

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the life of our day, the town has begun to replace the village as the characteristic unit. In a physical sense Indian life is still largely led in the villages; but ideas generated in the town, and propagated through the town-made newspaper and an urban system of education, are rapidly changing the rural outlook, and few who have come into contact with these new forces are able to fit themselves into village life as it is or to resist the temptation to migrate to the nearest town.

Until very recently, however, village life engrossed the attention of the richest as well as the most cultured Indians in their daily concerns. The bulk of such persons had their residence in the villages, and exercised a dominant influence in the conduct of their affairs. The encomiums bestowed on the ancient village-republics of India by the observant British Indian administrators of the early nineteenth century, though we may not accept them as literally true, are clear proof that, until then, the village continued to be the real centre of social life and the principal nursery of social virtues. And from the hundreds of Cōja inscriptions that have come down to us, we see that under the Cōjas the villages of Southern Indian were full of vigour and strength.)

The beginnings of the system of village government that we see in full swing under the Cōjas must be sought in an earlier age. The Pāṇḍya and Pallava inscriptions of the eighth and early ninth centuries show a system, very similar, but not quite so developed, in operation throughout the Tamil country. For our purposes, it is enough to observe that an important inscription from Mānūr<sup>1</sup> in the Tinnevely district of about A.D. 800 anticipates in several respects the better known inscriptions of the time of Parāntaka I from Uttaramērūr in the Chingleput district. The life and functioning of rural institutions, the ultimate cells that sustained national

existence, were clearly little affected by dynastic wars and the shiftings of political power at the top.

Government by means of primary assemblies comprising the adult males of each village was the central feature of rural organisation. Besides these assemblies, there were in existence

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many other groups and corporations of a social, religious or economic character, each interested in looking after some definite local institution or function. The relation between these groups which are found in almost every village and the village assembly itself is not easily expressed in terms of modern political thought. The village assemblies and the groups alike derived their authority from ancient custom and ideal right (Dharma); the moral support of public approval of their conduct in particular instances was in either case the primary sanction underlying their daily activity; in the last resort they could both appeal to the king's government for support in so far as their behaviour conformed to the accepted code of moral conduct. What was right in each case depended on the circumstances, and on the application to them of enlightened reason informed by the principles of the law-codes (Smṛti) and precedents, if any. Precisely in the determination of such casuistical points did the learned Bhaṭṭas of the time render the highest service to society. For to the extent to which their findings were impartial and convincing, and not warped by prejudice or corruption, to that extent was social harmony promoted and the foundations of orderly and peaceful development strengthened. That the system survived intact till the beginning of the last century must lead us to infer that this delicate and onerous work was on the whole well done by those to whom it was entrusted. The village assemblies and the groups were then more or less legally on the same footing in their relations to government and society. But they, in fact or even in theory, were not of equal importance to the life of the nation. The village assembly had the widest range of functions in relation to its locality, whereas the groups were each limited in the range of their operation to some specific purpose or other, such as the maintenance of a single temple, or the regulation of a single craft or trade. The village assembly had a general interest in everything that these groups did, and in many things besides

that none of them attempted. Even in matters that fell specifically within the competence of a particular group, the assembly had a concurrent jurisdiction to which any one could appeal, if the group concerned was in default. The groups, as long as they did their work well, relieved the assembly of that work; the ultimate responsibility for local welfare, however, lay on the assembly. The members of the groups were also members of the assembly, and this fact must have considerably influenced their relations *inter se*. While the groups represented particular interests that might occasionally clash, the assembly looked after the general interest and, as a dispenser of justice, helped in adjusting rival claims to the satisfaction of all parties. Perhaps the nearest analogy to this complex of relations may be found in the pluralist view of the relation between the State and the groups, with this difference, that the relation here was among local bodies and groups functioning in limited areas and not over the entire national field. The national state, represented by the King's government, enveloped and sustained the villages and the groups together.

Before discussing the types of village assemblies and their working, the leading examples of the more limited groups may be briefly noticed. In

Groups. speaking of these groups and of the village assemblies themselves as corporations, we are to understand, not that there was in existence any formal system of incorporation by which groups attained a particular legal status, but simply that they, in fact, acted like individuals, buying and selling, suing and being sued in their group capacity. They recognised also that the continuity of their life as corporations was independent of their changing personnel.<sup>2</sup> He who runs may read from the inscriptions that this was the universal rule. It was simply assumed that there was no difference in these respects between an individual and a group, of persons banded together for a common purpose and well known as such in the neighbourhood. Such groups were organised for all sorts of purposes. Some were economic like the mercantile groups of *Vaṣaṇjīyar*, and the *Manigrāmam*, often named after the locality of their domicile;—*Vaṣaṇjīyar* of *Tiruppurambiyam*,<sup>3</sup> *Manigrāmam* of *Ādittapura*<sup>4</sup> are examples. These mercantile

groups will come up for more detailed consideration in another connection. There were other groups, more numerous, organised on the basis of religion. The *mūlaparudaiyār* of different localities were clearly in direct charge of temples. In *Sueindram*, this body was functioning under the control of the local *Mahāsabhā* (assembly) from the time of *Parantaka I* to that of *Rājārāja I*; subsequently they threw up the management of the temple and restored it to the *Mahāsabhā*; and having done this, they dissolved themselves.<sup>5</sup> We see here a body, constituted for a specific purpose, going out of existence when it is no longer able to function properly; and its duties thenceforth devolve on the *Mahāsabhā*. The *Mūlaparudaiyār* of *Tiruk-kuṣa-mūlki* are stated to be in charge of the affairs of the temple of *Tirunāgēṣvaram*.<sup>6</sup> The priests attached to temples organised themselves into groups with many picturesque names. The generic name for these priestly groups of *Saivas* was *Sivabrāhmaṇas*; those of *Vaiṣṇavas* were called *Vaikhānasas*. Among the specific names of particular groups, the following may be given as examples: *Āṅa-nāṅṅai-Siva-brāhmaṇar*;<sup>7</sup> *pati-pāda-mūlattar*,<sup>8</sup> *tiruvuṅṅāṅṅai-karapurumakkal*,<sup>9</sup> *tiru-vuṅṅāṅṅai-sabhai*.<sup>10</sup> The *Pan-māhēṣvarar* and the *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* whose protection is invoked at the end of almost every inscription recording a gift to the temples were the congregations of these sects, sometimes said to be spread over eighteen districts (*niṣṅam* or *nāḍu*) which are nowhere named.<sup>11</sup> *Śūta-gaṇam*, *Kumāra-gaṇam*, *Kṛṣṇa-gaṇam*, *Kāḷi-gaṇam* and other such groups were in the position of managers and trustees of single shrines from which they took their names. The *pēriḷamaiyār*, and the *śaṅkarap-pāḍiyār*<sup>12</sup> were other bodies connected with temples though their duties are obscure. There are other names of groups related to temples, but they need not be reproduced. There are also instances of local groups within a village, and professional groups. The villages were often divided into *śēris*, streets or quarters, and the people of each *śēri* formed a group for certain purposes. *Uttama Cōḷa* appointed the people of two *śēris* of *Kāñcīpuram* to take charge of the *Uraṅam* temple and manage its affairs.<sup>13</sup> The *śēris* of *Uttaramēūr* formed the basis of representation on the executive committees of the village assembly in the constitution agreed to in the twelfth year of *Parāntaka I*.<sup>14</sup> An inscription of A.D. 1103<sup>15</sup> from

Peppāḥam mentions the *śabhis* of the *śris* of Maḍḍiṅḡa-koḷa-caturvāḍi-maṅḡalam, and in another instance the *śris* appear to have been represented on the panel of members for drafting resolutions of the assembly.<sup>16</sup> Examples of professional groups are the *kalanas* of *śras*, carpenters, goldsmiths, iron-smiths, and *śasṭrinan* in Talaiṅḡaṅḡu (Tanjore),<sup>17</sup> and the *Maṅḡḡi-śalana* (shepherds?) in other places.<sup>18</sup> Some of these groups apparently ranked below others and were designated, accordingly, *śāśi-śalanaṅḡa*.<sup>19</sup>

In 1077, at Cēḷebū, <sup>20</sup> an endowment of some lands in the local temple was placed under the permanent protection of the *Śihūnapati*, and the three hundred *apāla* and the three hundred *śāmba* of the place. At Kāmaraswālī, a body called the Seven-hundred-and-fifty took charge in 1096<sup>21</sup> of an endowment which involved the periodical collection of specified contributions and the maintenance, with the proceeds, of the worship and specified festivals in the temple. The *cittirāṅḡalippirava-nāḡa* of the seventy-nine *nāḡas* act as judges in a case of accidental homicide during a hunting party at Jambai in the third year of Kulōttunga II.<sup>22</sup> The *Arāḡan* of the locality undertake the protection of a charitable endowment in Kunnāḡḡūḡōḷ (Padukottai) in the second year of Rājaraḡa II.<sup>23</sup> The *śāḡḡar*, *perippanḡar* and *paṅḡḡar* prescribe the *nāḡasāḡa*, penance or expiation, for an accidental homicide at Olakkūr (South Arcot) in the fourth regnal year of Rājāśhiraḡa II.<sup>24</sup>—a function which was performed some years later by the *paṅḡḡar* alone at Vēḷūr in the same region.<sup>25</sup> In the nineteenth year of Kulōttunga III, the *perippanḡar-nāḡas* of twelve *nāḡas* gave some land as *śrasṭhāḡḡar* to a temple in Nellore.<sup>26</sup> In the same year a body called *śrasṭhāḡḡar* present a Petition to Kulōttunga III at Tiruvōḡḡūr regarding the condition of a *śrasṭhāḡḡar* village.<sup>27</sup> In the twentieth year of Kulōttunga III, the *cittirāḡar* of the temple, Kōḡḡa-mūḡḡarans, and the four families who acted as guardians of the temple (*śrasṭhāḡḡar* *śrasṭhāḡḡar* *śrasṭhāḡḡar*) accepted an endowment from a *śrasṭhāḡḡar* of the temple of Tirumapaḡḡar-nāḡa-śrasṭhāḡḡar.<sup>28</sup> Twelve years later, the author of the *Vāḡu* temple at Tirukōḡḡūr recovered from a certain *śrasṭhāḡḡar* ten cows entrusted to his grandfathers many years before, and

dently the terms of the original endowment had suffered neglect.<sup>29</sup> The *mūḡḡarans* were present with the *śabhis* of Tiruvōḡḡūr and the *nāḡa* of Kulōttungaḡḡa-śrasṭhāḡḡar, when they enquired into and adjudged a case of longstanding misappropriation of the livestock belonging to a temple.<sup>30</sup> This was in 1218. At Munnūr in the Tanjore district, a high official of the central government, the *nāḡas* of the town, the executive committee (of the *śrasṭhāḡḡar*) and the trustees of the temple (*śrasṭhāḡḡar*) co-operated in engraving on the temple walls the title deeds of the temple relating to its *śrasṭhāḡḡar* lands, as the deeds were in danger of being lost by decay.<sup>31</sup> The *mūḡḡarans* of Tiruvōḡḡūr, Tanjore district, decided in 1224 that descendants in the female line could be held responsible for the performance of duties undertaken by their ancestors in accordance with the terms of a charitable endowment, and that they should continue to pay interest on money invested with the family.<sup>32</sup> These instances illustrate the variety of local corporations and the wide range of their interests and activities. We are not yet in a position, however, to determine the composition and mutual relations of these bodies as closely as may be desired.

Social life was dominated by these innumerable groups, and the individual did not lack opportunities for self-expression. By birth, residence and occupation, and sometimes by choice, he was a member of one or more of these corporate bodies, each devoted to a specific local purpose. Mutual adjustment among these groups was largely a matter of good-will. We do not come across many instances of intercession by government or by private parties for the regulation of group-relations. And there is no evidence in the works of the jurists that speculation on this fascinating aspect of jurisprudence ever advanced far in India. If these groups had acted in the spirit of enforcing their rights strictly and straining them to their utmost limits, the relations among them would easily have become too complicated to be settled without the aid of an intricate and nicely thought-out system of positive law. The groups were those of the land for several generations, but they did not give rise to any attempt at a precise definition of their rights and relations. Much must have been left to the play of good-will on all sides.

Of the village assemblies proper, we notice two types distinguished by the names *Ur* and *Sabhā*. A third kind of local assembly was the *Nagaram* confined to mercantile towns. All of them were primary assemblies of the residents of the localities concerned, and, generally speaking, regulated all their common concerns. They were subject to general supervision, in particular a periodical audit of their financial transactions, by the officials of the king's government. Otherwise, they were left to themselves. When important business was transacted by these assemblies, such as a change in their constitutional procedure or an alteration of land-rights affecting the revenues of government, their meetings were attended by the officers of the central government.<sup>88</sup> How much their presence influenced the proceedings it is not easy to determine. In some places, large temples were regularly managed by officials who also attended the meetings of the assembly, where the affairs of the temple came up for consideration.<sup>89</sup> Important matters were sometimes taken up to the king for his decision; two inscriptions of the reign of Kulōttunga I from Tribhuvani show him regulating the enjoyment of a *Kāni* and laying down a scheme for the promotion of arca plantations at Tribhuvani.<sup>90</sup>

The *Ur* was the simplest type of these assemblies. This word means 'village' or 'town'; it is employed also in the sense of the assembly of the *Ur*; this becomes clear from the phrase '*ūrāy-isāinda-ūrōm*', meaning 'residents of the village met as *ūr*,' which occurs in some records; and from the *Ur* ordering, like the *sabhā*, the drafting and engraving of records by its agents.<sup>91</sup> The *Ur* functioned in several places alongside of the *sabhā*,<sup>92</sup> acting by itself or jointly with the *sabhā* according as the business on hand required. On the other hand, the *Ur* was the only assembly in other places.

The *Sabhā* constitutes the type of which we get the most detailed accounts in the inscriptions. (It is invariably an assembly associated with the Brahmin village.—the *Caturvēdi-mangalam*. Many of these *agrahāras* or *mangalams* were created by royal grants.) Faith in the unique merit of the gift of land (*bhū-dāna*) was

very common and frequently acted on by those who could afford it. Thus it came about that new colonies of pious and learned Brahmins were settled in the different parts of the country and gained control of local affairs through the *Sabhā* and its executive.)

The *Sabhā* and the *Ur* co-existed in places where a new settlement of Brahmins was super-imposed on a more ancient community by the constitution of a *mangalam*. In almost every place, the advent of the new class of settlers must have been welcomed for many reasons. Often the land had to be purchased from its previous owners, individuals or communities, before being made over by the king or the noble to the donees who were to form the new *mangalam*, and this resulted in a rise in land-values; at any rate, it put the members of the *ūr* in possession of much cash that they could put to good use. If the land sold had been common property, as it sometimes was, the proceeds were used in financing projects of public utility. Then the coming in of a group of persons, conspicuous for their learning and character, benefited the people by bringing them into touch with the best and highest culture available at the time, and giving them a class of natural leaders to whom they could turn for advice and guidance in their difficulties. The common people continued to meet as the *ūr* and carry on their affairs as before: the newcomers formed themselves into a *sabhā* of the usual type. Such, in outline, is the course of affairs one is led to postulate from the inscriptions of the period.

Sometimes one village was organised as two *ūr*-assemblies for similar reasons. About A.D. 1227, the village of *Sāttamangalam* had two assemblies, one of them made up of the residents of the Hindu *dēvadāna* part of the village, and the other of persons in the Jaina *paṣṭiccādam*; both assemblies were called *ūr* and they co-operated in setting apart some of the village land for a tank and flower-garden, and making the land tax-free, by themselves undertaking to pay the taxes and dues thereon.<sup>93</sup> Similarly we find the constitution of a double-*ūr* in two other villages, *Kūmara-mangalam* and *Amaṅkuḍi* in *Urattūr-kūṭṭam* in the modern 'Pudukkottah State', about A.D. 1245.<sup>94</sup>

Of the exact composition of the *ūr* we have no direct knowledge. From the general expression employed *ūrōm*, we must infer that the meeting was attended by all the residents of the *ūr*, though the leading part in the deliberations would have been taken by the elders. The *ūr* had an executive body called '*aṅgaṅam*' 'the ruling group', a term which is sometimes shortened into '*gaṅam*', or expanded into '*mī-yāṅgaṅam*'.<sup>40</sup> The numerical strength of this executive and the manner of its appointment are not known. We also find the term '*ur-āṅgaṅaḷ*' which is doubtless another way of describing the '*aṅgaṅam*'.<sup>41</sup> Some of the *sabhās* also appear to have had this form of a simple executive which was responsible to them for all matters;<sup>42</sup> for we find the names of Bhaṭṭas (learned Brahmins) among the members of some of the *gaṅams*. Another explanation may, however, be offered for this feature; the *bhaṭṭas* who were members of the '*aṅgaṅam*' might have, in fact, been the executive members of the *ūr*. In other words, they might have formed part of the original village and continued to do so, even after the constitution of a *mangalam* with its *sabhā* in the same place.

An inscription of A.D. 1220 from Muniyūr<sup>43</sup> mentions the *tonḍal* and *vāyattar* of the *ūr* besides nine persons whose names are preceded by the phrase: *ūrkkuc-camainḍapadi*, which may signify either that they represented the general assembly of the *ūr* on the particular occasion or that they formed the executive of the *ūr*-assembly for the time being.

(As a rule the *Sabhā* had a more complex machinery of local administration and functioned very largely through its committees called the '*Vāriyams*'. The exact meaning of '*Vāriyam*', perhaps a Tamil word, is somewhat obscure; a connection with '*Vāri*', 'income' in Tamil, 'rigorous demand' in Kannaḍa,<sup>44</sup> may be suggested. It is equally possible that *vāriyam* is a Tamilised Sanskrit word, *vārya*, meaning 'selected' or 'chosen'; in fact one inscription employs the expressions '*varaṅam Seydal*' for the act of choosing, and '*varaṅam*' for the executive body of the *sabhā*.<sup>45</sup> And the term '*vāriyar*' denotes persons employed by the *Sabhā* in specified duties. When the *Mūlaparuḍai* on Śucīndrum ceased to manage the local temple, the *sabhā* appointed two *vāyinar* to do this work

on their behalf. And the Pāṇḍya inscription at Mānūr, to which reference has already been made, lays down that no kind of '*vāriyam*' was to be entrusted to persons who did not possess certain qualifications. (The early history of the *vāriyam* is very obscure. But enough evidence remains to show that the systematic employment of committees for executive work in rural administration was the result of a fairly long period of experiment, trial and error.) In the earlier stages such work may have been done by individuals or very small groups. What looks very much like an *ad hoc vāriyam* for a specified temporary purpose is mentioned in an inscription from Śrīnivāsanallūr;<sup>46</sup> its precise date cannot be determined as the ruling king is described in it only by the title Rājākēsari, but there is little doubt that it is an early Cōḷa inscription. This *vāriyam* is appointed, not by the territorial *sabhā*, but by the *mūlaparuḍai* of Mahēndramangalam in charge of the local temple; and the duty entrusted to the *vāriyam* was to describe authoritatively and record the extent of the *iṅaiyili dēvadāna* lands of the temple. There must have been several other instances of similar special *vāriyams* appointed for specific purposes. Whether the experience gathered from such experiments led to the growth and spread of the system of *vāriyams* in local administration, or whether the machinery of committees evolved by the *sabhā* in its active working was adapted by the other corporations, cannot now be decided. A *nīla-vāriyan* of Tirukkaḍaiyūr is mentioned as late as 1194, and he was doubtless an official under the *sabhās*.<sup>47</sup> The members of the executive committees of the *sabhās* were generally called '*vāriyapperumakkaḷ*'.<sup>48</sup>

(The number and descriptions of the *vāriyams* differed in different *sabhās*, as also the the method of their appointment.) The best known example of the constitution of such *vāriyams* is that of the *sabhā* of Uttaramērūr, a village still flourishing under that very name in the Chingleput district and preserving many interesting vestiges of its past glory. (The large irrigation tank within a couple of miles to the west of the neatly planned village is doubtless the celebrated Vairamēgha-taṭṭāka of the Pallava and Cōḷa inscriptions in Uttaramērūr, a tank which occupied much of the attention of the *sabhā* in those days and placed under the management of a special Tank com-

mittee (the *ēri-vāriyam*.) In the twelfth year of Parāntaka I, A.D. 919, the *sabhā* adopted a resolution fixing the method of appointment to its executive committees, of which five were named. This resolution (*vyavasthā*) was taken in the presence of the official of the king's government specially deputed for the purpose by a royal order (*śrī-mukhān*). The central object of the arrangement adopted was to secure on the committees a fair representation not only for the thirty *kuḍumbus* (wards) into which the whole village was divided, but for the twelve *seris* (streets) into which the wards were grouped. The actual method of selection was by lot (*kuḍu-ēḍlai*);<sup>50</sup> but selection was confined to those who were duly nominated by the *kuḍumbus* according to rules which laid down certain conditions which had to be satisfied by every person before he became eligible for such nomination. The attempt to combine the representation on the committees of the *kuḍumbu* and of the *śēri* did not work, and as the result of the breakdown that followed, another effort was made, two years later, to reform the method of election to the committees. The *śēri* was allowed to fall into the background, and the direct representation of the *kuḍumbus* on the committees became the only aim. But the occasion of the revision was used to clarify other doubtful questions that had cropped up in the interval, and to make more detailed and specific regulations for the nominations by the *kuḍumbus*. This revision of the constitution was also carried out in the presence of a king's official and recorded in the form of a *vyavasthā* of the *sabhā*. The very next year, the fifteenth of Parāntaka I (A.D. 922), the *sabhā* appointed another<sup>51</sup> committee for assaying gold for all people in the village: this was not a new *vāriyam*; it was a committee of eight persons chosen by lot from among citizens who paid taxes, were resident in particular quarters of the village, and had made a name for assaying gold. This committee was perhaps intended to assist the *pon-vāriyam* (gold-committee) of the *sabhā* in the performance of their work.

Of the constitution and working of no other *sabhā* do we have such detailed knowledge as of that of Uttaramērūr. By their references to the *vāriyams* in other places, however, the inscriptions lead us to suppose that the method of entrusting details of executive

work to committees was generally followed by the other *sabhās*, when they found such details too much for a single executive committee. The work was honorary, no payment for it being suggested in any of the records, and no one could be expected to give more than a part of his time and energy for such work; the division of labour among a number of committees, the number being varied from time to time, was the most natural device to adopt, and so it was adopted.<sup>52</sup> Two inscriptions from Tennēri of the eleventh year of Rājārāja I, A.D. 996, show the gradual spread from one place to another of these expedients of rural administration. One of these inscriptions records a resolution of the *sabhā* of Uttamaśōja-Caturvēdi-mangalam that only members learned in the Mantra-Brahmaṇa were eligible for service on the *vāriyam* and for drafting the resolutions of the assembly,<sup>53</sup> and that any one who contravened their resolution should be liable to the same punishment as those who disobeyed the king's orders (*tiruvāṇai-maṇṭullār-paḍum danḍam*). Less than two months after the date of this resolution, the same *sabhā* took another resolution calculated to exclude from the privileges of serving on the *vāriyam* and drafting the resolutions of the assembly, persons who had been found guilty of theft of a Brahmin's property and other offences of a more serious nature (*mēl-paḍu-kurram*). The simple and piecemeal nature of these resolutions, and their dates, are proof, if proof were required, of the uneven pace kept by the numerous *sabhās* in the development of their constitution and administrative practice. And no official of the king's government attended the sessions of the *sabhā* of Uttamaśōja Caturvēdi-mangalam when these resolutions were taken. (In fact the *sabhās* were left largely to themselves, and each *sabhā* was free to make the arrangements that best suited its own peculiar conditions.) No fewer than nine *vāriyams* are enumerated, for instance, as having been set up by the *sabhā* of Amani-nārāyaṇa Caturvēdi-mangalam in the third year of Pārthivēndravarmān;<sup>54</sup> while only four *vāriyams* are mentioned in a record of A.D. 919 from Tiruppārkaḍai.<sup>55</sup>

An inscription from Siddhamalli (Mannargudi tq. Tanjore) dated in the third year of Adhirājendra<sup>56</sup> records a very interesting *grāma-vyavasthā* (a constitutional resolution for the village) arrived at by the *sabhā* at a full meeting sum-  
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moned after due notice and held in the presence of a royal officer. It says that the executive committee (*ūr-kūṭṭam*) and the *vāriyam* (*ū-vāriyam*) as also the *vāriyam* for the *nāḍu* (Purangarambāi) were to be manned only by the *Sāsanabaddhar* and the *Sāsanabaddha-makkaḷ*. If others are to do such work they must be elected at a full meeting of the *sabhā* held after due notice in accordance with a royal order (*truvaṇai*); if, however, they are directly appointed by the government—*ṣṣādi anṟikke rājakulattāl varāṇanjeyvār*—they should be ten per *ṣeri* for *kūṭṭam*, one per *ṣeri* for *vāriyam*, and three per *ṣeri* for *nāṭṭuvāriyam*. And in any case only persons who had not served for five years including the year concerned should be chosen. The inscription breaks off here and is perhaps not complete. But the part that has survived is remarkable for two reasons; it contemplates three alternative methods of appointment to the executives of the village and the *nāḍu*—hereditary right guaranteed by *sāsana*, election by *sabhā*, and appointment by government. Then, it shows that one class of persons were deemed qualified in their own right for all the executive posts; they are described as *Sāsanabaddha* and *Sāsanabaddha-makkaḷ*. These terms are not easy and can be elucidated only tentatively at present. An inscription of Uttama Cōḷa's region from Sembianmahādēvi (Tanjore dt.)<sup>55b</sup> states that the *Sāsanabaddha-caturvēdi-bhaṣṭattānap-perumakkaḷ* of that village were brought into existence as a body by the queen whose name the *brahmadēya* village bears; this shows that the term refers to men included by name in the original *sāsana* deed creating the *brahmadēya*, who were chosen naturally for their learning and character; and the *makkaḷ* of our inscriptions may then be taken to apply to their descendants. This view, if correct, leads to the further inference that the hereditary owners of *brahmadēya* lands were quite ready to admit others into partnership in the management of local affairs, and content, if necessary, to limit the sphere of their own political ambition to give scope to their fellows,—or possibly found themselves compelled to do so by the force of changing conditions.

There are not wanting, on the other hand, instances in which the king's government interfered to regulate the constitutional arrangements prevailing in the *sabhās*. They be-

long generally to the late Cōḷa period. Even in these instances, it is possible, though by no means clear, that the initiative was taken by the *sabhās* themselves, and that the terms of the constitutional settlement reported to the king by his officials and sanctioned by him were based on resolutions taken by the assemblies concerned. The inscriptions, however, contain only the record of the sanction accorded by the monarch to proposals placed before him by his own officials. An inscription from Talaināyar (Tanjore district), dated the 73rd day of the seventh regnal year of Kulōttunga III,<sup>56</sup> takes the form of a letter addressed to the *sabhā* of Kulōttunga-ṣōḷa-tarināyaka-caturvēdi-mangalam and the *taṇḍuvān* (collector) of the village. The letter contains rules for the election of the executive body (*kūṭṭam*) of the assembly<sup>57</sup> sanctioned by the king at the instance of two officials, Brāhmēndra and Vāṇādhirāja, written out by the *tirumandira-ōlai* and attested by nine others with titles ending in *rāya* or *rāja*, also no doubt officials of the central government. The rules laid down were the following: from the seventh regnal year, only those were to be elected to the *kūṭṭam* who had not been in the *kūṭṭam* for ten years preceding the year in which the election took place; the candidates must also be Brahmins above forty years of age, learned (*vidvān*) and impartial (*samar*); the relatives of those who had served on the *kūṭṭam* during the five years before and the five years after the seventh regnal year were also to be held ineligible for the *kūṭṭam*. The king also ordered that all Brahmins who were guilty of wicked deeds (*vinakkēḍu*) by defaulting the land revenue (*kaṣama*) and oppressing docile Brahmins and respectable tenants, accepting bribes (*kaikkūli*) and so on, were to be fined in proportion to their offences, irrespective of whether they had served on the *kūṭṭam* or not. This last clause, together with the requirement of impartiality in the candidates for election under the new rules, warrants the supposition that local administration in Talaināyar had suffered by the growth of faction and violence for some time before the reform recorded in this inscription. Another instance of the royal sanction of a local constitution is dated five years later, A.D. 1190, and comes from Ayyampēṭṭai.<sup>58</sup> At the instance of Nuṣambādarāya, the king ordered that the executive (*varāṇam*) of the *sabhā* of Rājēndra-ṣōḷa-caturvēdimangalam were to be chosen

from among those who had not served on it before and were not less than forty years of age.

Lest it should be thought that village assemblies as a rule lost their initiative and passed under the control of the central government in the late Cōja period, it may be noted that the *mahāsabhā* of Kāmadavalli-caturvēdimangalam resolved in A.D. 1232 to adhere to an earlier decision of theirs to constitute their executive (*grāmakāryam*) from among those who agreed to serve on the basis of a yearly tenure;<sup>90</sup> and there is no evidence of any reference to the central government on either occasion. Likewise, the *mahāsabhā* of Śembiyannmahādēvi resolved of their own accord not to hold meetings of the executive at night for purposes of local administration (*grāma-kāryam*) and for considering revenue affairs (*kaḍamaikkāriyam*), as nocturnal meetings resulted in inefficient work (*upahati*) and extra expenditure of oil for lamps. They fixed the day from which the new arrangement came into force. They also resolved not to reappoint any person to the executive (*kūḷḷam*) within five years after one term of office.<sup>91</sup> The inscription is dated in the seventeenth year of Rājarāja III. The distinction made here between *grāma-kāryam*, local affairs, and *kaḍamaikkāriyam*, revenue business, deserves to be particularly noted. Though this distinction is not expressly found in other records, we are justified in assuming that it was observed universally by all the village assemblies which had definite responsibilities both towards the locality concerned and towards the central government.

There is lastly an inscription<sup>92</sup> of the thirtieth year of the reign of Rājarāja III from Śenganūr (Tanjore district) which is of unusual importance to the study of local institutions in the late Cōja period. It is a record of constitutional and other arrangements relating to the assembly of the village (the *Mahāsabhā*). The interesting point here is that these arrangements are decreed by the *mūlaparuṣai* of the temple of Viśvēśvaradēva: *Viśvēśvaradēvar kōyil mūlaparuṣaiyir kūḷḷanguṟaiṅṟak-kūḷi irundu grāmakāriyam vyavasthai paṅṅina paḍi*, a clear statement that the *mūlaparuṣai* (*mūlapariṣat*) of the temple framed the regulations that follow in the inscription for the conduct of the affairs of the village. It is not clear why the *Mahāsabhā* (mentioned further on in

the record), instead of following the usual rule of itself regulating its own affairs, left the decision of important issues to the *mūlaparuṣai*; we may surmise, however, from the trend of the record as a whole that the *Mahāsabhā* was unable to reach satisfactory decisions on account of sharp differences, and felt the need for laying the whole matter before some external authority for arbitration. If this view is correct, it is not without significance that the *Mahāsabhā* sought the assistance of another local authority, rather than of the king's government; it may be that by the end of the reign of Rājarāja III, the central government, having lost its efficiency, failed to command the confidence of the people. In fact, one of the rules made on this occasion shows that in this period the officials of the king's government (*mudaliḡaḡ*) even disturbed the smooth working of local institutions by their intrigues with particular factions.

The rules that follow are reasoned statements of the decisions reached, and we see that the *mūlaparuṣai* were fully alive to the extraordinary and difficult nature of their task on this occasion. The first resolution relates to the constitution of the executive administration (*kūḷḷam*) of the village: there was an immemorial practice (*anadiyāga vyavasthai*) that, when the executive of the village was chosen (*nammūrk-kūḷḷam iḍum iḍattu*), those who had once served could serve again only in the fifth year thereafter, their sons only in the fourth year and their brothers in the third, and this ancient practice was to be maintained; only those who were not less than forty years of age were to be chosen; the *kūḷḷam* should be chosen after obtaining the consent, 'as our ancestors did' (*pūrapuruṣāḡaḡ śeydapaḍik-kidḡḡa*), of the villagers assembled as the *ūr*; any persons who got in by fraud (*uḷḡari*, lit. disguise) with the support of the officials (*mudaliḡaḡ*) of government or in violation of these rules, would be deemed to be traitors to the village, all their properties being confiscated; the *kūḷḷam* was to be chosen every time for one year (*samvatsara-veraṅam*); any persons that stayed on longer (*mēḡpaḍi niṅḡar*) would also be considered *grāmadrōhis* and punished as above. The appeal to the *mos majorum*, the stress laid on the consent of the *ūr*, the protest against undue influence by the *mudaliḡaḡ* and the deterrent punishment laid down against attempts to capture the executive by improper



methods or to prolong the period of office beyond the proper term, are all features of the resolution that deserve to be noted. Let us observe this also: how the choice of the executive was actually made, we are not told; nor do we hear of how the consent of the *ūr* was expressed; obviously our record does not tell the whole story, but sets down only the decisions on a few points that had come under discussion, the rest being a matter of common knowledge at the time.

The rest of the *iyavathā* relates to matters of revenue and financial administration. When collecting the *kaḍṁmai* and *kuḍimai* (general revenue) dues of the village and the *sabhārinijōgam* (local cesses), the members of the *kūḷam* should collect only the legitimate dues (*prāptam*) and not anything in excess thereof; *sabhārinijōgam* was not to be mixed up with the *kuḍimai*, but collected separately, and expended in accordance with written orders separately communicated to the accountant (*kaṇakkanukku-nyōgam eḷudikoḍuttu*); if the expenditure on any single item (*oru poru-jukku*) exceeded 2000 *kāṣus*, the written sanction of the *Mahāsabhā* had to be obtained before the expenditure was incurred; if any expenditure was incurred otherwise than in accordance with these rules or any excess collection (of taxes and dues) was made, a fine of five times the amount involved was to be collected, which together with the proceeds of penal assessment on persons who had arrears of revenue (they had to pay double the original assessment) went into the coffers of the *sabhā* (*sabhārinijōgam*). Lastly, the accountant of the village and the officers of the *vāriyam* and the *kuḷumbu* were to change annually and carry out the orders lawfully issued to them—*āṇḍu māri niyōgappadi nīṅkal-kaḍaradāgarum*. We have no means of ascertaining the exact role of the *vāriyam* and the *kuḷumbu* in this village and our knowledge of the actual working of these institutions here, as elsewhere, must remain imperfect.

The *sabhā*, *mahāsabhā*, and the corresponding Tamil words, *kuḷi* and *pērun-guḷi*, refer to the same institution, which is sometimes even called *pērun-guḷi-mahāsabhā*. Its members are collectively referred to as *perumakkal*, and the honorific term '*tiruṇḍiyār*' is also employed in some inscriptions. The *sabhā* usually held its meetings in the temples and

*maṇḍapas* of the village, and the term *Brahma-sthāna*<sup>61</sup> appears to indicate the fixed meeting place of the *sabhā* wherever there was one.) Sometimes it met outside the village on the banks of a tank or under a tree; this was certainly not due to the lack of a more sheltered place for the meeting. Some examples of such meetings are best accounted for by assuming that the inauspicious nature of the business transacted required that it should be done beyond the living quarters of the village.<sup>62</sup> The *sabhā* was usually summoned by the beating of a drum (*śāṅṅi*); the meeting was also proclaimed by sound of bugle (*kāḷam*) or a double bugle (*iraiṅkai-kāḷam*).<sup>63</sup> Meetings were also held at nights when required.

The *Nagaram* was another type of local assembly, not so much in evidence, however, as the *ūr* and the *Sabhā*. The same term is sometimes employed to designate occupational groups like *Śāliyanagaratōm*.<sup>64</sup> But when the *Nagaram* of places like *Sivapuri*,<sup>65</sup> *Tirupajanam*,<sup>66</sup> *Parakēsariapuram*,<sup>67</sup> and *Takkōlam*,<sup>68</sup> and the *Mānagaram* of *Kāñci*<sup>69</sup> are in question, we are clearly dealing with territorial assemblies which, by their status and functions, had much in common with the *Sabhā* and the *ūr*. In some places like *Tillaisthānam*,<sup>70</sup> the *Nagaram* and the *ūr* seem to have carried on their duties side by side.

The *Nagaram* was in all probability a primary assembly of merchants, which was organised as one of the local assemblies in important trade centres and was the only assembly in places where the mercantile interests overshadowed all the rest.

Territorial assemblies representing the *nāḍu* were also in existence and discharged important duties, particularly in regard to land revenue administration. '*Nāḍu*' like *ūr* generally bears a territorial division, and the corporate character of '*nāḍu*' in some of the contexts in the epigraphs is brought home to us by expressions like '*nāḍu-śāśinda, nāḍḍōm*', 'residents of the *nāḍu* met (formed) as *nāḍu*'.<sup>71</sup> These corporations endow charities in their own names,<sup>72</sup> and take charge of charitable endowments.<sup>73</sup> In the fifteenth year of a *Parakēsari*, a certain *Kaṇḍan Maḡavan*, the feudatory of the *Coja* monarch, issued an order to the *nāḍḍār* of *Kuṅḡakkūḡgam*.<sup>74</sup> This order stated

that the chief had decided to make a gift of some land as *kāṇi* to a certain person subject to a fixed annual payment of 25 *pon* for all time as the land tax on it; on no future occasion, when general revision of assessment was made, was this land to be put in a class which would raise the dues from it to more than the sum of 25 *pon* then fixed; the *nāṭṭār* were requested by the chieftain to give effect to these conditions, and they, accordingly handed over the land to the person named and undertook not to enhance the tax due from the land in any future assessment. The part assigned by this inscription to the *nāṭṭār* in the classification of the lands and the periodical assessment of land revenue, and the permanent settlement of the assessment on some land are all noteworthy features of the land-revenue administration of the time. The order of Rājarāja on the gift of the village Āṇaimangalam to the Buddhist shrine in Negapatam was addressed among others to the *nāṭṭār* of the Paṭṭinakkūṭṭam. No direct evidence on the constitution of these assemblies of the *nāḍu* is forthcoming; an analysis of the signatures affixed to the Leyden grant (of Āṇaimangalam) is, however, very instructive in this connection. The grant is signed first by the officer of the *paṭṭa-vāri* who was present with the *nāṭṭār* when they marked the boundary of the village by getting an elephant to beat the bounds, then by the man who rode the elephant on the occasion, then by the accountants of twenty-seven villages, including Āṇaimangalam, in the Paṭṭinakkūṭṭam, and lastly by the *bhāṭṭas* who guided the whole transaction. The accountants sign on behalf of the *sabhā* or the *ūr* of their villages and in accordance with their instructions. One wonders if the assembly of the *nāḍu* was constituted by the representatives of each of the villages in it coming together, the accountants being present among them.

In the tenth year of Kulōttunga I,<sup>78</sup> the *nāṭṭār* of Pūramalai-nāḍu are seen appointing a *pūjāri* (priest to conduct the worship) in the temple at Tirthamalai in the Salem district. The *nāḍu* of Vaḍa-panangāḍu in Pudukkōṭṭah resolved in A.D. 1149 to levy a fine of one *mā* of arable land to be assigned to the temple for any injury caused by *ambanavar* (?) to arable land or on the highways in and near Nal-vayalūr.<sup>79</sup> An inscription from Jambai dated in the reign of a Karikāla-Cōḷadēva<sup>80</sup> assigns an important part to the *nāḍu* of Vāṇagap-

pāḍi in the conduct of the affairs of the temple of Vāḷaiyū-nakkar-yōgavāṇar; the donor, a chieftain of Bāṇa extraction, states that his ancestors had assigned to the temple the village of Raṇabhīmangalam; he then increases the endowment and the scale of expenses, and entrusts the proper observance of the new scale to the *nāḍu*. It is also of interest to note that under the general supervision of the *nāḍu*, the details of the management were carried on by one single village chosen by lot (*kuḍavōlai*) for each year—a provision which emphasises the relation between the assembly of the *nāḍu* and the village-assemblies suggested by the Leyden grant of a much earlier time. An undertaking given by the shepherds of a village to make certain annual payments to a temple is attested by 93 persons from 67 villages who describe themselves as *ūrkkuccamainda*, i.e., representing their respective villages, evidently on the assembly of Vaḷḷuvappāḍi-nāḍu, the region in which the villages were included;<sup>81</sup> the inscription comes from Śrīrangam and is dated 1184, the sixth year of Kulōttunga III. Another inscription of the late Cōḷa period from Kāñcīpuram,<sup>82</sup> records what is apparently an approval by Madhurāntaka Pottappiccōḷa, the Telugu-Cōḷa king of the time, of a resolution of the *nāḍavar* of Jayangoḍa-śōḷamaṇḍalam remitting six *kalams* of paddy from the *kaḍamai* due on each *vēli* of land that was *tirappu*, or *devadāna*, *tirumḍaiyāṭṭam*, *paḷḷicandam*, *agarappāṭṭu*, *maḍappāṭṭam*, *jirippāṭṭu*, *paḍaiḍḍāṭṭu* and *raṇṇiyappāṭṭu*. This enumeration of the types of holdings is apparently meant to be exhaustive and to include all the productive lands in the *nāḍu*; the instance before us is therefore one of a general revenue-remission initiated by the *nāḍu* and approved by the ruler of the locality, clear proof of the vitality of the assembly of the *nāḍu* even so late as the thirteenth century. The *nāṭṭār* are also found often co-operating with other corporations and with individual officials in the administration of justice and in other matters.<sup>83</sup>

The *nāgaram* and *nāḍu* of the Tamil inscriptions are, in their names, if nothing else, the exact counter-parts of the *paṭṭa* and *janapada* respectively of Sanskrit literature. Whether the village assemblies called *ūr* and *sabhā* in Southern India were known to the Sanskrit writers on Indian polity, and whether the assemblies must be taken to have

been included under the general term *Janapada*, are questions not easily decided at present.

The procedure that was followed in the conduct of *Janapada* is not described in any of the inscriptions. Even the method employed in the choice of officers, we have something of their qualifications and tenure. We must assume that membership in the general assembly was unrestricted and open to all the residents of the village; the inscriptions sometimes state expressly that the meeting was fully attended, everybody young and old being present.<sup>14</sup> There is no evidence that the idea of a *gramana* was known; but definite methods of summoning meetings and going notice of them were prescribed, and the expression often employed, *Janapada* (*Janapada*) *manah*,<sup>15</sup> indicates that importance was attached to the presence of all the members of the community for the time being. There is also no evidence that there was a general discussion in which the leading men took part in accordance with their social status and if the matter was one affecting any class in particular, the representatives of that class had every chance of explaining their point of view; the final decision was reached by common agreement. *Kulas* were sometimes made, as in the *Mitila* assembly, against furious opposition and attempts to hold up business by *obstructionism*; obviously the enforcement of such rules depended on the support of public opinion. The procedure at meetings seems on the whole to have been rudimentary, and the assemblies had, but for their structure, hardly surpassed the stage of folk-gatherings.

The local assemblies often co-operated with one another and with other corporations in purchase of common objects. The *gana* of *Tanavara*, the *gana* and the *desana* of a temple in *Tiruvannamur* were together responsible for the proper management of the temple and when they transacted its business they met in the *desana* (*Janapada*) of the temple.<sup>16</sup> The emoluments of the servants of another

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temple at *Tiruvannamur* were fixed at a common meeting of the *gana* of the place, the *gana* the *Svalyamanaga*, the *Kudira*, the temple including the *manava*.<sup>17</sup> The presence at the meetings of the servants whose emoluments were being fixed implies that this was not done without some regard for their humane character of the economic arrangements of the time. Again the priests of a temple at *Poomalur* and other servants on its establishment are, together with the *officers* of the *desana*,<sup>18</sup> placed in charge of a cash endowment for a lamp. There is one instance on record of the *manava* of two neighbouring villages conferring and agreeing that the two villages should thereafter count as one.<sup>19</sup> This happened in the reign of *Parivatsala* I, A.D. 933, and constitutes a measure of the freedom enjoyed by these local bodies. The union of villages was the result of their voluntary choice and was effected without any direct reference to the central government. The grant of *hukmanaga* or *desana* in its execution involved the co-operation of many organised groups. A typical instance is the grant of *Pulivanur*, which is put through by the *officers* of *Pulivanur*—right with the assistance of the *officers*<sup>20</sup> of neighbouring villages, the *officers* of all the including *desana* *palavanaga*, *hukmanaga*, *manava*, *manava* and old *relationships* and the *desana*.<sup>21</sup> This enumeration of co-operating local authorities is of interest in two ways: it mentions some special matters by which land was held; these will be discussed elsewhere. And it shows clearly that the assembly of the *manava* (right) was a body distinct from the assemblies of the villages (*gana*) and towns (*palavanaga*). Unlike the *Landan* grant which is addressed to local groups, in more or less the same terms and is signed by the representatives of all villages and towns in the *manava*, this grant from *Tiruvannamur* is signed only by the villages whose land rights were affected by the gift, besides the officials of the revenue department. Except for this difference in detail the two grants remarkably confirm each other, and imply that the assembly of the *manava* was made up of representatives from the assemblies of all the villages and towns in the *desana*.<sup>22</sup> Instances are not wanting of a number of such assemblies of the *manava* co-operating for some common purpose.<sup>23</sup>

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Local Govern-  
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primary assemblies in the villages and towns, and representative assemblies in the larger divisions. The *sabha*, the *ūr* and the *nagrāṇa* were of the nature of folk meetings in which every one who had a stake in the locality was entitled to be present. This becomes evident from the manner of summoning these meetings, which was by a general proclamation, by beat of drum or other suitable means, of the time and place of the meeting. The formula is often employed in describing these meetings that they were quite fully attended; the young and the old having assembled together after due notice of the record of a decision having been reached by the method of voting; and it does not seem likely. The political spirit of the time, such as it was, aimed at securing the harmony of classes, rather than their equality. A healthy society based on a general distribution of small properties, which was free from the glaring economic oppression of one class by another, had no particular use for the ideals of modern democracy. Social life was dominated by groups rooted in ancient custom and ideal right, and was subtly suffused with emotions of a puasi-religious nature. All that was demanded in such an atmosphere was an opportunity to watch the course of affairs, and to raise a protest if anything went wrong, or to press a point of view that was being overlooked. This was furnished by the periodical meetings of the assemblies and the groups; but the leadership in such gatherings remained with those naturally fit for it. Age, learning, and wealth, in addition to birth, furnished the most obvious qualifications for such leadership; official standing and public benefactions were other claims to the consideration and homage of the average man.

That the villages were little 'republics' which had a large measure of autonomy in the management of their own affairs is seen from the powers

of taxation for local purposes, and of granting exemptions from such taxes and dues, enjoyed by their assemblies, and from the separate administrative staff, comprising doubtless only a few officials, employed and controlled by them. Of their power of taxation for local purposes, an idea may be

formed from the instances in which the assemblies grant remissions and assignments of dues without and reference to the king's government and in the exercise of their own powers. In the second year of a Rājāśvati, the *sabha* of Nāṅṅar<sup>1</sup> assigned, in perpetuity, to the local temple to which they owed some money, the proceeds of a local cess on shops (*saṅgāḥi-kāḍi*) in lieu of the interest on the loan. The *nagarika*-*Kumara-māṭṭāḍapuram*<sup>2</sup> made over their annual income from *vāra-raṅga*,—a cess of which the nature is not clear,—towards a fund for maintaining a Jaina shrine in good repair. At Tiruvetumbūr, the *sabha* of Śrīkaṅṅa-*caṭturvēdimanṅalam* resolved that no dues of any kind should be levied on the properties of the temple on their account from the date of resolution;<sup>3</sup> they got on another occasion a lump sum payment from a person as they wanted cash for digging a tank, and in consideration thereof assigned to him the right exercised till then by the assembly of collecting paddy at a certain rate from the cultivators of the village. The *ūr* of Uḷiyūr obtained a number of exemptions in perpetuity on behalf of a temple in their hamlet, and these were pronounced by the *sabha* of Uṭaramēṭūr who granted them to be free from the interference of all extraneous powers.<sup>4</sup> In these and many other instances of a similar nature, the village assemblies were clearly disposing of rights that were exclusively vested in them and that they were free to utilise in any manner calculated to advance the social good of the little community whose affairs they managed. These assignments and remissions of the taxes and dues collected by themselves should not be confused with another class of tax remissions for which the village assemblies became responsible. In the latter class of cases, in lieu of a lump sum payment made in advance to it, the assembly undertakes to pay all dues to the local and central governments on particular plots of land for all time. The lump sum in these instances was the capitalised value of the annual dues chargeable to the land, and was generally called *irai-ḍaṅṅam* or *irai-kāraḷ*.<sup>5</sup> Possibly the term *ṅāra-nāḍam*<sup>6</sup> which occurs in some inscriptions in a similar context has the same meaning. Such advance payment in a lump sum of future taxes was due to two general causes. First, persons who endowed charities by setting apart land, often desired to secure for such land freedom from all dues and

inquiries, and the common way of doing this was to pay their capitalised value to the assembly of the village where the land was located, making them responsible for all future payments. Secondly, the assemblies, on their own initiative, often raised money in this manner for immediate capital expenditure for public purposes, which could not be financed otherwise. The *sabhā* of 𑀲𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓𑀭𑀺𑀯𑀓, a *bhramadhya*, for instance, owed a considerable sum of money to a person whose properties became forfeited to the king for reasons not stated; when the *sabhā* was called upon to remit the amount to the king's treasury, they had to borrow the sum from the local temple and undertake to pay the taxes on some temple lands.<sup>19</sup>

The responsibility for the details of local administration was, as pointed out before, vested in small executive committees appointed by the general assembly, and service on such committees was honorary. There was a small staff of paid servants in each village to assist these executive committees and maintain the records of the village. These village officials were called *madhyasthas*, a term often rendered into 'arbitrators';<sup>20</sup> the word does indeed mean 'arbitrators', but it is difficult to admit that this is its meaning in the Cōja inscriptions, or that the duties of the *madhyasthas* employed by the assemblies included the task of arbitrating among disputants. Perhaps the term was applied to village officers in order to emphasise their neutral position in all matters of rural politics. They attended the meetings of the assembly and assisted in the conduct of the proceedings, but took no part in the deliberations. Their duties and remuneration were fixed by the assembly at its discretion. In A.D. 923, for instance, the *sabhā* of Aiñjaṣasam resolved that their *madhyasthas* employed in writing up the accounts connected with the tank (*ēri*) were to be remunerated at the rate of four measures (*nāṭis*) of paddy per diem, and were to receive in addition seven *kaḷahju* of 'red gold' per annum with a pair of cloths each; that each of them had at the end of his year of office, to produce accounts and pass through the ordeal of red-hot iron (*maḷu*); that those who were declared pure after the ordeal should receive a bonus of a small amount of gold, and that those that failed in the ordeal should pay a fine of ten *kaḷahjus* of gold, the reason for

the heavy fine being that the corpus of the tank-fund (*eri-madda*) was not of sufficient size; and that no corporal punishment (*karadandam*) was to be levied in by the *sabhā* in such cases.<sup>21</sup> Generally it was a *madhyastha* that recorded the resolutions of the assemblies to the dictation of one or more of the prominent members present and taking part in the preceding discussions. Another class of officer was called 'Taraganāri', the exact duties in which each was engaged being indicated by the phrases like *Kāra-kaḷahju-kāra-kāri-kaḷahju*,<sup>22</sup> the accountant who was supervising the boundaries (of lands?). In A.D. 1235, an accountant was dismissed by a *sabhā*, and his descendants and relatives declared unfit to hold the office again.<sup>23</sup> An inscription of uncertain date from Mannārkōyil in the Tinnevely district mentions the *madhyastha*, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the goldsmith and the village-pariah as the persons on whom the representatives of the central government depended for demarcating the boundaries of a village Vindanūr, given away as *ūruñjajjānam*.<sup>24</sup> A curious inscription<sup>25</sup> from Tribhuvani (Pondicherry) dated in the forty-third regnal year of Kulottunga I, A.D. 1113, contains a provision that the artisans and professional men should pursue their crafts and professions within the precincts of the village, and that such of them as served the residents of other villages would be deemed to have been guilty of a grave offence against the law. This is an interesting example of rural protectionism; but we have no reason to believe that it was universal, or even common. On the other hand, the occasions for service outside one's own village or town could not have been very frequent. An inscription from Tirumāpikuḷi (S.A.) records the endowment of a *śandivikḷu* by an *ūrp-paraiyan* in A.D. 1221.<sup>26</sup>

The functions of the assemblies had a wide range. They were as a rule entrusted with the direct charge or, at least, the supervision of all charitable endowments in the village. To judge from the number and provenance of the inscriptions recording such gifts, in no place was this source of public benefaction a negligible item, and in several villages it was in itself sufficiently important to warrant the creation of a separate committee (*dharma-ōḍriyam*) for its administration.<sup>27</sup> Statistics are of modern origin, and it is no easy thing

mangalam for a period of 35 years between the third year of Uttama Cōja and the twenty-ninth of Rājendra I. A petition to the king led to an enquiry by a royal officer, and then the *Sabhā* was required as penalty to pay 400 *kāśus* instead of 200 received by them previously; the *Sabhā* returned the land as the equivalent of 100 *kāśus* (*vilai-dravyam*), and for the balance they agreed to pay all the dues on the land to the state for all time, thus treating 300 *kāśus* as *īraikāval*.<sup>110b</sup>

The village assemblies sometimes stimulated the flow of private charity for the general benefit of the community by giving suitable public recognition to their benefactors. The *sabhā* of Tiruppēr recorded in an inscription, A.D. 1129, their gratitude to a certain Bhaṭṭa whose prayers and benefactions were believed to have been of great use to the village in a troublesome period when its fortunes had sunk low and the people were deserting it.<sup>117</sup> The *sabhā* of Uttaramērūr conferred some hereditary privileges on a courtesan who carried out extensive repairs and additions to the Viṣṇu temple in the locality.<sup>118</sup> The *sthānattār* of the temple and the residents of Tirumalavādi adopted an interesting method to express their gratitude to a benefactor; he had greatly improved the temple and by slightly diverting the course of the Coleroon, averted the danger of inundation which threatened the village; in appreciation of these and other services, the *sthānattār* petitioned the deity on the occasion of a festival that a free house might be granted in perpetuity for the residence in the village itself of this great benefactor, and then, ostensibly with the sanction of the deity, a house was set apart for the purpose from the properties of the temple.<sup>119</sup> This was in 1223. Other examples can be easily gathered from the inscriptions.

Such in outline were the nature, organisation and functions of local assemblies and groups in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In a general account, many characteristic details which might add vividness to the picture are necessarily left out. No room can be found for them except in detailed histories of particular assemblies which cannot be attempted here.<sup>120</sup> But what has been said is enough to show that between an able bureaucracy and the active local assemblies which in various ways fostered a live sense of citizenship, there was attained a high standard of administrative efficiency and purity, perhaps the highest ever attained by the Hindu State.

A remarkable parallel to the position of the townships in the Cōja empire is furnished by that of the cities of Gaul in the Roman empire as can be seen from the description of the latter by Fustel de Coulanges.<sup>121</sup> 'Each city possessed its public property comprising buildings, land, capital fund, contributions. It could receive donations and bequests. It directly administered all this property. It regulated land rights and lent out its money on interest. It got contributions for itself such as octrois, market dues, tolls on bridges and roads.

'It had its own expenses on its buildings (fortifications), streets, its forum, its basilicas, its temples, its public baths and its theatre, its roads and its bridges. It established schools and appointed teachers, as it appointed its doctors. In short, the city and its ..... territory was constituted like a veritable state. We do not mean to say by this that it was independent. To think of it as a free community under the simple suzerainty of the empire would be exaggerated and inexact. It had to obey all the orders of the imperial government. It opened its portals to a pro-consul every time he wished to visit it, and we may go further and say that nearly all its acts were submitted to the governor of the province for his approval. But what we should not here is first that the imperial government had no agent always present in the city, and secondly that the city had a complete organism and a life of its own. It possessed its directing senate, its corps of magistrates, its jurisdiction, its police, its treasury, its goods movable and immovable, its public fund, its schools, its clergy and its high priests. None of all these came to it from outside: magistrates, professors, priests, every one was found within. Doubtless it was not a free state; it was at any rate a state.'

1. *Et.* xxii, p. 5-11.
2. *Studies*, pp. 101, 129; 67 of 1898.
3. 71 of 1897.
4. 33 of 1895.
5. 82 of 1895. 86 of 1896. *T.A.S.* ii, p. 7. The dissolution of the body is a legitimate inference from I. 14, which lays down punishment only for the members of the *Paruḍai* going back on their agreement individually and not in their collective capacity.
6. 214 of 1911.