, and is phrased so as to include all possible types of primary resource, not only rights to land and animals, but mineral wealth and access to means and routes of communication. By 'control' she means the possession of the right of access to the primary resource: an agricultural dominant caste controls the agricultural labour force by virtue of its own rights over the land. One cannot measure the control of economic resources simply in terms of 'ownership' however. Where there are large land-holdings these tend to be leased out, and it is then the tenants who control the access to them of the rest of the population.

"It is the power to employ and supervise directly the labour of others that makes for dominance." (ibid:16, my emphasis)

Later on, she specifies that dominance cannot be equated with control of the land: it is simply that the latter is a useful index by means of which to measure the former. Dominance cannot be reduced to mere economics (ibid:269) .

Given Beck's framework of higher and lower-order regional units (2.5), it is easy to see that dominance is relative. The dominant group in the context of a given village may itself be dominated in some wider context.

"Thus one cannot speak of dominance per se, but must refer to the specific area controlled." (ibid)

This is a very useful formulation, for it allows the notion of

'dominance' to be applied to any empirically-observed social or territorial entity ¹⁷. Dominance as a concept does not stand or fall with the notion of village loyalty, as Srinivas would have it, nor does it necessarily replace the village on the sociological plane, as Dumont and Pocock suggest. Dominance is a relationship, not an attribute of a group, and to see it as such, removed from any particular context and any specified dominant group, is surely in the best traditions of Dumontian sociology

Of the other fieldworkers in Tamil Nadu, Gough uses the term 'dominance' only in a non-technical sense, even in her later accounts (1960:32), although the Brahman landlords in her mirāsi-type village display all the stigmata of a dominant caste ¹⁸. Bêteille also avoids the idea, though it would seem that Sri-puram was, in the past at least, largely owned by Brahman mirāsudārs (1971:192-3) . It may be that he did not find the idea helpful in the modern context, when most actual owners of land seem to reside outside the area (though as usual he is reticent over the exact, numerical facts) (ibid:112) . Whatever the reason, the issue is never raised.

Djurfeldt and Lindberg treat the whole issue very superficially. Describing a hypothetical village, invented for the purpose of discussing traditional inter-caste economic relations, they state:

17. Mayer (1958) made a similar point; in his case the relevant levels were the village, the region and the kingdom.

18. They are the largest caste-group (1960:18), own nearly 70% of the land (ibid:32) and, formerly at least, had village-wide judicial pre-eminence (ibid:47) .

"In this village (and in each village) there is a dominant jati group, which controls the land and dominates politically " (1975a:37, author's gloss and emphasis) ¹⁹

In the context of Thaiyur, and at present:

"The Vellala (sic) is the dominant jati, that, in pre-colonial times, probably controlled all land in the village. Much of their property has been lost... but they still retain a sizeable portion of the land ... and with it, they maintain their political dominance of village affairs." (ibid:73-5)

Although Beck's book, with its perceptive refinements, is included in their bibliography, they refer their usage back to Srinivas, but with one difference, that caste is not subsequently treated as a primary socio-structural factor. It is not clear why even this shadowy usage of the notion of dominance should find a place in an analysis which assumes that during the colonial period, "jati lost its ascriptive relation to class" (ibid:54), and when, moreover, they do not distinguish between the 'Vellala', 'Tottakara Mudaliar' and 'Vellala Pillai' (all sic) listed, but even then not separately, in their table of castes (ibid:73). To which of these groups does the above quotation apply? It would be a fundamental analytical error to regard them interchangeably as dominant castes on the basis of a posited similarity of social class.

Subsequently Djurfeldt and Lindberg produce a whole series of relationships of 'dominance', none of which are specifically

19. In a footnote they add: "This is a simple adaptation of Srinivas' concept of "dominant caste"." (ibid:37) .

caste based. The very relation of dominance is here treated as though it were variable; whereas Beck envisages the same type of relationship as linking different pairs of related groups at different territorial levels, they blur the analytical precision of the relationship itself, so that in such examples as the money-lender/debtor or saltmerchant/lessee relationships (ibid: 315), the term is applied to dyadic transactions between individuals in the market economy.

To sum up, the notion of 'dominance' has not been applied to the analysis of data, as far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, to anything like the extent that one would expect in view of the importance claimed for it by Dumont. When it has been used, this has normally been in a very loose way, which in one case at least seems to represent an obfuscation of Srinivas's position. Beck's view appears to be the most sophisticated, and she is certainly the only author among those mentioned to have registered any ethnographically-based advance on Dumont's purely assertional view.

Beck makes a convincing case for the dominant status of the Kōhku KavunDar in her particular ethnographic context (1972:269) Having done so, she is able to give a coherent account of the social structure at all the various territorial levels which she delineates. This analysis is valid only because of the prior demonstration that a dominant caste does exist empirically. In the present case too, it is not possible to adopt Dumont's premise that what appears to be village unity is in fact the unity of the locally-dominant caste-group, until it has first been shown that such a group is indeed to be found in each of the villages under consideration.

4.7 The Present Case

Having discussed the concept of 'dominance' from the theoretical point of view, we now turn to an examination of the evidence in the present case. Taking the various characteristics of dominance one by one, we will see to what extent particular castes fulfil these disparate criteria. This information will then be synthesised, to see whether any caste does in fact occupy a dominant position overall.

4.7 1 Caste Panchayats and Dispute Settlement

One central issue may easily be disposed of: in none of the 3 villages is there a caste council whose jurisdiction extends beyond the boundaries of its members' caste-group. Some castes do have committees (saṅkam), however, which exert a greater or lesser degree of authority within their own local group.

In TV, the Kōṇār caste council, or Yādavar saṅkam²⁰, meets monthly on the evening of full-moon day, outside house T1. There is no committee and no officials: any member of the caste living in TV may attend, and most do so. Anyone may speak, but as usual the older men carry the most weight. Married women and widows often speak.

Each Kōṇār household pays Rs 1/- per month to the saṅkam, which also levies Rs 1/- from the household concerned whenever a Kōṇār bride enters or leaves the village. The saṅkam discusses matters of general interest and proposes communal projects. In 1977 it decided to raise the money to build a maḍam, a roofed platform where meetings could be held or visitors to the village might sleep. This was to be built next to the Panchayat Board office. The money was collected in stages, by means of a bi-monthly auction (ēlam) (SaṅkarapāNDi Kōṇār, T1).

20. Yādavar is an honorific title of the Kōṇār caste.

The TV Nāyakkar also have a caste saṅkam with a monthly levy of Rs 1/-, and I was told that the Pillaimār do likewise. The Maravar have no saṅkam, but I have no information on other castes.

In VV, the NāḌār have a Parish Committee (kirānam makkaḷ), which raises money for the annual St. Xavier festival by means of a levy on every NāḌār household. It also raised Rs 1,500/- to purchase a record-player and speaker set which is now used for all communal and familial festivals within the community, thus obviating the need to hire one. Most of the money came from NāḌār families now settled in Virudunagar.

This committee may also fine young men for "misbehaviour" before marriage. The penalty may be as high as Rs 500-1,000/- "if the girl is spoiled". Even if a couple are seen talking together too often, a fine may be collected from the boy concerned (Fr. Njānappirākasaṃ, V1) .

None of these bodies wield any authority outside their own caste, and all are locally based except for the NāḌār committee, which covers emigrants in Virudunagar to some degree.

The only local mechanism for the settlement of disputes between members of different castes seems to be an appeal to one or more of the respected elders of the village. Our landlord Mēkaliṅka Kōṇār was much in demand for this, although as we will see the Kōṇār cannot be thought of as dominant in terms of any of the possible criteria. Only minor disputes arising in the normal course of events are dealt with in this way: a typical example would be an argument over who should have first use of a particular part of the threshing floor at the height of the harvest. More serious matters, involving violence or disputed land ownership, are dealt with through the civil or criminal law courts.

From the traditional judicial aspect then, there is no sign of any village-wide institution at present, nor any memory of

there having been one in the past. No caste, therefore, fulfils Srinivas's diagnostic criterion of dominance.

4.7 2 Numerical Strength

Previous writers have differed over the importance of population size as a concomitant of dominance. While the criticisms of the Srinivas view (4.6) seem to have force, it is still relevant to consider the population figures given in Table 1.1 with dominance in mind.

In all three villages, there is one caste group which is numerically preponderant to the extent of containing more than double the population of the second largest group. The Maravar (TV 1) make up more than a third of the population of their village, while the NāDār (VV 1) and Ayōtti ReDDiyār (KP 1) constitute more than half. Several other caste groups make up more than 10% of the population in their respective villages.

The important point, then, is that whatever other criteria may be adopted, there are caste groups in every village which would satisfy any reasonable numerical requirements for dominance.

4.7.3 Political and Administrative Power

In the absence of any traditional 'village panchayat', formal political power resides solely in the new kirāmaṁ pañcāyattu, especially in the person of the President. He shares executive power with the traditional offices of Munsīp, KarNam and, to a lesser degree, Talaiyāri (2.3). It will be clear from what follows, however, that the spheres of competence of these various personages are not always congruent with village boundaries.

For example, although TV and KP are separate 'revenue villages' they share the same Village Panchayat (2.1, fn 1) ²¹. The members of this TV/KP panchayat are (MaDasāmi Tēvar, T31) :

1. MaDasāmi Tēvar (T31), Talaivar ('President');
2. LakshmaNapperumaL Tēvar (T77); 3. Muttuccāmi Tēvar (T78);
4. SaNmuka Kōnār (T15); 5. Suppaiyā PiLLai (T35);
6. SaNmuka ReDDiyār (K27); 7. Nāku ReDDiyār (K56);
8. Irāman (Paraiyar, T134); 9. KaruppāyammāL (Kōnār, T167)

There is a statutory Scheduled Caste member (No. 8) and a woman member who was not unequivocally identified. The Munsīp and KarNam are not allowed to stand for election, but No. 2 is the KP Talaiyāri (who lives in, and was elected from, TV); No. 3 is his yB .

There is a separate panchayat for VV alone, made up as follows (Savarimuttu NāDār, V83);

- 1 Savarimuttu NāDār (V83), Talaivar;
 - 2 IrājamēriyammāL (V83); 3. Innācimuttu NāDār (V91);
 4. Yākappa NāDār (V24); 5. Yēsukanī NāDār (V56);
 6. Suppā Nāyakkār (V147); 7. Muttukaruppan (PaLLar, V167)
- In this case, No. 2 is the President's W, and No. 3 his BWF .

Savarimuttu NāDār has been President of VV ever since the panchayat was first constituted in 1960, although his old F is often referred to as 'the President' out of politeness. By contrast, the TV/KP panchayat has had three Presidents. The first was Ponnu ReDDiyār (K20), who died in office. Nallaiyā Kōnār (T16) then took over, until his business in Tirucchi took him away from the village for most of the time ²². When he gave

21. According to Beck's (1972) terminology, TV and KP are thus 'hamlets'. I have not followed this usage because 'village' is used locally, and while the term is no doubt ambiguous, so is the Tamil ūr, which means anything from 'house' to 'nation', depending on context.

22. Presidents must convene and preside over meetings at least every 2 months (Saraswathi 1973:12) .

up the position, the present incumbent took over. As far as I am aware, there has been no opposing candidate in any of these 'contests' for the presidency; there was certainly none at the most recent election in 1971.

All 3 villages have another body, the kirāman kuRu or 'Village Association', set up under the auspices of T.S.S.S. . In TV this has 20 members (slightly fewer in VV and KP), of whom at least 4 must be young and at least 3 female. It is supposed to contain at least one member of each caste-group. Its functions include the suggestion and (ideally) implementation of communal programmes for the betterment of the village; it also makes proposals to T.S.S.S. for such external financial support as is required to implement these programmes, and is intended slowly to take over the executive powers in the Kovilpatti Package Programme which are currently exercised by T.S.S.S.'s own social workers ²³. At present this process has scarcely begun; the association has no real power and meets only when T.S.S.S. staff visit the village.

The most important members of the associations are the four who represent their villages at the regular parish-level meetings. For TV these are; 1. MāDasāmi Tēvar (T31), Chairman (and also Panchayat President); 2. Arakappa PiLLai (T40), Vice-Chairman (the KarNam's eB); 3. Suppaiyā Tēvar (T74), Secretary (the President's ZH); 4. Kurusāmi Kōnār (T79), Treasurer. Other members include the following (no-one knew the full list): 5. Perumālsāmi Nāyakkar (T158) (the Munsīp); 6. Kurusāmi Tēvar (T102); 7. Kurusāmi Nāyakkar (T38); 8. Irāman (Paraiyar, T134); 9. SaNmukam (Paraiyar, T138); 10. Paradēsi KavunDar (T6); 11. SaNmukasundaram PiLLai (T159); 12. Mēri (Kōnār, T84) .

As for the traditional administrative offices, the present

23 The ideology of T.S.S.S. places a higher value on modifying village attitudes than on improving living conditions by direct, external action. The various T.S.S.S. innovations are intended to become self-supporting eventually (Fr. Malayampuram) .

incumbents are as follows:

Munsīp : TV; Perumaḷsāmi Nāyakkar (T158);
 VV; Srīnivāsaperumāl Nāyakkar (KoppampaTT1);
 KP; Turairāḷ ReDDiyār (Kottu ReDDiyār, K48) .

KarNam : TV and KP; Kumārasāmiyā PiLLai (T41);
 VV; Srīnivāsaperumāl Nāyakkar (KoppampaTT1)

Talaiyārī : TV; Muttaiyā Tēvar (T76A);
 VV; Vēlccāmi MaNiyakkārār (V142);
 KP; LakshmaNapperumāl Tēvar (T77) .

Of these, the TV Munsīp is a terminological 'son' (FMZS) of the childless former incumbent, Suppa Nāyakkar (T158A), who is still alive but almost blind. Saṅkaralīṅka ReDDiyār (K55), an Ayōtti, was formerly Munsīp of KP, but when he died the office passed outside his family for reasons unknown to me, and is now held by a Kottu ReDDiyār newcomer. The KarNam of TV and KP is the second son of the previous incumbent; his elder brother went into the army instead, and has now retired back to TV (T40) . The VV Talaiyārī inherited the office from his FF . The other officials are all the eldest sons of their predecessors.

The KarNam-cum-Munsīp of VV used to live there, in the building which is now his office. He said that the two posts were not held separately because of the smallness of the village . The Talaiyārīs of TV and KP both live in TV and are distant relatives, sharing the same family deity (Kāḷasāmi in TV).

The implications of this distribution of political and administrative power will be discussed below (4.7.6 and 5.10) . For the present, the following points should be noted; firstly, it is normal throughout Tamil Nadu for the post of KarNam to be held by a member of a PiLLai sub-caste; similarly, in this area, the Talaiyārī is nearly always drawn from a Maravar sub-caste. The holding of these offices by members of the castes in question

cannot therefore be regarded as evidence for that caste exercising power as a result of any purely localised position of dominance. Moreover, as far as my own experience goes, it seems that the Munsīp is most commonly a Nāyakkar, ReDDiyār, or other past or present Telegu speaker, at least in those villages which formerly lay within Nāyakkar-controlled samīndāris. If this is indeed so, then the same reservations would apply to the office of Munsīp too

4 7.4 Economic Power

Table 4.1 contains most of the data needed, in this agricultural context, to determine the relative economic positions of the sub-castes. The only significant source of wealth not yet dealt with is trade and commerce.

The shop-keepers in the three villages are as follows:

- TV: 1 Cellaiyā PILLai (T5); 2. Muniyasāmi Tēvar (T34);
 3 ARakarsāmi Nāyakkar (T93); 4. NaDarāja PILLai (T101).
 KP: 1. Nañjaiyar (Brahman, K6); 2. Suppaiyā CeTTiyār (K7);
 3. Nāku ReDDiyār (Ayōtti, K63).
 VV: 1. AntōNimuttu NāDār (V115); 2. Taṅkaccāmi NāDār (V105);
 3 Sēsukani NāDār (V67 is the shop; he lives in V71);
 4 Mariyasavari NāDār (V60, a tea shop);
 5. Lakshmiyammāl (MaNiyakkārār; leases V129 from a NāDār and operates an iddli²⁴ shop there. She lives in V134, leased from the Munsīp.);
 6. Suppā Nāyakkar (V148 is the shop; he lives in V147) .

Most of these operate on a very small scale indeed. The largest by far is that of AntōNimuttu NāDār (V115), yB of the VV President, who stocks such items as school note-books and torch batteries, in

²⁴. A steamed rice-flour cake, eaten with chutney and vegetables.

addition to the usual erratic selection of grain, vegetables, fruit, sweets and betel. The largest shop in TV is that of Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5), and even that has a turnover of a mere Rs 50/- per day from its 80-90 customers. Of this, less than a third is in cash, the remaining sales being on a payment-in-kind or credit basis. As for all shops, Cellaiyā's trade comes from a cross-section of all castes, including Untouchables. The shops in KP are all on a very small scale indeed.

It is less easy to name those who trade in various commodities, for almost anyone may do so from time to time, given the opportunity. Among those for whom such dealings are a major source of income are several of the shop-keepers

In TV, both Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5) and Muniyasāmi Tēvar (T34) act as merchants for rice and other crops (3.6.1). Kurusāmi Kōnār (T4A) trades in charcoal, which is made on a small scale in TV and KP by burning the thorn bushes which would otherwise soon cover the entire non-cultivated area.

Iratinasāmi ReDDiyār (K50) sometimes engages in local deals involving cash crops such as chillies. Most of his business is in Tuticorin however, and he travels there daily. The shop-keeper Nāku ReDDiyār (K63) also acts as a merchant.

In VV, apart from the President's shop-keeper brothers AntōNimuttu (V115) and Sēsukanī (V71), others with obvious business interests are Yākappa NāDār (V66) and Visuvāsa NāDār (V39).

It should be emphasised that almost all those mentioned in this section are also land-owners and farmers, sometimes on a very large scale. The NāDār brothers in shops V67 and V115, for example, both own more than 30 acres of land. Moreover the customers in the shops, and the suppliers of the raw materials in which the merchants deal, are by and large the local farmers. Once again we are reminded of the prime importance of the land.

Note that with the possible exception of the NāDār in VV, no caste-group seems to exert a preponderant role in trade or commerce. The wealth accruing from such activities is therefore relevant for the individual households concerned, rather than for the caste-group as a whole.

Turning now to the central economic issue, the control of land, it is evident from Table 4.1 that only 2 castes in TV, the Maravar (TV 1) and Nāyakkar (TV 3), own or control sufficient land to be serious contenders for a position of economic preponderance. Yet the Maravar are in fact slightly below average in terms of land per household and per individual. Only the Nāyakkar combine significant total land-holdings with an above-average position in these latter respects.

In VV there is such a pronounced concentration of land in the hands of the NāDār (VV 1), that on this basis alone no other caste can possibly be dominant using any of the definitions of Srinivas, Dumont or Beck. In KP things are not quite as clear-cut: the Saiva CeTTiyār (KP 3) and Kottu ReDDiyār (KP 4) have the highest holdings per household and individual, but neither controls more than 1/6 of the total land area. The Ayōtti ReDDiyār (KP 1) control nearly 4 times as much land in all, and although the holdings of individuals and households are smaller, they are clearly the group with the greatest economic power.

4.7.5 Caste Ranking

Srinivas added a rider to his characterisation of a dominant caste, to the effect that such a caste should not be too low in the caste hierarchy (1955:18). For Dumont, this would come

about quite naturally; the de facto dominant caste of pseudo-Ksatriyas would easily come to be awarded a status commensurate with their power, so long as they "lavishly endow(ed) the Brahmans and 'toe(d) the line' " (Dumont 1972:242) .

Of the various candidates for dominant positions to have emerged above, only the NāDār would have any difficulty in satisfying Srinivas's condition (see 1.4.1) . Although not Untouchables, they were traditionally regarded as in some ways the lowest of the low. The Barber and Washermen in TV all said that they would not work for NāDār, and although the point was purely theoretical in the context of TV, it was echoed by the VaNNār in VV ²⁵. It should be added that the present status of the NāDār community is much higher than all this would imply.

For the rest, the Maravar and Nāyakkar in TV, like the ReDDiyār in KP, are generally agreed to occupy positions in the upper halves of the caste hierarchies in their respective villages (see Tables 1.3 and 1.4) .

4.7.6 Discussion

In TV, the economic data rule out all but two of the castes. Of these, the Nāyakkar come closest to dominating economically; they also provide the Kirāṁam Munsīp. On the other hand, they have no representative on the village panchayat and my impression is, speaking broadly, that they are characterised by withdrawal from village life rather than involvement in it. Households T158, T158A and T161, which together make up 33 (35%) of the

25. The latter did actually serve NāDār, but the significant point is that he felt constrained to deny this.

Nāyakkar population of TV, and which account for 247 acres (72%) of its land, are separated spatially as well as socially. It is noticeable that Nāyakkar are much less assiduous in inviting fellow villagers to their family festivals, and in attending those of other villagers, than are the other large high-caste groups. This is not the kind of behaviour expected from dominant groups or patrons.

The Maravar, as individuals, are averagely-placed economically, but their numerical strength is reflected in their having 3 representatives on the panchayat, including the President. His education to B.Sc. level had no doubt played a part in his selection, and although I heard some vague hints to the effect that certain caste-groups resented the Maravar and preferred to vote against them, the fact remains that MāDasāmi was elected unopposed. He is a pleasant, almost shy man, not at all the usual type of office holder, and although he is, as he needs to be, fairly well off (25 acres of land), he is by no means a dominating personality in everyday village life.

The Ayōtti ReDDiyār in KP come close to satisfying several of the criteria of dominance. They make up more than half the population of the village and own slightly more than their fair share of land, even though they are only third in terms of land per household and individual. Their land is, moreover, fairly evenly distributed, with 19 households having 10 or more acres, and no single family or group of families controls a disproportionate amount.

Their position is reflected politically in that they provide both KP representatives on the panchayat. Even so, they cannot

exert direct political control because they make up a minority on the TV/KP panchayat as a whole. This position is further weakened by the fact that the panchayat also includes the KP Talaiyāri and his yB, who are moreover relatives of the Maravar in KP. The KP Munsip was formerly an Ayōtti, but this office has now passed to the other ReDDiyār sub-caste.

Overall, the case of the Ayōtti ReDDiyār illustrates that economic and numerical strength need not carry over into the formal political and administrative sphere, given that the present democratic-bureaucratic structure is imposed from without. It is interesting to note though, that the posts of KarNam and Talaiyāri are held by non-residents, which perhaps indicates that KP was subservient to TV even in the past.

In VV only the NāDār come into serious contention. They are of relatively low status, however, and are Christians, which cuts them off from the ritual prestations which express intra-village relationships at temple festivals (5.8). At the Munīyasāmi festival in VV for example, it is to the Nāyakkar houses that the PaLLar deities process for the cooling ceremony, just as it is to the Turkkaiyamman Temple and not the Catholic Church that these deities go to worship when incarnated.

Even in the economic sphere, the NāDār owe their position largely to a single family, which provides 3 panchayat members, operates the 2 largest shops in any of the villages, and until recently also owned a match factory, the only local industry²⁶. Of course, caste identity counts for a good deal, the more so when, as here, each local caste-group is also a group of

26. This closed in 1976; increased taxation made it uneconomic.

close kin (6.4) . Many Nāḍār fear this family though, the more so as a result of their very closeness. It was, after all, through money-lending and its associated extortion that they acquired wealth in the first place, a circumstance which also reminds us that their eminence has been short-lived and will, some say, be transient.

The TV Nāyakkar also owe their above-average position to the holdings of a single family. In both the Nāḍār and Nāyakkar cases, the bulk of the caste-group is close to the average economically. It would therefore be simplistic to regard either group as constituting a dominant caste.

It seems that we are faced with a situation in which wealth, power and influence accrue to certain families rather than to caste-groups as a whole. To those already mentioned may be added the incoming Kottu households in KP (K48 and K50), and that of the former President Nallaiyā Kōṇār (T16), who would doubtless be even more prominent were he permanently resident in TV . The very fact that he was elected President although his caste-group fulfils none of the requirements for dominance, indicates that conventional ideas with regard to dominant castes have little relevance here.

This does not mean that I reject the notion of 'dominance' per se . Beck's work, and to a degree that of Srinivas too, show how useful such an approach can be. But it must always be a requirement that the existence of such a 'dominant caste' should be clearly demonstrable empirically. As this is not possible in the present case, we must look elsewhere for a potentially unifying analytical factor.

CHAPTER 5 : INTER-CASTE PRESTATIONS

5.1 Inter-Caste Relationships: General Introduction

It will be my contention that the social organisation of the area studied can best be understood in terms of inter-caste relationships. An analysis in terms of dominance takes this view too, of course, but in that case such relationships are regarded as being first and foremost unifocal, linking the various service castes individually with the dominant caste (Dumont and Pocock 1957a:31; Dumont 1972:149). As we have seen, this is not tenable in the present case: instead of positing a set of relationships which form a social unit because all 'radiate' from the same central, dominant group, it is more satisfactory to see the situation as a 'multinuclear' one in which most groups are linked in one way or another to most other groups, with no single relationship taking precedence. What is more, these links are not confined to a single village, but may encompass two or even all three.

It will be argued that this 'micro-region' as a whole constitutes a much more helpful unit of analysis than any one village in isolation. In order to demonstrate this we will begin by looking more closely at the types of inter-caste relationship which exist within the micro-region.

The question of inter-caste relations has been touched on in the most general way above (16), in connection with the use of 'kinship terms'. At this broad level, there is no space to do more than make some very brief comments. Like all relationships in India, those between castes are ideally links

between superior and inferior groups (Dumont 1972:95) . Indeed, relationships between equals are the problematic ones here, leading for example to factionalism in the political sphere (ibid:209) .

For present purposes, two types of relationship may be distinguished: 1) those in which the identity of one polar group is specified, while that of the other is relatively open This will be the more common situation in the discussion which follows The relationships between Priests, Barbers, Washermen and Artisans, and their respective clients, are all of this type; 2) those for which the identities of both groups are specified, as in the case of the Āsāri and PaLLar, to be dealt with below (5 5) .

We will be concerned primarily with the more specific question of the prestations exchanged by the various castes, using this word in its widest possible sense so as to cover rights, duties and obligations as well as gifts and payments Some general remarks on prestations are needed to set the subsequent discussion into proper perspective

One fundamental point is that the size of the payment made to a specialist is regulated by convention and is independent of the amount of work actually done, within the limits of what are regarded as the specialist's normal duties If however any of these experts are required to perform extra, 'special' activities, then they are recompensed for these on a piece-work basis. It is convention which determines what is 'normal' work and what 'extra' In connection with payments of all types, it is customary to add an extra measure, or in some other way give

more than the amount laid down by convention or prior agreement. This is done to ensure that there is sandōsham ('mutual satisfaction') for both parties.

5.2 The Threshing Floor

Routine payments are often made annually at harvest time, and much of what is owed is handed over on the threshing floor in the form of paddy. Some actual examples will provide a useful introduction to the local idiom.

To begin with, prestations made on the threshing floor are of two kinds. A distinction is made between that which is varattusampalam ('income', 'salary') and that which is māṇiyam ('free'), given freely out of respect ¹.

Example A : Pālasuppīramāṇiya Kōṇār (T17) makes the following payments on the threshing floor: 8 marakkāl of paddy each to the two Āsāri (Blacksmith and Carpenter) as varattusampalam, with a further 2 pakkā each as māṇiyam should they wish to collect it (usually they don't, for the extra amount is small and beneath their dignity); 2 pakkā as māṇiyam to both active pūsāri ²; the same amount to Saṇmukam (T125), the Barber, and to Candiran (T32), the Washerman who serves his house ³; 4 pakkā to the channel-controller, Vēyilmuttu (Paḷḷar, V176) (see 5.9.5).

Example B : Kurusāmi Kōṇār (T4A) gives nothing to the Āsāri, because he has no plough, cart or bullocks. He gives only 1 pakkā of paddy as māṇiyam to the Washerman Irāḷ (T107), because his house is served by Candiran. Otherwise the same as example A.

Example C : Cellaiyā Tēvar (T72) gives 4 marakkāl to each of the Āsāri as varattusampalam, plus the usual 2 pakkā māṇiyam if it is claimed. He gives 3 pakkā to the Vēlār pūsāri but none to

1. A similar distinction is reported by Benson (1977:243) for Andhra Pradesh.

2. Namely the Ōduvār and Vēlār.

3. He would have given 2 pakkā to Irāḷ if he had claimed it.

the Ōduvār; 3 pakkā to his Washerman Candiran (none to Irāj); 2 pakkā to the Barber; and 6 pakkā to the channel-controller.

Example D : The brothers Muttuccāmi (T78) and SaNmuka Tēvar (T94) both make the following prestations; 4 marakkāl + 2 pakkā to both Blacksmith and Carpenter; 2 pakkā to each pūsāri and to Candiran; 1 pakkā to Irāj (who serves neither house) and the Barber; 4 pakkā to the channel-controller.

Example E : Kurusāmi Nāyakkar (T38) follows the same scheme, except that he gives 2 pakkā to both Washermen, and either 1 or 2 to the Barber. As for the channel-controller, Kurusāmi specified that the rate was 2 pakkā per acre of wet land.

These examples show differences in detail, but the general pattern of the payments is clear. The Āsāri receive both their varattusampalam and their māniyam payments at this time, while for most of the others the payments are regarded as māniyam, the varattusampalam being given separately, as described in (5.9).

5 3 Gifts and Obligations

'Extra' work, falling outside the scope of conventional, routine obligations, is paid for separately. If a farmer wants a new cart or plough, for example, he pays the Āsāri for this. An extra pūja can be arranged in any of the temples, in which case the sponsor provides the items used in worship and also recompenses the Priest. Work at weddings and other life-crisis rituals is also specifically rewarded.

These situations introduce another, more general distinction, which parallels, and in fact encompasses, that between varattusampalam - that which is "for labour" as one Nāyakkar informant put it in English - and that which is given freely. It emerges that at weddings, funerals and puberty rites, the payments made

to Brahman, Barber, Washerman, etc., are divided into two parts, sampalam or 'salary', and sashtiram. Sashtiram literally means 'art', 'science' or 'specialised religious knowledge' (JPF:375), and as I interpret its use here, it conveys the idea of payment, not for the actual work which the recipient has carried out and which has been rewarded by the giving of the sampalam, but in recognition of the inherited caste characteristics and specialised knowledge by virtue of which he became able to perform this function⁴.

Varattusampalam and maniyam are thus special cases falling within the general categories of sampalam and sashtiram respectively. The latter concept is particularly pervasive and extends to cover those prestations made to or by certain relatives at weddings and other occasions. It is even used for non-material prestations such as the obligation upon certain relatives to attend these events and perform their specific ritual function. Our neighbours' son Ravi (T1), for example, took the 'bridegroom' role at his FZD's puberty ceremony (8.2): he is only a baby, but it was his sashtiram, his duty, to fulfil this obligation (Saṅkarapāṇḍi Kōṇār, T1). To return to an earlier example, it is the sashtiram (= 'obligation') of the farmer to give the maniyam gifts on the threshing floor, and it is the sashtiram (= 'right') of the specialist to claim them. It is for this reason that the maniyam gift itself comes to be spoken of as 'sashtiram'.

Clearly, the fulfilling of an obligation by the person best

⁴ As David (1977c:182-3) reports: "caste occupations... relate directly to the caste's shared natural substance (and the) propensity to perform them is held to be substantively transmitted from parents to children."

qualified to do so, and the reward which he receives for so doing, are both covered by the concept of sāshtiram. In the most general case, it is the sāshtiram of the MB, FZ, etc., as the case may be, to carry out the ritual duties for which they are uniquely qualified. Conversely, the sāshtiram of the recipient - the ZC, BC, etc. - is to make the appropriate prestations in return, if any ⁵. We might describe such obligations as exemplifying sāshtiram in its 'pure' form.

Similarly, it is the duty (sāshtiram) of the village specialists to attend the life-crisis rites of their 'clienteles' and perform their allotted duties. These are often of a material kind and related to their normal occupations: to that extent there is apparently no need to make a special sampalam payment because the sampalam given annually covers this. Nevertheless, special non-routine obligations are involved for the specialist, who might also be said to be reaffirming, in this ritual context, his continuing relationship with the client household: this is recognised by the giving of a sāshtiram prestation. Here we see sampalam impinging, to a degree, upon the sāshtiram payment: the latter thus takes a slightly 'diluted' form.

Fully-fledged village servants therefore receive no extra sampalam on the occasions of life-crisis rites (or temple festivals). By contrast, those who are not enmeshed within this particular local community, but who are nonetheless specialists in some

⁵ Obligations of this type are not necessarily reciprocated directly: the ZS is MB to another individual, and will one day be required to make the same prestation to his own ZC. The situation is structurally akin to 'indirect marital exchange'.

aspect of the ritual, receive both sampalam and sashtiram as their reward. This is true for a Brahman Priest officiating at a wedding, and we will see (5.4) that although the payments are no longer separable temporally they are nonetheless clearly distinguished conceptually.

It should by now be abundantly clear that in the above cases, and indeed in the case of payment in general ⁶, it is impossible to avoid the conflation of 'economics' and 'ritual' behaviour. Those service groups whose specialities would be seen as substantively 'economic' are rewarded in a very similar way to those whose activities would conventionally be described as 'religious'. Moreover, in this system of rewards there is both an 'economic' and a 'ritual' component, the sampalam and sashtiram respectively, and as we shall see, both are present in the payments made, whether the recipient be the village Carpenter or a Brahman Priest at a wedding. More generally, I am in agreement with Khare (1977:107) when he says that:

"... if we regard 'economic', 'political', 'ritual', etc, as specific attributes of social relations (rather than as separate classes of social relations) we are on a more realistic ground to examine them."

There are two ways of undertaking the study of these various prestations. We will begin by considering the life-crises and festivals themselves, describing for each the rights and obligations of the various specialists. Having thus gained an overall picture, we can deal with these specialists one-by-one,

6. Even payments to permanent agricultural labourers are to some degree ritualised, as witness the need to ensure sandosham (5.1) .

describing their roles in everyday life and reiterating the salient features of their ritual responsibilities. This twin perspective will make it clear that we are dealing with relationships between 'clienteles' - of various sizes - on the one hand, and individual experts on the other. Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which the spheres of activity of the various experts extend beyond, or fall within, the boundaries of the individual villages.

In this chapter the analysis will deal primarily with the 'service castes', including the Priests and Artisans. The discussion of the concepts involved in prestations has taken us well beyond these limits, however. In my view the MB (say) can be looked upon as an 'expert' in much the same way as the Barber, although his 'clientele' is ego-centred rather than corporate, and although his responsibilities lie within, not across, caste boundaries. With this general context in mind, we now turn to the discussion of particular ritual occasions.

5 4 Wedding Prestations

In this and succeeding sections of the present chapter, we will be concerned only with prestations as they involve the various specialist groups. This concentration upon a single aspect of ritual is purely for ease of presentation, and marriage will be dealt with as a 'total social fact' in Chapter 9 .

All the village specialists have definite roles to play in marriage ritual. We shall discuss these first of all, before turning to the question of their remuneration. The information comes mainly from Mēkalihka Kōnār (T1) and Suppaiyā Kōnār (T120) .

The Kollan Āsāri (TV 8, Blacksmith) must provide the newly-wedded couple with an arukamaNī ('to-make-small blunt-knife', JPF:31, 770), which consists of a blade attached to a board. It is held between the feet and used for chopping vegetables: these are pushed against the blade, away from the user, to be sliced.

The Taccan Āsāri (TV 6, Carpenter) gives an akappai and a paruppu kaDai palakai. The former implement is a ladle with a wooden handle and a bowl made from half a coconut shell. The latter ('peas mashing board', JPF:670, 182, 672) comprises a wooden board and a mashing tool consisting of a hemisphere of wood with a handle. It is used for crushing lentils.

The Barber has no special duties apart from shaving the groom. The VaNNār must provide a cloth to cover the marriage platform, and others to make a roof for it. He may also have to provide a white vēSTi⁷ to lie between the paddy and the rice, under the large brass water-pot on the platform. This last is probably only needed if a Brahman Priest is to officiate. The VaNNār must have washed the cloths before the ceremony, and he reclaims them afterwards.

The Ōduvār (TV 5e), as pūsāri of the PiLLaiyār Kōvil, is usually required to take the tāli (wedding necklace) to that temple, on a tray which also contains auspicious items such as coconut, turmeric, poTTu and sandalwood, as well as the bride's wedding sēlai (sari). PiLLaiyār is always worshipped at the start of an auspicious event.

If a Brahman Priest is present, he has the responsibility of conducting the marriage ceremony (kalyāNam) itself. In the absence of a Brahman, this duty devolves upon a female relative of the groom (9.10): she will be involved in any case⁸.

7. The vēSTi is the local, sarong-like male garment.

8. These remarks apply to TV. I attended no weddings in VV and there were none in KP during my stay. I am fairly certain that weddings in KP follow a similar pattern, and even involve some of the same individual specialists. For VV, I have some data from an interview with the Parish Priest.

The weddings of wealthier families involve a preliminary ceremony known as mukūrttakāl ūnrutal (9.8), at which all the above officiants, except for the Brahman Priest, who is necessarily a non-resident of the village, should be present. It is also customary for the Munṣīp and KarNam to attend.

All the marriage ceremonial takes place at the groom's house, so that if the marriage is an inter-village union the above duties fall only upon the specialists and officials of his village.

Turning now to the question of the remuneration of the specialists, this can best be illustrated by studying a particular example in some detail. The wedding in question is that of Iramacandiran Nāyakkar (T161) and Māriyammāl (T36), which took place in TV on 7 July 1977. The marriage is also discussed in (9.7.1, example C) and the account is supplemented by general, theoretical data from my two Kōṇār informants.

A Brahman Priest named TevuDu Aiyar came from ETTaiyāpuram to officiate. He received Rs 8/- as sampalam, and his sāshtiram was made up of: 9 tēṅkāy (coconuts), 2 paḍi (= 2 small paḱkā) of paccarisi (husked rice), 2 paḍi of nel (paddy), some uncooked vegetables, and Rs 1/25.

The Kōṇār gave a slightly different theoretical list: tēṅkāy, verrilai (betel), sūḍam (camphor), paccarisi, puRuṅkarisi (parboiled rice), sāmpirāṇi (incense), and the following vegetables: kattarikkāy or brinjal (aubergines), vāRaikkāy (green plantains), sēṇaikkiRaṅku (yams), and avaraikkāy (sabra-beans)⁹. The Brahman should also be given a vēSTi: my Nāyakkar informants did not mention this, but I think they had simply forgotten, for I saw the Brahman wrap his rice and paddy in a vēSTi to carry it

9. Brahmans should not eat onions, or 'foreign' vegetables like potatoes and carrots (Subramaniam 1974:138). Hence only 'traditional' ones are given. The giving of raw food is in keeping with the requirements of purity (Dumont 1972:124).

away. This garment is called either kōDi vēSTi ('new vēSTi') or kumpa vashtiram ('water-pot garment'); the latter name presumably derives from the vēSTi spread below the brass pot (see above) . The cash given to the Brahman as part of his sāshtiram is called the teccaNai ('a present to a guru', JPF:477) .

The VēLār and Ōduvār pūsāris each received a coconut and 1 paDi of paddy as their sāshtiram, even though only the latter had carried out any actual duties. The theoretical list also includes eNNeY (vegetable oil), betel and incense.

The two Āsāri each received 1 paDi of paccarisi, a coconut, etc . Most material prestations, of whatever kind and in almost every context, are accompanied by such items as coconut, betel, holy ash, etc.

The VaNNār, in this case Candiran, received 6 paDi of Kampu, 1 coconut, and a bunch of vāRaikkāy (unripe plantains) . My Kōnār informants said that they would give 1 paDi of rice and a Rs 1/- teccaNai . Finally, SaNmukam the Barber received a vēSTi: the Kōnār would also have given 1 coconut, 1 paDi of rice, betel, and a teccaNai gift

For all recipients other than the Brahman, these payments are regarded in their entirety as sāshtiram. The specialists have fulfilled their own sāshtiram obligations by carrying out the duties specified above, and are rewarded in accordance with the sāshtiram of the family involved in the life-crisis. On the other hand, while it is in a sense the sāshtiram of the Brahman to officiate at weddings, and while this aspect of the matter is recognised in the prestations which he receives, he is not a member of the local community and is therefore performing work outwith his routine obligations. He therefore receives a sampalam payment "for labour" .

This is somewhat irregular, in that prestations made to a Brahman are nominally gifts; payment should not be made for services rendered (Subramaniam 1974:87) . Doubtless the Brahman

would prefer to view the sampalam rather differently from my informants. Cash payments made to a Brahman should ideally be fractions of the Raja Krichram, the amount given by a king (ibid). This is Rs 12/50, and it is interesting to note that the teccaNai gift in the above example was exactly 1/10 of this

It is possible to give only a general description of the prestations involved in a Christian NāDār wedding. There is usually a service in the church, the cost of which is Rs 23/- for ordinary Mass (Pali) or 25/- for High Mass (PaDanpali). In addition to this fee to the parish, the Priest himself receives rice and fruits known as santippu ('presents sent to a great personage', JPF:340). He is also sent some dinner from the house

Other payments are made in cash. There is no village Carpenter or Blacksmith, so the question of their payment does not arise. The one VaNNār in VV claims not to work for NāDār, but in fact does so, and is paid in cash at weddings. The same is true for whichever Barber serves the household in question (5.9.1) (Fr. Njanappirākasaṃ, VI) .

There is one more inter-caste prestation to be considered in the case of a wedding; it is more general but no less important. All villagers, and sometimes those from adjacent villages (especially in the case of TV and KP), are invited to attend the wedding. After the ceremony, they are summoned again, in small groups independently of caste, to eat the wedding feast. After eating, each household head makes a cash contribution to the expenses, which is recorded in a moy, or 'list' (5.5.1) . The amount given is governed by the need for (delayed) reciprocity between the families of recipient and donor. The latter will have his own list, and so will know how much was given last time the roles were reversed. Certain people are obliged to make large

contributions, but as they are specific relatives of the feast-giving family their prestations are more appropriately considered in (9.7.1) . The inter-caste prestations are important in toto even though they are small individually. The hosts can expect to recoup anything from Rs 500/- to 1,000/- in this way, thereby accounting for between a quarter and a half of the total wedding expenses in a typical case. When each donation is handed over, the donor is given betel in return.

The Barber and Washerman do not eat at the house, but are given cooked food to take home - except by the Āsārī, who give only the raw materials. The Paraiyar (in the case of TV) and the Cakkiliyar (in all 3 villages) are fed outside the house at the end, if they come. Usually only a few Cakkiliyar turn up, but nonetheless it is clear that in principle the entire local community receives food. In the opposite situation, the higher castes do not of course attend or eat at an Untouchable wedding, nor do the above service castes and Untouchables contribute to the moy of the higher castes.

5.5 Funerary Prestations

As will be seen in Chapter 11, funerary ritual may be divided into 3 parts. There is (a) the funeral itself, involving the cremation or burial of the deceased; (b) a rite in the cemetery next day; and (c) a subsequent purificatory rite known as Karumāti. For present purposes, we will be concerned largely with the first and last of these stages

5.5.1 Prestations at the Funeral

The central role in funerary ritual is played by the Barber,

Hocart's 'impure priest' (1968:11) . He officiates at the ceremonies much as the Brahman does at a wedding, and while a full account of his duties must be postponed for Chapter 11, a cursory discussion of some of them must be given here

Briefly, the Barber directs the relatives in the performance of their duties, constructs or assists in constructing the bier, bathes and dresses the corpse, shaving it if it is that of a man, constructs the funeral pyre, shaves the chief mourner(s) head(s) at the cemetery, remains by the pyre overnight and performs the cooling ceremony on the following day.

For Hindus, deaths generate impurity, and the ceremonies do not involve a visit to a temple, for which one must be pure. For this reason, Hindu pūsāris take no part in funerals, although they are usually present. The Nāḍār, on the other hand, do visit the Catholic Church on the way to the cemetery, although the Barber officiates thereafter (11.6) .

The other important role in a Hindu funeral is that of the Washerman: he must provide the coloured cloths used on the bier, and a sari which is used as a screen while the Barber is preparing the corpse. If, as is usual, a roofed shed or pandal is erected outside the bereaved household, then the cloths for its ceiling are also provided by the Washerman. At the cemetery he reclaims the cloths from the bier.

The Washerman's role is effectively subsidiary to that of the Barber, and in the case of the Scheduled Castes both sets of duties may be performed by the same individual (5.9.2) .

Both Barber and Washerman are referred to as kuḍimakan, 'son of the village'. The TV Barber SaNmukam, a knowledgeable ritual specialist, said that he was "like a son" to the villagers whom

he served, because he performed all the duties of a son when one of them died. This point will be taken up in (5.9.1) .

Another functionary involved in the funeral proper is the veTTiyan, who fetches the wood and other materials for the funeral pyre, or digs the grave in the case of a burial. In practice several people perform these tasks, which are the responsibility of the Paraiyar for most of the castes in TV and KP . The Paraiyar also make and carry the bier at VāNiya CeTTiyār (TV 7) funerals (Mēkalikka Kōnār, T1), a relationship of the second type (5.1) . Another such involves the Āsārī (TV 6, 8 & 13), for whom the PaLLar (VV 2) make and carry the bier, act as veTTiyan and perform other ritual duties (11.2, example A) . There is a widespread close relationship between these castes, and mythical justification for a 'father-son' link between them (Thurston 1909:V, 476); this would explain the funerary role of the PaLLar.

The Cakkiliyar (VV 4) sometimes act as veTTiyan; they always do so for the PaLLar. Moreover, several Cakkiliyar stay in the cemetery overnight after higher-caste funerals, in company with the Barber (Mēkalikka Kōnār, T1) . Only those few members of the castes concerned who actually carry out these duties are recompensed, but the obligation falls on the group as a whole.

The Christian NāDār also have a veTTiyan; he is KaNapati, a Paraiyar who lives in the midst of the NāDār quarter (V80) - a rather odd state of affairs, as the Parish Priest remarked. He digs NāDār graves, but serves none of the Hindu groups. He is himself a Hindu though, and plays no other part in NāDār activity.

There is traditionally a messenger or tōTTi, who goes to inform those relatives of the deceased who live in other villages. TV no longer has a tōTTi, but the PaLLar in VV use Cakkiliyar for this purpose (example D below) .

Finally, there are usually Musicians present for the actual funeral. They arrive as soon as possible after the death and play

most of the time from then until the procession reaches the cemetery (funerals are held in the afternoon, within 24 hours of the death) . The PuLavar (KP 5) are traditionally Drummers, but this particular task is too low in status for them. They do drum in the cemetery itself, but only for the KavunDar in TV, and for the RedDIyār (and Saiva CeTTiyār ?) in KP .

Instead, the usual Musicians are Untouchables, and do not enter the clean-caste cemetery. In this area the Musicians are nearly always Cakkiliyar, but the VV caste-group do not play instruments and so the orchestra has to be recruited from elsewhere . There are usually 5-6 instrumentalists on these occasions, 4 drummers and 1-2 nākaSvaram players ¹⁰.

I was told that there was no permanent connection between a village and a particular group of Musicians. Nevertheless, almost every event in TV is attended by the same group, who come from Sīkampatti ¹¹. Similar events in KP are accompanied by a band from Kuttal ŪraNi in Vilathikulam Taluk ¹². The PaLLar and NāDār in VV both have their own particular Musicians.

The above gives a general idea of the prestations made by the various specialist caste-groups to the bereaved family. In addition, the village as a whole (apart from the Untouchables and kuDimakan) contributes to the funeral expenses at the rate of 50 paise (8 aNā, or 'annas', in traditional coinage) per household.

10 The nākaSvaram is a clarinet-like reed instrument

11 Also known as OttarasupaTTi; neither name is to be found in the 1971 Census (Govt. of India 1972a: passim) .

12. Some of these Musicians gave a Kōṇār-sponsored concert in TV in February 1977, to celebrate the completion of the harvest.

Wealthy bereaved households may waive this, while in the case of a small-scale funeral with no Musicians it may be reduced. The name of each donor is recorded by the KarNam or an assistant, and the giving is usually done outside the bereaved household prior to the ceremony.

All the specialists are recompensed in cash, at the edge of the cemetery. Every available adult male in the village will have accompanied the bier thus far, and will wait by the entrance until the rituals have been completed. When all is ready the KarNam spreads a white cloth on the ground in front of him, on which all the available money is placed. The men of the village seat themselves around him to witness the distribution of the cash.

The KarNam draws up a list of those who are to be paid; like the list of donors already mentioned, this is known as a moy ('list', 'money-presents', see Dumont 1957b:231-2). He then enters the amount of the payment against each name, being guided by the elders of the bereaved caste as to what is customary in each case. The specialists are called forward in order; some who have no special role on this occasion, such as the pūsāris, may be absent, in which case they will usually be paid later on. The KarNam hands or throws the money, using his left hand, to the Barber, who takes it in his right hand and then passes it on to the correct recipient using his left. The employment of the left hand signifies the inauspicious nature of the occasion, and it would normally be grossly impolite to give or receive any object in this way.

Like most prestations, these cash payments are thus given publicly and recorded at the moment of giving, so that they are effectively witnessed by a large proportion of the community In

the present case, at least part of the money handed out will also have come from that community. This communal assumption of a significant share of the financial burden is characteristic of life-crisis rites, just as it is of temple festivals. We now turn to some detailed examples of the cash prestations made in connection with actual funerals:

Example A : Kollan Āsāri At the funeral of Aiyān Āsāri (T45, see also 11.2, example A; 11.4, example C), the payments made were: Rs 0/50 to the Blacksmith, Carpenter, and the VēLār and Ōduvār pūsāris; Rs 4/- each to the Barber (SaNmukam) and VaNNār (shared by Candiran and Irāj); Rs 10/- to the PaLLār veTTiyan, who also received the coins given when the deceased was 'fed' with rice; Rs 32/- to the Musicians from SīkampaTTi; Rs 0/50 to "Tirumalai", received by the Ōduvār (see below). The total amount paid out was Rs 52/50, and there was no moy collection.

Example B : Saiva VēLLāLar PiLLai At the funeral of KalyāNiyammāL (T69, see also 5.5.2, example A; 11.4, example A) there was a levy of 50 paise per household which realised Rs 58/50; all 'clean' caste households with male heads had therefore given. The payments made were: 50 paise to the VēLār pūsāri, followed by another 60 paise; Rs 1/50 followed by 1/- to the VaNNār (Irāj); Rs 1/50, a further 1/-, and a final 0/50 to the Barber (SaNmukam, assisted by his ZS/DH, Irāmasuppu from KP); 0/30 to Tirumalai; Rs 4/- plus 0/50 to the Paraiyar veTTiyan, who were described in the KarNam's list as kaDDai kempu ('log cutters?'). There were no Musicians, and the total amount given out came to Rs 11/40. The second series of payments was given out once it was clear that there would be enough to go round; all the payments fell into the category of sāstiram, but by giving them in two parts it was made more likely that sandōsham (satisfaction) would be achieved.

Example C : Ayōtti ReDDiyār The payments made at the funeral of Saṅkaraliṅka ReDDiyār (K36, see also 11.2, example B) were as follows: (the terms in inverted commas are those used by the KarNam in drawing up his moy) 'Cidamparam' (a PuLavar, K15), 0/25; the

'VaNNār', Candiran from TV, Rs 2/-; the Musicians, from SīkampaTTi, Rs 40/-; the Paraiyar veTTiyan (from TV), Rs 6/25; the 'PāNDitar', Irāmasuppu (K65, who was instructed throughout by his WF SaNmukam from TV), Rs 2/-; the 'Vināyakar Pūsāri', i.e. the Ōduvār, who is Priest of the PiLLaiyār (Vināyakar) Temple in KP, 0/25; the 'VēLār pūsāri', included in the list but not present, nothing; 'Tirumalai', 0/25; the 'Taccan' Āsāri and the 'pakaDai' (Cakkiliyar, cf. Thurston 1909:II, 7), neither of whom were present, nothing; 'Sinnakurusāmi' (K14), the PuLavar who played the drum at the cemetery, Rs 1/- .

In drawing up the moy, the KarNam left space for further payments to the Barber and Washerman, and after the above distribution was complete, SaNmukam was given 0/50 and promised another 1/50 "tomorrow". Candiran had been assisted by his tampi (terminological yB), Vēlu (K19), and Rs 1/55 was given partly to the latter and partly to such children of the two men as happened to be present ¹³. A few coins were given to an itinerant beggar. The total amount given out was Rs 56/- . There is no general collection in the case of KP .

Example D : PaLLar At the burial of Kanniyammāl (V164, see 11.2, example C; 11.4, example D), the moy was drawn up by Vēyilmuttu (V176), the channel-controller, who is also pūsāri of the Muniyasāmi Temple. The amounts given were : to the Musicians, PaLLar of the same sub-caste from IlavanpaTTi, Rs 32/- ; to the Barber-cum-Washerman (Sīni, a TīNDā VaNNār from SottaranpaTTi who always serves this community and whose W and B also took part), Rs 6/- plus a further 1/-; to Sīni's B, Rs 1/-; to the Cakkiliyar messenger (tōTTi) and grave-digger (veTTiyan), Rs 5/-, raised to 6/- after discussion, the Cakkiliyar adopting an inferior, pleading posture; to another Cakkiliyar, 0/25; to 2 small Cakkiliyar boys, 0/05 each; a few coins were given to an itinerant beggar. The total amount given was approximately Rs 46/50 .

Example E : Maravar Sokkaliṅka Tēvar (T91) was very old, and childless, and his funeral was conducted with a levity which reflected his social 'unimportance'. It was agreed that the contribution of

13. Only the children of Barbers and Washermen are allowed to come to the cemetery, presumably so that they may learn their profession. All other children are forcibly ejected from the procession.

each household should be reduced from 8 annas to 4 . There were no Musicians, and a total amount of Rs 10/50 was distributed to the following (I do not have details of the individual amounts): the Barber (SaNmukam); the Washerman (Candiran); the Paraiyar veTTiyan; the two Āsāri; the VēLār and Ōduvār pūsāris; and the Talaiyāris of TV and KP . Both the last-named are of the same sub-caste as the deceased, and it may be significant that this payment was not made at any of the other, non-Maravar funerals I attended

It is possible to discern a general pattern despite the differences in detail . The largest single payment goes to the Musicians if any are present: it is given to them as a group and is unaffected by the size of the band. As in the case of the veTTiyan, and to a lesser degree the Barber and Washerman, a certain amount of haggling takes place. A certain sum is given, the leader of the Musicians receives it but remains standing to describe the expenses of the mid-day meal, the cost of the journey, and so on. Finally he is given a little more, and sandōsham has been achieved. Many of the payments involve 2 installments in this way.

Next in order of size comes the payment to the veTTiyan. Again there are usually several recipients, but a single amount is handed over to their representative. Then come the payments to the Barber and Washerman (the kuDīmakān), who receive approximately equal amounts.

The various Āsāri and Priests normally receive equal, small amounts. None of these specialists has any role to play at the funeral, and it may be that, being customary payments which are not even tinged with the aura of a sampalan, these sums have been unaffected by inflation over the years. In any event, they are

purely nominal nowadays. In the case of the Nāḍār, a fee of Rs 12/- is levied to cover the Mass in the church, but this goes to the parish, not to the Priest himself (Fr. N̄janappirākasam, V1) .

There remains the payment to "Tirumalai", which is made to the Ōduvār pūsari in both TV and KP . The word tiru is a prefix meaning 'sacred, holy, beauty, wealth' and, metonymically, Lakshmi the goddess of fortune (JPF:523), while malai means simply 'hill' or 'mountain' (ibid:780) . Tirumalai is the name of a holy mountain near Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh, and is also the name of the mythical mountain which is the abode of Siva (Visvanatha Pillai 1972:419) . Finally, 'Tirumala Nayak' (i.e , Tirumalai Nāyakkar) was the greatest member of the Nāyakkar dynasty which ruled Madurai in the 16th and 17th centuries (Rajayyan 1974b:24) . Which, if any, of these meanings is intended in the present context is not clear, nor could informants offer any explanation. The Ōduvār is of course the Priest of Pīllaiyār, Siva's son.

Most of these officiants do not serve the Scheduled Castes, and so things are rather different in example D . This case demonstrates the inferiority of the Cakkiliyar, who serve the PaLLar as messengers and grave-diggers.

The most general prestation of all, namely the attendance and financial contributions of the rest of the male population, goes unrewarded at the time, but will of course be reciprocated when the occasion arises. Women villagers cannot go to the cemetery, and their prestation consists of a semi-formal visit to the bereaved house (made even by clean castes to Paraiyar families in TV, though not vice versa), and participation in the lamentations which continue until the body leaves the village.

5.5.2 Prestations at the Karumāti Rite

The funeral itself is only half the story, and we must now consider the purificatory Karumāti ritual which usually takes place 16 days later. A number of prestations are made by relatives on this occasion (11.4), but those of present relevance involve the Barber and, if one is called, the Brahman Priest who officiates. In the absence of a Brahman the Barber directs the ritual, otherwise he has a supporting role as well as shaving the mourners. Some actual examples will illustrate the situation.

Example A : Saiva VeLLālar PiLLai The karumāti for KalyāNiyammāl (T69, see 5.5.1, example B; 11.4, example A) was presided over by a Brahman named Irāmasāmi Aiyar from Kothali in Ottapidaram Taluk. According to Vēdam PiLLai (T69, the BDH of the deceased), the Brahman was given Rs 5/-¹⁴, plus a coconut, plantains, ilai (betel) and 1 paDi of rice. He should also have received the vēSTi used in the ritual, which was referred to during the ceremony as the "Aiyar vēSTi". Cooked food was prepared at the site of the ritual, and all that remained after the ceremony was the perquisite of the Barber.

Example B : Kollan Āsāri At the karumāti for Aiyan Āsāri (T45, see 5.5.1, example A; 11.2 example A; 11.4, example C) there was no Brahman Priest, and the ceremony was conducted entirely by SaNmukam (T125), the Barber. The son of the deceased, Vēlccāmi, said that SaNmukam received half the cooked food, comprising the equivalent of $\frac{1}{2}$ pakkā of rice, some pulses and vegetables. After the party had returned to the house, they also gave SaNmukam 1 pakkā of uncooked rice and vegetables.

SaNmukam (T125) discussed with me the differences between the Karumāti ceremonies of the different castes. He said that, taking both parts of the funerary ritual together, the VāNiya CeTTiyār (TV 7) paid him Rs 12/-, while all other castes gave Rs 4-5/- (or its equivalent). All groups gave him cooked food

¹⁴ This was sampalam.

too, except for the Āsāri and the VāNiya CeTTiyār, who gave rice - $1\frac{1}{2}$ pakka at the funeral and $1\frac{1}{2}$ at the Karumāti.

I did not actually witness the ritual in the case of example B, and so cannot resolve the contradiction between the accounts of Vēlccāmi and SaNmukam with regard to cooked food. I would tend to believe SaNmukam with regard to the general state of affairs, as he is naturally well-informed on such matters, and as, moreover, a similar pattern is discernible in the routine prestations made to the Barber, where again the Āsāri do not give cooked food (5 9.1) . On the other hand, it is possible that the theoretical rule was not exactly followed in this particular case.

5.6 Prestations at Female Puberty Rites

The ritual carried out when a girl menstruates for the first time is known in common speech as saDaṅku ('religious ceremony, with special reference to menstruation', JPF:331) . The similarities between this rite and that of marriage (kalyāNam) extend to the sphere of inter-caste prestations, as we shall see.

First of all, there will often be a Brahman Priest as the main officiant at the principal ceremony. If not, a married female relation will take charge. There will be a procession to the Amman or PiLLaiyār Temples, so that the Ōduvār is involved in both TV and KP (I have no data for VV). During the prior seclusion period of 16 days, beginning with the onset of menstruation in the girl, the Washerman is required to visit every 3 days, to take away her clothes for washing (Candiran, T32) . The following detailed examples indicate how these various specialists are rewarded.

Example A : Maravar At the saḍaṅku for Saṇmukattāy (T28, see 8.2, example C), a Brahman Priest officiated. He received Rs 5/- as sampaḷam, and his sāshtiram consisted of 4 coconuts, 1 paḍi each of paddy and rice, and Rs 1/- . The Washerman (Candiran) received Rs 25/- in all: this was made up of Rs 10/- as cash payment for his duties, plus 15/- in lieu of the vēSTi with which he should normally be presented. The pūsāris were given 1 small pakka of paddy, 1 coconut, 1 plantain, camphor, incense and betel. This is given for each temple, so the Ōḍuvār received these items twice over, for the Amman and Piḷḷaiyār Kōvils, while the Vēḷār received one set, in respect of the Aiyanār Kōvil. The KavunḌar pūsāri would also have received this prestation were he more active. It was emphasised that these prestations were not in return for any pūja on the day of the saḍaṅku, but were given to the pūsāris because of the offices which they hold: in other words, they were sāshtiram (Karuppasāmi Tēvar, T28) .

Example B : Vēḷār The saḍaṅku for Karuppāy (T110, but usually resident in Tuticorin) involved a Brahman Priest and a group of Paraiyar Musicians from Tuticorin (8.2, example B) . The Musicians received Rs 30/- in cash. The Brahman, who was from Pasuvandanai, received Rs 5/- as his sampaḷam: his sāshtiram consisted of 2 paḍi each of paddy and rice, a coconut, and the usual betel, etc. He was also given his bus-fare. The Vaṇṇār had come every 4 days during the girl's 16-day seclusion, and had been given Rs 10/-: no vēSTi had been given, nor had he acquired the clothing worn by the girl while impure. The seclusion had taken place in Tuticorin, so Candiran had not been involved: he said that he would have been given foodstuffs, not money. The Ōḍuvār pūsāri was rewarded as in example A (Kurusāmi Vēḷār, T110; Aruṇācalam Vēḷār, T113) .

Example C : Maravar The saḍaṅku of Muttulakshmi (T63, see 8.2, example A) was a much smaller affair. There were no Musicians and no Brahman. At the onset of menstruation, the girl was given special clothes to wear, which were changed and washed by Candiran every 2 days. On the day of the ceremony, the latter was given Rs 1/-, the girl's sari, some vegetable oil and jaggery.

The temple was not visited during the ceremony, but I do not know whether any sāsthiram gifts were made to the pūsāris (SaNmukaccāmi Tēvar, T63) .

At the more general level, the prestations involving the community as a whole are identical in form to those at a wedding, though slightly smaller in scale. One is invited, one attends, eats, and gives money which is recorded in a moy. Betel is given in return. The expense incurred by a saDaṅku is less than in the case of a wedding, and the moy gifts are typically smaller too (averaging Rs 3/- rather than 5/-) .

5 7 Prestations at Birth

There is little to be said about birth in the present context. Deliveries are often performed by older female relatives, but if some difficulty is experienced or expected the Barber's wife may be called in. In TV, SaNmukam's wife Lakshmiyammāl (T125) does this work if summoned. She receives either Rs 5/- or a sari. The Kirāṁam Munsīp records the birth free of charge, though whether this is a traditional duty or a bureaucratic innovation I am not sure.

When the child is one month old, it is taken to the Amman Kōvil at some auspicious time. The mother provides the materials for a pūja and the prestation to the pūsāri. On returning home, she announces the child's name for the first time (7.4) .

5 8 Prestations at Temple Festivals

Temple festivals (poṅkals) are unfortunately too complex and elaborate for a full discussion to be possible in this work. The prestational aspect is important in the present context,

however, and so it will be dealt with very briefly. Such festivals may be classified into 3 broad types, according to the constitution of the congregation of worshippers. These types are:

1) The festivals of 'village deities' ¹⁵, especially the Ammān, which involve the local community as a whole:

2) The festivals of 'family deities' or kuladeyvam, which involve patrilineal 'clans' drawn usually, but not always, from a single caste:

3) Festivals of less localised deities, which contain elements of the two previous types. I am thinking in particular of the festival in the TV Aiyānār Kōvil, which involves the entire local community, though as individuals rather than as a unit, but which is also a kuladeyvam festival for people from other areas.

In each case, the cost of the festival is borne largely by the worshippers: in the first two types this is achieved by means of a levy (vari, 'tax') on the village or clan concerned, while the third type is financed by an auction (ēlam) involving the local community, who bid against each other as individuals. In any case, it is clear that the major prestation is provided by the congregation itself.

It should be added, though, that all festivals of the first two types involve a procession around the village, during which every household is visited by the incarnated gods (the sāmis), who present the householder with holy ash and perhaps act as oracles. In the case of a type 1) festival, the householder will already have contributed his vari, and so makes no return.

15. This term is imprecise but in general use: it is employed here for the sake of brevity (see Dumont 1959a:78; 1970:23).

prestation at this time. In the case of a kuladeyvam festival, on the other hand, all householders not belonging to the clans concerned are required to hand money or a measure of paddy over to the sāmi's assistants before receiving the ash. Clearly, locality still plays a part even though the festival is ostensibly the concern only of particular descent groups. The latter provide the bulk of the finance but not the whole of it, and inter-caste prestations of a very general kind are involved even in an intra-caste festival

As usual, there are also more specialised prestations. The Washerman provides cloths for roofing any pandal built at the temple. He also makes cloth-and-oil torches (tīvaTTi) which are used in the procession. At festivals of types 1) and 2) the Talaiyāri kills the sacrificial goat-kid (tullukuTTi) and impales the rooster(s) (kaRuseval, locally kaRusaval) in front of the temple, on a spike which is made by the Carpenter, and which is sometimes fitted with a metal chain by the Blacksmith. At type 1) festivals, the KarNam and Munsīp are required to witness part of the worship, directly after these sacrifices have been made. The Priest of the temple is of course in charge of events within the shrine itself. There will also be Musicians whose participation is required at most key points in the ceremonial: as usual, they have to be drawn from outside the area. The Barber's role is limited to that of shaving the Priest and the possessed dancers.

In return for their participation, the Musicians are paid in cash in the usual way. They may also dedicate songs to important villagers whom they encounter when going about the village: anyone thus honoured is required to hand over a small sum (Rs 1-5/-) at the end of the song.

The Washerman receives a hand of bananas, the vaRaikkay or green plantains which will have stood, still on their tree-trunks, on either side of the temple entrance throughout the festival.

Offerings made to the deities, either on behalf of the entire congregation or by individuals, may be divided into three types. Some is consumed during worship, like the oil and milk which forms part of many offerings, some is returned to the donor after the pūja, and some goes eventually to the pūsāri or some other functionary. The more important offerings are divided quite rigidly, and there follow two especially detailed examples:

Example A : Amman Festival in TV At about midnight on the night of the main festival, the Ōduvār pūsāri prepared sōr (boiled rice) inside the Amman Kōvil itself, while Muttaiyā Tēvar (T76A) and IrāmakirushNa Kōṇār (T80) cooked chicken and mutton curries on the plinth outside. The former is the TV Talaiyāri, while the latter is an hereditary temple functionary called the kōvil paNi taNDal ('temple servant dues-collector', JPF:317, 654, 481) .

The food was laid outside the temple door, in front of the "cutting stone" (palipidam): including the curries, it is known as the paDappu sōr ('village (?) rice'). The Talaiyāri then sacrificed the kid and 2 roosters, helped by Muttaiyā Tēvar (T92) .

These offerings were later divided up as follows. Of the roosters, one went to the Taccan Āsāri (the Carpenter, who made the spikes) and one to the Talaiyāri. In practice, the village Carpenter, Irāmasāmi Āsāri (T115), and AruNācalam Āsāri (T48), head of the largest Taccan family in TV, receive a rooster in alternate years: it was Irāmasāmi's turn in 1977.

The kid went to the pūsāri, Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105) . Being a vegetarian, he sold it to the Washerman (Candiran), in return for the free washing of his clothes throughout the year. This two-stage transaction is a formal part of the prestatational scheme of the festival, not a fortuitous event.

As for the paDappu sōr, it was divided into 9 portions and distributed as follows: 1) the KarNam; 2) the Munsip; 3) the Talaiyāri; 4) the Barber; 5) the Washermen (a half-share each);

6) the taNDal; 7) the Carpenter; 8) the Blacksmith; 9) the pakaDai, i.e. the Cakkiliyar in VV (Mēkaliṅka Kōṇār, T1) .

Example B : Amman Festival in KP A similar distribution takes place at the Amman Kōvil poṅkal in KP . In this case, the goat-kid is given to the VēLār, as pūsāri of the subsidiary Turkkaiyamman Temple nearby. As he is a meat-eater, he retains it. The roosters go to the KP Talaiyāri, who carries out the sacrifices, and to Irāmasāmi Āsāri (T115), who makes the spikes. The paDappu sōr is again divided into 9 portions (the following list is at least in part an order of precedence): 1) the ampalam (K37); 2) the Munsīp (K48); 3) the Ōduvār pūsāri (T105); 4) the Talaiyāri (T77); 5) the VēLār pūsāri (T113); 6) the Washerman, in this case Vēlu (K19); 7) the Barber, Irāmasuppu (K65); 8) Irāmasāmi Āsāri (T115), the Carpenter; 9) Ponnuccāmi Āsāri (T44), the Blacksmith. The Talaiyāri also acts as taNDal, there being no separate functionary.

There are some differences between the two lists. The KarNam's share goes to the ampalam in the case of KP, the latter being some kind of hereditary headman. The word means 'a court of justice' (Visvanatha Pillai 1972:39), while Dumont refers to an ampalakal or 'ambalam stone', a kind of oracle which makes decisions in disputes, whence comes the title Ambālam or 'village chief' (Dumont 1957b:44) .

In KP, the two pūsāri receive instead of the taNDal and pakaDai. The heavy involvement of TV residents in this case should also be noted.

Similar prestations, though on a less comprehensive scale, are involved in other types of festival. At a kuladeyvam poṅkal, the paDappu sōr is eaten by the worshippers, a portion going to every contributing household. If a spike (kaRu) is needed on such occasions, then the village Carpenter receives a rooster, and if a

chain has been attached to the spike, the Blacksmith will receive a rooster too. After being impaled, the bird is throttled using the chain.

Example C : KāLasāmi Festival in TV KāLasāmi is the family deity of a number of Maravar families, including those of the TV and KP Talaiyāris. The latter is ex officio the pūsāri of the KāLasāmi Temple. The various sāshtiram obligations are as follows: the Washerman (Candiran) has to provide a sari to roof the pandal, and must also make the torches (tīvaTTi) for the incarnated deities to carry; for this he received Rs 5/- and some green plantains. The two Āsāri each received a rooster (see above). In 1977, the Carpenter Irāmasāmi actually received 2 birds: one was given at his house when a procession went there to collect the spike, and he later demanded one of those impaled at the temple. He was given this in the interests of sandōsham. The Vēlār pūsāri received Rs 10/-, 2 paDi of rice, coconuts, plantains, etc. The deity Aīyanār at whose temple he officiates is commander-in-chief of the village guardians, of whom KāLasāmi is one, and much of the ritual in fact took place at Aīyanār's temple rather than that of KāLasāmi (Muttuccāmi Tēvar, T78).

At the Aīyanār festival, and to a lesser extent at other poṅkals, ceremonial pots and statues are required by individuals making offerings, appealing to be cured of diseases, or fulfilling vows. These are made by the Vēlār, whose traditional occupation is pottery (5.9.3).

The entire discussion so far refers to the festival proper, the 24-hour period from one mid-afternoon to the next during which most of the events take place. Most festivals of all types last for '16 days' by Tamil reckoning however, in that pūja is celebrated daily for one week before the main events and for one week thereafter. If the main festival begins on a Tuesday, the first poṅkal will be on the preceding Tuesday, and there will be a

final poṅkal on the Tuesday following. This last is known as the eTTam poṅkal ('eighth (day) poṅkal') .

On or before the day of the eTTam poṅkal, every household involved in the worship receives half a coconut, a plantain, some betel and some holy ash. In the case of the Ammān festival, this is distributed by the Talaiyāri. It is taken from the offerings made in the temple during the festival proper, and as each contributing household will have given a coconut at that time, the nett effect is that each gives half a coconut to the pūsāri. At the same time, this prestation of coconut, plantain and betel is commonly made to honoured guests at rituals of all types. It is known as suruḷ tēṅkāy muri paṛam ('roll-of-betel-leaves coconut piece fruit', JPF, 420, 552, 812, 676) (Saṅkarapāṇḍi Kōṇār, T1) .

At the eTTam poṅkal itself, the officiating pūsāri prepares a 'sweet poṅkal' (sīni poṅkal, sakkarai poṅkal) of boiled rice with added jaggery, fruit, and coconut. In the case of the Ammān festival, he is assisted by the Talaiyāri. The KarNam and Munṣīp, and the Ampalam in the case of KP, are summoned when all is ready; sometimes they send a representative, such as one of their children. After a pūja during which some of the food is offered to the deity, everyone sits down in the temple and eats a portion of poṅkal. Anyone who wishes may attend, but the above officials or their representatives must do so. This concludes the festival.

There are certain particular inter-caste prestations which are made in the course of individual festivals. At the temple festival of the TV Paraiyar, the same Musicians are employed as at the immediately-preceding TV Ammān festival, but the higher caste specialists play no part. Nevertheless, the Paraiyar deities not only visit the higher caste temples to worship (from outside) but also process around the main part of the village, when a contribution of paddy or cash is levied from every household. No-one from the main part of the village attends the actual

worship, which takes place in ParaikkuDi ¹⁶, but a portion of paDappu sōr is given to the KarNam, and possibly to others too.

The main PaLLar festival is held at the Muniyasāmi Temple in VV . It too involves Cakkiliyar Musicians, and the PaLLar deities visit the Hindu households in the main VV village, where they are offered turmeric water and other items.

It would be possible to regard every phase and aspect of a temple festival, particularly at an Ammān Kōvil, as involving prestations by or to the congregation as a whole, the recipient or donor respectively being the deity. After all, the ultimate prestations are on the one hand the worship of the deity by his or her devotees, and on the other the appearance of the deities through the medium of possession and their acceptance of what is offered, this also implying the guarantee of protection against disease (Ammān), or the promise of agricultural abundance and physical protection (Aiyānār), throughout the coming year (Dumont 1959, passim; 1970:20-32) .

In this very real sense the festival is essentially a cycle of prestations between man and man, and between man and god ¹⁷. It is an anthropological commonplace to observe that it is the giving of prestations, the exchange of gifts, which both demonstrates and reconstitutes the structure of the local community.

¹⁶ Literally 'Paraiyar village' or 'Paraiyar family'. This term is used by the other villagers to refer to the Paraiyar quarter: the more widespread term for an Untouchable settlement, cēri, is not used

¹⁷. See Khare (1977) on the subject of the structural similarities between prayers and material prestations.

5.9 The Specialist Castes

It is now time to change perspective, to move from a consideration of the prestational aspects of social events taken as wholes to a discussion of the individual functionaries whose roles and rewards have figured in the above examples. In each case, we will now turn to the everyday, routine side of their work, and the way in which it is rewarded. We will also deal with some other special occasions on which they have roles to play, but which have not so far been described. Finally, we will consider the geographical 'spheres of competence' within which they carry out these various duties, so as to show how their 'clienteles' are distributed among the three villages.

5.9.1 The Barber

The general occupational titles which have been used to refer to the various specialists do not of course give a complete idea of the natures of their functions. Of no-one is this more true than the 'Barber', who is also a priest (albeit one concerned with inauspicious or pollution-inducing events) and a doctor. This last activity is referred to in the caste title (Maruttuvar) of the Barber who serves the VV NāḌar. The word also means 'midwife' (JPF:778), and the Barber's wife does indeed perform such duties (5.7). The caste title of the TV and KP Barbers (PāṇḌitar; TV 12, KP 9) seems to be of geographical rather than occupational significance¹⁸, but the Barber is often referred to

18. Saṇmukam (Tl25) said that he was of the Maruttuvar kulam ('clan?') of the PāṇḌitar jāti ('caste'). The latter title refers to the former PāṇḌiyan kingdom in south Tamil Nadu (2.2); alternatively, it may be a corruption of paṇḌitar ('physician').

in TV by the name nāvidar ('Barber', JPF:602), which elsewhere serves as a caste name (Beck 1972:5) .

The routine duties of the Barber include shaving the beards of all adult males in his client households. This he normally does once a week, and he also cuts their hair from time to time. In TV at least, customers go to his house, in front of which he carries out his work in a special outbuilding.

As we saw, there is an annual sampalam payment, and a sāstīram is also given on the threshing floor (5 2) . In addition, the Barber, together with the Washerman ¹⁹, is a kuDimakan or 'son of the village', and as such he visits his clients' houses morning and evening ²⁰ to obtain food from them. This visit is ritualised as follows: the Barber or his W comes to the front door (they do not come in, though they may do so on other occasions) and chants "sōr koDuṅkaL amma" ('cooked-grain please-give mother'). The word attā may be substituted for amma when visiting the house of a Maravar or any other group for whom this term for 'mother' is more commonly in use; the idea is to express the fact that one is "like a son" to the woman concerned (SaNmukam, T125; see 5 5.1) . The woman of the house brings out a handful of cooked food in her right hand; it may be boiled grain, iDDli or tōsai ²¹, whatever is available. She does not speak, but merely throws the food into the metal vessel carried by the Barber, who thereupon moves on.

We will now deal with the local Barbers one-by-one, indicating for each the form of his varattusampalam, and the size and geographical distribution of his 'ritual' and 'routine' clienteles.

19 The two kuDimakan perform their respective services for each other free of charge, as a direct exchange.

20. In practice, a specialist may have too many clients to need to visit them all twice a day. SaNmukam (T125) , for example, only came round in the evening.

21. A tōsai is a pancake made of rice- and lentil-flour.

SaNmukam (T125) : he shaves the entire touchable population of TV, and the equivalent Hindus in VV. He receives daily cooked food from these households, and they give him Rs 5/- per annum as sampaLam (except for the Nāyakkār (TV 3) who give 3 marakkāl of paddy or millet instead) . The major exceptions are the Āsāri ²² (TV 6, 8 and 13) who give neither food nor an annual payment, but pay cash at the rate of Rs 0/50 for a shave and 0/70 for a haircut. He owns his own house.

In the ritual sphere, he serves the same clientele, but as the Barber in KP is a young relative of his, he is frequently involved in ritual activity there too (cf. 5.5.1, example C) . Like other Barbers, he may be called upon to shave the heads of worshippers at temple festivals, in return for a fee (5 9.4) .

Irāmasuppu (K65) : he acts as the Barber in KP, and receives a sampaLam of 3 marakkāl of grain annually, but no cash. His house is his own (jointly with his M) . In practice he usually assists SaNmukam in the latter's ritual duties in all three villages

Suppaiyā (V43) : this man of Maruttuvar caste (VV 9) has a clientele of 10 NāDār households; he receives Rs 5/- annually for shaving and hair-cutting. Although he is a Hindu, he officiates at Christian funerals and even lives in the NāDār quarter, in his own house. He does not shave Hindus or officiate at their rituals. The remaining NāDār households in VV are served by a Barber from KāmanāyakkānpaTTi. I have no data on his caste or religion, or about the routine prestations which he receives.

5.9.2 The VaNNār

The Washerman is required to visit his clients' houses once daily, to collect any clothes which need to be washed. By no means all washing is dealt with in this way, however: people take a daily bath if possible, in the tank or at an irrigation well (or, rarely, in their house), and at the same time wash the clothes which they have been wearing. Such washing is done with water alone: the

22. SaNmukam related this to the fact that Āsāri traditionally take water only from their own wells or houses. It is not quite clear how this is relevant to the present context

clothes dry quickly at the prevailing temperature, and poor people may put them back on after spreading them in the sun for a few minutes. Richer people alternate between two sets of clothes.

Only best or special clothes are given to the Washerman; shirts and gold-embroidered veṢṬis by the men, wedding saris and blouses by the women. These are washed in the tank or at the perennial pool (nīravi) south of TV, but in the hot season, when the tank is dry and the nīravi has become foul due to the daily visits of the livestock herds, the Washerman may have to travel some distance to find usable water.

Soap is used in the washing, but cleansing is done mainly by beating the wet garments against a stone. The clothes are dried in the sun, heavily starched, and ironed using a brass iron filled with hot coals.

Like the Barber, the Washerman is a kuDimakan and receives food from his client households morning and evening, in the way described in (5.9.1). Actually it is usually the Washerman's W who collects the clothes and food, and she assists in washing the clothes. Washerwomen are usually loud and cheerful; they are subjected to suggestive remarks from the men of the houses which they visit, and they are great gossipers. This last function is surprisingly necessary because the village functions as a series of more-or-less discrete neighbourhoods, especially as far as the women are concerned (1.2, 6.5).

As for the remuneration of the VaNNār households, and the composition of their clienteles, the details are as follows:

Candiran (T32) ; he lives in a tiled house provided rent-free by the village. He gets daily food from his (approx.) 55 client

families, who include members of most of the TV castes. He also gets Rs 10/- annually from each household, which is usually given in several installments

Irāḥi (T107) : he also has a rent-free house His 30 client families of various castes reward him with daily food, annual sampalam and a maṇiyam gift on the threshing floor, exactly as in the case of Candiran

In both cases, the Āsāri are exceptional in not giving daily food. Instead, they give rice at the festivals of Deepavali, Adi and Tai Pongal, plus Rs 15/- per annum.

The two figures given do not add up to the total number of 'clean' caste households in TV. There may be a few households which are attached to neither Washerman, from poverty or for some other reason, but the discrepancy probably arises largely from the fact that their definition of 'family' differs from mine of 'household'. Neither Washerman has any clients in other villages as far as routine work is concerned, but they may be involved in ritual activities elsewhere (see 5 5.1, example C) .

SōḌalaimuttu (K18): he receives daily food and an annual 6 marakkal of grain from his 10 client households, all in KP. He gets no money. His house is his own. He stated that he performed ritual duties in KP, but this did not happen in my experience.

Vēlu (K19) : apart from his village work, he washes for clients in KaDampūr, the town some 4 miles from KP . He travels to and from the town in a light 'race-cart' pulled by a single bullock The town dwellers pay him in cash on a piece-work basis. He is a tampi (terminological yB) of Candiran, and the latter made use of Vēlu's iron, as he had none of his own until just before we left.

KaDakkarai (V136) : he is Irāḥi's F, living in what he said was his own house (I am sceptical) . He receives Rs 10/- yearly from his client families in VV, and also works for 3 houses in

KoppampaTTi, who give 6 marakkā annually. The size of his VV clientele is open to question, as he claims to work only for Hindus. There seems little doubt that he performs routine and ritual services for Christian Nāḍār too, however. Just before we left, he moved away from the village, to Madurai.

Finally, there are the TīNDā VaNNār ('impure Washermen'), who serve the Scheduled Castes as both Washermen and Barbers, though their title suggests that the former function is primary. They commonly serve more than one local group in these capacities, though their work is confined within a single sub-caste. As we saw (5.5.1, example D), the PaLLar's TīNDā VaNNār lives elsewhere. I have no data for the Cakkiliyar in this respect, but the TīNDā VaNNār of the TV Paraiyar operates as follows:

Perumāl (T130) : he has a rent-free house provided by the Paraiyar community, and another one in PuduppaTTi, where he also works (it is about 2 miles west of TV) . For his work as Barber and Washerman in TV, he is given Rs 6/- annually by every household plus, in principle, food twice a day. At harvest time, those clients owning land will also give him 2 small pakkā of grain as a sāstiram. He officiates at funerals, weddings, etc.

5.9 3 The Temple Priests

We have already seen that temple Priests (kōvilpūsāris) have duties and/or rewards at weddings (5.4), puberty ceremonies (5.6), births (5.7), and at harvest time (3.6.1), as well as at temple festivals (5.8) . In addition, there may be regular temple pūjas throughout the year, or during certain periods of it, in some of the temples (Table 1.5) . This is particularly true of the Ammān and PiLLaiyār temples, where pūja is performed on most Hindu festival days. The Ōduvār is therefore the most active of the Hindu Priests, though the Vēlār is called upon to conduct worship

almost as often at the Aiyānār Temple

Priests will perform more elaborate or non-routine pūjas whenever any villager provides the wherewithal. If, for example, someone wishes to celebrate a good harvest, make a vow in connection with an illness, or offer a poṅkal on behalf of their goatherds, then the pūsārī will officiate in return for a sāshtiram of the usual kind (coconuts, plantains, betel, maybe rice, etc.) . As shown above, he also receives a sāshtiram at various life-crisis rites and at the annual festival of each temple under his charge.

As for the Priest's sampalam, a grant of māṇiyam land is attached to most important temples. It may be cultivated by or for the Priest, to whom the produce or profit accrues. Even the Catholic congregation arrange things in this way (2 4) .

This use of 'māṇiyam' does not contradict the previous subsumption of the term under the rubric of sāshtiram (5 3) . The land is māṇiyam, but the produce therefrom is the Priest's sampalam; the latter becomes the personal perquisite of the incumbent, while the former remains associated with the office.

Details of the individual māṇiyam holdings are given below, together with an inventory of those temples for which each Priest is responsible. This list excludes pūsārīs who officiate at the shrines of kuladeyvam, for they are priests at festival times only, receiving a sāshtiram on such occasions but no annual sampalam. Their names are included in Table 1 5 . Generally speaking, both types of priesthood are inherited by pāramparai, succession from F to eldest S

Ārumuka Ōduvār (T105) : he is the pūsārī of the Ammān and PiLLaiyār Kōvils in both TV and KP . The Ammān Kōvils both have

māniyam land associated with them; there is 5 marakkāl of wet land in TV and 4 acres of dry in KP . As far as I know, the Ōduvār does not actually cultivate this latter plot.

As well as being Priests, the VēLār are also Potters It is quite usual for the pūsāri of an Aiyānār temple to be of a Potter caste (Dumont 1959:79; 1970:24) and most Aiyānār Kōvils contain terra-cotta figures of various kinds which they have made. Certain domestic festivals, notably Tai Poñkal in mid-January, involve the use of new hearths of baked clay, which are made by the VēLār. They do work of a less-obviously ritual nature too, including the manufacture of the huge, 8' high jars which are used for storing grain.

AruNācalam VēLār (T113) : he officiates at the Aiyānār Kōvil in TV, and at another, smaller Aiyānār temple in VV . In addition, he is Priest of the Turkkaiyamman temples in all three villages. The TV Aiyānār Kōvil has about 30 cents of wet land as māniyam. This also contains the temple well, so is worked as garden land. It was apparently donated some 50 years ago by a relative of Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5) . In practice much of the priestly work is done by AruNācalam's sons, as he himself is in his mid-70s.

The VēLār serve all three villages in their capacity as Potters. Payment for this work involves a cash component, but as usual, and especially in the cases of the Aiyānār and Amman festivals, a sashtiram prestation is given too.

On the occasion of the Aiyānār Festival in April 1977, the VēLār had received commissions for 23 clay figures of various sizes, 11 of them humanoid figures and the rest rather stylised animals. Most of the customers were from TV itself, and they paid cash sampaLam ranging from Rs 2/25 to 22/50, according to size and difficulty.

During the night of the festival, the payment of a sashtiram

was incorporated into the ritual as follows. The Musicians processed to the Vēlār houses, accompanied by the purchasers or their relatives. There the latter picked up the fragile statues, all of which had their eyes covered by strips of cloth, and followed the Musicians to a central point in the village, where the figures (uruvam) were set down in a row, facing east.

AruNācalam Vēlār moved along the line of figures to perform the rite of uruvam kaN tirakkatal ('image eye-opening'). Each customer laid a basket in front of his own statue, containing 1 marakkāl of paddy, 1 vēSTi, plantains, a coconut, holy ash, betel, etc. He also produced a live rooster and, after the Vēlār had broken the coconut, proceeded to cut one claw off the bird so as to dab some blood from its foot onto the forehead of the image. The Vēlār then removed the cloth from the eyes of the figure and passed on to the next uruvam, while the Vēlār women took away the bird and the other offered items.

The procession then resumed its passage to the Aiyānār Kōvīl where, a few days later, the images were installed upon the roof, with no ceremony whatever.

The uruvam figures are made of clay, which is fired and then painted. Figures of humans are always equipped with what looks like a stick, held in the right hand, and they carry a green bird (kilukku) in the left. The last things to be painted in are always the eyes of the figure, followed by the green bird and, last of all, the bird's eyes. Some people said that the purpose of the rite described above was that of preventing a glance from the uruvam causing smallpox among the worshippers, but most people, with typical empiricism, said that it was merely a way for the Vēlār to increase his income.

The status of the uruvam is something of a mystery. The

word means 'figure, image or idol', and the ritualised opening of the eyes is reminiscent of the consecration of the statue of a god (Hocart 1970:37), yet everyone was adamant that the figures were not deities and had no individual names or identities

Kurusāmi KavunDar (T7) : is the pūsāri of the Vaisnavite Perumāḷ Kōvil in TV . He officiates at the annual festival (Table 1.5), but does not bother with the pūjas which should be held on the 3 preceding Saturdays. He receives sāshtiram in the form of a share of the festival offerings, but there is no sampalam, nor is he given the sāshtiram of a fully-fledged kōvilpūsāri on other ritual occasions.

Fr. Njanappirākasa (V1) : as Parish Priest of St. Xavier's Church in VV, he has 10 acres of māniyam land, donated by the village for his upkeep. He also receives first-fruits at all harvests, and special gifts at weddings (5.4) . Other contributions go to the church rather than to the upkeep of the incumbent

The Scheduled Caste pūsāris usually act only once a year, at the temple festival, but they are nevertheless 'village' rather than 'lineage' Priests because the temples at which they officiate are those of entire caste groups, not kuladeyvam shrines . Moreover, the festivals involve the higher castes too, to some degree (5.8) . On the other hand, these priests do not receive any sampalam: they are merely rewarded at festival time with a share of the offering, which constitutes their sāshtiram. In every case, the officiant of the Scheduled Caste is a member of the caste concerned: their identities are to be found in Table 1.5 .

Most temple festivals involve the incarnation of some or all of the deities concerned, in the persons of individuals known as sāmi pidikki ('(by) god having-been-caught'), sāmyāDi or simply sāmi. This sometimes happens spontaneously, but the more important

deities are incarnated by particular persons who normally acquire the privilege through inheritance (though they may have to undergo a test too, see Dumont 1957b:350) . At kuladeyvam festivals, these sāmiyāDi are necessarily drawn from within the descent groups concerned, while at Scheduled Caste festivals they come from within the caste-group; neither case is relevant here. At 'village deity' festivals (5.8) however, the sāmiyāDi are drawn from various castes, and benefit the community as a whole by their activities.

At the Ammān Kōvil festival in TV, the goddess herself is incarnated by Teyva PiLLai from Manditōppu (near Kovilpatti), whose family came originally from TV . Others with recognised divine familiars are Muttaiyā Tēvar (T92), Suppaiyā Tēvar (T13) and Suppā Nāyakkar (T42) . All take part in the processions around the village and in other parts of the ceremony. Teyva PiLLai also becomes briefly possessed when the Paraiyar sāmiyāDis visit the Ammān Kōvil to worship, a few days after the Ammān festival proper.

In KP, the Ammān is incarnated by ŌvammāL (K2, Ayōtti), while others with recognised roles are SaNmukavaDivu (Maravar, K67), who incarnates Turkkai, Karuppasāmi Tēvar (K5), Marimuttu Tēvar (K74), and Kumārasāmi (K11), Mūkkaiyā (ex-KP) and SaNmukaram (K47), the 3 last-named all being Ayōtti ReDDiyār.

In every case, the sāmiyāDi either live in the village concerned or are descended from former residents. Moreover, the congregation of worshippers at a 'village deity' festival is primarily made up of such people, and it will be the occupants of a single settlement who contribute financially towards the ceremonies. Yet the Priests' own activities extend beyond the settlement, and for the VēLār and Ōduvār their various 'parishes'

cover all or the greater part of the area under discussion

One is tempted to speculate that this latter state of affairs would have been even more pronounced were it not the case that the bulk of the non-Scheduled Caste population of VV were Catholics. The high caste Hindu group in that village is not at present large enough to mount a festival on its own, and its present temples are small and incomplete. Its members attend the TV Amman festival, though as spectators rather than participants, and their ritual activity in VV itself is limited to their minor role in the PaLLar festival (5.8) .

5.9.4 The Artisans

The sampaLam due to the village Carpenter and Blacksmith is given on the threshing floor (5 2) . The amounts are worked out on the basis of 4 marakkāl of paddy per pair of bullocks per year. Thus PālasuppiramaNīyaṇ (T17) gives twice as much as Cellaiyā Tēvar (T72) because he has 2 pairs of bullocks and the latter only one (compare 5.2, examples A and C) .

This payment does not cover any work done on the bullocks themselves, however. They are shod by an outsider, Taṅkavēl Āsāri from NākampaTTi, who works in all 3 villages and many others besides. He describes himself as an ilaDam ('horse-shoe') Āsāri, and is paid in cash at piece-work rates.

A farmer will normally have one plough and possibly a cart, for each pair of bullocks which he owns, and it is for this reason that the sampaLam is related to the number of bullocks. It covers the maintenance of carts and ploughs (for which the customer provides the raw materials) and trivial maintenance

tasks around the client's house, such as freeing sticking doors, unjamming locks, or erecting shelves.

In TV, Irāmasāmi Āsāri (T115) is the Taccan or Carpenter, and Ponnuccāmi Āsāri (T44) the Kollan or Blacksmith. Both serve all houses in TV and KP according to the sampaLam/sāshtiram system already outlined, and both are involved in prestatational cycles at weddings (5 4) and temple festivals (5.8). They will also build new carts, ploughs or furniture if commissioned, but in that event the customer pays an agreed price in cash, over and above the regular sampaLam.

Of the other Taccan and Kollan households in TV, all are engaged primarily in their traditional occupations, but are not rewarded in the traditional manner. For example, Suppan Āsāri works as the VV Blacksmith and has a workshop there; he is not a true 'village Blacksmith' though, for he is paid in cash solely for work done. Kālaiyan Āsāri (T46), another Blacksmith, works at his trade in Pasuvandanai, while AruNācalam Āsāri (T48) does carpentry for cash, mostly for clients in KoppampaTTi, assisted by various of his sons and other relatives

As for the Tattan Āsāri (Goldsmiths), AiyānperumāL Āsāri (T114) is not, by the nature of his work, involved in a regular, annual prestatational cycle with the local households. Instead, he is rewarded whenever his services are required (see also Chapter 6).

He is often called upon during temple festivals, including those of Scheduled Castes, which are frequently chosen by parents as occasions on which to have their child's ears pierced. This is done for every child when it is 1-2 years old; even some adult males still wear ear-rings and all women and children do so. The Goldsmith pierces the ears and inserts the thin gold rings, and the Barber shaves the child's head ²³.

At the Aiyānār Kōvil festival in TV, for example, AiyānperumāL pierced the ears of several children. This took place beside the temple, and all the children had their heads shaved by

23 This too is a common prestation: one offers one's hair to a favourite deity as part of a vow.

Saṇmukam (Tl25) immediately beforehand. Each functionary was then offered a brass tray containing Rs 1/-, half a coconut, a plantain, betel, etc. This form is typical of sāsthiram payments and includes a cash teccaṇai, or guru's fee (5.4). The Goldsmith would of course be rewarded with a separate cash sampalaṇam for the materials and/or craftsmanship involved.

It is not surprising to find that, although the Goldsmith is not included in the annual prestatational cycles, payments made to him are nonetheless ritualised to a considerable degree. After all, his services, whether it be the fitting of ear-rings or the making of a marriage-tālī, are associated with ritual events. But this is only one example of a more general phenomenon where Āsāri are concerned. When a Carpenter works on a new house, for example, he is not only paid a varattusampalaṇam in cash, but also receives a sāsthiram as part of a ceremony known as nilai viDutal ('doorpost releasing', JPF:615, 876), which takes place when the front-door frame is first erected.

On 2 May 1977, I was summoned to Suppaiyā Kōṇār's house (Tl20), which was being rebuilt. The door frames had been raised but were not yet firmly fixed with bricks or cement. In the western room of the south-facing house, the following pūja items were laid out on a plantain leaf in the south-western corner, the numbers referring to Figure 5.1 : 1) a small brass oil-lamp;

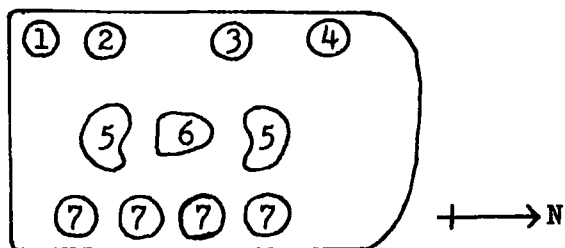


Figure 5.1 : Nilai ViDutal Pūja

2) 1 paDi of paddy in a vessel; 3) a PiLLaiyār made of turmeric paste; 4) another PiLLaiyār figure made of cow-dung, with a tuft of grass in the top; 5) plantains impaled by sticks of incense; 6) betel leaves

and areca nuts; 7) halved coconuts.

The coconuts were broken only after they had been smeared with sandalwood paste (sandanam) and poTTu at 3 different points on their circumferences. This was done by AruNācalam Āsārī (T48), who was in charge of work on the house. He collected the coconut water in a pot which also held some ordinary water, and then sprinkled this mixture over the leaf, moving his hand around 3 times clockwise as he did so. He then waved the burning incense over the leaf 3 times, tracing out the shape of the Tamil letter ō (ॐ), which is the abbreviated form of the mystic name of the deity, ōm or Aum. The sprinkling and incense-waving were done 3 times altogether.

Turmeric (mañjcal) and poTTu were smeared on the new door posts of both rooms of the house, in a design involving 3 parallel lines of mañjcal and a red dot of poTTu in the middle of the central line. These patterns are kuṅkumam ('red or saffron colour', JPF:253); they are to be found on almost every Hindu house, and are renewed annually. In the present case two sets of markings were put on each vertical post of the door-frame, another on the top cross-piece, and a 6th on the stone door-step. Around the top of each frame was tied a kāppu, as worn on the wrists of sāmiyāDī. A kāppu is an amulet consisting of 3 rolled betel leaves and 3 sticks of turmeric root, tied alternately along a string.

AruNācalam then tore up a betel-leaf, and sprinkled the pieces on the 2 PiLLaiyār figures, the paddy and the oil-lamp. He stood inside the door of the western room, and laid a tray on the stone step. On this tray he put betel leaves, areca nuts and a plantain. He broke a coconut and laid the halves on the tray, over which he waved incense as before. Taking up a vessel containing cow's-milk, he poured a little at the bases of the door-posts, the eastern one first. I was invited to do likewise and then all the other adult men present followed suit. This pūja, but not the milk pouring, was repeated at the door-step of the eastern room.

The pūja items were then divided: AruNācalam received Rs 1/-, the paDī of paddy, and half a coconut; Saṅkaraliṅka VēLār (ex-TV), who had been working on the house as his assistant, received Rs 1/-

plus half a coconut; the village Blacksmith, Ponnu Āsāri (T44), who was present as a spectator, got the same; a relative of AruNācalam Āsāri (not from TV), who had also been involved in the work, got half a coconut. The Ōduvār was present too, and received a plantain, while I was given the suruL tēṅkāy muri paṛam (5.8) . We were all given sandalwood paste to smear on our bodies as a ritual coolant, betel was distributed, and we were served with coffee

This illustrates perfectly the way in which occupational specialists are in a sense priests when engaged in the work which is their speciality. In this case AruNācalam was engaged to do the necessary carpentry for the house, and was rewarded by a negotiated cash payment. But this sampaLam was in itself insufficient and had to be supplemented by the ritual sāstīram just described, in the course of which moreover the Āsāri assumed the role of pūsāri. One interesting and revealing cultural detail may be added: whereas a Priest normally breaks coconuts using a curved sickle (aruvaL), an Āsāri always uses a chisel, the tool of his trade.

This last remark also applies to the final rite to be considered here, and which is performed by the village Carpenter and Blacksmith. It takes place on Tamil New Year's Day in April (the first day of Cittirai) and has the somewhat unwieldy title of TamiR Cittirai oNNam tēdi tittam, vivasāyī nāl ēr vaippatal ('Tamil Cittirai first day brightness ²⁴, farmers' day yoke-of-oxen placing') .

24. This refers to the 'bright' half of the month, i.e. during the waxing of the moon

The rite took place at 9 a.m. on 13 April 1977, in the fields to the east of the village, just south of the road leading to ParaikuDi. Most if not all the bullocks in the village were brought there, the adult pairs yoked to their ploughs and the young animals led individually by boys

At the western end of the field, facing east, a pūja was being prepared for by Irāmasāmi (T115) and Ponnu Āsāri, the village Carpenter and Blacksmith respectively. The following items were laid out on a plantain leaf (the numbers referring to Figure 5.2): 1) a PiLLaiyār made from cow-dung and grass; 2) a PiLLaiyār of turmeric paste; 3) a pile of betel leaves; 4) bunches of plantains impaled with incense sticks; 5) a ladle of smouldering embers to

which camphor (karpūram or sūDam) was added. Chains of flowers were draped around the PiLLaiyār figures and Rs 1/- was put on the pile of betel

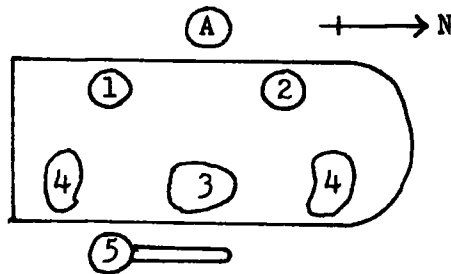


Figure 5 2 : New Year Pūja for Āsāri

In front of the leaf ('below' it in the figure) were put a

number of wicker baskets, each containing 1 paDi of paddy, a coconut and a bunch of plantains. Each had been brought by the owner of a pair (or more) of bullocks. Beside the baskets was a heap of canes with nails in the end, such as are used for goading working bullocks

The plantains from each basket were added to the piles on the leaf by Irāmasāmi, while Ponnu transferred the paddy from each of the small baskets into a larger one which stood closest to the plantain leaf. The coconuts were taken from each basket in turn, dipped in pure water and smeared with turmeric and poTTu ²⁵. After being held in the camphor smoke from the ladle, the nut was split using the Āsāri's chisel, and the coconut water was collected

25 This was done in three places, as in the nilai viDutal (above) .

in a single pot. Half the nut was returned to the donor's basket, and the rest was put on the plantain leaf. A total of 18 nuts were split in this way ²⁶.

When this had been done, each chisel was used to pare a piece of coconut flesh out of one of the nuts, and the chisels were then laid in front of the plantain leaf, each with the piece of coconut on top of it. The 18 donors each put 25 paise on the betel leaves in front of the PiLLaiyār figures (to whom the money was said to be given) .

The spiked canes were sprinkled with turmeric water by Irāmasāmi and cursorily sharpened by Ponnu. Meanwhile the vessel containing the coconut water had been placed at position A in Figure 5.2 . Some of the coconut water was used by Irāmasāmi to asperse all the ritual objects. While all the onlookers worshipped, hands held palms together in front of the chest, burning ash was waved clockwise over the leaf by Irāmasāmi.

Ponnu distributed the goads to their owners, and the recipients ran to their bullocks and began to race them, ploughs and all, clockwise around the adjoining field to the east. The animals, some of which were decorated with red and green balloons, were excited and kept breaking ranks. Finally, the owners untied the animals which raced off home, with or without some measure of control from their handlers.

The paddy, plantains, coconut-halves and money were shared equally by the two Āsāri. I received suruL tēṅkay muri paRam from the Panchayat President.

Several elements seem to be involved in this rite, which is from one point of view clearly a sāstiram accruing to the Āsāri from those for whom they work, the bullock-owners of TV ²⁷. The prestations, typically, are so arranged that the transaction is a

²⁶ According to my census, 28 TV households own at least 1 pair of bullocks, so not everyone contributed fully to this event.

²⁷ I believe that there was a similar rite in KP later in the morning, involving the same two Āsāri, but I did not see this.

two-way one: in return for the paddy, coconut, plantains and money, the Āsāri 'give' half a coconut and do some 'work' (the sharpening of the goads)

At another level, the Āsāri are worshipping the 'tools of their trade' (the chisels), while the farmers are ostensibly offering the cash to PiLLaiyār rather than to the artisans. PiLLaiyār is of course the god of beginnings, and it may well be (though it did not occur to me at the time to ask) that the rite symbolises either the completion of the previous year's mutual obligations between Artisan and client, or the public renewal of that relationship, or both. This would explain the fact that the ceremony took place on Tamil New Year's Day

5 9.5 The Channel-Controller

One of the recipients of paddy on the threshing floor is the channel-controller (5.2), whose office is variously known in Tamil as maDaikkāran ('sluice-gate man', JPF:768), maDaitirappavar ('sluice-gate opener', ibid:768, 528) and nīrappāyacci ('water irrigator', ibid:621, 689) (Kurusāmi Kōnār (T79), PālasuppiramaN-īyan (T17)) . The present incumbent is Vēyilmuttu (PaLLar, V176), who inherited it by pāramparai from his father

His duty is to open the sluice gates of all three tanks (3,2) at 6 a.m. and to close them at 6 p.m., throughout the paddy-growing season (October-January approximately, depending on the strength of the monsoon) . He receives between 2 and 12 pakka of paddy from each owner of wet land, the rate being in general 2 pakka per acre. This payment is made in its entirety on the threshing floor, and during the harvest season he is to be seen there almost every evening, awaiting payment by whoever is working

there on that day. He receives no share of any other crop.

This payment does not involve a division into sampalam and sashtiram, but is regarded in its entirety as falling into the latter category. This is because the job traditionally carried with it a grant of 7 marakkāl māniyam land, the produce of which, as in the case of the pūsāri, was intended as his sampalam ²⁸. Vēyilmuttu says that he has sold this land, which is surely most irregular.

The Channel-controller serves all holders of wet land in all 3 villages. In practice this rules out most of the occupants of KP, but those few who do hold rice land contribute on exactly the same basis as the inhabitants of TV and VV .

5.9.6 The Scheduled Castes

The Channel-controller is drawn from one of the Scheduled castes, but a description of his duties by no means exhausts the contribution of the Untouchables to communal life. As already mentioned (2.2), the Scheduled Castes, and particularly the PaLLar and Paraiyar, traditionally acted as agricultural labourers for the land-holding castes. Even now, although there are no hereditary ties, many of them work as permanent labourers for land-owners of various castes, and as Table 3.2 shows they are not necessarily limited to working for land-owners from their own settlement. The relatively good economic position of the PaLLar causes them to be less involved in such relationships than would traditionally have been the case however, and the Untouchables' 'prestation' of agricultural labour is less of a

²⁸ Like the pūsāri, the Channel-controller serves the community as a whole, rather than as individuals. In such cases, payment by means of a collective granting of land is obviously appropriate.

factor than it might once have been.

This is least true of the Cakkiliyar, who still retain their position as winnowers for farmers in all 3 villages (3.6.1) . Moreover, they still act as Scavengers for the same region. If an animal dies, they are called and come after dark to remove it. The entire carcase is their sāshtiram, and they may eat the flesh if they wish. The skin of the animal is probably more important because the Cakkiliyar are also Leather-workers. They make, or more often these days repair, sandals for any household in the 3 villages, and would traditionally at least have made the leather tubes used in the kavalai (3.2): I omitted to ask whether they still did so.

Cakkiliyar come round the village occasionally to see whether anyone has shoes in need of repair. The customer pays for the raw materials, but the shoemaker is not specifically rewarded for the work itself²⁹. Instead, a handful of food will be given whenever the Cakkiliyar comes to ask for it, just as in the case of the kuḍimakan: in TV at least, this happens only on feast and festival days³⁰. They also receive, more or less formally, a share of the temple offerings at festivals (5.8) .

One or other of the Scheduled Castes acts as veṭṭiyan (grave-digger or wood-cutter) at higher-caste funerals (5.5.1), and the Cakkiliyar act as tōṭṭi (messengers) for the Paḷḷar.

29 Not all Cakkiliyar households mend shoes, so some are not involved in these particular prestations. On the other hand, all take part in the winnowing at harvest time

30. They repaired shoes for us and, alone among the specialist groups, 'co-opted' us into the traditional system to the extent that they came to our house to collect food.

Indeed, TōTTi is the name of their sub-caste. The Musicians at funerals and temple festivals are Untouchables too, but in this case they come from outside the area.

Looking at the relationships from the opposite point of view, it is clear that the 'clean' castes as a whole recognise links and obligations of various kinds with respect to the Scheduled Castes, a sort of communal responsibility of an admittedly rather paternalistic kind ³¹

Example A : Temple Visit For example, a Paraiyar woman came next door (to T1) one day in April 1977, and was given some raw rice on a winnowing fan - the method normally used for giving rice on formal occasions. When I asked the reason for the gift, I was told that the woman's baby son had to be taken to a distant temple (the Māriyammān Kōvil in IrukkañkuDī, Ramanathapuram District) to have his head shaved. The rice was a contribution towards the expenses involved. The woman then went on to other houses in the neighbourhood and received similar prestations.

Example B : Murder Just before we left the village, there was a murder in ParaiyarkkuDī. One of the close relatives of those involved was Kālimuttu (T142), who works as a labourer for PālasuppiramaNiyan (T17, Kōnār). As a result of the murder, Kālimuttu was off work and earned no money; he was therefore given a meal at T1, on the grounds that he was "a good man" and in trouble. He also needed money to buy off the police ³² and to cover the medical expenses of the murderer, who was himself badly wounded. I contributed towards these costs, which seemed to be regarded as an obligation upon the higher castes as a whole.

³¹ This aspect is not surprising, for traditional relationships were often expressed in terms of F-S 'kinship' links between castes, cf. the Āsarī-PaLLar relation (5.5.1) and the kuDīmakan (5.9.1). Epstein (1967:233) gives a Mysore example of an hereditary landowner-labourer link expressed in these terms.

³² Normal police practice is to detain as many close relatives as possible, to ensure the surrender or acquiescence of the accused.

In this connection, we may also adduce the fact that the higher-castes contribute towards the expenses of the Paraiyar temple festival (5.8) . The converse does not occur, although the 'village deity' festival at the TV Ammān Kōvil is 'for' the Scheduled Castes just as much as for the others, and they attend as spectators even though they are not permitted to enter the temple itself.

5.10 Summary and General Conclusions

Table 5 1 summarises much of the data presented in this and the preceding chapter I have listed each local grouping separately, even when, as in the case of the PāNDitar for example, the different local groups are in fact close genealogical kin. This has been done to emphasise the interlocking nature of the inter-caste and inter-village links The various offices which each local group holds, the roles which they play and the functions which they perform, are all listed together with the extents and compositions of their 'clienteles'. Important functionaries living outside the area are also included, as are those few cases in which a resident of TV, VV or KP has duties which extend beyond the area under consideration

Generally speaking, these offices, roles and functions are caste or even sub-caste specific, either locally or for the wider region of south Tamil Nadu. The 'modern' political offices connected with the Kīrāmam Pañjāyattu have however also been included Although not caste-specific in essence, these often become so in practice, given the demographic structure of the village or villages concerned

Table 5 1 : The Nature and Extent of Inter-Caste Relationships

Caste	Office, Role or Function ^a	Socio-spatial Extent ^b
<u>Terku VaNDānam :</u>		
1. <u>Maravar</u>	Panchayat President	(TV + KP)
	2 Panchayat Members	(TV + KP), (TV + KP)
	2 Talaiyāris	TV, KP
	SāmiyāDī in Ammān Festival	TV
2. <u>Paraiyar</u>	Agricultural Labourers	TV
	VeTṭiyān	TV'(+ KP')
	Priest of Māriyammānkōvil	TV
	Panchayat Member	(TV + KP)
	'Son' of TV CeTṭiyār	TV'
3. <u>Nāyakkar</u>	Munsip	TV
	SāmiyāDī at Ammān Festival	TV
4. <u>Kōnār</u>	Kōvil TaNDal	TV
	2 Panchayat Members	(TV + KP), (TV + KP)
5. <u>Pillaimār</u>	Pūsārī (Ōduvār)	(TV + KP)
	KarNam	(TV + KP)
	Panchayat Member	(TV + KP)
	SāmiyāDī at Ammān Festival	TV
6. <u>Taccan</u>	Village Carpenter	(TV + KP)
	Jobbing Carpenters	VV, KoppampaTṭi
	'Fathers' of PaLLar	VV'
	Roles in life-crisis rites	(TV + KP)
7. <u>CeTṭiyār</u>	'Fathers' of Paraiyar	TV'
8. <u>Kollan</u>	Village Blacksmith	(TV + KP)
	Jobbing Blacksmith	VV, Pasuvandanai
	'Fathers' of PaLLar	VV'
	Roles in life-crisis rites	(TV + KP)
9. <u>VeLār</u>	Pūsārī	(TV + VV + KP)
	Potters	(TV + VV + KP)
10. <u>KavuNDar</u>	Pūsārī	TV
11. <u>VaNNār</u>	Village Washermen(2)	TV, TV
	Ritual roles	(TV + KP), (TV + VV')

(cont'd)

Table 5 1 (cont'd)

Caste	Office, Role or Function ^a	Socio-spatial Extent ^b
12. PaNDitar	Village Barber	(TV + VV')
	Midwife, Doctor	(TV + VV' + KP)
	Funerary Priest	(TV + VV'(+KP))
	Other Ritual Roles	(TV + VV'(+KP))
13. Tattan	Goldsmith	(TV + KP (+VV?))
	Ritual Role (ear-rings)	(TV + KP (+VV?))
14. TINDa VaNNār	Barber/Washerman	(TV' + PudupaTTi)
	Funerary Priest, etc.	(TV' + PudupaTTi)
<u>VaDakku VaNDānam :</u>		
1 NaDār	P.U.C. Vice-Chairman	Kayattār P.U.
	Panchayat President	VV
	4 Panchayat Members	VV, VV, VV, VV
2. PaLLar	Channel-controller	(TV + VV + KP)
	VeTTiyān	(TV' (+VV'(?)))
	'Son' of Āsari	TV'
	Priest of Muniyasāmi Kōvil	VV'
	Panchayat Member	VV
	Agricultural Labourers	VV
3 KampaLattar	Panchayat Member	VV
4 Cakkiliyar	Winnowers	(TV + VV + KP)
	Scavengers	(TV + VV + KP)
	Leather-workers, Cobblers	(TV + VV + KP)
	VeTTiyān	(TV' + VV')
	Agricultural Labourer	(TV + VV)
	TōTTi	VV'
	Vigil at burning ground	(TV + VV' (+KP?))
	Priest of Muttuvīraṇ Kōvil	VV'
	Share of paDappu sōr	TV
5 Kōnār	-	
6 VaNNār	Village Washerman	VV
	Ritual Roles	VV

(cont'd)

Table 5 1 (cont'd)

Caste	Office, Role or Function ^a	Socio-spatial Extent ^b
7. MaNiyakkārar	Talaiyār	VV
8. Paraiyar	VeTTiyan	VV'
9. Maruttuvar	Barber	VV'
	Funerary & Ritual Roles	VV'
<u>Kalīṅkaṭṭi :</u>		
1. Ayōtti	2 Panchayat Members	(TV + KP), (TV + KP)
	Ampalam Headman	KP
	SāmiyāDī in Ammān Festival	KP
	(Former Munsīp)	KP
2. Maravar	SāmiyāDī in Ammān Festival	KP
3. Saiva CeTTiyan	-	
4. Kottu ReDDiyan	Munsīp	KP
5. PuLavar	Temple & Funerary Drummers	(TV' + KP')
6. VaNNār	Washermen (2)	KP, (KP + KaDampūr)
	Ritual Roles	KP, KP
7. Tattan	-	
9. PāNDitar	Barber	KP
	Ritual Assistant	(TV + VV' + KP)
10. Brahman	-	
<u>From Outside the Three Villages :</u>		
Brahman	Priest at Life-crisis Rites	(TV + VV' + KP)
Nāyakkar	KarNam	VV
(KoppampaTTi)	Munsīp	VV
Āsārī (NākampaTTi)	Shoeing Bullocks	(TV + VV + KP +++)
TīNDā VaNNār	Barber/Washerman	VV'
(SottaranpaTTi)	Funerary & Ritual Roles	VV'
Cakkiliyar	Musicians	TV, VV, KP
Barber	Barber	VV'
(KāmanāyakkanpaTTi)	Funerary & Ritual Roles	VV'

(cont'd)

Table 5 1 (cont'd)

Notes (see also main text) :

The caste code-numbers refer to Table 1.1, in which the full sub-caste titles are given.

a. The 'offices, roles and functions' are not listed in any particular order

b. The notation in the 'extent' column is as follows:

A - means simply that the whole of village A is covered
(possibly with the exception of the Scheduled Castes)
by this aspect of the caste-group's activities.

A' - means that only certain castes within village A are
served or dealt with in this way

(A + B) - means that the villages A and B are both covered

The analysis of this information will be carried out in the next chapter, but some general conclusions may be drawn here. In the first place, although few of these inter-caste prestations 'spill over' beyond the boundaries of these 3 villages, many of them do extend over 2 or even all 3 villages within the region of study. Secondly, the caste-groups are not equally important in these respects. Some have no 'formal' inter-caste rights and obligations whatever - except, of course, as clients to those listed above - while those of some other castes are confined to a single village or a part thereof. Thirdly, the character of these obligations varies from caste to caste, being made up for example primarily of political responsibility in some cases, and of ritual activity in some others.

CHAPTER 6 : THE MICRO-REGION

6.1 Introduction

It is now possible to return to the somewhat enigmatic comment made at the beginning of (4 6), in which was mentioned the possibility of applying Dumontian principles more systematically, in an attempt to define the scope and nature of the unifying factor, if any, in the region under investigation. The aim of the present chapter will be precisely this. Much of the necessary material has already been presented in Chapters 4 and 5, but we must now deal with other factors which tend to bring about the greater integration, or in some cases the internal fission, of the area as a whole. It will be assumed from now on that the 3 villages can most profitably be considered as a single social unit, a proposition which will, it is hoped, be demonstrated by the data presented both here and above

6 2 Geography

In the first place, the 3 villages are geographically proximate. Moreover, if one wishes to reach the 'outside world', either by cart, or on foot to catch a bus, one must travel north or south along the cart road which passes through all 3 villages. For men at least, there is thus relatively frequent occasion to pass through one or both of the other villages. They have less reason to visit other nearby villages such as PudupaTTi which, though only slightly more distant, do not lie on this road. Nothing in my own work ever led me to need to visit PudupaTTi, nor did residents of TV visit there very often. Several people, indeed, told me what an unsavoury place it was.

One consequence of the road, which is hardly in itself geographical, but which might appropriately be remembered here, is that a number of TV men have mistresses in the other villages, particularly in KP (1 6) . Several of these liaisons are long-lasting, and they are afforded varying degrees of tacit, or in one case even overt, recognition.

It has already been mentioned that TV and VV have joint rights in one of the irrigation tanks (3 2) . They also share the same name, of course, terku and vaDakku meaning merely 'south' and 'north' respectively . Moreover, land-holdings intermingle at the borders of the 'revenue-villages', so that residents of one village often own land which is assigned to another for official purposes. This situation is common as far as TV and VV, or TV and KP are concerned. It is much less frequent between these villages and their other neighbours, with a slight exception in the case of VV and PudupaTTi (4.2) .

6.3 Administration

As for the administrative ties which connect the villages to the various governmental agencies, it has already been shown that the spheres of competence of the traditional officials, the KarNam and to a degree (because of residence) the Talaiyāri, and of the modern Panchayat members extend across TV and KP (4 7.3) .

In TV there is a 'Panchayat Board' office, operated strangely enough under the title of the 'Vadakku Vandanam Co-operative Society', and administered by the Kayattār Panchayat Union . A P.U. employee comes (in theory) daily from KaDampūr, and items such as rice, sugar and textiles are sometimes on sale

there at subsidised prices for holders of appropriate ration cards, i.e. all household heads normally resident within the 3 villages under investigation. It is from this office, too, that the annual crop loan is distributed to residents of TV and VV (3.6.1)

All 3 villages belong to the Roman Catholic parish of VaDakku VaNDanam. This is an administrative rather than a religious link because whereas TV and KP are to all intents and purposes wholly Hindu, the Kovilpatti Package Programme is organised on this parish basis. The parish covers 3 other villages too, namely AccaṅkuLam, KōvindampaTTi and TittampaTTi, and T.S.S.S. regularly distributes milk powder, wheat flour and cooking oil to the mothers of young children in the parish, who come to VV to collect it.

In other respects, though, the Package Programme tends to bring TV, VV and KP together, to the exclusion of the other villages. With its support, the villages unite to rebuild and maintain the cart road which links them, each village being responsible for the stretch of road nearest it. The Programme hopes to gain government support for the provision of materials to surface and tar the road; T.S.S.S. would then finance the labour of the villagers on a 'food for work' basis. The villagers have agreed to this, through the medium of the 'Village Association' (4 7 3) (Fr. Malayampuram, T.S.S.S.) .

Other planned facilities, such as a dispensary in VV serving TV and KP too, will be shared similarly and (ultimately) financed jointly. The Catholic Priest in VV is already called upon to operate and administer other 'food for work' programmes involving any or all of the 3 villages, especially during the hot season, when opportunities for agricultural work are limited.

6.4 Kinship

The villages are also linked by kin ties. These would not in themselves be sufficient to bring about the degree of unity being postulated below, of course, because every caste group has links of this kind with many other villages. Nonetheless, and especially because of the number of caste-groups involved, these ties reinforce those operating in other spheres. The maintenance of relatively distant kin links is also encouraged by the spatial proximity of the local groups.

When speaking here of 'kin ties', I do not refer merely to that postulated 'kinship' which might be taken to exist between any two members of any given South Indian sub-caste. Instead, I mean that it is possible to combine the groups concerned in each case, within a single genealogical diagram¹

Thus the KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar in TV and KP (TV 1, KP 2) are kin, as are the Kōñār in TV and VV (TV 4, VV 5). Of the two Washermen in TV, one (Irāḷ, T107) is the S of the VV Vaññār, while the other is related to both households in KP. The Barbers in TV and KP are close relatives (MB-ZS and WF-DH). Until some 15 years ago, there were a few Ayōtti ReDDiyār, kin of the KP caste-group, resident in TV. Although they have now moved out of the area, they still own land there (4 2.1, example D).

Note that there are no direct kin links between VV and KP. In this sphere, as in a number of others, TV seems to occupy a kind of pivotal position, the other 2 villages being linked through it, in a way which provides a socio-structural parallel to the geographical situation

1. This therefore excludes the two Paraiyar groups (TV 2, VV 8)

6 5 The 'Neighbourhood'

After having to some degree 'dissolved' the social reality of 'the village' in favour of a unit of larger size, it is appropriate to say something about those factors which have the same general effect but for the opposite reason, factors which, namely, tend to fragment 'the village' into smaller social entities

The most obvious point is that each village is divided into endogamous, and to a degree 'endo-interactional' caste groups. Of these social divisions, the most far-reaching is that between the Untouchables and the other castes. The Paraiyar in TV, and the Pallar and Cakkiliyar in VV, all live in settlements which are spatially distinct from the settlement proper and (in the case of VV) from each other. These groups are similarly 'kept at a distance' in social life, as when the Paraiyar attend the TV Amman Festival as spectators, prevented from entering the temple, or when they and the Cakkiliyar are offered food in the street, outside the house in which a higher-caste wedding has taken place. Such situations symbolise their separation from the remainder of the community, although the fact that they attend these events at all reminds us that this separation is only relative, that they are in a broader sense included and accepted, albeit not as equals.

Within the main settlements too, there are divisions, though of a different kind. These have no conceptual or jural basis and are purely matters of statistical, behavioural fact. They are not named, nor is there any local generic term to describe them. We will refer to these sub-divisions as 'neighbourhoods'.

It is true that castes tend to occupy distinct, solidary

residential blocks within the village (14), but these are not entirely adhered to, nor are the neighbourhoods coterminous with them. Single-caste quarters may indeed segment into neighbourhoods, as in the case of the NāDār (VV 1), for whom the areas on opposite sides of the church are quite distinct in general appearance and lay-out, as well as in terms of social interaction.

The more common situation, though, is one in which the neighbourhood cuts across caste boundaries and is heterogeneous in composition. In TV, for example, the northern part of the village, containing all the Āsārī houses and a number of PiLLaimār and Nāyakkar households, constitutes one such neighbourhood.

I propose, however, to go into most detail in connection with the neighbourhood within which we ourselves lived, and which I therefore know best. This is doubly necessary, because it is only through prolonged observation at all seasons and during all hours of the day and night, that this behavioural entity becomes manifest.

'Our' neighbourhood, then, contains the following castes and households, listed in approximately clockwise fashion according to geographical location:

Kōnār : T18, T17, T16, T120, T86, T82, T80, T81, T9, T98,
T1, T2, T4, T4A, T79, T84, T85, T15 .

Maravar : T12, T22, T13, T3

KavuNDar : T6, T7

PiLLaimār : T11, T10, T8, T5

There are therefore 18 Kōnār households including 88 individuals, virtually the entire Kōnār caste-group; 4 Maravar households, 18 individuals; both KavuNDar households, 12 individuals; and 4 households of PiLLaimār, containing 18 individuals. Altogether there are 28 households with a total population of 136 people.

The unity of this neighbourhood manifests itself in many different ways. In daily life, the women co-operate in household

tasks, working jointly on the large mortar outside T13 to prepare 1TT11 and tōsa1 batter, borrowing each other's pounders for husking grain, and going to each other's houses to use the small grindstones needed for halving lentils. Small groups drawn from within the neighbourhood go together to the well, or to defecate, or to bathe in the tank, and when working parties are formed for weeding paddy or picking cotton, these are constituted similarly

They also look after each other's children, or more precisely the teenage and sub-teenage girls do so. For example, a KavunDar girl aged about 11-12 spent most of her time at our landlord's house looking after his grandson Ravi. She was not paid in any way for this, though she might have had an occasional meal, yet this duty was definitely seen as her responsibility. If an infant left alone for any reason is heard to be crying, any of the neighbourhood women and girls will go to comfort it, even if this involves entering someone's empty house.

The men sit in a group, in the morning and especially after sunset, under the street light outside T1. They discuss politics, the weather, or the latest murder in the Taluk, while the women sit on the front step of T16 or T86, gossiping about each other or about the anthropologist and his family.

The children of the neighbourhood play together, and except at school have virtually no contact with children from other neighbourhoods. They visit other parts of the village so rarely that, even up to the time we left, when the children in nearby houses had long since become used to our presence, our arrival in some other part of the village would be sure to draw a crowd of its neighbourhood children

On festival or feast-days, or when someone had been to a major temple such as that at Tirucchendur, small gifts of fried food, sweets, plantains or parched grain are sent to the houses of neighbours. Ad hoc groups may combine to cook ponkal together at a particular local temple. When Cellaiyā PiLLai's (T5) infant died, it was the neighbours who came to the house to witness the preparation of the body, and it was the neighbourhood men who joined the procession to the place of burial (11 5, example A). When the same household celebrated SaraSvati pūja (not described in this work), it was again a neighbourhood group which was invited to attend.

6.6 The 'Jajmāni System'

The previous chapter was concerned with what is commonly known, in the social anthropology of India, as the 'jajmāni system':

" .. the system corresponding to the prestations and counter-prestations by which the castes as a whole are bound together in the village, and which is more or less universal in India " (Dumont 1972:138)

The actual terms 'jajmān' and 'jajmāni' are not so widespread, however. They are unknown in the region under investigation, and for that reason have not been made use of until now, but that apart, there are strong grounds for wishing to avoid their use altogether.

The word jajmān is of Sanskrit origin, and had initially a purely religious referent: 'he who has a sacrifice performed' (ibid:139). Nowadays, in those parts of India in which it is used, it designates employers or patrons in general. The Tamil

form ecamān means 'master, lord, husband, proprietor' (JPF:137) . As for ja.jmāni, in Sanskrit it means 'the privilege of performing the function of Priest, Barber, etc at weddings and other occasions' (Dumont 1972:139); however, the Tamil ecamāni means simply a female ecamān (JPF:137) .

To this extent then, 'ja.jmān' and 'ja.jmāni' are indigenous terms with quite clear etymologies and definite present-day connotations. The idea that there was something called a 'ja.jmāni system' seems however to have originated in Wiser's (1936) monograph on the subject (Pocock 1962:88-9) Two points may be made in this connection: firstly, while Wiser's use of the term 'ja.jmāni' is perfectly understandable in the context of his local, monographic study of a region in which it formed part of the indigenous vocabulary, its application to other regions in which it is not so used is by no means as satisfactory. Dumont has comprehensively, and in my view conclusively, criticised the use of the term 'caste' as a sociological rather than an ethnographic concept (1972:Appendix; see also Leach 1960a:1-2) , yet, in common with many others, he has used the term 'ja.jmāni' in precisely this way, to apply to parts of India in which the word is unknown².

Secondly, and this criticism applies to Wiser also, the 'system' is an analytical abstraction not an ethnographic reality or indigenous cultural concept, even when the terms are in use. The elements of this system are of many different kinds, applying

2. In "Homo Hierarchicus", Dumont persists in writing 'Ja.jmāni system' in inverted commas for so long that one detects a degree of scepticism concerning the term.

to all spheres of social life, and it is most unlikely that all would be regarded by the local inhabitants as systematically connected, much less as alike in essence. This should be clear from a consideration of the disparate material of Chapters 4 and 5. Not only does the so-called 'system' embrace many different activities, each of which is governed by its own 'rules' and 'customs', but no one individual or group within the community is likely to be aware of all the ramifications of that system.

In the present case, then, the 'system' has no jural or cultural basis, but is an abstraction on the part of the analyst, made in terms of an alien, sociological concept, that of the 'prestation'. There is some justification for this procedure, however, when we remember that the phenomena under consideration are united in a more abstract, conceptual way, through the medium of the categories sampalam and sāshtiram in particular (5.3) ³. Moreover, as we have seen, the latter notion extends to cover relationships within the caste and even within the genealogical family, something which is taken into account in the present treatment but which none of the analytical treatments of the 'jaṁmāni system', however much they might differ in other ways, sets out to do.

It may be that it was this failure to distinguish between 'categorical' and 'jural' data (9.2) which led different writers to take such diametrically opposed views of the (so-called) 'jaṁmāni system'. Wiser emphasised the 'multi-nuclear' nature of the inter-caste relationships, and their reciprocal, to a

3. There is also the concept of 'sandōsham' which will be returned to below.

degree reversible, character. Today's patron would be tomorrow's client, in some other aspect of social life . In almost complete contrast, Beidelman (1959) concentrated on a single relationship, that between land-owner and tied labourer, which he saw as unidirectional and exploitative ⁴. Both writers were keen to demonstrate the integrative role of the 'system' as they conceived of it, but whereas for Wiser the significant fact was that the village was thereby maintained as a "self-sufficing community" (1936:16), Beidelman set out to prove that "any integration possible is of a coercive nature" (1959:68) .

Pocock perceived that different writers were indeed talking about different kinds of relationship under a single label. He sought to resolve the problem by means of an increased analytical precision, and to that end distinguished 3 types of relationship within Wiser's so-called system, types which are sometimes distinguished indigenously too. There are 1) the unskilled agricultural labourers; 2) the Artisan castes (in the present case, the Āsāri); and 3) the 'religious specialists', the Priest, Barber and Washerman (1962:91-2) ⁵; all these share the same employer: "the dominant caste is the jaṁmān par excellence" (ibid:89) . Beidelman dealt only with the first kind of relationship but for Pocock, jaṁmān being religious in its origin, only the third type can correctly be covered by the term.

4 Epstein (1967), on the other hand, saw the system as beneficial for the labourers, to the extent that they were guaranteed their subsistence even in lean years

5 These types correspond in a way to those suggested by David and Marriott (see 6.7) .

It does not apply to the economic sphere in this primary sense, although certain cultural forms found in 'true', religious jajmāni relationships carry over into relationships of the other types (ibid:89) .

When, in almost complete contrast, Benson restricts her recent discussion of "a South Indian Jajmani system" to "the economic aspects" of that 'system' (1977:241), she adopts an implicitly substantivist definition of economics for that purpose. This leads her to discuss only the activities and rewards of those specialists whose occupations are 'economic' in nature according to her definition. Thus she deals with Artisans, Barbers and Washermen, but not with Priests (ibid:242). Yet surely the remuneration of the Priest is economic even in terms of her definition? By proceeding in this way, she leaves herself with subject matter which does not make up a system, in that one part of it - as perceived indigenously (ibid:242) - has been quite arbitrarily excluded, and which has in fact nothing to do with jajmāni, strictly speaking. We are not told whether the local people do use this particular term, but in any event it is here applied analytically in a sense and context quite remote from its prime meaning, which is indeed specifically ruled out by her definition.

In the face of this muddled use of 'cultural' categories as analytical terms, Pocock's greater precision is desirable in itself, and as it happens his distinctions would seem broadly applicable to the material in Chapter 5, as far as distinguishing types is concerned. Nevertheless, the objections on principle to the sociological use of the term 'jajmāni system' still remain.

Pocock, moreover, makes these relationships centre upon a 'dominant caste'. Dumont does likewise, while rejecting the possibility of applying Pocock's religious/economic distinction at any but the most local level (1972:146) . In the subsequent discussion, it becomes clear that Dumont's assumption of the existence of a 'dominant caste' complicates his argument, and is hard to square with his belief in the transcendence of 'status' over 'power' ⁶.

The relationship between the 'dominant' and 'dependent' castes is one in which the former group, which "controls the means of subsistence", allows the latter "access to the means of subsistence through personal relationships with the members of the dominant caste" (ibid:148-9) . But as both groups "live under the sway of a system of ideas in which the 'power' aspect ... is in fact encompassed" (ibid:148), the system appears to those who live under it to be oriented towards the whole (ibid: 149) and religious in form (ibid:150) .

This conclusion comes dangerously close to the idea of a 'false consciousness' - an exploitation disguised by Brahmanic sophistry - which Dumont's detractors have put forward in criticising his views (cf. Mencher 1974) . It stems from the intrusion into the argument of the 'dominant caste', on what he clearly believes to be sound ethnographic grounds. What then of the present case, in which no such group is to be found ? There are two possible approaches: one is to agree that Dumont's analysis is appropriate for a village with a 'dominant caste'

⁶ This difficulty reappears throughout Dumont's work in the "Contributions..." series, as well as in "Homo Hierarchicus" (1972) .

but that, there being no such caste in the present case, there is by definition no 'jaṃmāni system' . The other is to say that, insofar as Dumont claims to explain an allegedly "universal" Indian fact (the 'jaṃmāni system') in terms of a non-universal phenomenon (the 'dominant caste'), his characterisation of that 'universal fact' must be faulty. In either event we are led logically to the same conclusion, that Dumont's analysis of the 'jaṃmāni system' is inapplicable to the present situation.

This is not to say that there are not universal features, at the cultural level at least, to be found under the spurious rubric of the 'jaṃmāni system' . The various purely descriptive comments which Dumont makes are all more-or-less applicable in this case:

"The religious connotation is important, and is still present today .." (1972:139) "(The 'system') regulates prestations... in a way which accords with custom:... repayment is in kind... spread over the whole year... there are obligatory presents... on the occasion of the main festivals of the year and... at the major family ceremonies, ... (and) those who are considered the main servants of the village enjoy a gift of land from the communal funds which are at the disposal of their patrons collectively " (ibid:140)

Such facts, systematic or not, do indeed seem to be "more or less universal in India" (ibid:138)

To sum up, we have seen that the 'jaṃmāni system' has not so far been recognised for what it is, an essentially external, analytical concept. Unlike the notion of 'dominance', which is applicable to certain contexts, that of the 'jaṃmāni system' is, moreover, to be rejected, on the general grounds that it: (a) extends an indigenous term beyond its correct range of meanings; and (b) fails to cover the entire field (that of prestations) to

which it is normally applied

6 7 The 'Cultural' Approach to Prestations

In the Tamil context, Pocock's distinctions (1962; 6.6) have been made in slightly different form by David (1973b, 1974, 1977c) for the particular case of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka. He distinguishes two modes of inter-caste relationship:

1) the 'bound' (kaTTuppaTu), in which there is a durable, multi-contextual, stratified connection (kōNDāTTam) between the parties to that relationship, and in which transactions take place in terms of "traditionally fixed prices"; and

2) the 'non-bound' or 'free-willing' (iStamāna), in which no permanent connection exists (kōNDāTTam illai), which are momentary, uni-contextual and non-stratified, and in which transactions take place with reference to "bargained fair prices" (1974:45) .

These modes are associated with different sets of symbols, and lead to 'codes of' and 'codes for' conduct ⁷ which are mutually contradictory in that:

"Two persons cannot... simultaneously exchange with both a traditional fixed price and with (sic) a bargained fair price " (ibid:54)

The 'bound' symbols, which give rise to an 'Aristocratic' 'code of' conduct, are: vēlai, work; ātaram, mutual aid in times of stress; urimai, non-negotiable right to service and remuneration; anumatī, command; kauravam, honour; maraiyātai, respect. The 'non-bound' symbols, prescribing a 'Mercantile' 'code of' conduct, are: viyāpāram, business; upakāram, "contrasted assistance" (?); nītam, fairness; keTTikkārar/mūtai, clever man/fool; sandōsham, mutual satisfaction. A third set of symbols, giving rise to a 'Priestly'

7. The terminology derives from Geertz (e.g. 1964, 1966) .

'code', is not relevant to the present discussion (David 1973b: 37-8; 1974:51-3, 1977c:200-1, author's glosses)

David proceeds to contrast these two normative types of relationship with respect to the behavioural (he says "social-structural") features with which, as "codes for" conduct, they are associated. He uses the Barber (bound) and the Goldsmith (non-bound) to display polar contrasts with respect to the following variables (1973b:32-3; 1974:54-5; 1977c:199) :

- (i) recruitment : ascribed (Barber) v. voluntary (Goldsmith);
- (ii) duration : long-lasting v. of no set duration;
- (iii) space : locally-defined v. alocal;
- (iv) clientele : limited by purity v. limited by ability to pay;
- (v) pricing mechanism : traditional, periodic, ceremonial v. economic;
- (vi) context : 'connection' (multi-contextual) v. 'no connection' (uncontextual);
- (vii) vector : stratified (hierarchical) v. non-stratified

I will argue that this distinction cannot be maintained, certainly not in the present context. David himself acknowledges that there are intermediate cases (1974:55), though he still labels every caste in Jaffna as either primarily 'bound' or primarily 'non-bound' in its relationships (1973b:36; 1974:47; 1977c:203). I have in mind a more fundamental criticism than this, however.

The same two functionaries may be examined in the present context, first of all, so as to show where the difficulties in David's approach lie. If we look at the first variable above, 'recruitment', he says:

"The relationship between the Barber and his master

exists due to the caste categories assigned to the two persons at birth. Recruitment between the Goldsmith and his client, on the contrary, is voluntarily contracted " (1974:54)

This is a false dichotomy. The Goldsmith's occupation is just as much a product of "caste categories" as is that of the Barber: moreover, the "master" frequently has a choice as to which Barber he patronises (e g., the VV Nāḍār), and in this sense both relationships are equally voluntary.

If we consider a village such as TV, with its resident Barber and its resident Goldsmith, then the differences in duration and spatial extent are not so apparent either. The Barber's services are certainly required far more frequently, and there are indeed the posited contrasts in clientele, but the pricing mechanisms are not as different as David would suggest.

On this last point, it has already been shown (5.9.4) that payments to both Barber and Goldsmith contain both ritual (sāstīram) and economic (sampalām) components. While the Goldsmith, like the Āsārī in general, does, it is true, earn a "bargained fair price" for his work in piercing ears (or, for the Taccaṇ, building houses), he also receives a "traditional fixed price" in the form of his sāstīram. Moreover, the concept of sandōsham, which David associates only with the 'non-bound', 'Mercantile' schema (1974: 52, see above), is all-pervasive in TV, applying to agricultural wages (5.3, fn 6), funeral payments (5.5.1), festival prestations (5.8) and to mercantile dealings⁸.

⁸ David's own example of the use of sandōsham in dealing with a taxi-driver (1974:52) invites a similar interpretation. It seems to me to illustrate the intrusion of a "ceremonialised" payment

As for the existence of a vector of stratification in these inter-caste relationships, it is certainly true that the Goldsmith's business relationships are not hierarchically limited in the way the Barber's are ⁹. Yet the degree of stratification may be a logical concomitant of the specialised function of the caste concerned, and this from the viewpoint of criteria of purity, the concept which David seeks to transcend (1974:66) . For example, the Barber must necessarily be less pure than his client, for pan-Indian cultural reasons: this stratification cannot be related to contingent, local cultural codes. That is, the latter cannot cause or explain that stratification for the comparative sociologist, though they may indeed purport to explain it for the local population.

On the other hand, there is no a priori reason why a Goldsmith's relationships should be stratified: the material with which he works is pure (purer than either patron or client?) in intrinsic nature. The fact that he is (in Jaffna) primarily involved in non-stratified professional transactions may therefore be more plausibly tied to local, normative codes

David produces a caste ranking list in which the highest and lowest castes are said to be 'bound-mode', hierarchically oriented groups, while those in the middle range are of 'non-bound' mode

(akin to a "traditional fixed price") into a "bargained" transaction
 9. By contrast, David's points on contrasting degrees of stratification in food transactions (1974:58, 62) would not apply at all to TV (14.1) . Such prestations are also explained differently in eastern Sri Lanka too (McGilvray 1977:50). I have no evidence of alternative strategies in the use of personal pronouns, such as is described for Jaffna (David 1974:59, 61) .

and are not hierarchically ranked (1974:47) . In one sense this merely states the obvious, in that the extremes of the scale must necessarily appear to be the most influenced by hierarchy. But there is also a logical flaw. The point is not whether a particular caste can be said to be "primarily" (ibid) engaged in 'bound' or 'non-bound' relationships, but that in fact all castes are involved in relationships of both types. All must deal with Goldsmiths and with Barbers ¹⁰.

It seems, then, that David is guilty of reification and the confusion of data with analysis (cf. Chapter 12) . He has clearly put his finger on a valid contrast between different modes of behaviour, but has then proceeded to attach these behavioural labels to particular social groups. It would be more satisfactory to recognise that there are different aspects to the behaviour of all groups: all act sometimes in a 'bound', sometimes in a 'non-bound' way. One should not classify the groups into 'bound' and 'non-bound' therefore, but the contexts .

In addition, David presents these distinctions as indigenous cultural facts of a normative kind, yet it is by no means certain that the modes which he outlines are 'emic' in origin. True, he uses Tamil terms, but these are granted a possibly spurious degree of systematisation. Indeed, he is not above inventing wholly 'etic' meanings for them (10.3, fn 11). The

10. It is true that the TV Āsāri seem to organise their relationship with the Barber in terms of a "fair" rather than a "fixed" price model (5.5.2, 5.9.1). Unfortunately for David's scheme, the Barber's explanation of this referred to criteria of purity, not to transactions. Moreover, the Āsāri behave in a similar (though not identical) way to all other groups when it comes to funerary prestations.

result is merely the expression of an external concept in the local language, a procedure open to the criticisms already voiced in connection with the use of the phrase 'jajmāni system' (6.6) Translation masquerades as analysis.

Now even if we admitted the existence of coherent indigenous exegeses of the sets of symbols reported by David, there would remain the objection that these symbols are not met with elsewhere, certainly not with these meanings, even in other parts of Sri Lanka (McGilvray 1977:8) . This is true even of the Tamil terms for 'bound' and 'non-bound'.

It follows that David's induced general theories, depending as they claim to do upon 'cultural codes', are of dubious validity when applied to local contexts in which the constituent symbols of these 'codes' are absent or differently structured. It is my contention that one cannot use a localised, indigenous cultural theory (which is, in any case, almost certainly the product of a philosophically inclined local minority¹¹) to give an account of a widespread, structural-analytical pattern¹² Instead, the theory can be seen only as a local gloss upon that pattern. On the other hand, it would seem valid to use a cultural theory made explicit in one locality to assist in the interpretation of a practice found in a second locality of which the people themselves have no explanation to offer, provided that there is otherwise a considerable degree of socio-structural and cultural similarity between the two localities.

11. One cannot assume that every Briton to utter the word 'democracy' is a political scientist, still less that all agree

12. To do so would be equivalent to basing an analysis of U.K society upon the speeches of, say, Sir Keith Joseph.

David complains with justice that our picture of South Asian social structure is synecdochic, that 'part' which is made up of agricultural villages being mistaken for the 'whole' of society, with little consideration being given to mercantile, fishing and artisan communities (1973b:30) . Yet his own style of analysis leads to a synecdochism of a less obvious but more fundamental kind, for the social theories of a particular local group have been accorded the status of sociological theories applicable to the entire South Asian region (see also Chapter 12) .

6.8 The 'Micro-Region': Fusion and Fission at the Level of 'The Village'

Beck (1972) deals with 'the village' as a segment of a higher order territorial unit, the nāDu ('country', 'region'), rather than as an entity forming the basis of social cohesion and integration. The present data suggest a similar approach, although for historical reasons higher order social units exist in a far less systematic and overt way in Tirunelveli (2 2, also Beck: personal communication) . This at least is the case at present, but it may well be that the situation has changed since the authority of the ETTaiyāpuram samīndār was ended (2 2, 2 3) . This particular samīndār was much larger than Beck's nāDu, however (1972:24, 63) , and in any event it has left no detectable mark on the overall social organisation in the region of study.

Without wishing to generalise the conclusion beyond the limits of this single, particular case, I feel that the body of data presented so far points unequivocally to the fact that these

three villages must be treated, sociologically speaking, as a single entity. I propose to refer to this entity as a 'micro-region', a usage which has the advantage of locating it, from the point of view of its size, within the series 'region', 'sub-region', 'revenue village' and 'hamlet', as delineated by Beck (1972) . The 'micro-region' is intermediate in size between the 'sub-region' (nāDu) as found in Coimbatore, and the 'revenue village' found in both locations. It should be remembered, though, that in the present case the 'micro-region' has no indigenous identity, normatively or categorically.

As shown above, two or even all three of the villages in the present study are linked in a variety of ways, in the spheres conventionally referred to as 'political', 'economic', 'administrative', 'religious' and 'genealogical'. Many of these links have been listed in Table 5.1, from which it is however clear that not all caste-groups contribute equally to the prestatational unity of the 'micro-region'.

In general, those castes which come closest to 'dominance', namely the NāDār (VV 1), KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maṇavar (TV 1), Kammāvar Nāyakkar (TV 2) and Ayōtti ReDDiyār (KP 1), contribute least to this integration. This becomes even more apparent if one looks only at their traditional 'offices, roles and functions' which, if they exist at all, are in every case confined to a single village. It may be added that these four castes are among the most numerous in Tirunelveli District (see Table 1.2) . Furthermore, their separation into different villages is a general feature. The mutual hostility of NāDār and

Maravar is indeed legendary, and they are rarely found residing in the same settlement (Sunder Singh 1961:13) .

Table 5 1 suggests that, far from village solidarity being the social fact of prime importance in delimiting the social sphere, as Bailey has suggested (1959:95), and far from it being the solidarity of that caste-group which most closely approaches dominance, as Dumont has maintained (Dumont and Pocock 1960:88, Dumont 1972:148-9), this particular social entity acquires its identity by virtue of the activities of those at the extreme ends of the scale of purity and pollution.

On the one hand we have the Priests (Ōduvār and VēLār) whose purely 'religious' spheres of activity embrace the entire micro-region¹³. At the other end of the scale, the Untouchable groups, and particularly the Cakkiliyar, the lowest of all, fulfil their functions for the whole micro-region, functions among which it is hard to distinguish the 'economic' from the 'religious', though both elements are certainly present (winnowing, scavenging, grave-digging, etc.) .

The other groups making major 'contributions' towards micro-regional identity are the Artisans and the kuDīmakan (Barber and Washerman) . Again their roles are both 'religious' and 'economic', as Table 5 1 illustrates.

The Washermen apart, one thing which all these groups have in common is that they are not found in every village. Add to this the fact that the functions which they fulfil are all, in

13. The VēLār's pottery work may be included here, as being primarily concerned with the manufacture of religious artefacts (5.9.3) . I have already made it clear that my distinction between 'religion' and 'economics' is analytical rather than substantive

their different ways, essential, and it becomes clear why their integrative effect is so pronounced. It is surely no coincidence that most of these key caste-groups are found in TV, the largest of the 3 villages and the geographical centre of the micro-region. Even the Cakkiliyar are spatially segregated from the main VV settlement to such an extreme degree that they come close to living on the 'border' between VV and TV .

The fact that neither Priests nor specialised Untouchable groups are to be found in every settlement seems to be a very general state of affairs in Tamil Nadu, and one which suggests that units such as the one dealt with here may be widespread, providing a unit of analysis which lies between the unsatisfactory 'village study' on the one hand and the potentially unwieldy study of an entire region on the other. Beck's data on 'sub-regions' (1972) are suggestive in this respect

Further data comes from Benson's study of a group of villages in Andhra Pradesh. She attributes social cohesion to a single, powerful family in one village (1977:240), but this group is very small, and in the absence of evidence to support her assertion, it seems equally plausible to draw attention to the role of the service castes in bringing about the unity which she describes.

Of the residents of her 'central village', the Tailor serves 5 other villages, the Carpenter and Barbers 4 each, and the Blacksmith and Potters 1 other each (ibid:244-6) Only the Washerman of that village, among the active service castes, does not serve clients in any other villages.

Benson does not discuss the ritual activities of these functionaries, nor the role of specialist Priests, whom she regards quite arbitrarily as "less important" (ibid:242), despite the fact that the villagers include them in their list of pani-wallu or 'work people' (ibid) . Even so, the information given

points to the way in which a number of local settlements may be united by virtue of the activities of specialists and by the prestations which the latter exchange with their clients

In the absence of relevant information from other areas, one cannot draw general conclusions from so few examples. A similar pattern is however found quite generally (albeit on a larger geographical scale and with, at the most, a tenuous influence upon modern social structure) in the case of the Priestly group par excellence, the Brahmins. As already mentioned (15), most villages lack Brahmin Priests and so recruit them, when required, from one of the local 'temple towns'. These are to be found here and there throughout the region: they contain temples of more than average size and antiquity, dedicated to Vedic, all-India deities. Such towns are often found at crossroads, and their continued existence reminds us of the fact that the Indian town of past centuries was a religious and cultural, rather than an economic centre (Stein 1976b:77). In the present case, KaDampūr, Pasuvandanai and Koppampattī are the nearest such centres; Kayattar is another, and TV residents may even recruit Brahmins from as far away as ETTaiyapuram.

It has already been mentioned (4.6, 61) that the approach adopted here is in a sense more 'Dumontian' than that of Dumont himself. Once it has been shown that the complicating factor of 'dominance' is absent, the way is open for the demonstration that it is the groups at the extremes of the caste hierarchy, for whom 'status' is most easily freed from considerations of 'power' (Dumont 1972:84)¹⁴, which have the major integrating

¹⁴ 'Status' is concerned with purity and priesthood (Dumont

role Those at the top of the status hierarchy, occupying the structural position assigned by classical varna theory to the Brahman (namely, in this case, the Ōduvār and VēLār) ¹⁵, have unequivocally 'religious' offices. It is true that they conform only partially to the canons of 'Brahmanic' behaviour, but it is their relative position, not their substantive character, which is important (pace Marriott and Inden; see Chapter 12) . On the other hand, those at the bottom of the scale, actually Untouchables but structurally, in varna terms, akin to the Sudra, have duties in which the 'religious' is inextricably mingled with the 'economic'. To this extent then, the view presented here illustrates and is thoroughly consistent with, Dumont's view that religion, dharma and 'status' encompass, respectively, 'political economy', artha and 'power', and that this encompassment holds the key to an understanding of Indian society in its uniqueness and specificity.

6.9 Conclusion

This first part of the analysis has been concerned with the demarcation of a social unit The discussion has also served to bring out the nature and extent of the inter-caste relations which, it has been argued, constitute and define that unit

1972:114), while 'power' or 'legitimate force' derives from military or economic might and is linked to the royal function (ibid:197) . 'Power' acquires legitimacy by subordinating itself to 'status', and this is manifest in the Brahman/Ksatriya relation 15. My view of the varna system as an ideological, classificatory device rather than as an archaic ethnographic fact, has been expounded in an unpublished seminar paper

It is important to remember that the 'micro-region' is an analytical rather than an indigenous concept. In this respect it resembles the concepts of 'dominant caste' and 'jajmāni system' which have been discussed and, for the present case at least, rejected above. It is necessary to avoid the tendency to substantify, to accord this analytical structure some degree of conceptual, jural or behavioural reality. It is intended solely as a model of the social structure in the present case, and like all scientific models it is heuristic and provisional (Popper 1972). There is, moreover, no present justification for claiming any degree of generality for it. It would seem possible that it might apply elsewhere, but it is certainly not intended to compete with, say, a 'dominant caste'-centred analysis when the latter is clearly appropriate, still less to supersede Beck's sophisticated blending of the principles of dominance and territory, based upon indigenous categories (1972) .

The situation is quite simple: from a very early stage, a variety of empirical observations convinced me that if I wished to 'make sense' of the social structure of TV - my original primary intention - it was essential that I should take VV and KP into consideration too. When I began to do this, I found that the 'trails' which had led me from TV towards the other 2 villages, did not continue to lead outwards but, for the most part, doubled back to the starting point. These 3 villages displayed a high density of interactions and were parts of a single, multiplex network of relationships. By contrast, links with other villages were relatively tenuous and widely dispersed.

The inter-village links were in most cases also inter-caste links, and the last few chapters have dealt mostly with these, treating them as prestations in the widest sense of that term. In the process, there has appeared ample evidence to support Mauss's contention that social units exist to the extent that:

" . . they, their sub-groups and their members, have been able to stabilize their contracts and to give, receive and repay... That is one of the secrets of their wisdom and solidarity " (1970:80)

PART TWO

INTRA-CASTE RELATIONSHIPS IN LIFE-CRISIS RITUALS

CHAPTER 7 : LIFE CRISES: BIRTH AND INFANCY

7 1 General Introduction

Part I of this work was concerned with providing an introductory survey of the area studied, and with the delineation of the framework of inter-caste relationships through which, it was argued, the extent, nature and structure of the social unit could be discerned. The aim of Part II will be the study of intra-caste relationships, particularly the life crisis rituals of the different caste-groups, through which these relationships receive their most public and systematic expression. It should however be borne in mind that even in this sphere it is not possible to limit ourselves to relationships within the caste concerned; it was shown in Chapter 5 that members of other castes have more or less specific parts to play on these occasions, for which they are rewarded in the manner already described. In this present chapter and the ones following, the extent of these inter-caste obligations will also be clarified.

The current chapter will deal with birth and infancy, and their associated ceremonies and prestations. In the succeeding chapters, puberty (Chapter 8), marriage (Chapter 9) and death (Chapter 11) will be dealt with. Chapter 10 will be concerned with one particular aspect of marriage, namely the high frequency of marriage with the eZD, and the effect which this has upon the 'Dravidian' kinship terminology. Finally, Chapter 12 will return to some of the more general theoretical issues to have arisen in the course of the work, and will attempt to summarise and clarify my own position with regard to them.

7.2 Birth

Pregnancy lasts for "ten months" according to Tamil reckoning, which takes both the first and last calendar months fully into account. I have no 'ethno-biological' data of my own with regard to conception (see Chapter 12). Women behave normally during pregnancy, going about their usual domestic and agricultural work and being free to visit temples should the situation arise. In this latter way, pregnancy differs from menstruation, which is regarded as an impure state and which prevents a woman from attending a temple¹. There is, however, impurity as a result of the birth itself, as we shall see. Only with the onset of labour do women abandon their normal work.

Pregnancy is not ritualised to any noticeable extent, but sometimes, when a wife is "five months" pregnant (with a first child only?), her marital household may make small gifts to all other high caste households in the settlement. On one such occasion, for example, each was given a plantain and a piece of crystallised white sugar. The gift is brought round by the women of the household concerned, excluding the wife herself.

Childbirth takes place within the household site, but if there is a suitable spot outside the actual dwelling-house, such as a reasonably private porch or verandah, this will normally be the place chosen. A wife always returns to her natal home for

1. This exclusion from the temple is the only way in which menstrual impurity manifests itself, except at puberty (8 2). A menstruating woman cannot cook poṅkal at the temple, but she can cook normal food in the home, from which she is in no way excluded.

her first confinement, even if this is merely another household in her husband's village. She may do so for subsequent births too, but this becomes progressively less likely. Any expenses involved in having the first child will be borne by the wife's parents. These usually amount to about Rs 150/- when all the necessary temple visits and prestations are included

No men may be present during the actual birth. The midwife may be an older relative, but if complications arise the Barber's wife may be called in. This is avoided if possible because she has to be paid (5 7) . Informants stated that in really serious cases they would send for a doctor or go to a hospital, but I know of no occasion on which either procedure was resorted to.

There were no deaths of women during labour in the course of my stay, but such events are commemorated by the raising of a sumaitāṅki ('a platform on which to rest burdens', JPF:417) stone which is worshipped at festival times by relatives of the deceased, often quite distant ones. On the other hand, I know of one still-birth and several deaths in early infancy during my year in TV, and there may have been more, for little fuss is made on such occasions and they are quickly forgotten ².

Most births seem to take place quickly and with little fuss. For example, Isakkīyammāl (Kōṇār, T4) gave birth on the front verandah of her marital house, within 10 yards of where we lay sleeping, and we heard nothing until the shouts of the women

2 A still-born child is simply buried without ceremony. For an account of the relatively unelaborate funeral of a very young child, see (11.5) .

marked the first cry of her baby son

Isakki's house was immediately behind our back window, in a fairly private alley-way. The birth took place in the early hours of 20 June 1977, and the kuruval³ shouts by the women are only made when the child is male.

The midwife was PāmmaL (T98); her D CellammaL (T98) was also present, as were SaNmukattammaL (T2), who was both FZ and MM to the child, and SaNmukattāy (T85), a neighbour. All these were married women or widows, and all were Kōṇār.

Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5), the owner of a wrist-watch, had been summoned, and was waiting some distance away at the end of the alley, so that the time of birth would be known with some precision. He announced that it was exactly 2 a.m., and departed.

The baby was then washed: this should be done exactly "one minute" after birth (SaṅkarapāNDi Kōṇār, T1). The cord was cut a few minutes later, to the sound of 3 kuruval from the women, and was tied with a piece of thread⁴. It was not clear to my wife whether the after-birth had emerged by this time or not. In any event, PāmmaL almost immediately threw sand all over the verandah to soak up the blood, and swept all this up into a basket, on top of which she laid the placenta. While this was going on, the mother was taken inside to have her stomach rubbed with coconut oil. Once the cord was tied, the baby was carried inside too.

The child was soon brought out and was bathed again, in warm water to which PāmmaL added a packet of a soapy, ash-like substance. She held the child by his feet and shook him, threw him up into the air a few times, blew in his ears, and sucked and spat out the contents of his nose and mouth.

Isakki came out again and lay on a straw mattress on the

3. This ululating cry (also kulavai or kuṛavai) is made by women to mark crucial transition-points on auspicious occasions. In the present context, this first kuruval would not be made for a baby girl.

4. Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975b:50) suggest that unhygienic practices immediately after delivery, especially the severing of the cord with an unclean instrument, may be the commonest cause of infant mortality in Tamil Nadu.

verandah, while her mother SaNmukattammāL took a maNveTTi ('hoe', JPF:770) and dug a hole in the back yard of the house in which to bury the after-birth and the other contents of the basket.

At about 2.45 a.m., SaNmukattammāL came round to wake up Mēkaliṅka Kōṇār, our landlord (T1), who bathed and went round to T4. She also summoned Alison, who was asked to take her ball-point pen for use as a dropper.

At the house, a strong solution of karuppaTTi ('jaggery', a brown sugar made from palm sap) was prepared, and Mēkaliṅka fed the baby by putting 3 drops of this into his mouth using the pen (1 kuruvai each time). Alison then fed him with 3 drops (kuruvai each time), and the child's F MurukaNDi was summoned from the back of the house to do likewise (kuruvai as above). The F sees his child for the first time "exactly one hour" after birth (SaṅkarapāNDi Kōṇār, T1). The baby was given more of the karuppaTTi by PālammāL, using her finger as a dropper, but this was not ritualised.

The baby's face was washed and he was rubbed with coconut oil. Powder was put on the cord and into his ears. He was laid beside his mother, with plantain leaves spread under his head and bottom. SaNmukattammāL washed the verandah and everyone else went home.

Mēkaliṅka Kōṇār is a terminological grandfather (tāttā) to the child, but any respected man of the appropriate caste could be asked to perform this first feeding. A new-born baby is fed only with karuppaTTi for the first two days, and only when the colostrum has given way to milk does the mother begin breast-feeding.

On the following day, VīrammāL, the (Nāyakkar) wife of MuttukirushNa Kōṇār (T119), gave birth to twin girls. There is no special word for twins, which are described simply as iraNDu kuRandai ('two children'), and there are no particular beliefs concerning multiple births (SaṅkarapāNDi Kōṇār, T1).

7 3 Early Infancy

The mother and child are not wholly excluded from the house after the birth, but they spend most of their time out on the verandah, the floor of which is washed daily during this period ⁵. A small lamp is lit beside the child at night.

On the '10th' day after the birth, the mother leaves the house-site for the first time, to go and bathe ⁶. On her return, purified, she can resume her full working and social life.

It is not immediately apparent why birth should generate impurity. One could argue that this is due to its similarity to menstruation, in that blood and the placenta are discharged. On the other hand, birth is in most respects an auspicious transition.

The idea that parturition gives rise to impurity is of considerable antiquity in Tamil Nadu. Hart (1973:234-6) points out that the sacred power (aNaṅku) which women were believed, in the Sangam Period (2.2), to possess, was present especially in the breasts, the symbols of femininity. He links the impurity of the woman after birth with the ban on sexual intercourse during the suckling period ⁷, and sees both as designed to prevent the masculinity of the husband being weakened by his physical contact with the breasts, and especially the milk, of his wife.

5. This would normally only be done once a week, on Friday morning.

6 Isakki gave birth on 20 June at 2 a.m., but by local reckoning this was still the 19th, as days do not begin until sunrise. Both first and last days are then counted, and the '10th' day was 28 June.

7. The houses were close enough together for us to be aware that this ban was not fully observed in practice.

During the immediate post-natal period, there are certain prescribed foodstuffs for the new mother to take. The full list of these, seldom fully conformed to in practice, is:

On the '7th' day the woman is given kōRikkari (chicken curry) and sārāyam (the locally-made liquor), mixed together in a glass in 3:1 proportions. On the '9th' and '13th' days she eats chicken curry again, and on the '16th' she has both curry and sārāyam. On this occasion the liquor is mixed with a medicine called paDikayam ('Asafoetida mixture'), which should be taken regularly after childbirth and which contains: 1) mañjīcal, turmeric; 2) kaDuku, mustard seed; 3) sukku, dry ginger; 4) kayam, asafoetida; 5) mīLaku, pepper; 6) narukkumūlam, a root of some kind; 7) ōmam, basil; 8) karuppaTTī, dark jaggery; and 9) pūDu, garlic. On the '30th' day after the birth, the woman should eat curry, sārāyam and paDikayam again (SaṅkarapāNDi Kōṇār, T1) ⁸.

This is the only situation in which women drink liquor, and it is also virtually the only circumstance under which meat is available apart from at the end of temple festivals. PiLLaimār women do not eat curried chicken after giving birth, but they do take liquor.

Isakkiyammāl (T4) merely took chicken curry and sārāyam on the '10th' day, after taking her purifying bath. This is the most common procedure in practice.

Birth has a 'cooling' effect on the mother's body (Beck 1969: 562-3) and so the immediate emphasis in her diet is on the supply of 'heating' foods to restore the 'symbolic temperature' of her body to equilibrium. All foods are classified as 'heating' or 'cooling', and to a greater or lesser degree (ibid:566-70) . Of

8. These timings are necessarily approximate, as meat should not be eaten on Tuesdays, Fridays or the last Saturday of a Tamil month.

the foods mentioned above, both the curry and the liquor are heating, while of the ingredients of the paDikayam, some are heating and some cooling according to Beck's list ⁹, with the former predominating

All babies are breast-fed. No family could afford to give their child powdered milk or baby food as its main diet even if they wished to do so, for the cost would have been about Rs 15/- per week, equivalent to 5 days' wages for a man. Nor did I come across any examples of wet-nursing. From the beginning though, a child is given not only karuppaTTi but also very sweet, weak coffee. Children are not weaned in any systematic way or at any particular age, but they tend to begin to take a little solid food (usually boiled rice) before the age of one. They may well continue to receive a little breast-milk (tāypāl, 'mother's milk') until they are 2-3 years old.

The limiting factor here is usually the timing of the next pregnancy: a pregnant woman will often continue to breast-feed the previous child for as long as she can, but given that no birth control methods other than abstinence are practised by the villagers, this may not be for very long. A child is liable suddenly to find itself, of necessity, weaned and relatively ignored (see Dumont 1957b:236, for an example of the psychological stress which this may induce in the child) .

7.4 Naming and Other Ceremonies

After the actual birth, the next important ritual event

9. I was unsuccessful in an attempt to collect my own data on this classification, though the ideas were certainly familiar locally.

is the giving of the child's name. This is usually chosen on astrological grounds, which is why it is so important to know the exact time of birth (7.2) .

On 18 July 1977, Isakki (T⁴) took her small son to the TV Ammaṇ Kōvil, accompanied by her 2 older children and a few of their young friends. The Ōduvār was in attendance, and he performed a short pūja with materials provided by Isakkī. There was no special ceremony involving the child himself, but on their return to the house it was announced that his name was to be SaNmukarāj.

Five days later, the boy's F MurukāNDī went to the Māriyamman Temple in IrrukaṅkuDī and had his hair shaved off, together with the beard which he had grown during the last few months of his W's pregnancy (cf Dumont 1957b:235) .

Other significant events in the life of a small child include the visit to an important temple at the age of about one, during which his or her hair is shaved off and offered to the deity. Next comes the ear-piercing (5.9.4), also accompanied by the shaving of the head, which generally takes place a few months or years later.

The initial head-shaving, prior to which the child will generally have a long and deliberately unkempt head of hair, often takes place at the temple of a deity to whom the mother had made a vow, or about whom she had dreamt, prior to the birth. A favourite choice among the Kōṇār is the famous temple of SuppiramaNiyār (alias Murukan, younger son of Siva) on the sea-shore at Tirucchendur. Another popular temple, involving less expense, is that of Māriyamman at IrrukaṅkuDī. At the temple, coconuts, betel, parched grains and pulses, sweets and sugar are

offered to the deity. The bulk of these are returned to the worshipper together with some holy ash, and when the family returns to the village they present small quantities of the food and ash to their relatives and neighbours.

CHAPTER 8 : LIFE CRISES: FEMALE PUBERTY

8.1 SaDaṅku : the Female Puberty Ceremony

None of the castes included in this study practise any kind of ceremony in connection with male puberty. The circumcision undergone by Piramalai KaLLar boys (Dumont 1957b:238-43) is unknown here, even among the KaLLar's local equivalents (on the bases of occupation and legend) the KoNDaiyaṅkōTTai Maṛavar. All castes perform rituals in connection with female puberty however. These are referred to in everyday speech as saDaṅku rites ('religious ceremonies connected with female puberty'), but a more formal term is irudu maṅkaLaSnāna ('puberty auspicious-bathing', JPF:82, 763) .

There is a considerable literature on female puberty rites in South Asia, yet the ceremony to be described below has never before, as far as I am aware, been reported. The distinctive feature of the rituals performed in TV and the surrounding region is the inclusion of a ceremony which, in its form and in the way in which it is described, is clearly analogous to a wedding, or kalyāṇam (Chapter 9), even to the extent of involving a 'bridegroom' who is, in most cases, a female cross-cousin of the menstruating girl.

This circumstance raises the question of the precise inter-relationship between these rites (and others reported by previous writers) and such practices as the 'marriage' of a girl to an object in Central India (Dube 1953), to say nothing of the celebrated tālīkaTTukalyāṇam, or 'tālī-tying ceremony' of Kerala.

These comparative questions will be dealt with later, once the form of the saDaṅku ceremony in TV ¹ has been described.

8.2 SaDaṅku Rites in Terku VaNDanam

I witnessed several saDaṅku ceremonies, involving girls of Maravar, Vēḷar and Paraiyar caste. In addition, I checked salient points with members of other castes, in order to find the extent to which the pattern was a general one.

All the castes in TV (and, as far as I am aware, in KP too) observe a ritual pattern which may be summarised as follows:

- (i) the girl menstruates for the first time, becomes impure as a result, and enters a place of seclusion;
 - (ii) after a certain time she re-emerges and is ritually bathed;
 - (iii) there follow certain rites reminiscent of weddings, which involve the participation of a 'bride-groom';
 - (iv) finally, there is a feast for relatives and fellow-villagers.
- There are also certain well-established prestations of various kinds.

As already mentioned, the 'bridegroom' is usually female. Among the Kōṇār however, a small boy plays this part. There are numerous differences in detail, not only from caste to caste but seemingly from family to family. The wealth of the household seems to play a large part in determining the form and degree of elaboration of the rite: in particular, rich families recruit Brahman Priests to officiate.

1. I attended no saDaṅku in VV. The only one in KP during my stay coincided with a wedding in TV, and although I attended the feast I was not present for the ritual.

It seems reasonable to assume, though, that the most essential elements of a ritual will be retained by even the poorest of those who practise it. Accordingly, I will begin by describing the least elaborate of the rites which I attended, before going on to deal with the grander affairs.

Example A : Saḍaṅku for Muttulakshmi (Maravar, T63) This rite took place on 20 November 1976, exactly 16 days after the onset of first menstruation. During the intervening period the girl was secluded in the western room of the two-room family house, as there was no space outside on which to erect the usual hut. She was allowed female visitors, who could go inside and talk, but she could not be seen by men.

When menstruation began she was given old saris to wear and the VaNNār (Candīraṇ, T32) came every two days to collect her dirty clothes for washing (for his payment, see 5.6, example C) .

On the day before the ceremony the outside of the house was given a fresh coat of white paint. Next day things got under way long after the auspicious starting-time of 12.30 p.m. The girl was first bathed inside the house; this should have been done by her attai (FZ), but as the latter was not present some other married women took her place.

The girl's F, SaNmukaccāmī (alias 'Pāppā') Tēvar, gave out sandalwood paste to the small boys in the audience, who smeared their bodies with it and ran off. Pāppā said that this should have been done at a later stage, but that as there was so little space outside the house, he had done it first to try and reduce the size of the crowd.

Muttulakshmi was led out in a new sari, her face yellowed with turmeric² and flower garlands around her neck. She was followed by her māpillai ('bridegroom', see below), this role being taken by Kuruvammāl (T128A), Muttulakshmi's MBdy³. The 'groom' was not dressed up at all.

2. This has a cooling effect: it is also used as a cosmetic.

3. Muttulakshmi was 17, and her 'groom' was aged 11-12 .

The two girls sat down cross-legged on a wooden bench, facing east, with Muttulakshmi at the southern end of the bench and her 'groom' on her left. The officiant was Muttulakshmi's periyammāl (FeBW), Nācciyammāl from Sēdūr, though she had little to do on this occasion. She stood at the north-east corner of the bench, and at the south-east was placed a tray containing an oil-lamp, a pot of ash, two half-coconuts and a pile of betel leaves. This tray had first been passed around, to be worshipped by the adults in the audience.

Vīraccāmi, the H of Nācciyammāl and Muttulakshmi's FeB, came forward and sprinkled some holy ash over both girls' heads. He then put a spot of ash on Muttulakshmi's forehead using his finger and thumb, and put Rs 2/- into her right hand. He put ash on the 'groom's' forehead and gave 'him' Rs 1/-. The honour of being first to do this would have belonged to Muttulakshmi's FF had he been alive, according to Pāppā Tēvar.

Others were then called forward to do likewise. Important relatives and leading villagers of other castes take part, and the order of precedence seems to reflect overall status rather than genealogical relationship (if any) with the host family. On this occasion the Panchayat President, MaDasāmi Tēvar (T31), went up next, although he is only a makan (terminological 'son') of Pāppā Tēvar. I was third, and other relatives followed. On this occasion few members of other castes were present, no doubt because of the simplicity of the event, but normally a fair cross-section of villagers both attend and take part at this stage.

After all this, Muttulakshmi was led back into the house, betel and sandalwood were distributed, and the crowd began to drift away. People were called to eat at various times later in the day. As it had been such a small-scale function, relatively few people were invited, and it was clear from the names in the moy ('list', see 5.5.1) which recorded the cash contributions of the diners, that most of those fed had been Maravar.

The main contributors to the moy, and their relationships to Muttulakshmi, were: Turaicciyammāl (FZD, madini) gave Rs 10/-; this was a duty inherited from her parents, who were the FZ (attai)

and FZH (māma) . Both are dead. Periyattammāl (FZH's second W, attai) also gave Rs 10/- . The following gave 5/- : Irakkattā (FMZSW, sitti), Vīraccāmi (FeB, periyappā), Karuppaiyā (T25) (FFBS, sittappā) . Kurusāmi (T128E) (M's deceased B's DH, aNNan) gave 3/- ; he had inherited his WF's obligations, in the absence of another adult male in his WM's household, next to which he lived ⁴ . These cash gifts come to Rs 43/-; Pāppā Tēvar claimed that the moy had realised 120/- altogether, the balance being in amounts of 3/- or less.

Four genealogical MBs (tāymāmakal) are still alive. In order of descending age, they are: SōDalaṁmuttu (T128B), IruLappā (T73), Cellaiyā (T128C) and SaNmuka (T128A, the 'groom's' F) . These four jointly provided Muttulakshmi's new sari, and also gave her some cooking or water-carrying vessels.

At the end of Muttulakshmi's next menstruation, all "important" relatives living in TV brought gifts of cooked food to the house.

A number of points arise from this account. The person I have called the 'bridegroom' is in fact a girl, referred to as the māppiLLai . This is a kinship term applicable to a male cross relative, usually one who is younger than the speaker (Table 10.1), and it is normally employed only by males. In connection with weddings, however, the word has the more particular meaning of 'bridegroom', just as pon (more correctly pen or peN) means 'girl' under normal circumstances but 'bride' when it is a question of marriage.

When asked why a girl should act as 'groom' at a saDahku , those castes following the custom reply that if a boy were to do so the effect would be that of a real marriage. This does

4. His WF would have been MB to Muttulakshmi, and he or his S would have been expected to contribute with the other MBs to her sari, etc. See Dumont (1957a:34-5; 1957b:259-61) for detailed examples of a S or yB inheriting a MB's obligations.

not seem entirely convincing though, given the Kōnār practice ⁵. In any case, certain key elements of wedding ritual are missing from the saḍaṅku. These include the tying of the tālī and the subsequent three-fold circumambulation of the marriage platform.

Nevertheless, the 'groom' is always a genealogical cross-relative of the newly-matured girl, albeit one who, for reasons of sex or relative age, falls into an unmarriageable category. Each caste has, moreover, a traditional preference for one particular genealogical relative as the ideal spouse: there is said to be a 'claim' or urimai linking the two preferred spouses (see Table 9.2). For a Maravar girl, the preferred spouse is her MBS, and it is worth noting that the 'groom' in example A was the MBD of Muttulakshmi.

The girl's periyammāl (FeBW) officiated. It could equally well have been her sitti (FyBW or MyZ). In either event, this woman is necessarily also the attai (FZ, MBW) of the 'bridegroom' (cf Table 8.1).

As for the prestations, it is clear that local residence, not just genealogical relationship, has a part to play when it comes to the giving of money. Thus a distant relative such as Karuppaiyā Tēvar (T25) made one of the largest contributions to the moy, whereas some of Pāppā Tēvar's own brothers from elsewhere neither attended nor contributed ⁶.

5. Palanimurugan told me that the role of 'groom' is played by the tāymāmā (MB) in his Vāṇiya Ceṭṭiyār sub-caste. A similar practice exists among some Vēllālar (Thurston 1909:VII, 385).

6. In fact, his eB Irāmasuppu (T3) did not contribute, but whether this was due to the latter's undoubted poverty or to some dispute, I am not sure. As for Karuppaiyā, he is one of Pāppā's sokkaran (9 5), which implies a certain obligation.

Whereas the responsibilities of parallel relatives are thus modified by the contingencies of residence and ability to attend on the day in question, a much more formal obligation to give devolves upon the tāymāmā and certain other cross relatives (for example, the FZ) . These relatives do not only give money, but must provide specified gifts such as the girl's sari and some brass vessels. In this example, the largest cash gifts, too, came from the family of the girl's deceased FZH, her terminological māmā.

It is important to distinguish the gifts in kind from the cash presents, because the recipient differs. The sari and vessels go to the girl herself; like the similar presents which she will receive at her wedding, they are her own property and cannot be disposed of by her father, father-in-law or husband without her express permission. On the other hand, the money, whether given in the course of the ceremony itself or after the subsequent meal, passes to the girl's F and is used to defray the expenses of the function.

I had previously attended the Vēlār saḍaṅku to be described below (example B), and I asked Pāppā Tēvar about the omission of certain ceremonies which I had seen there. For example, there was no visit to the temple in the above case, no Musicians and no ceremonial bath outside the house-site. I was told that because the ceremony was on such a small scale, there were no large gifts and so it was not worth processing with them to the temple (which would have involved a half-mile detour anyway, as the tank was full and the Ammān Kōvil almost surrounded by water). As there was no pandal (ceremonial shed) and no Brahman Priest, it was not

necessary to carry out the more elaborate bathing. Only a Brahman Priest could officiate, he added. If no Brahman was recruited then a relative always conducted the ceremony, never one of the local kōvilpūsāris.

It seems that the demands of reciprocity limit all aspects of the ceremony if the host family is poor. The cross relatives will not give large presents under such circumstances, nor can the household expect to recoup much by way of the moy, because fewer people will attend and they will give only small donations.

Example B : SaDaṅku for Karuppāyi (Vēlār, T111) This girl normally lives with relatives in Tuticorin, though her parents reside in TV. Her first menstruation had begun in Tuticorin, and a VaNNār there had dealt with her laundry during the 16 day seclusion period. The payments which he and the other officiants received have been detailed in (5.6, example B).

Karuppāyi was brought to TV so that the rites could be held at her natal house. There had, however, been a gap of more than a month between her actual menstruation and the holding of the ceremony on 5 October 1976. I was told that it could take place at any convenient time between 16 days and 3 months after puberty.

The ceremony began with a procession to the Ammān Kōvil, led by a Drummer and a nākaSvaram player. These Paraiyar Musicians were followed by some of the male relatives and by girls (not, of course, including Karuppāyi herself, who was still impure) bearing trays of gifts. One bore the sari donated by the tāymāmā, other saris had been given, and there were also coconuts and plantains for the temple offering, as well as flower garlands and cakes of expensive soap. The Ōduvār performed a brief pūja inside the temple, and the procession returned to the house, taking the most direct route in both directions.

A crowd had gathered at the house, including men and women of Nāyakkar, Maravar, Kōṇār and PiLLaimār caste, as well as the Vēlār relatives. One spectator, MurukāNDi Kōṇār (T4), was drunk

and made as if to attack the Musicians before being physically restrained and persuaded to sit down.

The 4 Vēlār households lie along the north and south sides of a small courtyard, which had been roofed over for the occasion. The usual bamboo structure supported a roof of woven matting and a ceiling of white cloths supplied by the VaNNār. Plantain trees were tied to the vertical bamboo poles and large hands of green plantains stood on either side of the entrance. Inside this pandal, two benches stood side-by-side in a north-south direction.

The Brahman, who was from Pasuvandanai, sat cross-legged at the south end of the eastern bench, facing north. Karuppāyi was brought out to sit on the other bench, facing east (kuruva cries from the women as she sat down).

In front of the Brahman, on his bench, were the following items (the numbers refer to Figure 8.1) : 1) a plantain leaf on which was spread a measure of unhusked paddy; on top of this was a second leaf; 2) a pot of cow's milk; 3) a bunch of plantains;

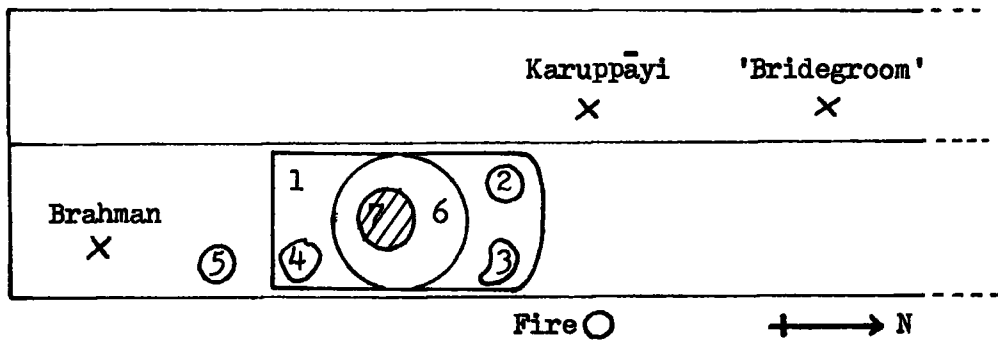


Figure 8.1 : Arrangement of Ritual Objects at Vēlār SaDaṅku

4) betel leaves; 5) a small brass pot filled with water and with a bunch of margosa leaves (vēppilai ; *Azadirachta Indica*) arranged round the inside of the neck; 6) a pile of husked rice; 7) standing on top of this rice, a large brass pot filled with water, in the neck of which a flower-draped coconut rested on

another bunch of margosa leaves The outside of this vessel was covered by a criss-cross pattern of white thread, tied round it by the Brahman. A white cloth was knotted around the neck of the vessel. On the ground in front of the bench was a small fire of sticks and ghee, the 'sacred fire' which is an essential ritual element when Brahmans officiate at weddings and saDañkus, but which is omitted otherwise ⁷.

The tray containing the tāymāmā's sari was placed on the bench to the girl's left. There were more kuruvai from the women. The Brahman aspersed the girl and the bench in general, using water from pot 5 .

Karuppāyi then climbed over the front of the bench and was led outside by her sitti (FyBW), UccimāLi (Tl10) . A crowd of women followed them out into the street to the east, but the girl's FF, AruNācalam (Tl13), was the only man to do so. Some of the women took out water pots, and the Brahman went out and poured pots 5 and 7 over the girl's head as she sat on the ground (kuruvai each time). The music rose to a crescendo.

The girl was led back in by her sitti and taken straight into the house The Brahman resumed his seat and proceeded to pour the rice and paddy into bags (they form part of his sāstiram, see 5 6, example B) . He removed the thread from the water-pot. Meanwhile, a VēLār man took away the plantain leaves and put out the fire.

The front bench had thus been cleared, and a tray containing two half-coconuts, plantains and betel leaves was brought out and laid on it. Pots of ash and sandalwood were laid beside it.

The sitti UccimāLi led out a small girl wearing a turban and jacket, and carrying a book and pen. This was the 'bridegroom': her name was also UccimāLi and she was Karuppāyi's MBDy . The 'groom' was garlanded and sat down cross-legged in the normal bridegroom's place, at the northern end of the bench and facing east.

7. The twigs should be from the *Ficus Religiosa* or Pipal tree (Tam Arasamaram) .

A few minutes later, Karuppāyi was led out by her sitti (kuruvai and faster music) . She was dressed in the new sari given by her tāymāma. She climbed onto the bench from the front, and sat down beside the 'groom'. Another of her sittis joined Uccimāli in front of the bench.

The Brahman put ash on the foreheads of 'bride' and 'groom', before pouring a little milk from pot 2 into the latter's right hand. The 'groom' drank this, and milk was then given to Karuppāyi in the same way.

One of the sittis put sandalwood paste on the couple's right arms and climbed over the benches to stand at the back. The 2 sittis then passed various objects to and fro across the benches. This episode occurs regularly in saḍaṅkus and weddings, and the details in this case were as follows: Uccimāli, standing at the front, took an item in each hand and passed both over simultaneously, one on each side of the couple. The woman standing at the back took hold of both items, and then immediately passed them back, the overall effect being that of a symbolic encirclement of the couple by each object. The process was carried out thrice with each pair of objects (kuruvai each time) . On the first occasion, two pots were exchanged; these contained cow's milk and cow's urine. Next the two half-coconuts was passed to and fro, and finally a full paddy-measure and some flowers were used. Then, to more kuruvai, Uccimāli broke a pappadam over Karuppāyi's head.

The tāymāma, Paradēsi Vēlār (not from TV), came forward and sprinkled ash over Karuppāyi's hair before putting some on her forehead. Her FF AruNācalam did this next, followed by his W, who gave ash both to the 'groom' and to Karuppāyi.

The couple got up, and Karuppāyi was led into the house by her sitti, who carried the half-coconuts. The music stopped and there was the usual distribution of betel and sandalwood before the crowd dispersed.

When I discussed the ceremony with AruNācalam Vēlār (T113) and his son Kurusāmi (T111), the girl's FF and F respectively,

they made the point mentioned above, that a girl acted as 'groom' to prevent the ceremony from constituting a real wedding. Only the father's maccinan's (cross-cousin's) daughter could play the part, they emphasised. In this case, Karuppāyī was FZDe to her 'groom': according to AruNācalam the FZD is the urimaippen⁸.

I asked why they had chosen to hold the ceremony in the month of PuraTTāsi, which is inauspicious for weddings. I was told that this applied only to true weddings; for other kinds of ceremony it was a more than usually auspicious month. This agrees with Beck's findings (1972:283) .

Finally, I asked them why the girl had been taken outside to be bathed: "Because she was impure (tīTTu)". Why had a Brahman been called to bathe her? "Only a Brahman can remove tīTTu."

Example C : SaDañku for SaNmukattāy (Maravar, T28) The saDañku for Karuppaiyā Tēvar's eldest daughter was a grander event than either of those described so far. Printed invitations were distributed throughout the village and to relatives elsewhere. The girl had been secluded in a temporary hut on the verandah of the house, and the ceremony took place about 7 weeks after her first menstruation, on 16 March 1977 (which was also Indian General Election day) .

The invitation, printed on a coloured card alongside a picture of Ganesh (Pillaiyār) and Murukan, read as follows:

upāyam Sri Murukan tuNai rudu mañkaLa Snāna aRaippitaR
With holy Murukan's aid Puberty Ceremony Invitation

uyartiru avarkaLukku anpuDayīr nikaRum mañkaLa-
Dear Sir, to you affectionately, being performed auspicious

karamāna 1152-mLu Sri naLa Tai māsam 20 (2-2-77) pudankiRamai
year 1152 year Tai month 20th (2-2-77) Wednesday

8. On another occasion, however, Kurusāmi VēLār (T111) said that the MBD was the urimai girl.

anru k̄alai 6 maNikku eṅkaLadu putalvi tiruvāLara celvi
that morning at 6 a.m. our daughter growing up woman

Sanmukattāy pushpavatyānāl nāLadu PaṅkuNi māsam 3
Sanmukattāy attained puberty⁹ That day PaṅkuNi month 3rd

(16-3-77) pudankiRama tiruvōNa naDcattiramum sittayōkamum

(16-3-77) Wednesday (astrological

kūDiya supayōka supatinattil anru k̄alai 9 maNikku mēl 10-30OkkuL
data) that morning from 9 till 10.30 a.m.

rudu maṅkaL Snānam terku vaNDānam eṅkaLadu illattil naDai peruvadāl.
puberty ceremony Terku VaNDānam in our place will be held

taṅkaL taṅkaL kuDumpa sakidam vandirundu kuRandaiyai
Yourselves our own family together with having come the child

āsīrvatikkumpaDi kēTTukkoLkīrōm
in order to bless we are inviting

avvaNNam virumpum
in like manner desiring,

taṅkaLanpuLLa
yours affectionately,

Karuppasāmi Tēvar (MB)

M. Karuppasāmi Tēvar (T28, F)

Sanmuka Tēvar (MF, deceased)

K. Pecciyanmāl (T28, M)

Sillaṅkulam

Terku VaNDānam

taṅkaL varavai edirpārkum

their own gifts will be expected:-

V. Ponnaiyā Tēvar (T67, FFB)

Terku VaNDānam

Cellaiyā Tēvar (T94, FMB)

" "

M. MaDasāmi Tēvar (T106, FyB)

" "

M. Kurusāmi Tēvar (T102, FyB)

" "

S. Pūlaiyā Tēvar (MB)

Sillaṅkulam

S. Karuppasāmi Tēvar (MB)

"

I have added precise genealogical data, indicating in each case the relationship of the named individual to Sanmukattāy. For TV residents, I have also added the code numbers of their houses

A 'radio' system had been hired, and as usual on such occasions, it began to operate on the previous evening. However,

⁹ Literally, 'flowered'.

the policeman who was staying in the village overnight, to guard the polling-booth, enforced a reduction in volume on the grounds that the use of loud-speakers in public places was now forbidden until after polling had finished

Preparations : The invitation named the auspicious period as being from 9 to 10.30 a m., and for once events kept fairly well to time. There was a pandal outside the house, and two benches were placed in this, oriented in a north-south direction. The Brahman officiant was MaNi Aiyar from KiRa MuDiMaN, in Otta-pidaram Taluk, and his first act was the tying together of strings of vēppilai leaves to form a kāppu kaTTu ('guarding hedge') over the doors of the house.

He also set out a number of ritual objects on the benches in front of him. These included the following (the numbers refer to Figure 8.2) : 1) a large brass oil lamp; 2) a full paddy-measure, with a small oil lamp on top; 3) a turmeric mound, representing PiLLaiyār; 4) a cow-dung PiLLaiyār with a tuft of grass in the top; 5) a pile of betel leaves; 6) a bunch of plantains (items 1-6 all rested on a plantain leaf); 7) a pot of

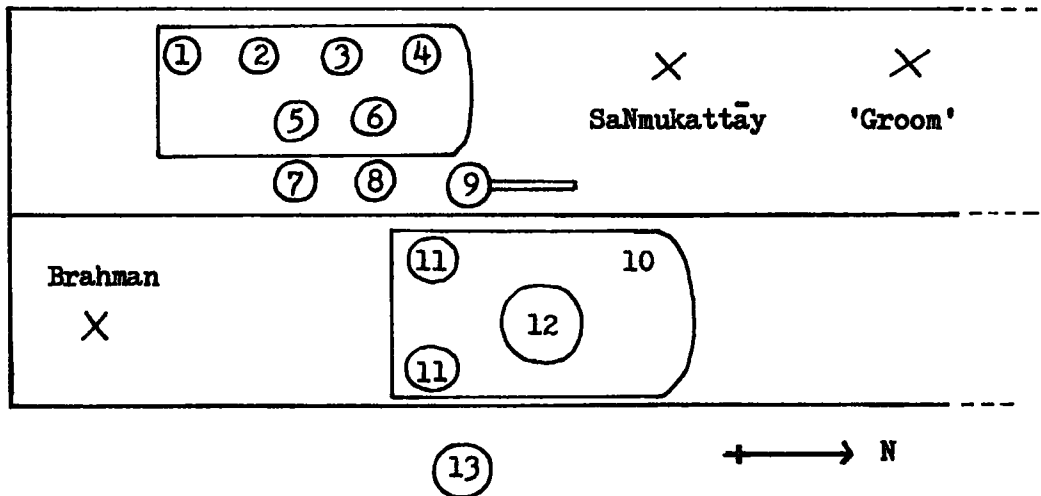


Figure 8.2 : Ritual Objects at Maravar Saḍaṅku (T28)

cow's milk; 8) a similar pot of cow's urine; 9) a ladle of hot embers from the hearth; 10) unhusked paddy spread between two plantain leaves, with raw rice spread on top; 11) two small brass water pots; 12) a large brass water pot; 13) a fire of twigs and ghee on the ground.

The 3 water pots (11, 12) were tied with white thread as in example B . The Brahman put turmeric paste, red poTTu and flowers on the big oil lamp (1), the paddy measure (2), the turmeric PiLLaiyār (3) and the small lamp (on 2) . The 3 water pots were decorated similarly, and a coconut was placed in the neck of each, resting on a clump of vēppilai leaves. A large dab of turmeric paste was put on the eastern side of pot 12 .

Incense sticks were stuck into the plantains (6) and the Brahman broke a coconut, laying half in front of each PiLLaiyār (3, 4) . 30 paise in coins was placed nearby, as an offering to PiLLaiyār.

Procession : The sound of kuruvai came from the house, and several girls and women emerged, led by TāmīRarāsi (T74) and Pārvati, the D of Irāmasuppu Tēvar (T3) and MBW (attai) to SaNmukattāy . Five of the women carried trays of gifts, of which they themselves and/or their husbands were in most cases the donors. The second tray, that of Pārvati, held the sari which SaNmukattāy would later wear.

The group of women moved quickly up the street to the west, turning to the north outside our house and proceeding to the PiLLaiyār temple ¹⁰ . The trays were laid on the steps of the temple and worshipped. The Ōduvār appeared in some haste and unlocked the temple, then brought out and distributed ash.

The trays were picked up and carried once clockwise around the temple, on its raised plinth. The women returned eastwards down the central street, turning south at the President's house (T31) and thereby completing a clockwise circuit of the central block of the village.

Bathing : Meanwhile, Pēcciyammāl (VaNNār, T32) had spread a sari on the rear bench, where the couple would later sit. When the procession returned, the tray bearing the sari was laid on the front bench and the other trays were set on the ground in front of it.

There was a kuruvai inside the house and SaNmukattāy was

10. They were not permitted to go to the Ammān Kōvil, as it was too close to the polling-booth.

led out by her 'groom' TāmiRarāsi (T74, her FFBDdy, sammanti) . The two girls went clockwise round to the rear of the benches and SaNmukattāy sat down alone, facing east.

The Brahman poured a little paddy into her right hand, and she sprinkled this over her head. He gave her some more, which she kept. She was garlanded, and ash and poTTu were put on her forehead. He put some milk in her right hand and she drank it. The coconut was removed from one of the small pots (11) and a little cow's urine was added to the water. A few drops of the mixture were sprinkled over the girl's head. During all these operations the Brahman chanted inaudible mantras.

The Priest got down from the bench and aspersed the crowd with a little of the liquid. He went off into the house with the pot and re-emerged through the side-door, thereby completing an anti-clockwise circuit of the residential site. He replaced the coconut on the pot, and sat down again.

The girl was given more paddy, which she threw over her head. She got down (kuruvai) and went out of the pandal to the east, led by her attai Pārvatī. She sat on a low stool facing east, and TāmiRarāsi poured a small pot of water over her. After some argument among the women, she was given turmeric paste to rub over her face and hands.

The Brahman brought out the two small pots (11), one of diluted cow's urine and the other having been similarly treated with a little cow's milk. He poured both over the girl, using the milk first. He returned to fetch the big water pot and gave the girl the turmeric from its neck, to put on her face. Then, as she loosened her hair, he poured all the pure water from the pot over her head.

Pēcciyammāl (the VaNNār) produced a dry sari, and this was wrapped around the girl as she was helped to remove her wet sari and underskirt. She was led back into the house by TāmiRarāsi.

The Brahman returned to the bench and put the 3 coconuts on top of the pile of rice (10) . Muttaiyā Tēvar (T92) (the girl's FBWMZS, māmā) tied a cloth round his waist in the manner of a

pūsari performing pūja, and carried the tray containing the sari so that it could be worshipped by the audience, the important men first and then the women ¹¹. Finally, he made a clockwise circuit of the benches and took the tray into the house. The same tray was immediately brought out empty, and the Brahman put ash on it, poured a little ghee into the centre, and lit it.

The 'Marriage' : At 10.15 a.m. there were more kuruvai shouts from inside the house, and Tāmirarāsi (T74) was led out by her M and seated on the bench. Saṇmukattāy followed, led by her attai Pārvati. She was wearing the new sari, and several stops were made while her helpers fussed over the arrangement of it, and adjusted her garlands. She was eventually taken clockwise around to the back of the bench, and sat down on her 'groom's' right. Both were given rice to pour over their heads, as before, and the Brahman gave ash and poTTu to the 'bride' and then the 'groom'. Each drank milk out of her right hand, the 'groom' first.

The attai broke a poppadum over Saṇmukattāy's head, around which it was first waved 3 times, clockwise. She repeated this with 2 more poppadums. Pārvati took a half-coconut in her left hand and the plantains from the bench (6) in her right. She passed both items to and fro across the bench to Tāyammāl (T74) (Tāmirarāsi's M, and FFBD - attai - to Saṇmukattāy) who stood behind the benches. They did this 3 times in all (cf. example B).

The giving of money now began. First came the KarNam's eB ARakarsāmi PiLLai (T40), who put ash on the 'bride's' forehead, did the same to the 'groom', and gave money to both ¹². The KarNam himself followed, and I was 3rd. Alison was 4th, but was not required to give money. Next came the President's F, Ponnaiyā Tēvar (T67), who was mentioned in the invitation, and after him the President himself (T31). Any others who wished to do so gave at this point: they included one other woman,

11. At a wedding, the tāli would also be on the tray to be worshipped in this way (cf. Chapter 9).

12. At a wedding one gives Rs 5/- (say) to the groom and 1/- (say) to the bride, odd numbers being auspicious. At a saḍaṅku the proportions are reversed, and the 'bride' receives more.

Anandammāl (T48'), a Taccaṇ Āsārī. While all this was going on, two large brass pots - gifts from relatives - were brought out and put down in front of the platform.

The Brahman made up a tray of coconuts, plantains and flowers, which formed part of his sāstīram. A complete list of his perquisites, and those of the other functionaries, is given in (5.6, example A).

The two attais passed turmeric round over the heads of the couple, who were then anointed with it (kuruvai). They got down from the bench and returned to the house in a line, each woman taking the left wrist of the following woman in her own right hand. The order was: (i) TāmīRarāsī; (ii) SaNmukattāy; (iii) Pārvatī. Sandalwood paste and betel were distributed and people began to leave. We were called back to eat almost at once.

Expenses : In addition to the payments to functionaries, the rental for the 'radio' equipment came to Rs 72/- for the 24-hour period. The total expenses including food, the major item, were put at 600/- in cash and 240/- in kind. The latter was largely accounted for by the use of their own rice, of which more than 1 kōTTai was consumed ¹³.

On the other side of the ledger, the total amount of cash given during the ceremony itself came to Rs 190/- . The major contributors were relatives, as follows: (i) the girl's FFBS (sittappā), MāDasāmi (T31, President), Rs 21/-; (ii) her FZH (māmā), Kurusāmi from ParumpukkōTTai, 21/-; (iii) her MB (tāy-māmā), Karuppasāmi from SillāṅkuLam, 11/-; (iv) her FFB (tāttā), Ponnaiyā (T67), 10/- .

Cash gifts received before or after the ceremony and listed in the moy amounted to Rs 581/- from just over 100 donors ¹⁴. These came from several different castes, and none of the main

13. They expressed this in metric units, as $1\frac{1}{2}$ kuNDal, i.e. $1\frac{1}{2}$ 'quintals' or 150kg .

14. The information is very reliable in this case, as the moy was actually written up, next day, by Palanimurugan and myself.

donors in this group (the 14 who gave Rs 10/- or more) were particularly closely related to the family. One of them was Irāman (T134), a Paraiyar, who gave Rs 10/- .

The total cash 'income' thus comes to Rs 771/-, as against expenses of about 840/- . In addition, the following gave gifts which were included in the procession to the Pillaiyar temple or, like the big pots, displayed near the platform, and which accrued to Sanmukattāy herself rather than to her F : (i) and (ii) her 2 FyBs (sittappa), MaDasami (T106) and Kurusami (T102); (iii) her FFMBDD (attai), Karuppāyi (T27), her widowed next-door neighbour; (iv) Pūlaiyā from SillāṅkuLam, her MB (tāymāma) and the H of Parvatī who officiated in the rite; (v) Mandira and his W MalaiyaRaku, her FZH (māma) and FZ (attai) from Vāvattā; (vi) Suppaiyā and his W Lakshmi, her MZH (sittappa) and MZ (sitti) from TennampaTTi; (vii) Muttaiyā (T92), her FBWMZS (māma); (viii) Suppaiyā and his W PāppammāL, her FFBWZDH (māma) and FFBWZD (attai)¹⁵ from Tālaiyūttu; (ix) four individuals from other castes, including 2 CeTTiyār from Tuticorin (but formerly of TV), a NāDar from Tālaiyūttu, and the Goldsmith Aiyanperumāl Āsari (T114), who gave plantains and flowers.

In this case, the pubertal girl was the MFBSD of her 'groom'. The two were cross-cousins therefore, but as they were not first cousins their relationship clearly did not correspond to the urimai link between a Maravar man and his FZD .

Those giving gifts to Sanmukattāy included all her parents' siblings except for her MB Karuppasāmi, who gave money during the ceremony. It seems significant that he was also the only parents' sibling who was still unmarried.

Finally, it is noticeable that even a large-scale function need not cost the hosts very much. Indeed, when the gifts are taken into account, the family appear to have made a nett 'profit'.

15. These relatives were also her MBWMZDH and MBWMZD, the appropriate kinship terms of course being the same.

Example D : Saḍaṅku for Irāmalakshmi (Maravar, T128A)

Irāmalakshmi had been kept in seclusion for 16 days, in a hut outside the house. The ceremony was set for 10 March 1977, and a printed invitation was distributed. It was similar in general pattern to that in example C, with the usual formal greeting, followed by the timing of the event and the relevant astrological information. It continued as follows:

enadu sakōtaran Rā. SaNmuka Tēvarin putalvi sau pākkiyavati
our brother Rā. SaNmuka Tēvar's daughter auspiciousness

Rāmalakshmikku Terku VaNDānam eṅkaL illattil vaittu
for Rāmalakshmi T.V. our place-in having-been-set-

Kayattār rāsi lāri adipar Tiru S. Perumāl Tēvar avarkaL
aside, Kayattār ? lorry-owner Mr S. Perumāl Tēvar he

talaimaiyil naḌaiperum pūppuppunita
in charge will be conducted menstrual discharge purity

nīrāTTu viRā ¹⁶ vaipavattirku taṅkaL taṅkaL kuDumpu
being bathed ceremony festivity. Yourselves our own family

sakidam vandirundu kuRandaiyai āsīrvatittu sirappikka
together with having come the child having blessed to honour

vēNDukirōm
we must.

avvaNName virumpum
in like manner desiring:-

innanam
thus (say) :-

Rā Irulāppā Tēvar (FeB, T73)

Rā Sōlaimuttu Tēvar (FeB, T128B)

Rā. Cellaiyā Tēvar (FeB, T128C)

Rā. SaNmuka Tēvar (F, T128A)

Terku VaNDānam

Terku VaNDānam

Ka Kōmati Tēvar

taṅkaL nalvaravai peridum virumpum
their good gifts greatly desiring:-

S. SaNmukaiyā , PannīrkuLam (tāymāmā). K. Sīttarāman, KīRappaNNai

A. NaḌarāja Pillai, KalappapaTTi

A. Rāmasāmi, MēlappaNNai

16. PūppuppunitanīrāTTuviRā is another formal name for the saḍaṅku.

A. <u>Saṅkarappā Nāyakkar</u> , <u>MēlappaNNai</u>	V. <u>Periyasāmi NāDār</u> , <u>KottāRi</u>
K.S. <u>Sēdu Nāyakkar</u> , "	Mu. <u>Suppaiyā Tēvar</u> (T83)
P. <u>Sīnivāsa Nāyakkar</u> , "	S. <u>MaNi</u> , <u>lāri purōkkaṛ</u>
S. <u>MuttuppaNDi</u> , <u>Sūriyaminikki</u>	<u>Kayattār</u> (lorry broker)

It is noticeable that there is far less emphasis on relatives in this case. The family are among the poorest in TV, on the bases of housing and land-holdings. They were no doubt hoping to entice large gifts or cash contributions from the people named, who are ex-employers or merchants with whom they deal. Few of these people actually attended.

Procession : The auspicious period lasted from 10.30 a.m. until 12 noon, but events ran extremely late. Eventually, 2 trays containing saris, flowers, coconuts, betel, hand-mirrors, etc. were taken to the PiLLaiyār Kōvil. One was carried by Ankammāl from VānarampaTTi (MZ, sitti, to Irāmālakshmi) and the other by MalaiyaRaku (T68, her FZDe and FBSW, hence her madini). They were accompanied by the 'groom', Kuruvammāl (T35A), the yZ of the latter, who carried a small pot. They walked very quickly, with frequent kuruvais.

At the temple, which was closed, they put these items on the front step, worshipped them, and returned by the same route. They all went into the house, but one tray and a sari were brought out again to be worshipped by important male guests.

Bathing : Irāmālakshmi was led out to the south-east of the pandal, to sit on a bench facing east, surrounded by women ¹⁷. Two pots of water and some veppilai leaves (margosa) were brought, and MalaiyaRaku dipped the leaves in water, walked round the girl clockwise, and sprinkled her with water. This was done a total of 4 times - once hesitantly and then 3 more times very quickly - and finally the whole potfull was poured over the girl.

17. These included a transvestite male from another village, a relative of the hosts who took part in all the female activities including the preparation of the food.

MalaiyaRaku brought turmeric from the house and Irāmalakshmi rubbed it onto her face. A second pot of water was poured. The girl's ornaments and flowers were removed and her hair was loosened; a third pot of water was poured so as to wet the hair thoroughly. She stood up and removed her wet sari and underskirt. She was wrapped in a dry sari and led back into the house, amid a great crowd of women who followed her inside.

'Marriage' : A bench was placed in a north-south orientation and a plantain leaf laid on its southern end. The rest of the bench was covered by a sari provided by PēcciyammāL (VaNNār, T32). A coconut was split by Irāmalakshmi's tāymāmā SaNmukaiyā (from PannīrkuLam, unmarried ¹⁸), who laid it on the leaf in front of the usual pair of PiLLaiyār figures. A small piece of coconut flesh was cut out and laid beside the PiLLaiyār, and a full paddy measure was placed on the leaf, together with some incense.

At noon, kuruvaī sounded inside the house and the 'groom' KuruvammāL was led out by MalaiyaRaku, with much discussion as to whether she ought to be wearing a turban. MalaiyaRaku went back into the house to fetch the 'bride' (more kuruvaī), who was wearing her new sari. Both sat on the bench facing east, with the 'groom' to the north of the 'bride'.

MalaiyaRaku waved vēppilai leaves 3 times clockwise over the couple and then threw the leaves away to the east (kuruvaī). She repeated the process with more leaves, throwing these to the west (kuruvaī). Taking a half coconut in each hand, she passed these to and fro across the bench, assisted by MāriyammāL (T128E), who stood behind it. The latter is both FBDe and MZDe to Irāmalakshmi, and is hence her akkāL. The coconuts were exchanged three times.

The 'couple' then exchanged garlands. The 'groom' passed a garland to the 'bride', putting it round her neck. She returned it to the 'groom's' neck and then transferred one of her garlands to 'him'. Finally, the 'groom' put this garland back around Irāmalakshmi's neck. The 'groom' mistakenly passed over another garland at this point, but it was returned by a relative.

18. No married MB was available to play the main role, as SaNmukaiyā is the only man among 8 children.

Each of these correct exchanges was accompanied by kuruvai from the female spectators, as was the tying together of the right hands of the 'couple', by Sōlaimuttu Tēvar (T128B) (her FeB) . The ceremony of putting ash on the foreheads of the couple ('bride' then 'groom') began, together with the usual giving of money. The KarNam was first to give, followed by Suppaiyā Tēvar (T83), a very distant relative but named on the invitation, no doubt because of his relative wealth. The KarNam's eB followed, then the President, various key relatives, myself, the Munsīp, the TV Talaiyāri, and the tāymānā . During this period, sandalwood was distributed to the audience

The 'couple' finally got down off the bench and went clockwise around it . The initial order was, MalaiyaRaku first, followed by the 'bride', 'groom' and Māriyammāl . Each held the hand of the person following (see example C) . About halfway round the bench, there was a discussion with relatives, after which they reorganised themselves so that the 'bride' was led by one woman and the 'groom' by another. The crowd drifted away and the meal did not begin till several hours later, by which time the male relatives had indulged in moderate drinking.

Expenses and Prestations : The family were unable to guess at the total expense incurred, but said that they had borrowed Rs 600/- from the KP Talaiyāri, at the latter's usual interest rate of 10% per month. In addition, 60 big pakkā of rice had been consumed. The pandal and 'radio' equipment had each cost Rs 30/-, while the plantain trees and electricity (an extension cord from Suppaiyā Tēvar, T74) had each cost 12/- .

The moy collection had realised Rs 363/-, the main donors being the girl's FeB Cellaiyā (T128C), and her MZH Kōmati Tēvar from VanarampaTTi . Six others gave 10/- or more, including Suppaiyā Tēvar (T83) and ABakarsāmi Nāyakkar (T93) .

Gifts to the girl were as follows: SaNmukaiyā (her tāymānā) and UDaiyār Tēvar from TennampaTTi (FFZS, mānā) both gave saris; Brass vessels came from Sōlaimuttu and his W Sōlaiyammāl (T128B) (F eldest B and M eldest Z, periappa and periyammāl). Oddly enough, a vessel also came from MaDan (PaLLar, V158) .

In this example, the 'bride' was MBD to her 'groom', so the relationship was not akin to the Maravar urimai preference. On the other hand, Irāmalakshmi did not in fact have any relative to whom she stood in the position of FZD because her mother's only brother was, as we saw, unmarried. Her family is unusual in that her F is one of 5 brothers who had married 5 sisters.

Examples C and D display many more features of marriage ritual than did the previous cases. Acts such as the tying of the hands, the exchanging of garlands and the breaking of the pappadums are all regularly found in weddings too (9 9) .

In several respects though, acts performed at a saDañku have an emphasis which is the reverse of that found in the case of a wedding. Most notably, a saDañku takes place in its entirety at the 'bride's' house, and a wedding at that of the groom. Ash is put on the forehead of the 'bride' first in the case of a saDañku, and it is she who receives the larger sum of money. Generally speaking, at a saDañku the 'bride' precedes the 'groom' in the circumambulation of the bench at the end (examples B and D, others unreported here) .

In example C this last feature did not appear, and this illustrates another aspect of these, and indeed all other types of ceremony, namely that the form is not constant even if one compares examples involving the same caste and roughly equal degrees of elaboration. Thus example D involves several acts (for example, the exchange of garlands) which were omitted from the generally more elaborate example C . It is instructive, too, to compare these two cases bearing in mind that example C

involved the participation of a Brahman Priest, while example D did not. The involvement of the Brahman seems to have led to a greater emphasis on the purificatory aspects, the bath and what preceded it, while in his absence the 'wedding' came to the fore

There is of course an invariant core to the ceremony, comprising certain key stages which cannot be omitted, but it is quite clear that the problem of exactly how these stages (and even more, their minor details) are to be accomplished, is solved in ad hoc fashion as the rite proceeds. There are often pauses for debate, during which knowledgeable or officious bystanders will suggest different courses of action, often with considerable vehemence.

This does not mean that the details are arbitrary, however. Their general significance, for example as 'cooling' or 'purifying' acts, is known, and the only argument concerns when and if they are appropriate, bearing in mind that each caste, and even each family, will have its own, idiosyncratic practices. Even the Brahman must be informed of these beforehand, for he does not have sufficiently detailed knowledge about his clients to be able to conduct the ceremony without their aid.

It is convenient to use a linguistic analogy here. Any sentence which conveys the desired meaning¹⁹ and which is grammatically correct, is as good as any other in terms of its information content. The actual form of words does not matter, within these limitations. In the same way, this ritual has an

19. To be more precise, analogy should be drawn with linguistic statements of an 'illocutionary', or performative kind (8.6.3) .

aim and an idiom: its aim ('meaning') is to announce that the girl is now mature and to return her to society as an adult ²⁰, while its idiom ('grammar') involves the correctly executed public performance of the seclusion, purification and 'wedding' episodes. If the idiom were to be inappropriate to the occasion (ungrammatical) then the desired social transformation would not be effected (the meaning would be lost) . There is however no single correct procedure, and many equally valid forms are possible .

8.3 Sociological Relationships Involved in the Puberty Rite

Table 8.1 displays some relevant sociological facts about the main participants in those saDañku ceremonies which took place during my stay. In every case, the sari worn by the matured girl was presented by her MB (tāymāma) . It is the responsibility of the groom to provide the sari at a 'real' wedding, and given that the groom may indeed be the MB of the bride in the case of most local castes, there is an obvious parallel to be drawn between the two prestations.

Two considerations urge a degree of caution in this respect, however. In the first place, the MB donates the sari at a saDañku even when, as in the case of the Maravar, marriage between a MB and his eZDy is both forbidden in theory and absent in practice (9.3) . Secondly, the MB who gives the saDañku sari is, if possible, already married and hence not a very likely choice of husband. Example C (8.2) demonstrates that the responsibilities

20. For a more precise formulation see (8.7) .

Table 8.1 : Relationships of Participants in Puberty Rituals

Caste and Household	Age of Girl	Urimai	Relation To 'Groom'	Main Officiant	Sari Donor
Maravar (T28) (ex. C)	16	FZD	MFBSD ¹	<u>attai</u> (MBW) ²	MB
Maravar (T63) (ex. A)	17	FZD	FZD	<u>periyammāl</u> (FeBW)	MB
Maravar (T128A) (ex. D)	16	FZD	MBD ³	<u>madini</u> (FZD, FBSW)	MB
Paraiyar (T139)	15	FZD/MBD	FMBD ⁴	<u>sitti</u> (MyZ)	MB
Kōnār (Kovilpatti)	?	MBD	FZD ⁵	<u>sitti</u> (MyZ)	MB
VēLār (T111) (ex. B)	18	FZD ⁶	FZD	<u>sitti</u> (PyBW) ²	MB
Ayōtti ReDDiyār (K20)	16	FZD/eZDy	FZD	?, ²	MB

Notes :

1. The matured girl had no female first cross-cousins.
2. A Brahman Priest took a leading part in these cases.
3. The matured girl had no MBD .
4. In this case the matured girl had no unmarried female cross-cousin in any close genealogical sense. Her 'groom' was her sitti, though considerably her junior.
5. In this case the 'groom' was a baby boy (Rav1 from T1); the girl had no cousins to whom she was MBD .
6. There is some doubt over this (8.2, fn 8) .

at a saDaṅku of an unmarried MB are very limited, should he have a married brother.

The identities of the other officiants are less clearcut. The married female relative who takes a more or less central role at the 'wedding' (and at the purification, in the absence of a Brahman Priest) is in most cases the FBW and/or MZ of the girl .

The sitti (FyBW, MyZ) seems to be the first choice. As shown, it is the genealogically closest relative of this terminological type who is involved, though she may be assisted by other, more distant relatives standing in the same terminological relationship to the matured girl.

To anticipate a little, the fact that the future H of the matured girl will in most cases be her terminological mānā (Tables 9.3, 10.4), means that the officiant here is not only the sitti of the girl, but also a terminological (or even a genealogical) 'sister' of the future H. That is, she is a member of the same terminological category as the officiant who will eventually perform the girl's wedding.

I know of no certain reason why the saḍaṅku rites described in (8 2, examples C and D) should depart from the norm with respect to the genealogical identity of this main officiant. In both cases there were genealogical periyammāls and/or sittis who could have been called upon. Indeed, the minor role in example D was played by a MyZ. These abnormalities cannot be explained by factors such as a preference for or against an officiant from one's own village, or a bias in favour of an officiant from a wealthy household. On the other hand, given that the Maravar do not marry their eZDy, it is clear that the argument of the previous paragraph does not apply; this may affect the choice of relative in some way.

As for the 'bridegroom', 'his' relationship to the 'bride' corresponded to the direction of the urimai link in 3 of the 7 cases, while in 3 others there was no relative standing in the appropriate relationship to the matured girl. The remaining

example, that of the Kōnār, involved a male 'groom' to whom the girl stood in the relationship of FZDe. The entire genealogy of the TV Kōnār does not provide a single instance of FZD marriage in practise (10.4), and it may be that this choice of 'groom', together with his extreme youth, has the effect of nullifying the saDañku qua marriage, just as the use of a female 'groom' is said to do for the other castes ²¹. The male, Kōnār 'groom' should be less than 10 years old, whereas the girl will typically be 16 or more by the time she matures physically (Table 8.1) ²². We will see below (10.6) that there is a prescriptive requirement that a groom be senior to his bride, and that this is universally observed in practise. Such a large age discrepancy in the opposite direction at a saDañku might in itself be seen as invalidating such a 'marriage'. It will be shown, too, that because of this age requirement, the 'bride' and 'groom' at a Kōnār saDañku are not in a marriageable relationship to each other from the terminological point of view, even though they are cross-cousins genealogically speaking.

There are a few puzzling references in the older literature to the custom of marrying a mature woman to a young boy, her junior cross-cousin. Following the ceremony, the boy's father, her MB, is said to cohabit with the woman and to sire her children. Several such accounts are quoted by Thurston (1906,

21 An argument against this line of reasoning is that the Kōnār do not claim actually to prohibit FZD marriage (10.4) .

22. The late onset of puberty seems to be associated, in general, with low levels of health and nutrition.

1909); they derive from casual observers for the most part, and I know of no such evidence from any trained fieldworker. Such practices would go right against what is known of the age requirements in South Indian marriages.

Two examples presented by Thurston concern groups studied here, the ReDDiyār (Thurston's 'Kapu', 1906:49; 1909:III, 240) and Kōnār ('Idaiyar', 1909:II, 360)²³, and I came across no evidence whatever for such a custom among either. In general, it is argued that the practice arises out of the absolute necessity of marrying a girl to the appropriate cousin, but this seems to misunderstand the classificatory nature of the prescription. I certainly do not claim that such marriages never took place, especially in areas remote from my fieldwork location, but it is possible to see how amateur ethnographers might have been misled by second-hand accounts of saḍaṅkus and eZDy marriages.

The saḍaṅku, at which a young boy or girl plays the part of, and is referred to as, the 'bridegroom' (as mentioned, māppillai also means 'male cross-cousin'), is commonly spoken of as though it were a wedding: the very word kalyāṇam is often used. It might well not be apparent to one who had never actually seen a ceremony that the 'groom' was often a girl and the 'wedding', at the very least, something less than a fully-fledged marriage. If the fact that women married their 'uncles' (who are to be equated, according to western 'commonsense', with the fathers of their cross-cousins) were also known, it would be very easy to jump to a wrong conclusion of the kind outlined above.

23. For other cases, see Thurston (1909:IV, 120) 'Kunnuvan'; (IV, 423) 'Malayāli'; (V, 265) 'Nattukottai Chetti'; (V, 441) 'Okkil-
iyan'; (VII, 184) 'Tottiyān'; (VII, 193) 'Konga Vellala'.

On the other hand, several of the reports state explicitly that the juvenile 'groom' becomes the pater of the woman's children, the 'uncle' being merely their genitor. This would rule out my explanation, and I would only add, from my own experience, that the possibilities of misunderstanding Tamil statements phrased in kinship terms are legion, particularly of course when one's own acquaintance with the idiom is slight. Nevertheless, this pater/genitor distinction could lead one to take the opposite view to the one outlined by me above, and to see the saDahku as a 'survival' of the now-defunct custom of marrying a mature woman to a boy. Such a view would explain nothing about the present status of the saDahku however, and would in that respect certainly be inferior to any of the modes of analysis set out below (8 6) . In the absence of precise data from the past, of a kind which will presumably never become available, the problem must be left open.

8.4 Other Female Puberty Rites in South Asia

It has already been mentioned that female puberty rites of one kind or another are to be found almost throughout South Asia, and that these may be associated with 'mock' or 'real' marriages in various ways. This formulation begs the question of whether 'marriage' is an appropriate analytical category for dealing with certain of the practices to be described. The point will be returned to in (8.5) and in the meantime the term 'marriage' will be employed as and when the cited authors do so, without prejudice to any subsequent conclusions concerning the essential nature of the phenomenon.

Certain elements are common to all South Indian and Ceylonese puberty rites. These include a period of seclusion for the pre-pubescent or newly-mature girl, the duration of which may vary with the hierarchical status of the caste concerned, at least in many parts of Tamil Nadu (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1974)²⁴. At the end of the seclusion the girl is bathed and there is a feast for her family and other relatives.

As the previous paragraph implies, these rites may take place before puberty or at the time of the first menstrual period. There does not seem to be any socio-structural or conceptual distinction here, though. If one accepts that the ceremony is at least partly aimed at assuring the girl of her due place in adult life, at safe-guarding the purity of her adult relatives, and at regulating access to her sexual and reproductive activity²⁵, then so long as she is never 'let out' into the world of everyday, adult life without this ceremony having been performed, there is no logical reason why it should not be carried out at any time before she returns to social life after her first menstrual seclusion. Differences in timing may thus be seen as purely cultural variations.

I now propose to give very brief accounts of puberty and pre-puberty ceremonies from various parts of South Asia, before going on to deal (in 8.6) with the various exegeses which have been proposed.

24. The period of seclusion is generally (not in TV) shorter for higher castes and longer in southern Tamil Nadu than in the north (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1974:126, 122). The same trends are found at subsequent periods too (ibid:129, but see 7.2, fn 1 for TV).

25. These propositions will be justified below (8.6.3, 8.7).

8.4.1 The 'Standard' South Indian Puberty Ceremony

Thurston (1906, 1909) gives brief accounts of the puberty ceremonies of many South Indian castes. Many of these display a remarkable uniformity, but their reliability is open to question, for Thurston was largely dependent upon secondary sources, and even when dealing with caste-groups covered by the present study, he nowhere mentions the existence of a 'bridegroom' or even the resemblance to a marriage ceremony²⁶.

A more detailed, recent account of what appears to be the 'normal' South Indian ceremony is provided by Dumont for the Piramalai KaLlar. His description may be summarised as follows:

The hut or shelter is built by a cross relative, from the girl's or her parents' generation. She is led there at an auspicious time by a senior or junior female cross relative. She is armed with a reaping-hook which she keeps with her throughout.

The day before the seclusion is due to end, the MB arrives with his gifts, which include 60 measures of parboiled rice, a silk sari, metal pots, garlands, etc. The girl offers him an ālatti, or tray of ritual objects, and he puts a garland around her neck. Everyone eats.

Next day, the 15th of her seclusion, the girl tears up and burns her hut at dawn. She bathes at a well, a meal is taken on the verandah of the house, and from that day until the 30th the neighbours take turns inviting her to eat in their house.

On the 30th day, the household crockery is replaced and the house is spread with cow-dung and aspersed (perhaps by a Brahman). Several important people are invited to a meal, along with the

²⁶ To name only those castes of whose saḍaṅkus I have details, the Maravar (Thurston 1909:V, 40); Kōṇār (II, 358); VēLār (VII, 343); ReDDiyār (III, 234) and Paraiyar (VI, 133). In this last case, a separate tāli-tying, not observed by me, is mentioned.

Priest (pūsari) and possessed dancer (kōḍāṅki), and neighbours. After another 4-5 days, the MB's family come to offer a banquet. Before it, the MB offers Rs 1/- to the girl, betel is distributed, and everyone bathes. On the following day, other cross relatives come (Dumont 1957b:243-4) .

8.4.2 Puberty Ceremonies Among the Sinhalese

The Sinhalese of Sri Lanka, who are Buddhists, perform a puberty rite which retains much of the structural form of the South Indian ceremony, while differing in its cultural details and in the duties of the various officiants. The following account is due to Yalman:

A menstruating girl is secluded in a small hut or a closed room of the house (Yalman 1963:29) . She stays there alone or in the company of an old grandmother. Her dirty clothes, urine, faeces and menstrual blood are put into a special cooking pot, as are the plantain leaves off which she eats. A rice-pounder is kept in the room with her (ibid:30) .

An astrologer ²⁷ determines the length of the seclusion, and at the auspicious time the Washerwoman covers the girl's head and leads her out to a place where she can be bathed in secret. The polluted pot is also taken.

Meanwhile, the Washerman purifies the house with cow-dung and turmeric, and decorates it with white cloths. He lays certain ritual objects on the floor, including: a pure cloth on which uncooked rice is sprinkled, plantains, oil-cakes, a basin containing water and a coin, and an oil-lamp.

The girl is bathed thrice in water or milk. The Washerwoman breaks the polluted pot against a milk-exuding tree, and dresses the girl in new clothes, retaining the old ones for herself. The girl is again covered in cloths and led back to the house, where a māmā breaks a coconut in two (ibid:31) . A Washerman may do this

27 The girl acquires a new horoscope at this time: this was not the case in TV .

if the actual MB is absent, but a māmā of some kind must be present.

The girl's head is uncovered inside the house, so that the ritual objects are the first things she sees. She looks into the water and puts out the oil-lamp. Then the māmā uncovers her head completely, she walks over the rice, and worships her relatives in order of seniority ²⁸.

The Washerman is given the ritual objects and the money in the basin. The girl's relatives then eat a communal meal. Her marriage may be arranged at this time (ibid:32).

Here gift-giving seems less pronounced; at any rate, Yalman does not discuss it. Moreover, the role of the Washerman and his W is much more central than in (8.4.1). The Sinhalese Washerman does not perform the funerary functions which lead to his Tamil counterpart being addressed as 'son' by the higher caste inhabitants of the village (5.9.2; cf. Yalman 1960:83; 1971:68-9). As the Sinhalese are Buddhists, his funerary activities are limited to the removal of impurity and he does not, as far as I know, act as a Priest at the cemetery. The fact that the Sinhalese Washerman is addressed as redi māmā ('cloth māmā', or 'cloth MB, FZH') rather than as 'son' (Yalman 1963:31) seems to accord with his generally higher status and his greater participation in auspicious events such as that described above. At the same time, this role corresponds closely to his everyday occupation, in that something dirty or polluted is made clean by his efforts. The Sinhalese mode of address would thus seem to recognise the 'purifying' aspect of his activities, whereas Tamils are more concerned with the fact that he necessarily handles the polluted items in the process.

28. See Gombrich (1971:60-2) for a discussion of the notion of 'worship' as not exclusively 'religious' in Sri Lanka; this would apply in a general sense to South India too

8.4.3 'Token Pre-Puberty Marriage' in Central India

Dube has described a form of what he calls "token pre-puberty marriage" which is performed by Hindu castes and "aboriginal tribal groups" near the Madhya Pradesh-Orissa border, at the extreme northern limit of 'Dravidian-type' marriage systems (Dube 1953:18) ²⁹. The characteristic feature here is the marriage of the girl, when still immature, to an object of some kind.

At the age of 9 or 10, a girl should be married to a prescribed object, an arrow in the case of 'tribal' groups (the Chinda and Chaukhutia), a branch of the Bassia latifolia tree among the Raj Gonds ("landed aboriginal peasantry") and a wooden rice-pounder among the Hindu castes.

This rite is referred to as the 'first marriage': it resembles a regular wedding in nearly all respects, but involves no engagement ceremony and no marriage gifts. During its 2-day duration, all major marriage rites are performed, as follows: oil and turmeric are applied to the 'bride' and 'groom'; there is a procession; yellow rice is thrown; the couple go around the marriage post; there is a ceremonial bath.

"A real or classificatory brother-in-law (sister's husband) of the girl holds the token bridegroom in his hand and acts at the different stages of the ceremony on its behalf. For this service he receives a special gift of money or cloth at the time of the girl's regular marriage." (ibid:19)

Should the girl not undergo such a ceremony prior to puberty, she and her family would suffer certain permanent social disabilities. For example, she would not be allowed to visit temples or to celebrate marriage with full rites, as she would be permanently polluted. She might also be suspected of witchcraft.

It is not clear whether the "brother-in-law" so ambiguously referred to should be in fact already married. It may well be

29. The term 'Dravidian' is conventionally used to describe marriage systems in the area with which we are dealing. The limitations of this characterisation will be made clear in Ch. 10 .

that Dube merely means to indicate that any male cross-cousin fulfils these duties. In any event, it is surely significant that although the 'marriage' is said to be with the object, it is in fact someone from the category of 'potential spouse' who "acts... on its behalf" and who is, moreover, subsequently given a prestation akin to that received by an urimai partner when his urimai girl marries someone else (9.6) . It is as though the validity of the 'marriage' between the human couple is nullified by the expedient of regarding the object as the 'groom'. The result is the same as that achieved in TV by the use of a female 'groom'

8.4.4 The 'Tāli-tying' Rituals of Kerala

For anthropologists, the most celebrated 'pre-puberty marriages' are undoubtedly those practised by the castes of Kerala, under the general title of tālikaTTukalyāNam ('tāli-tying marriage', JPF, 511, 184, 208) . There are numerous variations of this ceremony, from caste to caste and from region to region. Many descriptions are provided by Thurston (1909), but I present here, for purposes of comparison, a brief account of the rites formerly performed by the Sūdra Nāyar of Cochin.

A group of girls from a single matrilineage (taravād), aged from 2 to 12, undergo the ceremony together. Many groups seclude the girls for a 'mock-menstruation period' beforehand. The whole local sub-caste group (tara) takes part. A special shed is erected, a picture of the goddess Bhagavati is drawn on the floor of the shed, and a branch of a special milk-exuding tree is put in one corner so as to attract the goddess. A plank of the same wood is sat on by the girls, in turn, during the rite.

All allied lineages (inahkar) attend the 4-day ceremony. On

the first morning the girls worship their lineage goddess. Young men of the lineage go to meet the 'bridegrooms', who are chosen by astrologers. The 'grooms' are greeted at the gates of the house by the married women of the lineage, their feet are washed by the young men who met them, and they are seated in the marriage shed, in which auspicious objects are placed.

At the auspicious moment, each girl is led out by her brother and seated on the plank. The Brahman officiant hands the tālī to the 'groom', who ties it. The couples are secluded in the house for the remaining 3 days of the ceremony. There is some doubt over whether sexual intercourse occurs.

Next day the other relatives gather for certain rites performed by the priest and oracle of Bhagavati. She is propitiated and a cock is sacrificed, after which the oracle is possessed by her and announces that she is satisfied. The remainder of the second and third days is given over to feasting and music.

On the 4th day, each 'couple' takes a purificatory bath hand-in-hand in the village pool. They return to the house in their best clothes and eat a joint meal, the woman eating first ³⁰. The 'groom' receives food and clothing from the head of the matrilineage (the Kāranavan) and goes home. Among some groups, the final act of the rite is the tearing of a cloth, half being given to the tālī-tier and half to the girl, as in a divorce. The girl does not usually continue to wear the tālī thereafter ³¹.

The tālī-tier can become one of the sampantam (in Tamil, 'relations, affinity, alliance', JPF:349) lovers of the girl, who is now entitled to enter into several such relationships. He is in any case the 'ritual father' of her children, and they and their M will observe death pollution restrictions on his decease (Gough 1955c:49-50) ³².

30. This is of course a reversal of the everyday order of eating.

31. Fuller (1976:103); Gough does not mention this.

32. This did not in fact happen in many cases (Fuller 1976:111) .

Gough gives a number of other descriptions which point up the degree of symbolic and socio-structural variation. Whereas the tālī is tied by a member of an allied lineage in the above case, higher-ranking Nāyar groups arrange for this to be done by a local Nāyar chief from a higher sub-caste, or by a Nambudiri Brahman. Among certain lower-caste groups, the tālī is tied by a woman (the MBW or FZ of the girl concerned) or even by the local Barber's wife (ibid:79) .

One very interesting case, in the light of the present discussion, is that of the Tiyyar, among whom the tālī is tied by a boy, usually very young, who is drawn from a lineage into which the girl may marry. The available accounts ³³ show many similarities to wedding ceremonies, and the tālī-tier might indeed marry the girl subsequently. This caste, unlike those dealt with above, has localised patrilineal exogamous groups, though these seem formerly to have been cross-cut by dispersed, exogamous matrilineages (ibid:59-60) . In other words, this marriage system approaches those found in Tamil Nadu in that there is less emphasis on a unilineal system of descent as far as exogamy is concerned ³⁴, residence after marriage is virilocal, and inheritance is from father to son.

8.5 Puberty Ritual and Marriage

It seems clear that we are dealing with a single socio-structural complex, in that all these pubertal and pre-pubertal

33. Gough (1955c:61) quotes from Thurston (1909:VII, 80-1), Iyer, (1909-12:I, 285-7) and Aiyappan (1944:159-60) .

34. Gough defines 'descent' in a wider sense than Dumont: I will follow the latter (9 3) .

seclusions, purifications and 'token marriages' serve the same purpose, that of marking the social maturity³⁵ of the girl concerned, and regulating or directing her new-found maturity in such a way as to enable her to take her proper place within adult society. In particular, access to the girl's procreative power is thereby restricted, to a greater or lesser degree, within the framework of the accepted system of marital alliance for the caste-group in question, a process which will later be completed, among most groups, by a ritual marking the beginning of her enduring liaison with a particular husband deemed suitable according to the tenets of that system of alliance.

There has of course been an extensive debate over the particular question of whether the tāli-tying rite of the Nāyar constitutes a marriage. In general, Leach (1955; 1961b:107-8)³⁶ views the phenomenon which we commonly call 'marriage' as involving a 'bundle of rights' such as legitimation of off-spring, access to sexuality, labour and property, and the setting-up of links of 'affinity' between people and between groups. No single case of 'marriage' involves all these features, nor is any one of the latter common to all forms of 'marriage'. Moreover, other features may be added to the list without prejudicing it.

Against all this, Gough sees :

"... a quite simple logical flaw in (Leach's) argument...

35. This formulation is deliberately chosen: the rites are not primarily concerned with biological maturity save as a limiting factor, as is shown by their performance for girls of 2 years old (Gough 1955c:49) .

36. Reference will be made here to the 1961b pagination .

every ethnographer might extend at will Dr Leach's list of marital rights, and in short define marriage in any way he pleased." (1959:23)

For cross-cultural comparison, she goes on to conclude, we need a "single, parsimonious definition simply in order to isolate the phenomenon we wish to study" (ibid) ³⁷.

This begs the question of whether there is in fact such a cross-cultural phenomenon to be studied, which is precisely Leach's point in his subsequent comment that "all universal definitions of marriage are vain" (1961b:105) . To paraphrase his discussion of another issue, the creation of a class labelled 'marriage' is as irrelevant for our understanding of social structure as would the creation of a class 'blue butterflies' be for our understanding of the anatomical structure of lepidoptera, and for the same reason, namely that such labelling concerns itself with surface substance rather than with structural relationships (Leach 1961b:4) .

The situation is of the type discussed by Needham, who uses the analyses of Wittgenstein (1958) to argue that 'marriage' considered cross-culturally is an improperly-constituted class based upon 'serial likenesses' (Needham 1971c:13, 30) rather than upon a common structural feature. Yet even Needham, after stating his view that:

"There need not be... any one thing that the phenomena of... 'marriage'... have in common." (ibid:30)

finally recoils from the implications of this conclusion, with the comment:

37. Gough has subsequently modified her views with respect to Nāyar marriage, and now accepts Dumont's position (Gough 1965:11) (see 8.6.3) .

"What is common to the myriad forms of marriage may be only the contractual union of sexual statuses."
(ibid:31) ³⁸

This seems inconsistent: my own view would be that there is nothing common to the "myriad forms of marriage". As a corollary of this, it follows that it is fruitless to argue whether the various puberty rites considered above are, or are not, forms of marriage.

When, in subsequent sections, I discuss various practices under the general heading of 'marriage', this will be for convenience only, as a translation of the Tamil term kalyāNam. This usage will not imply any connection with any externally-imposed definition of 'marriage', though my discussion will aim to throw some light on the indigenous meaning of the term 'kalyāNam'. Similarly, the present chapter is concerned with the purely local (South Asian) implications of the saDanku and the other 'puberty rites'.

8.6 Exegesis

It is to the analysis of these latter rituals that we now turn. Various writers have attempted to interpret puberty rites, and the methods employed may be differentiated into several types.

8.6.1 The Psycho-Analytic Approach

Gough found it impossible to discover sociological explanations for such features as the social identities of the

38. Note that even this broad definition would not, because it is phrased in the plural, include the tālī-tying rite under the rubric of 'marriage', to say nothing of the other examples in (8.4) .

participants in the rites, or even for the necessity of holding them in the first place. She concluded that:

"... the answer to these problems lay in unconscious motivations common to the members of these castes, and could be elucidated only in terms of a psycho-analytic hypothesis." (1955c:45-6, my emphasis)

The resulting analysis is, as Yalman describes it with commendable self-restraint, a "remarkable argument" (1963:38) .

For Gough, the rite is "always a symbolic defloration" (1955c: 62) . It is necessary because of the "marked horror of incest" which causes the girl's male relatives to "renounce the rights in her mature sexuality before she is in fact mature" (ibid:64) .

Furthermore, even among matrilineal castes, there "seems little doubt that... a 'normal' Oedipus complex must develop in early infancy"; in other words, "a man unconsciously wishes to kill his father and appropriate his mother" and "a girl harbours murderous wishes towards her mother and incestuous ones towards her father" (ibid:66) . Among these groups however, the "suppressed hostility of a boy towards his father... becomes... transferred to the mother's brother at the age of four to six" (ibid:67) . This is shown, apparently, by the fact that the boy observes ritual pollution on his MB's death This argument is curious, in that it employs sociological evidence to buttress a psychological argument (see also below) . Gough is, of course, forced into this position because it is necessary to reconcile the Oedipus complex with matriliney, and to show that "unconsciously the mother's brothers... are regarded as genitores as well as patres... " (ibid) .

The role of the high-status Nāyar or Nambudiri Brahman in 'symbolically deflowering' the woman, among certain caste-groups, is to be explained by the fact that the taking of virginity is dangerous: "the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother, as a woman whom it is desirable to approach sexually but who may not be approached, because of the threat of castration or murder by a male parental figure" who is, in matrilineal castes, the MB . The virgin's male relatives control her sexuality but cannot use it, and she "is, therefore, feared by men of her own age-group". "A father-figure common to the whole society is therefore summoned, symbolically (and sometimes actually) to deflower the girl, release her, in respect of her sexuality, from the ownership of her natal kinsmen, and leave her... a normal mature woman..." (ibid:71) .

As for the goddess Bhagavati, she is equated with Pattirakālī, a "hideous, black-faced demon" (ibid:74) . She is both a virgin and a mother, and her accoutrements indicate that "she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common fantasy for European children too" (ibid:75) . The fear of deflowering a virgin arises from this association of the virgin with the 'phallic mother', because "like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack an aggressor" (ibid; author's gloss !) .

Menstrual blood is associated with the mother, and recalls "the infantile fantasy of parental intercourse as a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him and acquires the penis. A virgin who had

menstruated but was still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower" (ibid).

I have quoted at length from the original argument, because its very absurdity makes one telling point against it. There is of course not a shred of evidence for the interpretation offered, nor would Gough's account be directly applicable to the other puberty rites discussed here. She admits that her thesis calls for psycho-analytic evidence for the particular society in question, and that "such data are not... at present forthcoming" (ibid:46) . In any case, a universal phenomenon, such as the Oedipus complex is claimed to be, necessarily "loses its force in the 'explanation' of local and particular ceremonies" (Yalman 1963:38) .

In my own view, whatever 'unconscious motivations' might govern an individual's response to his or her participation in collective rites such as puberty ceremonies, the fact remains that these rites are primarily sociological, not psychological events. One cannot explain the behaviour of the community - or at least one cannot completely explain that behaviour - in terms of the motivations and desires of its individual members. Rites may satisfy psychic needs, but as they necessarily do so in different ways for different participants one can hardly argue that the rites themselves stem from or express particular needs.

I am not competent to judge whether Gough's argument makes sense in psycho-analytic terms. I suspect that it does not, but that view is irrelevant to my argument ³⁹ My contention is that

39. For example, Gough does not explain why the high-caste 'deflowerer' is not afraid of the virgin girl (1955c:72), nor does

these rites form a part of the very social order which, in Gough's exposition, is claimed to bring about the alleged motivations in the individuals concerned. Her argument is a circular one. If the social order - child-rearing practices or family structure - produces these motivations (Gough 1955c:66-7), then the 'motivations' cannot be used to explain the social order.

8.6.2 The Symbolic Approach

Yalman's approach seems a more promising one, for he starts from the assumption that "highly formalised collective rituals always do reflect the structure of the collectivity" (1963:54, my emphasis) . From this point of view, caste, as the "general unifying structural framework" (ibid:25), is the prime factor which must be taken into account.

Given the supreme importance of the caste system, it is obviously essential to be able to determine unequivocally the caste identity of all persons living within that system. More specifically, it is necessary to safeguard one's own purity, and that of one's relatives, by controlling social contacts with persons of doubtful or inferior purity. The regulation of marriage and sexual intercourse is one crucial way of avoiding status ambiguity.

she discuss his 'motivations'. The posited 'transference' of the boy's hostility from F to MB at the age of 4-6 does not ring true either (ibid:67) . The MB is the central figure in the boy's life from the start. Moreover, Gough ignores the fact that a Nayar woman might have several lovers (ibid:48), in her haste to justify the posited existence of the Oedipus complex. The supposed 'horror' of incest is at odds with the lack of Dravidian words for it.

This regulation may take many forms. Where the emphasis is on endogamy, as it is among the Sinhalese with their vasagama pedigrees and pavula 'kindreds' (Yalman 1960:88, 91), it follows, says Yalman, that a person's ritual status will depend upon the nature of the 'caste blood' received from both parents⁴⁰. As endogamy becomes less important, more emphasis may be given to the status of one or other parent until we reach the other limiting case of affiliation through only one of them. In such a situation, "status differences can be kept up by unilineal pedigrees without recourse to endogamy rules"; this is the case for the 'aristocratic' hypergamous Nāyar groups (Yalman 1963:40) .

In this latter situation, it is less important whom the status-bearing individual marries; if status derives solely from the F for example, the identity of the M is unimportant (ibid) . On the other hand, it is very generally true in South Asia that inter-caste copulation or marriage can only occur hypergamously⁴¹. Such attitudes date back to the Laws of Manu (Manu, x, 6ff) . Stevenson has suggested that this is because women are internally polluted by intercourse with a lower-caste man, whereas men are only externally polluted by intercourse with low-caste women (1954:57); for Dumont, such a view, held in the absence of indigenous evidence for beliefs of this kind, amounts to an imposition of western ideas of cleanliness and hygiene (1972:174).

40. If Yalman is speaking literally when he talks of 'caste blood', then his argument is not generally applicable. Both David (1973a) and McGilvray (1977) report Ceylonese Tamil views which do not see 'blood' as an individual attribute derived from both parents.

41. That is, between a higher-status man and a lower-status woman.

Be that as it may, if caste affiliation is acquired solely through the mother, the fact that the father is of higher caste will not matter , and may even be a social asset. On the other hand, so long as the off-spring of such a union were not likely to claim to be of his status, there would be little to deter a high-caste man from entering into a liaison with a lower-caste woman. The situation is an asymmetric one, in which the father must be of the same or higher status than the mother, in order to safeguard the status of the child. To this extent then, group membership still depends on the identity of both parents, though it is through women that the purity of the matrilineal group is vulnerable, and through women, therefore, that it must be safeguarded (Yalman 1963:42) . Hence the unusually great emphasis on female purity among Nāyar.

Thus far, Yalman's argument is a socio-structural one, resembling the earlier analyses of Dumont (1961a, b; 1964; 1972) which will be dealt with in (8.6.3) : only in the context of the caste system is it possible to understand the concern over the purity and sexual activity of women. The general approach seems valid and is, in any case, merely the background to what concerns us here, the puberty rite itself.

Yalman describes the symbolic structure of the Sinhalese ceremony (8.4.2) as follows:

"(a) The infertile child is polluted by menstrual blood. (b) She is segregated in a dark room where she becomes fertile but pure. (c) She is reborn out of the dark room with a new horoscope as a fertile but still impure woman. (d) She is cleaned but positively charged. (e) Her re-entry over the thres-

hold into the 'community' as a fertile and pure woman is marked by the breaking of the coconut.

(f) The positive charge goes into the water basin and other objects on the floor (g) The washer-woman takes them away... The ceremony is a public statement that the girl has reached the marriage market " (Yalman 1963:32)

He also goes into some detail over the nature of menstrual pollution (ibid:29); the symbolic meanings and inter-connections of menstrual blood, semen and milk (ibid:30); and the phallic symbols involved in the rite itself, such as the rice-pounder (ibid) , the plantains and oil-cakes (ibid:31, see also 8.4.2) . He argues that the structure of the Hindu temple, with its central shrine which only the purest may enter, illustrates his exposition of the importance of female purity, for this shrine is a symbolic womb in which is placed the lifkam or phallus of Siva. In this room, " 'purity' is created by the union of the gods" (ibid:44)

Leach has accused both Yalman and Gough of basing their arguments upon mere intuition, which is "quite incapable of validation" (1970:821) . However, most of the specific points which he makes against Yalman bear upon the material summarised after the lengthy quotation above (ibid:820-2), which does not seem to be central to Yalman's thesis. Moreover, Leach himself is mistaken on several points ⁴².

42. Firstly, he denies that the Washerman is a "symbolic kinsman": my own data (5.9.2) do not support Yalman's view (1963:31-2;8.4.2) that the Washerman's role is associated with cross-cousin marriage, nor was the relationship in TV the same as that reported by Yalman, but the existence of a relationship expressed in kinship terms is common to both cases. Secondly, Leach accuses Yalman of omitting to mention that a coconut has a male and female end (Leach 1970:824),

As an alternative, Leach proposes a symbolic structure based upon the fact, recognised but not followed up by Yalman, that the ceremony is a typical rite de passage, consisting as it does of a process of separation, a period of isolation, and a re-aggregation process during which the individual concerned returns to society with a new social status (Van Gennep 1960) . The infant girl is in a 'normal, neuter' state; at first menstruation she becomes an 'abnormal, impure, neuter' personage and because of her abnormality she is isolated. At the end of menstruation the girl is bathed and becomes an 'abnormal, pure female'. When she returns to the house and walks over the rice to increase her fecundity, she becomes an 'abnormal, pure, fertile female'. Finally, her exceptional purity is transferred to the ritual objects: these are removed by the Washerman, and the girl becomes a 'normal, adult female' (Leach 1970:824-5) .

So Leach is concerned with the symbolism of the "transformational process" : instead of considering the 'symbolic meanings' of the particular items involved in the ritual, he emphasises the inter-relationships of these objects. The rice-pounder, which Yalman saw as phallic, is viewed by Leach as the instrument whereby the neuter infant (= unhusked paddy) is transformed into the fertile woman (= pounded, husked rice, over which she walks) (ibid:825) . The argument is ingenious, though Leach certainly overstates his case when he implies that his style of analysis, unlike Yalman's, might be extended to cover puberty

according to Sinhalese belief, yet Yalman discusses that very issue (Yalman 1963:55) .

and marriage among Jews and Catholics within the same paradigm (ibid:827) . Moreover, it is hard to see in what respects Leach's analysis is less "intuitive" than Yalman's, though it is certainly more structured and abstract. Rather than superseding Yalman's argument, it throws a different, complementary light on the same body of data.

I am in agreement with Leach's concluding admission, that "beyond a certain point, the gimcrack operations of Levi-Strauss's cultural bricoleur require no 'explanation' at all" (ibid:828) . Certain aspects of any Indian ritual are likely to be cultural borrowings, consonant⁴³ with what is taking place but devoid of precise meaning or function in that particular context. The borrowing of ritual forms for reasons of status-advancement, for example, may lead to the performance of acts, and the presence of objects, which have nothing to do with the symbolisation of the social transformation which is actually occurring.

One cannot, I would argue, apply Turner's style of symbolic analysis (cf. Turner 1967) to the Indian context because the necessary degree of cultural homogeneity and exegetic consensus is lacking in the multi-caste environment which prevails. To be more precise, the symbolic structure of the various saḍaṅku rites described in (8.2) should be sought not in the material symbols employed but in the actions and statuses of the participants. Here there are no 'dominant' material symbols such as the milk-exuding trees of the Ndembu (ibid:20-1): such material symbols as do appear are less important and may be seen as akin to Turner's 'instrumental' symbols, which are the "means of attaining...

43. That is, grammatically correct: see (8.2) .

explicitly expressed goals" (ibid:32) . As we have seen, the choice of such symbols, and indeed the order in which they are employed, varies from case to case.

When reading Turner, one feels that the rites have been constructed around the central, immutable symbols ⁴⁴ The emphasis in Indian ritual seems to be the other way round: the material symbols are introduced where appropriate into the primarily social, performative rite ⁴⁵. I will try to illustrate this 'socio-symbolic' view below (8.7) : it will be seen that my view of symbolism owes more to Leach (especially Leach 1976) than to Turner.

8.6.3 The Socio-Structural Approach

In the final analysis, the puberty ritual may be seen as associated with a transformation in the socio-structural status of the girl concerned. To retain the previous nomenclature for a moment, the rite 'symbolises' that transformation. But we are no longer dependent upon intuition at this level of analysis: we do not need to posit such intangibles and unverifiabiles as 'unconscious Oedipus complexes' or 'phallic rice-pounders'. From the socio-structural viewpoint, we can observe directly that which is being symbolised, namely the social organisation of that society.

⁴⁴. For example: dominant symbols "possess considerable autonomy with regard to the aims of the rituals in which they appear." (Turner 1967:31) .

⁴⁵. The pot of water poured by the Brahman, for example, is not a symbol but an agent. The symbol is the pouring of it over the girl. This would be, as I understand it, Leach's (1970) position too.

Moreover, the ritual does not merely 'symbolise' the social transformation, it also 'effects' it. Tambiah (1973a:220-2) has extended the linguistic analyses of Austin (1962) to cover ritual behaviour also: in these terms, the female puberty ritual is an 'illocutionary' act. An illocutionary linguistic statement, such as "I apologise", brings about, by the mere fact of being uttered, the state of affairs to which it refers, and similarly the enactment of the puberty rite brings about the socio-sexual maturity of the girl. Rituals and illocutionary statements are both performative .

It follows that in order to be effective, such rituals must be correctly performed (grammatical) . To this extent the symbols and objects employed, and the identities and activities of the participants, must be appropriate to their context. That apart, however, they are sociologically irrelevant: it is the fact that the ritual is indeed performed which brings about the structural transformation.

Our attention should therefore be directed to the social structure as depicted in and reconstituted by the rite. From this point of view, Yalman (1963:25) is right to emphasise those institutions, primarily the caste system but also rules governing the choice of marriage partner, which span the entire geographical region with which we are concerned. It is within this wider social context, too, that Dumont offers an interpretation of, in particular, the tālī-tying rites of the 'aristocratic' Nayar.

His argument (Dumont 1961a; 1964:82; see also 1972:158, 166 for a brief summary) rests upon the discrimination of several

different types of marriage⁴⁶. Not only may sexual liaisons (and their offspring) be 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate', as in the distinction between 'wives' and 'concubines', but the former type may be further sub-divided into unions of 'high status' and 'low status' .

From the male viewpoint, 'principal' (senior or first) wives may be distinguished from 'subsidiary' (or subsequent) ones. But whereas a man may often undergo a number of marriages with full rites, it is almost always true that a woman "can be married in the strict sense and with full ritual only once" (1964: 82) . For her then, subsequent unions, even if legitimate, can only involve truncated marriage rites and are in this sense 'secondary' or inferior.

Dumont points out that a 'full marriage', a union which is both the 'principal' marriage of the man and the 'primary' marriage of the woman, is strictly regulated in terms of the limitations imposed upon the castes and statuses of the parties involved (ibid:83) . A marriage which is 'subsidiary' for the H and/or 'secondary' for the W is less rigidly circumscribed, while the concubinage relationship is the least regulated of all.

Dumont considers mainly the 'aristocratic' Nāyar groups, on the grounds that because they practise hypergamy their procedures are uncomplicated (as far as the present analysis is concerned) by considerations of kinship. His view of hypergamy, as adapted by Yalman, has already been mentioned (8.6.2) . Dumont does not

⁴⁶. Dumont bases these distinctions on his own observations among the Pīramalai Kāḷḷar (1957b) .

concentrate on purity though, but upon the fact that caste boundaries are not absolute. They are merely some of the more important among a whole variety of social cleavages (ibid) .

The situation can only be understood when two sociological factors are kept in mind. Firstly, the Nāyar are matrilineal whereas most castes, even in Kerala, have patrilineal descent ⁴⁷ Secondly, a given rite may set up a secondary union, or even a concubinage relationship, for the male party, while constituting the 'primary' marriage of the woman.

The tāli-tying rite is seen by Dumont as the 'primary' marriage of the woman. It may be performed (for these Nāyar) by a Nambudiri Brahman, and the high status of the 'groom' maintains or even enhances the status of the girl's family. It is less important to control the woman's secondary (sampantam) unions, except insofar as the man must not be of lower status.

Among the Nambudiri, only the eldest son makes a 'principal' marriage to a Nambudiri girl. The younger sons can only enter into 'subsidiary' unions of sampantam type with women of lower status, such as the 'aristocratic' Nāyar. From the point of view of the patrilineal, isogamous Nambudiri, only the off-spring of 'full' or 'principal' marriages can possibly be of Nambudiri caste. For the matrilineal, hypergamous Nāyar, on the other hand, the children of the Nambudiri's 'subsidiary' unions are unequivocally Nāyar, with a status which is if anything higher because of the identity of their genitor . The relationship between Nāyar and Nambudiri is thus one of "symbiosis", in which the two contrasting systems of lineal descent interlock.

47. For the Dumontian definition of 'descent', see (9.3) .

Dumont's main aim is to show that the tālikaTTu ceremony and the system of sampantam liaisons, are not bizarre and unique phenomena but institutions perfectly consistent with pan-Indian practice, albeit in a somewhat idiosyncratic way (1961a) . He restricts his account to this single example, but the analysis can be extended to the other Nāyar groups too, for the symbiosis of aristocrats and Nambudiri is merely the upper limit of a structure which links a whole series of matrilineal, hyper-gamously-linked Nāyar groups (cf Dumont 1961a:28) whose relationships are more complicated because the caste identity of the two parties imposes a greater or lesser degree of common kinship upon them.

Dumont's approach is really descriptive rather than analytic, apart from his valuable discussion of the 'types' of marital union Fuller has carried socio-structural analysis further than this, and his discussion is particularly interesting because it starts from the same premise as my own, that 'marriage' is not a useful sociological concept (8.5) . He adds that:

"The problem... is not to decide whether the tāli-rite was a marriage; it is rather to determine what was 'stated' in the rite, and then to compare these 'statements' with similar or identical ones made in other communities..." (Fuller 1976:105)

In addition, he directs much more attention to the sampantam relationship, in an attempt to view puberty, purity and marriage as a single cultural and structural complex (ibid) .

Fuller begins by refining a distinction made by Iyer (1909-12: II, 27-8) . For most Hindus, marriage is made up of a 'betrothal' and a 'consummation', and Iyer suggested that the tālikaTTu rite

and the ritual inauguration of the sampantam relationship (Fuller 1976:107-8), respectively, corresponded to these two stages. The two rites taken together constituted the 'marriage'. Fuller points out that the 'betrothal-consummation' nomenclature does not really apply to the Nayar and suggests, purely for convenience, the terms 'first' and 'second' marriage (ibid:105). These usages seem un-necessarily confusing, especially in view of Dumont's terminology, to which, as Fuller notes, his own distinctions do not correspond.

Instead, I prefer to describe the two stages as the 'puberty ceremony' and the 'wedding' respectively (these being labels, not phenomena defined cross-culturally). The two rites taken together represent the transition from immature child to mature wife and mother, a view which sees the entire period of mature, un-married womanhood as a phase of liminality (Turner 1974:80). In this particular case, entrance into that state is given much more emphasis, relative to departure from it, than is usually the case in India.

Be that as it may, I would agree with Fuller's considering of the two separate rites as a structural whole, and with his view of the tāli-tying ceremony as a rite of passage (contained within the larger rite), a view discussed above. As he points out, though, it is more than this, at least in those cases in which there is an enduring relationship (of affinity for example) between the girl's family and that of the tāli-tier (Fuller 1976:105-6). One could make the same point in connection with the 'token marriage' reported by Dube (8.4 3) and even, once these comparative studies have provided the clue, for the castes of TV.

Dumont has argued that the relationship between sampantam partners, and between their respective lineages, is for most Nāyar (not those with Nambudiri partners) one of 'affinity' ⁴⁸, in typical South Indian fashion (1961a:21) . Dumont seems over-anxious to prove that 'affinity' is identical in all cases, but like Fuller (1976:114) I feel that Dumont is right to the extent that there is a basic similarity among them. As a result, the relationship between 'affinal' (inaṅkar) lineages resembles that prevailing in Tamil Nadu, even though the relationship between the individual husband and wife is much less important

All this leads Fuller to the view that the woman's "second marriage" (Iyer's 'consummation') is "primarily concerned with the continuation of her or her husband's line through the birth of legitimate children" (ibid:105) . He argues, in short, that the tālikattu ensures the status and purity of the girl herself whereas the sampantam inauguration does the same for her children. This seems a valuable insight.

In Fuller's opinion, the usual Indian situation is however one in which the "first" and "second" marriages are not separated;

"They are both included within one 'ordinary' marriage, which is thus a rite of passage for the bride, as well as a ritual concerned with sexual relations and the progeniture of children." (ibid)

This position seems to need revision in the light of the data on

⁴⁸ Dumont's concept of 'affinity' will be dealt with later (10 2). For the moment, I need only say that whereas I will argue against its usefulness in terminological analysis, it does seem helpful when, as here, it is applied to behaviour and jural rules

female rites of passage which has been presented above. It appears that the Nayar system of puberty ritual and marriage is less idiosyncratic than even Dumont and Fuller think.

8.7 A Socio-Symbolic Analysis of the SaDaḥku Rite

It is time to return to the TV saDaḥku rite itself, to show how its symbolic structure may be analysed with the minimum of recourse to the 'intuition' of the anthropologist. In performing the analysis, the emphasis will be on the significance of the acts which make up the rite, rather than on material symbols.

To begin at the most superficial level, the saDaḥku ritual involves a sequence of events in time. The most important of these are, in order, the onset of menstruation and the beginning of the associated seclusion, the end of this seclusion, the bathing of the girl, and the 'marriage' ceremony. This sequence, together with the other data to be presented below, is summarised in Figure 8.3 .

If we look a little deeper, we see that there is an overall 'socio-temporal' sequence, which differs from the above in that it is not linear and continuous, but quantised and sporadic. On the one hand, rites of passage contain a liminal period of 'social timelessness' (Leach 1976:77); on the other, ritual performances occupy finite time-spans but "the message is transmitted as if everything happened simultaneously" (ibid:44) . In the present case, the socio-temporal sequence may be summed up as follows: childhood gives way to seclusion and liminality, which is in turn replaced by adulthood. This is nothing more than a reformulation of Van Gennep (1960) in appropriate terms

We now come to the changes which are brought about during these sequences. As we have seen, one approach would be to say that these are 'symbolised' by the ritual acts. By contrast, I have argued that the acts do not so much represent the changes taking place as bring them about. I propose to describe these changes in terms of the reversal or persistence of the girl's orientation with respect to a series of empirically-verifiable or verbally-explicit dichotomous structural oppositions, a procedure which perhaps sounds more complicated than it actually is.

I will consider the various oppositions one-by-one, showing how and when changes in polarity occur during the temporal and 'socio-temporal' progress of the rite. I begin with the opposition immature/mature. It is clear that at the beginning of the ritual process, the girl is in an immature state and that by the end, whatever her biological condition, she has become socially mature⁴⁹. As it happens, the onset of biological and social maturity is at least notionally simultaneous in TV, but the comparative evidence has shown that this is not necessarily the case everywhere.

In each case, I will mention some of the evidence for my chosen oppositions, and for the reversals which occur with respect to them. Here, the girl becomes mature during her seclusion, at the end of the first menstrual period itself. This is vouched for by informants and is also manifest in her clothing. Prior to

49. Relatively speaking, that is; one can also view the kalyāṇam rite as a subsequent transition from relative immaturity to relative maturity.

her seclusion, a girl will have worn a long skirt and blouse, or possibly a 'half-sari'; subsequently she always wears a full, adult's sari. At first this is simply an old, dirty garment, but after the bathing she puts on the new sari given by the MB. From this point on, she will always dress like a mature woman, and there could be no question of her reverting to a skirt.

Now consider the opposition pure/impure. Here the situation is more complex, for it is not a question of a single, irreversible change in orientation. The woman 'created' by the rite is in a state of normal purity, as was the girl before it began, but there is an intermediate phase of impurity. It is quite clear from informants' statements that the impurity begins with the onset of menstruation, and that it is because of this that the girl is placed in seclusion. The Vēlār pūsāri has already been quoted to the effect that this impurity is removed by the ritual bath (8 2). But this is not the end of the matter, for the point about purity is that it is relative (Dumont and Pocock 1959: 17). The normal, 'secular' purity mentioned so far is itself impure relative to the sacred purity attained during the wedding episode, which has to be dissipated at the very end.

Another transformation may be represented by the opposition girl/woman. This also undergoes a single, irreversible change but it cannot, I would argue, be equated with the acquisition of maturity (above). If that were so then the bathing alone would be sufficient to transform the 'impure woman' into a pure, social personage, yet in practise the major part of the ceremony is still to come. I see the 'wedding' as bringing about this onset of womanhood and I will argue below that this process takes the form

of another rite of passage within the framework of the larger saDañku rite, just as the saDañku as a whole is itself only an episode within that encompassing rite of passage which is the puberty-marriage complex.

As for the hot/cool opposition, it is clear that 'heat' is a condition brought about by a state of impurity, while 'coolness' is a symptom of 'normal' purity. These relationships are brought out very clearly by Beck (1969:562), and though my informants were less verbally explicit on such matters than her's, they nonetheless employed 'cooling' substances such as water, cow's-milk and cow's-urine, turmeric, sandalwood paste and Margosa leaves (cf. *ibid*:568-9) during the bathing. Once again the 'wedding' episode complicates matters: all rituals seem to produce 'heat' (*ibid*:564) and it follows that whereas during an inauspicious rite (the seclusion) heat is associated with impurity, it arises in conjunction with special purity during auspicious transitions (the 'wedding'). In each case, though, changes in the 'symbolic temperature' of the girl are directly related to changes in her purity.

There are three spatial oppositions, which are subject to direct, empirical observation. The first is that of inside the house/outside the house. The previously pure girl (inside) finds herself excluded (outside) when she first menstruates. After the bath, she is pure and goes back inside. As a 'mature girl' she is still socially anomalous though, and so the 'wedding' takes place (outside). At the end, she becomes a 'normal, mature woman' (and goes inside again).

The spatial opposition outside the hut/inside the hut, is more simply disposed of, for the girl enters the hut at the beginning of menstruation and leaves it for ever at the end. If we compare these two locations, it is clear that the house is associated with 'normality' and with the possession of a definite social status, whereas the hut represents liminality and ambiguity. This it does in a negative, inauspicious, impure context.

The marriage shed (pandal), on the other hand, represents positive, auspicious, pure ambiguity. Dumont has argued that the Hindu marriage rite brings about a temporary exaltation of the status of the main participants (1972:91-2): the girl begins it as a pure individual and is purified still further by the Brahman. She is now, as we saw, 'hot' as a result of this exceptional purity, and has to be 'cooled' (sandalwood, holy ash) before she can return to the normal state of secular purity. At the same time, the performance of the 'wedding' has effected the transition to womanly status. Here then is the third spatial opposition, that between outside the shed/inside the shed.

Leach has argued that liminality may be regarded as a condition of 'social death' (1976:79), in the sense that the secluded or otherwise marginal individual is temporarily or permanently removed from normal social structure. If we consider the opposition living/dead, then the seclusion in the hut can be seen as a form of social death, and the girl's subsequent re-emergence as a re-birth⁵⁰. It is possible to trace similarities between the saDahku rite and those associated with birth and death:

50. As we saw, a Sinhalese girl is given a new horoscope at this time, which replaces that cast at her birth (8.4.2).

the unifying cultural factor is that all three processes generate impurity, while socially all are processes of status transformation. It seems less appropriate, on the other hand, to interpret the 'wedding' episode in the saDaṅku, or for that matter the full kalyāṇam rite, in terms of social death. The process is better seen as one of temporary divinisation (Dumont 1972:92) .

Thus far, the discussion has involved some putting of two-and-two together but without, I hope, making five. My final point will be purely speculative, though it suggests a line of cultural inquiry which I did not, unfortunately, pursue in the field. It concerns the socio-physical nature of the girl, and specifically her 'blood' and 'natural bodily substance'. David's (1973a:521) data demonstrate that a Jaffna Tamil woman becomes of the same 'bodily substance' as her H after marriage. Clearly, then, one purpose of the Jaffna marriage rite is the effecting of this transformation. My own data (10.4) indicate 'trans-sanguination' rather than 'trans-substantiation', but this transformation too must be a feature of the ritual. At the same time, we have seen that Dumont and Yalman view the puberty rite as a means of safe-guarding caste purity, particularly that of the girl's natal kin as personified by her father. I suggest then that the presence of a mature but unaffiliated woman in the father's house would constitute too great a risk to his purity, and that the 'wedding' episode in the saDaṅku may be regarded as the first step in transferring the girl to her future husband's family. Relatively speaking, the girl would then end the ceremony as a woman who is, in socio-physical terms, identified with her cross relatives rather than with her father. This would account

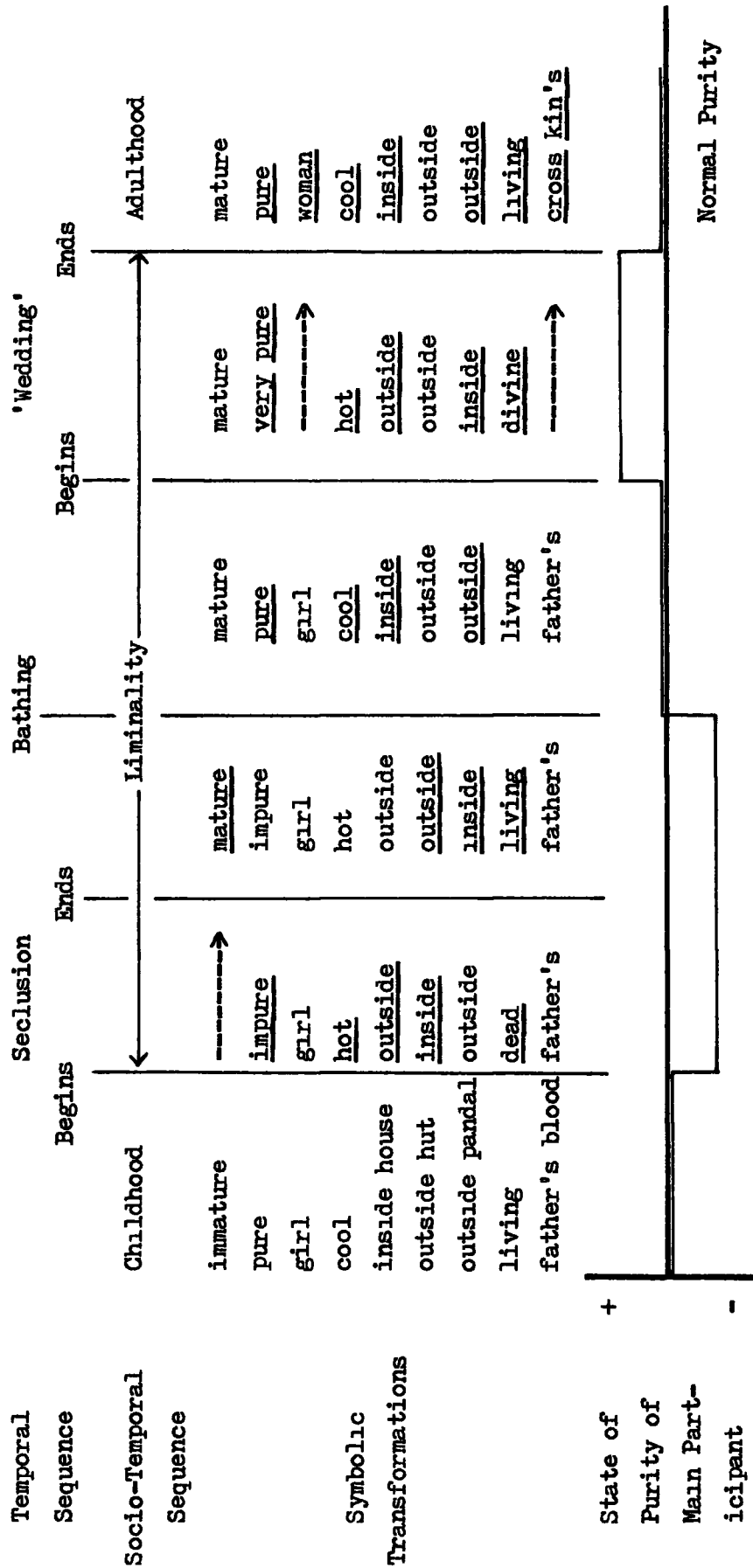


Figure 8.3 : The Structure of the SaDahku Ritual in TV

for the presence of the cross-cousin 'bridegroom' and for the choice of a cross relative as officiant, as well as for the gifts from the MB . All these anticipate the final, permanent transfer and trans-sanguination of the girl at her subsequent kalyāṇam .

The final opposition, then, is that of father's blood/cross kin's blood, and it would be interesting to know what views different South Asian groups hold on this matter and how, if at all, these correlate with the degree to which 'puberty' is stressed relative to 'marriage'.

8.8 The Overall Pattern

Previous sections have emphasised the basic unity of the various South Indian and Ceylonese practices with regard to female puberty. I have also attempted a critique of the several approaches which other anthropologists have adopted in the analysis of these rites, and it will be apparent that my own sympathies lie with what I have called the 'socio-structural' view.

The kind of structural analysis which I favour does not concern itself with the substantive categories, such as 'marriage', which have conventionally been employed in cross-cultural analysis. This latter approach is less staunchly empirical than it supposes, for it has the paradoxical result that, by concentrating upon labelling some particular ceremony as a 'puberty-rite' or a 'marriage', it ends up emphasising the categorical aspects at the expense of the particularities of the institutions under investigation. At the most basic level, such 'analysis' is founded not on the 'hard facts', but on a typology.

Although substantively different, 'puberty rites', tālī-tying,

'pre-pubertal marriage', the seclusion of women, and 'marriage' itself may in fact all be structurally related in a more profound sense than that suggested by Yalman (1963) . One can see them as different cultural solutions to the same structural problem, solutions in which the different emphases may be correlated with differences in other aspects of the social structure (though this has merely been hinted at above) . It should also be emphasised that we have been dealing with rituals and practices located at different points on a continuum, as a reading of Thurston (1909) makes clear . The 4 cases discussed in (8.4) were chosen because detailed data were available through the publications of trained anthropologists, not because they were empirically isolable 'types'. The different practices shade into one another and many intermediate situations exist.

The basic issue at stake (and here I follow Yalman) is that of the control of female sexuality and reproductive capacity: this control is crucial to the caste system, as both Yalman (1963) and Dumont (1961a, 1964) show, and it may be achieved in a whole variety of ways.

At one extreme, we have the solution of the Tamil Brahmins (Yalman 1963:48-9), who practise pre-pubertal marriage for women, the marriage rite bringing about a permanent, isogamous liaison between the couple concerned. An orthodox Brahman must marry his daughter off before she reaches puberty: by doing so, he avoids being responsible for the monthly destruction of an embryo (ibid:49) . We might call this the 'exo-solution' to the problem, because the girl has been completely separated from her natal kin, in a sociobiological sense, long before she reaches puberty.

The opposite pole of the continuum is provided by the practice of the Nambudiri Brahmins. They have no public puberty rite, no tālikāTTu ceremony, and no pre-pubertal marriage (ibid: 49-50) . We have seen that only the eldest son of a Nambudiri may contract a 'principal' marriage with a Nambudiri woman, and it follows that large numbers of Nambudiri women remain unmarried. Their purity is safeguarded by elaborate and rigidly-enforced rules of seclusion (ibid:51-2; Thurston 1909:V, 188) ⁵¹. This will be referred to as the 'endo-solution', because the girl is never separated from her natal kin, who protect themselves by keeping her a virtual prisoner. As Yalman implies, it is not surprising that the Brahmins, whose women are the purest of all, should provide us with the two most 'extreme' solutions to the problems of female sexuality.

The tāli-tying of the 'aristocratic' Nayar has obvious cultural similarities with Brahmanic 'pre-pubertal marriage'. We might describe it as a 'false exo-solution' though, in that the resemblance to 'marriage' is substantively a sham. The girl is merely united in a fictive or formal sense, to a group with which her relationship will generally remain tenuous in comparison with the 'endo-link' to her natal matrilineage. The occurrence of the subsequent and slightly ritualised sampantam relationship introduces us to the other dimension of the situation. On the one hand it indicates that these Nayar do not quite occupy the 'endo-' pole of the continuum either, while on the other it shows that,

⁵¹ It seems that the secluded women underwent 'marriage' as part of their funerary rites, before their relatives finally 'lost control' of them (Yalman 1963:51) .

to avoid elaborate circumlocution, their 'wedding' is preceded by their 'puberty rite', the emphasis being almost entirely upon the latter ⁵² The aristocratic Nāyar are thus, despite surface appearances, almost polar opposites to the Tamil Brahmans.

The Sinhalese provide a less extreme contrast. Men and women may, it is true, enter into socially-acceptable (though not necessarily permanent) unions with no ceremony whatever, especially if they are already related in an appropriate way (Yalman 1960:89) On the other hand, some weddings are highly elaborate. The Sinhalese therefore show much less of an 'endo-' orientation than do the aristocratic Nāyar, and at the same time they give, on average, rather more significance to the 'wedding' and to the 'affinal' relationship between the spouses and their respective kin. The fact that land is inherited bilaterally is probably relevant in this particular case, while more generally it would seem plausible to associate patrilineality with an emphasis on the 'wedding' and matrilineality with an emphasis on the 'puberty rite', bilineality being associated with a more or less equal degree of importance for the two. This would be so whether 'lineality' were defined in the precise Dumontian sense or not.

Among the Raj Gonds, the 'puberty rite' itself has a little more to do with 'marriage', not only because it mimics a 'wedding' in the same way as does the Nāyar tālī-tying, but also in the sense that the bearer of the object to which the girl is 'wedded' is terminologically a potential spouse. At the same time, the

52. 'Marriage' is an ambiguous term, referring as it does to both a state and a process. In this section, it will be used only in the former sense: the process will be called a 'wedding' (cf. 8.6.3).

initial rite does not transfer control of the girl to her affines, so that the 'exo-' orientation is by no means fully pronounced. Note that it is not the degree of cultural resemblance between the 'puberty-rite' and the 'wedding' which is being taken as diagnostic of a bias toward 'marriage', but rather the extent to which affinal relationships are emphasised in the initial rite, and the degree to which that rite is emphasised at the expense of the subsequent 'wedding'.

Affinity plays a part in the TV saḍaḥku too, and in a rather more direct fashion. The actual participation of a cross relative as 'bridegroom' indicates, especially in the case of the Kōṇār, a slightly greater emphasis on 'marriage' than in the case of the Gonds. In the other plane, the two cases are again almost equivalent, although insofar as the saḍaḥku emphasises the urimai partner as the future spouse (8.3), it reduces the girl's freedom of choice while increasing the degree of control exerted by her affinal relatives. At this ideal level, then, the TV castes seem to have a slightly greater 'exo-' orientation than do the Gonds.

The Sūdra Nāyar give rather more emphasis to 'marriage' than do their aristocratic caste-fellows. The tālī-tier is much more likely to be an affine and potential sampantam partner of the girl. Sampantam hypergamy is unlikely for demographic reasons ⁵³, but remains a theoretical possibility, and this, together with the fact that several simultaneous sampantam liaisons are possible, shows that the 'endo-' orientation is almost as pronounced as among the aristocrats.

53. This is because they are far more numerous than the aristocrats and the other groups which out-rank them.

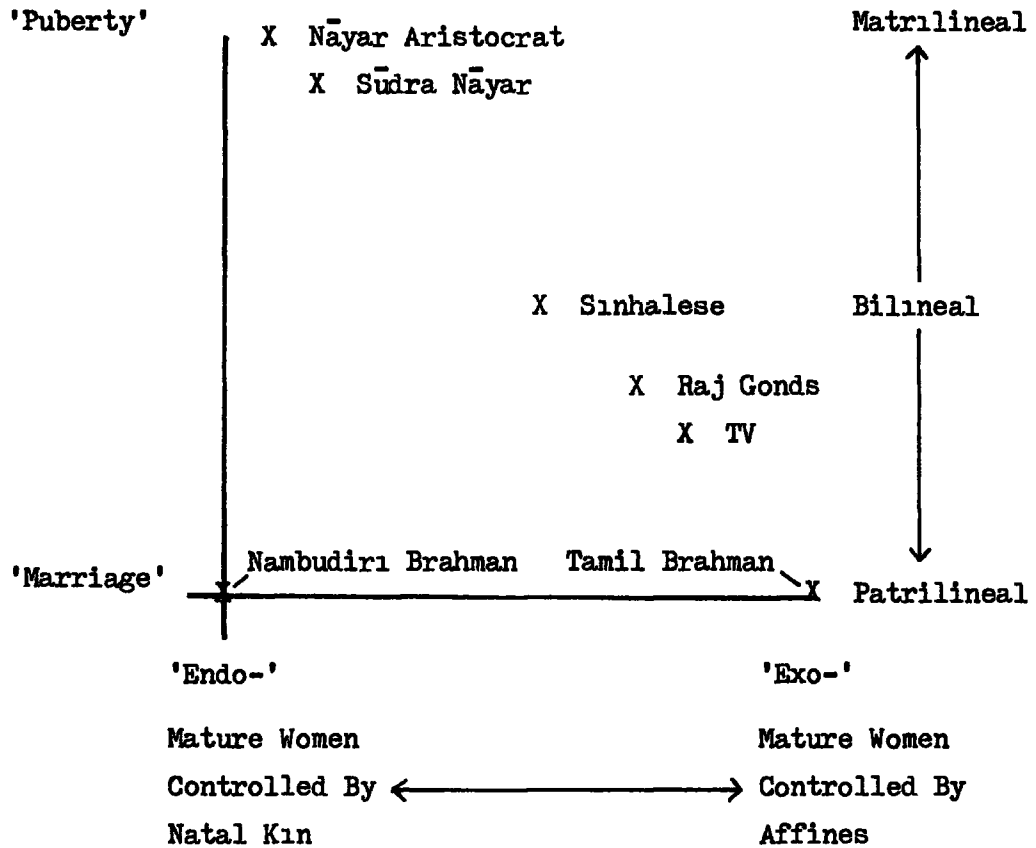


Figure 8.4 : Socio-Structural Treatment of Female Sexuality

The overall situation is depicted in Figure 8.4, in which the locations of the various groups are indicated qualitatively, not in accord with any quantitative criteria. The labels 'puberty' and 'marriage' are intended, as I have said, to denote the resolution of the girl's status with respect to her natal kin and her affines respectively. It should be clear from the analysis that this is not simply a question of the relative degrees of elaboration of the two ceremonies, as was the case in Fuller's model. A society having a highly elaborate 'first' marriage, or 'puberty rite', but with a considerable affinal content, would thus be placed some way towards the 'marriage' pole with respect to the vertical axis.

Similarly, the labels 'endo-' and 'exo-' indicate, in part, the degree to which the girl's sexual activity is subject to control by her natal and affinal relatives respectively. It is clear then that the two axes are not wholly independent variables, and it is not surprising that most of the studied groups display a tendency for an emphasis on 'marriage' to be reflected in a greater 'exo-' orientation, and vice versa.

When a girl's status with respect to her natal kin is made clear in the initial 'puberty ceremony', in a way which does not at the same time attach her in any definitive way to an affinal group, then the girl may find her own freedom to enter into liaisons to be correspondingly great. When, that is, the emphasis is on assuring the status of the girl vis-à-vis her natal rather than her marital relatives, she may have a greater independence when it comes to choosing her spouse or spouses, though she must of course observe the requirements of hypo- and isogamy, and any other cultural restrictions which may be operative. As the emphasis shifts towards an 'exo-' orientation, however, the degree of control exerted by her affinal relatives becomes much greater, and her own freedom of choice is thereby reduced.

CHAPTER 9 : LIFE CRISES; MARRIAGE

9.1 The Significance of the Marriage Rite

The previous chapter inevitably referred to the topic of 'marriage' and it was necessary to gloss over certain distinctions and definitions which would have been better left until the present chapter and the one following. It is of course clear from the discussion in (8.5) that one cannot use the term 'marriage' in any sociologically definitive sense, and my policy has been to employ the term simply as a translation of the Tamil word kalyāNam (or kaliyāNam) .

The meanings associated with this word - 'happiness, prosperity, marriage, wedding, festivity, gold, good character, virtue' (JPF:208) - indicate quite clearly its positive, auspicious connotations. Dumont has pointed out that marriage is the only Hindu rite of passage which does not entail the acquisition of impurity by the main participants. Quite the reverse in fact, for the married couple (and especially the bridegroom) are temporarily exalted and are treated as Brahmans or, what is structurally the same thing, as gods (1972:92) .

This temporary enhancement of status is by no means the only important feature of the Hindu marriage. We saw (5.4) that the marriage ceremony was the occasion for a precisely-regulated sequence of inter-caste prestations. It will become clear below (9.7) that for both sets of relatives too, it gives rise to a complex and protracted series of exchanges, which endure through the birth of children to the couple (7.2) and the saDahku rites of their daughters (8.2), to make themselves felt at the marriages

of these children, thus completing the cycle one generation further on.

Marriage therefore marks an important point of intersection between the systems of inter- and intra-caste prestations. In addition, we have already seen that the regulation of female sexuality, through 'marriage' or other means, is crucial to the preservation of caste identity and family purity (8.6.2) . Bearing all these points in mind, it is easy to agree with Dumont when he says:

"... marriage constitutes to a large measure the link between the domain of caste and that of kinship..."
(ibid:152)

In view of its importance, two chapters will be devoted to the study of 'marriage' and related phenomena. In this first chapter, which will largely be descriptive, the marriage rules of the caste communities will be discussed, together with the marriage rites themselves, seen as rites of passage and as contexts for prestations. The following chapter will be more analytic in nature and will be concerned with the relationship between marriage-type and kinship terminology. Particular attention will be given to the terminological effects of marriage with the eZD .

9.2 Categories, Rules and Behaviour

It is convenient to begin by making explicit a series of distinctions which will be employed throughout these discussions of 'marriage', even though this will involve the introduction of certain concepts which will not be discussed fully until Ch. 10 .

We begin with a crucial observation by Dumont, noting that:

"... kinship terminologies have not as their function to register groups." (1964:78)

This lack of any necessary homology between kinship terminology and descent-group structure is amply demonstrated by Dumont's own South Indian data (especially 1957a:13-23) . Not all examples of the lack of correspondence between different levels of social life can be viewed in this way however. Comparative work by Needham has led him to conclude that:

"(1) symmetric prescriptive terminologies can govern asymmetric affinal alliances; (2) asymmetric affinal alliances can be accompanied by a non-prescriptive terminology." (1967:43, my emphases)

'Prescription' and 'alliance' will form parts of the subject-matter of Chapter 10. For the present we need only say that the quotation deals with examples of lack of correspondence between systems of categories (in this case, terminological systems) and jural rules (systems of alliance) .

I propose therefore to follow Needham (1972:171) in discriminating three levels of social life ¹. There is behaviour in the statistical sense, there are rules of a jural kind, comprising, in the words of the dictionary, "ideas pertaining to natural or positive right" (Chambers 1972:714) , and there are categories, or systems of classification.

The connections among these different levels are problematic,

1. Dumont himself has subsequently modified his position, and recognises the greater degree of precision introduced in Needham's formulation (Dumont 1971:131; 1975:145) .

and it will certainly not be possible to resolve such questions here (but see Chapter 12 for a more precise formulation) . On the other hand, whereas Schneider (1965:53) seems to view these problems as arguments against Dumont's formulation, it appears on the contrary to be a step forward when one is able to point out, as Dumont and Needham have done, not only that inconsistencies do exist in social life, but also that it is possible to codify these in terms of a multi-level model.

It is clear that the three levels are analytic abstractions and that the fullest possible understanding can only be achieved when all are taken into account. Nevertheless, Chapter 10 - and especially (10.4) - will show that there are very clear discrepancies among the pictures given by the levels individually. I cannot do more than hint at the philosophical problem of whether this lack of congruence is to any degree evidence of the 'reality' of the individual levels. In the particular case of 'marriage', a three-level model applies so neatly that one is tempted to see it as something more than pure abstraction.

Thus, turning to the data which I myself collected, it is obvious that the 'categorical' level is represented by the kinship terms, the structure of which will be dealt with in Chapter 10 . There is no problem over the statistical, behavioural data either. Information on the frequencies of occurrence of different types of marriage (Table 10.2) and on the age differences between spouses (Table 10.3) is easily collected through the recording of genealogies.

At the level of 'rules' things are not as clearcut, for we do not know in advance what particular cultural form such rules may

take (Needham 1972:172-3) . On the other hand, jural information of this kind was the main stock-in-trade of the armchair anthropologists of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was on the basis of such data, and with a consequent over-emphasis on formalisation, rigidity and (often purely theoretical) cultural elaboration, that the description and typological classification of the world's kinship systems was carried out. It is to this phase of anthropological endeavour that we owe the term 'Dravidian' as a title for one particular ideal configuration of kinship and marriage, and it is therefore something of a paradox (though one inherent in such typologies) that it should now be necessary to ask (in Chapter 10) the question: do the Dravidians in fact possess a 'Dravidian' kinship system ?

However, it remains true that most descriptive accounts of South Asian kinship deal primarily with information of a jural type. Such a conventional statement of the main jural features will not only round off the preceding discussion but will also provide a useful introduction to the particularities of 'marriage' regulations in Kovilpatti Taluk.

9.3 South Indian Marriage Rules and the Local Context

All the groups to be considered in this discussion of 'marriage' are regarded as having marriage systems of 'Dravidian' type. Broadly speaking, and postponing more precise definitions for the time being, the conventional jural characterisation of such systems lays most stress on the practice of 'cross-cousin marriage'. Among other possibilities and prohibitions, this practice results in the MBD and FZD being permitted spouses for a

male Ego, whereas the FBD and MZD (the 'parallel cousins') are forbidden. In addition, in my field location, almost all local caste-groups permit Ego to marry his elder sister's daughter.

The only exceptions to this final statement are the NāDār (VV 1) and the KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar (TV 1, KP 2) . The NāDār are Roman Catholics, and the genealogical eZD falls within the range of forbidden marriage partners as defined by the Catholic church. Hindu NāDār groups elsewhere are known to permit marriage with the eZD (Beck 1972:254), so it is clear that the religious prohibition is the deciding factor in VV . Even then, such marriages are permitted under certain rare circumstances. If a MB or an eZD is a cripple, or for some other reason normally unmarriageable, and if the other party is willing to marry them, then the Bishop may give permission for the marriage to take place (Fr Njānappirākāsam, V1) . Several NāDār also commented that, should they wish to arrange an eZD marriage, they would simply hold this at the house and not at the church: no-one in VV had actually done so, however. Even marriage with a first cousin, while not forbidden, involves a 'fine' of Rs 2/50, payable by each family to the church.

The prohibition in the case of the Maravar arises from the fact that they are divided into a number of exogamous, matrilineal groups known as kilai . I propose to speak of groups of this kind as 'matrilineal descent groups': in so doing, I am using the notion of 'descent' in the precise and restricted sense proposed by Dumont. It refers only to the transmission of membership in the exogamous group and not, as is commonly the case among

Africanists, to succession and inheritance too ².

Aiyappan long ago noted (1934:281), as Lévi-Strauss later deduced on purely formal grounds (1969:432-3) that a system such as the Maravar possess is incompatible with genealogical ZD marriage by virtue of the fact that the MB and ZD belong to the same exogamous, matrilineal descent group. The Maravar themselves make this point quite explicitly. Marriage with a classificatory or, as I would prefer to say, terminological eZD is not thereby ruled out of course, but I am not aware of any cases of this involving reasonably closely-related Maravar.

9.4 Exogamous Groups

The case of the Maravar introduces the question of the types of exogamous grouping to be found locally. These are of several kinds, and although there is often some confusion over the details, I now summarise, caste by caste, such data as I was able to collect.

9.4.1 The KoNDaiyañkoTTai Maravar (TV 1, KP 2)

It has long been known that the K.K. Maravar are divided into a (theoretical) total of 18 matrilineal kiLai ('branches', JPF:248) and that these kiLai are grouped, three by three, into 6 kottu ('bunch, cluster', *ibid*:303) (Fawcett 1903; Thurston 1909:V, 33). My own information bears out Fawcett's report as far as kiLai names are concerned, but the correlation of kiLai and kottu is by no means as unequivocal in my data as his report

2. As for these latter features, all groups in Table 1.1 display succession and inheritance from F to S. Residence after marriage is ideally virilocal for most groups.

suggests. Furthermore, only a minority of the kilai named by him are actually present in the region of study. Finally, I obtained certain fresh information on the overall structure of these exogamous groupings.

There is in fact a third, previously unreported level of organisation, which my informant ("Pāppā" Tēvar, T63) had learned of from a book (the "Kilai Vakai Kottu") kept in the palace of the (Maravar) ex-samīndār of KaDampūr . The 18 kilai are grouped into 6 kottu³ and these are in turn paired to give 3 pavalam⁴ . My informant, who was the only person to know of the existence of such a group, gave the name of his pavalam as Jeyavā (Sēyavan = Murukan) .

Informants were all agreed that one should marry into a different kottu as well as a different kilai . The further suggestion by Fawcett (op. cit.) that the kottu are grouped into exogamous pairs is congruent with the pavalam organisation as outlined above. The point is purely academic though, in that very few people know to which kottu they belong. In any case, it is probable that the entire structure is the over-systematic rationalisation of a process of ad hoc fission (Dumont 1957a:7) .

I collected the kilai affiliations of all Maravar in TV and KP, and also obtained the kilai of the informant's F in most cases. Beck has pointed out (n.d.:11) that, among those South Asian caste-groups which place strong stress on a unilineal

3. One informant echoed a suggestion of Dumont's (1957a:7), that there may in fact be 2 kottu in each kilai (SaNmuka Tēvar, T24) .

4. This means 'coral'. Kadhivel (1977:9) states that Maravar women wear a pavalam necklace after marriage, as well as a tali .

principle of descent, the importance of other criteria of marital correctness, such as terminological category, is correspondingly reduced. Two features of my Maravar data bear this out. In the first place, the degree of conformity to what Lévi-Strauss (1969:445) would call a model of 'restricted exchange' is much greater at the level of the kiLai than it is in purely genealogical terms.

Thus, only 12.5% of all marriages take place with the genealogical FZD (Table 10.2), even though she is the preferred spouse or urimai (9.6) . On the other hand, out of a sample of 58 past and present marriages in TV for which one or both spouses is still alive, 34 (59%) involve a man marrying a wife of his father's kiLai . Fawcett noted that such marriages were favoured and some of my informants commented on the fact without prompting. Clearly, such a practice is structurally equivalent to FZD marriage.

The second feature to which I referred is the tendency to tolerate marriages which are terminologically incorrect, provided that the rule of kiLai exogamy is satisfied.

Kurusāmi Tēvar (T12) married his FZDD Malaiyammāl, who was his terminological makaL ('daughter') . His wife was therefore of the wrong terminological level, and was moreover a parallel relative. In addition, Kurusāmi's eB Suppaiyā (T13) had made a FZD marriage and was thus married to Kurusāmi's WMZ, a state of affairs which had preceded Kurusāmi's wedding. Kurusāmi's marriage was generally agreed (even by him) to be wrong on both counts; one result of it was that Malaiyammāl and her D used the same kinship terms to their more distant relatives. Nonetheless, informants drew attention to the fact that the rule of kiLai exogamy had not been breached. It may be added that both brothers had married into their father's kiLai, in accordance with the prevailing pattern.

Cellaiyā Tēvar (T34) married his MBWZ (attai) . This, too, was agreed to be wrong strictly speaking, but again it was justified on the basis of the different kiLai of the H and W . Dumont reports such marriages with terminological 'father's sisters' among other groups of these Maravar (1957a:40) .

Finally, an example of the opposite state of affairs; in one case kiLai exogamy had not been observed, and this first became apparent when those closely involved gave fictitious kiLai affiliations for themselves and their parents, but in such a way as to make their accounts mutually inconsistent. Evidence from more distant relatives made clear what had happened.

So terminologically wrong marriages were admitted quite freely, whereas breaches of kiLai exogamy were concealed. This is in complete accord with Beck's generalisation.

In all, 7 kiLai were present in TV and KP; informants did not know the names of any others, so it must be presumed that only these 7 were found among their relatives elsewhere, too . The same group contained 4 kottu . The complete list, with alternate names in some cases, is as follows:

KiLai : (i) maruviDu, 'cross relative's house'; (ii) vīra-manattan or vīramuḍitaṅki, 'king's crown-bearer'; (iii) sētar or sēturai, 'red king?'; (iv) AvattiSvar or Akattiyar, the name of a Tamil sage; (v) seyaṅkoNDar (Fawcett's 'Semanda'), 'conqueror?'; (vi) nāTTumaNNar (Fawcett's 'Nataivendar'), 'supporter of the world?'; (vii) ARakapāNDiyan, a former King of Madurai .

Kottu : (i) mīLakāy, 'pepper'; (ii) verrilai, 'betel leaf'; (iii) mundiri, 'grape-vine'; (iv) sīrakka, 'cumin, fennel' . The last two differ from Fawcett's list (1903) .

Correlation : Few informants knew their kottu, so the data on the correlation of the two sets of categories is meagre. Moreover, the replies conflicted, so that although kiLai (i) was said by all my few respondents to be linked with kottu (iii), kiLai (ii) was variously associated with both kottu (ii) and (iii).

Different members of kilLai (iii) claimed affiliation with kottu (i) and (iv); of kilLai (iv) with (ii), (iii) and (iv); of kilLai (v) with (i), (ii) and (iii); of kilLai (vi) with (iii); I have no evidence for kilLai (vii) . The data therefore conform at least as well with the suggestion made to Dumont, that 2 kottu = 1 kilLai, as they do to the statements of Fawcett and my own informants, that 1 kottu = 3 kilLai .

The observed pattern of marriage alliance between the pairs of kilLai is summarised in Table 9.1 . This is based upon a sample of 119 marriages, made up of the previously-quoted 58 marriages plus the marriages of the parents of these people ⁵. There is no evidence of any directional bias in these figures: in other words, marriage between a man of kilLai A and a woman of kilLai B is as likely as marriage between a man of B and a woman of A . This accords with the reversible, 'restricted-exchange' model which is persistently found at all levels of analysis where this caste-group is concerned.

Table 9.1 : Pattern of Inter-KilLai Marriage for the TV Maravar

Wife's KilLai	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(vii)
Husband's KilLai							
(i) <u>maruvīDu</u>	-	16	8	2	10	1	0
(ii) <u>vīramuDitaṅki</u>	12	-	7	6	1	0	0
(iii) <u>sētar</u>	8	1	-	1	6	0	1
(iv) <u>Akattiyar</u>	3	3	1	-	0	0	1
(v) <u>seyahkoNDar</u>	7	2	7	1	-	5	0
(vi) <u>nāTTumaNNar</u>	0	0	0	0	7	-	0
(vii) <u>ARakapāNDiyan</u>	0	0	0	0	1	1	-

5. Each set of parents was counted only once, however many married children they had.

As is normal among South Indian castes, the Hindu inhabitants of the region have family deities or kuladeyvam, which they inherit from their fathers. This deity is specified by both name and place. For example, several Maravar families, including those of the Talaiyāris of TV and KP, have as their deity "Terku VaNDānam KāLasāmi", that is, the deity KāLasāmi whose temple lies in TV . Altogether some 17 different local deities are named as kuladeyvam by various Maravar men and women ⁶ in TV . Their shrines are to be found in various locations within the Districts of Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram (the geographical spread of the caste), and the statuses of these deities within the South Indian pantheon is that of 'heroes' or 'guardians', which is of course consistent with the traditional occupations of the Maravar ⁷.

In general it is true to say that couples cannot marry if they share the same family deity. My sample of 58 Maravar marriages includes one case in which H and W share the same deity but none in which deity and location is common to both. Clearly then, the empirical situation is that the Maravar have both matrilineal and patrilineal exogamous groups, and the cultural stress laid on the former should not blind us to the fact that descent is in fact bilineal.

6. Strictly speaking, a wife becomes a worshipper of her husband's kuladeyvam after marriage, so it is the H's and WF's family deities which are in question.

7. See Beck (1970:794) for a classification of types of family deity. In the present case, two informants named Aiyānār as their family deity; his status is somewhat higher, but he is the commander of the 'heroes' and the choice is not inconsistent (Dumont 1959a) .

9.4.2 The Ayōtti ReDDiyār (KP 1)

Thurston reports several examples of "septs" and "true totemistic septs" among the ReDDiyār (as 'Kapu', 1909:III, 230-1) and there is brief mention of a moiety organisation. Similar groups exist in KP, where they are known as kilai, no doubt as a result of cultural borrowing from the region's numerically-dominant group, the Maravar. These ReDDiyār groups are patri-lineally organised however, and their names make it clear that their true generic name is vāDar or vāDai ('street, village').

Informants stated that their sub-caste contained 24 such groups, divided into two exogamous moieties of 12 groups each. With reference to a given Ego, these groups were thus divided into his sammantakkārar⁸ ('affinal relatives') who were marriageable, and his sokkāran ('heirs', see also 9.5), who were not.

A number of people were unable to name their kilai in this case. Rather more could give the name and/or location of their kuladeyvam. As a ReDDiyār acquires both attributes from his or her F, it becomes meaningful to investigate the extent to which the memberships of the two types of patrilineal group coincide. In practice there is an exact correspondence in every case for which the necessary data is available; it seems clear therefore that each kilai has its own particular kuladeyvam and vice versa.

I have insufficient data for any attempt at assigning particular kilai to one or other moiety, nor was it possible to obtain the meanings of most of the kilai names, which seem to be of Telegu origin⁹.

8. Sammantakkārar is also used as a kinship term for affines (see Tables 10.1 and 10.4).

9. The 'VasiSta' vāDar is named after a rishi (JPF:840).

9.4.3 The Toṭṭi Cakkiliyar (VV 4)

The Cakkiliyar too have groups which they describe as kilai. In this case though, the groups are patrilineal moieties which are not sub-divided. The names of the moieties were given to me as sāNa and dasiri; these are not Tamil words, the Cakkiliyar having a corrupted form of Telegu as their mother-tongue, and it seems likely that the names are more correctly rendered as sāṅkam and dāsari .

These are, respectively, the names of a Saivite and a Vaisnavite sect (Thurston 1909:II, 480; II, 112) . Mudiraj has reported that many Telegu castes are divided on these sectarian lines, albeit with a high incidence of inter-sect marriage (about 60% of all marriages, 1970:287) . He mentions that the Madiga, the local equivalents of the Cakkiliyar, have sectarian priests known as Madiga Jangams and Madiga Dāsari (ibid:283) .

The situation in VV is thus an extreme variant of the same pattern, in which inter-moiety marriage is compulsory rather than merely statistically preferred. I found no case in which the Cakkiliyar had violated this rule of kilai exogamy, although their marriages were most irregular in other respects, to say nothing of being highly unstable.

9.4.4 The Kammāvar Nāyakkar (TV 3)

This caste has three types of patrilineal grouping, the kuDumpa peyar or family name, the kōttiram (Sanskrit 'gotra') or 'family, lineage', and the family deity. There seems to be a 1:1 relationship between family name and family deity, although complete information could not be obtained.

With regard to kōttiram affiliations, matters are complicated by the fact that several families treat this grouping, in both theory and practice, as though it were endogamous, while the majority regard it as exogamous in typical pan-Indian fashion. It was agreed by everyone, on the other hand, that the family names of the H and W should be different.

The meanings of the family and kōttiram names are obscure, and are probably of Telegu origin. As in almost all other cases, there is no correspondence whatever with the list of "septs" reported for the caste by Thurston (1909:III, 98) . As for the kuladeyvam, a high proportion bear Vaisnavite names, such as Perumālsāmi, NārāyaNasāmi and Kōpālsāmi.

9.4 5 The VāNiya CeTTiyār (TV 7)

This group also has kōttirams, but in this case all regard them as endogamous. They all claim membership of the same group, the name of which is variously rendered as arasaDi makārishi, arasaDi makālīṅkam, arasaDi makārajā and arasaDi teyvēndira makārajā kōttiram (arasaDi means 'royal') . My assistant Palani-murugan was of the same kōttiram, and his F confirmed that the group was endogamous, adding that there were also exogamous groups known as kulam ('family, descent, caste') .

9.4.6 The Āsāri (TV 6, 8 and 13)

The Āsāri are grouped into 5 vēlai or 'trades', which are: taccu, or carpentry; taTTā, goldsmithery; kollu, blacksmithery; kaNNa, brass-smithery; and kallu, stonemasonry (cf. the list in Beck 1972:75) . These groups are normally endogamous, and though

one Carpenter (a S of T48 not now resident in TV) had married a Blacksmith girl, his F AruNācalam said that this would not have been allowed in the old days.

One informant added that there were 5 endogamous jāti ('sub-castes') cutting across this occupational division. He named three of these as NāTTupurattār, Teluhku and MakānāTTukkārār, titles which seem to indicate distinctions on the basis of region of residence.

There was a vague awareness of a system of endogamous kulams too, and one Blacksmith stated that they were all of Visuvarkulam. This may correspond to Thurston's Visvagu (1909:III, 108), which was however an exogamous group. The sub-caste names differ from those given by Thurston. The same informant knew of a caste guru, or sāmiyar, living in Tirunelveli Town (cf. Beck 1972:75) .
(Informants: Suppan Āsāri, T50; SaNmukam Āsāri, visiting T50; both Blacksmiths: AruNācalam Āsāri, T48; Carpenter)

9.4.7 Other Castes

Of the other caste-groups in the three villages, some individuals claimed that their particular castes were sub-divided into kulam or kōttiram segments, but no-one could state even their own affiliations in these respects. Other groups, such as the Paraiyar (TV 2), Kōnār (TV 4, VV 5), PaLLar (VV 2) and PuLavar (KP 5), stated that they had no sub-divisions of this type. All groups, except of course for the Christian NāDār, have family deities to whom individuals become attached through their fathers, although women change allegiance to their H's kula-deyvam after marriage. A man is often required to marry someone

with a different family deity, but the Kōnār, whose kuladeyvam is almost invariably a localised form of Aiyanār, do not obey such a rule in theory or practice.

9.5 Sub-Divisions of the Exogamous Group

Two other types of group must be considered here. Both are sub-divisions of the exogamous group, and both have an exclusively male membership.

First of all, a man's paṅkāli are simply his full and half brothers. The word means 'partner, share-holder, co-heir' (JPF: 643), and clearly refers to the fact that the father's property will be divided up among this particular group¹⁰.

One's paṅkāli are included within one's sokkāran: this latter group also contains the children and children's children of paṅkāli to a depth of 2-3 generations, depending upon such factors as place of residence, extent of genealogical knowledge, etc.¹¹. It is necessary to add the proviso that a F and S are neither paṅkāli nor sokkāran to each other, and to this extent the sokkāran is more like a 'kindred' than a lineage, for membership differs slightly for each set of male siblings. Figure 9.1 indicates how the paṅkāli and sokkāran groups are constituted for a hypothetical local kin group of three generations depth. It seems that such ties are gradually forgotten

10. The word paṅkāli is found in a variety of similar contexts in South India (Dumont 1957b:274-5; Beck 1972:305) and Sri Lanka (David 1973a:524). The TV usage is more restricted than any of these however.

11. This meaning of sokkāran is distinct from, and more precise than, that given for the Ayōtti ReDDiyār above (9.4.2).

as genealogical distance increases, and it is not clear what purpose, if any, the sokkaran serves at present ¹². It is certainly not an expression of common ties of 'blood' or 'bodily substance', for in several cases I found that Kōnār men considered themselves to be the sokkaran of individuals to whom they were related by virtue of a parent's second marriage or unofficial liaison.

(i) Suppaiyā Kōnār (T120) and MāDasāmi Kōnār (T98) stated that they were related as sokkaran but I could see no genealogical reason for this. It was explained that MāDasāmi had had "two fathers". After his own (biological) F had died, his M had lived with Suppaiyā's yB Īnamuttu, who had never married. The latter had also died, but the liaison was perpetuated in the sokkaran relationship.

(ii) Suppaiyā Kōnār (T82) said that Nallaiyā Kōnār (T16) was his sokkaran. I was told that Nallaiyā's F had had 6 mistresses, one of whom had been Suppaiyā's widowed mother.

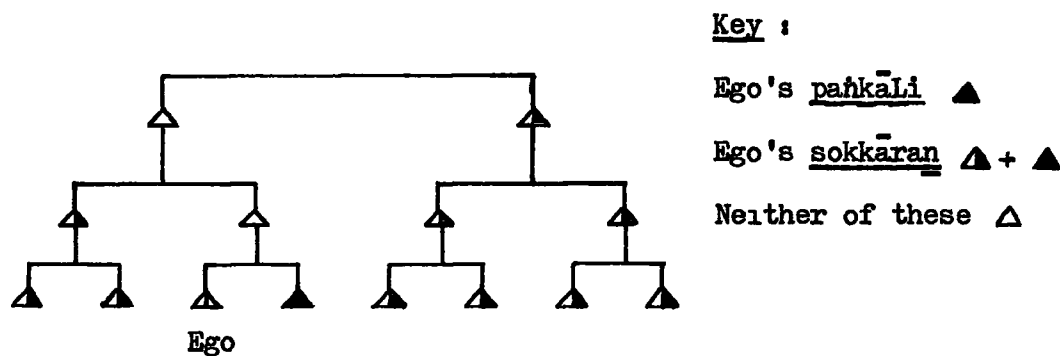


Figure 9.1 ; PaṅkaLi and Sokkaran

12. There is an obvious parallel to be drawn with the group known among the Pīramalai Kaḷḷar as uDanpaṅkaLi or uDandaikkārar. This is made up of parallel cousins to the second or third degree (Dumont 1957b:173) .

9.6 The Urimai Relationship

So far we have dealt with marriage regulations which compel, or more often prohibit, marriage with a specified group or groups of people. Another type of regulation specifies the ideal marriage partner within such groups. Each South Indian sub-caste singles out one genealogically-defined relative who is regarded as the preferred marriage partner. The two potential spouses thus inter-related are said to have an urimai or 'claim' (JPF:117) over each other, and the female party is referred to as the urimaippen, pen meaning 'girl' or 'bride'.

In some parts of South India and Sri Lanka, a person must pay a fine, or at least a symbolic gift, to his or her urimai partner, should he or she marry someone else (Dumont 1957a:18; Yalman 1963: 27) . This does not happen among the groups studied here, and the lack of correspondence between the direction of the marriage preference and the empirical marriage pattern (Table 10.2), together with the vagueness of many informants concerning these matters, suggest that such rules have little influence on behaviour in this particular area.

There are three possible choices of urimaippen, the FZDy, the MBDy and the eZDy ¹³, and informants were presented with all three possibilities when being asked to identify their preferred partner. In common with many informants, my research assistant (whose own genealogy contains a high proportion of ZD marriages) was at first unable to see any distinction between marriage with a MBDy and marriage with an eZDy . As shown in Figure 10.2, these two relatives do indeed become identical under conditions of

13. For the significance of the relative age requirement, see (10.6) .

Table 9.2 : Urimai Relationships

Preferred Partner	Castes Having This Preference
FZDy	KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar (TV 1, KP 2) All Āsari Groups (TV 6, 8 & 13, KP 7) Anjca PaLLar (VV 2) Cakkiliyar (VV 4)
MBDy	Kammavar Nāyakkar (TV 3) Sivi IDaiyar Kōnār (TV 4, VV 5) VāNīya CeTTiyār (TV 7) PāNDi VaNNār (TV 11, VV 6, KP 6) Maruttuvar (VV 9)
eZDy	Ayōtti ReDDiyār (KP 1) Saiva CeTTiyār VeLLāLar (KP 3) PāNDitar (TV 12, KP 9)
FZDy & MBDy Equal	Sāmpākkamār Paraiyar (TV 2, VV 8) KavuNDar (TV 10) NāDār (VV 1)
Contradictory Data	PiLLaimār (TV 5) VēLār (TV 9) Kottu ReDDiyār (KP 4) PuLavar (KP 5) KampaLattar Nāyakkar (VV 3) MaNiyakkārār Maravar (VV 7)

Note : different sub-groups of PiLLaimār tended to give different answers, though this was not completely clearcut.

repeated ZD marriage, but such a milieu is not always found in practice and it is of course necessary to distinguish between these two preferences analytically.

Of the larger caste-groups, only the Maravar, PaLLar and Āsari (TV 6 & 8) were unanimous in naming the same urimai

partner. In other cases I report the majority view. For some other groups the smallness of the sample makes the situation unclear, as indicated in Table 9 2 . Two points should be kept in mind in connection with this Table. Many people, except among the Maravar, PiLLaimār, Āsāri (all), ReDDiyār, PaLLar and Cakkiliyar, were extremely vague on the subject, and a large number could not state their preference. Furthermore, it often happened that an informant named one or other cross-cousin as the urimaippen, only to add that marriage with the ZD was "better".

9.7 Marriages in TV: the General Pattern

Having dealt with those rules which determine the choice of spouse on the basis of genealogy and exogamy, we now turn to the consideration of rules which govern actual marriage procedure, beginning with the more general and universal features.

Informants from every caste-group were asked a series of informal questions about their marriage practices, from which it emerged that there are no especially significant and enduring alliances with particular villages, lineages or families. In none of these castes, moreover, do women receive any share of the landed property (sottu or nilam) from their parents, either at marriage or subsequently, unless the family has no sons. None of these caste-groups allow or practise polyandry; on the other hand, all except the NāDār allow a man to take a second wife, subject to the first wife's consent, should the latter be childless (9.11) ¹⁴.

¹⁴. Once again, the behaviour of the NāDār in this respect is a consequence of their conversion to Christianity and is not characteristic of the caste as a whole.

Only the Maravar permit widows to remarry, but widowers are generally expected to do so, unless they are very old. Some groups allow divorce (9.12) and in such cases both parties are free to remarry, though I do not know whether full-scale kalyāṇam rites would be performed a second time.

Under normal circumstances, the newly-married couple will set up house in the husband's native village, particularly if he expects to inherit landed property from his father¹⁵. Only the Barbers and Washermen state any preference for neolocal residence after marriage, a practice which would be consistent with the universal but limited nature of the demand for their services. It is clearly necessary that they should settle in a village which can provide sufficient employment¹⁶.

Turning now to factors governing the actual selection of marriage partners for their children, informants gave almost identical accounts irrespective of caste. The most important characteristics of the ideal spouse are, in no particular order: the personality of the individual and the character of his or her family and ancestors (munnōrkāl), their overall wealth, the size of the dowry, and the horoscope, it being understood that terminological or, in the case of non-relatives, age requirements have been met. It is my impression that astrological compatibility is less important here than among the Sinhalese, for example. All

15. Partition of the property into equally-yielding shares for each S, normally takes place when every S is married and, preferably, has sons of his own. The F may reserve a small plot for his own subsistence, or be supported by each S in turn on a monthly basis.

16. Both VaNNār families in TV are recent arrivals (4.2) .

informants emphasise that the ideal spouse is someone who is already closely related (sondam, 'that which is one's own'; JPF: 452) . In such a case, character and wealth are already known quantities, dowry payments are reduced, and horoscopes are not required. Non-Āsāri craftsmen and village servants (VēLār, Barber etc.) stress the desirability of finding a son-in-law interested in following their traditional calling (sondatoRil, 'own work') .

Isogamy seems to be the norm. Most informants say that the 'class' (vakuppu) and 'status' (takuti) of bride and groom should normally be the same, but that an educated bridegroom of lower status would be acceptable. It is not clear what precisely is understood by 'status' in this context however, and the final point is a purely theoretical one as far as the experience of my informants is concerned. It seems likely that informants are here voicing an urban preference which has diffused to them via the press, radio or, most probably, the cinema. The only educated man in TV, the Panchayat President, had certainly not been of low status ¹⁷.

Attitudes to sister exchange (sakōtari parimarram, 'sister transaction') ¹⁸ vary from person to person rather than from caste to caste, for no caste-group formally prohibits such marriages. Strangely enough, the same feature is singled out by both sides. On the one hand people say that such close inter-relationships are good because serious disputes are thereby

17. Education may lead instead to the payment of a very high dowry (Tambiah 1973b:63) .

18. This conventional expression is misleading, given arranged marriages. In practice, two sets of parents exchange daughters.

rendered less likely, while on the other it is argued that a dispute affecting one of these marriages would be likely to cause the breakdown of the other too. In any case, the fact that such marriages are allowed, whether or not they are approved of, is further evidence for isogamy.

The general attitude in the early stages of marriage negotiations is one of mutual suspicion. The other family's claims to wealth and land are carefully verified, and the pros and cons of the union are subjected to interminable discussion by the main protagonists and their friends and neighbours. Once the matter is decided upon, though, events follow each other very rapidly and the wedding usually takes place within the month.

9.7.1 Intra-Caste Prestations at Marriage

The first stage in the marital prestational cycle consists of a gift from the groom to the bride. This is known as the parisam, a word also denoting 'touch' or 'contact', carrying with it the implication that this gift 'makes contact' between the couple and their respective families (JPF,667) . The avowed purpose of the parisam is the obtaining of the bride's consent, and her acceptance of the gift indicates that the couple are betrothed. The families of other suitors could not approach her parents thereafter without risking a fine from the caste council, if there is one.

It seems that the parisam gift goes to the bride herself rather than to her father. It comprises a sum of money, usually at least Rs 101/-, a sari, and the usual accessories such as plantains, betel, flowers etc. The previously-agreed sum to

cover the cost of gold for the bride's tālī is also given at this time, it being the groom's family's responsibility to pay for this but the bride's family's duty to get it made. All these items are handed over at the bride's house, whereas the kalyāṇam occurs at the house of the groom, except in the relatively rare case of a temple marriage (9.9, example D) .

At the time of the kalyāṇam, the agreed 'dowry' payment (sīdanam or varadaṭṭaṇai) is made to the bride by her father. I use the term 'dowry' here purely to translate the Tamil sīdanam and do not intend it to have any analytical significance. Tambiah (1973b:92) has argued that it is useful to separate out the 'bride-price' and 'dowry' elements in Indian marriage transactions, a procedure which leads him to the conclusion that a normal marriage in South India contains payments of both types. This naturally takes it for granted that 'bridewealth' and 'dowry' are terms which can be defined in a meaningful way for purposes of cross-cultural comparison. At the same time, Tambiah renders these terms analytical rather than substantive, that is, he makes them refer to aspects of more complex transactions rather than to complete types of transaction. In the circumstances, I think it preferable to adopt an alternative approach, that of treating the prestations as a whole first of all, and only then attempting to separate out the elements involved, but with reference to the social structure prevailing locally rather than to terms drawn from English and defined for anthropological purposes largely in the context of Africa. After all, the payments are not separable in fact: the parisam ('bride-price' in Tambiah's terms) is only given once the size of the sīdanam ('dowry') has been agreed, and the overall

'balance-sheet' is not only known in advance to both parties but is also, as we shall see, regulated by custom.

The sīdanam includes a gold chain (not the tālī) valued at twice the amount spent on the tālī by the groom's family. This doubling of the return gift has been noted by Dumont (1957b:231). The bride may also receive other jewellery from her parents, as well as the brass or bronze vessels with which she will keep house. Other items may be given too, depending upon the wealth of the family and on what has been agreed during the initial negotiations, but the 2:1 ratio is generally observed, particularly when the two families are already related. All these items given as sīdanam are the property of the bride and cannot be disposed of without her express consent.

Financial parity is further restored by the fact that the groom's family must provide the clothes worn by the couple at the kalyāṇam itself. They must also bear the entire cost of the marriage rite (minus, of course, the amount realised by the moy collection), including the provision of the meal and the giving of the stipulated inter-caste prestations to the village servants (5.4). In the long term, the groom's family's contribution may be regarded as including that share of the landed property to which, as a son, the groom is entitled. From this point of view their gifts to the couple are, ultimately, the greater.

There follow some details of a series of parisam-sīdanam exchanges in TV. The informant is the groom in each case:

Example A : Kōṇār When SaṅkarapāṇḌi Kōṇār (T1) married Vijayā, to whom he had not previously been related, he gave a parisam of Rs 201/-, together with a sari and the agreed sum of 1,000/- to cover the cost of a tālī. Vijayā's F gave her a sīdanam which included many good-quality vessels, a gold chain worth 2,000/-, and 3 buffalo. When the family subsequently

wished to sell one buffalo to pay for a radio, this could only be done with Vijaya's consent.

Example B : Maravar Muttukutṭi Tēvar (T83) married Kōmati, his MFBSD (see 9.9, example D) and gave her a parisam of Rs 101/-, a sari and other gifts to a total value of 150/- I do not know how much was given for the tālī, which is not elaborate in the case of the Maravar. In return, the sīdanam involved vessels and 10 pavan (80g) of gold, worth Rs 4,300/- .

Example C : Nāyakkar IramakirushNa Nāyakkar (T161) married Māriyammāl (T36), his FMZHZSD, and gave a parisam of Rs 101/-, a sari and some fruit. In addition, 200/- was given to pay for the tālī; this was ostensibly from the groom, but actually given by his eZ . The groom's family did not give precise figures for the sīdanam, saying that it was "only 4 or 5 pots and a chain". This disparaging attitude is doubtless customary, but the small scale of the prestations as a whole contrasted with the wealth of the groom's family, and perhaps reflected the fact that the groom was the youngest son, and his bride a widow's D .(See also 5 4)

Not all castes undertake parisam-sīdanam transactions in this way. In general, Barbers and Washermen, as well as members of Scheduled Castes, lack the landed property which provides the context for such gifts and which allows them to be made on the above scale. Dowries are not customary among these castes and the girl is normally provided only with vessels and some jewels (ear- and nose-rings, tōDu and mūkkutti respectively) .

Dumont (1957a:29-30) distinguishes between what he calls 'external' prestations between the two families involved, and which include the parisam and sīdanam, and 'internal' prestations made within each family, such as the moy collection. This dichotomy does not seem to apply in the present case. In the first place, the kalyāṇam itself takes place at the groom's house and there is much less toing and froing than among the

KaLLar Secondly, and as a result, there is only one moy to which both sides contribute. Finally, in a context in which marriage with a close relative is extremely common, it would be necessary to specify much more precisely exactly how the two 'families' are to be separated analytically.

Generally speaking, those invited to a wedding will be given a pattirikai, or printed invitation, some days beforehand. When the person being invited is a non-relative or someone who is pankāli or sokkāran to the inviting family, the invitation is merely handed over on its own, but when an invitation is given to a sammanantar ('affine'), such as a māmā, tāymāmā or maccinan, Rs 1/- must be enclosed in it ¹⁹. This money is known as the aRaippu suruL, and if his invitation did not contain it, the recipient would not come to the wedding. Here aRaippu means 'invitation', and suruL (literally 'rolled up or curled like a betel leaf') is widely used to indicate reversible prestations made in connection with marriage (Dumont 1957b:231) .

Assuming that the affine has duly received his suruL of Rs 1/-, he will then give a return suruL of 2/- on the wedding day, in addition to the money which he would normally contribute to the moy after eating. This suruL is recorded separately in the moy, and 1/- is regarded as coming from each of the married couple concerned. Here again there is a doubling of the reverse prestation: the groom's 'affines' are of course, by definition, parallel relatives of the bride.

In addition to buying new clothes for himself and his bride, the groom must give garments to certain other persons. He will

19. The amount thus given was formerly 4 annas (Rs 0/25) .

give a vēSTi and shirt (or towel, tuNDu) to the men involved and a sari and blouse to the women. Those to whom clothes must be given in this way include: the groom's sisters and ZHs, the tāymāmā (and W), the bride's parents, the bride's siblings and siblings' spouses, and sometimes the bride's parents' siblings too. The groom may also choose to give vēSTis to other friends and relatives (though not usually to their wives), and gifts of this type will eventually be reciprocated. The return is more rapid in the case of the compulsory gifts, because all these recipients must make cash contributions to the moy which are equivalent to the value of the clothing plus Rs 5/- This total return payment is also known as suruL.

Example D : Kōnār SaṅkarapāNDi Kōnār (see example A above) made the following compulsory gifts of clothing at his wedding: a sari each to his eZ and yZ (in each case these had to be equal in value to that bought for the bride), and vēSTis for their husbands; vēSTis to his tāymāmā and WF, and saris for their wives; a vēSTi to his bride's (unmarried) yB; a sari and vēSTi respectively to the bride's MyZ and MyZH (the other siblings of the bride's parents did not attend). Voluntary gifts of vēSTis were made to Nallaiyā Kōnār (Tl6), at that time the President of TV, and to MurukāNDi Kōnār (Tl8), a personal friend.

Example E : Maravar Muniyasāmi Tēvar (T34) gave saris to his two yZ, MīnāTci and Kōmati, and vēSTis to his 3 MBs, Kurusāmi, Sundara and Ireṅkasāmi, the first of whom was also his bride's F. In addition, he gave a vēSTi to the Panchayat President (his WMFBS) and to a VēLār friend (see also 9.9, example C).

Example F : Nāyakkar IrāmakirushNa Nāyakkar (Tl61, see example C above) gave clothing as follows: a vēSTi each to his and his bride's MBs; a vēSTi to his eldest B and to his bride's aNNan (her FBS/MZS); a sari to his eldest sister and a vēSTi to her husband.

For all castes except the PiLLaimār, the bride's mother does not attend the wedding even if it is held in another house in her own village. She is said to be 'shy' in front of her new son-in-law²⁰. One month later she visits the groom's house, and it is then that she receives her gift of a sari.

Note that this practice counters David's assertion that a certain rite, performed by the bride's M, is "essential" to a Tamil wedding (1973a:523). His account in terms of categories of kin would seem to apply only to Jaffna, and it seems that he is here guilty of that tendency towards synecdochism of which he accuses others (1973b:30; see also 12.5).

9 8 The Mukūrttakāl Ceremony

Turning now to the actual performance of the marriage ceremony, we begin by considering a ritual which precedes the kalyāṇam by several days, but which is performed only by wealthier households or by those castes with greater claims to Hindu orthopraxy. This is the mukūrttakāl ūnrutal (literally 'auspicious-time-post setting-up') or the raising of the marriage post, and of the marriages which I attended only the one to be described below actually included it. The prestations involved have already been discussed (5.4). The rite is performed at some auspicious moment prior to the erection of the marriage platform.

The marriage of Murukan²¹, yB of Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5), to

20 Some women will not speak their son-in-law's name even long after the wedding. The PiLLai practice of attendance is more 'orthodox'

21. Resident in Ramanathapuram District; the wedding was held at the family house in TV, however.

his FZSD Taḥkarāḥammāl (T11), took place on 8 September 1976. The mukūrttakāl was set up on the morning of 5 September, in the courtyard of T5 .

The groom's F and B must be present, together with the village KarNam and Munsīp . The groom himself need not be there, and in this case was not. The village Āsāris officiated ²².

The marriage-post itself was about 6 feet long; it should be made of bamboo, but as none was available palmyrah wood was used instead. Mango leaves and flowers were tied around the upper end.

Two kāppu amulets were made up. One of these was tied around the post and the other placed on a tray. The post was held vertical, about 3 feet in front of the verandah at the southern side of the courtyard. On the verandah, certain ritual objects were placed as follows (the numbers refer to Figure 9.2) :

- 1) a steel tray containing betel leaves and incense; 2) plantain leaves; 3) 2 coconuts spotted with red poTTu; 4) an oil lamp;
- 5) a full measure of paddy; 6) a turmeric PiLLaiyār; 7) a cow-dung and grass PiLLaiyār; 8) a tumbler of cow's urine; 9) a

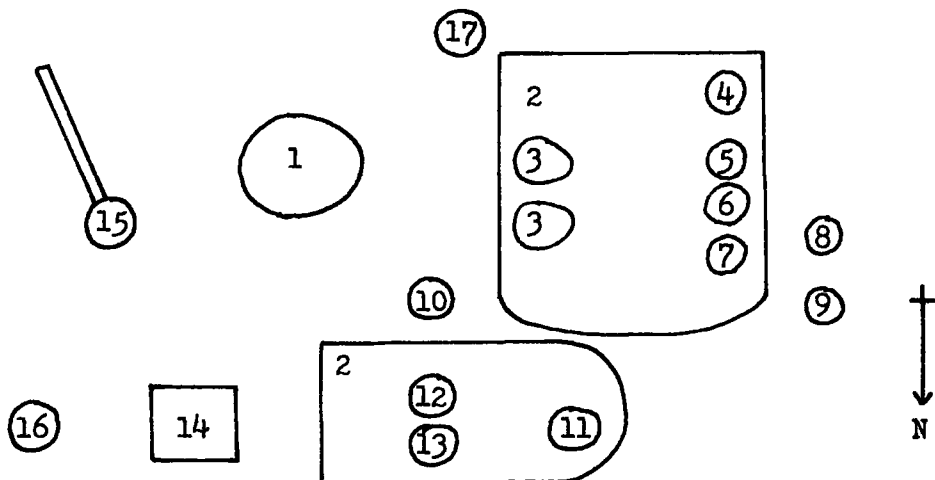


Figure 9.2 : Ritual Objects for a Mukūrttakāl Rite

tumbler of cow's milk; 10) a tin of red poTTu; 11) turmeric paste; 12) camphor; 13) betel leaves and turmeric root; 14) a

22. At this early stage, I was not able to put a name to all those taking part. Irāmasāmi Āsāri (T115) was among them.

tray containing the second kāppu amulet; 15) a ladle of embers; 16) a pot of water; 17) a cup of sandanam (sandalwood paste) .

A hole was dug at the extreme south-western corner of the courtyard, and the Āsāri measured out the base of the marriage platform using this as a reference point. Flowers were placed on the lamp, the paddy, the Pillaiyārs and the coconuts, and sticks of burning incense were placed in the pile of turmeric (11) . The coconuts were broken in the presence of the KarNam, Munsip and bridegroom's F . Some of the coconut water was added to the water pot (16) and a little of the contents of this was sprinkled over everything. The halved nuts were put back on the plantain leaf

The ladle of ash was waved over all the other items. Camphor was burned on a betel leaf in the rear tray (1), which was picked up and waved over the 2 leaves. More coconut water was sprinkled. All these ritual activities were carried out by the Ōduvār pūsāri .

A number of the important guests then took turns to pour a little of the cow's milk into the prepared hole, after which the post was lowered into it. This was accompanied by kuruvai cries from the women present, who had waited inside the house until this moment. The bride was not present, but her M was.

Some of the female relatives took the remaining kāppu amulet off the tray and tied it around a wooden rice-pounding pestle. They took the turmeric root (13) from the front leaf and pounded it in a mortar (more kuruvai) . Meanwhile, the Āsāri had already begun to place the bricks and mortar for the base of the marriage platform. Sandalwood paste, betel and poTTu were distributed, and the audience drifted away. (See also 9.9, example B)

The construction of the platform should immediately follow the mukūrttakāl rite, which serves as its ritual beginning. The post itself is always at the south-western corner of the platform, of which it does not, however, form an integral part. There are obvious similarities between this rite and the ceremony involved

in the erection of the door-posts of a new house (5.9.4), and here too the Āsāri performed priestly duties, albeit in association with the Ōduvār .

Both Dumont (1957b:222) and Beck (1969:564-5) say that the mukūrttakāl post should be made from the wood of a tree with milky-white sap, and Beck goes on to relate this fact to the general colour symbolism of South Indian ritual. In the present case such wood was not used, but the milk which was poured presumably carried a similar symbolic load. I did not observe any rite in connection with the eventual removal of the marriage post after the wedding.

I do not intend to discuss in any great detail the symbolic significance of the structure or content of this rite. Informants stated that its purpose was to ensure good health and long life to the couple - a vague pronouncement typical of local exegeses - while Beck sees it as a 'cooling' process prior to the wedding itself, and hence as part of the overall symbolic structure of that wedding rather than as an event in its own right (ibid) .

As an unusually auspicious occasion (9.1), a wedding is doubtless more than normally susceptible to evil eye, which would explain the presence of the kāppu amulets at this stage. The disposition of these, together with the similarity in shape, leads to an identification of the marriage post with the rice-pounder. No doubt Yalman would emphasise the phallic significance here, while Leach would be more interested in the transformation symbolised by the grinding of the turmeric, and which is clearly auspicious, as it is accompanied by kuruval . The turmeric root

is, moreover, ground into a paste, bringing to mind the figure of PiLLaiyār (6), the remover of obstacles and keeper of the gate. One aspect of the grinding of the turmeric thus draws attention to the position of this ceremony in the wider context, as the inauguration of the wedding ceremony²³.

9.9 The KalyāNam Ceremony

The performance of the marriage ceremony (or kalyāNam) will now be discussed, with reference to some actual examples from TV. I will also provide a synopsis of the Christian rite in VV, which I did not observe.

In TV, I attended marriages involving Maravar, Kōnār, Nāyakkar and PiLLaimār. No two were identical in ritual form, and it will not be possible to describe them all. I will therefore present those examples which illustrate most clearly the salient features. Following the same policy as in Chapter 8, I will begin by describing the simplest of the ceremonies which I attended.

Example A : Kōnār Pēccimuttu and Cellaiyā, the oldest sons of MāDasāmi Kōnār (T86), were both married on 12 September 1976²⁴. The two bridal parties arrived at house T16, to which one of the families was quite closely related, on the previous evening. They came in bullock carts. There were kuruvai as they entered the courtyard.

The first marriage was between Pēccimuttu and his MFBSD, ĀNDacci. Their terminological relationship prior to the marriage had been that of māma/marumakaL. He was 28 and she about 21.

23. Beck (1972:140-1) remarks that PiLLaiyār (Vināyakar) serves "as a point of reference or a beginning to whatever else occurs".

24. The month of ĀvaNi is the most popular time for weddings.

This wedding took place in the courtyard of T86 . There was no pandal or platform, only 2 benches arranged side-by-side in a N-S orientation. On the eastern bench was a tray bearing betel and coconuts, and the other bench was spread with cloths.

The bride entered, clad in her new sari, to the sound of kuruvai, which were repeated when the groom came forward a moment later. Both wore garlands (mālai) . They sat down on the western bench, the groom taking the northernmost position.

The tāli (a gold ornament on a turmeric-stained string) was produced and tied by Cellammāl (T16), the W of Nallaiyā Kōnār and sitti to the groom. Cellammāl put sandalwood paste on the tāli and on the groom's neck. She removed a garland from the bride and put it around the groom's shoulders for a moment before replacing it on the bride. The latter then herself transferred the same garland to the groom's neck, and he replaced it around hers.

The bride and groom held hands, but a heated discussion among the spectators led to them being told to let go again. The fathers of the couple stepped forward and stood before the benches, directly in front of their respective children. The right hands of bride and groom were tied together as the fathers watched (kuruvai) ²⁵. Cellammāl threw some betel leaves over the couple (kuruvai) and sandalwood paste was distributed to the audience.

Cellammāl passed various objects to and fro across the benches, assisted by an unidentified woman standing at the rear (cf. the similar rite at a saḍaṅku, 8.2 example B) . The objects were, in order; betel leaves, turmeric and coconut.

The bride's (unmarried) yB then led the groom, the bride and the groom's unmarried yZ 3 times clockwise around the bench (kuruvai) . Each held the left wrist of the following person in their own right hand. Still in the same order, they left and walked round to T16.

25. At some weddings, the right hand of the groom and the left hand of the bride are fastened in this way.

Some new clothes were presented to SundarapāNDiyā Kōnār, the bride's F, and (referred to as) the tāymāmā of the groom ²⁶. When this had been done, the audience began moving round to Tl6, so as to be ready for the next ceremony.

A bench was set up on the verandah of Tl6, in the usual N-S position. By the time we arrived, the groom Cellaiyā was already sitting on the bench and Ponnaiyā PiLLai (Tl1) was presiding over an array of ritual objects. These were set out as in Figure 9.3, and comprised the following: 1) a plantain leaf; 2) an oil lamp; 3) a full paddy measure; 4) a tumbler of cow's milk; 5) 2½ coconuts; 6) poTTu; 7) sandalwood paste; 8) a ladle of embers; 9) a tumbler of cow's urine; 10) 2 empty trays; 11) a tray of betel leaves and a coconut. Ponnaiyā's role was probably intended to correspond to that of a Brahman ²⁷, but he merely sat there and took no discernible part in proceedings. AruNācalam Vēlār (Tl13) brought and distributed ash from the Aiyānār temple, while a tray bearing the tālī was being passed around for worship.

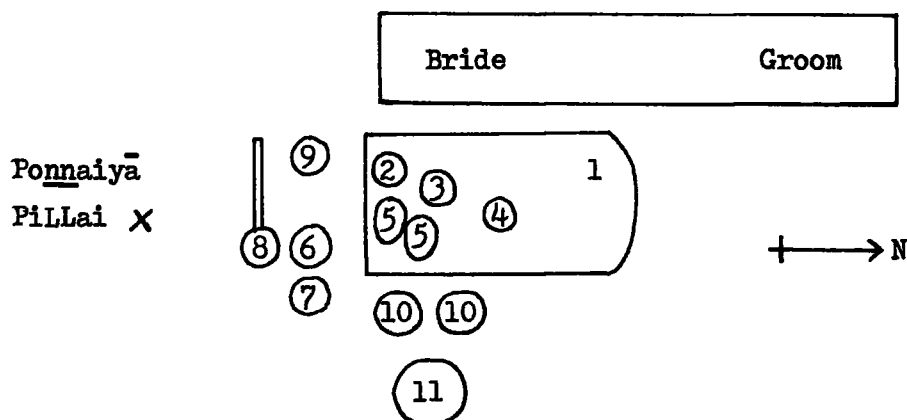


Figure 9.3 : Arrangement of Ritual Items at Kōnār Wedding

After a moment, the bride Lakshmi emerged from the house (kuruvai). She was the FFFZHBDDHBD of the groom, and their terminological relationship had been that of māmā/marumakāL. He was 23 years old and she was 20.

26. Actually he was the groom's MFBS, but the groom had no MB.

27. Structurally speaking, a PiLLai is equivalent to a Brahman as far as the Kōnār are concerned: both are of higher caste.

She sat down to the right (south) of the groom and the tālī was tied jointly by Saramāri, the bride's eZ and also her MBW, and by Cellammāl (T16) .

In this case, Cellammāl was much more closely related to the bride (Table 9.3) than to the groom, though it was her terminological relationship to the latter (sittī) which was emphasised. This was no doubt partly because she lives in the same village as him, and partly because of the wealth and influence of her H, connections with whom were repeatedly emphasised by the groom's family.

PālasuppiramaNīyan (T17), the tampi (FBSy) of the bride, broke a poppadum (appaLam) over the couple, which generated much merriment among the audience. Garlands were exchanged: once again Cellammāl helped in the first transfer and the second was carried out by the couple themselves (kuruvai each time) . In the second exchange, the groom gave his garland to the bride, who returned it - a reversal of the procedure in the first wedding and, I would think, a more correct order of events.

Cellammāl passed objects to and fro across the bench in the usual way, assisted by Saramāri. Two coconuts were passed, then the tumblers of cow's urine and milk (kuruvai each time) . The two fathers came forward, and Saramāri tied the couple's right hands together.

The bride and groom were helped down over the front of the bench, and were led 3 times clockwise around it and the pūja items, by PālasuppiramaNīyan (kuruvai at each completed circuit) . He was followed by the groom, the bride, and the groom's unmarried yZ as in the first wedding.

The couple resumed their places on the bench, and the first couple sat down at right angles to them, facing south. The more important villagers had come only to this second ceremony, and the Munṣip now put ash on the foreheads of all 4, in the order: groom 2, bride 2, groom 1, bride 1 . Other prominent figures

followed, but no money was given at this time.

The double ceremony took a mere 25 minutes and the serving of food began not long afterwards in T16. The moy contributions were handed over by each guest after eating and this process went on all day. By late afternoon, Cakkiliyar women were sitting out in the street, eating what was left of the food out of large, wicker baskets.

By that time, both couples had left, each to visit the respective bride's house. Both returned two days later with the dowry vessels and other belongings. Before each couple entered the courtyard, the groom's yZ waved a tumbler (contents unknown) over their heads and there were kuruvai shouts, which were repeated as they entered the house itself. Soon after her arrival, each bride went off to draw water from the village well for the first time. For this they wore their wedding saris and were accompanied by the women of the house, who gave kuruvai shouts and threw betel leaves into the well.

These two marriages represent the bare minimum as far as ritual is concerned. All three families are poor (T86 has no land) and both grooms work as day-labourers, as does their F (Table 3 2) . Moreover, Pēccimuttu is weak and sickly ²⁸ and his M is one of the two leprosy victims in TV . Neither bride received any cash or gold dowry from her father, and ĀNDacci was given only some old vessels worth about Rs 100/- .

The total expenses for the grooms' family came, nevertheless, to about Rs 1,100/- . This was spent mainly on food, clothes and the two tālis. Against this, only some 200/- was recouped through the moy . The double wedding was of course cheaper than two separate ceremonies would have been, and such events are quite common for this very reason.

28. To add to their troubles, Cellaiyā was arrested on a murder charge within a week. He was in fact innocent, but remained in custody for several months.

The visits to the brides' houses were not observed, as both took place in other villages. I have only one observation of this part of the wedding ceremony, and it concerns that PiLLai marriage for which the mukūrttakāl rite was described (9.8) .

Example B : PiLLai (Visit to Bride's House) On this occasion, both families had their main houses in TV . The wedding was held at the groom's house (T5) in the morning and the couple visited the bride's natal house (T11) in late afternoon. They processed there to the sound of kuruvaī. Before they entered the house, their feet were washed by the groom's married eZ, who had earlier officiated at the tying of the tālī . She was now given a sum of money in return for her role in that ceremony. Once inside the house, the couple received sweets from the bride's M . The couple remained in the house for only a few minutes before returning to T5 .

It does not follow that other castes behave in this precise way, especially when the visit takes place in some other village. The PiLLai differ from all other local caste-groups in allowing the bride's M to attend the actual kalyāṇam at the groom's house (9.7.1) ²⁹. For the other castes, therefore, this visit might therefore be expected to be more important and elaborate.

Turning now to the question of more complicated wedding ceremonies, and with a view to making the quoted examples comparable while at the same time indicating the sorts of variation which may arise, we will now consider two Maravar weddings involving families of above-average wealth. One of these took place at the groom's house while the other was held in a major temple in a nearby 'traditional town' .

29. Moreover, the couple's mothers played a part in the rite at T5, helping their Hs to witness the binding of the couple's hands.

Example C : Maravar Household Wedding (ViTTu KalyāNam)

The marriage of Muniyasāmi Tēvar to his MBD Vīralakshmi from ParumpukōTTai (9.7, example E) took place on 6 April 1977. Printed invitations were sent out, and it will be seen that these had a format very similar to that followed in a saDañku invitation.

Murukan tuNaitirumaNa ARaippitaR

(With) Murukan's protection Wedding Invitation

nikaRummañkalakaramāna 1152-m āNDunaLavarūDamit will take place auspicious in the year 1152 year NaLa³⁰pankuni mādam 24-m (6-4-77) pudañkiRamai suvāti naDcattiram kuDiya

Pañkuni month 24th (6-4-77) Wednesday (astrological

suppiyoka supatinattil anrukālai maNi 9.30-kku mēl

data) on that day morning from 9.30 until

10.30-kkuL risapalakkanattil

10.30 under the sign of Taurus (?)

enadu putalvan tiruvalar

my son grown-up

ParumpukōTTai lēl³¹ Tiru

ParumpukōTTai late Mr

selvan

son

Vīrapattira Tēvar avarkaL

Vīrapattira Tēvar his

pēttiyum Tiru V. Kurusāmi Tēvar

SD and Mr V. Kurusāmi Tēvar's

avarkaL putalviyamāna tiruvalarS. Muniyasāmikku

S. Muniyasāmi and

selvi VīralaTsumikkum³²

D Vīralakshmi

TirumaNam seyyap periyorkaLāl

Wedding to hold by the elders having been resolved

niccayittuTerku VaNDānamenadu illattil naDaiperum

in my place it will be held. To the happy wedding yourself

TirumaNa vaipavattirku tāñkaL

30. The 50th year in the Tamil 60-year cycle (Arden 1942:318) .

31. A Tamil translation of the English "late", or 'deceased'.

32. LaTsumi is a more correct Tamil rendering of Lakshmi .

taṅkaL kuDumpa sakitam vandirundu maṇamakkalaL
 our family in company with having come the wedding procession
āṣṭirvadikkumpaDi kēTTukkoLkireṇ
 so that it may be blessed I invite.

avvaNName virumpum taṅkaLanpulla
 in the same manner desiring, Yours affectionately,

V. Kurusāmit Tēvar M. Saṇmukat Tēvar
ParumpukkōTTai (bride's F) Terku Vaṇḍanam (groom's F)

iruvīTTār aRaippu
 Both families' invitation

taṅkaL nalvaravai anpuḍan etirparkkum :
 your kind attendance affectionately will be hoped for :

M. Maḍasāmi Tēvar, peN tāymāmanār, Terku Vaṇḍanam (bride's MB)
Vi. Sundarat Tēvar, māppillai tāymāmanār, ParumpukkōTTai (groom's MB)
Ayyatturait Tēvar, AmmāLpaTTi ³³.

Preparations : On the day before the wedding, the 'radio' arrived and a pandal was erected so as to completely cover the courtyard behind T34 and T35 . The awning of the pandal (under the roof of woven palm-leaves) was made of white cloths with a red border along the fringes. These two colours were separated by a thin strip of black, punctuated by white arrowheads ³⁴.

Under this ceiling, the actual marriage platform was set up at the western end of the courtyard, facing east. The cloth making up its roof was red in colour. The four corner-posts had plantain trees tied to them.

The Brahman officiant was Irāmasāmi Aiyar from KīRakkottāli in Ottapidaram Taluk. When I arrived at 9.25 a.m., having been summoned by a group of women relatives who were going from house

33. The groom's yZH . Note that the bride's F was also tāymāmā to the groom, but that another MB took this role at the wedding.

34. This scheme is normal for such structures. It is tempting to relate it to the system discussed by Beck (1969) whereby white = coolness; red = heat; black = death (and 'social death' or transition). The colour scheme thus depicts an auspicious rite of passage (white → black → red → black → white) .

to house, the Brahman was beginning to set out the ritual objects. There was only a small crowd at this stage, most of them Maravar, because there was a 'competing' saḍaṅku in KP involving the illegitimate D of an important TV PiLLai man.

The Brahman made up 2 strings of kāppu kaTTu leaves (8.2, example C); one of these went over the door of the house and the other across the roof of the marriage platform. The other items were arranged as shown in Figure 9.4, and consisted of the following: 1) a number of plantain leaves covered this part of the bench; 2) an oil lamp; 3) a full paddy-measure; 4) plantains and incense; 5) a halved coconut; 6) a cow-dung and grass PiLLaiyār; 7) a turmeric PiLLaiyār (unusually, this too had grass in the top); 8) a pot of cow's milk; 9) 3 pots of water tied with thread (cf. 8.2, example B), each with a coconut in the neck: all the pots rested on raw rice on top of a plantain leaf, below which was paddy and another leaf; 10) a fire of twigs and ghee, burning on the ground on top of a pile of paddy husks. Turmeric, poTTu and flowers were placed on the lamp, the paddy-measure and the 2 PiLLaiyārs .

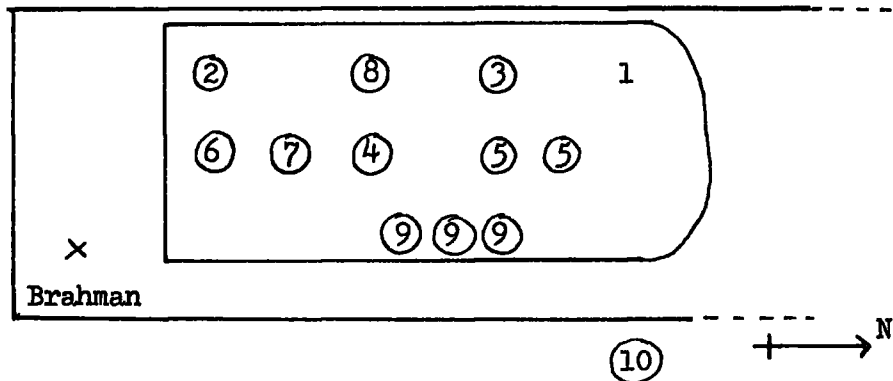


Figure 9.4 : Ritual Objects at a Maravar Household Wedding

Cellaiyā VēLār (T110) arrived from the Aiyānār Temple, wearing his sacred thread and with his upper body smeared with sandalwood. He distributed ash to all those present.

The Brahman tied a piece of grass around the 4th finger of his right hand ³⁵, and used that hand to mix rice and turmeric-

35. This ring of kusam grass is called a pavitram (Subramaniam 1974:173) : the latter word also means 'purity'.

paste on a betel leaf. This mixture was scattered over the pots, and some flowers were also sprinkled over them: the Brahman chanted mantras throughout.

The arrangement of rice and paddy under the pots (9) - and possibly the burning of paddy husks in the fire (10) - brings to mind Leach's analysis of dynamic symbolism in the saḌaṅku rite. It therefore points to a structural as well as cultural similarity between the two rites, reminding us that, although widely separated in time, the saḌaṅku and the kalyāṇam jointly convey a message which can only be fully understood if the two episodes are considered simultaneously (Leach 1976; 8.6.2) . The paddy and the rice represent, respectively, the 'before' and 'after' states, not only of these individual episodes, but with reference to the entire rite of passage from immature girl to mature wife

The Ceremony : The bridegroom, Munīyasāmi, was led out by his tāymāma Sundara Tēvar (see fn 33 above) and sat down at the northern end of the marriage platform, on a mat. There were piles of vēSTis and towels at the front of the platform, and one of each was given to the Brahman to hold. Another set was given by the groom to his MB, and yet another to his own F Saṇmuka . The groom took another set himself ³⁶, then got down and carried them into the house ³⁷.

The Panchayat President, MāḌasāmi Tēvar (T31), sat down on the platform and was garlanded. He was given rice (which he threw back over his head) and ash by the Brahman, who then gave him the vēSTi and towel which the groom had left with him just

36. For a full list of the clothes given, see (9.7, example E) .

37. The groom's party were using an out-house, as the bride and her relatives were occupying the main room of the house.

beforehand ³⁸. In return, the President gave the Brahman Rs 1/- on a tray of betel leaves.

The bride was led out by her madini VeLLattāy and MīNāTci (for the exact relationships see Table 9.3), to the sound of kuruvai. She sat down beside the President at the northern end of the platform. The President got up with a tray of ash in his hand, put some ash on the bride's forehead, and sat down again. The bride rose and was led back to the house by the same 2 women.

The Brahman gave a few flowers to the President, who sprinkled them over a small cup on a tray (?). The President was briefly addressed by the Brahman and then got down, first removing his garland, which the Brahman kept.

The bride's sari and the tāli were brought round on a tray to be worshipped. After a few minutes, the groom reappeared in his new clothes, led by his maittunar Ayyatturai (fn 33) and followed by 2 small boys. They all went around the platform once clockwise, before the groom sat down at the northern end. His maittunar helped adjust his clothing, ash and poTTu were put on his forehead, and he was aspersed with water from a sprinkler held by Saṅkaraliṅka Vēlār (cf. 9.7, example E).

The bride was led out (kuruvai) by her madini MīNāTci and by Kōmatī, her nāttinār. She sat to the south (right-hand side) of the groom, clad in her new sari and elaborately coiffured, and her tāli was almost immediately tied by MīNāTci (kuruvai) with the most perfunctory help from the groom. The bride gave 2 coconuts to MīNāTci, who tied them into the front of her sari and got down off the front of the platform, on which she had been standing to tie the tāli. The other madini, VeLLattāy, was given one coconut.

These two recipients then passed ritual items to and fro across the platform, MīNāTci standing at the front and VeLLattāy at the rear. Firstly, MīNāTci passed a coconut in her left hand and a pot (9) plus coconut in her right; next she held a larger pot (9) in her left and a small pot draped in flowers in her

38. The President is a māma (MFBS) of the bride, though he was here singled out from among many equally distant relatives as a consequence of his local status as a mukkiyamāna āl ('important person').

right; finally she held the paddy-measure (3) in her left and a coconut in her right.

Garlands were then exchanged. The same garland went back and forth twice, from the bride to the groom and back again. The exchanges were carried out by the couple themselves, with a little assistance from the madinis³⁹. Some pieces of peeled plantain were put in the couple's right hands by the Brahman, a little milk was poured on top, and both of them ate. MiNaTci produced 3 poppadums: each in turn was waved clockwise and then smashed over the heads of the couple.

A number of relatives then presented the couple with framed pictures⁴⁰, and the name of each donor was announced over the speaker system. Afterwards, the bride's F Kurusāmi came forward and tied the right hands of the couple together with a scarf. The President was called up, and he gave equal amounts of money to groom and bride (in that order), putting ash on each forehead first. Many others followed when called, including me.

Once everyone had given, the couple stood up and a procession was formed in the usual fashion, consisting of: (i) Ayyatturai, the groom's maittunār; (ii) the groom; (iii) the bride; (iv) MiNaTci, the groom's married yZ and madini to the bride. They went around the platform 3 times clockwise, and disappeared into the main part of the house (kuruvai) .

The serving of food began almost immediately. In the afternoon, the bride went to fetch water from the well, and afterwards she and her H left for her natal village of ParumpukkōTTai.

Example D : Maravar Temple Wedding (Kōvil KalyāNam) The marriage of MuttupāNDi (alias 'MuttukuTTi') Tēvar (T83) to his MFBSD, Kōmatī from KīRa MaṅkaLam (see 9.7, example B) took place

39. I think that this order is incorrect, and that the second exchange should really be initiated by the groom. As for the food eaten just afterwards, this ritualised 'first meal' takes place back in the house for some castes (e.g. Nāyakkar) . The bride is served first, a reversal of the normal order of events.

40. These were coloured lithographs of gods, film-stars or politicians (the 3 categories being structurally equivalent !): most were of M.G. Ramachandiran, filmstar and Chief Minister of Tamilnad.

on 12 December 1976, in the Kailāsanātar Temple in Pasuvandanai.

The Temple : Pasuvandanai is some 7-8 miles from TV, at the spot where the road to Ottapidaram branches off the main Kayattār- Eppodumvendram road. It has several 'village-type' temples, like those in TV but on a larger scale. The Kailāsanātar temple falls into a different category altogether; it has resident Brahman Priests and several daily pūjas. It is a typical Saivite temple, with a high surrounding wall, a mandapam or pillared hall on the eastern side, and a large bathing-tank surrounded by stone steps at the south-west. Most of the area within the walls is roofed over, and the more important deities have their own individually roofed enclosures within. Two of the shrines lying outside the main roof are topped by small kōpurams, rectangular pyramidal towers characteristic of Tamil Nadu. Figure 9.5 indicates the location of the various deities within the temple, and in the list below a little information is given about some of them, though there is no space to go into details of iconography or the structure of the pantheon. Many of the names were written over the entrances to the shrines, and the remainder were supplied by one of the Temple Priests. The shaded area was roofed over.

- 1) Vināyakar (or PiLLaiyār), the elder son of Siva.
- 2) Sivaliṅkam ; Siva in the form of a liṅkam or phallus.
- 3) SuppiramaNiyār (or Murukan), the younger son of Siva, flanked by his wives VaLLi and Teyvānai on his right and left
- 4) Under a small kōpuram, TeTciNāmūrtti, "the posture of Siva with his face south, teaching the four sons of Brahma under a banyan" (JPF:477) .
- 5), 6) SaNDi kēSvarar and SaNDi kēSvarī respectively, male and female Saivite saints (ibid:334) .
- 7) SaṇiSvarar, or Saturn (see also no. 20 below) .
- 8) Ānandavallī, literally 'a joyful, divine young woman'; more precisely a form of Pārvatī, the consort of Kailāsanātar; under a small kōpuram.
- 9) SaNmukanātar, the 'six-faced lord', a form of SuppiramaNiyār flanked by VaLLi and Teyvānai (cf. no. 3) .

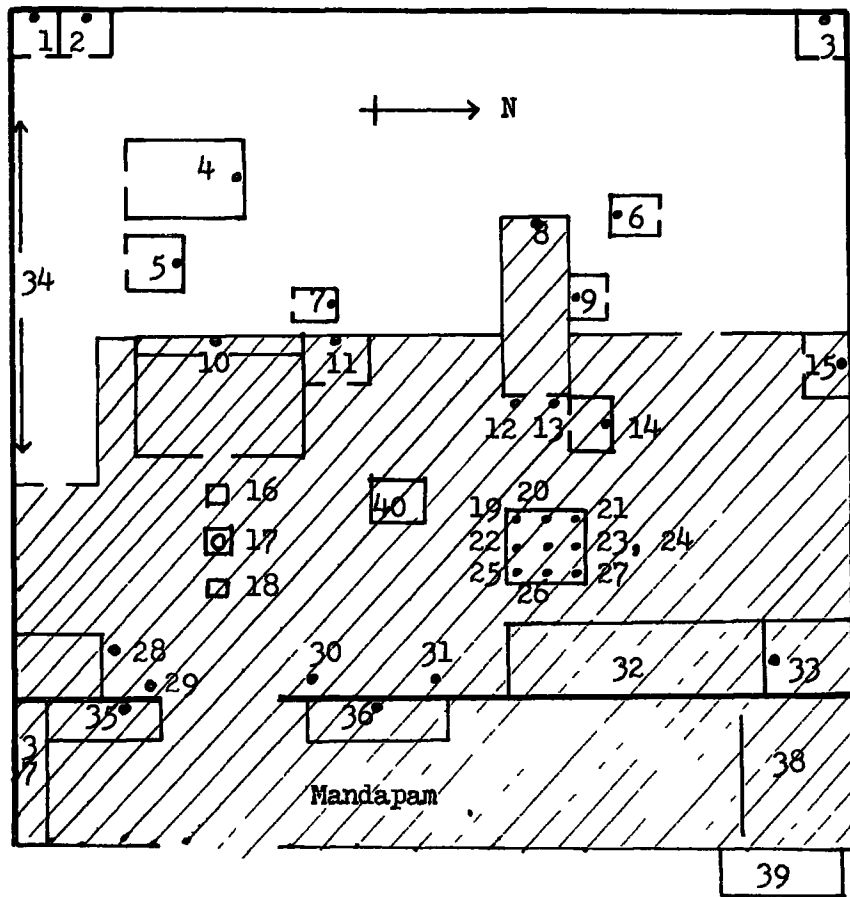


Figure 9.5 : The Kailāsanātar Temple, Pasuvandanai

- 10) Kailāsanātar, the eponymous deity of the temple; Kailāsa is a mythical mountain and the abode of Siva, while nātar means 'god' or 'lord'
- 11) PālasuppiramaNiyār, another form of SuppiramaNiyār (pāla means 'world').
- 12), 13) Tuvarakapālaki, literally "door-keeper" (JPF, 544) .
- 14) Ānandavalli, see no. 8 .
- 15) Pairavar, commonly rendered as 'Bhairava', a ferocious form of Siva.
- 16) Nandi, the bull, vehicle of Siva and always to be found facing into the main shrines of Saivite temples.
- 17) A kampam, or metal column of circular cross-section, going up and out through a hole in the main roof.
- 18) A raised platform.

19)-27) The nine planets, being, in numerical order: Irāku (the 8th planet, JPF:79), SaNīSvarī (Saturn, see no. 7), Kēdu (the red serpent which, with Irāku, causes eclipses), Sevvāy (Mars), Sūriyan (the sun), ViyāRan (Jupiter), Candiran (the moon), Sukkiran (Venus), Pudān (Mercury) .

28) Adikārnandi, the 'master of Nandi', keeper of Siva's bull.

29) Sūriyan, the sun (see no. 23).

30) Candiran, the moon (see no. 25) .

31) Vāmadēvarishī, the name of a rishi or holy man.

32) The figures carried in the annual festival procession.

33) UlakāNDiSvarī, literally 'goddess of the world', a form of Siva's consort Parvati.

34) The 63 Nainār or Tamil saints (Basham 1967:302); each is depicted and a summary of his life-history is given.

35) TuvarakanaTtī, doorkeeper of KaNēsan (PiLLaiyār) .

36) TuvarapālataNDāyutapāNī, a doorkeeper and servant of Siva.

37) The Priests' office.

38) The place where the food was served (see below) .

39) A lean-to shed in which the food was prepared.

40) The 'marriage-platform', which was merely a blanket spread on the stone floor.

Preparations : This ceremony differed in a number of ways from that dealt with as example C above. No pandal was built, and presumably the temple itself served this purpose. There were far fewer ritual items deployed on the marriage platform in the present case too, and it seems that their use was avoided by the expedient of having the couple visit various parts of the temple. This leads to the view that when a pandal is built, and when a Brahman lays out a complex set of ritual items such as that depicted in Figure 9.4, this is in fact the construction of a temporary temple.

In the present case, I did not receive a printed invitation because I was out of the village when these were distributed. The auspicious period was from 07.30 to 09.15, but when it began very few people from TV had arrived. The bride's party, on the other hand, had spent the night within the temple. The 'radio'

system was in operation and the groom's family were busy preparing food and garlands in a shed erected outside the temple proper. The groom himself arrived at about 08.45, in a race-cart, and was immediately sent for by the officiating Brahman Priest ⁴¹.

They sat down on the steps of the main shrine (no. 10) while the Brahman recorded details of the marriage in the temple register. He also collected a fee of Rs 10/-, and issued a receipt which was signed by the groom and 2 witnesses, the (Nayudu) President of KīRa MaṅkaLam and the (Maravar) President of Pudupaṭṭi ⁴².

The Brahman arranged a tray of coconuts, plantains, betel and poṭṭu (all provided by the groom's side) and added to it some incense and the tāli, which were produced by the bride's party. The groom's family produced another tray containing garlands, a sari and blouse, and a shirt and vēSTi. The Brahman put ash on the groom's forehead (no kuruvai) and handed him the shirt and vēSTi, which had been sprinkled with turmeric as all new garments are ⁴³. The groom withdrew a little and changed into these fresh garments.

The garlands were taken into shrine 10 by the Brahman, who was then approached by a bridal party of 5 women and 2 girls, shouting kuruvai. They were given the sari and blouse, and the bride retired to dress.

The Ceremony : At 09.15, there were kuruvai and a single temple drummer began to play. The Brahman, bride and groom went into shrine 10 and the spectators crowded in behind them. The Brahman performed a short pūja, ringing his bell while the crowd

41. This same Brahman had officiated at the VēLār saḍaṅku (8.2, example B) .

42. This was not an official registration of the marriage with the civil authorities, but a requirement of recent legislation codifying the acceptance of fees in major temples.

43. Like the eating of meat, the donning of new clothes is essentially a ritual act, for they are normally bought only at festival times.

worshipped. Ash was then distributed to the bride, then the groom, and then to everyone else.

The groom was garlanded by the Brahman (kuruvai), and then himself placed a garland around his bride's shoulders (kuruvai). The Brahman instructed the couple to go around the temple, and they left followed by a small retinue, the groom bearing the tray which contained the tālī.

The rest of us filed out of the main shrine and sat down, facing north, close to the marriage platform (no. 40). In front of this blanket was some sandalwood paste and holy ash, and beside it sat the KīRa MañkaLam President, who was preparing betel for distribution.

The bride and groom passed us after their anti-clockwise⁴⁴ circuit within the temple walls, and they went on as far as shrine no. 8, which they entered. Having thus completed worship at all the shrines (but excluding the various doorkeepers), they came and stood behind the blanket, facing east. The groom sat down first, then the bride, to the south of him as usual. The groom's maccinan (yZH), Suppaiyā from TāRaiyūttu, sat to the north of the groom.

The Brahman put some ash into the groom's right hand and the latter, crossing his arms at the wrist, raised his clenched fists to his temples 3 times. He then picked up the tālī tray again and the Brahman added several strings of flowers to it. Some money was added to the tray by a relative of the groom⁴⁵, and it was again passed round to be worshipped by important guests.

The Brahman then took the tray and unwrapped the tālī. The groom took this and tied it around the bride's neck (kuruvai),

⁴⁴. Whereas circumambulation outside an auspicious object, in this case a temple, should be done clockwise, this is only with a view to keeping one's auspicious right side towards the object: it follows that when circling a temple from the inside, one goes anti-clockwise for the same reason (M. Kalab, private communication).

⁴⁵. It is customary to give the Brahman Rs 5-10/- at this point, but the groom had forgotten his own money.

assisted by his eZ Kōmati and his yZ KuruvammāL (W of Suppaiyā) . Kōmati took the goblet of sandalwood paste from the Brahman and put a little on the forehead of the bride, then the groom. She did the same with the ash. The Brahman gave her half of a string of flowers, the remainder of which went to the bride.

The groom put a garland round his bride's neck and she returned it before putting one of her's round his neck and receiving it back from him. Each transfer was marked by kuruval.

The groom's F was called forward to put ash on the foreheads of the groom and bride. He then sat down facing south, in front of the groom's end of the blanket. The bride's F came and did likewise before seating himself facing north at the bride's end of the blanket. The 2 fathers took their child's right wrists in their own right hands and pulled them together while the Brahman tied a new towel around the couple's hands.

The PudupaTTi President got up and put ash on the groom's forehead, then the bride's, before giving Rs 1/- to each. Other men got up in turn to administer ash, giving money only to the groom. Each donor subsequently received betel from the PudupaTTi President. Meanwhile, the Brahman removed the cash and betel from the tray: they are his perquisites.

Eventually the couple stood up and the groom handed the tray to the bride, who passed it to one of her relatives. Then, holding hands in the usual way, the following procession formed up: (i) the groom's maccinan Suppaiyā; (ii) the groom; (iii) the bride; (iv) the groom's eZ Kōmati. They went around the 9 planets (nos 19-27) 3 times anti-clockwise. Then someone seemed to intervene and they went around 3 times clockwise ⁴⁶.

The couple finally sat down alone on the blanket. The groom presented some clothes to Kōmati. The latter gave the sandalwood paste back to the Brahman, who took it into the main shrine together with the betel and coconuts from the groom's tray. At the groom's request I was called forward to give ash and money.

46. I cannot be sure whether the first (anti-clockwise) circuits were mistaken.

Prestations and the Wedding Feast : While the women clustered round the couple, the men wandered away chewing betel. The couple were led off to the place where the bride's party had spent the night, and were greeted with kuruval. After a few minutes, the groom and his maccinan came and sat down on the blanket again, with a tray of betel in front of them. The bride's F put Rs 151/- on this tray⁴⁷. The money was removed and the amount written down in a book. The maccinan then gave Rs 101/- in similar fashion.

Meals were served in the mandapam shortly afterwards. Most of the guests from TV were Maravar, though there were also Kōnār and one VaNNār, as well as a few ReDDiyār from KP. No PiLLai or Nāyakkar were present⁴⁸

The couple left at about mid-day, to spend some time in the bride's natal village. In this case they remained there only 2-3 days, returning to TV before the start of MārkaRi, a month inauspicious for weddings.

Expenses : MuttukutTī and his F Suppaiyā showed us the exact figures for the various items of expenditure. These were as follows: 500 printed invitations, Rs 36/-; the 'radio', 17/-; rental (vāDakai) of cooking vessels, 50/-; cooking of food, 20/-; building the lean-to kitchen, 10/-; vegetables and spices, 30/-; sandalwood, 1/-; flowers and betel, 26/-; to TāRaiyūttu Mandira Tēvar, the groom's yZHF, for bullock carts, 60/-; to Suppaiyā, S of Mandira, for ditto, 100/-; clothes for bride and groom, 236/-; parisam of 101/- for bride's consent and 150/- for her sari; rice for the meal, 300/- . This gives a total of 1,137/-, and taking new clothes for the rest of the family into account, they estimated a total expense of about Rs 1,500/- .

The bride's dowry has been discussed (9.7.1, example B) . The groom's family recouped a total of Rs 867/50 from the 114 contributors to the moy. Most of these gave 5/-, but 17 people

47. The money was not actually from him (see below) .

48. The PiLLai had gone to the funeral of the KarNam of another village, while the Nāyakkar take little interest in others' rites (4.7.6) . This Maravar family are also a little removed from village life, both spatially and socially.

gave 10/- or more. The most important of these contributions were the following: 151/- (mentioned above) from PūlammāL, the groom's MZ; 101/- (also mentioned above) from TāRaiyūttu Suppaiyā Tēvar, his yZH; 21/- from Mūppampattī MāriyammāL, the bride's MZ⁴⁹. These 3 prestations were recorded separately, together with 10/- from KīRa MaṅkaLam Aṅkaiyā Tēvar (yZH and FZS to the groom) and 5/- from Kailāsapuram MalaiyaRakammāL (relationship unknown). The biggest contributors to the main moy were Kurusāmi Tēvar from Īnam MaṅiyāTci, with 20/-, and "Suppa Nayudu" (i.e. Suppā Nāyakkar, T158, the former Munsip of TV and a neighbour), who gave 16/-.

9.9.1 Christian Marriages in VaDakku VaNDānam

Christians also use the term kalyāNam for 'wedding'. When a marriage has been arranged, the groom makes a parisam gift to the bride, which comprises a sari and some flowers but no money (rich families may give jewellery too). The gift requests the bride's consent to the match, and her acceptance of the sari commits her to the marriage.

Before a marriage can be celebrated in church, banns must be read on at least one occasion (ideally 3 times). Before agreeing to do this, the Priest checks the baptismal records of the couple, asks if they are sondam ('relatives'), and collects Rs 5/- advance payment for the costs.

As in TV, marriages take place in the groom's village; the first post of the marriage pandal may be erected at an auspicious moment beforehand, at a ceremony called nāDkaL ('set-up post') during which milk is poured into the hole (cf.

49. These include gifts from all surviving siblings of the couple's mothers. Neither of them had a tāymāma, nor were there any living descendants of such persons.

9 8) . Only rich families do this. The pandal builders are paid in rice when the rest of the structure is erected on the day before the wedding. The NāḌār's own 'radio' is set up.

The bride's party arrive the day before the ceremony. They are greeted with a rejoicing song and given milk and fruit. Rice is provided for the bride and groom only: it is called putta pūtakkaḷ sōr (putta = 'new'; pūtakkaḷ = 'the vessel in which a bride first serves rice to her groom'; sōr = 'boiled rice'; JPF: 720, 732) and includes a side dish of fried fish. Some joking takes place and the groom is prevented by his future brothers-in-law from eating the food.

The couple visit the Priest, ostensibly to ask his permission: uttaravu vaṅkutaḷ, 'permission receiving' (JPF:109, 860) . All their relatives accompany them. The Priest gives general advice and discusses the arrangements for next day.

On the wedding day, the couple and their relatives come to church for a Mass. Only the bride's M stays away, out of shyness towards her new son-in-law. In the Mass there are readings and a sermon (tiruvurai) and the wedding takes place in the middle of the service. The Priest blesses the tālī and hands it to the groom, who ties it round the bride's neck with help from his sister. The latter attends the bride all day, while the groom is accompanied by the bride's B, referred to as the māppillai tōlī (tōlī = 'a litter (in which one is carried)', JPF:575) .

Various prestations are made just before the start of the service: the groom must give a tāymāman vēSTī to his MB and a poy muTTī sēlai (sari) to his sister(s) . Here poy means 'sham, false' and muTTī means 'fist' or 'alms': the meaning of the

overall expression being obscure ⁵⁰. The groom also gives vēSTis to his ZHs . He receives the cash value of the garment, plus Rs 1/-, from each recipient. For her part, the bride must also give a vēSTi to her tāymāmā . Dowries (sīdanam) are usually given, and will be at least symbolically handed over during the ceremonial.

The couple return to the groom's house after Mass, and there is an ālatti ceremony (the honouring of the couple with a tray of ritual objects, cf. Dumont 1957b:224) at which the groom has to give some money, a total of say Rs 5/-, to his sisters-in-law (madinis and koRundiyaḷs) . There is then the usual feast for all the village, followed by the giving of moy donations. Formerly the bride would have gone to draw water in the afternoon, putting betel leaves in the well beforehand, but as there are now water-taps in VV, this part of the ceremony has been abandoned.

That night there may be a procession around the village. Formerly, the couple would have been borne in a palanquin known as pallākku, but nowadays, if it happens at all, a taxi will be used. On the following day (or sometimes that same evening) the couple go to the bride's house. The pandal is finally taken down on the "8th" day.

Payments to the various functionaries have already been discussed (5.4) . The above data derives largely from Fr. Njānapirākasam (V1), in consultation with some senior NāDār men.

50 One can read all sorts of meanings into such expressions if one assumes (as is often in fact the case) that one has been given a slightly incorrect version. Here I will only mention that mutti means 'hymen' .

9.10 Analysis

In these varied accounts, it is still possible to discern an overall pattern which, whatever the cultural details, is followed by all the above Hindu cases as well as in the PiLLai and Nāyakkar weddings which have not been fully described. This pattern may be summarised as follows:

- (1) The couple put on new clothes, provided by the groom.
- (2) The bride and groom take their places on the platform and the tālī is tied with help from a married woman relative of the groom.
- (3) Garlands are exchanged.
- (4) The hands of the couple are bound together by their fathers (and, in the case of the PiLLai, by their mothers too) .
- (5) Guests make offerings of ash and money to the couple.
- (6) The couple circumambulate the bench (or part of the temple), led by a male relative and followed by a female one.
- (7) There is a meal and a moy collection.

Much of the symbolism of the rite is readily apparent even from this bare framework. The bride dons clothes provided by her new H, and his tālī is fixed around her neck, where it will remain until his death. The sexual symbolism associated with the tālī itself has often been pointed out (Dumont 1957b:227; Fuller 1976:104, for example) . Their fathers help bring about the couple's union by binding them together, and the guests both recognise the union and honour the couple with their gifts of ash and money. Finally, the circumambulation of the bench, which corresponds to the circumambulation of the temple and hence

of the world, is another indication of the fact, already remarked upon, that the marriage pandal may be regarded as a temporary temple (cf. 9.9, examples C and D) .

It should be noted that all these ceremonies are unorthodox, according even to those accounts which purport to describe the customs of the particular castes concerned (for example, Kearns 1868; Thurston 1906, 1909), to say nothing of the ideal ceremonies as set out in legal or Brahmanic texts. To name only one point of difference from almost every source, a house marriage in this area always takes place at the groom's house, not the bride's. Moreover, none of the ceremonies include the one rite specifically mentioned as binding by the Hindu Marriage Act (1976:section 7) ⁵¹, namely the Saptapādam or 'Seven steps': in this respect though, they are by no means unique.

We must now look in more detail at the relationships between the various participants in wedding ritual. Table 9.3 lists the relevant information for all the marriages which I attended, and several notable regularities emerge. In the first place, the bride is terminologically either a marumakal ("niece") or, among the Maravar, a koRundiyaL ("junior cross-cousin") of the groom. The terminological identity of the bride will be returned to in (10.6) however, and for the moment we will deal only with those other relatives who take part.

51. The same act prohibits marriage with a cross-cousin or ZD (section 3 (g)(iv)), unless such marriages are customary among both families concerned (section 5 (iv)).

Table 9.3 : Genealogical and Terminological Relationships of

Wedding Participants				
Groom's Caste & Household	Bride	Officiant(s)	Circumambulation	
			Leader	Follower
Kōnār (T86) (first)	MFBS (<u>marumakaL</u>)	FFFZHBDSW ^a (<u>sitti</u>)	WyB (<u>maccinan</u>) ^c	yZ (<u>taṅkaḷ</u>)
Kōnār (T86) (second)	FFFZHBDDHBD (<u>marumakaL</u>)	FFFZHBDSW ^b (<u>sitti</u>) + WeZ (who was also WMBW)	WFBSy (<u>marumakan</u>)	yZ (<u>taṅkaḷ</u>)
Pillaimār (T5)	FZSD (<u>marumakaL</u>)	eZ (<u>akkāL</u>)	WyB (<u>maccinan</u>)	eZ (<u>akkāL</u>)
Maravar (T34)	MBD (<u>koRundiyaL</u>)	Two yZs (<u>taṅkaḷ</u>)	yZH ^d (<u>maitṭunār</u>)	yZ (<u>taṅkaḷ</u>)
Maravar (T83)	MFBS (<u>koRundiyaL</u>)	eZ & yZ (<u>akkāL</u> , <u>taṅkaḷ</u>)	yZH (<u>maccinan</u>)	eZ (<u>akkāL</u>)
Nāyakkar (T161)	FMZHSZD (<u>marumakaL</u>)	eZ (<u>akkāL</u>)	WFBSy ^e (<u>maccinan</u>)	eZ (<u>akkāL</u>)

Notes : All the genealogical and terminological data refer to the groom as Ego unless otherwise stated. A Brahman Priest also officiated in all except the Kōnār cases. For all castes except the Maravar, maccinan, maitṭunār and marumakan are more-or-less interchangeable kinship terms (Table 10.4) .

- The groom had no married Z in the two Kōnār examples.
- The officiant was also FBWBW (attai) to the bride.
- The groom also sometimes addressed this person as marumakan.
- The groom had earlier been led out by his MB (tāymāma) for a rite at which clothes were distributed (9.9, example C) .
- The bride had no B in this case. The groom was led out by a distant maccinan (not this person) at an earlier stage.

First of all, the ideal officiant is a married eZ of the groom. She leads the bride out, actually ties the tālī, and she or another Z makes up the rear of the procession around the platform. If there is a choice, the eZ seems to be preferred to the yZ, even if the latter is married, but in any case the officiant is someone who is both a parallel relative ('kin') by birth and a cross relative ('affine') by marriage. Being anomalous in this way as far as her B is concerned, she seems the ideal person to effect the transformation which the tying of the tālī represents, for according to David (1973a:523) it is at precisely this point that the transformation in the bride's substantive identity takes place ⁵².

According to this 'dynamic' or 'transformational' view, the Z bridges the gap between her B and his new cross relatives, in a way which reflects her own structurally intermediate position between the two groups. One could take a related but more 'static' view, as follows: the groom has previously 'lost' a woman (his Z) in marriage, at a rite in which, as the bride's yB, he himself may well have played a leading part. In return, as it were, his Z now 'provides' him with a woman, who may indeed be her own D. In the latter case, the eZ could not herself officiate, one assumes, because as the bride's M she could not normally attend the wedding. Unfortunately I did not witness any marriage in which the bride was the eZDy of her H. But in any event, whether as the donor of her own D or as the transferor of someone else's, it is the groom's eZ who ensures that he acquires a wife.

52. The tālī is a polysemous symbol (Turner 1967:50) of course, and represents other things too.

The sister brings the bride to her B, stands between them while they are still on the platform, but is separated from her B during the subsequent procession by the woman who has been transferred to him. Having discharged her obligation towards her B by bridging the gap separating him from his bride, she ends the ceremony having been finally and definitively separated from him.

The role of the WyB (or yZH) seems to follow directly from the above, whichever genealogical position he occupies (from the terminological viewpoint the two positions are in any case identical). He shares the 'affinal characteristics'⁵³ which the groom's Z acquired at her own wedding and which the present bride is now losing. His role is subordinate to that of the main officiant in practice, and on the symbolic plane he can be seen as the opposite polar reference point on the dimension along which the two women move at marriage. He represents, in Dumont's terms, the 'permanent affine' just as the groom himself represents 'permanent kin' (see 10.2).

The above does not exhaust the implications of the parts played by these two relatives, the Z and WyB of the groom. One or both of them are, as Beck has pointed out, likely to be the parents-in-law of any children born to the marriage at which they are officiating, given the high incidence of first cross-cousin marriage (1972:240-3). There is, indeed, although one

53. These may be expressed in terms of 'natural bodily substance' (David 1973a), 'blood' (TV) or in any other socio-biological and cultural ways. Pace David, Marriott & Inden, et al, this cultural mode is irrelevant to the basic structural fact (see Chapter 12).

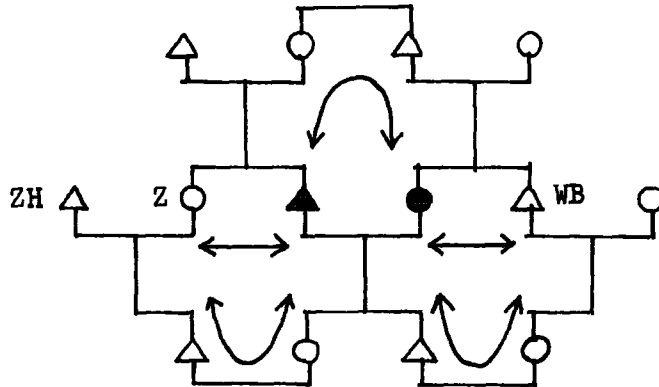
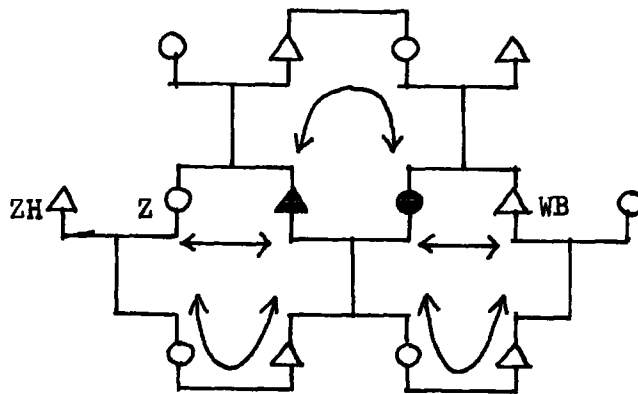
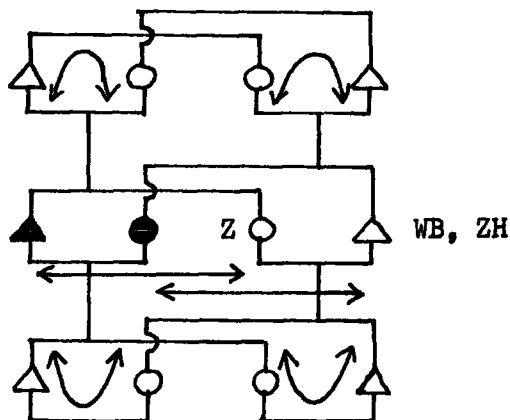
would not want to make too much of the fact given the small size of the sample, a strong correlation between the genealogical identity of the male participant and the direction of the urimai preference. For those castes with a stated MBD preference (Kōnār, Nāyakkar, this sub-group of PiLLai, the Saiva PiLLai) the wyB (or the nearest available genealogical equivalent) takes part: conversely, for those with a preference for the FZD (here represented only by the Maravar), the yZH is involved. In all cases the participant would be the father of the urimai girl for any son born of the marriage which is taking place ⁵⁴.

This aspect, the making of a claim with respect to the future off-spring of a new union, is quite explicit in Beck's data. This is not so in the present case, at least among those castes whose weddings I observed, but I think it legitimate to make deductions of this type within a given socio-cultural area. In other words, I would argue that as the socio-structural situation is the same in both cases, an aspect explicitly recognised in one cultural form may therefore be inferred in the other ⁵⁵.

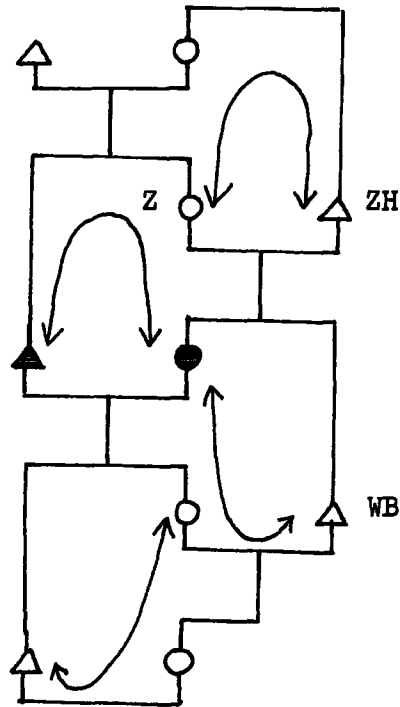
The general picture which has emerged ties in with Dumont's views drawn from other groups in the region, on the diachronic transmission of the 'alliance' link (Dumont 1957a; 10.2) . Given

54. Alternatively, it should be kept in mind that the Maravar are the only group in Table 9.3 to prohibit eZDy marriage. For the terminological difficulties raised, see (10.6) .

55. I would not, however, accept the reverse process, that of making structural generalisations on the basis of cultural data from a given locality, and for this reason too I feel reservations concerning the work of David and other Chicagoans (Ch. 12) .

(a) Repeated MBD Marriage(b) Repeated FZD Marriage(c) Repeated Symmetrical Cross-Cousin Marriage

(Figure 9.6 cont'd overleaf)

(d) Repeated ZD MarriageKey to Symbols :

Groom (Ego)



Bride

Urimai LinkOfficiation at
KalyāNam (not
known for d)Future 'in-law'
LinkFigure 9.6 : Diachronic Aspects of the Alliance Relationship

repeated first cross-cousin (or for that matter ZD) marriage, the same group of individuals have urimai claims on each other, officiate at each others weddings, and marry their own children to the offspring of the others. Figure 9.6 shows how any given marriage presupposes the past, present and future marriages of 3 generations, whatever consistent form of close genealogical may be chosen. Moreover, given the general background of a classificatory terminology applied to a closely inter-married

local caste-group, the situation is not so very different when the spouses and participants are in fact genealogically more distant.

This structural analysis should end on a note of caution, however, for while the above view seems plausible and is consistent with a number of other, minor cultural details of the rites which have not been adduced here, I have no local exegesis with which to back it up. In this respect then, my analysis falls short of the standard which I set myself in the analysis of the saDahku rite (8.7) .

With regard to the latter ceremony, a comparison of the lists of participants given in Tables 8.1 and 9.3 provides evidence in favour of my suggestion that the saDahku and kalyaṇam may profitably be seen as a single entity. It has already been mentioned (8.3) that the officiants in the two rites are terminologically (and hence sometimes genealogically) identical. Moreover, given that the identity of the 'groom' in the saDahku most often reflects the direction of the urimai, it follows that the 'groom', too, is a terminological and perhaps genealogical 'sister' of the girl's future H. Finally, the donor of the saDahku sari is of the same terminological category as the girl's future H (except in the Maravar case) and may even (though this is unlikely given that the donor is usually already married) be that future husband.

9.11 Second Marriages

All the Hindu castes in the area allow a man to take a second wife, subject to his first wife's consent, if his first

marriage is childless. In practice, polygyny occurs in other circumstances too, as the example below illustrates. In either case, sororal polygyny is the most common form; that is, the second wife is usually the yZ of the first. There is very little in the way of ceremony associated with such a second marriage.

Kurusāmi Tēvar (T12) had made a 'wrong' marriage to his FZDD (9 4.1) . His W Malaiyammāl had borne him a daughter and 3 sons. His WM was a widow, for whom the cost of marrying off her D might well have proved a considerable burden. Moreover, Kurusāmi and his W are extremely hard-working and are often occupied, on their land or his carting business, from before dawn until well after dusk. At the time in question, Malaiyammāl had been ill and as the the children were not yet old enough to work it was clear that an extra pair of hands would be a considerable advantage. All these factors decided Kurusāmi to take one of his wife's younger sisters as a second wife.

The marriage took place early in 1977. Kurusāmi went off one evening, dressed in best white shirt and new veSTi. He returned in his bullock cart in the early hours of the morning, with his new bride and some of her male relatives. There was no ceremony or feast: a few children were smeared with sandalwood paste, and the relatives left later that day.

Thereafter the younger wife wore the tālī previously given to her eZ. The latter continued to wear the beads normally placed on either side of a Maravar tālī. The family ate from a single hearth, in contrast to the situation described by Beck (1972:203), and the wives shared the agricultural and domestic work. The children continued to address the new wife as sitti (MyZ), the same term as they had used before the second marriage.

No dowry or other prestation was involved. The husband did buy his new wife some saris, including the one in which she arrived, but these were sometimes worn by the elder sister thereafter.

It should be pointed out that this second marriage was not a 'wrong' one, for my own data bear out Beck's discovery that a relationship set up as a result of a recent marriage takes priority over one involving an earlier marriage (1972:226) . The contrast between the above rite and those described in (9.9) is very marked though, and it must be remembered that in terms of Dumont's classification of types of marriage (8.6.3) this was only a 'subsidiary' union for Kurusāmi, even though it was the 'primary' marriage of his bride.

Even so, a full marriage rite would according to Dumont have been possible under these circumstances, and two possible socio-structural reasons suggest themselves for the actual, truncated ceremony. Firstly, the marriage involved the same two families as had the groom's 'principal' union. Secondly, the junior wife, having previously undergone a normal saDañku ceremony, can, it has been argued above, be seen as already part of the way through the process whereby control over her sexuality is transferred.

9.12 Divorce

Divorce is permitted by the various Maravar and Nāyakkar caste-groups, by the VaNNār, PāNDitar, Paraiyar, PaLLar, Cakkiliyar and (recently) Āsāri. The local term for it is tīrttal, 'causing to be finished' (JPF:532) .

The D of SaNmuka Tevar (T94) was divorced in Feb. 1977. Her entire dowry was returned to her F, and her saris and other garments given back to the donors. Her family returned the Rs 101/- parisam, and the tāli was handed back to the groom's F .

I do not know what the grounds for divorce were in this case. It often results from a personal or financial dispute, either between the couple themselves or involving their respective relatives. Another common cause is the husband's preference for another woman, in spite of which he had submitted (in form only) to his parents' wishes. The changing of marital partners, whether accompanied by de jure divorce and remarriage or not, is fairly common, and the longer I remained in the villages the more such cases came to my attention. Among the Kōnār, who do not officially allow divorce, 8 of the adults currently resident in TV had to my knowledge had previous marriages, prolonged extra- or premarital liaisons, or concubines from other castes.

I did not witness any actual divorce proceedings and have no idea whether any ritual is involved. It is however clear from the information which I was given in the above account, that the most important aspect is the return of prestations. It is not simply a question of an economic transaction between the two divorcing individuals, of the drawing-up of a 'balance-sheet' and the making of a single payment by one side or the other. Instead, all the gifts made by the immediate relatives at the time of the wedding have to be returned exactly and individually. This illustrates the fact that a whole framework of relationships hinges on each marriage, and also supports my thesis that the study of prestations is crucial to an understanding of South Indian society.

CHAPTER 10 : ELDER SISTER'S DAUGHTER MARRIAGE

10.1 Introduction

There is a widespread preference in South Asia for marriage between a real or 'classificatory' "mother's brother" and his "elder sister's daughter". Beck has plotted the geographical distribution of this preference as accurately as present knowledge permits, and the resulting map (Beck, n d.) shows that in the 4 southern states of India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) some or all of the population of each administrative District allow marriages of this type.

In spite of its geographical spread, social importance and theoretical interest, the preference has received little investigation from ethnographers. Those who have studied it have tended to treat it as a minor variant of cross-cousin marriage (with which it is invariably associated) for reasons which will be made clear. This chapter represents an attempt to redress the balance, and it will necessarily be concerned with certain theoretical confusions, the resolution of which is a pre-requisite for the analysis of this intriguing phenomenon.

We have already seen (9.3) that all the caste-groups to be found in the TV area practise 'cross-cousin marriage' and that all except the KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar and the Christian NāDār permit a male Ego to marry his eZDy .

As will become apparent below, a number of difficulties arise from this association of eZDy marriage with the 'Dravidian' type of kinship terminology. Because the Maravar terminology

does not involve any of these problems, it will be dealt with first. I have presented it in Table 10.1, giving only the closest genealogical specifications in each case. This should be of assistance in following Dumont's analysis of the 'Dravidian' terminology, to which we now turn.

10.2 The 'Dravidian' Kinship Terminology

The 'Dravidian' kinship terminology has been subjected to an immense amount of analysis, by Morgan (1871), Rivers (1906), Hocart (1927), Emeneau (1967), Dumont (1953a,b; 1957b; 1961b, 1964), Leach (1960b; 1971), Yalman (1962; 1969), Tambiah (1965), Beck (n.d.; 1972; 1974) and Carter (1973), among others. The most satisfactory account of the terminology per se is that given by Dumont, and I will summarise very briefly the results of his analysis before going on to criticise it.

He begins by recognising four basic, organising principles inherent in the terminology. These are:

- (i) classification by generation;
- (ii) distinction of sex of referent;
- (iii) distinction of two kinds of relative within certain generations; and
- (iv) distinction of relative age (Dumont 1953a:34).

The use of the term 'generation' here is rather unfortunate, for reasons which will become apparent (10.5). I would prefer to speak of, say, Ego and his F as belonging to different 'terminological levels', but I will continue to talk of 'generations' while paraphrasing Dumont.

Table 10.1 : Kinship Terminology of the KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar

Kinship Term	Genealogical Referents	Level
1. tāttā	FF, MF, FFB, MFB, FMB, MMB	+2
2. pāTTi, ācci	FM, MM, FFZ, MFZ, FMZ, MMZ	+2
3. ayyā, appā	F	+1
4. periyappā	FeB, MZH (older than F)	+1
5. sittappā	FyB, MZH (younger than F)	+1
6. attā, ammaL	M	+1
7. periyammaL	MeZ, FeBW	+1
8. sin ^{na} mmaL, sitti	MyZ, FyBW	+1
9. māma, māman	MB, FZH, WF, HF	+1
10. attai	FZ, MBW, WM, HM	+1
11. māmiyar	HM	+1
12. aNNan	Be, FBSe, MZSe	+0
13. akkaL	Ze, FBDe, MZDe	+0
14. tampi	By, FBSy, MZSy	-0
15. tañkacci, tañkai	Zy, FBDy, MZDy	-0
16. attān	MBSe, FZSe, WeBe, HeB, eZH	+0
17. madini	MBDe, FZDe, WeZe, HeZ, eBW	+0
18. mait ^{tu} nār, maccinan,		
māppillai	MBSy _{ms} , FZSy _{ms} , WeBy, WyB, yZH _{ms}	-0
19. koRundan	MBSy _{ws} , FZSy _{ws} , HyB, yZHy _{ws}	-0
20. koRundiyaL	MBDy _{ms} , FZDy _{ms} , WeZy, WyZ, yBW _{ms}	-0
21. sammanti, nāttinār	MBDy _{ws} , FZDy _{ws} , HyZ, yBW _{ws}	-0
22. sammantakkāran	DHF, DHM, SWF, SWM	+0
23. makan	S, BS _{ms} , ZS _{ws} , HBS, WZS	-1
24. makaL	D, BD _{ms} , ZD _{ws} , HBD, WZD	-1
25. marumakan	BS _{ws} , ZS _{ms} , WBS, HZS, DH	-1
26. marumakaL	BD _{ws} , ZD _{ms} , WBD, HZD, SW	-1
27. pēran	SS, DS, BSS, ZSS, BDS, ZDS	-2
28. pētti	SD, DD, BSD, ZSD, BDD, ZDD	-2

Of these four principles, the most important is the third, the only wholly non-biological criterion (ibid:39) . In the F's generation, for example, there are two classes of male relatives. The F belongs to one and the MB to the other, but it would be an error to regard their relationship as primary and that between the classes as resulting from terminological extension (ibid:35) . Nor, just because MB = WF terminologically, should we assume that the former "cognatic" usage is primary and the "affinal" one secondary. The view that natal kinship position takes precedence over marital relation is derived from our own categories of thought, not from indigenous views (ibid) .

Dumont proposes an alternative approach: what, he asks, is the structural principle which opposes the two classes to each other? This principle may be called 'alliance', and the ZH-WB relationship is only a special case of this, because marriage connects not merely two persons but two groups. Two people standing in such an alliance relationship to each other are to be called 'affines' (ibid) .

The cross-parallel distinction, and the idea of linearity, are not basic indigenous categories. They arise, says Dumont, from the anthropologist's insistence on tracing links by compounding single steps. Thus it is the anthropologist who brings the mother into the relation between Ego and his so-called 'mother's brother': in fact the latter is merely opposed to the father, as is obvious once the sexes are considered separately ¹.

1. Presumably Dumont is objecting here to the unthinking translation of the Tamil term māmā as 'mother's brother', a procedure as misleading as the earlier tendency to render it 'uncle'. Yet as it stands, his contention is patently untrue, for Tamils do

Every relationship between terminological categories is in the form of a structural opposition, and each opposition has a differentiating principle and a common basis. Thus Ego and his F are differentiated by 'generation' but united by what Dumont terms a "kin link" or, negatively, by the absence of alliance. The latter is therefore the common basis of their relationship. By contrast, Ego's F and MB are united by a common basis of 'generation' but are differentiated by 'alliance', by the absence of a 'kin link'. 'Affines' and 'kin' thus make up a truly structural opposition, in that between them these categories cover an entire semantic field, the one implying the absence of the other (Dumont 1961b:81) .

For Ego then, the F and the MB are alike in terms of 'generation', but differ in that they are respectively 'kin' and 'affine' to Ego. The so-called 'mother's brother', Dumont concludes, is thereby shown to be an 'affine' via the F rather than a 'consanguine' via the M (1953a:38) .

This point produced a characteristic rejoinder from Radcliffe-Brown. It could not be true, he argued, that the MB was not a consanguine, in view of the fact that among the Nāyar of Kerala the maternal uncle was head of the taravad, or matrilineal, matrilocal joint family (8.4.4), while the F was no more than one of the sampantam lovers of the M (1953:112) .

In his reply, Dumont contended that Radcliffe-Brown was confusing substance with structure. In fact, the crucial

bring the M into the relationship between a man and his genealogical MB, as the expression tāymāmā ('the māmā who is one's mother's brother') illustrates.

differentiating principle of the 'Dravidian' terminology, the distinction between 'kin' and 'affines', is clearly still present. It is simply that in this case the positions of F and MB have been reversed: the MB is here 'kin' to Ego, while the F is an 'affine' (Dumont 1953b:143) .

The point is well made, but Dumont does not, it seems to me, push this line of argument far enough. He continues to worry over the labels to be attached to the polar positions of his various oppositions, referring to these sometimes as 'kin' and 'affines', sometimes as 'consanguines' and 'affines' respectively (1961:81) . The problem is that in each case these labels carry a prior semantic load which is not necessarily appropriate to the present context. This point will be elaborated in (10 3) .

Turning now to consider other paired categories, and using genealogical designations to label these classes, not as their prime or central meanings, we can say that just as the MB is the affine of the F, so the 'cross-cousin' is Ego's affine. Alliance therefore has a vertical or diachronic dimension as well as a synchronic one. Clearly 'alliance' must transcend the 'generations' in this way if it is to be opposed to kin links. The diachronic preservation of an alliance relation, says Dumont, is equivalent to the observation of a certain marriage-rule, and cross-cousin marriage is:

"... the perfect formula for perpetuating the alliance relationship." (1953a:38)

Only one marriage of this type need take place in each generation, and it would serve to maintain the 'alliance' relation between the whole group of Ego's kin and the whole group of his cross-cousin's kin.

A further criterion appears within Ego's 'generation' however, for it is terminologically divided in half on the basis of relative age. This replaces 'generation difference' as the basis of one type of relationship and the principle of the other. There are therefore 4 types of male relative in Ego's generation: older and younger 'kin' and older and younger 'affines'. There are 4 types of female relative too, classifiable in the same way. It should be added that relatives in Dumont's 'kin' category are differentiated by relative age in the +1 'generation' too, that is, FeB/FyB and MeZ/MyZ are distinguished by means of prefixes (Table 10.1, terms 4 & 5 and 7 & 8 respectively) .

We return to the previous situation in the 'generation' following Ego, with 'generation' and 'kin/alliance' as the two criteria. Dumont sees the kin-ally distinction as less fundamental in this case. The argument is a linguistic one: 'sons' and 'nephews' are denoted by the same root, with the addition of the prefix maru- in the latter case (1953a:38) . It is not at all clear to me why this linguistic fact should have any necessary bearing upon the intensity of Dumont's postulated 'kin' v 'affine' opposition. Indeed, the very topic of this chapter, marriage with the eZDy, carries with it the implication that the opposition is every bit as important in this 'generation' as it is in Ego's own ².

2 Dumont treats kinship terms in isolation from their reciprocals. One surely cannot argue that 'son' and 'cross-cousin' are only slightly differentiated while at the same time basing one's entire analysis upon the opposition between their reciprocals 'F' and 'MB' respectively. His procedure is all the stranger when one reflects that he is aiming at a view based on, precisely, structural relationships.

Moving two 'generations' away from Ego in each direction, Dumont sees no distinction between 'kin' and 'affines' His explanation is as follows:

"In the grandfathers' generation, cross-cousin marriage (or an equivalent) leads one to suppose an affinal link between Ego's two grandfathers, and this is the very reason why there is normally only one term for both of them, for both are kin in one way and affines in another: mother as well as father is kin to the Ego, and so are their fathers, who have at the same time an alliance relationship, so that we may consider one of them A as kin and the other B as affine, or, equally, B as kin and A as affine: the two categories merge in that generation and the distinction of kin does not apply to it."
(ibid:38)

This reasoning is not convincing however, and glosses over an unsolved problem in the analysis of South Indian terminologies. We can accept the statement that the mother may be 'kin' rather than 'affine' to Ego, because there is evidence from the Jaffna Tamils of Sri Lanka to show that marriage is believed to involve the trans-substantiation of the woman. As we saw (8.7), she becomes "physically identical with her husband and his kinsmen", according to David (1973a:521) . However, and as a corollary of this, she ceases to be of the same "natural substance" (ibid) as her F and B . There is thus ethnographic confirmation ³ of a point which one would want to make of Dumont's argument on purely logical grounds. He himself criticised the anthropologist who 'ropes-in' the mother into the relation between Ego and his

3. My own informants made equivalent structural points, though only when prompted by me (10.4) .

MB, who was said to be "essentially" (1953a:37) Ego's father's affine. If this is true of the MB should it not also be true of the MF? Should the latter not in fact be considered as 'essentially' the FF's affine? After all, by Dumont's own argument, Ego's F would think of him in that way ⁴.

In any case, the empirical situation is that there are not necessarily, as Dumont supposes, only two terms for the +2 'generation' level. In Beck's account, the great majority of castes do distinguish FF from MF and FM from MM (1972:228, 287) . In my own case, I found only 2 terms in general use, as Table 10.1 illustrates, but there are 4 terms available and some of the older Maravar use them ⁵. It is by no means clear, then, which situation is the more frequent, and while there are arguments in favour of the equation of FF with MF being the more basic feature, they are not those adduced by Dumont ⁶.

Be that as it may, the terminology as represented by Dumont is portrayed in Figure 10.1, in a form which he chooses

4. Though he is committed to the view that kinship terminologies are not to be directly related to social groups (9.2, 10.3), it remains true that Dumont views 'kinship' and 'affinity' as the attributes of groups and not merely as Ego-centred modes of classification. If this were not so, how could these attributes be said to have diachronic dimensions? One cannot therefore view 'affinal' status as relative in the way he does here, for an individual cannot be the affine of a given Ego without also being the affine of Ego's son.

5 These terms are: pōtti (FF), pōttiyayvā (MF), appāttāL (FM) and ponnattāL (MM) (NallammaL, T128A) .

6. It has been suggested that the overall symmetry of the terminological system would best be served by there being two terms in the +2 level (Allen 1975:89-90) . I have no definite views

so as not to attach any spurious primacy to the genealogically closest member of each category. While applauding this intention, one must nevertheless recognise the problems associated with this diagram. Apart from the question of the ± 2 'generations', dealt with above, there is the matter of the location of the female categories in the 3 central 'generations'. As shown, box C includes the class of 'mothers', G and K below it include that of 'sisters', and N' includes Ego's 'daughters'. Similarly, box D ('fathers' sisters') comes directly above H and L ('female cross-cousins') and O' ('daughters-in-law') . Thus the double vertical line in the centre of Figure 10.1 separates potential spouses at the levels of Ego and his 'sons', while uniting actual spouses at the 'father's' level. It might have been thought more consistent to adopt one criterion or the other; after all, alliance being by Dumont's own argument a diachronic phenomenon, it seems illogical to distinguish 'present spouses' from 'future spouses' in this way. Personally, I will follow Allen in choosing to group "terms for categories of relatives who may not intermarry" on one side of the central line, and "terms for those who have, could have, will or may do so" on the other (1975:83) . The positions of 'mothers' and 'fathers' sisters' would then be reversed ⁷.

We should be clear what Figure 10.1 represents. It does not imply that there will be one and only one indigenous kinship

7. In his paper (1953a), Dumont deals individually with some of Ego's female relatives too, but the above inconsistency, together with the implications of David's (1973a) work, led me to omit these examples from my detailed exposition of Dumont's views.

term for each box from A to P'. The situation is often more complex, with a greater or lesser number of individuating terms within each structural box. Such terms are merely local elaborations of the basic structure, which they do not of course invalidate. They simply add an extra, but less widespread, less essential structural element. On the other hand, if terms are found which 'overflow' the bounds of Figure 10.1's boxes, then these do threaten the basic structure as analysed therein, and must be examined with great care. Such a situation will be encountered below (10.6) .

Level	△	○	○	△
+2	A (+ fem. A') (Grandparents)			
+1	B (Fathers)	C (Mothers)	D (Father's Sisters)	E (Mother's Brothers)
+0	F (Elder Brothers)	G (Elder Sisters)	H (Elder Female Cousins)	I (Elder Male Cousins)
-0	J (Younger Brothers)	K (Younger Sisters)	L (Younger Fem. Cousins)	M (Younger Male Cousins)
-1	N (Sons)	fem N' (Daughters)	fem. O' (Daughters- in-law)	O (Sons- in-law)
-2	P (+ fem. P') (Grandchildren)			

Figure 10.1 : Structure of the Maravar Kinship Terminology

10.3 Substance or Structure?

This analysis of Dumont's concerns only the terminology⁸ and we have already (9.2) encountered his dictum to the effect that kinship terminologies do not necessarily reflect the structures of behavioural or jural groups (1964:78). For Schneider (1965) this avoided the issue of what precisely the connections between terminology and behaviour were. It is certainly true, as Schneider goes on to say, that these connections are problematic, but when he adds that the real problem is:

"... whether or not (the MB) can be considered an affinal or a consanguineal relative, or both "
(ibid:53)

this is not only to resurrect Radcliffe-Brown's substantivist objection, but also to raise a purely cultural distinction to the status of a universal principle of thought.

As hinted above (10.2), Dumont himself is not immune from criticism on this latter score. It is surely not justifiable to make use of an essentially cultural distinction such as that between 'consanguines' and affines in order to express what is a purely abstract, analytical division in a categorical system (the kinship terminology), unless of course there is evidence that this very cultural distinction is drawn in this context by the actual users of that categorical system. As it happens, some Tamils do have notions of common blood and shared bodily substance⁹, but these do not necessarily conform to Dumont's,

8. But see (10.2, fn 4) for reservations as to how far this is in fact the case.

9 Others again do not (McGilvray 1977:18).

as we have seen (David 1973a:522)¹⁰ In any case, that is merely their particular cultural expression of the basic structural fact, which is that by anthropological (not indigenous) definition, the F is always a parallel relative and the MB always a cross relative

Dumont's residual use of cultural categories leaves him vulnerable to such travesties of his position as that perpetrated by Scheffler. The latter translates Dumont's terms 'consanguines' and 'affines' into Tamil (with, at best, only local validity¹¹) as paṅkāLi and māman-maccinan respectively (1977:870) From that point on, he rehearses Dumont's entire argument in these terms, something Dumont himself (1953a, 1957b) does not do. As a result of this sleight-of-hand, Scheffler is able to conduct the subsequent discussion as though it is the meaning and spread of the cultural categories paṅkāLi and māman-maccinan which is at stake. In fact, of course, it is at the analytical level that Dumont's argument is to be understood, even though he himself insists, as we saw, on expressing it in pseudo-cultural terms. It is with a view to avoiding just such confusions as to the status of the argument that I prefer to designate the two classes of relative by the neutral terms 'parallel' and 'cross' respectively.

10 All sub-caste members in Jaffna are believed to share the same blood. Some of those whom Dumont would call 'consanguines' are united by common 'bodily substance' and are thus concorporals

11. These labels are mentioned only in passing by Dumont (1950:6; 1957b:274), with, in the case of paṅkāLi, several restrictions and qualifications (1957b:277). In my own area of study, the terms sokkārār and sammantakkārār were in use (9.4.2).

In his writings, Scheffler assumes that 'extensions' in the meanings of kinship terms occur only from some primary meaning (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971; Scheffler 1977; but see 1.6) When applied to terminological analysis, such a view pre-empts the analysis of the data by assuming a priori that a certain usage, normally the 'closest' in genealogical terms, is primary (Good 1978:129) . Thus Scheffler accuses Dumont of specifying the 'consanguine-affine' opposition as essentially that between brothers and brothers-in-law, and of thereby demonstrating what he seeks to deny, namely that "polysemy by extension" is a feature of Dravidian kinship terms (Scheffler 1977:870) . In fact, says Scheffler, even in Dumont's account:

"... the broader "affine" class... is based on the narrowly defined class which includes the brother-in-law relationship alone." (ibid:871)

It is not clear to me what this statement means even as the piece of Tamil linguistic history which it is presumably intended to be; how can the terms māmā and marumakan be said to be "based" on the class maccinan ? Moreover, it entirely misses the point of Dumont's argument, in which the class of "affines" is defined analytically, and to which local linguistic forms are irrelevant (1953a:36) ¹². In any case, Scheffler ignores Dumont's repeated cautions to the effect that:

"... we should not... substitute the idea of a dyadic relationship for that of a class." (ibid:35)

12. This must be so, given that the terminology which is in question extends over a number of languages, not all of which are even members of the Dravidian family.

David's (1973a) work leads to a more tenable criticism, the making of which is, however, again complicated by the intrusion of cultural factors. David points out that there are in fact three over-arching types of relative, not two, even though two of these types share the same set of kinship terms. The parallel relatives, Dumont's 'kin' or 'consanguines', are of two sorts: 1) those who are in a genealogical sense parallel relatives of Ego, whom David describes as "sharers" (of bodily substance) and for whom he uses the Tamil term sakōtarar (lit. 'brothers and sisters, parallel cousins'); and 2) those who are referred to by parallel kin terms because they are the cross relatives of Ego's cross relatives: although genealogically distant from Ego, this group is unmarriageable on terminological grounds and is only very rarely married into in practice. David therefore calls these people "non-uniters" with Ego (ibid:525), and describes them in Tamil as sakalar (lit. 'WZH'). Marriages should always occur with the remaining category of persons, the cross relatives, whom David calls the "uniters" and for whom he uses the Tamil term sampantikkārar (lit. 'those connected by marriage affinity') reported above (9.4.2) .

The Tamil terms given by David are very probably not in local use in the senses given here. As McGilvray (1977:57, fn 24) suggests, the socio-biological glosses are merely an "alien jargon" imposed by the ethnographer upon three non-genealogically-specific kinship terms. Nonetheless, David's analytical point, that there are three types of relative, still holds.

Note that the 'non-uniter's' are not consanguines of Ego, nor are they 'kin' in any but the most tenuous of genealogical senses,

yet in principle they make up almost half the population of the endogamous sub-caste with respect to any given Ego¹³ To the extent that Dumont makes his analysis contingent upon the literal application of the kin-affine or consanguine-affine distinction, then the 'non-uniteds' are entirely excluded from that analysis. If, on the other hand and as I have argued above, these terms are not to be taken seriously, then they merely confuse the issue and are best avoided. By contrast, an interpretation in terms of 'cross' and 'parallel' relationships has no difficulty in accommodating and accounting for all three of David's broad types.

It is necessary to emphasise that, as with the kinship terms themselves, David's labels apply to ego-centred categories of person and not to actual social groups. This represents a crucial difference between the South Asian kinship system and those Australian section systems which display some of the same structural features.

Dumont's notion of 'alliance' or 'affinity' is intended to act as a foil to the concept of diachronically-transmitted 'kinship' or, as he defines it, 'descent'. One is to envisage a scaffolding, in which the vertical girders of the descent groups are held in place by the 'glue' of affinity. What then of those groups with 'Dravidian' terminologies which do not appear to have any unilineal groups whatever, such as the Kōṇār in TV? It would seem, as Yalman remarks for the Sinhalese, another such group, that the glue has become rather more important than the girders (1969:619).

13. Assuming that the caste contains, relative to any Ego, 50% each of cross and parallel relatives, then the 'non-uniteds' consist of the latter group minus Ego's few 'sharers'.

There can clearly be no universal principle acting in opposition to descent when the latter is itself not universal within the Dravidian area. Moreover, as we have seen, Dumont's ultimate formulation kinship equals consanguinity plus affinity (1961b:81) not only introduces ideas which are not universal, but also fails to account for all the usages of either the cross or the parallel kinship terms ¹⁴. David's suggested modification to consanguines equal concorporals plus affines (1973a:528) is even less widely applicable; indeed, it may not even hold for the society from which it is claimed to derive (McGilvray 1977).

In Dumont's case, I have argued, all these problems arise because, almost in spite of himself, he continues to worry over the labels to be attached to the poles of his structural relationships, despite his avowed intention of concerning himself with the nature of these relationships themselves. In the last analysis, then, I am criticising these labels rather than Dumont's conclusions: they are at best misleading and, if taken literally, are often downright wrong in particular local contexts. This does not invalidate the general structure which he proposes, however. With the minor modifications in the arrangement of female relatives, and the possible sub-division of the +2 level, both of which have already been discussed, taken into account, Figure 10.1 would give us as good an idea of the 'Maravar-type' of terminology as any yet provided

¹⁴. Parallel terms are applied not only to 'sharers' (= 'consanguines'?) but also to 'non-univers', while cross relative terms apply to those 'univers' who are one's 'affines' and also to the affines of one's affines' affines.

10.4 Frequencies and Norms in Empirical Marriage Patterns

The application of a three-level model derived from Needham (1972) to data which I myself collected, has already been touched upon (9.2) . The categorical level of which Needham speaks is in this case represented by the kinship terminology, and we have now dealt with the structure of this for one particular caste-group . There is more to be said, but that will come later (10.6) .

It was also stated above that the collection of statistical-behavioural data was carried out through the medium of genealogies. One problem arises, however, in connection with the tabulation of genealogically-based marriage types. The point first presented itself in empirical, South Indian observations by Aiyappan (1934), though it is probably most familiar as a result of Leach's celebrated paper on matrilineal cross-cousin marriage (1961b:60, Figure 6) . The situation in which ZD marriage is allowed, and has in fact occurred in several successive instances, is illustrated in Figure 10.2 ¹⁵ On examination, we see that Ego's spouse is then not only his ZD but also his MBD . I found a few such cases in practice, and the question arises of how, if we are to measure the frequencies of different types of marriage, marriages of this particular type are to be classified.

¹⁵ Figure 10.2 may be viewed in several different ways, and to save redrawing it I shall from time to time adopt different perspectives on it below. Firstly, as here, it may represent a real or fictional genealogy; secondly, it may represent the structure of a prescriptive kinship terminology; thirdly, though this will not be done here, it may be used to depict the forms of jural alliance relationships between groups, not individuals

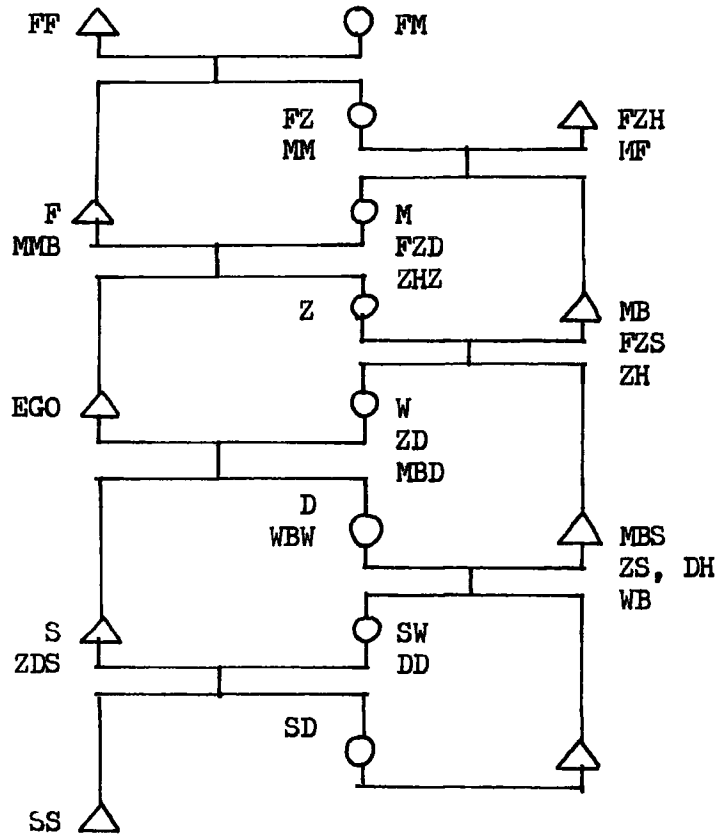


Figure 10.2 : Results of Repeated Sister's Daughter Marriage

I have listed such marriages as being with the ZD, on the principle that one gives a genealogically-closer relationship priority over a more distant one, unless there is reason to think that the people themselves do otherwise. In fact, such marriages are regarded as being with the eZD, as we shall see. Not all eZD marriages are of this type, of course, and most of my genealogies displayed no such ambiguity.

Turning now to a detailed consideration of Table 10.2, in which are presented the results of this genealogical investigation, it should first-of-all be explained that the samples used are made up as follows: every marriage of which at least one of the spouses is still alive and resident in the area, is included; the marriages of all the siblings of both these

Table 10.2 : The Frequencies of Cross-Cousin and eZD Marriage

Sub-Caste	Sample Size	Geneal. Identity of Wife			(1)+(2) +(3)
		(1)MBD	(2)FZD	(3)eZD	
Maravar (TV 1, KP 2)	144	12.5%	12.5%	-	25.0%
Paraiyar (TV 2)	77	9.1	11.7	10.4%	31.2
Kammavar (TV 3)	67	11.9	9.0	9.0	29.9
Kōnār (TV 4, VV 5)	86	14.0	3.5	9.3	26.8
Pillaimār (TV 5)	75	2.7	1.3	8.0	12.0
Taccan (TV 6)	46	-	15.2	10.9	26.1
CeTTiyār (TV 7)	48	2.1	2.1	6.3	10.5
Kollan (TV 8)	34	11.8	11.8	23.5	47.1
VēLār (TV 9)	16	6.2	-	6.2	12.4
KavuNDar (TV 10)	5	-	20.0	-	20.0
VanNār (TV 11, VV 6, KP 6)	34	8.8	8.8	11.8	29.4
PāNDitar (TV 12, KP 9)	14	-	-	14.3	14.3
Tattan (TV 13)	3	-	-	-	-
TīNDā VanNār (TV 14)	3	-	-	-	-
NāDār (VV 1)	291	9.5	7.6	0.003	17.1
PaLLar (VV 2)	126	4.0	4.8	0.1	8.9
KampaLattar (VV 3)	54	1.9	5.6	1.9	9.4
Cakkiliyar (VV 4)	43	-	9.3	2.3	11.6
MaNiyakkārār (VV 7)	17	-	-	11.8	11.8
Maruttuvar (VV 9)	14	7.1	14.3	7.1	28.5
Ayōttī ReDDiyār (KP 1)	131	5.3	6.9	11.5	23.7
Saiva CeTTiyār (KP 3)	27	7.4	-	3.7	11.1
Kottu ReDDiyār (KP 4)	20	-	-	20.0	20.0
PuLavar (KP 5)	21	-	9.5	9.5	19.0
Teluhku Āsāri (KP 7)	8	-	-	-	-
	<u>1,404</u>	<u>7.1</u>	<u>7.2</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>20.0</u>

Notes : Altogether there were 100 marriages with the MBD, 101 with the FZD, and 80 with the eZD. If the Maravar and NāDār, who forbid eZD marriage, are excluded, these totals become 54 (5.6%), 61 (6.3%) and 79 (8.2%) respectively.

Second marriages are included.

spouses are also taken into account, as are the marriages of the children, children's children, etc of all these people This is the same sampling technique as that adopted by Beck (1972: 254) and the idea is that one should include all and only those people for whom reliable genealogical data is available. Even so there are occasional loose ends at the fringes of my consolidated genealogies, and the percentages given in Table 10.2 should therefore be regarded as minimum values. For various reasons, this is particularly true of the PiLLaimār (TV 5) and VāNīya CeTTiyār (TV 7) among the larger groups¹⁶, while the size of this type of error, coupled with the smallness of the sample, renders the figures for the small caste-groups somewhat unreliable.

The Maravar and NāDār have jural prohibitions on marriage with the eZD (9 3) and Table 10.2 shows that their respective rules are fully observed at the behavioural level. On the other hand, the Maravar display no behavioural bias towards their urimaippen (cf. Table 9.2), a state of affairs by no means peculiar to them The Taccaṇ Āsāri (TV 6) display a high frequency of marriage with both the FZD and the eZD, but not a single case of MBD marriage: by contrast, the Kollan (TV 8), who state their FZD preference, if anything, even more vehemently than do the Taccaṇ, display in practice an equal incidence of FZD and MBD marriages.

By contrast, the Kōṇār (TV 4, VV 5) provide few examples of FZD marriage: indeed, the genealogies collected in TV included none at all This latter characteristic, the tendency

16. In the PiLLaimār case, this is because they include a number of endogamous sub-groups So much CeTTiyār emigration has taken place that in only a few households are both H and W still present to be interviewed: moreover, CeTTiyār women refuse to name their DHs, thereby restricting my information still further.

of groups practising ZD marriage to avoid marriage with the FZD, has been predicted by Lave (1966:194) and Rivière (1966a:739) . We will see, however, that both these authors deal, though admittedly in terms of slightly different definitions, with hypothetical systems of prescriptive ZD marriage: this is not the situation met with here (10.6) . Moreover, TV Kōnār informants expressed no aversion to marriage with the FZD; in fact, 2 informants even named her as the urimaippen .

When people were questioned about their jural or behavioural marriage preferences, most could only offer the explanation that this was their custom. One Kollan̄ Āsāri put forward the idea that the MBD was of the same blood (irattam) as Ego, whereas the FZD and eZD were not (Suppan̄ Āsāri, T50) . In response to my questions, he explained that wives were of the same blood as their husbands, and that this change took place during the wedding. This is, of course, formally similar to the assertions of David's informants that blood is common to the entire caste-group, but that a woman undergoes trans-substantiation (a change in 'natural bodily substance') during her wedding (David 1973a: 521) . However, whether 'trans-sanguination' is assumed or not, it is not at all clear how my informant's distinction can be maintained. It is even less clear how it could be the MBD who is thus excluded when, as we have seen in Figure 10.2, she may well be found to be genealogically also an eZD ¹⁷.

17. On the other hand, alone among the castes practising eZDy marriage, the Āsāri do not make the eZDy terminologically identical to the junior cross-cousin (see Table 10.4 for the usual case) . Instead, they retain a 'Maravar-type' terminology

To complicate matters further, when I revisited this house in search of clarification, I happened to meet a visiting relative who discounted this argument in terms of blood and offered an alternative line of reasoning based on the terminology. He claimed that MBD marriage created certain terminological problems given that FZD and eZDy marriages were the norm. Note that this is precisely the reverse of the situation envisaged by Lave and Rivière. Here it is the MBD who is being ruled out as a spouse for terminological reasons. Given the logical features of the system as portrayed in Figure 10.2 however, it is difficult to see how such an explanation could hold water, and perhaps it is not surprising that neither I nor my assistant could understand this informant's reasoning¹⁸.

These inconclusive indigenous 'explanations' are mentioned because they are the only ones I was able to elicit in connection with cross-cousin or ZD marriage. The only other relevant point

(Table 10.1) . Their thinking on such matters is obviously somewhat idiosyncratic therefore, but unfortunately I do not have enough precise data on their actual usages to be able to say whether they solve problems of 'genealogical identity' (10 6) differently from other castes.

18. As closely as I can reproduce it, his argument ran: in a milieu in which FZD and eZDy marriages are common, the same term (akkaL) is used for the WM, whether the latter is genealogically eZ or FZ. The bride herself is therefore the akkaL makaL . If a man were to marry his MBD however, he could not call his WM (who is now also his MBW) akkaL . This account itself has several non-sequiturs, and I have omitted a number of directly contradictory statements, including his agreement with my suggestion that eZD marriage would make his FZD equivalent to his M !

which arose in this connection, was that many informants were unable to see any difference between MBD and eZD marriage, especially when the MBD was also the urimai girl. There are terminological reasons for this, as we shall see (10 6) .

To anticipate a little, the confusion between 'preference' and 'prescription', which has bedevilled kinship theorists for many years, can be resolved by differentiating the 'categorical' level, at which alone one finds prescription (Needham 1972:175), from the level of jural rules, at which cultural expression is given to marriage preferences. The importance of the behavioural data in Table 10.2 is then simply stated as follows: they demonstrate that neither the symmetry of the prescriptive terminology nor the asymmetry of the expressed urimai preferences necessarily determine overall, statistical behaviour patterns .

10 5 Previous Theories

Several writers have dealt with ZD marriage from the theoretical point of view. Lévi-Strauss did so, and in the specific context of South Asia, but unfortunately his analysis is vitiated by his failure to comprehend the 'Dravidian' kinship system. This is odd, given that he quotes from Hocart's account of that terminology, which, while ultimately misguided in its attempt to see Dravidian terminologies as precursors of Indo-European systems (1927:201), nevertheless gives a good description of their structures.

For example, Lévi-Strauss repeatedly (1969:432, 437) speaks of Ego's WMB as Ego's 'brother-in-law', given the possibility of ZD marriage. In fact, this person is of course usually a termino-

logical 'father' to Ego, and may indeed be his genealogical F. The only other possibility is that Ego marries his eZD, in which case his WMB is Ego himself ! Lévi-Strauss also describes Ego's WZH as his 'brother-in-law' (ibid:432), when in fact he is a terminological 'brother'. He states that Ego and his MB are in competition over the same woman, the MB's "matrilateral niece" (ibid:434), yet the MBZD, if that is the person to whom this ambiguous phrase refers, is Ego's 'sister', and is certainly not marriageable whether this relationship be genealogical or terminological. Finally, he feels it necessary to give special mention to:

"... two particularly primitive groups, (who) formally prohibit marriage with parallel cousins, who are classed as brothers and sisters." (ibid:429)

thereby showing that he has not realised what should have been obvious from Hocart's paper (1927:182), namely, that all the South Indian groups which he mentions do this.

Lévi-Strauss takes issue with Rivers, the main authority cited, on the grounds that Rivers postulates (correctly, as we now know) the existence of "a former system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage" (ibid:431). Now it is true that Rivers sometimes speaks as though genealogical cross-cousin marriage was by-and-large a thing of the past (1907:611-2), though the Appendix to that paper makes it clear that this is not the case. By the time Lévi-Strauss wrote he should certainly have been aware of the true situation, if not from this Appendix then from his other sources, Thurston (1909) and Hocart (1927). What is more, he fails to understand that part of Rivers'

argument to which he specifically refers: he says that Rivers equates MB with FZH "without proof" (Lévi-Strauss 1969:430) when in fact, as Rivers makes clear in that same paper, the two are equated terminologically (1907:620), and are often genealogically identical in practice (ibid:627) .

Throughout his discussion Lévi-Strauss tries to play down the symmetry of the system. He wishes to dissociate the MB from the FZH because he has a grander point to make, namely that:

"India thus verifies the surprising correlation...
between generalised exchange and the role of 'creditor'
played by the bride's matrilineage " (1969:437)

This is entirely wrong, for the following reasons: (1) the reference to 'matrilineages' is entirely superfluous, not to say downright incorrect in most Indian cases; (2) much more importantly, none of the examples which he discusses in fact involve generalised exchange. The terminology is quite clearly of symmetric prescriptive type; moreover, I know of no specific case ¹⁹ in which one cross-cousin is prohibited even at the jural level, though there are, as we saw, asymmetric preferences.

The confusion arises because Lévi-Strauss, then and subsequently (ibid:xxx-xxxv), has refused to make the usual distinction between preference and prescription. He sees no difference between terminological requirements and urimai rules in this regard (ibid:425): both are 'prescriptive' because both

¹⁹ Beck (n.d.:4) mentions that certain castes in northern Andhra Pradesh are said to prohibit FZD marriage, but I am not aware of any precise studies of such a phenomenon

say "what must be done" (ibid:xxxiii) . Only at the behavioural level does he allow 'preferences' to appear: they are thus associated with a 'statistical model' whereas prescriptions may be represented by 'mechanical models' (ibid:xxxv) .

Such a view leads Lévi-Strauss, like Rivers and many others before him, to a false conclusion. In fact, a MBD urimai preference is no evidence for the occurrence of prescriptive or compulsory matrilinear cross-cousin marriage, as Tables 9.2 and 10.2 illustrate. There is therefore no connection between such a preference and the existence of asymmetric 'generalised exchange': the latter is nowhere found in the area under discussion²⁰.

Lévi-Strauss is not the only person to have taken a confused and imprecise view of the nature of prescription in this particular connection. The most weighty theoretical consideration of ZD marriage to have appeared subsequently is open to the same criticism. In it, Lave attempts to develop a theoretical model of ZD marriage, and to show that this would constitute a distinct analytical type. She notes that in all known cases, ZD marriage is in fact preferential rather than prescriptive, and that it is always found in association with cross-cousin marriage, but she postulates, quite reasonably, an ideal situation in which all actual marriages accorded with this ZD preference. As an aid to analysis this is unexceptionable, but she goes on to say that

20. In addition, those groups such as the Sinhalese or the TV Kōnār which lack the unilinear principle, could not possibly practise either 'generalised' or 'restricted' exchange in the diachronic, corporate fashion envisaged by Lévi-Strauss.

her analysis will therefore be akin to the analysis of a prescriptive marriage system, because:

"... a marriage preference which was followed by 100 per cent of the population would produce the same effect as a prescriptive marriage rule." (1966:186)

Later on, she describes prescription as "the limiting case at the strong end of the continuum" of degrees of preference (ibid: 197) .

As authority for this view she cites Maybury-Lewis. Unfortunately, he says exactly the opposite at the place mentioned, namely that a society with 100% observance of a MBD rule, say, would still, in the absence of a prescriptive terminology, be a preferential system. This is because:

"... a sudden change in people's marrying habits would presumably alter any institutional alignments based on statistical trends, whereas in a prescriptive system this would be irrelevant."
(Maybury-Lewis 1965:225-6)

I find this argument persuasive, and as a consequence of it we must conclude that, insofar as she avowedly treats it as though it were in fact prescriptive, the system postulated by Lave is prescriptive.

Moreover, I cannot agree with her that:

"... in societies with prescriptive marriage rules it is never the case that all or even a large percentage of marriages are between people who are of the appropriate relationship categories." (ibid:197-8, my emphasis)

I agree of course that it is not necessary for most marriages to

be of this type, but my own data clearly show that they may be. More than 95% of the extant marriages in TV involve people who, prior to marriage, stood in the "appropriate relationship categories" (the remainder having been previously unrelated) .

Rivière adopts a sounder view of prescription, for although he does not explicitly define the phenomenon he connects it to the terminological structure rather than to extremes of preference (1966a:739) . Whereas for Lave ZD marriage is a system of "direct exchange" between patriline (1966:186), Rivière prefers to see it as "oblique discontinuous exchange" and points out that patrilineages as conventionally understood need not be present (1966a:738) .

I would not wish to argue over the names used here, though as it happens I do not find the notion of 'exchange' particularly useful in the context of prescription. In both cases, though, the phraseology clearly derives from Lévi-Strauss, for whom ZD marriage, like marriage with the FZD, is an "abortive form" of "premature" exchange which can "never exceed the stunted form of so many precocious plants". Oblique exchange "results from... a greedy and individualistic attitude", it is "a speculation on an as yet unrealised future" and it "prevents (the cycle of reciprocity) from ever being extended to the whole group" (1969: 448) .

This is more than mere fanciful description, for 'exchange' is here seen as a phenomenon the form of which is determined by the "attitude" of the members of society. This 'conspiracy theory' of social life, akin to that so devastatingly criticised by Needham (1962) in the work of Homans and Schneider (1955), is to be rejected here too, on the grounds, among others,

that it proposes a genealogically-based cause for a corporately or terminologically grounded phenomenon. For one thing, Lévi-Straussian 'exchange' necessarily involves corporate, diachronically-persisting functional groups (see also fn 20) . It is true that such systems have often been portrayed by means of 'genealogical' diagrams (see Leach 1961b:61, Figure 7 for one invidious example), but as already mentioned (10.4, fn 15) this is a quite distinct, and in my view misleading use of such diagrams. Secondly, it is of course not the genealogical first cross-cousin or eZD per se who is the prescriptive spouse of Ego, but someone with whom he stands in the same terminological relationship as with one or all of these particular persons. Finally, it should also be noticed that, by positing such an extreme contrast between matrilateral marriage as "the most lucid and fruitful of the simplest forms of reciprocity", and ZD marriage as "its poorest and most elementary application" (1969:451), Lévi-Strauss shows quite clearly that he has not realised that ZD and MBD marriage become equivalent under the conditions of Figure 10.2 .

None of these criticisms are applicable to Lave or Rivière of course, although the latter still takes the Lévi-Straussian view that FZD and ZD marriage are in some way similar, by virtue of the reversal of the direction of exchange at "each genealogical level" (1966b:554-5) . This might indeed seem to be the case when one draws certain types of diagrammatic model, but how can kinship terms (for that is what we are ultimately considering) be said to 'exchange' with each other, directionally or otherwise ? Moreover, where precisely are these genealogical

levels to be found in Figure 10.2, which reproduces the very terminological structure envisaged by Rivière ? Every position in that figure can be defined as belonging to either of two levels: MM is also FZ, MB is also ZH, MBD is also ZD, and so on. To talk of the direction of exchange reversing with each successive "genealogical level", as Rivière does, or before "even a full generation is allowed to elapse", as Beck (n.d.:2) puts it in a paper which takes a similar general stand to Rivière's, is, I would suggest, not especially enlightening in such a context.

Lave agrees that the distinction of 'generation' is of questionable importance in the context of ZD marriage (1966:190). When, however, she states that as a result of such marriages "each membership term must apply to members of more than one biological generation" (ibid:my emphasis), we see the dangers inherent in working with an unexamined 'commonsense' concept such as 'generation'. Lave does not assume that generational differences do not exist, but that a system of ZD marriage transcends them. Furthermore, she sees ZD marriage as being associated with "nearly a physiological generation's difference between spouses" (ibid:191) . This is an old chestnut, particularly among earlier writers (though Shapiro 1966:85 makes the same assumption) . The idea behind it is that, as an 'uncle' is marrying his 'niece', he is necessarily much older than his bride. Rivière implicitly refutes this when he says that among the Trio "spouses tend to be of roughly similar age" (1966b:552), but it is worth hammering the point home.

Table 10.3 : Seniority of Husbands in TV and KP

Marriage Type	Sample Size	% of Total	Av. Age Diff(yrs)	Median Diff(yrs)
(a) <u>All Sub-Castes</u>				
All marriages	182	-	5.7	5
eZD	23	12.6	7.0	6
MBD	11	6.0	4.3	5
FZD	12	6.6	5.5	4.5
(b) <u>Excluding Maravar</u>				
All marriages	126	-	5.8	5
eZD	23	18.3	7.0	6
MBD	6	4.8	4.8	5
FZD	6	4.8	5.7	4

Accordingly, Table 10.3 displays the age differences between H and W in the villages of TV and KP. In all cases but one, the H is the elder ²¹ The sample is obtained differently from that used for Table 10.2: only those marriages for which both spouses were still alive and resident in the village were considered, for it was only in such cases that I was able to obtain reliable age data. These data come from two sources. In the course of my own village censuses I ascertained the ages of all village residents: I also had access, in the cases of TV and KP, to the results of a 1971 census carried out by the Malaria Eradication campaign.

Exact ages are of little importance locally, in comparison with relative age, and the answers in both cases were clearly only approximations. I have therefore averaged the two sets of results in order to arrive at the figures presented in Table 10.3.

²¹ Even this exception 'proves the rule', for it concerns the second marriage in a 'sister-exchange'. The chronologically prior marriage made this second groom the eBWB of his bride, to whom he was the junior by less than a year.

Data on VV were excluded because there was no external check and my own figures were incomplete, but such data as I do have from there in no way affect the general conclusions to be drawn below. One major caste-group in the sample actually used, namely the K.K. Maravar, do not practise eZD marriage and so the Table also gives the figures excluding this caste, lest their inclusion should distort the results in some way

The Table shows clearly that while the age disparity is marginally above average in cases of eZD marriage, there is by no means a "physiological generation" separating the spouses. The median age difference is smaller still. These figures pertain only to the specific genealogical relatives mentioned, of course, and if one takes into account such close genealogical equivalents as the FBDD, the age difference approaches the overall average

Nor does the Table provide any evidence for Kodanda Rao's assumption (1973:26) that the age difference between a man and his FZD is on average greater than that between him and his MBD. The two forms of cross-cousin marriage are equally frequent overall, while the age disparity lies in one direction when one considers 'average' figures and in the other when one looks at the 'medians'. There is in fact no statistically significant difference between these two forms of marriage, with respect to frequency or age difference.

10.6 The Present Case

Before considering my own data on the terminological implications of eZD marriage, I must first make explicit a distinction which has been made throughout the present chapter:

the distinction is that between terminological identity and genealogical identity.

When, for example, Rivière writes (1966a:739) the equations $MBD = ZD$ and $FZD = M$, he is speaking of a terminological identification which would, as he says, be diagnostic of the existence of 'prescriptive ZD marriage'. In neither of these equations is it implied that an actual Ego living under such a system will have only one genealogical relative corresponding to each terminological category. His FZD and his M may be the same person (as under the conditions of Figure 10.2 viewed as a genealogy) but they need not be. Under such a system however, Ego would in any case refer to both genealogical relatives by means of the same kinship term. This, then, is an example of terminological identity.

Now the situation in South India is in some respects the reverse of this. There is a symmetric prescriptive terminology coupled with a variable degree of preference for eZD marriage. The result is that certain relatives who would otherwise be terminologically distinct become genealogically identical. Ego then has to choose which of two possible terms he is going to use, or, more precisely, there will be local conventions which will allow him to do this. Reference to Figure 10.2 and Table 10.1 will show that Ego's FZ (attai) may also be his MM (pāṭṭi or āccī), for example. In practice, a TV Ego will call such a relative attai, but we cannot regard this as representing the terminological identification of FZ with MM, because whenever these two relatives are not genealogically one and the same Ego will address them by means of different terms.

The occurrence of eZD marriage does involve some terminological identifications too, though, and to illustrate this Table 10.4 reproduces the kinship terminology used by those castes in TV which practise unions of this type (but excluding the Āsāri, see 10.4, fn 17) . Alternative usages are sometimes included, because there is some variation from individual to individual even within each caste-group. For example, one man may refer to his MBDy as koRundiyaL (term 20 in Table 10.4) while another calls her marumakaL (term 26) . The latter usage seems more logical, given that the FZSe is referred to as māma (term 9)²², but the former follows the practice of those castes which prohibit eZD marriage.

The data in Table 10 4 were largely obtained by the method of asking hypothetical questions of the type: "What term do you use to refer to your MBW ?" Tamils customarily think in these step-wise terms, as an alternative to the 'classificatory' forms described here (see Dumont 1957b:273), and so there is no problem of comprehension involved here. A few mistakes occur, but these are easily overcome by interviewing numbers of informants. The more critical usages were checked by means of actual, genealogical examples²³.

22. There do not appear to be any systematic differences between 'reference' and 'address' kinship usages, beyond the fact that juniors are addressed by name, and seniors only by kinship term. The questions were asked so as to elicit referential usages.

23. David says that where distant relatives are concerned "there is no simple way of deciding whether (that relative) is parallel or cross" (1973a:527) . This is not the case, of course: the terminology conveys that information. This was quite explicit in

In this chapter, then, the data were obtained by a method which deals only with terminological identities, not with genealogical ones. Thus, for example, the use of attai to refer to the MM does not appear in Table 10.4, because it could not be elicited by the questions which were asked. For the same reason, the use of akkaL (term 13) to mean MBWe does not appear either. However, as far as the analysis of the terminology itself is concerned, we are interested only in these terminological identities, so that the limitation inherent in the method turns out to be a positive advantage. It should be mentioned here that data on genealogical identity were obtained by asking all adult (and some juvenile) members of the TV Kōnār community what kinship terms they used to refer to all other members of that community, the reciprocal being elicited at the same time as a means of double-checking the answers. The topic of genealogical identity and its resulting conventions falls outside the scope of the present work, however.

Table 10.4 displays a strong tendency for cross-relative kinship terms to reflect relative age rather than genealogical position, in a way reminiscent of Karve's division of Tamil kin categories into those applied respectively to Ego's seniors and juniors (1968:246), though with the two groups constituted differently and with no attempt to dress this division up in

the cases of many woman informants, who used, in responding to my questions, a series of little mnemonics (e.g., akkaL makaL = makaL, or "the person whom my akkaL addresses as makaL is also my makaL") whereby relatives could be classified by means of their known relationship to someone to whom Ego's own relationship is already known.

Table 10.4 : Kinship Terminology Associated With eZD Marriage

Kinship Term	Genealogical Referents
1 <u>tāttā</u>	FF, MF, FFB, MFB, FMB, MMB
2 <u>pāTTi</u> , <u>ācci</u>	FM, MM, FFZ, MFZ, FMZ, MMZ
3 <u>ayyā</u> , <u>appā</u>	F
4. <u>periyappā</u>	FeB, MZH (older than F)
5 <u>sittappā</u>	FyB, MZH (younger than F)
6. <u>attā</u> , <u>ammāl</u>	M
7. <u>periyammāl</u>	MeZ, FeBW
8. <u>sinnammāl</u> , <u>sittī</u>	MyZ, FyBW
9 <u>māmā</u>	MBe, FZH, WF, HF, FZSe, MBSe, BSe _{ws} , ZSe _{ms} , eZH, HeB, WeBe
10. <u>attai</u>	FZ, MBW, WM, HM
11 <u>māmiyār</u>	HM
12. <u>aNNan</u>	Be, FBSe, MZSe, ZSe _{ws}
13. <u>akkāl</u>	Ze, FBDe, MZDe, ZDe _{ws}
14 <u>tampi</u>	By, FBSy, MZSy
15 <u>taṅkacci</u> , <u>taṅkaī</u>	Zy, FBDy, MZDy
16 <u>attān</u>	ZHe, HeB
17. <u>maḍiṇi</u>	ZDe _{ms} , FZDe, MBDe, BDe _{ws} , WeZe, eBW, HeZ
18. <u>maittunār</u> , <u>maccinan</u> , <u>māppiLLai</u>	MBY _{ms} , WBy, HeB
19 <u>koRundan</u>	MBY _{ws} , MBSy _{ws} , FZSy _{ws} , ZHy _{ws} , HyB
20. <u>koRundiyaL</u>	ZDy _{ms} , MBdy _{ms} , FZDy _{ms} , WZy, yBW _{ms} , MZy _{ms}
21. <u>sammanti</u> , <u>nāttinār</u>	Bdy _{ws} , MBdy _{ws} , FZDy _{ms} , HyZ, yBW _{ws}
22. <u>sammantakkāran</u>	DHF, DHM, SWF, SWM
23. <u>makan</u>	S, BS _{ms} , ZS _{ws} , HBS, WZS
24 <u>makaL</u>	D, BD _{ms} , ZD _{ws} , HBD, WZD
25. <u>marumakan</u>	BSy _{ws} , WBS, ZSy _{ms} , HZS, DH, MBSy _{ms} , FZSy _{ms} WBy
26 <u>marumakaL</u>	WBD, ZDy _{ms} , HZD, SW, MBdy _{ms} , FZDy _{ms}
27. <u>pēran</u>	SS, DS, BSS, ZSS, BDS, ZDS
28. <u>pētti</u>	SD, DD, BSD, ZSD, BDD, ZDD

cultural clothes by inventing Tamil terms for its two halves (ibid; see also Dumont and Pocock 1957b:62) . Not only does māma (term 9) refer to the MBe (who can be regarded, in the terms of Figure 10 1, as belonging to the +1 level), but it is here also used for the elder male cross-cousin (of level +0) and even for the opposite-sex siblings son (of level -1) if the latter is older than Ego

Marriages between relatives seem almost always to be regarded 'as though' they were MB-eZD unions, and the terminology employed by potential spouses, whether they actually lie in this genealogical relationship (or a more distant equivalent) or whether they are genealogical cross-cousins (or the equivalent), shows this (Table 9 3) . Marriages between previously unrelated spouses, on the other hand, seem for some reason to be more commonly treated as marriages between post-facto cross-cousins. Thus it is only in such cases that one finds the terms for male cross-cousins, attān (term 16) and maittunār, etc (term 18), brought into play ²⁴.

24. In the particular context of a wedding, of course, the groom is described as the māppillai, whatever term may be used on other occasions. Moreover, the other male participant is generally referred to as the groom's maccinan even when his Z, the bride, is said to be the marumakal of the groom. This same "maccinan" may well be described as the groom's marumakan on other occasions, however. The two usages are in fact interchangeable, according to context, which is itself evidence for the structure which I suggest in Figure 10 3 . The fact that the term maccinan is regarded as the more appropriate one in the wedding context may be attributable to the connotations of equality which it conveys: some groups regard the WB as the sexual preceptor of

The theoretical discussions to which I have referred were concerned, Lave's protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, with prescriptive systems of ZD marriage. They therefore necessarily dealt with a system of asymmetric matrilineal cross-cousin marriage too. Even when we confine ourselves to the categorical level, the South Asian situation departs from this model in two ways. First of all, the terminology is not asymmetric, but symmetrical prescriptive in type. Secondly, it is not simply the ZD who is a potential spouse, but the elder ZD: given that the H must be older than his W, the possible spouse is in fact the eZDy .

What precisely is the status of this latter requirement ? I would argue that it is not a rule in the jural sense (or not only that), but a categorical distinction. In the case of the Maravar the situation is clear: for a male Ego the prescribed spouse belongs to the koRundiyaL category (term 20 in Table 10.1). She is therefore the terminological equivalent of a MBDy or FZDy, and may indeed occupy one of these precise genealogical positions with respect to her husband. From the male viewpoint, the system is therefore one of symmetric prescriptive marriage with a junior cross-cousin .

No distinctions are made among the various types of ZD in this Maravar terminology. Once we turn to those groups for whom eZDy marriage is a possibility, however, the terminology is found to be predicated upon the supposition that such marriages the groom (David 1973a:524), and while this particular cultural form was not made explicit locally, it would clearly not be a role suitable for a relative so far the groom's junior as to be referred to by the latter as marumakan .

will in fact occur, as Table 10.4 illustrates. A male Ego can refer to his eZDy as koRundiyaL (term 20), to his eZDe as madini (term 17), and to his yZD as marumakaL (term 26) . He may not in fact always go to these lengths, and it is more commonly the case that marumakaL is used for both the eZDy and the yZD, even though only the former is marriageable, but the point is that it is clearly possible for the terminology to make all the necessary discriminations. From the male viewpoint, this system is one of symmetric prescriptive marriage with a junior cross-relative, in other words, the category of potential spouses is genealogically speaking broader than in the Maravar case.

It is impossible to represent this second situation by means of a closed mechanical model of the type shown in Figure 10.2 There is no way of incorporating the equation:

$$FZDy = MBDy = eZDy \neq FZDe = MBDe = eZDe$$

into a single such diagram, because that diagram would inevitably depict differences in 'generation' which are irrelevant in the present context. Even if the question of relative age is left aside, there would seem to be no way of representing more than 2 of the 3 genealogically-possible spouses on a single figure of that kind.

It is possible, though, to draw a structural diagram of the type favoured by Dumont, although the categorical boundaries turn out to be differently placed, as Figure 10.3 illustrates. It rearranges the female terms in the way already discussed (10.2), but otherwise the organisation of the parallel relatives remains the same as in Figure 10.1 . We saw that the Maravar

(a) Male Speaker :

Level	△	○	○	△
+2	tāttā , pāṭṭi			
+1	periyappā ----- appā ----- sittappā	attai	periyammāL ----- ammāL ----- sittı	māmā
+0	aNNan	akkāL	maḍıṇı	
-0	tampi	taḥkai	koRundiyaL	marumakan
-1	makan	makaL	----- marumakaL	
-2	pēran , pētti			

(b) Female Speaker :

+2	tāttā , pāTTi			
+1	periyappā ----- appā ----- sittappā	attai	periyammāL ----- ammāL ----- sittı	māmā
+0	aNNan	akkāL	madinı	
-0	tampi	taṅkai	sammanı	koRundan
-1	makan	makaL		----- marumakan
-2	pēran , pētti			

Figure 10.3 : Structure of Kinship Terminology Associated

With eZDy Marriage

terminology incorporated different cross-relative terms for male and female speakers in the ± 0 and -1 levels, but these were applied within a single structural framework. In the case of Figure 10.3, on the other hand, not only do men and women employ different terms but the actual surface structure of the terminology depends upon the sex of the speaker.

At a more abstract level, the structure proves not to depend upon the gender of Ego however, although Figure 10.3 still remains structurally distinct from Figure 10.1. Thus there is one term in Figure 10.3 for a younger cross-relative of the same sex as Ego (marumakan for a male speaker and sammantı for a female), and two terms for a younger cross-relative of opposite sex to Ego (koRundiyaL/marumakaL for a male and koRundan/marumakan for a female speaker).

10.7 The 'Dravidian' Kinship Terminology Re-Examined

Terminologies of what has here been called the 'Maravar type' have usually been taken to exemplify the 'Dravidian' system of terminology as found in South Asia, and the structure presented in Figure 10.3 could no doubt be seen as a variant of this basic form. Yet from a purely logical point of view, one could just as plausibly see the 'Maravar type' as a derivative of that which incorporates eZDy marriage. The fact that most writers have taken the first course is at least partly the result of an historical accident: Rivers, Hocart, Srinivas, Emeneau, Dumont, Leach, Yalman, Tambiah and Carter all worked among groups which, for one reason or another, prohibit marriage with the eZDy (Beck n.d.:5). Given the existence of such an

immense body of work by such a distinguished collection of anthropologists, it is hardly surprising that even those ethnographers whose field locations brought them into contact with actual cases of eZDy marriage should have followed the majority view.

Gough, for example, reports Tanjore Brahman and (unspecified) "low caste" terminologies in which none of the major terms seem to cross 'generational' barriers (1956:849-53) . Although she states that ZD marriages take place (ibid:844) she does not discuss its terminological consequences.

Kodanda Rao also seems to regard the 'Maravar type' of terminology as basic, in his study of an Andhra fishing village, though his position is rather confused. He makes the point that MBS and ZS may be genealogically identical, and adds that we cannot write the terminological equation $MBS = ZS$ because these two genealogical positions are denoted by different kinship terms, bavamaradi and menalludu respectively (1973:29) . So far so good, but he then says:

"These two terms are never equated by the fishermen as their rank implications are quite contradictory; rather, the alternative reckonings made possible by the inter-relationships shown in Figure 1 (the same as my Figure 10 2) are used to substantiate an equation bavamaradi = menalludu, i.e., WB = ZS."
(ibid, my gloss)

This passage is not entirely clear, but it seems self-contradictory. To complicate matters further, he goes on to ridicule Leach, Lave and others for their alleged emphasis on logic at the expense of local cultural facts, especially in

connection with their equating of ZD and MBD . He says:

"It is true that (ZD) marriage when practised continuously... would result in MBD marriage in every case. But this reasoning ignores the effects of a kinship terminology in which all the kin terms are designated according to generational level. After all, the fishermen know who is one's MBD and ZD (sic) . A man's MBD comes from the same generation as his own, while his ZD comes from the descending generation." (ibid:29-30)

This passage involves a number of errors, and I will mention only the most obvious, that neither the fisherman nor the anthropologist can possibly distinguish between the MBD and the ZD under these circumstances, because the whole point is that they are one and the same person. Of course, it may be that by local convention a male Ego will call such a person "MBD" when they are approximately equal in age and "ZD" when he is by far the senior, a state of affairs not unlike that depicted in Figure 10 3, but that does not seem to be the import of the passage quoted above.

With evidence of this kind to suggest that the author has not fully got to grips with the situation, it is difficult to evaluate his ingenious and interesting main thesis, which is that ZD marriage is not, as Dumont (1961b:90) and Lave (1966: 187) have argued, logically incompatible with status differences between the lineages involved (Kodanda Rao 1973:30-3) . Overall, this paper is a good example of the tendency mentioned above, whereby the data are fitted into the implicitly-accepted 'Dravidian' mould rather than being treated on their own terms.

McCormack has so far been the only South Asian ethnographer to describe a terminology as in large part predicated upon eZD marriage. Unfortunately, he merely reproduces a mechanical model formally identical with Figure 10.2 (1958:40) . As we have seen, this does not correctly depict the symmetry of the actual terminology. What is worse is that he does not actually report that terminology, so that it is not always clear whether the equivalences which he records are terminological or genealogical in nature (ibid:42-3, for example) . Despite these problems, and some differences in detail between his findings and mine, he clearly states the basic equation:

$$MBD = FZD = ZD^{25}$$

which I would regard as diagnostic of the system which I am here putting forward (ibid:42) .

The most revealing case, because of the scrupulous clarity and thoroughness with which the data are presented, is that of Beck (1972) . It might be thought that her published data, in which $FZDy = MBDy \neq ZD$ and $FZSe = MBSe \neq MB$, provide a negative instance: I do not believe this to be so, and for reasons which illustrate the difficulty inherent even in the collection of the supposedly 'raw' terminological data. For she clearly assumes cross-cousin marriage to be the basic form, so that when it comes to usages which derive from the occurrence of eZDy marriages, such as the use of the term māmā to refer to the senior male cross-cousin, she either gives these as 'address'

25. McCormack does not introduce the consideration of relative age into his discussion of such equations.

usages only, or treats them as secondary phenomena brought about by what she calls the "cross-generational slippage of kin terms" (ibid:227) . The 'secondary' phenomenon of eZDy marriage causes conflicts in the basic terminology which the ad hoc slippage succeeds in resolving: this is the implication of her procedure, though it is not explicitly stated. The result is that all such usages are elided from her consolidated terminological tables (ibid:287-9) . It is clearly not possible to obtain a result of the type shown in Figure 10.3 when it is assumed a priori that any deviations from the Figure 10.1, 'Maravar' type of terminology are trivial and idiosyncratic ²⁶.

I want to end this discussion by putting forward, as a counter-weight to the main body of established opinion, the following proposition. Given the extremely wide distribution of eZDy marriage in South Asia (Beck n.d.:map), and taking due cognizance of the fact that, where it is permitted, it tends to be at least as frequent as cross-cousin marriage (a point which is demonstrated by the figures reproduced from the work of others, in Table 10.5), I suggest that the more common form of the so-called 'Dravidian' terminology may resemble that illustrated in Table 10.4 and Figure 10.3 . This terminology accurately reflects the marriage patterns of almost every non-matrilineal

26. It is rather unfair to single out Beck's work to exemplify these difficulties of interpretation, and I would like to underline the point that this is possible only because her account is so carefully detailed. One can only wonder at what is concealed by the silence of certain other authors with respect to these methodological issues.

Table 10.5 : Frequency of Close Marriages in South India

Area Studied	Source	Identity of Wife			(1)+(2)
		(1)MBD	(2)FZD	(3)eZD	+(3)
Satara, Maharashtra ^a	I	12.9%	3.4%	0.3%	16.6%
Mandya, Karnataka ^b	II	14.0	5.0	7.5	26.5
Mysore, Karnataka	II	9.2	4.4	4.0	17.6
Morsralli, Karnataka	III	6.5	4.8	9.8	21.1 ^c
Kankayam, Tamil Nadu	IV	5.9	5.0	6.5	17.4
Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu	V	4.0	4.0	4.0	12.0
Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu	VI	15.2	15.2	20.3	50.7 ^c
Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu	VII	7.1	7.2	5.7	20.0

Sources: I, Valunjkar (1966); II, Banerjee (1966); III, McCormack (1958); IV, Beck (1972); V, Gough (1956); VI, Sivertson (1963); VII, this work.

Notes : The areas are listed in approximate north-south order.

a. This represents the extreme northern limit of the kinship system in question (see Beck n.d.;map) .

b. These results cover two villages, the data for which are reported separately in the original source.

c. In both these instances, all the reported figures are inflated because other close kin of 'similar' type have been taken into account. The relative frequencies of the three types should be approximately correct, however.

caste group in the 'Dravidian' region, because the vast majority of the inhabitants of Sri Lanka ²⁷ and the four southern states

27. According to Beck (n.d.:1, map) one does not find eZDy marriage in Sri Lanka; see also Yalman (1971:213), Robinson (1968:405) for the Sinhalese. It would seem from Banks (1957) that the phenomenon is found among Jaffna Tamils, however, and one would certainly expect it among the Tamil plantation workers.

of India belong to castes having some degree of jural preference for and behavioural incidence of eZDy marriage. While recognising that, as already argued (10.4), terminology, behaviour and mode of alliance need not be congruent, it is at least plausible to suggest that the most widespread terminology should be that which incorporates the practices of the majority, especially when there is no reason to believe that eZDy marriage is a more recent phenomenon than marriage with the cross-cousin.

Further work among those South Asian groups which permit eZDy marriage would enable us to resolve this matter, provided that the data were collected with the utmost care. I have mentioned some of the theoretical and practical problems which arise, and it is obvious that data which do not at the very least distinguish clearly between terminological and genealogical identity would be inadequate for this purpose. Given the necessary degree of precision in the collection of data, however, the hypothesis which has been advanced is susceptible to direct empirical investigation, and hence to the possibility of falsification, for each society to which it might be applicable. I submit therefore that unlike many hypotheses advanced in the sphere of kinship, my suggestion has the status of a truly 'scientific' theory in the sense proposed by Popper (1972) .

CHAPTER 11 : LIFE CRISES: DEATH

11.1 Introduction

This survey of the major, communally-recognised transition points in the life-cycle of an individual villager concludes with a consideration of the rituals and prestations which follow the death of such a person. A number of illustrative examples will be presented, prior to a discussion of some of the sociological issues raised. One aspect of the various events, namely the nature and structure of the inter-caste prestations, has already been dealt with (5.5) .

In that earlier account it was found convenient to divide the rituals into three parts, namely: 1) the funeral proper, involving the disposal of the corpse; 2) the rites which follow after an interval of 1-3 days, and which take place in the cemetery; 3) the subsequent purificatory rite at which certain prescribed prestations are exchanged by the close relatives of the deceased, and which typically takes place 16 days after stage 1. This three-fold division will be adhered to below, but it should be made clear from the outset that this is only as an aid to the description, and that when it comes to analysis the death rituals must be considered as a whole. For example, comparison of the practices of the different caste-groups shows that certain elements may appear at different stages among different groups. In particular, the Scheduled Castes are found to incorporate into stage 2, certain practices which most others delay until stage 3 .

11.2 The Funeral Proper

Cremation is the usual method of disposing of the dead. It is not an option open to the Scheduled Castes, however, and they invariably practise burial. The KoNDaiyañkōTTai Maravar practise both methods, but cremation is the more favoured form among them, as among all the other touchable Hindu castes. The Christian NāDār almost always bury their dead (11.6) .

Each village has its own cemetery, a short way to the north of the settlement ¹. In TV and VV there are also separate cemeteries for each Scheduled Caste, situated to the east. None of these places are permanently marked in any way: they consist simply of an untended rectangle of straggling thorn bushes and bare earth, with perhaps a few ashes or shards of pottery to indicate that a funeral has recently taken place. The cemetery is known as the suDukāDu ('burning-uncultivated land') or māyvuvaDi ('dying enclosure', JPF:225, 792, 862) .

Neither Hindus nor Christians use gravestones, though wealthy NāDār erect memorial stones near the settlement, and the KavunDar of TV set up inscribed stones near the Amman Temple as part of their stage 3 rite. A woman who has died in childbirth is commemorated by the erection of a stele or dolmen of roughly-hewn stone known as a sumaitāñki ('load-supporter') which is preserved and worshipped by her relatives so as to lighten the burden of her fatal pregnancy.

Example A : Kollan Āsāri Funeral Aiyān Āsāri (T45) died

1. In VV, the touchable Hindus and the Christians have separate cemeteries.

in the late afternoon of 18 January 1977, at the age of 58. He had obviously been in poor health for a long time, and was greatly emaciated.

On the following morning, 5 Cakkiliyar Musicians arrived from SīkampaTTi and began to play outside the house. There were 3 drummers, a cymbalist and a nākaSvaram player. A pandal had already been constructed outside the front door and villagers were going in and out, to pay their respects and make donations (which were recorded) towards the expenses. Ponnuccāmi Āsāri (T44), the Village Blacksmith and eBS of the deceased, was directing the preparations.

The band played all morning, with a few forays to welcome and escort important relatives arriving from elsewhere. At 13.30, I was fetched by Kālaiyaṇ Āsāri (T46) and asked to bring my camera. On the way back, he summoned SaNmukam the Barber.

The Mourners' Bath: The nīrmālai or 'water-garland' rite ² began soon afterwards. A white vēSTi with a tuft of grass tied in each corner was held aloft at full stretch by 4 bearers. Under it stood the dead man's two sons, Vēlccāmi (aged 19) and CellaperumāL (7), the former being the chief mourner ³. Both carried small brass vessels. The three eBSs of the deceased - Ponnuccāmi, SaNmukaiyā and Pon - accompanied them, carrying large brass water pots

Preceded by the Musicians, and by the Barber blowing a conch shell, this group left the village by means of its 'ritual boundary' between the Panchayat Board office and the PiLLaiyār Kōvil. They went past the Ammaṇ Kōvil on its eastern side ⁴ and stopped at the well just to the north of it. The 5 named above all took baths in water drawn from the well, which they poured over their heads

2. Mālai also means 'a monument to one burnt with her deceased husband' (JPF:794) .

3. In this locality, the eldest S is chief mourner for both parents. Among the KaLLar, the youngest S acts at his father's funeral (Dumont 1957b:247) .

4. On auspicious occasions such as temple festivals, processions pass this temple on its western side.

Meanwhile, the Barber tied string around the two small pots ⁵ and they and the larger vessels were filled with water. Leaves were arranged in the necks of all 5 pots, and coconuts were placed atop the 2 small ones. Both the Vēlār and Ōduvār pūsāris were present, and the latter had brought a few flowers which were laid over the pots (the mālai of the title?) .

The Barber put ash on the bathers' foreheads. The music had stopped as soon as the well had been reached, but it now restarted. The two sons put on Brahman-style white threads, but over their right shoulders ⁶. The 5 men went 3 times clockwise around the group of pots, led by the Barber blowing his conch. All then picked up their pots and returned to the house by the same route.

At the ritual boundary there began an episode known as silampu vilaiyāDu ('noise sport') . This involved two elderly PaLLar men ⁷, one leading the procession and the other ostensibly blocking its path. These two staged a mock fight with long staffs, and the procession had to halt repeatedly, as its attacker slowly gave ground. Eventually, with a final flourish, the drums grew faster and the house was reached. The Musicians led the way to the pandal, the large vessels were set down, and the music stopped abruptly. The two sons remained standing, still holding the small vessels.

The Preparation of the Body: The body was soon carried out and laid, head to the south, on an old wooden door, placed for that purpose just outside the pandal to the east. The women in the house began a wailing cry which went on with increasing intensity until the cortege finally left.

Candiran (T32), the Washerman, had provided a red sari which was held around as a screen while the Barber shaved the

5 This was done in the same fashion as that described for an auspicious Priest - a Brahman - at a saḍaṅku or kalyāṇam (8.2) .

6 Some Āsāri, such as AruNācalam (T48) wear a sacred thread all the time, but do so over the left shoulder, like Brahmans.

7. The PaLLar and Āsāri have a special relationship (5.5.1). The PaLLar had built the palanquin (see below) too.

deceased's beard, untied his wrists (which had been bound tightly together) and made other adjustments to the dead man's clothing. The widow, Lakshmi, was led out to apply oil to her H's head, after which SaNmukam oiled the dead man's hair thoroughly. Water from the big pots was used liberally to wash the body, which was then aspersed with water from the sons' smaller vessels.

A new, white veSTi was unwrapped, and after tearing several strips off it, with which to bind the feet, hands and mouth of the deceased, SaNmukam proceeded to dress him in it. He wrapped the cloth tightly so that the body was held in an upright, cross-legged posture. A white sacred thread was tied around the body, and sandalwood and turmeric pastes were rubbed over the face and arms. The eye-sockets were filled with turmeric paste, and a 25 paise coin was affixed to the centre of the forehead with a little oil. The lips were rouged with poTTu.

At 14.15 the music began again. The ground under the pandal was swept by the PaLLar, who carried out a large grindstone with which to make a back-rest for the body. They spread cow-dung thickly on the floor, and laid a mat on top of it.

The coconut from the eldest son's pot was removed and kept by SaNmukam. The Barber was also given an aluminium bowl full of cooked rice, prepared in T45, which he tied up into a cloth.

The widow bathed in front of the body. The eldest son was then called over and, in his presence, the body was carried across and seated on a panier of woven palmyrah leaves (paDa1), on top of the mat. The widow and other female relatives crouched at the dead man's feet, the wailing and drumming rose in intensity, and the elder son burst into tears. Some sticks of incense were lit. As chief mourner, the elder son went 3 times clockwise around the body, sprinkling water. He was accompanied by Ponnuccāmi (T44).

The pot of cooked rice, still in its cloth, was handed by SaNmukam to the elder son. Both sons set off to the ritual boundary, under the same white cloth as before and led by the Musicians. At the boundary, a rite called kāDu pārttal,

'seeing the land' or 'seeing the cemetery', was performed. This is done by all touchable castes; it is always very brief and in the present case was greatly attenuated. Normally the mourners are accompanied by the Barber, and are led by him in walking 3 times clockwise round a small piece of knotted straw, after which they stand facing east for a moment before going back to the house. Dumont (1957b:247) describes a similar rite known as paTTam eDukkiradu (cf. the Pallar paTTam eDuttal in example C). In the present case, the sons merely went to the boundary, turned and came straight back again.

The Cortege: As soon as they had returned, the Barber took back the pot of rice and placed it on the head of SaNmukavaDivu, the eBD of the dead man (and eZ of Ponnuccāmi, T44). Together with 3 other women, including Ponnuccāmi's W Pārvatī, the ZD of the deceased (the others were another ZD and a ZSW), she went around the body three times, clockwise. The elder son then did likewise, carrying a piece of cloth and led by the Barber. Simultaneously, some new clothes were produced, gifts from the dead man's "brothers"⁸ to the widow. The 4 women who had circled the body each 'fed' the deceased with a little of the yellow rice from the aluminium pot, after which the body was removed to the palanquin and arranged in a sitting position, facing south.

The palanquin or marit̄er ('dying car') was made of wooden scaffolding tied together by palmyrah strands, and was not unlike a sedan chair in general appearance. A red cloth provided by the VaNNār Candiran (T32) served as a canopy, and there was a straw filled palliasse, used as a bolster against which to lean the body. It had been standing at the nearest street corner, and it was to there that the body was carried.

A live rooster, feet tied together, was placed beside the dead man on the bier⁹. Some 6 or 8 men, from a number of

8. This according to Ponnuccāmi; actually they were his BSs.

9. This is done only on Wednesdays in TV (on Saturdays in Usilampatti, according to Palanimurugan). It grants the alleged wish of the dead man for another body to accompany him to the cemetery, and it is said that if this is not done, someone else will die almost immediately (Chettiar 1973:87).

castes including Maravar, Kōṇār and KavunDar, picked up and carried the bier. After I had taken a photograph at the request of the family, the pall-bearers set off towards the ritual boundary, led by the Musicians and followed by the Barber, the male mourners and other male villagers. The female relatives did not leave the house, and any women who happened to be near the route were ordered away. The pall-bearers arrived at the boundary at the double, giving the usual shouts of "Kōvinda, Kōvinda" as they ran ¹⁰.

At the ritual boundary the cortege halted. Three times the pall-bearers tried to surge up the small slope and out of the village, but on each occasion it was as though they were held back by some invisible force ¹¹. Finally they succeeded in running out of the village towards the cemetery, still shouting. They passed the Amman Kōvil on its eastern side and ran on. The Musicians tried to keep pace, and the village men followed more slowly. Any children accompanying the procession were forcibly ejected and sent back.

The Cremation : The pall-bearers entered the cemetery but the pursuing Musicians halted at the entrance. As soon as the bier had been laid down to the west of the funeral pyre, they stopped playing, packed away their instruments and withdrew to some distance. The Barber and other mourners arrived at a slower pace, and the body was lifted out of the tēr. It was placed on top of the pyre - a pile of logs some 3' high which had been prepared by the PaLLar men - with the head to the south. The rooster was hung by its feet from a nearby bush.

One of the PaLLar arrived carrying two round, earthenware pots (the work of the VēLār), one containing embers from the household hearth which would be used to ignite the pyre, and

10. This is a name of ViSṆu, which is odd given that most people are Saivites and that Siva is in any case the deity associated with the cemetery.

11. Some castes reverse the orientation of the tēr at this point, so that the body henceforth faces the cemetery (see also Dumont 1957b:247). This is not the Āsāri custom, and the body faces forwards throughout.

the other holding water, to be used in the pot breaking episode (see below) . Both Washermen were present, and they jointly dismantled the tēr and retained the cloths.

The Barber removed a strip of cloth from the dead man's vēSTi and handed it to Kālaiyan Āsari (T46), the F(2nd)WBS of the deceased. The Barber blew his conch, and the two of them set off back to the house with the cloth. Ponnuccāmi told me that their arrival would be the signal for the widow to put on white clothing for the first time.

When he returned, the Barber removed the coin and garlands from the body, over which the PaLLar began to pile cakes of dry cow-dung. He also untied the cloth which had been covering the mouth, and several relatives 'fed' rice to the dead man as follows: each washed his hand in a pot of water held by SaNmukam, took a little rice from the aluminium pot which the latter had brought with him, and sprinkled this over the dead man's face. Finally, each feeder dropped a coin into the rice pot. This was done first by Ponnuccāmi, then by a number of relatives described as the sammanti of the dead man (for their identities see Table 11.1) . Some non-Āsari also took part. A total of Rs 1/85 was collected as a result, and was later given to the PaLLar.

The Barber covered the corpse's head with the vēSTi and sat down just to the south, where he shaved the faces (not the heads) of the deceased's sons, and then of Ponnuccāmi. Meanwhile the PaLLar were covering the pyre with straw and mud, a task undertaken by the Barber for most other castes.

There followed a ceremony known as kalikuDam uDaittal ('trickling-pot breaking', Chettiar 1973:200) . The elder son walked clockwise around the pyre, carrying on his head the earthen water-pot. The Barber had punched a small hole in this, so that water trickled inwards toward the pyre. The younger son joined in a second circumambulation, the Barber having meantime made a second hole in the pot. Finally, a third hole was made, and the two sons were joined by Ponnuccāmi in a third circuit. At the end the pot was thrown down and broken at the south (head)

end of the pyre. The three relatives huddled together briefly, to weep, and the two sons removed their white threads.

Everyone moved away to the entrance of the cemetery, except for the Pallar, who remained to light the pyre through a small hole which had been left in its mud coating. For most other castes, the Barber lights the pyre. As usual, the embers brought from the house were employed. The Barber brought the chicken away, and it was later released unharmed.

The various functionaries were then presented with their cash payments as already described (5.5.1, example A) . Afterwards, and before returning to the village, all those who had attended the cemetery bathed in the tank or at a well. It was necessary at the very least to wash one's feet, hands and face. Cooking was resumed in the bereaved household later in the day.

All funerals (except, sometimes, those of children) take place in early afternoon, and share this same general structure. There is: 1) the collection of water from the well, the mourners first having bathed; 2) the preparation of the body; 3) the visit to the ritual boundary; 4) the procession to the cemetery; 5) the disposal of the body; and 6) the rewarding of the functionaries. There are the usual differences in ritual detail from case to case, but there are some systematic variations from caste to caste as well, and these are best considered by taking the above stages one by one.

1) All funerals involve the collection of water by the chief mourner (who is always the eldest son of the deceased) and some of his immediate parallel relatives. If the deceased is a married adult but has no son, then the chief mourner will be the closest possible relative standing in the terminological

relationship of makan to the deceased.

These persons always bathe at the well before the pots are filled, and after bathing all (even in the case of the Scheduled Castes) don a white thread which they wear until after the water pot has been broken in the cemetery. The PaLLar make and worship a cow-dung PiLLaiyār beside the well, after drawing the water. They break a coconut for the god, and offer up the clothes which will be worn by the deceased at the burial. The silampu episode is peculiar to Āsāri funerals.

At ReDDiyār funerals the women perform a rite known as māraDittal ('bemoaning the dead') before and during the nīrmālai carried out by the male relatives.

Example B : ReDDiyār Funeral At the funeral of Saṅkaraliṅka ReDDiyār (5.5.1, example C) a paccal pandal ('cool' or 'green' pandal) was constructed. This was a 2 feet square piece of planted palmyrah leaf, suspended 7-8' above the ground. A white cloth covered the underside of the square and in this was placed the white veṢṬi which would later be used to dress the body. From the four corners of the pandal hung narrow, 2'-long strips of turmeric-stained cloth, and from the mid-point of each side hung a string to which various objects were attached. Each string held, in no particular order, chillies, turmeric root and koRukkaTTai ¹². On the ground beneath the pandal were baskets containing rice and Bengal gram, both in the raw state.

Around these baskets stood a circle of seven women, facing inwards. All were ReDDiyār, but not necessarily close relatives

12. A koRukkaTTai or koRumai is a cake of boiled rice-flour, made by women during certain months of the year, in the course of midnight ceremonies resembling weddings, from which men are rigorously excluded. My wife attended several of these; the reports of naked dancing cited by Thurston (1909:VII, 387-8) seem to be erroneous.

of the deceased. They included mature girls, married women and widows. These women moved slowly round in a clockwise direction, singing in unison. In time to the singing, they raised both hands to their shoulders and lowered them again.

The song went on even after the men had returned and the body had been brought out and shaved by SaNmukam (T125). When they finally stopped singing the women divided up the rice among themselves. Some of the gram was distributed to the village children, who were then chased out of the courtyard, and the rest of it was shared by the women.

2) The preparation of the body is more-or-less the same for all deceased men. The Scheduled Castes have their own Barbers to do this (5.9.2). In the case of a woman the preparations are carried out in the house rather than the street, and are executed by women. A dead man is dressed in a new, white veSTi and a dead woman in a new coloured sari (unless she is a widow, when the sari will be white). Both will be garlanded, and turmeric, red poTTu and money are disposed in the same way.

3) Scheduled Castes do not visit the ritual boundary of the main settlement, in which of course they do not live, nor do they enter that settlement at any stage of their own funerary rituals. Instead they have ritual boundaries of their own, near the entrances to their own, particular quarters. In the case of the PaLLar, their ritual boundary is the scene for a rite known as paTTam eDuttal.

Example C: PaLLar Funeral At the funeral of Kanniyammāl (formerly of V164), and following the nīrmālai, or fetching of water from the well, the paTTam eDuttal ('cloth lifting-up') rite took place, replacing the kāDu pārttal of other castes.

A number of small, cubical baskets had been woven from

fresh grass, and filled with the "nine grains" ¹³. The dead woman's H carried two of these, and her S, the chief mourner, took one. They processed, led by the Musicians, past the Kāḷiyammān Temple in the centre of the Paḷḷar quarter, and out to the northern edge of their settlement, to where the bier had been constructed. The F walked ahead of his S, and both were under the usual white cloth.

They went clockwise around the bier, and stopped at its eastern end. The cloths to be used on the bier were spread on the ground, and a small lock of the F's hair was cut off and placed on top of them. The procession went clockwise round the bier again, stopping at the same point. This time two of the small baskets were placed on the cloths and at once picked up again. The S now had two of the baskets and his F only one. They went around the bier again, and stopped a third time. The contents of the baskets were tipped onto the cloths, and a lock of the son's hair was added. The grains were scooped up and returned to the baskets, of which the F again took two. They went once more around the bier, and returned to the house.

The body was subsequently carried to this spot on a mat before being placed in the bier. The Paraiyar also bring the bier no closer than the edge of the houses. As for the grain, the Paḷḷar pūsāri Vēyilmuttu (V176) said that it was scattered over the burial ground next day; someone else said that the seeds were allowed to germinate in the baskets

4) The procession from the house to the cemetery always involves the same kind of palanquin, carried in the same way with the same shouting, and led to the cemetery by a band of

13. The "9 grains" from which cooked cereal (sōr) can be made are, according to the local classification: (i) arisi, rice; (ii) coḷam, Sorghum vulgare; (iii) kampu, or Bajra (Pennisetum typhoideum); (iv) kēppai, or Ragī (Eleusine coracana); (v) kuru-Davalli, Panicum frumentaceum; (vi) kaDakkani, a millet similar to ; (vii) tenai or tinai, Setaria Italica; (viii) varaku millet Panicum Miliaceum; (ix) sāmai, a millet similar to (v) (Dumont 1957b:101; Saṅkarapāṇḍi Kōṇār, T1) .

Musicians. Castes differ in the extent of female participation however.

The Āsāri (cf. example A), PiLLaimār and ReDDiyār women, among others, do not accompany the cortege, and the widow performs her last obseques at the house. Women of some other castes, such as the Maravar, PaLLar and Paraiyar, come as far as the ritual boundary of the settlement or quarter. There the tēr is set down and the deceased's widow (or D) performs a kalikuDam uDaittal like that of the chief mourner at the cemetery (cf. example A), except that in the cases I witnessed the woman went around anti-clockwise.

At a Paraiyar or PaLLar funeral the W of the TĪNDā VaNNār may go to the burial-ground itself, to assist her H or S in his duties, while at the PaLLar funeral which I attended the eZ of the dead woman also came, to remove the jewellery from the body before the interment.

5) All cremations follow the basic pattern already described in example A. There follows a brief account of the burial at the PaLLar funeral discussed above.

Example C (cont'd) : The bier was set down at the western side of the grave (which had been dug by Cakkiliyar), and the body was laid out on the mound of earth beside it, head to the south. The grave itself was 3-4' deep, in a N-S orientation.

The eZ of the deceased removed all the jewellery (even plastic bangles, which were broken off) from the body. The woman's feet were unbound and exposed. The Barber began to shave the head of the chief mourner, the S of the deceased, just to the north of the grave. He also shaved a small patch on the back of the widower's right wrist. Meanwhile the Barber's B presided over the feeding of yellow rice to the deceased:

this was done first by the widower, then by his son. The woman's F and other relatives followed. Each sprinkled three handfuls of rice with the left ¹⁴ hand before washing their hands and throwing a coin onto the woman's chest. At the end, the Barber's B removed the money.

A cut was made in the palm of each of the dead woman's hands, before she was laid in the grave with her head to the south. A pot of embers had been brought from the house, and was set down at the north-west corner of the grave. The H and S of the deceased threw handfuls of earth into the grave and others followed suit. The rest of the earth was shovelled in, the eastern mound first, some leafy branches being added when the hole had been about half filled. Finally, the earth was trodden down and posts were stuck into the ground at the ends of the grave. The 3 garlands, which had been removed from the body, were placed around these posts, 2 at the southern end and one at the north. The son performed the kalikuDam uDaittal rite in the usual way, and was followed by his F on the 2nd and 3rd circuits. The relatives wept together as the pot was broken, and the drums restarted briefly.

The straw of the palliasse from the now-dismantled bier was hacked with knives, thrown over the grave from west to east, hacked at again, and thrown back. Finally it was thrown to the east again. Thorn branches were laid across the grave to protect it from animals, and everyone moved off to begin the cash distribution (5.5.1, example D) .

Note that even at a burial some pretence of cremation is present, in the shape of the fire which is taken from the hearth to the cemetery. It is one of the disabilities of Untouchability, however, that actual cremation is not permitted.

14. It seems generally to be the case that Untouchables are more aware of, and more scrupulous in their observation of, the symbolic significance of reversals, and of the right/left, clockwise/anti-clockwise oppositions.

6) The subsequent reimbursement of the functionaries takes always the same pattern, and has already been described (5.5.1) . Among all touchable castes in TV and KP, it is presided over by the KarNam, Kumārasāmiyā PiLLai (T41) . At a Scheduled Caste funeral a senior member of the caste-group will preside, and the higher-caste village officials will not be among the recipients (5.5.1, example D) .

11 3 The Second Day Ceremony

A rite is held at the cemetery on the day after a funeral. Unfortunately, circumstances conspired against my witnessing such a ritual and so I can give only a brief account based on the general statements of informants.

The Barber and the Cakkiliyar (or, in the case of the Āsāri, possibly the PaLLar) will have remained in the cemetery all night, tending the slowly-burning pyre. By the following afternoon it will have burned away completely and the Barber, blowing his conch, will visit the bereaved household to summon and lead a small group of male relatives of the deceased from that household to the cemetery. There they perform the rite known as tī āttutal ('fire cooling', more properly tī ārutal, JPF:63) They take with them the 9 kinds of cooked grain (11.2, fn 13), together with raw paddy, pulses and vegetables. A coconut, incense, cow's milk and cow's urine are also taken, the nut being ultimately presented to the Barber. The grains are scattered over the site of the cremation by the son(s) of the deceased, and the liquids are poured. No ashes or other remains from the funeral pyre are brought back or otherwise preserved.

The Paraiyar and PaLLar perform the tī āttutal on the third day. They also refer to it as kuRipāl ūttutal ('grave-milk issuing forth'; should the second word be āttutal, 'cooling'?). The Barber accompanies the male relatives to the site of the burial, where food is offered to the birds and milk is sprinkled on the ground. Some of the cooked rice is given to the TīNDā VaNNār, who receives no other payment. The offering of food to the birds forms part of the 16th day ceremonies among most higher caste-groups.

11 4 The Final Ceremony

The final stage of the funerary ritual takes place ideally 13 or 16 days (by Tamil reckoning) after the disposal of the body. Most castes call this final rite karumāti, a term derived from the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word karma, 'fate, actions in a previous birth'. Another name for it, karumāntam, means literally 'the end of karma' (JPF:21). It will be seen below, however, that it is by no means certain that the word retains its original significance in the area under study (11.7). There are several local forms of karumāti rite, and we will begin by considering the most common of these.

Example A: PiLLai Karumāti KalyāNammāl (T69), a childless PiLLai widow, was cremated on 31 March 1977. The chief mourner was her BDH (makan), Vēdam PiLLai (T69), and the others bathing at the nīrmālai rite were SuppiramaNīyan Mutaliyār (her BWZS by an inter-subcaste marriage), Kandan PiLLai (BWZS, and maccinan to Vēdam) and 2 small boys occupying similar genealogical positions to the last-named. Only Vēdam had his head shaved at the cemetery. The rewards of the specialist functionaries have already been described (5.5.1, example B).

The karumāti rite was held on 16 April 1977, having been delayed slightly by the Tamil New Year (13 April) . At about 10 a.m. the Barber, blowing his conch, led out a procession comprising: Vēdam PiLLai, carrying a bundle wrapped in a white cloth with a red border; Irāmasāmi Aiyar, a Brahman ¹⁵; Durairāj Tēvar (T70), a next-door neighbour; the Ōduvār; and the KarNam

This group walked from the house, across the ritual boundary, and out to the foot of a tree which stands between the Ammān Temple and its well. All the items subsequently used were unpacked from the cloth bundle. Raw rice was put in a pot, washed, and cooked using water from the well, over a small fire lit at the foot of the tree. Some onions and aubergines were added to the pot. The cooking was done by Turairāj ¹⁶.

The KarNam, who was present as a caste-fellow of the deceased and not ex officio, built a small pandal about 1' high. For its corner posts, 4 small holes were dug in the ground by a Paraiyar man with a hoe, who also dug a shallow pit in front (east) of the pandal. The earth from this pit was used to build up the floor within the pandal itself. The pandal was built out of sticks tied together with grass, and a plantain leaf was laid on the floor inside. It is known as a kāḷkuḷi pandal (or kāḷkuḷi, 'post-pit' or 'post-grave' pandal) and its structure is shown in Figure 11.1

Meanwhile SaNmukam the Barber shaved Vēdam PiLLai's head again. The latter had bathed at the well immediately on arrival, and after having been shaved he bathed again. A tumblerful of paddy was measured out and given to SaNmukam.

Inside the pandal, the following items were arranged on the plantain leaf (the numbers refer to Figure 11.2): 1) a full measure of paddy; 2) a cow-dung PiLLaiyār; 3) a turmeric PiLLaiyār; 4) a pile of rice (raw); 5) 2 plantains; 6) turmeric

15. He bore Vaisnavite markings, an indication of the lack of concern with pan-Indian sectarian forms displayed even by the most ortho-practising Saivite caste in the village.

16. The fact that a man of lower caste-status was entrusted with the preparation of the food on this formal intra-caste occasion, illustrates yet again the unimportance of hierarchy in TV .

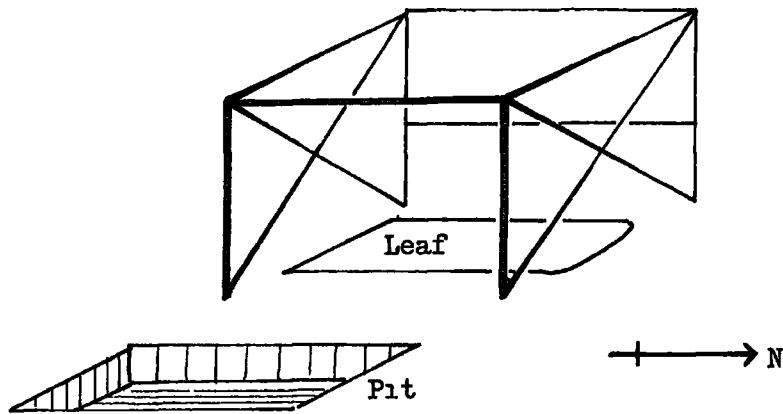


Figure 11.1 : The Pandai At a PiLLai Karumati Rite

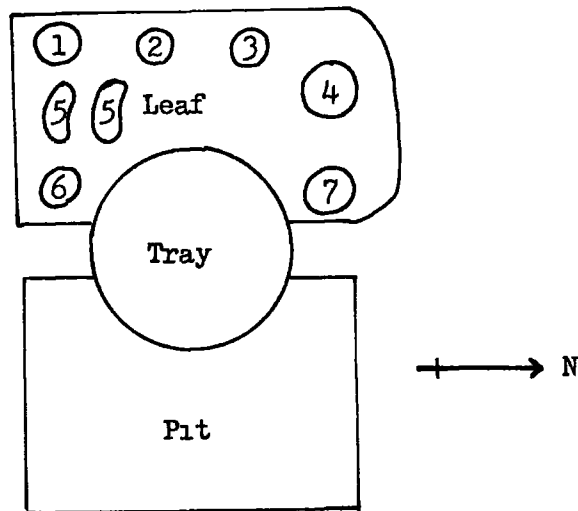


Figure 11 2 : Ritual Objects At a PiLLai Karumati Rite

root; 7) coconut The white and red cloth which had formed the bundle was draped over the frame of the pandai by the KarNam and Ōduvār, leaving only the eastern side open. This cloth was referred to as the "Aiyar vēSTī", and should in theory have been kept by the Brahman after the ceremony.

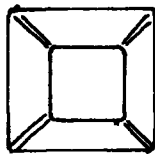
A small piece of cloth was soaked in turmeric water until uniformly yellow, and then put to dry on a stone. Turmeric water was poured over a piece of grass by the Brahman, who then pushed this grass into the top of the cow-dung PiLLaiyār (2) . All the pouring of liquids was done over the pit, here and subsequently, so that all the spillages were collected in it.

The Brahman sat down cross-legged to the south of the pit, facing north. He made up a length of white thread and gave it to Vēdam Pillai to put on. Vēdam sat to the east of the pit facing into the pandal and was given ash with which to rub his hands and chest. His hands were then rinsed with water over the pit, and the Brahman put a pavitra (ring of grass, Subramaniam 1974:173) around the 4th finger of Vēdam's right hand

Two reddish-coloured mud bricks, shaped as in Figure 11.3, had milk, water, sandalwood paste and more water poured over them. They were laid on the tray.

Some seeds (identity unknown) were put in Vēdam's right hand. The Brahman asked Vēdam's F's name, chanted a mantra involving this name, and washed off the seeds with water. He repeated the process using more seeds and the name of Vēdam's M. He did it a third time using the name of the deceased woman. Finally Vēdam washed his hands, rinsed the tray and put the bricks back onto it.

Plan :



Elevation :



Figure 11.3 : Brick Used In the Karumāṭi Rite

Both bricks were then wrapped by the Brahman in the dried, turmeric-stained strip of cloth. He wanted a separate piece for each brick, but on discovering that there was only one he wrapped each end of it around one of the bricks. The narrow tops of the bricks were left protruding upwards out of the cloth. The wrapped bricks were propped up at the western edge of the tray and decorated with sandalwood and poṭṭu, before being put on top of the pile of rice (4) inside the pandal.

A plantain leaf was laid across the tray, and the cooked food was brought over. Three piles of rice and vegetables were set out in a north-south line across the leaf. Incense was lit and stuck into one of the plantains (5), the other fruit being peeled and added to the food on the leaf.

A coconut was broken and the halves put inside the pandal . A pile of ash was placed on the front leaf and ignited. The Brahman recited some mantras and threw a few flowers into the pandal . Vēdam Pillai worshipped, in order, the piles of food, the burning ash and the halved coconut.

Vēdam got up, palms still together, and turned around on the spot, clockwise, three times. Kandan Pillai (the deceased's BWZS) and Karuppaia Pillai (relationship unknown), who had arrived during the preparations, now came forward and worshipped but did not turn around. The burning ash was put out.

Vēdam picked up the 2 bricks to the sound of the Barber's conch-shell, and walked off alone to the east. He waded out a few yards into the almost empty tank, turned to face the west, and threw the bricks back over his head into the water. He returned, removed his white thread, and bathed again at the well.

Some cooked gram and lentils were added to the food on the plantain leaf. The cloth was removed from the pandal, which was then taken down by SaNmukam. He carried the frame-work of grass and sticks off to the edge of the tank and threw it in. Vēdam picked up the tray (conch sounded) and carried the food off to the north. The leaf and food were laid on the ground, Vēdam returned with the tray, and everyone sat and waited until a crow flew down and began eating the food.

The tidying-up then resumed. SaNmukam took the rest of the food and the coconut, and tied them up into the white cloth, while Vēdam and Kandan bathed yet again at the well. The two Pillaiyars were thrown into the well. The prestations involving the functionaries have already been discussed (5 5.2, example A) .

The two bricks present an interpretative problem. They are similar in shape to the square-pyramidal figures often used to represent deities in temples, and indeed the Ōduvār described them to me as "Ammānsāmi", 'goddesses'. The way these figures were variously anointed (e.g., with milk) before being used certainly suggests an apishekam, or consecration of a deity.

The Barber, by contrast, said that the bricks represented PiLLaiyār figures. He said that it was actually he who made them, and added, somewhat inconsistently, that one of them was like a man, the other like a woman. The worship and subsequent disposal of male and female bricks has been described previously for other groups (Thurston 1906:161, 170; 1909:II, 7; VI, 112). Everyone disagreed with my suggestion that the bricks might represent the mother and father of the chief mourner.

The Āsāri, CeTTiyār and Kōnār karumāti rites are just like this PiLLai one, according to SaNmukam (T125) the Barber. Any temple well may be chosen as the site for them. The VēLār and Maravar perform their rites in the home, without the brick images, while the KavunDar erect stones near the Amman Kōvil on the 16th day, and hold their ceremonies on that spot. The TV Nāyakkar have an idiosyncratic ceremony which will now be described.

Example B: Nāyakkar Karumāti The karumāti rite for Ponnaiyā Nāyakkar (T123, F of the present Munsip) took place on 12 September 1976, 9 days after the cremation¹⁷. The rite was conducted by some senior Nāyakkar men who knew the details, and it was held just to the south of the Amman Kōvil well.

A mud figure, shaped like a 'gingerbread man', was made on the ground, head to the south, and rectangles of mud were built up at both ends of this figure. Four small stones were placed on these rectangles, 3 at the head and 1 at the foot. Turmeric coloured cooked rice was thrown over the figure, and it was aspersed with a little water. Flowers were draped across in strings. Turmeric-stained string was also added.

Five plantain leaves were laid down, 3 of them in an east-west line across the 'head' rectangle and one each across the

¹⁷ This was arranged for convenience; it should have been held after 15 days.

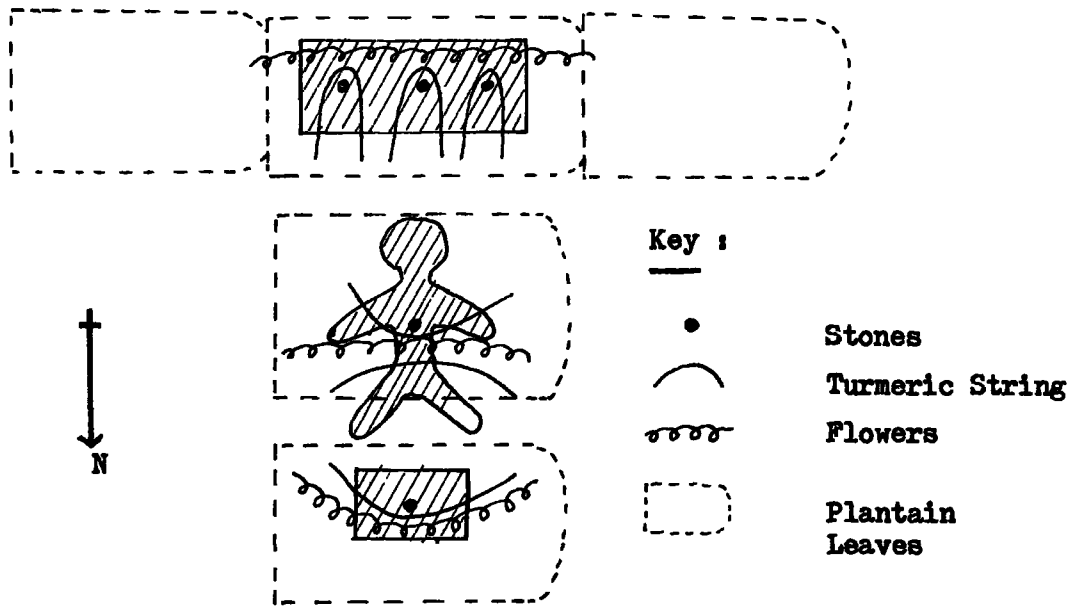


Figure 11 4 : Mud Figures at a Nāyakkar Karumāti

figure and the rectangle at the 'foot' end. The situation was then as depicted in Figure 11.4 . Cooked millet and rice was placed on each leaf, and sweetmeats and betel were added ¹⁸. Unlike all the other caste-groups having 'public' karumāti rites, the Nāyakkar prepare all this food at home and carry it out in a cloth supported by a crude basket of sticks. The grandsons of the deceased each added more food to every leaf.

The dead man's three sons each threw water from west to east along the concrete step at the edge of the well, just to the north of the figure. Each man was given one of the plantain leaves from on top of the rectangles, and each took his own leaf to the north and laid it down apart from the others. No birds came, so after a short while the leaves were removed to the south. The ceremony did not resume until crows had flown down and begun eating the food.

Candiran (T32), the VaNNār, took the contents of the two remaining leaves, then broke up the figures and threw the mud in the tank to the east. He also kept the rest of the food, the cloth in which it had been brought having been provided by him

18. The idea is always to provide some of the deceased's favourite foods.

in the first place. He threw the basket which had contained it into the tank. A bucket had been used to draw water from the well, and its remaining contents were poured over the remnants of the mud figure at the edge of the tank.

The Nāyakkar and other women had clustered under a distant tree to watch, but had taken no part in the rite. The male guests of all castes were served food in the school building after they had bathed, or at least washed their face, hands and feet, at the well. Meanwhile, the sons of the dead man had their beards and armpits ¹⁹ shaved by SaNmukam.

Afterwards, the sons, as well as the aNNān of the deceased (Suppa Nāyakkar, T158, the former Munsīp), were presented with clothes by their sammanti (their "marriage partners" as Palani-murugan put it). The donors included the MBs, WBs, ZHs and DHs of the men concerned.

These prestations are a crucial part of this final stage of death ritual. Here it is not a question of turbans, as in the cases reported by Dumont (1957a:37-43; 1957b:251-6), but of veSTis and possibly shirts or towels. There follows an example for which I have more complete details.

Example C : Āsāri Karumāti The karumāti for Aiyan Āsāri (see 11.2, example A) took place on 30 January 1977, at the well near the Aiyanār Kōvil. The form of the rite closely resembled that already described for the PiLLai (example A above), and the inter-caste prestations have already been dealt with (5.5.2, example B).

Later that same day, the intra-caste prestations were made, as in Table 11.1. In each case both a veSTi and towel were given. The funeral pandal was still in place outside the house and a temporary electrical extension had been set up. All the relatives gathered for a feast and next day the pandal was taken down.

19. I had been told that the Nāyakkar also had their fore-arms shaved. This did not happen here, but may have done so at the cremation.

Table 11.1 : Prestations at an Āsārī Karumātī Rite

Recipient	Relationship To		Relationship To Recipient
	Deceased	Donor	
1. & 2. Vēlccāmī & Cellapperumāl (T45)	S S	1. Solaiyappan 2. Ponnaiyā 3. Ārumukam 4. MunīyakuTTī 5. Pūvalīfīkam	tāymāmā (MB) māmā (FZH) māmā (FBWB) ^a māmā (FZH) maccīnan (FZS) ^b
3 Ponnuccāmi (T44)	eBS	1. Ārumukam	tāymāmā (MB)
4. Pon (Kovilpattī)	eBS	1. Ārumukam	tāymāmā (MB)

Notes : a. This donor was described to me as an "attai māppillai", to which he is terminologically identical.

b. The donor's parents (the FZH and FZ of the recipients) were both dead.

The children of the dead man were all unmarried, so that as can be seen from the Table, the emphasis necessarily fell on donors from senior terminological levels. All the FZs's families of the two sons made gifts, although in one case the obligation to do so had been 'inherited' by the son of deceased parents. Similarly, both received gifts from their only MB. The two other recipients each received vēSTīs from one of their three MBs, and in fact the donor Ārumukam was also their eZH. They were less closely related to the deceased of course, and so, apparently, only their closest sammantī felt constrained to make a prestation.

The Scheduled Castes do not carry out the karumātī rite,

although certain elements of such a ceremony (feeding the birds for example) are incorporated into their second or third day ceremony. There is an attenuated rite on the 16th day, which the PaLLar call urimaikkaTTu²⁰. The TĪNDā VaNNār is invited to this, but he performs no duties. He is given some cooked food however, as are the relatives, of whom only fellow-villagers attend.

Example D : PaLLar At the urimaikkaTTu for Kanniyammāl (11.2, example C) only one veSTi was presented. It was given by SuppiramaNīyan (V163), the brother of the dead woman, to her young son Māriyappan, the chief mourner (i.e., from MB to ZS) .

This particular gift to the chief mourner must therefore be presumed to be the most vital, and to originate from his main sammanti relative. When the recipient is young and unmarried, as in this case, his archetypal sammanti (in Dumont's terms his 'principal affine') is his MB . For a married man the ZH would seem to be the main donor. The detailed data presented above do not illustrate this point very well, but it is clearly evident in (11.5, example B) and (11.6) . What is clear from the above, though, is that eZD marriage, which sets up the genealogical identity MB = eZH (cf. the donor Ārumukam in Table 11.1), is uniquely congruent with such a prestation system.

20. Literally, 'claim-binding': the term also means 'duties and obligations of near relatives', while urimaiseyya means 'to perform the last duties to a deceased relation' (JPF:117) . Dumont renders the former term as urumāl kaTTu, 'tying the turban' (1957b:249), a translation which fits the ceremony he describes but which is inappropriate in the present case.

11.5 The Funeral of an Infant

The rites described thus far are those performed for 'full members' of society, that is, for married adults with children. When the deceased has been married but has no surviving children, as in the case of KalyāNammāl (11.4, example A), the same rites are performed but there is often a degree of levity among the mourners which one does not normally notice. In particular, the chief mourner, who is now a terminological makan rather than a genealogical S, becomes the butt of ribald joking. On one occasion I saw such a person pushed into the grave by other mourners, who humorously pretended to cover him with earth.

When a child dies the situation is rather different, for there is genuine sadness. On the other hand, the child is not a full member of the community and so the rituals involved are much less elaborate. The younger the child the more attenuated does the rite become, so that a still-born or as-yet un-named baby is simply taken away and buried with no ceremony whatever. There follows an account of the funeral of a slightly older child, which had undergone the naming ceremony.

Example A : PiLLai The 3-month-old D of Cellaiyā PiLLai (T5) died on the morning of 16 December 1976. She had always been sickly and had refused to feed properly even when her parents had gone to the great expense of purchasing tinned baby foods.

The Barber's conch-shell sounded at 08.15 and we hurried to the courtyard of T5 along with the other neighbours. The men sat down in unwonted silence near the entrance, while the women congregated at the western end, around the cement platform

which had been built for a recent wedding (9.9, example B) . The Barber sat apart from both groups.

Most of those present were neighbours (Kōṇār, Maravar, KavunDar and Pillai), but Cellaiyā is an important village figure and so the KarNam and his eB, the President's yB, and some Nāyakkar men were also there. No VaNNār attended at any stage

The child's body was in the cowshed at the north-west corner of the courtyard, held by SaNmukattammāL (T2), a Kōṇār widow Its M, Murukanantam (T5), sat nearby with her hair loose, crying and occasionally beating herself with her fists.

The body was smeared with turmeric paste, which was then washed off with water. The ear-lobes were pierced with thorns, which were left in place ²¹. SaNmukattammāL was helped in this by CellammāL (T98), a married Kōṇār woman. They wrapped the infant in a white cloth, leaving the head uncovered. The M held her child to her breast briefly, before the other two women wrapped it in a second cloth which covered it completely.

Ponnaiyā Pillai (T11), the child's MF, picked up the body, the Barber blew his conch, and all the men got up, though only a few of them actually joined the cortege. The Barber and Ponnaiyā led the way out into the street, and once they had gone the women went out through the back door of the courtyard to bathe. Murukanantam did not accompany them, and did not seem to bathe that day.

The male procession left the village across the ritual boundary, at which there was no ceremony. The tank was full, so that this route involved wading through waist-deep water just outside the village. The usual cemetery was in fact under water, and at this season funerals are held on the rocky grazing land north-west of the village, near the track to Pudupatti .

A shallow grave was dug by Paratēsi KavunDar (T6) and SaNmukasundaram Pillai (T159), the body being meanwhile laid

21. The child was not old enough to have undergone the usual ear-piercing ceremony.

on the ground to the west, with its head to the south. Ponnaiyā laid the body horizontally in the grave and the F, Cellaiyā, threw a handful of earth into the hole using his right hand. The grave was half-filled, leaves and branches were put in, and the rest of the earth was piled on top. Thorn bushes and stones were placed over it to deter animals.

Just as the small group began to return to the village, the TV Munsīp and Talaiyāri came rushing up, having only now learned of the event. Everyone bathed, and we were back in the village by 09.15 .

Cellaiyā's shop was open within a couple of hours, and his eldest son had immediately rushed off to school in TV, so little affected that he proceeded to come top in an English exam held that day. Neighbours of various castes took in food for the family during the rest of the day, but by next morning the shop was selling its ready-cooked iTTli and tōsai as usual. It was several days before Murukanantam reappeared in public, however. There were no subsequent rites of any kind.

Because the child in the above example was old enough to have been named, a ritualised burial was necessary. A Pillai adult would of course have been cremated. On the other hand, because the child was not old enough to have been shorn and to have had its ears pierced, there were no subsequent prestations among the relatives. Such prestations are made in the cases of slightly older children, however.

Example B: Nāyakkar The only child of Kurusāmi Nāyakkar (T38), a one-year-old girl named Suppulakshmi, died on 26 January 1977 . The girl was buried as in example A, and no cooking was done in the house for the rest of that day

On 31 January, the "7th day" afterwards, there took place an ēRu nāl āyviTTadu ('7th day having-come-food-distributing'). This began with a rite called talaimuRukku ('head bathing') at which all the child's parents, F's siblings and F's siblings'

spouses took an oil-bath No temple-visit was involved, nor did any Priest take part. The Barber and Washerman were present and were given cooked food (no prescribed amount) .

The child's F and M, Kurusāmi and ARakammāl, both received gifts from Kurusāmi's four maccinans (ZHs) , each of whom gave a veSTi, a sari and Rs 5/- . Other relatives gave money too, but there were no prescribed gifts from Kurusāmi's "sammanti" (WF, MB, FZH) . The actual donors would have been the sammanti of the dead child, of course. All the gifts were made publicly, and in the late afternoon all the relatives were fed at the house (Kurusāmi and KirushNasāmi Nāyakkar, T38 and T37) .

The term sammanti (or sampanti) has several meanings which are similar in their 'affinal' import but which differ in exact significance It has a genealogically-precise meaning as a kinship term (Tables 10.1 & 10.4), but is also used more generally to denote all or some of the category of cross-relatives ('affines') . No doubt Scheffler (1977) would take this to be an example of 'polysemy by extension', similar to those which he claims to detect in the work of Dumont, and would therefore take the most restricted meaning to be logically (and chronologically?) basic. I have argued against this narrow view of 'extension' on general grounds (1.6, 10.3) . When it comes to particular cases such as this, we should be quite clear that the assignation of 'focal' or 'primary' denotata to kinship terms (cf. also Carter 1973) can only be done on the basis of non-falsifiable (and hence non-scientific) inductive assumptions. Even the existence of etymological evidence for such extensions would not constitute proof of the existence of a logical, synchronic extension in the present - not that I am aware of

any such evidence in the present instance.

In the above example, my Nāyakkar informants restricted their use of sammantī to cross-relatives of a senior kind. In other contexts they, or in the same context other informants, might well include the maccinan among the sammantī, as in (11.4) . This is somewhat confusing for the anthropologist, who does not know without detailed enquiry how to understand the term in each case, but it need of course be no more obscure to the informant and his indigenous listeners than is, say, our own polysemous use of the term 'family' .

11.6 NāDār Christian Funerals

The NāDār community in VV practises burial. The Catholic church now permits cremation but the method is not liked in VV

The grave is dug by a Paraiyar who lives in the NāDār quarter (5.5.1) . He is a Hindu and performs no other services for the community The Barber attends too, even for those families served by Suppaiyā, the Hindu Maruttuvar He prepares the body at the house in the usual way, after which the Parish Priest comes to bless the body and accompany the procession to the church. Rich families have special coffins made, in which the body is carried and interred, but most make use of a coffin marked with a skull-and-crossbones, which is kept in the church grounds and which has long, horizontal poles by means of which it may be carried The Priest remarked that the permanent presence of this grisly object "caused some fear", and added that he was considering changing the system.

At the church there is Mass and a blessing. Women attend this but go no further The coffin is lifted onto a bullock cart, which is pulled by the pall-bearers. They do not run or shout, there is no reversal in the orientation of the body, and no struggle to cross the village boundary. The grandson of the

deceased may ride on the cart, over which is thrown fruit, flowers, small coins and pieces of coconut.

The Priest accompanies the cortege to the cemetery, but it is the Barber who officiates there. The latter shaves the heads of the chief mourners, the sons and grandsons of the deceased. There is no feeding of rice to the corpse and no kalikuDam uDaittal. Instead, relatives throw flowers over the grave while the Barber pours water onto it. Everyone must take a bath before returning home.

The prestations involved have already been dealt with (5.5.1). Next day, male relatives accompany the Barber to the cemetery, where they pour water "to make mud" and take some grain (not rice) which is later brought back and given to the poor. There is no karumāti ceremony, but on the 16th day the mourners receive veSTis or saris from their ZHs. "One must be brought from each sister's house," said the Priest. The mourners take an oil-bath and there is a family feast.

It is clear that many Hindu (or perhaps one should say 'Indian') cultural forms are retained, though their meaning may have changed, at least according to the official ecclesiastical interpretation. Christian doctrine does not explicitly recognise beliefs concerning impurity and pollution for example, but it is noticeable that educated Indian Christians place great emphasis on western-derived notions of bodily cleanliness and hygiene, which provide an alternative rationale for the retention of many purificatory practices such as ritual bathing. In the village context though, it seems more a case of the Christians retaining both their former behaviour and, more or less overtly, the previous justifications for it.

This leads to certain contradictions. For example, the body is taken into the Christian church, an act which would desecrate a Hindu temple. Yet, once at the burial ground, the

Barber acts as a Priest in almost exactly the same way as he would at a Hindu funeral: in VV, he may even be a Hindu. More generally, it will be clear from the above description that the standard 'Hocartian' distinction between the pure priest (the Catholic Parish Priest) and the impure priest (the Barber) is maintained during the ritual, the pure priest being absent during the preparation of the body and passive in the cemetery, and the impure priest (as a Hindu) being excluded from the Mass in the church. It is also noteworthy that the mourners bathe before returning home

It is less surprising to discover that the inter- and intra-caste prestations closely resemble those of Hindus, not only at funerals but at weddings too (9.9.1) . After all, the Nāḍār remain members of the caste order in a politico-economic sense even though their ritual involvement has diminished as a result of their religious conversion. Moreover, their marital system and family organisation conforms to the local pattern, apart from their idiosyncratic but by no means unique avoidance of marriage with the eZDy

11.7 Discussion

The generally-accepted account of 'the Hindu view of death' emphasises beliefs in cycles of rebirth (samsāram) . In these cycles, moral retribution operates in accordance with karman, the accumulated balance of past good and bad deeds, so as to determine the hierarchical position of each rebirth (Basham 1967:324-5) . This hierarchy forms a continuum which stretches from the basest of ghosts and spirits, through the

various living organisms of our own world, and on to the gods themselves or even beyond (Aiyappan 1977; Ostor 1971) .

Both the above Sanskritic words are known in their Tamil forms to the villagers under study. We have already seen that the 16th day death ceremony is known as karumāti, and as far as I am aware that represents the only use of the word karuman known to them. In other words, its meaning is simply 'death ceremony', rather than 'ceremony associated with past, present or future rebirth' The word samusāram is given a number of dictionary definitions, one of which is 'the state of being in connection with and subject to birth' (JPF:348) . This clearly derives from the sanskritic meaning. The other connotations reported by the dictionary all relate to marriage however, and indeed I only ever heard the word used in TV in the highly specific sense of "wife". It is, in fact, a respectful way of referring to someone else's wife in conversation with a third party: she is described as "X's samusāram."

In response to a suggestion from Charlene Allison, who had been carrying out research among Saiva Pillai in Tirunelveli Town, I began to question informants as to their beliefs on the nature of death. Allison had found that her urban and relatively ortho-practising Saivites did not generally believe in rebirth. They were aware of the doctrine and knew it to be held by Hindus elsewhere, but nevertheless denied that it was a feature of their own religious beliefs.

My own data point to a similar conclusion. Indeed, I would go further and say that most of those to whom I spoke

were not even aware of the existence of the rebirth doctrine. My questions about 'what happens to a person when he dies' were greeted with amused incredulity and it was clear that the question had never occurred to my informants, at least in these general and abstract terms.

Certain points were clear. It was agreed that people who had been murdered or who had died violently in other ways, might become pēy, hideous and gigantic demons which haunt parts of every village, often particular trees, and which may be seen at night by the unwary. It was also agreed that the soul or 'spirit', āvi, of the deceased remained in or near the bereaved house until the 16th day. It did not accompany the body, uṭampu, from which it separated at the moment of death, to the cemetery. "Only Siva is in the cemetery," said Vēyilmuttu (V176), the Paḷḷar pūsāri, after confirming the above. The problem was, what subsequently happened to the āvi? Here I could obtain no firm information. A few people made suggestions (for example, that it 'went to the south') but these were clearly ad hoc attempts to be polite.

Chettiar (1973:87) states that some Tamils believe in a heaven in which they live for ever: such a view would clearly be at variance with the orthodox Hindu view of rebirth as commonly represented. Moreover, the belief in a heaven which may be attained by the performance of penance is of great antiquity in South India (Pillay 1975:469), while McGilvray (1977:50) provides modern ethnographic evidence of similar import for the East Coast Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Logical contradictions need not necessarily present problems for worshippers, of course: indeed, they are the very stuff of religious mystery. In any case such a contradiction does not arise in the present context, and it seems instead to be a question of the complete absence of any generally-accepted beliefs concerning the after-life.

Previous writers (for example, Hocart 1968:12; Dumont 1957b:250) have emphasised the association of death, and indeed of all rites of passage except marriage (Dumont 1972:92) with impurity. It is generally stated, for example, that no cooking may be done in the bereaved household during the period of mourning, and that this restriction ends only with the feast on the 16th (say) day. It will already be clear that such was not the case in the present area of study. In general, the transactional consequences of inter-caste purity beliefs have been shown (1.4.1) to be much less significant here than in, say, the Kofuku region (Beck 1972). For example, caste-ranking was little apparent in eating behaviour, and caste differences were played down ideologically (1.4.1). In line with all this, it is perhaps not surprising to discover that the relative disregard for food purity extends to cover intra-caste contexts too, such as the cooking taboos at funerals. No caste-group observes anything like the full restrictions even in theory. At most, no cooking is done on the day of the funeral proper, but in some cases the evening meal is prepared normally even then.

This is not to say that a funeral is not felt to be associated with impurity, however. It even manifests itself in

Christian death ritual, as we saw (11.6) . In fact it has already been mentioned that bathing after attending a funeral is regarded far more seriously than is the need to bath after accidental physical contact with an Untouchable (1.4.1) . Many features of death ritual reflect its connection with the state of impurity. In the first place, the central positions occupied by the Barber (the 'impure Priest') and Washerman, the very village servants whose day-to-day function it is to remove organic impurity from their clients, is evidence for Stevenson's supposition that the (as we would see it) directly 'organic' impurity which derives from dirty clothing, the impurity which is seen locally as inherent in cut hair and clippings of finger-nails, and the 'symbolic' impurity which results from the death of a close relative, are all in essence examples of the same phenomenon. Secondly, certain aspects of the rites themselves are clearly designed to recognise or remove impurity.

From the viewpoint of the deceased, the preparation of the body is obviously purificatory, designed to remove the impurity generated by the physical transition from life to death and to purify the body in preparation for the social transition, the separation from the community to which he or she formerly belonged. This separation begins with the procession and ends with the lighting of the pyre or the filling-in of the grave.

Thereafter the emphasis shifts to the surviving relatives, those members of the community who have become polluted by the death of their relative and whose entrance into a phase of liminality may be marked by the shaving of their heads or, in

other areas, by their inability to prepare food for a certain time ²². Their impurity derives at least in part from the fact that they too are undergoing a change in social status, and the karumātī rite, with its associated water and/or oil baths, marks the end of this period of social disability. The prestations exchanged by the relatives may be seen as reaffirming the social ties of those re-entering full society: previous links are renewed and at the same time new statuses created by the death are recognised. The maccinan of one generation becomes the māmā of the next, and it will be noted in Table 11.1 that those māmās who are FZHs appear to be under as great an obligation to give as those who stand in the genealogical position of MB. According to that table, it seems that in fact it is the eZH link which carries with it the greatest responsibility, that the FZH, in the absence of married sisters, takes priority to the extent of even bequeathing his obligation to the FZS, and that the MB who is not also related in one or other of the above ways, is under a much less stringent obligation (Kurusāmī received nothing from his MB in 11.5, example B).

There is of course more to the karumātī rite than this, for the deceased is also involved as the recipient of the food offering. There is the problem of the meaning of the shaped bricks or, in the case of the Nāyakkar, the mud figure. These matters are very much open to speculation, and in the absence of local exegesis I do not propose to go into them here.

22. Widows, too, have their head's shaved soon after their H's funeral.

CHAPTER 12 : CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND THE ANALYSIS OF CULTURE

12.1 Prolegomena

A work of this kind does not lend itself to the drawing of neat conclusions. The subject-matter is far too disparate for that. In any case, the greatest possible degree of generalisation has been sought at each successive stage, so that any attempt to sum up would merely repeat what has gone before. Nor do I have any over-arching grand design to offer.

Certain theoretical issues have recurred from time to time in the above discussions however, and it seems appropriate to end by developing certain points made in particular contexts above. Briefly, these concern the status of 'culturally' or 'ethnosociologically'-based explanations, and the utility of certain three-level models of social reality.

12.2 Three-Level Views of Social Reality

In my discussion of kinship and marriage I used a tripartite model derived from Needham's explication of the notion of 'prescription' (1972) . To recapitulate briefly, Needham discriminated the following levels, the glosses to which are my own:

1) the statistical-behavioural, which comprises the aggregate consequences of the behaviour of individual actors in the society under consideration. In the particular case of kinship, this level is exemplified by the marriage patterns found empirically, and included in Table 10.2 .

2) the jural, comprising the normative, legal, moral, religious and analytical statements of informants. Needham (ibid:172) relates such phenomena to what Leach (1964:285) has called the "as if" descriptions contained in indigenous social theory. Their common characteristic is that they relate to an ideal held by the studied people themselves and made explicit by them, though not necessarily verbally and not usually in the form which the analyst himself would choose. The urimai rules were mentioned as examples of this class of phenomenon (9.6) .

3) the categorical, made up of the modes of classification and systems of nomenclature of the society under study. The kinship terminology is the archetypal example of data drawn from this level. Such data differ, perhaps, from jural phenomena in being implicit . That is, they are taken for granted by the members of society and do not require the kinds of explanation, justification or idealisation commonly applied to jural statements.

It must be admitted straight away that this tri-partite distinction is not always as noticeable or as easily-maintained as in the case of marriage. As usual (Khare 1977:107) it is better to see the above labels as referring to different aspects of the same social facts, rather than as constituting a taxonomy of ideal types of such facts ¹.

There is nothing to cause one to believe a priori that

1. One sees this in the case of illocutionary acts, for example The saDahku ceremony is both a jural statement about the new sexual status of the girl, and a behavioural act bringing about that which is stated (8.6.3). It also presupposes the categorisation of sexual and other statuses, of course.

the structure of any one stratum of social life is determined by any other, as Needham (1967, 1972) has so elegantly demonstrated, and indeed it was shown above that these strata were incongruent in the case of marriage (10.4) . On the other hand, it could plausibly be argued that the various levels are in some respects consistent with each other, as the example of marriage again shows:

Dumont said that 'cross-cousin' marriage was an ideal way of bringing about the alliance pattern inherent in the kinship terminology (1953a:38, see also 10.2) . I have argued that this formulation is deficient in that (a) it envisages only two aspects to social reality - the ideological and the behavioural (1972:311) - whereas the analysis of marriage is better served by discriminating three; (b) it therefore sees the terminology as enshrining the 'rule of alliance', whereas the latter is a jural, not a categorical concept; and (c) it therefore appears to attach a spurious, idealistic primacy to the categorical (cum-jural) level. The situation may instead be seen in terms of the mutual interaction of levels: the high behavioural incidence of genealogical eZDy and first cross-cousin marriage; the existence of the urimai preferences and (at a lower level of specificity) exogamous groups; and the structure of the kinship terminology; all these display a basic consistency in that it is logically possible to realise the requirements of each level within the framework of the constraints supplied by the other two, even though this may not always happen empirically.

Recent work by David (1973b; 1974; 1977c) puts forward a rather different tri-partite view, which stems from his desire to bridge the gap between the allegedly polar theoretical positions of structuralism and structural-functionalism, as represented by Dumont and Bailey respectively. For David,

both protagonists are reductionist in their thinking, though in opposite directions ². Bailey "reduces cultural ideas to social structure, to hard facts of resources and power", while Dumont "assigns empirical factors... to an 'encompassed' secondary position relative to the 'encompassing' position of the hierarchical ideology" (1977c:220-1) .

It is difficult to accept that the approaches of Dumont and Bailey can be opposed in this way. Certainly, Bailey is a self-confessed reductionist, at least in theory, though the extent to which he departs from such a position in practice was hinted at in (4.5) . To be fair, David is only paraphrasing other writers in his critique, but it would be a travesty to say, with Lynch (1977:251), that Dumont subsumes empirical factors within the ideology. A major theme of "Homo Hierarchicus" is that of the dialectic between 'behaviour' and 'ideology':

"(It) may be assumed a priori that there is normally a relationship of complementarity between the two... (This approach) frees itself both from idealism and from materialism by giving both... the opportunity to produce proof." (Dumont 1972:312; my emphasis)

Indeed, Dumont's work has been criticised above on the very grounds - which he himself now recognises (1971:131; 1975:145)- that this duality, which was the corner-stone of his thinking at that time, was insufficiently discriminatory. Marriott, too, has made Dumont's dualism a specific point of criticism, though for the opposite reason (1976b; see 12.4) .

2. The debate to which David refers was dealt with, from one of its aspects, in (4.5) .

In any case, the contrast which David draws between Dumont and Bailey seems more a rhetorical device than an essential part of his argument. His position is that, rather than reducing cultural phenomena in one 'direction' or the other, we should regard them as worthy of consideration in their own right. More than that, they are crucially important because:

"... conscious structures of thought, normative codes, mediate in a cognitive sense between actual networks of relationships and unconscious structures of thought."
(1977c:220)

He rejects the idea of a 1:1 correspondence between the various levels, and goes on to envisage them in terms of Piaget's (1971: 28-9) notion of the relativity of form and content: behaviour is content ordered by the form of the normative codes, which are themselves the content of the 'unconscious structures of thought' (David 1977c:221-2) .

The usefulness of this metaphor is limited, in my view, by its uni-directional nature. I prefer to see such ordering as being possible reciprocally. At once, though, clear similarities are evident between David's position and my own. His 'behaviour patterns', 'normative codes' and 'ideational features' (ibid: 222) correspond to my 'statistical behaviour', 'jural norms' and 'categories' . There are differences between our approaches however, and these ultimately prove to be more significant, for reasons which will become clearer once we have considered another current approach to 'cultural' data (cf. 12.5) .

12.3 Ethnosociology

In several recent papers, an ethnosociological view of Indian society has been propounded by Marriott and Inden, whose joint approach involves making use of indigenous texts, not as "prescriptive" (in my terms, 'jural') accounts of an 'as-if' reality, but as:

"... analytical sociological models, comparable to the theoretical generalised social systems of Max Weber or Talcott Parsons..." (1977:229)

They add that they read such texts

"... literally rather than symbolically, since our aim is to understand the cognitive categories of the world from which they come." (ibid)

These categories are not to be translated into those of our own 'commonsense' ethnosociology, but used to reveal the characteristics of Indian thought.

One basic cognitive category is that of 'jāti', and the conventional translation of this as 'caste' constitutes an unwonted narrowing of its indigenous meaning. It shares the same Indo-European root as our 'genus' (Marriott & Inden 1974: 983; 1977:230) and although the translation is not perfect, jāti may, like 'genus', be applied to categories of all animate, inanimate and supernatural objects, as well as to visual, aural and other sensory phenomena (1977:230) .

Every human 'genus' in India, from the varna to the individual person, is believed to be distinguished by its own particular 'defining qualities' (gunas), 'powers' and 'actions',

which together make up its corporate 'code for conduct' or dharma (1974:983; 1977:231) ³. This 'code' is present in the form of a particular corporeal property, be it 'shared bodily substance', 'blood' or whatever, which is common to the entire genus. The 'code' is thus inborn just as physical characteristics are; it is not merely ascribed, but immanent.

"South Asian thought does not oppose 'matter' to 'spirit' or separate 'nature' from 'morality' or 'law' ." (1977:231)

The corporeal property, however culturally defined, is believed to be transmitted from one generation to the next by means of a combination of physical and moral acts, such as sexual intercourse and marriage. Both types of act must be performed in accordance with certain rules, which ensure that the correct, different-but-complementary bodily substances are mixed and handed on to the off-spring.

Genera are thus characterised by the internal transmission of "hereditarily shared substance" (1974:984) . By contrast, genera interact through the exchange of "non-hereditary substances" (ibid) . The latter include food, bodily excretions, and such non-physical 'substances' as sensations, all of which are acquired and disposed of through the medium of the body itself

"Persons and genera are thus conceived of as channelling and transforming(these) heterogeneous, ever-flowing, changing substances." (1977:233)

3. Thus there is varnadharma, jātidharma, svadharma (for the individual) and so on.

They must seek out the most appropriate substances for themselves, through actions, diet, marriages, etc which conform to their corporate 'codes for conduct', and they must also remove all undesirable secretions. Persons of other genera provide or dispose of the various substances involved ⁴. For every genus therefore, its moral standing and its hereditary substance are maintained or altered:

"... according to the way that it receives or refuses to receive bodily substances, consumes or refuses to consume food, and gives or refuses to give services in exchanges with particular other castes." (1974:984) ⁵

In short, the authors' position is that South Asian society is characterised by a "universal axiom", namely the "cognitive non-duality of action and actor, code and substance" (1977:229, my emphasis) . From this point of view, transaction and attribution become merely "two aspects of the same thing" (Marriott 1959:106, quoted in Marriott & Inden 1977:235), while the notion of 'substance', used by Schneider (1968) to refer only to natural substances contained within the physical body, has to be widened to cover "that which passes between bodies - the contents(and) media of transactions" (Marriott & Inden 1977:235) .

The approach makes no a priori decisions as to whether Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, devotional sects or urban

4. They do not explain the involvement of other castes, and one is left to wonder whether it could be due to beliefs concerning purity, the very proposition which they seek to deny (see also Barnett, Fruzzetti & Ostor 1976:634) .

5 Presumably this would apply equally to the genus 'MB' (say)

populations should be included in any consideration of 'caste systems' (ibid:227) . On the contrary, it attempts to explain such phenomena as:

"... replications and deletions, as permutations and combinations, as negative and reciprocal transformations of coded substance in accord with the... cognitive repertory of kinds of non-dual units, relationships and processes." (ibid:236) ⁶

Hindu sects, for example, practice liberation from the day-to-day 'code for conduct' by adopting superior, divinely-inspired codes (e.g. Lingayats) or through reversing normal codes (Tantrists) (1974:988) . Buddhism provides a superior morality which encompasses the inferior, caste-based codes (ibid), a process carried still further by South Asian Muslims (ibid:989) .

12.4 A Critique of Ethnosociology

One fundamental criticism of the 'ethnosociological' approach is that it is based entirely upon the unsupported assertions of its authors as to 'how South Asians think' (see Barnett, Fruzzetti & Ostor, hereafter Barnett et al 1976:632) ⁷.

6. This seems, however, to involve another a priori assumption, that all these groups share a 'repertory' of cognitive categories.

7. See Marriott & Inden (1974:983, column 2, lines 41-3, 54, 59, 64, 68, 75) for references to the 'premises', 'assumptions', 'thoughts' and 'beliefs' of 'South Asian society' or 'Indian thought'. Neither here nor in their 1977 paper is empirical support offered for these assertions. No doubt the authors would claim (cf. Marriott 1976b:189) that these are only outlines of their approach, but we have had these outlines for some time now, and even when challenged by Barnett et al (1976), Marriott (1976b) offers no evidence in reply.

Moreover, it claims to apply to all South Asian societies and would, if accepted, 'solve' all the problems of Indian sociology "at one stroke" (ibid) . An approach which 'explained' everything in this way would, however, be "a viewpoint analytically trivial and solipsistic" (McGilvray 1977:52) . It contains its own 'escape clause' in the form of the "deletions... of the cognitive repertory" mentioned in the passage quoted above. Thanks to this device, even a negative example could be said to conform to the theory (ibid) which, being therefore irrefutable, could not claim scientific status (Popper 1972:41) .

Barnett et al allege (1976:632), and Marriott (1976b:194) accepts this, that the ethnosociological approach rejects not only the Dumontian dichotomy of ideology and behaviour but also the comparative sociologist's dichotomy between 'we' (the students) and 'they' (the society under study) . On the first point it is, as Barnett et al say (1976:635-6), remarkable that a theory based explicitly upon supposedly indigenous categories should so systematically exclude the indigenous ideology in favour of behaviour ⁸ . Ultimately, we are merely presented with a restatement of Marriott's former transactionalism (1959, 1968), but with addition of a claim to direct indigenous inspiration; what began as a theory has become a metaphysic.

As for the second charge, Barnett et al's simple distinction between 'we' and 'they' seems less satisfactory than Pocock's (1971:83-9) formulation, in which one tries to 'make sense' of

8. For example, it does not explain why genera should be not only differentiated but ranked. The mere existence of ranking, to say nothing of its particular, empirical manifestations, is inexplicable without reference to the ideology.

one's data from three points of view: on its own terms, by the application of one's own 'commonsense' categories, and with reference to the categories of comparative sociology. Be that as it may, Barnett et al's criticism still stands.

Marriott and Inden argue, in effect, that as Indian thought is monistic (in itself unproven as far as their critics are concerned), the analysis of Indian society should itself be monistic (Barnett et al 1977:599) .

"(It) would not be a bad objective for (Western social scientists) to make themselves - the knowers- somewhat like those South Asian objects that they would make known." (Marriott 1976b:195)

This is a thoroughly unscientific, even mystical approach, for it breaks down the barrier between observer and observed which lies at the heart of all science (Barnett et al 1977:601) .

In any case, it is wrong to imply (Marriott 1976b) that Dumont's dualism is ipso facto incompatible with India's alleged monism. Just because theories based on certain premises exist to deal with problems arising out of one particular context, this in no way invalidates the development of other theories, based on different premises, for use in other contexts. Nor, for that matter, is there any reason why alternative theories should not be applied to the same context. Indian social theory, whether or not we accept that version of it which Marriott and Inden set forth, does not supersede comparative sociological analysis but must be subsumed under it. We do not seek a more transcendental truth, but rather a more widely applicable theory.

More universal theories can more easily be tested and are therefore preferable (Popper 1972:123), but Marriott and Inden, absorbed in what McGilvray (1977:54) aptly calls their "admiration" of indigenous theories, would now deny us the use of the more universal theories of comparative social science. What set out (Marriott and Inden 1974) to be an exposition of 'Indian thought' has now (Marriott 1976b) assumed the proportions of a manifesto for 'monistic sociology'.

While Barnett et al reject the particular approach of Marriott and Inden, this is only in favour of their own theory of natural bodily substance, equally wide-ranging and similarly culturally-based but lacking any claim to 'divine inspiration' (Barnett 1970, 1976; Fruzzetti & Ostor 1976, as quoted in McGilvray 1977) . My criticisms of David's approach (12.5) will apply, mutatis mutandis, to these accounts also.

By contrast, McGilvray makes criticisms more radical in nature. He finds, as I do, that no indigenous theory of 'blood' or 'substance' exists in a sufficiently widespread or coherent fashion for him to be able to say "this is what this society believes". This is hardly surprising, for what people say they believe is less likely to be agreed by society as a whole than is what they take for granted. For example, all may agree as to the components of their kinship terminology, but which term should actually be applied in a particular instance may well be a matter for debate. Put more precisely, the system of classification is a 'given', but its application involves jural and behavioural considerations which may not be universally accepted.

I am saying, in effect, that systems of classification are the nearest things we have to intra-societal cultural universals (Needham 1972:174); how then do I differ from Marriott and Inden in their insistence on the use of indigenous cognitive categories? In the first place, I take such categories to be data whereas for Marriott and Inden they are theory. Needham is quite clear that his classification applies to sociological data; his three levels are "aspects of collective conduct and representations" (ibid: 171) . His purpose was not the discrimination of alternative analytical strategies for coping with that data. Secondly, as a result of the paradox pointed out by Barnett et al, Marriott and Inden do not in fact examine indigenous cognitive categories as actually used at all. Instead they cite them in passing, on the way to asserting the monistic view which they allegedly reveal ⁹.

For Marriott and Inden the meaning of behaviour is innate, or immanent within that behaviour. Even if we were to accept this, it would still be necessary to demonstrate that empirical fact conformed to ethnosociological assertion. If it did not, then Marriott and Inden might find others less willing than they themselves to see this as resulting from the 'deletion' of

9 This 'revelation' occurs partly through the medium of the translation. My dictionary does not bear out Marriott's rendition of maṅkalam and kalyāṇam as "bodily... well-being" (1976b:194, my emphasis); both are rendered 'prosperity, luck auspiciousness, marriage, etc.' (JPF:763, 208) . In neither case is there any reference to the body; the physical gloss, so appropriate to his schema, may well be Marriott's own. Similarly the idea that guṇa (Tamil kuṇam, 'quality, attribute') is immanent in substance (M & I 1977:231) would be disputed by the Sāṅkhya metaphysicians with whom the term is associated (Basham 1967:327) .

a universal category. Were they to delineate their theory at a lower level of universality (as 'people in Bengal believe...', for example) the above methodological problems would still remain, but because it claims universal validity the theory becomes potentially easier to refute on empirical grounds too: a single contrary instance will suffice. Let us therefore consider the case of the Tamils, to see whether it provides evidence which runs counter to Marriott & Inden's propositions.

The most widespread and distinctively-Tamil religious philosophy in South India is Saiva Siddhanta, which dates from the 14th century (Basham 1967:336). It explicitly distinguishes 'body' from 'soul' as one of its basic tenets (Paranjoti 1954: 57) and holds that the body "is a tenement, tenanted by the soul" (Subramania Pillai 1965:27) ¹⁰.

According to Zvelebil, the Tamil Siddha (sittar) movement, which is of immense antiquity, distinguishes both a 'subtle' (nuNNuTal) and a 'gross', physical body (paruvuTal) (1973:35): these are linked to, but are not identical with the spirit. The 'subtle' body is thought to mediate between the 'gross' body and the 'spirit' (ibid:39), a view characteristic of the pan-Indian system of Yoga ¹¹.

Turning now to ethnographic evidence, Barnett reports that KoNdaikkaTTi VeLLaLar women are believed to undergo trans-

10. I claim no expertise in Tamil philosophy, and will confine myself to points both basic and generally agreed. There are of course monistic philosophies in South India, notably that of Saṅkaraṇ (Basham 1967:331), but no matter how many confirmations a universal theory may receive, these cannot outweigh a single refutation.

11. Yoga is not necessarily dualistic with respect to the 'spirits' of the individual and the deity, but it is the relation between 'body' and 'spirit' which seems pertinent here.

substantiation at marriage, but that their 'spirit' remains unaltered (Barnett 1970, quoted in David 1977b:26) . This seems to indicate a dualistic view of the body/spirit relationship. Barnett also argues that, far from a stress on shared bodily substance being central to traditional Indian views of caste, it is only as a result of the modern 'ethnification' of caste-groups that such views have come to the fore alongside the older transactional views based on criteria such as purity (1976:158; see also Stein 1968:79) .

McGilvray has discussed in some detail the ethnosociology of the Tamils of Batticaloa (eastern Sri Lanka) . David reports from Jaffna that a child's body (uTampu) is said to derive from its father's semen and its spirit (uyir) from its mother's menstrual blood (1973a:523); this is itself a dualistic view, be it noted. In contrast, McGilvray found that whereas both male and female sexual fluids were thought to be involved in conception, the actual source of life was said to be an all-pervasive pirāṇa vayvu ('wind of life') originating from neither parent ¹² (1977:15) . Clearly, then, life ('spirit'?) is not only distinct from substance but is not an attribute passed on through the generations. As for the body itself, its substances were thought to be the same for everyone, whatever their caste. McGilvray states unequivocally that:

"... the notion that members of a single (genus) might actually think of themselves as 'sharers' ... of unique blood or natural substance... was untenable in the face of what informants said "
(ibid:18)

As for the "cognitive non-duality of... code and substance" (Marriott and Inden 1977:229), McGilvray says: "Research in Batticaloa does not support this universal axiom" (1977:49) .

My own data are, as I have said, sparse, largely because my informants were neither interested nor knowledgeable in such

12 This is the most widespread view: McGilvray reports contrary opinions on this and almost every other point.

matters. There is no doubt that the body (uTampu) and soul (āvi) are distinguished (11.7), but it has been shown that although beliefs concerning 'blood' and trans-sanguination are present, these are confused and far from wide-spread (10.4) . I can only echo McGilvray's view (1977:21) that local opinions are frequently diverse, disjointed and context-dependent, with no single coherent theory being held by all

I offer no substitute for 'ethnoscology' then, merely the suggestion that the above evidence is sufficient to falsify the approach with respect to the Tamils, and hence to refute its claim to universal validity. I would not want it to be thought that I reject the works of Marriott and Inden in their entirety however; it is their immanence and all-pervasive 'given-ness' which is open to doubt. Viewed as a descriptive metaphor, their 1974 review is a masterpiece of condensed clarity, while as a formal system Marriott's (1976a) 'substance and code' analysis of transactions appears as enlightening as David's similar distinctions between 'bound' and 'non-bound' relationships (1973b; 1974; 1977c; see also 6.7) . All these accounts suffer, however, because their distinctions are seen as present in social reality itself, rather than as analytical and of their authors' own devising :

12.5 Cultural Data and Sociological Analysis

Cultural or 'jural' data are the most problematic for the analyst. On the one hand, there are no a priori techniques for its acquisition, since in order to ask about a particular belief one must first-of-all know that such a belief exists. Given the infinity of possible cultural modes, such knowledge

can be gained only in a haphazard, accidental way. On the other hand, it leads to a kind of cross-cultural psycho-analysis, whereby the lightest word of the informant assumes a cosmic significance and is assimilated to a cognitive 'world view' all too easily introspected by the analyst himself.

For example, we saw that it was by no means certain to what extent David's 'bound/non-bound' opposition (1973b; 1974; 1977c; 6.7) and his 'sharer/uniter/non-uniter' triad (1973a; 10.3) were really features of Jaffna society itself. The words reported certainly exist in Tamil but there are doubts over the significances which David attaches to them. This is not to say that his formulations are not valuable, merely that their status is unclear.

In any case, even if models such as these can conclusively be shown to be present in the indigenous world view, there remains another, greater problem for them. If they are tied, as content to form, to a particular configuration of cultural concepts, then they cannot be assumed to apply to societies in which those concepts differ in significance, however slightly.

The classification of inter-caste relationships in general (5.3) and the significance of the notion of 'sandōsham' in particular (6.7); the tri-partite 'cultural division of relatives into three classes based on the characteristics of their bodily substances (10.3); and the notion that some kind of substantial identity exists between H and W (10.4); all these 'cultural' facts reported from Jaffna have been shown to take different forms, or in one case to disappear altogether, in the case of the TV 'micro-region'. McGilvray reports similarly

discrepant findings for Batticaloa. We cannot therefore regard David's theories, limited as they are to the status of analytical 'content' with respect to an indigenous, locally-specific cultural 'form', as being of general application. It is an inherent limitation of culturally-validated theories that they should themselves be culture-dependent and cognitively and geographically synecdochic.

The main difference between my Needham-derived three-level model and that of David, may therefore be expressed as follows. I take the view that jural data provide a link between behavioural and categorical social facts, a link which is based not on any presumed substantive or structural congruence of these various levels but upon the existence of a greater or lesser degree of consistency among them. For David, by contrast, the use of cultural analysis provides a link between behaviourally and ideologically reductionist strategies. This approach is in my view misguided: certainly I would reject reductionism, but my strictures would apply to the cultural reductionist too. There can be no 'behavioural analysis', no 'cultural analysis' and no 'ideological analysis': there can only be 'analysis'.

APPENDIX : GLOSSARY OF TAMIL TERMS

The most important Tamil words and phrases referred to in the main text have been included below. Those only met with once will have been defined on the spot and are not reproduced here. Caste names and kinship terms are not normally included; they may be consulted in Table 1.1 and Tables 10.1 and 10.4 respectively. The words are listed in English alphabetical order except that short vowels take precedence over long vowels throughout. Where appropriate, the Tamil term is followed by the number of the page on which it first appears.

Aippasi	- the month of October-November
amman̄ (35)	- goddess
arisi (101)	- raw, husked rice
Āḍi	- the month of July-August
ālatti (307)	- an honorific tray of auspicious objects
Āṇi	- the month of June-July
Āvaṇi	- the month of August-September
Cittirai	- the month of April-May
cōlam (101)	- Jowar, a type of millet
ēlam (165)	- an auction; a means of raising money to finance a project or festival
iḍḍi, iṭṭi (171)	- a cake of steamed rice- and lentil-flour
jāti (18)	- caste, sub-caste; genus
kalikuḍam uḍaṭṭal (469)	- the ceremony of breaking a water-pot over a funeral pyre
kalyāṇam (186)	- an auspicious ceremony; a wedding
kamalai (98)	- see 'kavalai' (q.v.)
kampu (101)	- Bajra, a type of millet
Karṇam (80)	- a village land-accountant

karumāti (190)	- a purificatory rite which ends death ritual
kavalai (98)	- a device for raising water from a well
kāppu (224)	- amulets or charms against evil-eye
Kārttikai	- the month of November-December
kēppai (101)	- Ragi, a type of millet
kilai (61)	- 'a branch'; an exogamous group
kiNaru (97)	- a well
kirāman (69)	- a village
kottu (353)	- an exogamous group among Maravar
kōTTai (118)	- a fort; a unit equivalent to 110kg of paddy
kōttiram (61)	- an exogamous or endogamous group
kōvil (35)	- a Hindu temple
kuDimakan (191)	- 'a son of the village'; a Washerman or Barber
kuladeyvam (49)	- a family deity
kulam (61)	- a clan or lineage
kuLam (95)	- an irrigation lake; a tank
kurukkam (131)	- an area of 0.97 acres of dry land
kuruvai (115)	- (or kuluvai), an ululating cry made by women to mark auspicious transition points in ritual
maDam (82)	- a pilgrim's rest-house
mandapam (45)	- the pillared entrance-hall of a temple
mañjcal (115)	- turmeric-root or -paste
maNveTTi (114)	- or 'mamotty', an agricultural hoe
marakkāl (113)	- an area of 1/12 acre of 'wet' land; the amount of seed required by such an area
maritār (467)	- a funeral bier
mālai (465)	- a garland of flowers
māniyam (180)	- a gift to a functionary; land the usufruct of which is associated with an office
māppillai (277)	- a male cross-cousin; a bridegroom
MārkaRi	- the month of December-January
Māsi	- the month of February-March
mirāsudār (75)	- a co-parcener of village land
mirāsudārī (75)	- a system of joint land-holding

- moy (147) - a list, esp. one recording donations at a life-crisis rite; a group of 20 goats
 mukūrttakāl (187) - a post erected prior to a wedding
 Munsīp (69) - a village revenue official
 nan̄jcai (99) - 'wet', rice-growing land
 nāDu (257) - a country or region
 nakaSvaram (193) - a clarinet-like reed instrument
 nel (100) - paddy (unhusked rice)
 nīrmālai (464) - the bathing of the mourners before a funeral

 paccarisi (188) - raw, husked rice
 paDi (104) - a volume of grain equiv. to about 1.5kg
 pakka (104) - a volume of grain equiv. to about 1.0kg; a 'big' pakka is equiv. to 1 paDi (q.v.)
 pali (189) - a sacrifice; Catholic Mass
 pañjāyattu (69) - a panchayat; a council
 pandal, pantal (13) - a hut of bamboo and palmyrah required on ceremonial occasions
 pañkāli (363) - heirs; a group of brothers and other male parallel relatives
 Pañkuni - the month of March-April
 paramparai (216) - succession from father to son
 parisam (370) - a wedding prestation, designed to obtain the bride's consent
 pavalam (354) - 'coral'; an exogamous Maravar group; part of a Maravar woman's tāli (q.v.)
 pavitram (388) - a ring of grass on a Brahman's finger during a pūja (q.v.)
 pālaiyam (73) - an armed camp; the territory of a chief
 pālaiyakkāran (73) - a Poligar, or traditional chieftain
 pālīpīDam (48) - a sacrifice stone; an altar
 pen, peN (279) - see pon (q.v.)
 pon (279) - girl; bride
 poñkal (35) - ceremonially-boiled rice, cooked at a temple; a temple festival
 poTTu (44) - a red or black cosmetic used on ritual occasions

puḍam (46)	- a truncated square-pyramid of masonry, representing a deity
puñjai (99)	- 'dry', unirrigated agricultural land
purampōkku (100)	- waste or common land
PuraTTāsi	- the month of September-October
puṟuṅku (101)	- parboiled rice
pūja (47)	- worship; a religious service
pūsāri (41)	- a temple priest
saḍaṅku (200)	- a rite associated with female puberty
saṁindār (74)	- a noble landlord or proprietor
saṁindāri (74)	- the territory controlled by a saṁindār; the system of land tenure under saṁindārs
sammantakkāran (359)	- affinal relatives
sammanti (469)	- (or sampanti), affines
sampaḷam (182)	- wages, pay for work done
sandōsham (180)	- mutual satisfaction resulting from a fair transaction
saṅkam (165)	- a (caste) committee
sāmi (48)	- a deity
sāmiyāḍi (44)	- a person possessed by a temple deity
sāshtiram (182)	- specialised knowledge; right, obligation; a prestation to or by a specialist
sēlai (126)	- a woman's garment; a sari
sīdanam (371)	- a prestation to a bride from her F; 'dowry'
sokkāran (280)	- an ego-centred group of male parallel relatives
sondam (369)	- relatives in a general sense
sōr (101)	- boiled grain
suḍukaḍu (463)	- a cemetery
sumaitaṅki (267)	- a stone erected to the name of a woman dying in child-birth
suruḷ (208)	- a rolled-up betel leaf; wedding prestations
Tai	- the month of January-February
Talaiyāri (80)	- a village policeman, assistant to the Munsīp (q.v.)
tāli (41)	- the ornament on a marriage necklace

tāymāmā (279)	- (or tāymāman), the MB
teccaNai (188)	- a gift to a guru or specialist
tēñkāy (187)	- a coconut
tēr (467)	- same as maritēr (q.v.)
tiTTu (286)	- impurity
tōsai (211)	- a pancake of rice- and lentil-flour
tōTTam (99)	- 'garden' land, irrigated by wells
tōTTi (192)	- a messenger associated with funerals
urimai (251)	- a right, esp. the right of first refusal for the hand in marriage of a specified relative
Vaikāsi	- the month of May-June
vaippāTTi (58)	- a mistress or concubine
varattusampalam (180)	- wages, salary
vāDar, vāDai (359)	- 'street, village'; an exogamous ReDDiyār group
vēppilai (283)	- leaves of the Margosa tree (Azadirachta Indica)
vēSTi (186)	- a dhoti, the main male garment
vēTTiyan (192)	- a grave-digger or funeral attendant

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