The Structure of Sinhalese Healing Rituals

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As social anthropology has set up new standards for the analysis of social structure, the lag in the study of religious thought and behavior has become increasingly apparent. New departures have been rare in this region and the figures of Freud, Durkheim, and Weber have continued to dominate the scene.

There are three systematic approaches to the study of religious behavior: first, the Freudian approach which seeks to penetrate the unconscious motivations behind religious behavior; second, the social structural approach of Durkheim and Weber which seeks to relate religious phenomena to the fundamental features of the societies under investigation.¹

A third approach, with which I shall be mainly concerned, was outlined by Radcliffe-Brown (1933) and followed up by Srinivas (1952). This approach seeks to examine the internal consistency of religious thought, symbolism, and behavior. It rests on the assumption that the religious categories of primitive societies form a coherent and internally consistent set of beliefs and symbols (like language) which, given the premises, follow logically. To a greater or lesser extent all anthropologists must utilize this approach when they attempt to understand the religious language of an alien society.

The learning of a religious language for the anthropologist is similar to the learning of any other language: the implications of symbols and the contexts in which their use is appropriate must be understood. But although there are these similarities, much of the work in religion has remained in the realm of ideas and has not been concerned with detailed analysis of the language of religion as a symbolic system. There have been few attempts to examine specific myths or rituals in detail, and although Warner (1958:244ff), Berndt (1951) and others have described the symbol system of certain myths and have noted their connections with ritual, there is no accepted theoretical framework for this kind of analysis.²

Recent advances in structural linguistics and communication theory have left their mark on anthropologists.³ In particular Lévi-Strauss advocates the application of the key concepts of structural linguistics to the study of myths, which are to

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¹ In some cases these two approaches have been brought together in a stimulating fashion (e.g., Fortes 1945; Gough 1959; Leach 1958; Nadel 1946, 1954), but in others they have remained complementary methods whose results may not be mutually compatible (e.g., Gough 1955).
² The question of the interconnection between myth and ritual is still wide open: Lévi-Strauss (1956) suggests not a one-to-one consistency but a “dialectic” and Nadel (1954:78) throws doubt on any connection between the two realms.
³ Apart from attempts to adapt mechanical computers which have had great influence on theoretical linguistics (Jakobson 1951:245) for anthropological use, there are suggestions that certain aspects of primitive thought categories are susceptible to linguistic analysis (Conklin 1962; Leach n.d.).
be treated as "communications" in an unknown language (Lévi-Strauss 1955:4.1, 4.2). Communication is made up of "units" (1955:3.0), and each stands in a "context," or as Lévi-Strauss puts it, "will consist in a relation" (1955:3.3). The analysis of these relations will show that they exist in "bundles" (1955:3.4), and that these bundles recur in different stages of the myth. In other words, the "structure of the Myth" will be analogous either to the recurring themes or rhythms of an orchestra score, or to the recurring problems or worries contained in the communication of a patient to his analyst.

Lévi-Strauss' proposals for the analysis of myths have had their earlier exponents like Propp, who advocated a similar strategy for the investigation of the "morphology" of the folk tale (1958), and recently Leach has used Lévi-Strauss' method in the examination of the structure of the Genesis story (1961a). There is no doubt that the method bristles with difficulties. It is by no means sure that two anthropologists will understand it in quite the same way, nor that they will succeed in analyzing the text of the myth in a truly comparable fashion. But even with these very serious reservations, I find Lévi-Strauss' examination of various myths extremely illuminating. Although the application of his principles is by no means unambiguous, he does appear to have placed his finger on certain universal attributes of myths. He also brings a new spark to a subject which has been seriously neglected since Malinowski: after all, to say that a myth is a charter for certain institutions, though no doubt true, does not tell us much about the intricacies of the myth itself.

In this paper I am concerned with ritual rather than myth. Rituals present problems similar to those that we face in the analysis of myths, and much of what Lévi-Strauss has to say concerning the structure of myths also applies to ritual. The differences are, however, important. Myth always tells a story. Ritual may be much more abstract and may simply consist of the handling of particular objects by specialists in a stereotyped way. Still the continuous action of a ritual may be broken down into "ritual acts" and these in turn may be analyzed into "items." In the case of Sinhalese rituals, there is little doubt that a systematic analysis of items (such as limes or saffron) in their particular contexts (e.g., used as anti-pollution agents) gives us a "code" which can be used to understand other communications in that culture. I assume that the ritual acts in which the items occur form part of a logical structure and are never simply meaningless. In fact, there is a logical symbolic structure about the total ritual which brings about the desired effects in the realm of ritual action.

The analysis of the code or the symbolic structure of the ritual is only one level of analysis. We must go deeper into the problems with which the ritual is concerned. Lévi-Strauss states that myths are designed to deal with unwelcome contradictions in human existence, such as life and death, fertility and barrenness (1955:4.10 & 6.2). He treats the Oedipus story as an attempt to answer the riddle of creation: how does one produce human beings from one pair of ancestors without incest? Leach (1961a) thinks that the Book of Genesis is concerned with the same worry. It is my thesis that, in a similar fashion, rituals are also centered around basic con-

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4 I am grateful to Professor T. Sebeok of Indiana University for bringing this work to my notice.
traditions such as pollution and purity, fortune and misfortune, health and illness, and appear to be attempts to turn one side of an “opposed category” into the other.

We thus have three levels of analysis: the contextual analysis of items to allow the construction of a code; the formal symbolic structure of the action; and, the deeper contradictions and problems the action is concerned with.

I shall attempt to put some order into the great mass of descriptive material we possess about Sinhalese religious ideas and healing rituals. In this paper I shall not try to construct a code, but shall simply provide certain contexts in order to interpret key items.

The Sinhalese, who are culturally similar to the people of South India, are Buddhists. They are divided into castes (Ryan 1953) and also worship the well known Hindu deities called deva (deva, male; devi, female) such as Vishnu, Pattini, Kataragama, Ganesha. Buddhism in Ceylon is associated with Buddhist temples (vihara)6 and a priesthood (sangha) divided into various orders. Hindu deities are seen as the assistants of the Buddha and are generally associated with special temples (devale) in charge of ritual practitioners called kapurala. In contrast to the Buddhist priests (bhikku) who shave their hair, take on a new name, and are vowed to celibacy, the Kapurala wear their hair long, retain their names, marry and have families. In most villages the devale consists of a conspicuous site which is purified and decorated on certain ritual occasions by a kapurala who is invited for this specific purpose. Although the kapurala observe special food taboos, they otherwise lead the same life as ordinary Sinhalese. They are always of the highest Goyigama caste.

The Buddha and the deities do not exhaust the supernatural beings of the Sinhalese. Demons (yakkuva) (yakka, male; yakkini, female) who are believed to inhabit all parts of the earth and sky, are extremely dangerous, and unless propitiated may bring misfortune and illness; grahayo, the “planetary deities” who are associated with the individual’s horoscope, determine his fate (karmaya) and may bring difficult periods in his life; peretaya are spirits or “ghosts,” who inhabit polluted places like graveyards and bring illness. Altogether these form an hierarchy of supernatural beings, ranging from the all-benevolent Buddha to the impure spirits of the dead.

The exuberant proliferation of the supernatural ideology of the Sinhalese can be gathered from a brief perusal of Wirz (1954). I shall attempt to show that in contrast to the manifest content of their rituals, their basic structure is exceedingly simple.

The analysis of the connections between the religious ideology and the social structure of the Sinhalese does not lead very far. Aspects of their social structure have been described. (See Leach, 1960, 1961b; Pieris, 1956; Ryan, 1953, 1958; Tambiah, 1961; Ryan, 1953; Sarathachandra, 1953; Wirz, 1940, 1954, to mention a few of the writers on the subject.)

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6 I write vihara in shorthand fashion. In fact the temple is a complex around a pansala (monastery), consisting of a vihara (shrine with image of the Buddha), a dagoba (stupa: memorial tomb), a Bo tree, and a bana mada (preaching hall).
It is well known that they have named and endogamous castes, and that so far as is known all the castes have a basically bilateral kinship system. Kinship groups take the form of semi-endogamous kindreds (Yalman, 1962c) and although the persons who will attend rites de passage or personal health rituals are often members of the kindred, the personnel may change by marriage alliances, and there is no permanent structure of authority in the group. In like manner, none of the supernatural beings of the Sinhalese can be traced to particular social groups—all castes are equally associated with all aspects of Sinhalese religion. Although the castes do have specific duties to perform (Ryan, 1953:95ff.; Hocart, 1931) and the low castes are not allowed into temples, the pattern frequently described for South India in which particular deities are associated with particular castes (e.g., Gough, 1960:43) or with particular lineages (Dumont, 1957) is not to be seen in the dry zone of Ceylon.7

The highly individualized nature of kinship ties is reflected in the preoccupation with the personal horoscope and fate (karmaya) (see Fortes, 1959). In religious activities there is much concern with pollution, a concept which is also operative in the caste hierarchy. Elsewhere I have shown that female puberty rites, the general idea of rebirth, and the notions of asceticism, are associated with the caste system (Yalman, 1962c, 1963). But there is little doubt that if we confine ourselves to a discussion of those areas of Sinhalese religion which can be approached only through their social structure, much of the complexity of their religious thought is lost.

Since Sinhalese beliefs about disease are primarily supernatural, beliefs and practices concerning ritual healing are best classified according to the specialists who deal with particular types of supernatural beings (Figure 1). The rites usually referred to as “devil dancing” or exorcism, with which I shall be mainly concerned, are those which fall between the double lines in Figure 1. The chanting of pirit (sacred text) by the bhikku does not fit neatly into this scheme, for in this rite, as we shall see, the priest does not deal directly with the Buddha.

Before we describe particular rituals, we should also note that the well-being of the Sinhalese villager is influenced by “good” (honda) and “bad” (naraka) categories which are also associated with the states of purity (pirisithu) and impurity (killa or apirisithu), illness or good fortune, and danger or protection from danger. These positive and negative states are also related to supernatural beings. Impurity (killa) is associated with vas (“supernatural danger” or literally “poison”). The demons (yakkuva) and the deities (devaya) as well as human beings may be dangerous by having vas. With humans it takes the form of evil eyes (as vaha), evil mouth (kata vaha) or evil thought (ho vaha). The patient, in other words, is not directly responsible for vas. It strikes him like a weapon from the outside. On the other hand, vas is also associated with sin (dos) which is the consequence of the “mistakes,” wrongs, or sinful actions (varada) of the patient. The individual is responsible for his sins and this responsibility can be carried over from his earlier lives into his present existence as “fate sin” (karma dos). The balance of an individ-

7 Particular shrines or temples may be owned by a local caste group in one locality (Ryan, 1953:286ff.), but even this is rare.
SINHALESE HEALING RITUALS

**Figure 1.—Ritual Specialists and Their Rituals (Central Ceylon)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Supernatural Being</th>
<th>Rite</th>
<th>Principal Object</th>
<th>Main Offering</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bhikku</td>
<td></td>
<td>pirit bana</td>
<td>pirit book sermon</td>
<td>dhana (food)</td>
<td>Chanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rites involving natanava (dancing) and the bera (drumming) of tom-tom beaters</td>
<td>kapurala</td>
<td>devaya (deities)</td>
<td>deviyange sellama* yatika**</td>
<td>ayuda (weapons)</td>
<td>adukka (food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e., “devil dancing”</td>
<td>bali adura</td>
<td>yakkuva (demons)</td>
<td>bali</td>
<td>bali rupaya (bali image)</td>
<td>dola (food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yakkuva adura***</td>
<td>yakkuva grahayo</td>
<td>tovil</td>
<td>yantaraya (charm) or dehi (limes)</td>
<td>dola (food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sastra kariya (astrologer)</td>
<td>grahayo</td>
<td>yantaraya (personal horoscope)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Horoscope interpreting for good and bad times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vedarala (general practitioner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reciting charms etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (Play of the Gods) subsumes all rituals concerning the devaya:
  i.e., an keliya, gam maduva (see below), maleliya, perahera (Processions)

* Also known as: kattandiya, yakku vedarala, dehi vedarala.

ual's sin (dos) against his good deeds or merits (pin), determines his chances for attaining a better or worse state in his next birth. Poison (vas) and sin (dos), impersonal and personal inauspiciousness, are often spoken of as a single category of vas-dos. All health rituals with which we shall be concerned are directed towards the elimination of vas-dos and their common source in pollution.

With these preliminaries I turn to the formal analysis of the pirit rituals. After drawing attention to the relatively simple formal structure of the rites and the use of certain items in their contexts, I will discuss the bali and maleliya (gam maduva) types of rituals.
I. Pirit Ritual in Teripehe Village

The occasion for this pirit ritual is the consecration of a new hut for the Rural Development Society. The priests of the Amarapura sect have been invited by the officers of the society. The ritual is to take place inside the new hall. A special cage-like structure, pirit maduva (pirit hut) has been constructed for this purpose, and is decorated by clean cloths brought by the washermen. Inside is a table covered with a white cloth (viyan) and on it are some water bottles (pirit pen) as well as certain charms (yantaram) (also horoscope).

The priests arrive from the temple in order of their ordination carrying one of the main ritual objects of the Buddhist temple, the “relic casket” (karanduwa or kata), made of gold and containing precious stones which symbolize the relics (of bone, tooth, hair, and nails) which remained behind after the cremation of the Buddha (dhatu). A brass pitcher full of water which is decorated with coconut flowers (malwattaya) is placed on the table.

After the priests enter the enclosure (pirit maduva), the tom-tom beaters start beating the round drum (davula). The small oil lamps around the enclosure are lit, and one of the priests sprinkles some rice over the table. A string called the pirit nula is attached to the white cloth above the enclosure. It is then passed around the table and held by each priest. The string then goes to the malwattaya and thence to the audience outside the hut.

The pirit itself is a Pali text recorded in a book (pirit pota) which tells of the struggle between the Buddha and his rival, Maraya. The tom-toms stop and the priests start chanting the initial prayer. At this point the string is handed around among the audience so that every person can have contact with it.

At the beginning of the ceremony, the seven priests chant together. Later two of them pick up the text, and in this fashion, taking turns, they keep up the chanting the entire night. The audience often goes to sleep; but it is considered important to hold onto the string.

As the priests are chanting, they hold fans in front of their faces. Two explanations are given of this act: The ordinary people say that the priest’s chanting is very powerful (saraya) and that this may strike (gahanava) the audience (an idea which is similar to that of katavaha, mouth poison, see above). Others say that in this fashion the priest cuts himself off from the world around him (see Yalman, 1962a).

In the morning after the book is finished, the priests leave with the tom-tom beaters. The string is cut into small pieces and members of the audience tie portions of it around their wrists or necks for added protection (arakshava) from any kind of danger. Some drink the water (pirit pen) on the table; others put it on their faces.

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Later in the day there is a dhana offering (mainly food) to the priests. As usual every day the Buddha figure in the temple is given the dhana of rice. The offering is made by the priest; laymen make offerings of flowers (mal puja). After the food offering to the Buddha, the priests move into a specially purified place where they are offered food by members of the Goyigama caste. Since the food is offered in a pure place, the priests wash their feet before entering the enclosure. Moreover, the place where the priests consume their food is surrounded on all sides by white cloths (viyana) brought by the washerman.
This type of pirit is commonly found in any Sinhalese village. Sometimes, when the pirit takes place on a national scale—such as for the arrival or departure of the Prime Minister at the airport—the numbers of the priests or tom-tom beaters may be much larger, but the ceremony remains much the same.

The essential aspects of the pirit ritual can be brought out by contrasting the above with a simpler example.

2. Pirit Ritual for a New House

A pirit takes place in the house of a newly married couple on the occasion of their completion of a new house. There is only one priest present. He has not brought the relic casket, but only the pirit book. There is no hut, but the chair for the priest is covered with a white cloth. There is another chair beside him on which he has some betel and tea. There is a table covered with a white cloth on which there is the pirit water, some coconut flowers, and the pirit book.

The priest chants the pirit alone in three half days (varuva). The string (pirit nula) comes from the book and is held at the other end by the young bride only. The priest holds his fan in front of his face and chants. When the chanting is finished, the pirit nula is tied around the wrist of the woman and the neck of the man. The priest ties the string himself and recites prayers.

The formal symbolic structure of the pirit may be indicated as follows: a. There are one or more bhikku (or sometimes laymen who are empowered to act in their place); b. A pure place is provided (the viyana, pirit maduva, etc.); c. The sacred text (pirit) is chanted by the priests; d. The text is connected by a string to the audience. (The connection may be established in various ways: the priest may hold the end of the string in his hand or, the sending end of the string may simply be tied to the enclosure which contains the sacred area, the relic casket, the water bottle in the middle of the table, or the pirit book); e. At the end of the rite the string which has been activated is tied around some part of the body of those who witness the ceremony.

The core of the ceremony consists of the transmission of the goodness of the sacred text to a recipient or recipients. A pirit chanted by one or more bhikkus, is more effective than are those chanted by lay singers.

The difference of elaboration around the basic pattern (the text, the string, the recipient) suggests that it is useful to distinguish between the primary structure and secondary structures in the rite. Thus, returning to the first version, we may refer to the enclosure, the white cloth covering the table inside the enclosure, and the relic casket as secondary structures of the ritual.

But there are also distinct subsidiary ritual acts connected with the primary structure. Giving of food (dhana) to the Buddha and his priests at the end of the first pirit ritual is one of these and is intended as an elaboration of the primary structure. There are many such special ritual acts which recur in other Sinhalese rituals. In the same ritual, the leaving of the horoscopes and charms in the pirit is a similar subsidiary act: it is expected that the charms (yantaram) will absorb some of the sacredness of the pirit text.

Having described the basic structure of the pirit ritual, I now turn to the bali
(image) ceremonies. In contrast to the pirit ritual, which is a general palliative utilizing the power of sacred Buddhist texts, the bali ceremony is specifically directed against he-and she-demons (yakkuva) and against the planets (grahayo) and is conducted by members of the tom-tom beater caste (Beravayo). The specialist in bali rituals is known as bali gurunnanse or as bali adura. He usually has helpers of the same caste, some of whom dance while others beat the elongated cigar-shaped drums (bera).8 Bali rites are distinguished from all others not only because they are the specialty of tom-tom beaters but also because they involve the construction of elaborate painted clay images and figures. These figures (bali rupaya), which are often seven feet high, depict the planetary beings or particular demons.

A bali ritual may be held whenever an individual has been consistently unlucky, or weak and ill. A bali is thought to be particularly appropriate when the individual suffers from epilepsy or forms of neurosis and hysteria. Two explanations are often given for the cause of the patient’s difficulties. First, it may be said that a yakkuva is “eating flesh and drinking blood” of the patients; for they are known for their partiality to flesh (which is polluting) and blood (which is even more polluting). Second, it may be stated that the particular configuration of the stars under which an individual was born has produced a period of difficulty (apele). The apele period can be predicted accurately from the horoscope of the individual by the astrologers. Hence the bali rituals are often recommended by the astrologer.

Whether the difficulties are caused by the planets or the demons, the ritual is intended to get rid of the vas dos of the patient, to get the yakkuva out of the patient’s body, and to appease them by the offering of food and flesh. This offering to such creatures is known as dola—in contrast to the dhana, offerings of food to the Buddha and the priests and adukka food offerings to the devaya. With these explanations we can turn to a description of the bali rituals.

1. Bali Ceremony in Teripehe Village

A bali is held in the tom-tom beaters’ hamlet of Teripehe village. A large bali figure has been prepared inside a special enclosure made of plantain trunks which has open sides but the top of which is covered by white cloths. This separates the bali area from the rest of the village. The center is occupied by a large figure referred to as Senasura; who is standing on a cobra. There is another small figure on top of him whom some people call Gini Devi, but others suggest that he is Maha Brahma, “the creator of the earth.” These figures are surrounded by the nine planets, the grahayo. (For the association of Giri Devi and the theme of incest, see Wirz, 1954: 129f.)

Opposite this effigy a small cage-like structure has been prepared for the sick person (leda) or (aturuya) who in this instance is a member of the tom-tom beater caste.

On a narrow ledge in front of the effigy, the offering (dola) is placed. It consists of fried foods (special offering to yakkuva), fried rice, fried oil cakes, fried jack fruit, also manioc, jaggory (sugar) and some grain. Near these foods is the skull of a
wild cat; yakkuva food can be cooked in this. There is also a mirror, some hair, a comb, red flowers, betel leaves, sandalwood candles, incense, and plantains. On the floor there are some coins on betel leaves called pandura which are a frequent offering to deities and yakkuva and rice in plantains. Also on the floor, apart from the dola, are two large coconuts and a rice pounder. There is a pot of saffron water (kaha pen) nearby. The entire dola is covered up with plantain leaves.

There are a considerable number of spectators inside the bali area. The proceedings start with the bali gurunnanse and his son and brother’s son dressed in special decorative clothes, singing and dancing to the rhythm of two tom-toms. The patient is isolated in his special little cage (maduva) covered with a white cloth.

The string (nula) which has a lime (dehi) attached, comes from the top of the effigy and is held by the bali gurunnanse. After some dancing and singing, the end of the string is passed on to the patient behind his cloth.

Two torches (pandam) are brought and lighted. The proceedings now take a new turn. The cloth covering the patient is taken away. The nine grahayo and the yakkuva are separately invoked, and the lighted torches are placed on either side of the effigy.

The “saffron water” is placed beside the patient, and two young girls (ideally virgins) hold arecanut flowers in their hands and with a sweeping gesture move the flowers from the patient’s head toward his feet. At the same time they chant ayu bowan (long life!-also used as a general greeting in Sinhalese). It is said that with this gesture, dos descends lower (dos bas venava) and falls away from the patient.

The covering on the dola is removed. The cobra on which the main figure Senasuru stands receives a lighted candle on his head. The dola is being offered. There is singing and dancing for each of the nine grahayo and the four yakka which takes a long time.

The dancing and singing proceed in this pattern through the night. The patient may get excited and start shrieking and dancing to the tune of the bera drum. He may get violent and fall unconscious.

At the end of the ceremony, the patient throws the lime with the string straight toward the effigy. As the figure is of soft clay, the lime usually sticks to some part of it. The arecanut flowers with which the patient was being given “long life” are also thrown at the effigy. Finally the effigy is covered with the white cloth which originally covered the patient. The patient has some food taboos for three half days, and must eat from specially clean plantain leaves.

The figures of the grahayo and yakka are then taken into the jungle and abandoned. This marks the end of the ceremony.

There is not much agreement on what the figures signify. During the ceremony it was said that the Gini Devi was troubling the patient and that the cobra was her agent. The large figure in the middle was likened to the patient. The mother of the patient, when questioned the day after the ritual, claimed that two planets, Angaharu and Rahu, had been troubling her son.

I obtained no explanation concerning the limes thrown upon the figure except that they “belong to the deities.” In view of the great importance attached to limes in many Sinhalese rituals, this is particularly unsatisfactory (see below). Some com-
ments on the contexts of the items used in rituals are called for before we go on to compare this account with other versions of bali ceremonies.

First attention should be drawn to the string, which has a similar function in other Sinhalese rites. It is clear that the string (nula) used in the bali serves the same general purpose as the nula used in the pirit ritual: it connects the ritual objects with a person or persons. But the intention of the string in the bali is the opposite of pirit. In the bali ceremony the illness of the patient is made to travel along the string back to the bali effigy, while in the pirit ritual the purity of the text travels to the audience (cf. Gunasekera, 1953:73). The bali figure represents the demon in its corporeal form outside the patient. The demon moreover, is presented with an offering of food (dola) to appease its hunger and to induce it to depart from the patient.

Second, the reversal aspect of the ritual is particularly obvious with respect to the white cloth and the string. At the beginning of the bali ceremony, the patient is covered with a white cloth and the string is brought to him. Then the cloth is removed and the patient is left face to face with the terrible yakkuva to which he is connected by the string. At the end of the ceremony, the string is thrown back to the demon and the connection is broken. Moreover, the yakka is now covered with the white cloth. In this sense, the patient and the figure have changed their places. The figure now contains the illness and is therefore taken away to be destroyed.

Third, the dola is offered to the yakkuva in lieu of the patient. Here again is a stream of ideas which associates the yakkuva and the illness with impurity (killa). The patient is in an impure state and hence the ritual of long life (ayu bowan) whereby the poison (vas) and sin (dos) are made to leave him. Because the yakkuva are particularly interested in pollution and are always said to hang around polluted places and objects, the dola (offering) contains many items which are considered polluting to the Sinhalese. Thus the food for the yakkuva is cooked in a skull, preferably one found in a graveyard. Hair and a comb are offered. The mirror into which boys and girls are not allowed to look until puberty may perhaps stand for the patient. Fried foods are conspicuous in the offering. According to Sinhalese folk ideology, fried foods are difficult to digest, and they are considered to remain as feces inside the body for a long time and thus to endanger one's health. But the yakkuva love fried things, which are associated with impurity.9

Fourth, the lighting of torches (pandam) or lamps (pahana) accompanied by the recitation of charmed verses (mantaram) is sometimes known as jivan karanava (make alive). It signifies that the object of attention is now "alive." The rite of jivan karanava is often said to be applied to objects used in sorcery (huniyam), but the lighting of candles on the cobra and torches stuck on the sides of the bali figure imply that the images have been activated.

Fifth, the saffron water is used much like pirit water, as a purifying agent. Saffron water is often used in contexts where killa and/or vas-dos is being counteracted. It is well known that the robes of the Buddhist priests are ritually dyed in saffron.10

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9 The usual offerings to the yakkuva are five kinds of fried foods (pulatu pas vagei) consisting of two kinds of fried flesh (kili mas: water flesh, die mas, i.e., fish, and land flesh, goda mas, i.e., meat), and three kinds of fried grains.

10 It is relevant to note here that the cloth from which the sacred robe is made should ideally be picked up in graveyards, which are places polluted by corpses (mini killa). (See below, and Yalman, 1962a).
Incidentally, we may also note that pollution houses (killa gedara), i.e., houses in which a death, a birth, or menstruation has taken place, will be cleansed either by spreading a new coat of cow dung (goma) or by the sprinkling of saffron water. The decoration of the pot with coconut and/or arecanut flowers—again like the pot in pirit ceremonies—indicates the association between the flowers and the water; and it is true that the flowers in question are again used as pure decorations with the white cloths (or with betel leaves—also considered very pure) or agents with which to counteract pollution. Hence, again, the receiving end of the pirit string may be tied around a bunch of coconut or arecanut flowers and betel leaves. In the bali ritual in question, the virgins chanting “long life” were in fact sweeping the pollution and vas-dos away with bunches of arecanut flowers.

Sixth, all that has been said about saffron water also applies to limes. They are a specific purifying agent against pollution. One of the main anti-pollution rituals of the Sinhalese consists of the cutting of numerous limes with sweeping gestures over each and every joint of the patient. The patient’s end of the string in bali rituals may be tied to a lime. At the end of the funeral ceremonies, the persons who have come into contact with the corpse will cleanse themselves of pollution by rubbing limes onto their hands.

It is useful to compare this account with another bali which I observed near Monaragala in the Wellassa province.

2. Bali Ceremony in Makulle Village

An extremely elaborate structure (maduva) has been erected with plantain trunks and decorated with the usual objects used in many of the rituals of the Sinhalese. This bali is referred to as a kiri maduva (milk hut; milk signifying purity). At an auspicious time (honda valava) specified by the astrologer on the examination of the personal horoscope of the patient, a six-foot pole is erected inside the enclosure. The act, known as kap hitavinava, is simply the erection of a milk exuding tree (kiri gaha) to mark the beginning of the ceremony at the correct moment. The particular pole in this ritual is painted and decorated at the top.

Two large yakkuva images, referred to as Ririyakku Baliya and Dalakumara Baliya, have been prepared. They both stand on animal figures. The Dalakumara stands on a buffalo and the Ririyakku stands on a cow. Both the yakka have their faces painted black. They have terrible aspects with conspicuous teeth, some of which protrude like tusks. They both have numerous cobras forming a headdress. Dalakumara Baliya is flanked by six smaller figures who are called pirivel and are like the grahayo in the first bali. Ririyakku has a fowl in either hand and some rats on two sides of his face.

Near the center of the square is another figure which I had never come across in other bali ceremonies. It consists of an ordinarily dressed female yakkini sitting on a stool. She wears blue and white clothes and is referred to as Katina Rupaya. Along the side of the square four pidaniya (objects with flowers and limes in them) have been prepared.

The animals upon which the yakka stand are their “vehicles.” (The high deities [devaya] also have their vehicles—like Kataragama’s peacock—who are at the same time their symbols.)

Facing these figures there is another hut covered with white cloths and intended
for the patient. A woman of twenty-five sits in this structure. The reason for the ceremony is that she is "mad" (pissu). Her madness, however, is partly the result of sorcery. Someone has made huniyam against her by charming part of a jack fruit and placing it across her path. The act is considered to be a specialty of the Veddah people but no specific accusations are made. She has been subject to fits and trembling. She falls down in her hut and starts wailing. The form of the wailing, which I have heard many times, is long drawn out, blood curdling "Hoool! Hoool!" sounds. The same sound is made when a patient gets possessed in bali ceremonies. The reason for her wailing is again stated to be that yakkuvu have entered her and are "eating her flesh and drinking her blood." The bali ceremony is intended to induce the yakkuvu to leave her.

The specialists for the ceremony are again the tom-tom beaters from a neighboring village. Two are dancing and singing and two others are beating a rhythm on the bera drums. The specialists are wearing their appropriate costumes.

It is stated that the two yakkuvu images want fowls and blood; Katina Rupaya wants meat.

The ceremony commences by covering the patient with a white cloth. After much dancing and singing the string which connects the Katina Rupaya with the yakkuvu figures is handed on to the patient. Later the white cloth which hides the patient is taken away. The dola offerings are offered to the yakkuvu figures. A fowl is killed and offered to the yakkuvu. Parts of it are given to the sitting female demon on skewers which are set all around her. Much incense is burned near the sick woman and she starts trembling. The explanation is that when the bera is played the vision of the yakkuvu appears to the woman and that then the woman will simply go mad (pissu hadanava). The possessed women throws herself on the ground and shrieks, "Hoool! Hooool!" Saffron water is sprinkled upon her and her excitement subsides. She is carried back to her enclosure in an exhausted state.

The specialist tom-tom beaters resume their dancing. Arecanut flowers are given to them which they hold in their hands instead of the usual bells. They chant "long life" while sweeping the vas-dos away from her toward the sitting yakkini. Later parts of the arecanut flowers are broken off in small pieces and again with sweeping gestures are thrown away from the patient towards the demoness.

The bali ends with the string thrown at Katina Rupaya. The yakkini is then covered with the cloth which covered the patient. There is much singing and dancing before the ceremony is finally concluded.

The bali figures, the pidaniya, the pole are then taken into the jungle to a place where they can no longer "see" the house. They are placed on the ground facing upwards and the tom-tom beaters make some feeble attempt to burn them with kerosene. The act is only symbolic and with the final recitation of mantaram they abandon the figures.

When we compare the two bali rites the main differences between them are as follows: (a) In the second bali ceremony three figures were involved. While the figure stands on a cobra vehicle in Bali 1, the vehicles of the second bali are cattle with cobras on their heads. This is part of the difference in the character of the yakkuvu concerned. (b) Bali 1 has no special pidanya offerings, but the dola stand serves the same purpose. (c) Bali 1 did not commence with a pole erection ceremony. (d) Bali 1 is directed against ill health in general whereas Bali 2 is specifically against
madness and sorcery. The patient in Bali 2 becomes possessed by the yakkuva. (e) The dola in Bali 2 is a newly killed fowl. In Bali 1 the dola is more complex but exploits the same theme. In both cases the dola contains pollution.

As against the differences listed, the basic symbolic structure of the rites is remarkably similar: (a) The bali area is demarcated and isolated by a hut (maduva). (b) Bali figures are created by the specialist. (c) The patient is covered at the beginning of the ceremony. (d) Bali figures are sacralized. (e) Bali figures are connected with the patient with string and the patient is uncovered. (f) The dola offering of yakkuva delicacies is presented. (g) The vas-dos of the patient is swept away. (h) When the yakkuva is out of the patient, the string is thrown back, the connection is broken and the figure covered. (i) The figures are destroyed or taken away into the wilderness. (j) The patient, still in a heightened state, is told to observe certain food taboos while gradually returning to ordinary life.

The bali ceremonies described in an unsystematic but detailed fashion by Wirz (1954:105ff.) also conform to this symbolic structure.

The description of pirit and bali rites forms an introduction to the sphere of ritual healing among the Sinhalese. The structure of these rituals is meaningful only when placed in the context of rituals directed toward the Hindu deities (devaya) and the rest of the complex of Buddhist concepts and ideology. In this section I provide an analysis of a maleliya rite, intended for the deities. I hope in this fashion to indicate some of the further implications of the category of supernatural beings under the Buddha which the Sinhalese refer to as the devaya and the yakkuva.

Maleliya is an elaborate ceremony undertaken by the kapurala on behalf of a village or a family. The Sinhalese would consider it to be part of the general category of sacred ceremonies referred to as “play of the deities” (deviyange sellama); “horn play” (an keliya); “village hut” (gam maduva); “procession” (perahera), or simply “ceremony” (mangalaya).

1. Maleliya at Teripehe Village

The ceremony takes place in the Galpitiya hamlet of Teripehe, and is intended for the ill grandson of a neighbor of the Goyigama caste. The main kapurala, Appuhami (my cook), has invited other kapurala to add to the occasion. The kapurala from Ekassa Temple (kovil, i.e., small devale) has brought the weapons (ayuda) of the deities in a box. The Ekassa kovil particularly is associated with the deity of the locality (Ekassa deva), but there are also numerous other deities associated with it.

A large hut has been prepared with plantain trunks and has been elaborately decorated with arecanut, coconut flowers, and white cloths brought by the washerman. At one end of the hut a small altar (masa) has been constructed about five feet off the ground. The altar is again decorated with white cloths and covered with plantain leaves. The most conspicuous objects upon the altar are the weapons of the deities (ayuda)—arrows, swords, and tridents, which are arranged vertically in an orderly fashion.

Three tom-tom beaters have been invited. Large amounts of pure food have been prepared and these will be offered later to the ritual practitioners who take part in the ceremony.
The maleliya starts with an initial slow dance and song sequence. The kapuralas take turns dancing. At certain points there are no songs but only dancing. Eventually the kapurala become possessed (amaru or mayan) one by one. They sing epics concerning the birth, life, and deaths of the deities associated with the weapons on the altar. Each weapon stands for a different deity, and as the songs are continued, betel and arecanut flowers are offered to the gods.

After an interval, the Ekassa kapurala becomes possessed. The tom-toms beat out a frenzied rhythm and the kapurala, swinging his hair, dances wildly. He is given some lighted torches which he "eats." After eating fire, the kapurala, still in a state of possession, turns to singing charms. He has a long staff in his hand and touches people gently as he dances. Some persons in the audience offer him money wrapped in betel leaves (pandura). He takes this, and standing in front of the person foretells the future. The assumption is that a deity has entered into him and is speaking through him. Some of the audience, particularly some young people, do not believe that the kapurala is really possessed and make fun of him. The audience is uncertain as to which deity has possessed him and different informants give contradictory answers. On the whole, they appear to say that this is the Ekassa deva speaking through his kapurala. There is another interval.

As the night proceeds, the other kapurala become possessed one by one and recite the stories of the deities. The kapurala appear to become possessed, particularly when the dancing and the tom-tom beating reach a certain intensity. The handling of the weapons of the deities or the offering of food-stuffs to them also appears conducive to possession.

The final rite in the morning consists of the Ekassa kapurala doing a dance for a goddess. This dance, known as the kiri amma natanava (the dance of the grandmothers), is said to be the offering of pardon for mistakes to those who have provided milk, i.e., the mothers. It is also said that during this dance the kapurala becomes the goddess Pattini. The Ekassa kapurala, in an appropriate fashion, wears a sari over his shoulder. During the dancing, the grandchild who is ill is given to the kapurala, who holds the child in his arms and dances violently near the weapons. Many of the words he utters are incomprehensible; but he is said to be relating his visions (pehena).

At the end of the dance of the grandmothers there is a final outburst of dancing by all the kapuralas concerned.

The symbolic structure of the rite is as follows: (a) A hut (maduva) is constructed; (b) Pure food (adukka) is prepared; (c) The symbols of the deities are brought and placed on an altar (mesa); (d) The symbols (ayuda) are sacralized by singing and dancing and beating of tom-toms; (e) Adukka is offered to the deities; (f) Each deity is handled separately and his history from birth to death is recited. The kapurala becomes possessed by the deity and speaks as an oracle (see below); (g) Possession (i.e., amaru vima) is repeated with variations for each deity; (h) The ayuda are taken back to the temple.

In fact the most complicated and formal version of the rite is a repetition for each male and female deity of the offering of adukka. Secondary structures may be elaborated around this basic theme. Thus in the preparation of the food, the utensils may be singled out for purification and worship; the men (women are impure) who do the cooking may cover their mouths with clean cloths to prevent saliva (very
polluting—bodily excretion) from falling on the food. The purification of ayuda by
the blacksmiths with lime and saffron and the washing of Pattini with milk fall into
this category. While these ritual acts are of vital significance when we construct the
code for the analysis of the contexts in which milk or saffron or limes are used,
they may or may not be considered necessary parts of the formal symbolic structure
of the rituals.

Up to this point, I have been concerned with the formal structure of Sinhalese
healing rituals, and hence have had to translate many of the ritual objects and acts
involved in the rite by indicating their contexts in the symbolic code used by the
Sinhalese. These are the first two levels of the procedure I previously outlined. I
now turn to the third level of analysis. What is the significance of these rites? What
problems are they concerned with? The best approach to these questions is to ex-
amine certain features of the categories of devaya and yakkuva.

I must point out immediately that I have not discussed here the more elaborate
ceremonies intended for the devaya. Some of these are annual rituals and have nation-
wide importance. For instance, the mysterious ceremonials in the jungle shrine of
Kataragama last a full fortnight, and pilgrims from all over Ceylon and even South
India visit the shrine to worship the god Kataragama and his mistress Valli Amma.
(Wirz, 1954:145ff.; Yalman, 1962b.) Similar annual ceremonies which culminate in
colorful nocturnal processions with elephants, tom-tom beaters, and diverse castes
take place in most important temples in Ceylon. (Ryan, 1953:211ff.) But even with
the limited material presented, we may proceed with our analysis.

We have noted, first, that both the devaya and the yakkuva are concerned with
this life. The sins of an individual in his earlier lives (karma dos) may still cling
to him in his present existence and may render him more susceptible to misfortune.
But the benefits the deities will bring or withhold, and the attacks of the demons, do
not affect his future rebirths.

In contrast, the Buddha and his priests are concerned with the next existence and
eternity. The priest comes into the life crises of a person only at his funeral. If his
merit (pin) outweighs his sins, he will be reborn in a higher state or even reach
Nirvana. The teaching of the Buddha expresses the interests in the other world. The
way to Nirvana is to minimize the importance of wealth, family, friends, and all
things which tie the person down to this existence. The individual is urged to give
up everything and turn to good deeds and purity, prayer, and meditation, to reach
Buddha-hood in his next existence. On the other hand, immediate disaster and hap-
piness are associated with the devale, the devaya, and the kapurala. They can give
health, money, children, good crops, and fertile wives. It is noteworthy therefore
that the ritual acts at the vihara consist of “prayer” (vandanava) whereas people go
to the devale to “beg” (nyaknya kirima) or to “request” (illasitima) the help of the
deities.

The Buddha and his priests are superior to the deities and their kapurala. The
latter are seen as the servants of the former. The relationships between the Buddha
and the devaya are expressed in a most suggestive fashion by the transfer of merits
(pin) from the Buddhist temple (vihara) to the devaya. Thus, the layman can ac-
quire merit by the performance of good deeds and by making offerings (puja dhana)
to the Buddhist temple. He may then go into a devale or simply turn aside in a
private place and offer a share (pangu or kotas) of his pin to the devaya. In return for giving some of this merit to the devaya, the individual is supposed to receive “protection” which will immediately aid him in this existence.

There are very important category oppositions in the realm of high Buddhism (see Figure II). Thus while the Buddha stands for Eternity, Maraya, his cross-cousin, his rival in all his lives, stands for Death. Yet both Maraya and the Buddha are one; for Maraya is sometimes described as only a thought in the mind of the Buddha. Here again is the polarity between eternal existence and finite death, which Lévi-Strauss notes is a recurring theme in mythologies and religions (1955:59-62).

Such oppositions also exist in the categories of the devaya and yakkuva (Figure II). Let us note immediately that the yakkuva and devaya are similar in many respects. There are males and females in both categories (deva, devi and yakka, yakkini). Both are supernatural beings in human form. Both have vehicles (yantarava) on which they can travel and which they can delegate to act on their behalf. When they are depicted as images, such as the bali effigies, images of the yakkuva, or the pictures of the devaya in Wirz (1954), there are remarkable similarities between their external manifestations. Of course the yakkuva are often distinguished by their black faces or blood-thirsty aspects and long teeth, but their general appearance seems similar to the manifestations of the devaya. Both the devaya and the yakkuva have supernatural power (balaya, dishtiya, vas) which can make people mad (pissu). The devaya and the yakkuva are so similar that sometimes the distinctions between them get blurred even for experienced specialists such as the kapurala.11

One of the best known kapurala in the Walapane district was my cook Appuhami. While taking down the names of the devaya who were expected to make their appearances for a gam maduva rite, we arrived at a group of Bandara devaya: Vannia Bandara, Alut Deva, Menikbandara Deva, Kumara Bandara Deva. Appuhami claimed that these last were really yakkuva, but yakkuva “who lived in the jungle like elephants” and who were respected in the same way as elephants (see Leach, 1962).

Although the devaya and the yakkuva are similar as a general category, they are diametrically opposed in all their vital aspects. The devaya are considered to be extremely pure (pirisithu), and the devale in which they reside is also an extraordinarily pure place. Persons afflicted with even a minute amount of pollution (killa) must avoid the devale and the devaya. Hence persons from “birth, menstruation, and death houses” (killa gedera) cannot go into the devale. Persons who have eaten killa food (flesh, fried foods, smelly things) would be endangered in the devale for the god would attack them. The nature of the attack is expressed in various ways: there are “white cobras” in the devale that will attack impure persons; the devaya will attack impure persons with vas (vas gahanava) and will make them mad or cripple them; the devaya do not have vas, but there are yakkuva in the devale who do have vas, and they will attack and make the impure person mad.12

In contrast to the devaya, the yakkuva are extremely impure. They live in filthy places, hang around graveyards, and thus are associated with the most intense

11 Gooneratne (1865, passim) also notes the similarity of the devaya and yakkuva.
12 This last statement comes from a kapurala who wanted to distinguish between vas and dishtiya.
pollution of all—death pollution (mini killa). One has to take ritual precautions when approaching graveyards because the yakkuva go through graves, and if they happen to go through one’s body, all is finished!

The opposition of the devaya and the yakkuva is manifested in the food they like. The devaya will be offered only the purest food. The adukka prepared for them must be specially cooked by men—women menstruate and are not as pure as men. The food must be offered in specially purified places. Hence the cleansing of the house with cow dung or saffron water before preparing adukka and hence the closing up of the mouth with cloths like surgeons in an operating theatre. The boiling of milk (kiri uturanava) is a special ritual offering to the devaya.

The yakkuva may be offered “five kinds of burned things” or “three kinds of flesh” (mas tun vage), i.e., land-pig (uru malu); air-peacock (madara malu); sea-fish (magula malu); all polluted condiments (kili malu).

As noted above, both the devaya and the yakkuva have a similar kind of power which ordinary people refer to as vas.18

The specialist kapurala is more careful in his distinctions. Appuhami kapurala claimed that the devaya have dishtiya (power, also deva balaya) whereas vas, which is mainly negative, belongs only to the yakkuva. The devaya use it for good purposes, whereas the yakkuva use it for bad purposes.

An important aspect of this power is that it “makes madness” (pissu hadanava). It has different manifestations in the case of the yakkuva and the devaya. When the dishtiya falls on the kapurala, who has observed food taboos, has kept himself ritually pure, and is in a pure place, then he is relatively safe. He will start trembling and shaking. He will start swinging his head round and round and will become “possessed” (mayang venava) by the deva or devi in question. His progressive entrance into the trance state is explained by saying that he becomes “difficult” (amaru venava—also used in the case of serious illness, loss of consciousness) or “mad.” It will be said that his blood becomes heavy (bara le venava). The kapurala thus becomes an oracle for the particular deity devaya who has possessed him. The people will offer panduru to the deity who is speaking through the kapurala. The kapurala will tell his “vision” (pehena kiyanava: foretelling the future) and will advise the worshipper. Such possession is always accompanied by frenzied tom-tom beating and much incense. I witnessed no difficulty in the kapurala’s getting out of the trance state. Some of these trances were quite genuine, but in many others the specialists showed indications of faking the manifestations.

Just as the devaya enter into the specialist and possess him, the yakkuva enter into ordinary persons and make them mad. The ceremonies for the yakkuva are intended to induce them to leave the patient. The outward manifestations of such madness often appear to follow the same lines as the possession of the kapurala. In fact the kapurala in the trance is spoken of as mad (pissu).14

13It may also be said that the vihara has no vas for the “Buddha is uninterested in such things.” And hence women who are polluted may be allowed into the vihara. But these are probably theological points which would stand much disputation, for the Buddha obviously has great power (balaya) but does not make men mad.

14The convergence of the cultural manifestations of possession and epileptic fits raises important questions (see Nadel, 1946). The entry into trance states, the simulation of epileptic fits, the tom-tom beating, all seem very similar in Africa, Asia, or Haiti (Metraux, 1959:120ff.).
Figure II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nirvana</th>
<th>World of</th>
<th>- (Minus) Impure (kiliutu, or killa)</th>
<th>Bad (naraka)</th>
<th>apaya (&quot;Hell&quot;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>+ (Plus) Good (honda)</td>
<td>- (Minus) Impure (kiliutu, or killa)</td>
<td>Bad (naraka)</td>
<td>apaya (&quot;Hell&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bhikkhu (Buddhist Priest)</td>
<td>bhikkhu (Buddhist Priest)</td>
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<td>in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vihara</td>
<td>vihara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pin (merits)</td>
<td>pin (merits)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graveyards</td>
<td>Graveyards</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corpse peretaya</td>
<td>Corpse peretaya</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spirits of the dead hovering</td>
<td>Spirits of the dead hovering</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>around</td>
<td>around</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Above: *vihare* Pattern: No dancing (*natanava*) ceremonies; tom-tom beaters use round drum (*davula*); no spirit possession.
Below: Devale Pattern: Dancing, gods' “games” (deviyange sellama); tom-tom beaters use elongated drum (bera); possession rites; may not be seen by Buddhist priests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deva lokaya</th>
<th>(api lokaya)</th>
<th>apaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deva lokaya</td>
<td>kapurala</td>
<td>yakkhuva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devi (in pure places)</td>
<td>in devale or maduwa</td>
<td>yakkini (hang around graveyards, polluted places)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dishiya (power of deity)</td>
<td>bali adura</td>
<td>vas (poison, supernatural danger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Cobra</td>
<td>yakha adura</td>
<td>Black Cobra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring pihita (luck, fertility, happiness)</td>
<td>in charmed enclosures (maduwa)</td>
<td>polanga (Russells viper)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planetary Deities</th>
<th>Personal Destiny (karmaya)</th>
<th>Fate—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ (honda velava)</td>
<td>dependent upon configuration of grahayo at moment of birth or conception.</td>
<td>brings: “Bad time” (apele)—illness, misfortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ brings: “Good time”</td>
<td>Specialist: Astrologers (nekat rala or sastra kariya) constructs horoscope (yantaram)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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There is a similarity between being hit by vas or falling under the power of the deity (dishtiya vetanava). The terminology utilized for yakku or devaya possession is identical. The kapurala and the patient start shivering and trembling (vevulanava or kili pelume); they may lose consciousness (sihi neti vanava); the yakkuva will appear (yakku pehanava) to the patient in the same way as the kapurala will have visions (pehenna). The usual term for the possession of the kapurala is mayang venava, whereas the term for madness is pissu hadanava.

The Buddha or Maraya, on the contrary, are never involved in possession rites. The Buddha or the state of Buddha-hood are approached by meditation and the relinquishment of all desire. The active nature of the devaya and yakkuva compared to the passivity of the Buddha is part of the opposition between their concern with this life and the next.

The devale are said to have white cobras in them, which are sacred or divine. The poison of the cobra is also referred to as vas. The yakkuva are also associated with snakes (e.g., bali, above) and particularly with the black cobra. The two aspects of the snake are also manifested in the mythology concerning the rivalry between the cobra and the Russels Viper which are both among the deadliest creatures on the island.

The polarity between the devaya and the yakkuva is best clarified by what the ceremonies are intended to accomplish. The rites for the devaya if carried out correctly have the following effects: (a.) Happiness and health (sepa sanipa) increases in the village; (b.) The fertility of Women, Cattle and Lands (sampata) is enhanced; (c.) The village becomes lucky (vassanava); (d.) Deaths decrease.

If the rites are forgotten, however, the village gradually relapses into the opposite state: (a.) (Leda duka) Illness and sorrow increase; (b.) Fertility is reduced; paddy yields are lower; (c.) The village becomes unlucky (avasanava); (d.) Deaths increase.

This contrast in the state of the individual or community is summed up in Sinhalese by the expressive words honda (good, auspicious) and naraka (bad, inauspicious). The same words are used to speak of low (naraka) and high (honda) castes, and of impurity and purity.

The essential contrast is that the rites and offerings (adukka) to the devaya are intended to bring about the set of positive effects, and the rites (bali) and offerings (dola) to the yakkuva are intended to oppose the set of negative effects. This simple dichotomy underlies all the complexity of Sinhalese thinking on the subject of the supernatural. All the rites and their minor details are directed towards the contrast between these basic issues:

15 Elephants, who also have divine attributes, have their positive and negative aspects. The white elephant is sacred and fertilized the mother of the Buddha, Maya, in a dream. The elephant of Marea, Nalagiri, however, tried to kill the Buddha.

16 The negative state can also be induced by sorcery (huniyam): the charms and rites which are directed towards the yakkuva to bring about the death or illness of a particular person (see Gooneratne 1865:68ff.).

17 Our observations are directly borne out, e.g., by the ritual activities at harvest time. There are elaborate precautions taken on the threshing floor to assure the increase of paddy and keep away the yakkuva who hover around. Thus, the threshing floor is made like a devale and is especially pure. No impurities, even women, are allowed to enter into it. A special language, kammata bhasava, is spoken which the yakkuva will not understand. If the precautions are not carefully observed the yakkuva will enter the threshing floor and the paddy will decrease.

18 Elephants, who also have divine attributes, have their positive and negative aspects. The white elephant is sacred and fertilized the mother of the Buddha, Maya, in a dream. The elephant of Marea, Nalagiri, however, tried to kill the Buddha.

19 The negative state can also be induced by sorcery (huniyam): the charms and rites which are directed towards the yakkuva to bring about the death or illness of a particular person (see Gooneratne 1865:68ff.).
All of these dichotomies are related to the opposition between purity and pollution, an opposition constantly reiterated in all Sinhalese rituals.

We must emphasize again that the logical connection between the positive and negative sides of the equation is so close indeed⁴⁸ that it seems as if the positive qualities are the negative qualities turned inside out. The purpose of the ritual is precisely to accomplish this conversion of pollution into purity. The rituals appear to oscillate between all that is impure and all that is pure. There are such oscillations at every level of Sinhalese religious thought. The ideology of pollution, for instance, has associations with life as well as death. Death is polluting, but the corpse, people say, becomes fertilizer (pohora) for the fields. The corpse is intensely polluting because “the feces cannot be excreted.” But feces and manure pits are also fertilizers. In Buddhist ideology too a death brings about immediate conception in some womb. At the same time, birth is intensely polluting (bodily excretions). Sexual intercourse which results in birth is polluting. The same dichotomy that life and death and purity and pollution are opposed but bring about one another is also embedded in the preoccupation with female puberty, which though it is the sign of female fertility is itself very polluting (Yalman, 1963).

Feces are impure, but the feces of the cow (goma) are very pure and auspicious. The ashes of cow dung, just as the relics of the Buddha’s corpse after cremation (see below) are even more intense in their purity and sacredness.

Just as the rituals may be said to oscillate between positive and negative states, it is also noteworthy that the ritual practitioners are themselves “mediators.” I discuss the Buddhist priests below, but let me draw attention to the position of the kapurala. The word kapurala carries the meaning of “middleman.” The ordinary kapurala in the Sinhalese villages is a “marriage broker” who brings two families together and mediates between them. This type of kapurala has nothing to do with the healing ritualist and may be distinguished from the latter by the qualification “wedding” (magula) kapurala. Interestingly enough, the marriage kapurala is always the object of much joking. The Radcliffe-Brown point regarding the ambivalence of “joking relationships” certainly applies to him (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952:90ff.).

The ritual specialist kapurala, on the other hand, is a mediator between men and the gods and goddesses. During his role as a mediator, he wears special costumes which have the characteristic that his breasts are carefully covered by a red sash. He also has to observe severe sex taboos. I suggest that the costumes and the taboos are intended to disguise or submerge his virility and render him sexless. When, however, he is possessed by a deity he will usually dance with one of the weapons and partakes of the sexuality of the god or goddess that has possessed him. In contrast, when pos-

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⁴⁸ So close that some writers miss the differentiation between devaya and yakkuva completely (e.g., Pertold, 1930:127).
sessed by a god, he uses the weapons which are pointed objects; but when possessed by a goddess, he dances with the symbols of the female deities: round objects which often have holes—necklaces, rings, brass mangos, etc.

We must also note in this context that the kapurala mediates not merely between the deities and men, but also between male and female deities. We have mentioned that the maleliya rituals include the recitation of epic songs concerning the birth and death of the gods. A number of other rituals which are beyond the scope of this paper, however, are directly concerned with sexual intercourse between male and female deities (ganu-purussiya sambandam) (Yalman, 1964).

The oscillation between impurity and purity at the level of the devaya and yakkuva is to be noted in the realm of high Buddhism as well. Consider the relics (dhatu) of the Buddha. These are parts of his body (sarira) which are supposed to have remained behind after his cremation. They are described as his bones (hakuru and lalata dhatu), his teeth (denta dhatu—in the Temple of the Tooth [Hocart, 1931], his hair (khesa dhatu), his nails (nyepata dhatu). It is not simply that parts of his corpse become sacred by being purified by fire during the cremation. Quite apart from the bones, some of the relics selected for religious attention are precisely the most polluting parts of the body, e.g., the nails and the hair (cf. Leach, 1958). These relics of the corpse become extra sacred, and extra fertile. Hence the belief is that it always rains when the dhatu are shaken, or when the tooth relic in Kandy is taken on a procession in its relic chamber.

Hair is selected for special attention. The hair of ordinary humans is very polluting (but women's long hair symbolizes fertility). The Buddhist priests must be very pure (and celibate, i.e., infertile) so their entire body is shaven from head to foot. But the Buddha figure has tightly curling black hair in all his representations; and as we suggested, his hair relic is again sacred and fertile (Leach, 1958, passim).

Consider the implications of the robe (siura) of the Buddhist priest, which should be made from cloths found in graveyards. In the funeral ceremony of the Sinhalese, a piece of cloth is left at the head of the grave with the recitation of the pansakulaya prayer. The cloth is thus imbued with death-pollution. But when stitched (in 108 pieces, which is said to be like the 108 sections of dos [sin]) and then dyed with saffron, the robe becomes extremely pure, sacred, and auspicious. It is then said to symbolize the ripe paddy fields of the Buddha's father which the Buddha saw during his ascent to Nirvana. Thus just as the bhikku mediates between life and death at funerals, the robe he wears reiterates the same polarity at the symbolic level.

There is an important difference between the bhikku and the Buddha, which is partly brought out by the handling of hair in the case of these sacred persons. The bhikku is extremely sacred and is revered as a holy man. He is, however, still involved in the contradictions of purity and pollution. His hair is shaved to emphasize his purity. But he also has a negative aspect: to meet a bhikku first thing in the morning

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19 The mango (amba) is the symbol of the goddess Pattini and in popular use stands for vagina.
20 The Buddha image (rupaya) is a symbol of the Buddha's sarira and contains precious stones as "relics" (dhatu) inside it.
21 The tapasa bhikku (ascetic monks) who make a point of living in graveyards and who meditate on death wear soiled brown robes which bring them even closer into the polarity between pollution and sacredness. They claim to be the true custodians of Buddha's teaching (Yalman, 1962a).
means death; to go to the paddy fields after having met him is believed to decrease the paddy yield; to dream of a bhikku symbolizes Maraya (i.e., death)

While similar oppositions may exist in the case of the Buddha (like the statement that Maraya is a thought in his mind), they are, as it were, resolved. It is said that the Buddha, though sacred and perfectly pure, does not care about pollution. Hence polluted women may enter his temples. Again, though his priests are shaven, he does retain his hair. In him all such contradictions are ended: life and death, purity and impurity, are no longer opposed but resolved. The main achievement of the Buddha is to move out of the cycle of life and death, happiness and sorrow, into Nirvana, where there is neither: the Buddha is Eternal Being.

The resolution of the contradictions between life and death comes through with particular emphasis in the case of the dagoba (also known as stupa). The word stands for dhatu-garbhayaya. My informants give the following associated meanings for dhatu: (a.) relics of the Buddha; (b.) seeds; (c.) semen. For garbhaya they simply say gaba, i.e., a pregnant womb. The explanation is that the relics of the Buddha are safe in the womb. When the Buddha died and was cremated, his body (sarira) became like tiny seeds, which were put into a dagoba. Although no direct association is made between the vitality of semen and the fertility of the relics, the dhatu are said to have “life” (pranaya) in them. It is also said that the land around a dagoba is particularly fertile. At other times my informants have said, “When the Buddha died his goodness (gune) became seeds (atta) and went into the earth and created the world.” In Buddhist thought it is clear that in the dagoba there is no longer a contradiction between life and death. The sacred object, which is a memorial tomb built upon the relics of the cremated body of the Buddha, also stands for the creation of the universe. More exactly, it is the perfect statement of Eternal Being.

I have been concerned in this paper with the formal aspects of Sinhalese healing rituals. The analysis proceeded on three levels. First, I noted that the items used in the ritual were part of a consistent code and could be examined in terms of their contexts. Second, I drew attention to certain formal arrangements in the rites (e.g., reversal themes in bali, the use of the string) and noted that they follow a logical procedure and bring about the desired effects in the realm of ritual. I also noted that all the rites and all the objects utilized in the rites either reiterated the opposition between positive-negative, good-bad, pure-impure categories or that they mediated between these binary pairs. I conclude that Lévi-Strauss is correct in calling attention to the orchestra score structure of rituals; as in folk poetry (see Sebeok, 1960:233), certain themes and elements are repeated in different forms through the text. In short, the exuberant complexity of the manifest symbolism of the rites we have been describing covers an underlying conceptual structure of extreme simplicity. But the analysis of the structure can be accomplished only by painstaking attention during field work, to identifying and recording the contexts of the ritual items.

My critics may claim that since I did not lay down completely unambiguous and explicit rules to guide my analytic procedure, the results are simply a set of personal opinions and do not indicate that there is any order in Sinhalese thinking on the

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22 As the informants put it, “Very high, good word for semen.”
subject. They may also claim that I have analyzed only those items which I found convenient.

The second point is easily answered. A complete elucidation of any one of these rituals would mean the analysis of all aspects of Sinhalese folk religion—an undertaking far beyond the scope of this paper. As to whether the structure exists in the rites or in my own mind, I may draw attention to certain independent observations without going into the metaphysics of the question. I want to mention three points made in the paper: (a) the distinction between the after-life and this life, (b) the devaya-yakkuva binary pair, (c) the position of the peretaya in Figure II.

(a) While working on this paper, I came to the conclusion that there was a division of labor between the Buddha and the devaya-yakkuva. I expressed this as the concern with the after-life and this life respectively and noted that the division was reflected in the use of special drums, and also by the taboo on Buddhist priests watching dancing ceremonies, or coming into contact with auspicious ceremonies of this life—i.e., birth, puberty, and marriage. Towards the end of the writing of this paper, I read Gooneratne, who reflects the same opinions, thus, “Buddhism does not hold out worldly advantages or immediate rewards in this life to its votaries . . . Its task is to obtain salvation for the soul . . . a consummation to be attained only in another state of existence . . . Demonism on the other hand deals with the concerns of this life and of this life alone” (1865:5ff.).

(b) Again, I concluded that the yakkuva and the devaya were the two opposed aspects of one category. The point is directly reflected in Gooneratne (1865), who states, for example:

[The devaya cult] like [the yakkuva cult] also refers to the interests of this world; but while the object of the latter is to inflict or cure diseases by the agency of demons, the object of the former is to protect men generally against all manner of evil, and from diseases . . .

(Concerning their similarity, he adds:)

[Neither] Dewo nor Yakseyo are born from the womb of a mother, but suddenly spring into existence full grown . . . Nevertheless the last two classes, viz., Dewo and Yakseyo may have mothers in a peculiar fashion . . . marrying and giving in marriage prevail among them as well as among men . . .

(c) I had found the peretaya, ghosts or spirits of the dead, difficult to place. They were lowly, filthy creatures and could belong with the yakkuva. But they were distinguished by a separate name and did not appear to be so concerned with this life as the yakkuva. I eventually classed them as the category opposite to the Buddhist priests. I have already indicated the close association between the priests and death and I have noted the extreme purity, the sacredness, and the food taboos of the bhikku.

Consider now what Gooneratne says on the subject:

The PRETAS are entirely a different race of beings from all that have yet been mentioned. They are the most helpless and miserable creatures in existence. They live only to suffer. Their only aliment is spittle . . . They can only look at it with burning desire . . . Their skins hang about them in loose folds . . . The Pretayo are not included in Demon workings . . . They are not possessed of power to injure a man . . . [except] by looking.
with desire at the food he is about to take; but this is a power, which is attributed to . . . men . . . as well as to Pretayo. (He too concludes, finally) The Pretayo . . . are creations of Buddhism, and not mere popular fancy (i.e., like devayo and yakkuva). (1865:38ff.)

Although not completely explicit, the peretaya category of supernaturals appears to be close to the negative aspects of the priest (the word bhikku means beggar) who is supposed to beg his food and who wears a loose robe.

Wirz's (1954) observations on the peretayo also underline the opposition:

Thus, not every individual is turned into a preta or preti after life, but only those who, up to and immediately before their death, fostered all kinds of desires, cravings, or passions, whether it was those who directed all their thoughts to money and earthly goods, those who massed treasures through avarice, those who were always planning the building of houses and palaces . . . (p. 184). (And finally, he says:)

. . . a . . . (dane) offered to the bhikshu of a monastery is always a cause to remember the preteo . . . (p. 191).

The psychological implications of the Sinhalese concepts which I have described are beyond the scope of this paper. Obviously, the point that feces, the bad-object par excellence, are aggressive and dangerous, and that they are at the root of the pollution complex is frequently met with in psychoanalytic literature. The bad-objects are also part of the self and have good aspects. This close association between the self and polluted but powerful bodily exuviae is also reflected in the sacred relics (hair, nails, bones, teeth, etc.) chosen to represent holy beings in almost all cultures. But these questions, however fundamental, take us into another realm where we cannot wander without expert guidance.23

APPENDIX I

Versions of Pirit Ceremonies

Pirit 3

The ceremony takes place in a polyandrous household. An infant is ill, and pirit will restore its health. The pirit starts at about 9:30 p.m. and will continue until midnight. The mother of the child is sitting near the doorway of her hut with the infant in her lap. There are no chairs in this poor house and everyone is sitting on mats.

There is no priest, but a group of lay singers take his place. His permission is asked in a formal manner and the priest gives it by reciting certain verses. Those who sing pirits have to be clean; the fact that this is only a ritual cleanliness is evident from the group assembled.

No rule can be made about the relationship of the singers. Some of them are known for their interest in religious matters, and one in particular who lives mostly in the temple is referred to as an upasaka (pious man). One of the “fathers” is singing and there are other neighbors and relations. The minimal importance of kinship

23 The field work on which this essay is based was carried out in Ceylon in 1954–56 and was generously supported by the University of Cambridge and the Wenner-Aren Foundation. I am grateful also to the director and staff of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences for providing the admirable circumstances in which the essay was written.
ties is suggested by the fact that one of the singers is of the washerman caste, (see Yalman, 1960:82–83). Since they all sit on the floor, the problem which the presence of the washerman presents in seating arrangements is solved.

The pirit nula is held by the singers and passes to the woman and her children. There is a water pot (pirit hen) near her with some red flowers in it. This is surprising, for they are usually appropriate offerings to the yakka. The flowers associated with the Buddha are normally white flowers (sapu) of the temple trees.

**Pirit 4**

A bamboo structure (pirit maduva) has been prepared and twelve lay persons, friends and relations of the householder, are singing like priests inside it. The hut is inside an ordinary village dwelling. Just outside the structure, which is also referred to as a pirit kotuva, oil lamps (pahana) are burning. The tom-tom beaters are seated outside and the washermen who have brought the cloth with which to decorate the structure will return in the morning. The relics (karanduwa) have not been brought out this time and only the priests are allowed to handle it. On the table around which the singers are seated, there are water pots, coconut flowers, betel, rice.

A string (pirit nula) is attached to the cloth above the structure and descends to the singers who all hold it. Then it goes around to the wife of the householder, who at the receiving end is holding it with an arecanut flower. The pirit is intended to protect (arakshava) the household and to counteract apele, (apele dura enta).

The singers hold the book (pirit pota) in their hands and are divided into two groups. (I am unsure as to whether this choral element involved in the singing represents the contest between the forces of evil [Marea] and the forces of good [Buddha].) The next morning all the singers get together and drink kanja, which is some form of milk and rice. They then tie the pirit nula around their wrists or necks and drink the water on the table.

There is another little structure with flowers and a lamp just outside the dwelling. This is known as a mal palliya (flower basket) and is of the same category as the mala bulat tattuva: an offering to the deities. The householder is unsure as to which particular deity it is intended for and recites the names Vishnu, Kataragama, Saman or “the god of four directions” (hatara varan deva). The offering is not a normal part of pirit. The fire is said to be lit to get guidance from the gods.

**Pirit 5**

A week before a birth is expected, a special pirit called angulimala pirita (birth pirit) is held for the pregnant woman. The verses of this pirit are different from the verses that are normally sung. The leda (patient) holds the pirit string. At the end of the ceremony, she has some food taboos imposed on her. She is not allowed to eat any kind of flesh or other dirty things. She may eat betel, which is very clean.* The patient has to avoid heavy fried food which will be difficult to digest.

**Pirit 6**

The pirit hut has been prepared. There are about nine singers who enter the

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* There is a story connected with the betel leaf which describes the way the leaf was brought by a snake. It is thought that the two ends of the leaf contain the vas (poison) of the snake and must therefore be torn off before it is eaten. Here again is the association between extreme purity and vas.
structure at different times. Some are friends and relations, and some are simply
the laborers of the owner of the house.

The pirit is being held for an old schoolmaster who owns many fields (Cooray).
He has a wound in his hand (tuwalayak); it is said that blood is collected in his
hand (le gallanava) and that he is losing strength (saraya yanava).

The sending end of the string comes from the singers and is wrapped around a
pot of pirit water. The arecanut flower wrapped in a betel leaf at the end of
the string is handed to the patient only after a great deal of singing. The object is
being passed back to the singers at intervals. The schoolmaster makes some fuss
about the fact that the string has to touch the white cloth (viyana) around the
structure. The next morning the string will be tied around the wrist of the patient
and he will drink the pirit water.

**APPENDIX II**

*Pulutu Pas Vage*  
(Five Kinds of Burned Things)

Burned or fried objects are part of the more general offerings of dola made to
yakkuva. The rite is also referred to as a *tun mansala araksava maturanava*, i.e., lit
three street corner protection charm: the charming of protection at the meeting
point of three roads which are inhabited by yakku.

The ceremony consists simply of the recitation of charms and the offering of five
kinds of burned things: *die mas* (water flesh), *goda mas* (land flesh), and three kinds
of grains: *abba* (mustard), *vilanda* (fried paddy), and one other grain. There are
also red flowers (*ratu mal*) and *le* (blood). The red flowers are specifically intended
for the yakkuva and stand in contrast to the white flowers usually offered to the
Buddha. These five kinds of burned things are put into small receptacles (*goduva*)
made from jack fruit leaves (*kos kola*). The jack tree is one of the category of *kiri
gaha* (milk tree), milk-exuding trees like the sacred Bo tree which stand for the
Buddha. But branches of the jack tree are used in sorcery.

**APPENDIX III**

*Bali 3*

The usual bali hut has been prepared and three effigies have been made which are
similar in their general lines to the effigy in Bali 1. The informants suggest that one
of the effigies is the figure of Maha Brahma and that the other one is the figure of
Valli Amma. They are uncertain about the personality of the third effigy. Other in-
formants would undoubtedly give different interpretations as to what the effigies
stand for. What is certain is that two effigies are male and one is female. It is also
noteworthy that the names offered by the informant are names of devaya, yakkuva.
(This is the double aspect of devaya and yakkuva to which attention has been
drawn.) All the effigies are standing upon large cobras. On a ledge in front of the
effigies, food offerings (dola) have been placed, again as in Bali 1. The dola is at
the moment covered with plantain leaves. Opposite the effigies, again as in Bali 1,
there is a hut which is covered up in front with a white cloth. The patient is inside the hut. The ceremony is an extremely elaborate one with six tom-tom beaters (bera kariya). The patient is rich and has spent more than 200 rupees on the ceremony.

After much singing and dancing by the tom-tom beaters led by the bali adura, the sick person is revealed. He is holding the string (nula) which connects him with the three figures of the yakkuva opposite him.

The dola is opened up and a mirror and a basket of food—fried rice, fried cakes (kavum), plantains, curries, hair—is in evidence. On the opposite side of the dola in front of the patient there is a molgaha (paddy pounder) placed on a plantain leaf in front of the sick man and there are pots of water with flower decorations on top (kaha pen: saffron water) on either side of the hut in which the patient is sitting.

As the tom-tom beaters proceed with their dancing and singing, a request is made by one of the schoolmasters to sing the jayamangala sutra. This is one of the Buddhist texts and is not normally part of a bali ceremony. The tom-tom beaters do sing it. The impression that as long as the singing and the dancing are continued it does not matter what is actually sung, provided it does have sacred power, is strengthened.*

In the morning, the patient is made to put his feet on the molgaha (pounder). (There is a parallelism here; just as the effigies have their feet on the cobras, so the patient has his feet on the molgaha.) A special ayu bowan takes place in which the tom-tom beaters address the patient and sweep away the vas-dos from him with arecanut flowers. They take some limes and stick these on the effigies. The patient then throws the cloth upon the bali images. He then throws the end of the string with a lime also upon the image.

There are subsidiary rites. Just before the final phase of the ceremony, all the singing and dancing stops. The two younger boys among the tom-tom beaters give their bells back to the older tom-tom beater. They then worship him and he returns the bells. After this, they worship each other. Then the youngest worships the oldest, and after this, the youngest in turn worships the two elder ones without giving the bells back. These ritual salutations are a recognition of the generational hierarchy among the tom-tom beaters. The asymmetry involved is that of kinship status and is not connected with relative age.

The images will stay in the house for three half days (tun varuva) and will then be taken into the jungle. The patient has food taboos placed upon him and will eat from pure dishes (plantain leaves).

APPENDIX IV

Versions of the Gam Maduva (Village Hut) Mangalaya (Ceremony) in the Village of Teripehe

(Accounts of Informants)

The leading people in the village will discuss the question of having a gam

* See Gooneratne (1865:52), "... much of what now seems ... gibberish, may at one time have been an intelligible language."
SINHALESE HEALING RITUALS

maduva. If there have been many deaths or misfortunes in the village, it is time to make an offering to the deities. Some people will make the rounds of all the houses in the village to collect contributions in paddy or money. A temporary hut (maduva) will be built for the seven kapuralas and the six or seven tom-tom beaters who are necessary for the occasion. The women cannot take part in the ceremonies but may only watch them. The washermen will provide the white cloth, and the men of the high caste will do all the cooking for the day. They will beat the paddy and prepare the food, and the kapurala will make the first offering of the food to the god.

The blacksmiths have to go to the kovil in Ekassa. There are some weapons (ayuda) which belong to the deities in the shrine. These weapons will be brought back to Teripehe with the procession. The tom-tom beaters will lead the procession and the weapons will be carried under a cloth provided by the washermen. The potters do not take part in this procession; but the cooking has to be done in new pots, and these are offered by the potter caste.

There are thirteen deities in Teripehe and the kapurala will dance to them one by one. They may dance about an hour for each god. At the very end of the ceremony there is a kiri amma dance. A man dresses up as a grandmother, wearing a sari, with a baby in his hands and becomes possessed.

The last act is called at bandima (literally “the tying of elephants”). Ten people dress up as elephants with a piece of cloth hanging in front of them like the trunk of the animal, and another ten persons hold them from behind. At the beginning of the rite, the elephants will be in the front and the tom-tom beaters behind. The elephants will move up and down and dance. There will be some other people who will hold a crossed pair of paddy pounders in front of the elephants like a gate. The elephants will push on the gateway, saying, “We want to go to the god.” The persons holding the paddy pounders will object and will demand some plantains. The elephants will return again and again, saying, “Can we go to the god?” Eventually they will hoot and dance and the tom-tom beaters will play the drums, and the elephants, thinking that the god has done this, will lose consciousness and fall down. They will be shouting, “Hoo!” Then the people will carry them into the hut. The elephants will be shivering (veulanava). A lot of food (kavum) and plantains remain. These will be given to the kapuralas, the washermen, the blacksmiths and the tom-tom beaters. If anything remains, this will go to the visitors and it will be said, “Hereafter, god, look upon us.” The elephants are also a god referred to as gana deyyo (i.e., Ganesha).

The Account of the Rite from a Washerwoman

The ceremony commences with the planting of a large kiri gaha (milk-exuding tree) pole (kanuva). The act is referred to as kap hitavima. Drums will be played, songs will be sung, and a kapurala and some people will be present. This pole is planted near the devale.

Processions will visit the houses of the village collecting rice and money and a date will be fixed for the gam maduva. The planting of the tree is like the foundation stone of a house (mul gala, i.e., root stone).

There will be a procession from the village where the paddy pounder (molgaha), the mortar (van gediya) and the paddy will be brought in procession under a white cloth with the singing of kavi songs and the beating of drums. Only the men will get...
together and prepare the food. They will cook some special rice called *de bata*? (god rice?). This food is cooked for the washermen, the tom-tom beaters, the kapurala and the other persons with specific duties (*atara kariya*). It is like a dhana to the gods. The food will be eaten then and there. After this, the tom-tom beaters and most of the villagers will go in procession to bring the weapons from Ekassa kovil.

The washermen will be busy in the village making *haluva*. Haluva are made of starched cloth in the shape of a fan, and are something like a deity. Since fourteen will come, fourteen haluva are needed. Furthermore, each deity needs different colors. Thus, (a) Kiritibandara needs a white haluva; (b) Kohombandara, red; (c) Kalukumara, black; (d) Nile bedde deviyo, blue; (e) Devatabandara, again, white, etc. The *kiri amma deviyo* needs two small haluva of white. All sorts of other deities will come too.

In the meantime, a box is made in Ekassa, and with the singing of sacred texts, all the weapons are put into that box and covered with a white cloth. Then the procession with the tom-tom beaters in the front and the weapons under the white cloth will start toward Teripehe. The blacksmiths will cleanse the weapons with limes and saffron at one of the mountain streams.

The haluva are prepared in a private place. The weapons (*deva ayuda*) are brought to the hut. The haluva will be brought in the same way with singing and dancing to the hut where the weapons have been placed. Both the weapons and the haluva are now outside the gam maduva (village hut) on a masa (altar or table).

The *atara kariya* will cook fourteen pots of rice, and they will prepare curries. They will also prepare plantains and kavum (fried cakes). At night the washermen, the kapuralas, and the tom-tom beaters will be given food.

The gam maduva ritual starts at ten o'clock at night. Then two weapons for each deity will be taken inside the maduva. They will be placed on a masa (altar). The singing and dancing will last about an hour. The kavis that are sung are known as *nyaknya kirima* (begging). The haluva are also taken into the hut one by one.

Then the food which is cooked is brought in procession to the same hut. All this must be done by men because women cannot touch these things. The food is placed on small table-like objects made of sticks and plantain trunks, called *karakala* (*pideniye*). There will be fourteen of these, one for each deity, and they will be arranged around the altar on which the weapons and the haluva have been placed. The small tables with food will have betel and heaped rice and curries on them.

Then the kapurala will recite the names of the gods one by one (*kannalav kirima*) and after this, the food will be placed in a corner. It is only after this that the *magul bere* (tom-tom beating) and the dancing will commence.

The kapurala will be singing the births and deaths of these deities. The good deeds of these gods will be recited, and if the ritual is well carried out, the fields will be more fertile and there will be not trouble with animals. The village will be lucky again.

*Another Version of the Rite from Appuhami Kapurala*

The necessary paddy is collected seven days before the intended ceremony. The kapurala will go from house to house in the village with the conch (*hak gediya*) and request food from the people. All the offerings will be placed in a specially prepared hut (maduva). Seven days after this initial collection of food, kap hitavima takes
place (see Version 2). This starts the ritual. The tree is tall and has an arecanut
flower on the top of it. The next day the hut is built around this tree.

Then the mortar and pestle are brought by men to the site of the ritual under
white cloth. Women who have stopped menstruation may help the men to prepare
the paddy and the food. The kapurala will start the initial stroke of beating the
paddy and then the men will go on. The women are not allowed to take part in this
stage of the proceedings. Three days before the ritual, all this is prepared and the
kapurala will send letters to other kapurala, requesting them to attend the celebra-
tions. When they arrive, they will be sent to houses to eat and the next day the cele-
brations will take place.

The cooking is a very special act which is carried out only by some people. These
persons will bathe, will be dressed in white, they will close up their mouths with
clean cloths and tie them up before touching the food. This preparation of the food
is referred to as adukka uyanava. Kavum (oil cakes), kiribat (milk rice), plantains,
and curries will be prepared.

Next the procession will go to the devale with tom-toms to bring the weapons
of the deities. The kapurala in the village are in charge of the weapons. They will
bring them and put them aside, but will not take them into the huts right away.
They will make a masa (altar) on which the food will be placed. Then the kapurala
will sing a yatika (see below) with the tom-tom beaters playing their drums inside
the hut. At the end of the yatika the food is brought out and the people are allowed
to eat. Then the kapuralas will dress up and get ready. Then there will be a yatika
to the arecanut flowers. After this, each kapurala will take a little of the flowers into
his hands.

The kapurala will recite the god's verses and dance. The dance is referred to as
pela paliya (the parade of weapons—also referred to as ayuda, or kanu mangalaya:
weapon or staff ceremony). The weapons will have been cleaned by the blacksmiths
with limes and saffron.

There will be dancing to the following deities: Nila bedde deva; Kohomba deva;
Kiritibandara deva; Menikbandara; Kumarabandara; Abinnana; Alut (new) deva;
Kadavara deva; Davatavabandara; Pallya bandara; Alut nuwara bandara (Alut
nuwara: A sacred place in the eastern jungles, also referred to as Mayangene);
Velassa deva. (It appears from the recitation that the number and names of the
deities are somewhat immaterial. Kapurala Appuhami had quite a difficult time
filling in the names for the twelve deities.) There are seven kiri ammas who are
the sisters of the gods. They are also referred to as ammala hatdena (the seven moth-
ers). These are the mothers who have given milk, and the intention of the ritual is to
ask pardon of those who have given milk for any “mistakes” (varada).

After the ayuda palya, there is a haluwa palya. All the haluva will be taken into
the hut singly. The only explanation of the haluva is that they belong to the gods
devange aiti).

Appuhami referred to another god (Dummala palya?—incense) as the chief
deity. He is also referred to as Palle bedde deva. The kapurala dances for half an
hour and tells of his visions (pehena). He tells of things which have passed and are
to come, and he reads people's minds.

No incense is used for the other deities. For the first dance, there is incense but
no weapons. In the next dance, the kapurala dances with his staff (pol kotuva:
coconut staff) which is also said to belong to the gods. After this dance, the weapons are handled one by one. Appuhami’s account of the kiri amma dance follows version 2 (above).

Appuhami kapurala’s account of elephant tying is similar to the earlier versions. Each kapurala holds the elephants from the sides and dances with them. The elephants will eventually become possessed (mayan) and will be difficult to manage. Two men will hold the paddy pounders crosswise to form a boundary (kadavata) which the elephants cannot pass. These two men will ask the elephants for food. “If you want to go to the deity, you must give kavum, plantains, etc.” just to pass the time. Then, as soon as the two men take away the boundary which prevents the elephants from approaching the deity, the elephants will go mad (pissu). They will dance violently and fall on the ground. They will be like dead bodies. Then they will be taken into the maduva and when the kapurala sprinkle some saffron water upon them, they will revive (See Yalman, 1964).

This account of the gam maduva by Appuhami is similar to the maleliya ceremony described in the text. I recall that when the kapurala was preparing the ceremony of maleliya, he did point out that it was going to be “just like” the gam maduva. In fact the maleliya was a much simpler ceremony than the one described here which leads me to believe that some of the ritual acts are dispensable.

The Mangalaya Davasa (Ceremonial Day) in the Village of Vilava in the Maho District

(Here is an account of a ceremony from an entirely different part of Ceylon which follows in its outlines the gam maduva of Teripehe.)

A small hut is built outside the local devale, called multen ge, i.e., “food for the deities” house. The hut is decorated with white cloths, and new clothes are given to the kapurala. The castes involved in this ceremony are, again, the washermen, the tom-tom beaters, the potters and the blacksmiths (who are expected to cleanse the weapons of the deities).

Before the ceremony takes place, the devale is ritually purified. After the preparation of the hut, new oil is prepared and food is brought by procession, by the various castes. The food is referred to as deva tovil pasdena, i.e., five offerings to the deities: rice, plantains, the plantain flower, curries, and coconuts. New pots are used.

Before the food offering is made, the kapurala cleanses the weapons. He takes the ayuda one by one and dances with them. The ayuda in question are a trident, a sword, and arrows, symbols which are normally used. For the goddess Pattini, however, there is a haluva which is a round object looking like a fan (see above). The kapurala washes Pattini with “sandalwood milkwater” (handum kiripen).

In this village the kapurala becomes possessed for five deities. They are listed as follows: Gam devatava, Ayya nayaka deva, Kadavara deva, Kambili deva, and Gama bahirava. The third and the fourth deities are known as elder brother, younger brother, or as cross-cousins.

The ritual is described as follows. At the devale the offering is made. After this there is some recitation (yatika kirima) by the kapuralas. They then get possessed and start telling the future. The ceremony starts during the day and ends in the middle of the night. It is clearly patterned on the same lines as the gam maduva in Teripehe.
My informants say that during the ceremonies women may be brought into the devale; if there are yakkuva in them they will come out. The women will be possessed and will hoot and may lose consciousness. After the yakkuva come out, the kapurala will chase them away.

APPENDIX V

Offerings to the Devaya

The boiling of milk (kiri uturanava): The ceremony is a simple adukku. It takes place near a devale or any selected pure spot in the village. The people may first come and promise to give the deities some food. When their promises come true, they will prepare seven mutti (small pots) of food to the village deity, gam deva. Rice and coconut milk (pol kiri) are brought from the various homes and are cooked on the spot. An important part of the ceremony is that the milk must boil over. The mixture is then eaten by the people. (A ceremony of this kind, but much more elaborate, takes place in the annual rituals of the Jaffna Tamils. Huge cauldrons of milk and rice are boiled over in the midst of great crowds of spectators.)

The offering of adukku, or a prayer (yatika): A man from Teripehe has lost his buffaloes and does not know where to find them. He has come to request Appuhami kapurala to ask the gods where the animals have disappeared to.

Appuhami has ordered the hut in which the ceremony is to take place to be cleansed with cow dung earlier in the day as a preparation for this event. Saffron water was sprinkled on the cow dung to make it doubly pure. A small altar (masa) has been prepared and the food is placed on it. Appuhami wears his special kapurala clothes.

The ceremony proceeds as follows. The kapurala begins to recite the epics concerning the birth and adventures of the deity. He takes a small, shallow basket in his hand which contains some food. After a while, his hand begins to tremble. He goes on speaking and suddenly begins to laugh and grunt to himself. The possession takes hold of him very gradually.

The possession lasts about half an hour. Appuhami comes out of it and walks toward me, smiling. It appears that the god who came was Kohomba deviyo.

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