



PASTORAL POWER IN THE POSTCOLONY: On the Biopolitics of the Criminal Animal in South India

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Early one October morning in 2001, I waded across the swollen river toward the wide plain of paddy fields at the heart of the Cumbum Valley, a lush agricultural region in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Clambering up onto a narrow rise above the water, I spotted a young herdsman named Surya following behind his small herd of black water buffalo. I tried to engage him in a conversation about these animals, but Surya wanted to speak instead about the moral shortcomings of the people of this village. “They do not know how they ought to live,” he complained—they stole from orchards to satisfy their hunger, they plotted and schemed to bring each other down. “You should teach them how to live well,” he told me, and embarrassed, I tried to shift the subject back to his animals. They had been crossing the swift waters of a narrow canal one by one as we spoke, making for the grassy cover of a coconut orchard just beyond the banks. Suddenly, a young calf with an injured leg began to slip downstream, unable to handle the current fed by recent rains. Surya stripped off his *lungi* and dashed into the water to hold the calf and guide it to safety. Grazing needed such vigilance, he returned to tell me: a close and careful watch against the perils of the environment but also against the meandering impulses of the animals themselves. He pointed out the “thievish” way that one of the buffaloes too had stolen off to search for better grass, before rushing again to give the animal a quick blow of his staff and bring it back into line with the others. Notwithstanding the conduct of his own neighbors, Surya was clearly teaching these creatures how they ought to live.

Although these were no more than the daily trials of a rural livelihood, I was struck by the casual way in which this young herdsman had bound together the moral government of his animals with the moral self-conduct of his peers. He seemed to imply that the people of his village too were in need of a little “grazing.” To those familiar with the ruminations of Western intellectuals, these associations may betray a startling resemblance to what Foucault (1981) had described as “pastoral” power: the government of a population modeled on the relationship between a figurative shepherd and the individual members of a flock. Foucault had dwelled on this long-standing Western image of power as a means of grappling with the tension between individualizing care and totalizing control in modern forms of biopolitics.¹ But what is striking about this fragment of rural South Indian life is the way in which the government of animal nature here drew both care and control together into a particular form of intimacy. I contend in this article that attending to such practices and the circumstances of their exercise offers a way of pluralizing our understanding of what is at stake in the modern government of life. Specifically, I argue that a close examination of the government of animals *by* humans is vital for an anthropology of biopolitics: for an understanding, that is, of the many ways in which humans themselves have been governed *as* animals in modern times. (See Figure 1.)

In recent years, numerous scholars have sought to take the very “human” lodged at the heart of anthropology’s disciplinary concerns as a problem for critical thought (Biehl 2005; Petryna 2002; Rabinow 2003). In one influential intervention, for example, Agamben (1998) sketched an animalization of human being in modern times: the violent dehumanization and extermination of that “bare life” deemed as obstacle to collective welfare. This argument, like the work of Foucault (1978) it sought to develop further, was based on a particular genealogy of political thought and state practice in the West. My aim in this article is to work toward a way of theorizing biopolitics in milieus beyond the modern West. I suggest that we may do so by examining other histories, practices, and idioms of government through which distinctions between the human and the animal emerge as essential problems of politics elsewhere. Relying on materials from South India, I call attention to three domains of local difference: the particular conditions of modernity that constitute certain human lives as animal objects of government; the quotidian practices of care and struggle through which animal natures are governed in moral terms; and the cultural idioms through which these lives become visible and intelligible as appropriate sites for the exercise of both power and resistance. In making these arguments, I draw particular inspiration from two bodies of critical thought: efforts to rethink the human in relation to the conceptual and practical challenges raised



FIGURE 1. A plowman carefully tends to his bull after a morning of labor. Working oxen are cherished animals in the rural Cumbum Valley, but such affections are earned most readily by animals that embody the moral virtue of restraint. In this sense, their conduct and its government are not altogether dissimilar from that of the human inhabitants of the region.

by living animals (Daston and Mitman 2005; Haraway 1989; Rothfels 2002; Wolfe 2003), and efforts to rethink the modern in relation to the constitutive alterity of colonial and postcolonial experience in India (Chakrabarty 2000; Guha 1997; Gupta 1998; Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003).

In the Cumbum Valley, for example, Surya's complaints may be taken as a veiled comment on the animal stakes of a regional problem in moral government.

This was a lush vale tucked between the mountain forests of the Western Ghats and the dry plains of Tamil Nadu, its irrigated fields and orchards sustaining a market-oriented agrarian economy. Surya's village, like most others in the valley, was dominated by households of the Piramalai Kallar caste, one of the most prominent communities of southern Tamil Nadu. State officials and ordinary citizens alike insisted that the recent prosperity of Kallar households here depended on their collective pursuit of "crooked paths" such as theft, smuggling, and other illicit trades rather than agrarian toil. Such assertions built on long-standing antagonisms between the caste and other cultivating communities in the region, but also more recent colonial histories. Blamed for habitual cattle theft, blackmail, and highway robbery by British officials throughout the 19th century, the Piramalai Kallar caste was designated a "criminal tribe" in 1918. Until Indian independence nearly three decades later, all Piramalai Kallar men were fingerprinted, prohibited from leaving their villages without written permission, and subjected to a profound range of official reform measures, regardless of whether or not they had been convicted of any crime. These agrarian politics and colonial histories continue to shape how men and women of the caste seek to make themselves into moral subjects today (Pandian in press).

In what follows, the government of animal nature provides the lens through which I examine these histories and their ironic legacies in the postcolonial present. I begin by discussing how the Indian Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 governed Kallars and other native subjects in India as organisms of impulsive, habitual, and instinctual criminality. I then turn to the echoes of these colonial histories of policing in the everyday practices through which plowmen, herdsman, and cultivators seek to govern the "thievish" conduct of domesticated animals in the region. These agrarian practices also inform, I argue, a vernacular imagination of government in rural South India as an enterprise of "grazing" those beings—either human or animal—deemed incapable of controlling themselves. I briefly chart a cultural genealogy of this agrarian conception of good government, and then sketch its salience for the contemporary management of human beings in rural South India. All of these materials testify to various forms of coexistence between practices of care and techniques of control in the pastoral engagement of an animal nature. But they also support a way of engaging biopolitics in relation to the empirical specificity of particular places and histories—a way of pluralizing, that is, the forms of welfare, modes of right conduct, and kinds of living being at stake in the modern government of collective life.

Our trail begins with the notion of a “pastoral” power and its flock of guided beasts—the traces of the nonhuman animal with a theory of modern life and its government.

ON THE POLITICS OF THE LIVING ANIMAL

There is something deeply and harshly ironic in the politics of life in modern times, as living beings have become subject to unprecedented forces of both meticulous improvement and total annihilation. “Modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question,” writes Foucault (1978:143). He had sought to understand how this had happened, how it was that life itself—“the indispensable, the useful, and the superfluous” (Foucault 1981:250)—had become the object and terrain of modern government. Foucault identified the emergence of a particular kind of power responsible for the state management of collective life in the West, a “strange technology of power” in which certain individuals and institutions assumed responsibility for the lives and welfare of many others. He called this a “pastoral” power, for it treated “the vast majority of men as a flock with a few as shepherds” (1981:231). This was a form of power that was both individualizing and totalizing, carefully ensuring the distinct and particular welfare of each one within a population of subjects, while at the same time submitting all of them to greater degrees of discipline and control. Although this may appear paradoxical from a certain standpoint, this coexistence of individual freedom and total power, of indulgent care and stern control, Foucault had argued that there was no real impasse here. Power and freedom always coexisted in a “complicated interplay” (1983:342).

The play of power and freedom has been widely shown to orient the lives of many kinds of human beings: women, children, colonial subjects, putative criminals, classificatory lunatics, and many others in varied circumstances have found that the promise of freedom from power is conditioned on submission to it (Mahmood 2005; Mbembe 2001; Mehta 1999; Foucault 2000). One class of living beings has only recently begun to gain such scholarly attention, however, and that is a class at the very heart of a specifically “pastoral” form of power. The model to which Foucault had turned to understand what he described as the modern “government of men by men”—that of the shepherd and the flock—concerned in fact the government by men of animals. Foucault had suggested, as a mode of engaging critically with this and other forms of power, the posing of a certain question: “how are such relations of power rationalized?” (1981:254). Here, however, Foucault himself might have examined more closely the ways in

which ideas of animality and practical relations with animals may have served to rationalize this particular kind of power. Foucault's work has played a vital role in challenging celebratory accounts of the human individual as a locus of autonomous identity and subjectivity. But this antihumanist orientation, one might argue, is most fully realized when we also consider the place of the animal within the body of theory itself (Fudge 2002). Would a closer consideration of the relations with animals evoked by the notion of pastoral power aid in grasping what is at stake in the tension between care and control? Let us take a closer look at the politics of pasturage as a means of addressing this question.

In his 1980 "Tanner Lectures," Foucault ventured an explanation of why modern states sought to govern the lives of their individual subjects so meticulously and indeed so dangerously. Here it was not sufficient to consider the paradoxes of Enlightenment reason, he argued: "we have to refer to much more remote processes if we want to understand how we have been trapped in our own history" (Foucault 1981:226). The "remote processes" at stake here involved what Foucault described as a "pastoral modality of power": "the idea of the deity, or the king, or the leader, as a shepherd followed by a flock of sheep." In this early theory of power—which Foucault traced back to the "ancient Oriental societies" of Egypt, Assyria, and especially Judaea—the shepherd was expected to direct a "constant, individualized, and final kindness" toward each of the beings in his flock (Foucault 1981:227). Although Greek thinkers largely dismissed this image of power, it was taken up in early Christian theology as a way of conceiving the personal and willful obedience sought by Christian pastors from their individual wards. Foucault argues that the modern practice of government elaborated beginning in the 17th century—and in particular, the doctrine of a "police"² meant to secure the moral well-being of a population through a close supervision of its conditions of life—borrowed from these Christian instruments of power. "That people survive, live and even do better than just that, is what the police has to ensure" (Foucault 1981:250): the means by which it attains these ends—in families, schools, workplaces, hospitals, and so on—are pastoral in their nature.

Foucault's work here is deeply illuminating and provocative. But there is also a way in which this genealogical account excises practical relations with animals from its narrative economy, reducing pasturage to nothing more than a political metaphor for most of Western history. With respect to the Hebraic texts, for example, Foucault insists on the metaphorical status of the shepherd-god. "They're just themes," he suggests: "In no way do I claim that that is effectively how political power was wielded in Hebrew society before the fall of Jerusalem" (Foucault

1981:230). Turning to the dismissal of the shepherd as “political metaphor” among the Greeks, Foucault argues similarly that the task of the politician is to assure the unity of a city rather than to foster the life of each person (Foucault 1981:235). And again in the many centuries of medieval Christian Europe, Foucault identifies a series of reasons as to why pastoral power failed to emerge at this time as an “effective, practical government of men”:

the pastorate of souls is an especially urban experience, difficult to reconcile with the poor and extensive rural economy at the beginning of the Middle Ages . . . the pastorate is a complicated technique which demands a certain level of culture, not only on the part of the pastor but also among his flock. [Foucault 1981:240]

Ironically enough, pastoral power was least effective within the rural milieu that lent it a name. This foreclosure, like each of the others, served Foucault a particular explanatory purpose. It is only in modern times, he argued, that pastoral power came to guide political practice at the level of the state. However, this argument also effects a complete break between pastoral models of politics and practical histories of pastoral engagement with animals. We are left again with a simple yet crucial question: what, if anything, might the government of animal life by human beings tell us about the government of human life in the West?

This is a difficult question that I can only address elliptically and speculatively here. One might call attention, for example, to the practice of shepherding in the ancient Near East as political tactic as well as metaphor: the kingly city designed and constructed as “cattle-pen” and “sheepfold” in the Sumerian literary compositions of southern Mesopotamia (Harmansah 2004), for example. Or one might suggest that the dismissal of such metaphors in classical Greece may have had at least something to do with the political distinction between freemen and slaves in polis society, as herds were grazed primarily by slaves and low-status hired freemen whereas agrarian husbandry enjoyed much greater repute as a primary cause of civilization (Hodkinson 1988). Although early Christians such as Chrysostom challenged the image of Christ as pastor by contrasting his style of leadership with that of living shepherds—“Actually shepherds do the opposite and follow their sheep from behind”—late medieval Christian preachers like the Englishman John Bromyard challenged in their sermons both the heresies of figurative shepherd-pastors as well as the real dangers of disease to living sheep (Hill 1993:51–52). Last, in early modern Europe, we may consider the import of works such as Stefano di Stefano’s

Pastoral Rationale (1731), a treatise on the sheep-owners guild as the paradigmatic “political body” of the predominantly rural Kingdom of Naples—penned by a pastoral poet and longtime officer in the Neapolitan Royal Sheep Customshouse (Marino 1986).

Admittedly, these are only fragmentary bits of evidence.³ But however episodic, these intersections between pastoral image and pastoral practice suggest that material engagements with nonhuman beings in rural settings may constitute an important domain of the “unthought” within Foucault’s own conceptualization of pastoral power. Relations between shepherds and flocks rely on a radical difference in kind between pastors and the populations in their care. Flocks are made up of beings that would scatter, starve, suffer, die, or simply lose their way without the careful attention of someone else with better judgment. It is for this reason that the pastoral care of such beings is intimately bound up with their close control: any apparent contradiction between power and freedom is dulled under such conditions by the judgment that they are incapable of acting effectively on their own. Among human beings as well, attributions of animality support numerous ways in which stern control may be rationalized as the most appropriate form of care. Distinctions between the human and the animal, in other words, yield some of the most effective ways in which certain individuals and institutions seize responsibility for the welfare of others. It is not altogether surprising that Kant had celebrated the moral virtue of those for whom “reason holds the *reins* of government in its own hands” (Baxley 2007). Pastoral restraint was most fitting for those incapable of restraining themselves.

These are abstract claims made at a precarious level of generality. How might we defend them in a manner consonant with anthropology’s commitment to the specificity of forms of life, history, and cultural imagination? Let us return for a moment to one of Foucault’s most potent claims concerning the biological life of modern individuals: “Modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.” What would an anthropological engagement with this claim concerning the human animal entail? One might ask about the particular conditions of modernity that orient this life whose existence is placed in question. One might ask about the practices of interaction, struggle, and care through which such existence emerges as a political problem of government. And one might ask about the kind of existence as a living being that is at stake under these conditions and in relation to these practices: what forms of life in particular milieus—human, animal, and otherwise—are subject to such power? Each of these problems or arenas of investigation yields a distinctive way of pluralizing and particularizing our

understanding of biopolitics. Each also offers, more specifically, a way of grappling with particular forms of animal life as loci of power and subjection.

Take the first problem concerning modernity, for example. Although often occluded in the political history of the West, the government of humans as animals has been a prominent feature in the management of Europe's colonies. "The terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms," wrote Frantz Fanon (2004:42), for example. European colonial power worked explicitly on beings beyond the threshold of the fully human, as this line was drawn in Enlightenment thought and the techniques of government that put its expectations into the practice. Subjects of colonial rule throughout Europe's empires struggled against the dictates of a biopolitics of difference whose horizons of possibility were framed by a difficult double bind. The not-quite-human either had to submit themselves to ambitious projects of training, discipline, and domestication—assuming the status of "an object of experimentation" (Mbembe 2001:27)—or to endure the racial violence of an exclusionary humanism. An abundant anthropological and historical literature has mapped the constitutive difference and postcolonial afterlife of "colonial modernity" in India, Asia, and elsewhere (Barlow 1997; Gaonkar 2001), with respect to matters as varied as liberal politics (Mehta 1999), panoptic authority (Kaplan 1995), and the status of civil society (Chatterjee 2004). Similarly, reflecting on the animalization of colonial subjects offers a way of grappling with the specificity of postcolonial biopolitics and its paradoxical forms of care.

The problem of practice leads in a slightly different direction. Donna Haraway (2003:5) reminds us that animals are not only good to think with—as Claude Lévi-Strauss famously suggested—but also "here to live with." Her work suggests that bestial images and metaphors are best understood in relation to embodied practices of engagement, labor, and struggle between our species and others. Such practices of animal care and control may continue to matter in subtle yet significant ways even when transmuted into figurative tropes such as that of the pastorate. Raymond Williams (1976) points out, for example, that even the prosaic word "manage"—so central to the rhetoric of modern governmental rationality—came into English from the Latin *maneggiare*: "to handle, and especially to handle or train horses." Kant's "reins" of government gain an unexpected resonance in this light.⁴ In grappling with such practices of animal engagement, one must pay close attention to the kinds of animal life they engage: to be governed as a pet within the protective confines of a domestic environment is of course rather different from being governed as a wild creature found beyond its fringes, and different yet again from the treatment of working animals in agrarian and other settings. Is this

a creature fit for indulgence, extermination, or careful discipline? Each of these modes of relation may be taken as a route of “traffic” (Haraway 1989) between the human and the animal: the practical conduct of animal conduct as a model of and for human conduct, and the conduct of human conduct as a way of imagining and exercising the government of animal life.

Last, we may also examine the ideas of life and living being at stake in particular social, cultural, and historical milieus. The very distinction between the human and the animal, for example, may be taken as a means of tracing rival forms of subjection to power. This has long been a shifting and slippery line in the West—as Agamben (1998) shows, for example, modernity has entailed a certain bestialization of the human as “bare life” with deep antecedents in classical thought. If this is the archive in relation to which modern biopolitics is articulated in the West, parallel forms of distinction and exclusion may be identified in other places, each with their own traditions and histories of constituting subordinate forms of life as objects of both violence and care. Consider, for example, the political engagement of Manchu tribal leaders as “barbarian” animals in Qing imperial China (Zarrow 2004), the rearing of Hutu peasants as beings akin to domestic beasts in the Burundian refugee narratives recorded by Malkki (1995), or the use of customary idioms of hunting and butchering in the Colombian political massacres of the 1950s (Uribe 2004). Modernity has neither eliminated these local cultural forms of care, control, and extermination of animal being nor has biopolitics in such places been reducible to the exercise of colonial and modern forms of government. Rather, what we find in postcolonial milieus throughout the globe are various kinds of articulation between existing idioms and practices, and the legacies of modern governmental intervention. Through such articulations, biopolitics beyond the West emerges as a terrain of encounter between rival ways of governing life.

The sections that follow are meant to lend flesh to each of these successive arguments. Let us begin with the animal reason of colonial power in rural South India.

DESCENT OF CRIMINAL MAN

News of the fallen World Trade Center flooded the Tamil-language television and print media of South India in September of 2001, as it did in much of the rest of the world. I was immersed in fieldwork in the Cumbum Valley at the time, and countless people asked to make sure that the parents of this U.S. visitor were safe from the carnage. Although they marveled at the scale of destruction broadcast relentlessly on the television, I found to my surprise that many situated this jarring

event quite easily within a local history of power, morality, and defiance. Watching yet another rerun of grainy black-and-white video footage within the living room of a rural family I knew quite well, I was startled to hear a kinswoman of theirs call out a pair of words at the sight of the crashing planes: “thieving fellows!” Another elder grandfather in the family pulled me aside on the street later that day, murmuring laments over and over again about the “jealousy” that must have prompted these unknown men to attack a prosperous and powerful United States. Two months later, a retired Police Superintendent in the village ranted loudly to me about the moral hazards of wealth and rivalry. As with Osama Bin Laden, he insisted, excessive desire could lead a man who held the “form” of a human being to behave nonetheless “like a bloody animal.” These assessments betrayed the force of the colonial past and older agrarian histories on the moral life of the postcolonial present. This was a village dominated by Piramalai Kallar castefolk, and these attributions of thievishness, overweening desire, and bestial tendency presented a strong echo of the colonial policing of this community’s conduct in animal terms.

In economic and political as well as numerical terms, Kallars constitute one of the dominant castes of southern Tamil Nadu. Although most Kallars today work as cultivators, laborers, and small traders, the name “Kallar” itself means “thief” in Tamil, and it is widely held in places like the Cumbum Valley that many have relied on “crooked paths” to advance themselves. Kallars began to settle here in large numbers in the late 19th century, fleeing famine in their native tracts to the east. Some tended herds of cattle, and cleared woods to cultivate dry grains. Many others worked as watchmen for the established landholding castes—Gounders, Chettiars, Vellalas, and others—of the region, looking after their standing crops, harvested grain, livestock, and household gates. In many of these villages today, Kallars have far surpassed these other castes in property holdings, economic wealth, and political influence. In the village of KG Patti—where the reactions to September 11, 2001, narrated above took place—their advancement had depended on their willingness to poach and pilfer timber, cane, sandalwood, ivory, and other valuables from the well-guarded state forests ringing the valley. But here and elsewhere in earlier decades, some Kallar households had also made a living taking from the ripening crops, domestic goods, and cultivated landholdings of other less forthright castes—often out of desperate need, but sometimes also with a proud sense of entitlement.

These practices of depredation were grounded historically in struggles between Kallars and other cultivating castes over political sovereignty in the southern

Tamil countryside. For centuries, hereditary warrior communities like the Kallars had established themselves as chieftains and watchmen in the dry plains of the region. Their authority was closely bound up with their feudatory right to protect these localities from attack and plunder, but also their ability to submit them to similar violence if that authority was not recognized by their inhabitants. This uneasy intimacy of protection and predation led colonial British administrators in the 19th century to decry the character and conduct of Kallar watchmen. Colonial law criminalized the Kallar watch as a ritual form of blackmail, a protection racket forcing cultivators to pay tithes to the very thieves who would otherwise make off with their cattle and crops (Pandian 2005). In this tussle between rival forms of government in the countryside, Kallar conduct was identified in official terms as a species of “terrorism.”⁵ In 1918, the Piramalai Kallars—an endogamous subcaste most notably defiant of the Pax Britannica—were declared as criminal by nature under the terms of the Criminal Tribes Act.

This particular instrument of colonial law in India governed its subjects as heirs of a stubbornly animal disposition. The 1871 act authorized the classification of populations demonstrably “addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offenses” as criminal communities.⁶ Its language of addiction attributed repeated entanglements with the state to the irresistible compulsions of untutored desire, among groups who lived in and preyed from the margins of rural society. Nocturnal highway robbery was described, for example, as a favored “pastime” among men of the Kallar caste, a “principal recreation” and a source of “natural excitement” for Kallar youths nursing a “love of adventure.”⁷ These naive pleasures were seen as the residues of an underdeveloped nature among the most defiant of colonial wards. One District and Sessions Judge, for example, asserted the following about Kallars and other warrior communities in the southern Tamil countryside: “In my opinion you could no more eradicate this hereditary instinct of theft from these men than you could from a magpie.”⁸ The Criminal Tribes Act was predicated on the assumption that such bodily impulses could indeed be redirected through an appropriate form of handling by the state.

The new criminology of 19th-century Europe had invested the criminal self with a hitherto unexplored topography of internal drives, pressures, and instincts, as Foucault (2000) has written. Properly trained and exercised, these forces could be endowed with virtuous habits and tendencies; governed improperly, they careened toward ruin (Collini 1991). At stake here was the moral conscience as an emblem of the fully human: as a compulsion born of social life, cultivated through instruction and example, and ideally capable of restraining the momentary tugs of lower

instincts.⁹ Criminals, like animals, savages, and children, were widely imagined by late-Victorian observers as reckless and impulsive creatures largely insensible to such moral persuasions. To thinkers and social planners wrestling then with the implications of evolutionary science, the criminal heart betrayed an atavistic and retrogressive animal nature.¹⁰ But the notion of criminal heredity was itself poised at the crossroads of two modes of evolutionary reasoning, creditable to the workings of innate disposition, on the one hand, and the noxious influence of social contagion, on the other hand.¹¹ Delinquent tendencies were seen as incubated most quickly in a social milieu of vice and degeneracy.

Conceived in this intellectual environment, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 singled out a number of groups of itinerant traders, forest dwellers and putatively professional thieves in North India for special surveillance, spatial constraint and rigid controls.¹² The act was extended to the Madras Presidency of South India in 1911, and applied to the Piramalai Kallars in 1918. Each adult Kallar male in nearly 900 villages was fingerprinted and registered as a “possibly active criminal,” regardless of whether or not he had been convicted, imprisoned, or even fined for previous infractions.¹³ Fresh names were added annually to police station rolls while a small number were removed each year on evidence of “good conduct.” The number of registered Kallars peaked at 39,056 in 1932, representing well over half of those subject to the Criminal Tribes Act throughout the Madras Presidency.¹⁴ Those registered under section 10(1)(b) of the act could not leave their villages for any reason between sunrise and sunset without first acquiring a written passport, be it to work, trade, or simply visit relatives. A much smaller number registered in addition under section 10(1)(a) were required to report for a roll call every night at the nearest police station at both 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.—most of these men likely spent each night sleeping as best they could in stationhouse doorways rather than trekking several miles twice nightly. Violation of these spatial constraints risked imprisonment.

Measures such as these worked on the animal nature or biological being of suspected criminals: they sought to govern instinctual tendency by controlling the movement of bodies through space. But this is not the only way in which the Criminal Tribes Act may be understood as an exercise of “pastoral” power. The act was held *in terrorem* over Kallar villages, to use the Latin phrasing of a district official central to the endeavor.¹⁵ Its most restrictive provisions were reserved as a threat to be imposed on the men of uncooperative or recalcitrant villages. The prospect of reform was therefore absolutely central to the operation of the act, and this prospect

of “weaning” Kallars from crime was put into play through strategies of care as well as tactics of control. The police post of the “Kallar Special Officer” was created in 1920 with a portfolio of responsibilities vastly outstripping the duties of ordinary policemen. These officers went on to form local panchayats or village councils in Kallar villages, open compulsory elementary schools and boarding hostels for Kallar children, supervise the disbursal of agricultural loans and lands, establish rural centers for cottage industry and cooperative production, and even organize Boy Scout and Girl Guide corps for Kallar youths.¹⁶ One district official described these measures as a “giving of the benefits” combined with a “shaking of the big stick,” echoing the carrots and canes with which proverbial mules are goaded.¹⁷

The threat of compulsion hovered over all of these multifarious ventures in moral tutelage. If the Kallar Special Officer served as “nurse” to the population, as one District Collector wrote, this was a care that had exacted its dues in fear.¹⁸ Police officials expected that the instruments necessary at the outset to force the prospect of “Kallar Reclamation” would ultimately give way to conditions supporting an autonomous exercise of moral judgment among these subjects. “It is hoped that in course of time the whole thing will be quite voluntarily done without exception,” noted the first of the Kallar Special Officers in 1923.¹⁹ With that horizon still distant, however, Kallars had no choice but to be governed as beings incapable of governing themselves: as beings intrinsically likely to stray, regardless of whether there was any evidence that particular individuals among them had done so. Like others subjected to the Criminal Tribes Act elsewhere in India, members of this caste were policed in a manner that tested the limits of the “humanizing influences” of British rule.²⁰ The animal rationality of these interventions is essential to understanding their peculiar blend of control and care.

Despite the rhetoric of improvement that justified these stringent measures, Kallar caste leaders and community representatives repeatedly complained of rampant extortion, degradation, and abuse at the hands of police personnel.²¹ On the eve of Indian independence in 1947, native delegates to the Madras Legislative Assembly repealed the Criminal Tribes Act: not for having successfully humanized its targets and achieving its intentions, but rather for having reduced the state and its own officials to the “monstrous” and “inhuman” cruelty of animals.²² Even today, descendants of those subjected to the act recall its strictures with a profound degree of ambivalence: they are remembered as necessarily harsh measures intended to make “good men” of their “savage” forebears, but also as cruel devices that restrained their subjects in the manner of captive beasts. I want to shift now to some of the contemporary legacies of these colonial instruments, seen from a particular and perhaps

even peculiar vantage point: the pastoral practices by which domestic animals are managed in the agrarian economy of the region today. Here we find some surprising echoes of the way in which human beings were once policed. But we also find another cultural terrain in which the pastoral government of humans as animals may be imagined, exercised, and resisted—a local counterpoint to colonial biopolitics.

THIEVING BULLS: CARE, RESTRAINT, REBELLION

One afternoon in 2002, I sought out Mokkarasu Thevar—a 91-year-old Kallar man known for his nationalist activism during the Indian struggle against colonial rule—in his native village in the Cumbum Valley. As we sat on his cot chatting about this history, a high fan above us lazily deflecting the midday heat, the elder man unexpectedly likened the Criminal Tribes Act to a particular tool of bovine discipline. “The Criminal Tribes Act was like a nose-rope,” he said to describe the law that even he had lived under as a young man. This “nose-rope” was a basic means of guiding and restraining plow bulls in the region, a thick braided cord passed through the nostrils of the animal and capable of inflicting a flash of pain when sharply tugged (see Figure 1). Startled by this comparison between humans and bulls, I asked Mokkarasu Thevar what he meant by it. “With the nose-rope, an ox will obey in fear of pain,” he replied. “The white man tried to do the same with the Thevars. But their valor cannot be controlled so easily. It will not change. It will not soften.” This image of colonial official as cowherd presented a close echo of the notion of pastoral power as a mode of rule. Here it appeared, however, that a problem of defiant will drew together the policing of men and bulls alike. With this likeness in mind, let us explore the care of oxen in South India as a rural practice of government.

Working oxen are cherished animals in the rural reaches of South India. Respect for these creatures among the cultivators, herdsman, and plowmen of the region goes far beyond the anthropological image of “sacred” Indian cows, for it derives less from the purity that they may lend to human rituals and more from the moral virtues exercised by these animals themselves.²³ Oxen are widely understood to have a “heart” capable of feeling all that humans do. Plowmen recounted the capacity for memory that these animals shared with human beings—oxen would remember even those who had sold them off, I was told, sometimes pausing for a moment at the threshold of former homes on their way back from a day in the fields. Folktales celebrated as well the loyalty of oxen as a species: oxen are said to have lost their original ability to speak only because a pair of bulls had once taught their owner how to cheat the god of death. In my many months in the Cumbum



FIGURE 2. Plowmen and plow bulls at work in the wetland paddy fields of the Cumbum Valley. Although mechanical tractors have largely displaced these animals in environments such as the uplands in the distant background of this image, farmers in the region insist that bulls remain necessary for more subtle operations in the cultivated lowlands.

Valley, I was always struck by the patient care with which plowmen bathed their bulls in the river after a long morning of labors, painstakingly wiping away every clump of caking soil from their legs and flanks. Every January with the Tamil *Pongal* festival, cultivators would brightly decorate the bodies of their plow bulls for ritual prayers and the promise of a day's rest to these toiling creatures.

These sentiments persist even as the place of oxen within the agrarian economy of the region continues to evolve (see Figure 2). Many of the upland reaches of the Cumbum Valley were first settled in the 19th century by migratory herdsmen of various castes, including Kallars. The mountain forests, scrub thickets, and dry fallow fields of the region sustained large herds and flocks of hundreds of cattle, goats, and sheep, which would roam over this terrain with scant supervision. Farmers relied on oxen in particular for plowing, leveling, manuring, and irrigating fields. Much of this has changed with the rise of a market-oriented orchard economy here in the last three decades. The undulating and once-open uplands of the valley have been steadily fenced for closely managed commercial crops of coconuts, grapes, bananas, cabbage, onions, beets, and other vegetables. Large itinerant herds of cattle have been almost fully displaced by these developments, with plow bulls and hybrid dairy animals now grazed largely within the restricted spaces of

riverbanks, roadsides, and private orchards, or stall-reared on special diets within domestic courtyards. Chemical fertilizers and tractors fitted out with disc and rotor blades have also dislodged most oxen from their niches in the agrarian economy. Pastoral care of such animals here is now much less a matter of flocks, herds, and populations and more a domain of individualized attention.

Nevertheless, for those who still own, tend, hire, and work with such animals, their management remains a compelling arena of both practical struggle and reflection. In speaking with these men and women about their efforts to manage these animals, I also came to see more of what was at stake in the moral government of their human peers. I learned that with oxen, as with humans too under many circumstances here, restraint was the price of affection: not simply being restrained,

Cumbum Valley Agrarian Economy

Researchers identify the Cumbum Valley as a “vanguard agrarian region” in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu (Ramachandran et al. 2001) whose farmers are reputed for their high yields and novel crops. A close survey of one village found nearly seven out of ten households involved in agrarian production: some as landlords, more as cultivating peasants, most as either tenant farmers or landless laborers (Ramachandran 1983). Two crops of rice paddy are raised each year on a slim ribbon of land running along the spine of the valley, irrigated by waters from a late-19th-century colonial dam. The uplands above these paddy fields have been steadily developed into irrigated orchards over the last four decades, sustaining commercial horticultural crops of various vegetables and fruits bound for regional, national, and global markets. Cultivators describe these ventures as lotteries or card games whose returns depended on wildly fluctuating market prices. On the dry fields that remain beyond the advancing wire fences of the orchards, cultivators rely on seasonal rainfall to raise even more precarious crops of peanut, sesame, pulses, and millets: some of these are saved for household subsistence, but here again market cultivation predominates. Cardamom, tea, and other plantations in the high reaches of the surrounding mountains employ migrant workers drawn from localities throughout the valley.

Many of these plantations date back to colonial times—the region has been closely integrated into global flows of capital and commodities since the 19th century. An activist organization sought to organize a public evening meeting against globalization in 2001 while I was conducting fieldwork. Benches were hired, lights were fixed, and a stage was set for a series of prominent speakers drawn from cities and towns throughout southern Tamil Nadu. I tried in vain to convince some of my cultivator friends to attend the meeting with me; ultimately, however, no more than a handful of people showed up, and the voices of the speakers alone echoed into the darkness. At a moment of deep skepticism concerning the developmental promises of the state and other official agencies, few are willing to trust their fates to such purveyors of pastoral counsel.

that is, but being willing to submit oneself to restraint. Those susceptible to restraint were more likely to enjoy the good favor of those who tended them. And those that were not—in spite of anything one might say about the sacral character of bovine life in Hindu India—were readily driven for sale to the butcher shops and beef markets in the nearby hills of Kerala. It was through this moral distinction between good and bad animals—between those capable of control and therefore deserving of care, and those incapable of control and therefore condemned—that the government of bovine life in the valley intersected with that of its human inhabitants. Specifically, that is, the legacies of the Criminal Tribes Act and its action on a locally dominant caste surfaced too as a way of making sense of bovine indiscipline.

Slightly after dawn one cool October morning in 2002, for example, I found cultivator Logandurai driving his pair of plow bulls along the main road in the Cumbum Valley village of KG Patti. He had joined a long train of bullock teams trundling toward the paddy fields to the distant southwest: the transplantation season was underway, and the plowmen had been hired to blend and level the wet mire of the fields for tender seedlings of rice. As we followed behind his pair of bulls, Logandurai taught me some of the calls with which he spoke to these animals: *tluk tluk* for them to walk, *adiyee!* to drive them forward quickly, *haa!* for them to stop. Oxen would not respond to such commands to work, he told me, unless they had the will to do so. A good ox could be described as just that: “good.” But like other cultivators and plowmen in the region, my friend reserved for a bad ox the startling epithet *kalavaani* or “thievish.” Thievish oxen were lazy animals that wished to eat without toil, he explained. A thievish bovine might steal into a field or orchard to nibble at ripening crops rather than ambling as far as a forest or pasture. And on the plowing fields, a thievish ox would toss its neck repeatedly to shake off its yoke, Logandurai told me, or just lie immobile in the mud without getting up to pull.

I was intrigued by this image of criminal oxen, which I learned was ubiquitous among those who handled these animals in the region. It depicted animal misconduct in moral terms as a problem of government, one that identified bovine indiscipline with the mode of conduct at issue in the region’s most distinctive colonial history: thievery. And it presented the agrarian landscape as one of varied temptations—ripe crops close at hand, cool wet mud, the comfort of a body at rest, and so on—toward which working animals might stray. Most interesting perhaps about this characterization was the way in which it distinguished between animals able and unable to restrain themselves in the face of such lures. “If a vehicle has no brake,

we must fix the brake. If we don't, it will go wrong, no?" one grazer explained to me, reaching for an analogy to explain this need even among animals for a faculty capable of controlling desire. Plowmen, grazers, and cultivators working with cattle certainly had means at their disposal to restrain those animals that would not restrain themselves. The nose rope was one such ordinary device, but one could also light a fire to the hindquarters of a lazy animal that refused to move, I was told, or even restrain cattle that roamed willfully with a *konti kattai*: a stick dangling between the forelegs from a wooden block around the neck of the animal, discouraging it from running quickly. These, however, were exceptional measures. As Logandurai had insisted that October morning, thievishness in an ox was largely a matter of habit: "Some men will just let their cattle graze on the crops of others. But my oxen never act thievishly . . ."

Like many others that I knew in the Cumbum Valley, Logandurai cared deeply for his plow bulls. I had once seen him glum and listless for days, because one of these oxen had been refusing to eat and none of his own remedies had worked. A veterinarian had finally diagnosed the problem as an impacted rumen, and the animal recovered in some time. For Logandurai, the moral conduct of his animals grew out of such close and ongoing practices of care. One could punish these oxen for behaving in particular ways, but they would ultimately do only what they were accustomed to doing. Most effective in "conducting" their conduct was the careful cultivation of particular inclinations and dispositions.²⁴ Like human beings, Logandurai and other plowmen assured me, for example, bulls too would refuse to work only if they had been left idle for a very long time. Accustomed to moving and acting in particular ways over time, they would not need to be controlled too violently, for they would move and act in a controlled fashion of their own accord. Such claims emphasized that everyday modulations of careful attention and stern discipline were essential to the moral subjection of these animals. Some would certainly present stubborn limits to such engagement, and their owners would have no choice but to sell them to the slaughter markets. But for the most part, these were effective practices: among these populations of animals, they yielded moral subjects.

"Pastoral care" on the agrarian terrain of the Cumbum Valley yields a way of moralizing animal subjects through a particular regime of power. These practices of animal management also gesture more specifically here, however, toward the moral character of the humans too that inhabit this terrain. It is no accident that bad bulls earn the epithet *kalavaani* or "thief": Kallar thievery and its control have long been some of the most stubborn problems of collective politics in the region.

Gounders, Vellalars, Chettiars, and other established cultivating communities here had struggled for decades to guard their fields against the nocturnal raids of those landless and desperate Kallar men and women willing to take from ripening fields and grain heaps. As Kallar households themselves began to attain a certain degree of numerical predominance, economic prosperity, and political authority in the region, such crop depredations also surfaced as a deliberate tactic of social struggle. I heard numerous accounts of herds of livestock purposefully unleashed on the ripening fields of others in the event of personal feuds or episodes of collective violence between rival castes and clans. When Logandurai—a Gounder and an affine of the headman's lineage in his village of KG Patti—spoke of certain individuals willing to let their animals graze on the fields of others, he gestured obliquely toward such histories. Thieving bulls testified to a defiance of the rural moral order by the humans too that tended them.

This quality of defiance that may be shared by men and bulls alike underscores the fact that the pastoral tending of such animals—like the pastoral tending of such men—is in fact a power relation rather than a scenario of total control: a relationship of mutual and “permanent provocation” as Foucault (1983:342) has written. It is this ongoing tension between the adamant nature of a resistant will and the moral force of government that explains how the image of the thieving bull circulates in the Cumbum Valley today: as a sketch of bovine excess, but also as an essential emblem of Kallar resistance to the historical strictures of the Criminal Tribes Act as well as more contemporary forms of policing. Local narratives describe inveterate Kallar rogues of the colonial era as *cantiyar maatu*: “obstinate bulls” that would not bow to the will or yoke of another. When Mokkarasu Thevar described the “valor” of those Kallars who refused to yield to the “nose-rope” of colonial law, he had called on this association. And another younger kinsman from his village of Anaipatti—especially notorious throughout the valley to this day for the willful and unrepentant depredations of many of its Kallar households—pointedly asked me the following: “If you suddenly tie up an ox that has been grazing on cultivated fields all its life, what will it do?” The thieving bull in such statements is far more than an analogy, turn of phrase, or purely symbolic likeness between man and beast.²⁵ It conveys instead the common defiance of a form of power to which humans and animals alike have been submitted: it reveals “grazing,” that is, as a vernacular mode of governing humans too in South India. I want to sketch now the place of this mode of power in the genealogy of biopolitics in the region.

“GRAZING” AS A PRACTICE OF RULE

The Indian Penal Code of 1860 laid the foundations for the operation of law in modern India. The exercise of power in postcolonial India still owes much to the categories, structures, and predilections of colonial rule; nevertheless, other earlier forms of power and authority continue to surface in durable if unexpected ways. I sat on a front stoop with a number of middle-aged Kallar men one afternoon in the village of KG Patti, talking about the Criminal Tribes Act and its work on their forebears. A man named Karuppu said that his own father had perished of diarrhea in a local jail, imprisoned for failing to send his sons regularly to the Kallar Reclamation school. Another named Muthu described how colonial officers had given his father a grant of land to cultivate, which he had held onto for a few years before losing it for good. Muthu himself worked as a field watchman or *kaaval* for other cultivators, and I turned to ask his brother Perumal—a retired police constable—whether there was anything that agrarian watchmen and constables had in common, given that they were both denominated in Tamil by the same word *kaaval*. Perumal’s reply took me completely by surprise. “Aren’t the police those who graze men?” he quipped with a mischievous smile. Karuppu broke in to explain this terse remark with a proverbial utterance: “A teacher educates speech, a policeman educates conduct.” The didactic formalism of his saying gestured toward its modern derivation. But was there anything else at stake in Perumal’s image of police officers “grazing” their citizens? Could this be taken as an Indian variant, analogue, or antecedent of pastoral power?

Earlier in this article, I suggested that the pastoral metaphor of the shepherd and the flock had intersected with various forms of pastoral practice in the history of the West, intersections that may have been essential to its salience as an image of good government. I want to argue now that a political idiom of “grazing” has circulated in a similar fashion in South India as a long-standing means of imagining effective rule. In a grammatical sense, the verbal root *meey* in Tamil accommodates both transitive and intransitive acts of “grazing.” *Meeythal* is to graze on, feed on, or prey on, whereas *meeyththal* is to lead birds, beasts, and other creatures in acts of grazing or feeding. The *Tamil Lexicon* (1982:3353) notes that the latter verb bears an additional colloquial sense: “to govern,” as in “to restrain and rule over.” Indeed, the term is often used in everyday expression to refer to the management of subordinate human flocks of various sorts. Teachers could “graze” their students, I learned in my months in the Cumbum Valley, just as overseers grazed their field laborers, parents their children, and police constables the criminals and crowds in their jurisdiction. At work in these practices of grazing is a form of power founded

on the careful supervision and bodily restraint of those beings deemed incapable of restraining their own desires and impulses. How might we sketch its genealogy?²⁶

Literary materials attest to various ways in which subjects of authority in India have been governed as if populations of animals in earlier times. Classical Sanskrit evocations of *danda*, for example—the figurative rod or scepter of royal righteousness enforced by the threat of punishment—bear pastoral resonances of goading and driving (Scharfe 1989). Sketched at its moment of creation in the canonical *Laws of Manu*, *danda* is identified as “Law” and “protector of all beings”: protector of a people construed here as a herd of *go* or cattle.²⁷ Although this might appear to us in retrospect as an instrument of violence rather than care, it is important to emphasize that its exercise was often construed as a necessary means of guidance for those subjects unable to distinguish between superior and inferior ends of existence on their own (Glücklich 1988). The presence or absence of such a faculty of discrimination among rival modes and ends of worldly life, in fact, has for centuries served as one of the most durable ways in which the properly human is distinguished from the merely animal in Indian literary and philosophical tradition.²⁸ Virtuous self-conduct among proper human beings, in other words, is widely understood in Indian moral and cultural life as a practice of controlling sensual impulse. Religious texts in particular sketch restraint from without as a way of cultivating those beings as yet unable to restrain their own desires: the deity Siva, for example, as a “grazer” subjecting the “milk cows” of the senses to stern pastoral guidance, to enable the moral perfection of the devotee within whose heart they wander (Varadarajan 1988:99).

Various forms of historical traffic would have drawn such ideas beyond the domain of elite literary culture and into contact with the cultural lives and material practices of ordinary people. Take, for example, the way in which a low-caste rural laborer proclaims his religious devotion in the *Mukkutal Pallu* (Kesikan 1960), an 18th-century Tamil dramatization of agrarian life performed in both courtly venues and local temple festivals (Peterson 1996)—

Those who spurn and do not bow
toward the 108 places of [the deity] Perumal—
I will bind their fiendish legs
and yoke them to the plow!
Those who do not know [the devotional verses of] *Tiruvaymozhi*
I will make into two-legged oxen
and “*thi thi!*” with my plowing staff
I will drive them Lord!

Presented with the colloquial rural language and ribald humor of the Tamil literary genre from which it is derived, there is no doubt a parodic quality to this laborer's assertion that he will yoke and drive those who remain ignorant and indifferent to his faith through the fields as "two-legged oxen." And yet, the moral authority of this plowing staff bears the unmistakable traces of a form of power founded on the need to restrain and guide an animal—specifically bovine—nature incapable of acting virtuously on its own. Here is another species of what Foucault might have called "pastoral" power: one in which the animal qualities of the tended body are absolutely essential to the control exercised in the name of its care.

In the agrarian traditions of the Cumbum Valley—a little over 100 kilometers to the north of the setting for this play—subordinate individuals had been subjected in many ways to the plow as instrument of moral and political ordering. A ritual veneration of the headman's plow, for example, took place annually in each village of the valley. Before harnessing his own plow for the cultivating season, every farmer was expected to pray before and lead once around a field a plow that the headman had harnessed and kept ready. The ritual publicly affirmed the necessity of the headman to bring prosperity, rain, and a bountiful harvest. "Only he was fit to support and protect," an elder Kallar cultivator in the village of KG Patti explained to me. Agrarian and domestic workers dependent on the care of the headman and other leading cultivators would have had their subordinate status marked by other practices as well. As recently as a few decades ago, for example, Kallars working as watchmen and farm laborers for higher-caste cultivators in the region were served their rice and water in iron winnows and tins, vessels kept aside for such use only within the cattle sheds, I was told, of respectable households. The aging Gounder headman of KG Patti likely had this hierarchical economy of relations in mind when he told me an apocryphal tale of a British official inviting his father to "graze all the villains" inhabiting his village in exchange for a grant of state land. When I asked why he insisted that such reform measures had failed, he spluttered out a single word with as much force as he could muster from toothless lips: "Animal!"

Much of the old headman's ire stemmed from his inability now to guard his tamarind trees in the distant uplands of the valley from pilfering by others. The field of power here has been greatly recomposed in the last 50-odd years: Kallars in this and other local villages have risen to an unparalleled local dominance, and village leaders must now negotiate the scope of their authority with the numerous servants of a postcolonial bureaucracy. Despite such shifts, grazing remains a vernacular idiom of government in the region, one that marks the continued salience of certain practices of collective handling. Techniques of physical pursuit and harness

are essential to state police work in the Cumbum Valley, for example: regular beat patrols, recurrent raids in problem villages, pursuit of suspected criminals on foot and by jeep, preventive as well as punitive confinement in both village and stationhouse spaces, and so on. We may find an evocation of such practices in retired constable Perumal's claim that policing was no more than a matter of grazing human beings. But we may also find the kind of power at stake here clarified by the ways in which such officers themselves distinguish between the human and the animal qualities of those in their care. "They are without human quality—they will never ever reform," another senior Cumbum Valley constable once insisted to me concerning the Kallar population of his jurisdiction. A stubborn and irredeemable animal nature was the moral condition that demanded a close and continuous regime of supervision and control.

We ought to recall at the same time, however, that the verb for *grazing* in Tamil bears two distinctive senses: leading in grazing, but also grazing or preying on. In the Cumbum Valley today, as in much of the rest of India, police hold little in the way of moral authority, as officers of the law are deemed more likely to prey on their own wards for bribes, gifts, and other favors rather than to lead them toward any superior means of livelihood. The very proverb that I cited earlier concerning the educative role of teachers and police officers, for example, is typically slurred and bent to suit the times these days in a far more ironic register: "A teacher is one who lacks good speech, a policeman is one who lacks good conduct."²⁹ In light of such judgments, lawbreaking itself is easily admired by some for its defiance. Many of the Kallar men and women that I knew, for example, denounced police constables as "thieves" in their own right, proudly recounting the animal vigor with which they had outrun these putative pastoral guardians on many occasions. "We would wander about like unyoked oxen," a former ganja trafficker in the village of KG Patti told me, fondly reminiscing about his younger days of willful insurrection. And a much younger sandalwood smuggler in the same village bragged in similar fashion with a drunken laugh one evening: "I run so fast that even the police cannot catch me." His friends celebrate his speed with a nickname that might simply be translated as "royal bull."

It is worth lingering on such boasts—which I often heard from Kallar men dwelling on the margins of the agrarian economy—for they challenge the *telos* of moral subjection implicit in the many forms of pastoral care that I have sketched here. To be sure, policing is imagined in South India as a task of domesticating animal tendencies and fashioning proper human beings. But even within these humanizing selves, the inherited strains of animal character remain: elements to

be celebrated, excused, or further trained depending on the moral dispositions of particular subjects. The “becoming-animal” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) of delinquent Kallars both echoes and displaces the moralizing premises of pastoral government. Such confounding trajectories reveal once again the hybrid nature of the biopolitical body in postcolonial India, indebted to the persistence in the present of multiple forms of subjection from the past.³⁰ The thieving bull is a being fashioned at the intimate interstices of rival forms of pastoral power, depredation, and care—a not-quite-domestic animal, both subject and rebel simultaneously. From the vantage point of such beings, postcolonial freedom may ultimately appear less as a path to becoming human in any one given sense, and more as a possibility of inhabiting the animal—in multiple, overlapping, and inconsistent ways.

CONCLUSION

For biopolitical subjects in the contemporary United States, Hurricane Katrina proved to be one of the most troubling reminders in recent times of the harsh limits to pastoral care and attention here. And yet, what is striking about much of the public discourse in the wake of the disaster is the extent to which victims and observers alike turned to the image of livestock to make sense of the government’s callous response. “We were herded over there like cattle,” one of hundreds moved to the Mississippi Coliseum complained on September 5, 2005, while a reporter for the Associated Press described the “human cattle yards” in which New Orleans refugees crowded and struggled to somehow survive. Some found echoes here of earlier forms of bestialization, such as the writer of a bluegrass parody in which the condition of those who had been “put in the arena an’ kept herded there like cattle” was underscored by juxtaposed drawings of a slaving ship and the infamous Louisiana Superdome. To be treated like an animal in such accounts was to be denied the care owed to a proper human being. Others, however, challenged the very premise of such complaints. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen an evacuation or disaster relief effort where people were not treated like cattle,” one blogger wrote, “because the best way to save the most people is to act in mass.” And a team of doctors described the horror they felt in branding the foreheads of the most desperate victims to be evacuated from a flooded medical center: “It’s just very hard to go and start marking people like cattle.” Yet this is exactly what they reported having to do, wielding a “marks-a-lot” pen in the name of triage, even as the practice reminded at least of one them of Auschwitz.³¹

Why are some people herded and driven as animals rather than cared for as proper human beings? What I have sought to do in this article is to query the terms of such a contrast by examining modes of human government deeply indebted to forms of animal care. Pastoral power may appear paradoxical if one opposes sympathetic care to brutal control, domains of freedom to domains of power, or nurturing conditions in which one may act autonomously to the situation of being herded, driven, and compelled against one's will. But these oppositions quickly collapse if and when the subjects of such power are judged and governed as animal beings. In South India, I have tried to show that this was the case in British colonial struggles to police and reform putatively criminal instinct, in quotidian efforts to govern the moral conduct of stubborn livestock, and in vernacular idioms of government that authorize the restraint of those deemed incapable of restraining themselves. To address the animal as a moral problem of government is to confront the borders of a persistent humanism that still often frames both prevailing understandings of and intellectual investigations into the nature of modern life. Focusing closely on the virtues and vices attributed to animal subjects, I have argued, may also help deepen our understanding of the basic premises and limits of human government as well.

It is insufficient, however, to make such arguments in the abstract alone. "How . . . might one begin to mark out the specificity of our contemporary biopolitics," Rose (2001:5) has asked, a question essential to any anthropology of the biopolitical. Building here on accounts of the constitutive difference of colonial and postcolonial modernities, I have sought to take the very premise of that common "our" as an invitation for critical inquiry. Conversations on life and its qualities in the Cumbum Valley of South India certainly do at times invoke genes, chromosomes, and other related entities, as do such conversations in many other parts of the world today. But other ways of imagining, engaging, and governing living beings and their natures continue to matter in this eminently modern milieu. The contemporary here is therefore shot through with the traces of other moments and prior forms of biopolitical government, both Western and non-Western, and each with their own genealogies both distinctive and intertwining. Ideas of moral life among humans and animals alike are unintelligible in the region today except in relation to the legacies of the colonial past—but this colonial past, too, however, is itself understood and recollected in the terms of a much older cultural imagination of good government in the region. I have sought to bring into focus the afterlife of these multiple biopolitical pasts in the postcolonial present, as a means of suggesting that the government of life in any milieu must be understood in relation to its specific history. These materials support an anthropology of biopolitics that begins with the

specific ways in which life may enter politics in particular places, and the practices through which it may come to serve as an arena for the exercise of power.

This is not meant, however, as a plea for specificity alone: claims made in relation to such cultural histories and practices should also be capable of attaining a level of generality beyond the scope of the empirical materials that constitute their grounds. I have pursued such generality here in a particular manner. The politics of living being, like any politics, involves practical relations of power whose impetus and character can only be grasped in relation to the everyday deeds of living beings. The traces of such engagement, however, may also be found at work within our own language of abstraction. It is for this reason that I have tried to take the pasturage implicit in a theory of “pastoral” power seriously, for here we have both a theory of power and a marker for material practices of governing life engaged elsewhere. By tracing the pastoral back and forth between these two domains of theory and practice, I have paid heed not only to the practical government of animal life but also to the complex ways in which that life itself has struggled into and beyond the domain of our own forms of knowledge. Such traffic points to a way of materializing theory itself—to a way of lending flesh, substance, and the obstinate force of embodied existence to our own instruments of understanding.

ABSTRACT

In this article, I argue that a close examination of the government of animals by humans is essential for an anthropology of modern biopolitics: for an understanding, that is, of the many ways in which humans themselves have been governed as animals in modern times. I aim also to work toward a way of theorizing such biopolitics in milieus beyond the modern West. Relying on cultural and historical materials from South India, I call attention to three domains of local biopolitical difference: the particular conditions of modernity that constitute certain human lives as an animal object of government, the quotidian practices of care and struggle through which animals are governed in moral terms, and the cultural idioms through which these lives become visible and intelligible as appropriate sites for the exercise of both power and resistance. The empirical ground of this article is formed by three modes of government of human and animal existence in colonial and postcolonial South India: the management of a population of subjects putatively criminal by nature as organisms of instinct and impulse by means of the colonial Indian Criminal Tribes Act; the contemporary echoes of such policing in the everyday practices through which cultivators and plowmen in the region govern the moral conduct of their oxen; and the persistent postcolonial legacies of a Tamil political idiom of “grazing” or restraining populations of human and animal beings deemed incapable of restraining themselves. The intimacy between practices of care and techniques of control in each of these instances suggests that a close attention to animality may provide a

way of resolving some of the constitutive paradoxes of the “pastoral” mode of power elaborated by Michel Foucault.

Keywords: power, government, animal, human, biopolitics, modernity, post-coloniality, India

NOTES

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1. My thanks to the editors for valuable and illuminating exchanges on this paradox.
2. By the term *police* Foucault does not solely refer here to the restricted domain of law enforcement as it is understood today but, rather, to the emergence of myriad public offices in 17th-century Europe—public health, statistics, economic planning, the scientific management of natural resources, and so on—dedicated to securing the moral wellbeing of populations through the close supervision of their conditions of life.
3. “The idea of the shepherd-king may seem to emerge as neither archetypal myth nor cultural image, more a history of fragments and chance meetings,” Murray (1990:13) writes.
4. For a thoughtful reflection on the language of command and the relations of government at work in the training of horses, see Patton (2003).
5. Cardew to Price, 3 December 1895, G.O. No. 473 Judicial, 31 March 1897, Tamil Nadu State Archives (hereafter, TNSA).
6. Emphasis added. Amendments made in 1896 enabled the application of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 to any section of any group. The 1911 act extended its reach to the Madras Presidency in South India.
7. Francis, *Madura District Gazetteer*; Paddison to Judicial Secretary, 27 April 1918, G.O. No. 1331 Home (Judicial), 5 June 1918, TNSA; Mullaly, *Notes on Criminal Classes*; and Loveluck, “The Kallar problem in South India,” G.O. No. 596 Law (General), 16 June 1921, TNSA.
8. Davies to Price, 30 September 1895, G.O. No. 473 Judicial, 31 March 1897, TNSA.
9. For Darwin (1872), for example, it was the “moral sense” among human beings that worked against this brutal imprint. Conscience was a compulsion born of social life, cultivated and passed onward through instruction and example, habit and reflection, to be turned against the momentary tugs of lower instincts and impulses.
10. Atavism formed the kernel of the criminal anthropology propounded by Italian physician Cesare Lombroso beginning in the 1860s. His “Natural History of the Criminal” pinned innate delinquency to the outlines of a brutish and retrogressive physiognomy: apish arms and jutting jaws, noses hooked like birds of prey, and so on (Lombroso-Ferrero 1911). English Victorian writers throughout the 19th century repeatedly sketched the bestial and animal nature of born delinquents (Leps 1992).
11. On the tension between these contrary forms of evolutionary reasoning, see Moore, Pandian, and Kosek (2003).
12. Interestingly enough, however, the object of notification under the Criminal Tribes Act in India was never a criminal “caste” as such, but always a criminal “tribe, gang or class.” Late-19th-century designations of collective criminality were provisional and contradictory wherever

- applied, argues Freitag (1991), often sacrificing the subtleties of native self-identification to the necessities of police administration.
13. Loveluck, "The Kallar problem," G.O. No. 596 Law (General), 16 June 1921, TNSA.
 14. G.O. No. 436 Public (Police), 18 August 1933, TNSA. Aside from Kallars, there were a total of 36,471 others registered as criminal tribe members that year, of whom 4,901 were women. At no point were Piramalai Kallar women registered under the act. On the controversy surrounding women of other communities registered under the act, see Radhakrishna (2001: 60–64).
 15. Paddison to Legislative Council, 28 August 1915. Judicial Department. G.O. No. 1649, 27 June 1916, TNSA.
 16. Hall to Marjoribanks, 17 May 1924, G.O. No. 541 Judicial (Poli), 29 October 1924, TNSA.
 17. J. F. Hall to IGP, 6 April 1931, GO No. 485 Public (Police) 12 September 1931, TNSA.
 18. Hall to Marjoribanks, 17 May 1924, G.O. No. 541 Judicial (Poli), 29 October 1924, TNSA.
 19. 1922 Administration Report, G.O. No. 2683 Law (General) Misc., 8 November 1923, TNSA.
 20. O'Farrell to Chief Secretary, G.O. No. 473 Judicial, 31 March 1897, TNSA.
 21. Mukkulathor Sangham petition to the Governor of Madras, G.O. No. 920 Home, 23 March 1945, TNSA.
 22. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Second Session of the Second Legislative Assembly, Government of Madras, Vol. V, No. 1–14, pp. 557–581, TNSA.
 23. For more on virtues as cultivated dispositions of moral conduct in rural South India, see Pandian (in press).
 24. This is akin to the "rehearsed" forms of spontaneous moral conduct discussed by Mahmood (2005), suggesting yet again that moral practices of virtue are at stake in such animal care.
 25. "Becoming-animal" is *real*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue. Plowing expeditions, oxen races, and *jallikattu* contests, a popular sport in which young men compete to bring down bucking bulls and seize the bundles of coins fastened to their horns, serve as arenas in which rural men may "become-bull." Several wildly popular Tamil films—such as the 1980 *Murattu Kaalai* or *Rough Bull* starring action hero Rajnikanth—match the virility of those who engage in *jallikattu* contests with the indiscipline of the bulls they tame. Historically in this part of Tamil Nadu, these contests have been identified most closely with Piramalai Kallar men.
 26. On the difference between Tamil ideas of moral restraint and the Kantian notion of virtue itself as a capacity for self-restraint, briefly alluded to earlier, see Pandian in press.
 27. See section 7.14 in Olivelle 2004.
 28. The fifth-century Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam*, for example, identifies the *manasu*, the internal discriminating faculty of heart and mind, as the sixth sense distinguishing humans from other forms of life. Lest we conceive this as a matter solely of physiology, the text goes on to class *maakka*—men without the quality of "discrimination"—among the beasts and other beings whose senses numbered no more than five (Murugan 2000:630–632).
 29. From *vaakkai kattravan vaaththiyaar*, *pookkai kattravan poolisaar* to *vaakkillathavan vaaththiyaar*, *pookkillathavan poolisaar* in spoken Tamil.
 30. My use of the polyvalent term *hybrid* is guided most closely by the work of Guha (1997), on the braiding of colonial governmental strategies with Indian rationalities of rule.
 31. These materials were culled from the following web pages in successive order: <http://www.wwtv.com/local/stories/WWLBLOG.ac3fcea.html>; <http://www.wwtv.com/sharedcontent/nationworld/katrina/stories/090205ccwcKatrinaWalkthru.1bc07ce2.html>; http://folksong.org.nz/new_orleans/index.html; http://www.beheardblog.com/log/_archives/2005/8/31/1185667.html#comments; <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14516700/page/4/>, accessed August 2007.

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