

suggest that *cao* inherited the characteristics of *lingshi*, and that subordinates of the county were changed to assistants to county officers. Thus, the spread of *cao* and the disappearance of *guan* signifies a strengthening of county officers.

Local Society and State Control as seen in the
Copper-Plate Inscriptions of Bengal: 5th to 7th Century

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The purpose of this article is to discuss the structure of local society, the condition of state control of it and the changes of both in Bengal during the Gupta and Post-Gupta periods (5th to 7th Century) through an analysis of copper-plate inscriptions, particularly so-called land-sale inscriptions. The research in view of the three aspects of subject and object of notification, applicant for land-purchase and acceptant of application, process of sale and donation may be summarized as follows.

Local society was connected on the supra-village level through an organization called '*adhikaraṇa*' at least in cases of land-sale and donation. In the Gupta period, in urban areas *adhikaraṇas* consisted of representatives of each group of city residents. In rural areas, they consisted of peasants (*kuṭumbin*) and the class of local leaders (*mahattara*). They decided matters relating to each land-sale and donation with the help of other members of society, such as record-keepers. Because applicants for land-sale belonged mainly to local society, *adhikaraṇa* in the period may have been an organization to cope with the problems inside. There are variations in levels on which *adhikaraṇas* were formed and on which social-unity was pursued. State control also varied in correspondence to them. As to the relation between state and local society, latter took the initiative. Though the participation of the members of local society inside or outside of *adhikaraṇa* can be seen in the Post-Gupta period too, there was a marked rise of the

class of local leaders and the absence of *kuṭumbins*. In the class of local leaders, the differentiation inside and the alliance with mention to villages to which they belong can be seen. Local participation through *adhikaraṇa* came to confront state control. State control had a tendency to penetrate into local society with the growth of regional kingship and its subordinate kingship; but local society continued to participate in the process of land-sale as before, and state control depended on the power balance with it.