YAKTOVIL:

The Cultural Poetics of a Minor Sinhala Practice

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of a practice and discourse found among Siṅhalas in the South and Southwestern Provinces of Sri Lanka. The practice is known as *yaktovil*. In Siṅhala conception the malevolent eyesight of supernaturals known as *yakkū*, is responsible for various illnesses, and yaktovil is a practice aimed at their amelioration.

The thesis aims to be an ethnographic and historical study informed by the task of reconstituting the *object* of anthropological analysis. It inquires principally into two kinds of question. The first has to do with the problem of how this Siṅhala practice, yaktovil, was founded as part of the visibility of Western knowledges. It is concerned with the founding assumptions and conceptual pre-conditions upon which anthropological accounts and descriptions of it rest. This kind of question is primarily concerned with a *Western* locus of power and knowledge. The second kind of question on the other hand, shifting locations somewhat, has to do with a rather *local* field of power and knowledge. It has two foci: In one the concern is with how local authoritative discourse *constitutes* yaktovil in a particular relation to what is canonically authorized as Siṅhala Buddhism, and how, at the same time nonauthorized (or what I will call "minor") discourses -- such as the discourse of yakkū -- work to appropriate the figures of this Canon for its own (heterodoxical) uses. The other focus is concerned with the poetics of yaktovil, with how this practice operates, through what kind of rationality and strategy, and by the organization of what kind of appropriate subjectivities.

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ON TRANSLITERATION, PRONUNCIATION, AND USAGE OF SINHALA TERMS

In this thesis I have for the most part followed the established conventions for the transliteration of Siṁhala words. Plurals are typically formed by adding an *s* to the Siṁhala singular (e.g., the plural of *ädura* is *äduras*). The one exception is *yakā*, where I alternately use *yaksayās* and the Siṁhala plural, *yakkū*.

In the transliteration of vowels and consonants I have followed Gombrich (1971). The vowels *a*, *ā*, *a*, *e*, *ē*, *i*, *ī*, are pronounced like the first vowels in sun, salt, may, end, made, in, and feel, respectively. (For technical reasons I have not distinguished the long *ǟ*, in *nǟ*, for instance, from the shorter *ä*.) Among the consonants, *c* is pronounced *ch*; the *ṣ* gives an *sh* sound; *ṭ* and *ḍ* are palatials pronounced with the tongue far back; *g* is always hard; and the *ṁ* in *Siṁhala* gives an *ng* sound.

I have followed Seneviratne's (1978) example in using the spoken, colloquial form of Siṁhala terms rather than the Sanskrit or Pāli or literary Siṁhala forms -- e.g., the Siṁhala *diṣṭiya* rather than the Sanskrit *driṣṭi*, or *yaksayā* (or alternately, *yakā*) rather than *yakṣa*. It is important, I think, to avoid giving the impression that these terms are strictly interchangeable. By the same token (and in the more important case), I have retained in certain instances the colloquial Siṁhala term rather than render it in the conventional English gloss. So that I have used *yakā* or *yaksayā* (pl. *yakkū*) rather than the conventional "demon," *yaktovil* (or *tovil*) rather than "exorcism," *adura* rather than "exorcist," *āturaya* rather than "patient," and *kapurāla* rather than "priest." I am aware that this will make reading more difficult particularly for those unacquainted with Siṁhala, and I have tried to

compensate by both making descriptive usages as clear as possible, and by repeating (in parentheses or in endnotes) what these terms refer to. I would insist however that it is necessary to work at displacing the colonial anthropological practice of assimilating non-European categories to European ones without due consideration to their employment in local usages.

All Siṁhala words are italicised except for key words that recur often, such as *ädura*, *āturaya*, *diṣṭiya*, *yakā*, *yaksayā*, *yakkū*, *yaktovil*, and *tovil*. These are italicised in the glossary, and, except where emphasis is required, only in their first instance in each chapter.

Finally, the name of the country. It is, of course a long time now (almost two decades -- 22 May 1972) since the colonial name *Ceylon* was replaced by *Sri Lanka*. In ancient texts as well as in many contemporary popular stories the name Lankā is used, and when referring to these texts or their images I have retained this usage. When referring specifically to British colonial representations of the island, I have used *British Ceylon*, or simply, *Ceylon*. And on those occasions on which I refer to contemporary images and representations, I use either *Sri Lanka* or *Lankā*.

GLOSSARY

ädura	A practitioner of the arts of controlling the malign figures called *yakkū*. Also *yakädura*, sometimes even *yakädura mahattaya* (Mr. yäkadura). In other areas called *kaṭṭādiya*.
ädurukama	Lit., the "work of the teacher." The practices involved in the controlling of the malign figures, *yakkū*. Also, *gurukama* which is etymologically the same.
āgama	Religion.
aila	Offering tray used in yaktovil ceremonies. Typically a smaller version of *taṭṭuvas* (which see).
anaguna	The "commands and virtues" of the Buddha. Typically invoked in the effort to secure the obedience of *yakkū*.
ārūdhaya	Typically condition of being under the influence of a deity.
äsvaha	Lit., "eye poison." The malevolent energy of the eyesight of human beings.
āturaya	A victim of the malign "look" (*bälma*) or *diṣṭiya* of a *yakā*.
āturu pandala	The shed where the afflicted person stays during the performance of a *yaktovil* ceremony.
āturumahatmaya	Husband of a female afflicted person, her benefactor.
āturuhāmi	Another name for the afflicted person if female. Used in relation to *āturumahatmaya*.
āvēṣaya	Condition of being under the influence of the malign figures called *yakkū*. Characterized by trembling, and lapses of conscious awareness. In the context of *yaktovil* a condition which is induced upon the afflicted person by the *yakädura* in order to elicit a certain kind of speech.
āyūbōvan	Long life. Often exclamatory. Sometimes *āyūbōvēvan*.

bälma	The "look." Most often the "look" of a supernatural figure, whether malevolent or benevolent.
baliya	In the context of *yaktovil* ceremonies, a clay representation of the main *yaksayā* who has afflicted the *āturaya*.
bana	Sermon based on the doctrine of the Buddha.
baṭagaha	Whistle used in *yaktovil* ceremonies.
bera kāriya	Drummer.
billa	A sacrifice, typically a cock.
bhūtaya	A mean supernatural. Often said to perform the work of deities.
bhikkhu	Someone who has entered and been ordained within the Order of Buddhist monks, the Sangha.
brahamana	A Brahmin.
dēva	A benevolent supernatural deity. Also *deviyō*.
dēvālaya	The shrine of a *dēva* or *deviyō* (a benevolent deity).
dēvatāva	A godling. A figure intermediate between malevolent and benevolent.
dharma	Law, truth, doctrine (Pāli, *dhamma*) Typically of the Buddha.
diṣṭiya	The malign energy of the "look" (*bälma*) of *yakkū*. A concept central to the understanding the action of *yakkū* and the work performed by *yaktovil*.
dōṣaya	Misfortunes, or troubles, or ill-effects. Not necessarily associated with the work of *yakkū*, but when it is, it is called *yakṣa dōṣa*, or *tanikam dōṣa* (which latter see).
dummala	A highly pungent incense used in *yaktovil* ceremonies to attract the presence of *yakkū*.
hāmuduruvō	Lit., "lord." Respectful term commonly used to address a Buddhist monk.
kaḍaturāva	The curtain used to partition off the afflicted person from the practices involved in invoking the presence of *yakkū*.
kapurāla	An officiant at the shrine of a *dēva* or *deviyō*, a benevolent deity.
kavi	Verses. They often relate the origin of supernatural figures such as *yakkū*.
koḍivina	Sorcery.
kumbhāndaya	A class of mean supernaturals.

īgaha	An instrument of command. A pointer, or rod.
mal maduva	Lit., "flower shed." Usually the main structure in *yaktovil* ceremonies. Typically decorated with red flowers.
mantraya	Formulaic and magical verses used in both malign and benign practices. Essentially it is used to "bind" the supernatural figure to the performance of a particular work.
namaskāraya	Gesture of obeisance or profound respect formed by bringing the clasped hands up to the forehead.
nivāmay	Finished. Marks the removal of *diṣṭiya* or malign eyesight from the body of an afflicted person.
pandam	Torch.
panḍuru	Coin offering made to a deity.
pidēnna	Offering given to *yakkū*. Usually *dola pidēni*.
perahära	Procession, usually in comemoration of a deity.
pin	Merit.
prētaya	The dissatisfied spirit of a deceased person.
purālapala	Platform structure erected in *yaktovil* ceremonies to receive the "body" of an *äḍura* in the elaborate ruse of death played on *yakkū*. Also *purahala*.
rahat	One who has all but seen nirvana. He will not be born again to the round of suffering (*samsāra*) which is life. Also *arhat*.
sangha	The Buddhist Order of Monks.
sāntiya	A ceremony of blessing. *Yaktovil* ceremonies invariably involve some conference of blessing unto the afflicted.
sarīra	Body.
sāsana	The teachings of the Buddha. Also refers to the periods or epochs when Buddhism prevailed (*buddha sāsanaya*).
sēman gänīma	The act of taking the *sēmanaya* or essence of an offering by imbibing it through the eyes.
sīmāva	Boundary. Often inscribed as part of the *sanction (varam* or *vivaranaya)* issued by the Buddha.
tanikama	Condition or state of being alone, or mentally apart.

tanikam dōṣa	The ill-effects that result from being in a state of vulnerability to the malign eyesight of *yakkū*.
taṭṭuva	Offering tray used in *yaktovil* ceremonies.
tīnduvi	Finished completely. Marks the removal of the malign influence of *diṣṭiya* from the body of an afflicted person. More emphatic version of *nivāmay*.
tovil gedara	The house where a *yaktovil* ceremony takes place.
varama	Lit., "warrant." Typically a limited and conditional power issued by the Buddha.
veḍakama	The practices involved in ayervedic healing.
vīdiya	Structure through which the *yakkū* enter the performing area of the *yaktovil* ceremony.
vivaranaya	Lit., "permission," or "leave." Like *varama* a limited and conditional power issued by the Buddha.
yakā	The most feared of the pantheon of malevolent supernatural figures. Also *yaksayā* (pl. *yakkū* or *yaksayō*.)
yaktovil	Major practice in which an *āturaya* is relieved of the *diṣṭiya* with which he/she has been afflicted. Also simply *tovil*.
yakves	The "costume" or appearance that a *yaksayā* assumes in order to carry out its malign work.
yakvimānaya	The abode of the hosts of *yakkū*.

INTRODUCTION

THE POETICS OF CULTURE:

TOWARD A CRITICAL POSTCOLONIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

When, a few years ago, anthropological (or perhaps "meta-anthropological") texts such as *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986) and *Writing Culture* (1986) appeared, they seemed to promise, if not a thorough-going reconstitution of the anthropological project, then at least an unprecedented rethinking of it. At any rate, the authors of the one (George Marcus and Michael Fischer) and the editors of the other (James Clifford and George Marcus) gave the impression that in the contemporary "crisis" of anthropology fundamental ideological presuppositions regarding the West's ability and/or responsibility to represent the non-West were faltering, being challenged.

In these texts (and others, for they now constitute a sizeable corpus), no longer was anthropology really *in question* (to recall Stanley Diamond's pointed phrase)[1] for its direct or indirect implication in politically compromising institutions, or for the inability of its discourse to take up critical positions vis a vis the West. True enough Marcus and Fischer (1986) did argue for an anthropology as a "form of cultural critique" of the West, but the register in which it was formulated, and the image through which it was articulated, were decidedly different to those employed for instance by Stanley Diamond, undoubtedly the foremost protagonist of this kind of project.[2] In his essay, "Theory, Practice, and Poetry in Vico" (1980), Diamond outlined his conception of a "critical anthropology" in the following terms:

> By critical anthropology, I mean the comparative, historical, and revolutionary perspective on *contemporary Western civilization*, impelled by conditions that have become acute under industrial monopoly capitalism.... The positive task of critical anthropology is to help generate an alternate sense of human possibilities based on concrete cultural-historical inquiry, while interpreting and, where justified, supporting the multiplex reactions against these phenomena *in our own society* (ibid.: 309. Emphasis added).

What I want to draw attention to here is the fact that in these more recent texts a completely new image of anthropology now offers itself, one as much influenced by Clifford Geertz's famous remark that what ethnographers do is *write*, as by Jacques Derrida's critique of logocentrism.[3] And of course anthropologists never thought to question the ideological and institutional conditions that both made their new "writerly" self-image historically possible and, in a Foucauldian sense, "within the true" (which perhaps only demonstrates the limited notion of "reflexivity" they generally employ).[4] Rather, anthropology, now seen principally as a form of *writing*, as a practice of producing texts, was criticized for what was argued to be the political implications of its poetics, of its representations of Others. To be sure, the older issues regarding colonialism and, in general, the political relation between the West and non-West (imperialism, let's say), issues in which anthropology has forever been embarrassingly entangled, were not displaced. But they were, so to put it, recuperated to another, and, so it seemed, more sophisticated level: *writing*. In his Introduction to *Writing Culture*, Clifford for instance announced,

> We begin, not with participant-observation or with cultural texts (suitable for interpretation), but with writing, the making of texts. No longer a marginal, or occulted, dimension, writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter (1986: 2).

Or, as Marcus and Fischer put it,

> the contemporary innovations in anthropological writing, occasioned by the crisis of representation affecting other disciplines, are moving it toward an unprecedentedly acute political and historical sensibility that is transforming the way cultural diversity is portrayed. With its concerns firmly established across the traditional divide of the social sciences and humanities, anthropology (among other disciplines such as literary criticism) is thus serving as a conduit for the diffusion of ideas and methods from one to the other. The current changes in past conventions for writing about other cultures are the locus of operation for this strategic contemporary function of anthropology (1986: 15-16).

Now one may or may not agree that it is "innovations" in "writing" that is sharpening the political sensibility with which cultures are portrayed. But what is to be noted here is that the axial term in

the contemporary problem of anthropology is that of "representation."

I do not however want to weigh the pros and cons of the conception of anthropology as essentially a matter of textual production. I might suggest that it would be important to inquire into the way or ways in which certain kinds of textual production are secured, are made to function as "true" in a discursive/institutional domain such as anthropology.[5] However this is not the immediate issue here. I want to focus briefly instead on two positions or arguments within the general discussion about ethnographic representation. I will roughly, and I should say, provisionally, designate them "postmodernist" and "postcolonialist." These positions are of course not mutually exclusive, but they are, I would suggest, distinct, inasmuch as while both are equally concerned with the "problem of representation," one takes as its point of departure a number of themes associated with postmodernist criticism (heterogeneity, anti-totalizing discourses, decentered subjects, experimentation, etc.), and the other is principally concerned about the implications of representing the former colonized (stereotyping, distortion, assimilation, reductionism, etc.). And indeed, as a consequence of this difference in focus, one position is altogether more optimistic than the other as regards the future of anthropology. Both have had their spheres of influence and both have offered valuable criticisms of contemporary anthropology. My principal concern in examining these two positions then is not to criticize either postmodernist or postcolonialist arguments as such, but rather to raise some questions about the *kind* of anthropological *object* they often establish in their own texts in the course of their critical agendas. It is intended to try to clarify some aspects of the question of the prospects for, or idea of, an adequately *postcolonial* anthropology. And this too, mind you, as a sort of starting point for my own inquiry into aspects of Siṅhala discourse and practice.

One of the central tenets of the "postmodernist" critique of anthropology is that "cultures" are mobile, unbounded, conjunctural, and open-ended.[6] One now has to speak of the "betweenness" of cultures, the displacement, the overlapping, the hybridity, of cultural experience. In older anthropological texts (those of the school of British structural functionalism in particular), it is

argued, cultures were represented as though they were timeless, historyless, spatially immobile, unmixed. However, as Clifford has quite rightly maintained,

> "Cultures" do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition and negotiation of a power relation (ibid.: 10).

I do not entirely disagree. And yet I think that this characterization of culture as mobile, unbounded, etc., is itself open to the question: For *whom* is "culture" unbounded? For the anthropologist or the native? And note that my question is not the familiar one about the supposed objectivity of one perspective as against the other. Rather I am suggesting that the "boundedness" or otherwise of "culture" is something that is *established* in kinds of discourse. More precisely, in discourses of *power*. Obviously neither "boundedness" nor its absence are given in the world. To say a priori that "cultures" are *not* bounded therefore is misleading since local (cultural) discourses do in fact "establish" authoritative "traditions," discrete temporal and spatial parameters in which it is made singularly clear to cultural subjects *and their others* what is (and who are) to belong within it and what (and who) not. Surely part of the dispute between the Siṅhalas and Tamils in Sri Lanka for example (to mention but the most immediately pertinent instance) has to do precisely with the question of how the "boundary" of Siṅhala culture and the "boundary" of Tamil culture are authoritatively established.

Therefore, the idea that cultures are not bounded seems itself to presuppose an unquestioned position from which one could, as it were, point to authentic seamless "cultures" out there in the real world, moving in and out and inbetween other equally authentic, seamless cultures. And so doing, such conceptions merely displace one kind of essentialism (culture as essentially static) with another (culture as essentially mobile, changing). The dilemma derives of course from the attempt to formulate a priori conceptions of what "culture" is or is not. And to that extent at least they are unsatisfactory.

The work of Edward Said, particularly *Orientalism* (1978), has been central to the recent renewal of the postcolonial critique of anthropology. Certainly no work of the last twenty years has

contributed more to unmasking the persisting economy of colonial discourse. In that work, anthropology was rather implicitly than explicitly criticized. In a more recent work however, "Representing the Colonized" (1989), Said has been unsparing in his direct criticism of anthropology's relationship with imperialism, even going so far as to doubt the future value of the discipline. In closing this essay he wrote, in part,

> I cannot say whether it is now possible for anthropology as anthropology to be different, that is, to forget itself and to become something else as a way of responding to the gauntlet thrown down by imperialism and its antagonists. Perhaps anthropology as we have known it can only continue on one side of the imperial divide, there to remain as a partner in domination and hegemony (ibid.: 225).

Now what worries me about this passage is not so much the dire image of a beleaguered anthropology slowly walking the gauntlet, as the ambiguity of such conceptions as the need for anthropology "as anthropology" to "forget itself" as a way of becoming "something else." If the implication of this argument is that anthropology needs to change its *object* (and therefore its problematic) in order to transform its project, I would certainly endorse this and propose that we set about this task in concrete, historically specific studies. Indeed this thesis proposes to be a small contribution in that direction. If however the implication is rather that there is really no such possibility because ethnographic representations are *necessarily* imperialist accomplices, then I am not persuaded that this is so. It seems to me that anthropology need not necessarily be preoccupied with representing or interpreting the "essence" of cultures, with disconcealing a truth about native lives hidden from the natives themselves. And it is this that needs to be criticized. It is puzzling that in the critique of the West's representation of non-Western cultures, the employment of a conception of authentic culture *in its own discourse* makes impossible the conception of an alternative anthropological project. Indeed I am left with the impression that this formulation reflects a more crucial ambiguity in the structure of this kind of (however understandably indignant) postcolonial argument itself.

And this raises a question I want to pose in the following way: Why does it appear admissible, even politically correct, to attempt to understand the political economy of ***Western***

discourses about the non-West, how the "truth" about the West's Others is established and circulated, and yet at the same time politically dubious to attempt to understand how, in non-Western societies, power produces and authorizes local "truths" and "traditions," and how these condition the formation of distinctive subjects? I want to suggest that there is something new and very curious at work in this kind of argument, and I want to suggest further that it is perhaps linked to at least two broad contemporary social processes which have gone little examined in discussions of postcolonial anthropology[7]: The first is the erosion of the demographic and economic conditions that supported the old symmetrical distinction between First and Third Worlds (complicating the picture by creating for the first time large constituencies of unwelcome immigrants in the West).[8] The second is the emergence of institutional conditions -- and of a corresponding discursive space -- supporting (even at times promoting) postcolonial intellectuals in the West and providing them with a hitherto unknown visibility. These processes have created new kinds of postcolonial problems, problems with a different locus and different conditioning effects on discourse, and a new intelligentsia to articulate them.

In the contemporary rethinking of colonial discourse therefore the coordinates of what tends to get identified as colonial practice have changed; it is the condition of the immigrant, *the non-Westerner* in the West, that has come to seem paradigmatic of the colonial condition. So that the problem of the representation of other cultures seems to revolve entirely around the West, as though "the West" were the only significant referent, as though "the West" were the only significant field of power/knowledge. And consequently the non-West, often by virtue of its very absence from direct problematization, is made to occupy a space of authentic culture. It is to be wondered therefore whether the postcolonial critique of "colonial discourse," like the postmodern critique of "bounded culture," is not often really only "traveling in the West."[9]

A more fruitful approach to the contemporary "predicament"[10] of anthropology, I think, is that suggested by Talal Asad in his essay "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology" (1979).[11] Let me extract what seems to me to be the central theme of this essay as a way of trying to re-pose the

question of culture and colonialism. Arguing that the anthropological analysis of ideology has foundered on the ideological constitution of the anthropological object itself, Asad is concerned to show how this object, culture, is produced in anthropological texts through a continual slippage toward a conception of "a priori systems of essential meaning." This slippage, he suggests, often emerges through a conflation of conceptual registers that are in fact distinct: the discourse of the anthropologist (a systematic and interpretive discourse in which objects are analytically constructed); and the discourse of the society (those local knowledges through which cultural lives are *lived*).

> The ambiguity ... is between what is supposed to be the way the anthropologist actually thinks and speaks *about* social life and the way the people the anthropologist is studying are supposed actually to think and speak *in* their social life (ibid.: 613).

This attempt to represent the "authentic system" of the natives in the systematic discourse of the anthropologist, leaves unposed at least two distinct kinds of question, both of which turn on the ideological constitution of the anthropological object: (1) the question of the genealogical determination of the particular objects of specific anthropological concerns (the problem for instance of how certain objects -- like demonism -- come to be taken up within anthropological discourse); and (2) the question of how historically specific local discourses come to be produced and maintained as authoritative systems (the problem for instance of how a local discourse like Sinhala Buddhism establishes what counts as Sinhala Buddhist tradition, and what not).

In this effort to rethink the anthropological problem, Asad introduces the useful concept of "authoritative discourse." Authoritative discourse, Asad maintains, is to be understood as,

> materially founded discourse which seeks continually to preempt the space of radically opposed utterances and so prevent them from being uttered. For authoritative discourse, we should be careful to note, authorises neither "Reality" nor "Experience" but other discourse -- texts, speech, visual images, etc., which are structured in terms of given (imposed) concepts, and reproduced in terms of essential meanings. Even when action is authorised, it is as discourse that such action establishes its authority. The action is read as being authorised, but the reading and the action are not identical -- that is why it is always logically possible to have an alternative reading (ibid.: 621).

The concept of authoritative discourse (which bears much in common with Foucault's conception of "games of truth"), in other words, is concerned to think historically produced configurations of

knowledge and power, whether in theoretical practices such as anthropology, or local practices such as the Siṅhala *yaktovil*.

In these terms therefore, the very issue whether "culture" is "bounded" or "unbounded" is displaced by a different sort of problematic altogether. Such an ethnographic concern, it seems to me, does not seek to represent the essence (partial or otherwise) of a culture. And here the question to pose would be twofold: (1) How, *through* what kinds of relations of power, and *in* what kinds of discourses, has the West inaugurated the local practices as objects of Western knowledge? And (2) through what kinds of social practices authorized through what kinds of social discourses is a distinctive "tradition" *established* among the people being studied, and how within it do they learn to recognize themselves as distinctive subjects?

I arrived in Sri Lanka in November 1986 to conduct fieldwork on the Siṅhala practice known as *yaktovil*. Yaktovil is an elaborate healing practice, popular in the Southern and Southwestern Provinces of the island, in which victims of the malign eyesight of supernatural figures called *yakkū* (sing. *yakā*, or *yaksayā*) are relieved of the ill-effects.

This was in fact a critical political period in Sri Lanka. On the one hand the conflict between the Siṅhalas and Tamils in the North and East of the island was escalating rapidly, and the Sri Lankan government was at the time in the middle of talks with the Indian government on a solution. The negotiations led to a Peace Accord between Sri Lanka and India (signed in the wake of considerable Siṅhala opposition) which brought an Indian Peace Keeping Force to the island. On the other hand, there were indications of the reemergence in Southern areas of the militant Siṅhala organization, the Peoples Liberation Front (Janata Vimukti Peramuna or JVP), the group that had led the 1971 Revolt.

In January 1987 I moved to the southern coastal town of Devinuwara, more popularly called Devundara. The British colonizers called the town Dondra. Devinuwara is in the Matara district of the Southern Province, and is indeed the southernmost town in the island. Matara Town (four miles

to the west of Devinuwara) has always been a town of renowned Buddhist learning and was the center of the Southern Sinhala Kingdom of Ruhunu (see Obeyesekere 1984). Devinuwara, which literally means "city of the god," is itself a town of considerable historical importance. It has been a center of pilgrimage to the god Upulvan (or Uppalavanna, the Pāli, which local inhabitants more often use) since at least the twelfth century A.D. (see Paranavitana 1953). As I will describe in Chapter Six there is a local legend about the installation there, before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505, of a red sandalwood image of the god Upulvan by the King Dapulusen. According to another local legend, the last fatal battle between Rama and Ravana (figures from the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*) took place on the site of the present *dēvāla* (shrine-house) in the town.

Devundara was also important for the British who arrived at the end of the eighteenth century. The southwest coast was a focus of British colonial evangelicalism, and many of the best-known missionaries (Rev. John Callaway, and Rev. Daniel J. Gogerly among them) served in the Matara chapter of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. But, interestingly enough, it was a town in which the missionaries met with considerable and indeed exasperating intransigence. For instance, in one contribution to the Wesleyan organ, *Friend*, of December 1837, entitled "The Wesleyan Mission Station, Matura," there is reprinted a candid letter (dated October 30, 1837) written by the esteemed lay missionary D.J. Gogerly. It was addressed to the Wesleyan headquarters in England, and in it he laments the "moral" state of affairs in Matara generally, and in Devinuwara in particular. He writes,

> Generally speaking I think that Matura [sic] is one of the least promising of all the fields cultivated by this mission. Budhism [sic] has here its full operation (Gogerly 1837: 101).

And he continues,

> On the Dondra side of the Station, although we have labored long, in Dondra itself little fruit appears. We have preaching regularly on Sundays and Week-days in two places, and the congregations are sometimes respectable, but this vicinity abounds in vice as well as in superstition. Drunkenness and uncleanness are ruling crimes, and scarcely attempt to hide their heads (ibid.: 105).

Such is the distinctive honor bestowed upon this town.

This dissertation is a study of the Sinhala discourse of yakkū and the practice of yaktovil that

discourse informs. By Sinhala "discourse of yakkū," I should state, I mean to designate that discourse in which a whole exhaustive local knowledge (statements, narratives, concepts, images, etc.) pertaining to the malign pantheon of those supernaturals which the Sinhalas call yakkū is articulated. I mean to mark out both the esoteric knowledges of the practitioners (*äduras*) of the arts of influencing these supernaturals (arts generally referred to as *ädurukama* or *gurukama*), and the more popular nonspecialized knowledges of those who nevertheless traffic in one way or another in this discourse. The thesis aims to be an ethnographic and historical study informed by the kind of problematic I have suggested a postcolonial anthropology must interest itself in.[12] It tries therefore to inquire principally into two kinds of question. The first has to do with the problem of how this Sinhala practice, yaktovil, was founded as part of the visibility of Western knowledges. It is concerned with the founding assumptions and conceptual pre-conditions upon which anthropological accounts and descriptions of it rest.[13] This kind of question is primarily concerned with a *Western* locus of power and knowledge. The second kind of question on the other hand, shifting locations somewhat, has to do with a rather *local* field of power and knowledge. It has two foci: In one I am concerned with how local authoritative discourse *constitutes* yaktovil in a particular relation to what is canonically authorized as Sinhala Buddhism, and how, at the same time nonauthorized (or what I will call "minor") discourses -- such as the discourse of yakkū -- work to appropriate the figures of this Canon for its own (heterodoxical) uses. In the other focus, I am concerned with the poetics of yaktovil, I am concerned with how it operates, through what kinds of *rationality* and *strategy*, and by the organization of what kinds of appropriate subjectivities.

In Chapter One I introduce the Sinhala discourse of yakkū by describing its most important concept, *diṣṭiya*. I discuss the relation between this concept and the practice of yaktovil. In Chapter Two, I describe two of several yaktovil ceremonies I observed in the Matara district of southwestern Sri Lanka. Most of the tovil ceremonies I observed were performed by the troupe I worked with closely. These performances very often involved intense and elaborate sequences in which the afflicted person was questioned about the source of her/his affliction, the adequacy of the offerings,

etc. I describe these sequences in detail because they are critical I think to the strategy yaktovil employs.

The Sinhala yaktovil has been the object of several anthropological accounts, each pursuing divergent theoretical interests but all resting on similar assumptions about "ritual." In Chapter Three, I inquire into some aspects of the problem of the anthropology of "ritual" and critically examine one recent monograph devoted to the Sinhala yaktovil. In this examination one of the things which I am most concerned to question is the specifiably *demonological problematic* in which the Sinhala practice of yaktovil has been inserted by Western discourse. In Chapter Four, I try to trace the emergence of this problematic showing how it was inaugurated in the nineteenth century evangelical Christian discourse on Sinhala religion. In Chapter Five, the focus on the connections between power and knowledge in Christian colonial discourse shifts to an inquiry into the connection between power and knowledge in local discourse. Specifically, I inquire into the way in which Sinhala Buddhism has established an authoritative tradition of Sinhala "religion," constituting, in so doing, the space of other nonauthoritative discourses and practices. And finally in Chapter Six, I inquire into the Sinhala poetics of eyesight showing its relation to the formation of distinctive mental and physical dispositions, and the relation between these and the practice of yaktovil.

To begin with, then, I endeavour to sketch and discuss the Sinhala concept of diṣṭiya. It is this concept, diṣṭiya, more than any other perhaps, that best provides an introduction to the Sinhala discourse of yakkū and practice of yaktovil.

Notes

1. See "Anthropology in Question" in Diamond (1974).

2. Curiously enough Diamond's name only appears once in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, and in a wholly derivative connection (see 1986: 74).

3. Borrowing the conception of the "inscription" of social action from Paul Ricoeur, Geertz asks and answers his "generative" question: "'What does the ethnographer do?' -- he writes." See Derrida (1978).

4. See Rabinow (1986) for a similar criticism. I should note however that where this kind of criticism has taken Rabinow in his more recent work is not at all clear. See Rabinow (1988).

5. For an elaboration of some aspects of this problem see Asad (1986c).

6. One of the most interesting attempts to think about this idea of "bounded" culture -- and the writer is by no means a "postmodernist" -- is to be found sketched in Appadurai (1986).

7. One very obvious reason for this is the sorry absence of postcolonial anthropolog*ists* from these discussions.

8. On the emergence of this distinction between First and Third Worlds see Pletsch (1981).

9. I take the phrase from Amitav Ghosh's splendid little essay, "The Imam and the Indian" (1986).

10. The phrase "predicament of culture," of course belongs to James Clifford (1988).

11. This essay, originally the Malinowski lecture for 6 March 1979, has been surrounded by a curious absence of careful attention. And where it has been cited, the reading of it has been equally curious. Diane J. Austin, for example, in her Jamaica ethnography, writes approvingly that: "Talal Asad has argued that universal elements within a society should be the anthropologist's focus of analysis" (1984: xxi).

12. The intersection of anthropology and history is much discussed in contemporary anthropological discourse. One of the early protagonists for an historically self-conscious anthropology was Bernard S. Cohn (see 1987).

13. For an interesting and valuable forerunner to this kind of inquiry, see Boon (1977).

CHAPTER I

MALIGN GLANCES:

DISTIYA AND THE SINHALA ARTS OF YAKTOVIL

Yakkū (sing., *yakā*, or *yaksayā*[1]), according to a Sinhala legend, were the original inhabitants of Lankā. They were a cannibalistic species, given up to lives of lawless extravagance, to song and dance and food. Merriment and devastation were their chief pastimes until the Buddha, grieved by what he saw, and appealed to by the gods, intervened and yakkū were exiled to the fabled island of Yak Giri (*Yak Giri diva*[2]). But the Buddha, in so ridding Lankā at last of these dreadful creatures, worked a curious compromise. For as part of the *vivaranaya*, or sanction, by which these yakkū were bound he gave them leave to make people ill on the sole condition that they then accepted the offerings made to them in his name by the authorized persons, *yakäduras*, and removed their malign influence. This, so to speak, was their dispensation. It allowed a curtailed and much restricted margin for their malevolence. But importantly too, most importantly in fact, by the Buddha's action their *mode* of malevolent action was also circumscribed; indeed it was quite radically transformed.

In their long, immemorial reign in Lankā, yakkū had been accustomed to sating their craving for flesh and blood by seizing and eating human beings with impunity. The Buddha's intervention however put an end to this lawless liberty. He drew, as legend has it, an impenetrable *sīmāva*, or boundary, around Lankā, preventing thereby the physical re-entry of these yakkū. But in order as it were to partially accommodate their malevolent designs, or at least to contain them within a

designated field of action, the ever magnanimous Buddha permitted them a distinctive and singular *modus operandi*. Yakkū were allowed only to cast their glances or "look" or *bälma* upon Lankā and its inhabitants, to look at (or upon) them, as "through the eye of a needle." Moreover, this "looking" itself was confined to short periods at various times of the day. And it is this "looking" which, from that inaugural day to this, has constituted the register of the malign power of yakkū.

This, for Siṁhalas (or at least Siṁhalas of the Matara area of Southwest Sri Lanka), is the origin of the malevolence of the eyesight of yakkū. In talking about yakkū and the feared malevolence of their eyesight, people most often use the term *diṣṭiya*. Indeed, easily the most vital concept involved in the whole Siṁhala discourse of yakkū and practice of yaktovil is the concept of diṣṭiya. Diṣṭiya refers to the malign energy or essence of the eyesight of yakkū.[3] And, as we will see, it is possible to say that diṣṭiya, this malign energy of eyesight, is almost synonymous with the very *presence* of yakkū themselves.

In the anthropology of the Siṁhala yaktovil, however, this concept of diṣṭiya has suffered a curious neglect.[4] Perhaps the reason for this is not immediately apparent. Nevertheless, one of the things that I would like to suggest in the course of this thesis is that the field of *anthropological* visibility, that is to say, what the anthropologist sees as the important constituents of the object of his or her discourse, is determined by the kind of *problematic* employed (not the other way around), and that therefore this neglect of a fundamental Siṁhala concept is far from fortuitous.

Interestingly enough however, the concept of diṣṭiya did not escape the attention of that nineteenth century Sri Lankan maverick, Dandris de Silva Gooneratne. In what is undoubtedly still the most fascinating work on the Siṁhala discourse of yakkū, his seminal monograph-sized essay "On Demonology and Witchcraft in Ceylon" (1866),[5] Gooneratne offers the following remarks:

> Although demons are said to shew themselves in these ways to men [i.e., in various apparitions], yet the opinion of those, who may be called the more orthodox of the demon-worshippers, is that these apparitions are not the demons themselves, but certain puppet-like spectres, which they create and present to the eyes of men, in order to frighten them; that the demons themselves are millions of miles distant from the earth; and that on these occasions of sending forth these spectres, and on every other occasion, whether during demon ceremonies, or at any other time when they are supposed to be present, they do not come themselves, but send their *dristia*, with or without the spectres, according to the

> circumstances of each case, or merely according to their own whim. By *dristia*, which means literally "sight," or "look," is meant that, although they are not personally present, yet they have the power of "looking" at what is going on below, and of doing and attending to every thing required of them, as if they were actually present. This opinion however is one, which is confined to the more learned of the demon worshippers; the more ignorant believe that the demons themselves are bodily present at these scenes, although they assume some sort of disguise, whenever they choose to make themselves visible to men (Gooneratne 1866: 46-47).

This penetrating passage may well serve as a compact introduction to the Siṅhala concept of diṣṭiya. The sheer complexity of the concept of diṣṭiya, however, its esoteric nuances no less than its range of popular connotations, would no doubt suggest that it is far from comprehensive. Therefore it is necessary I think to attempt to elaborate on some of the ideas it so succinctly sketches.

Diṣṭiya is an indispensable concept. The whole Siṅhala arts of influencing these yakkū in fact -- arts known variously as *gurukama* or *ädurukama* (lit., "the work of a teacher")[6] -- turn in one way or another on this singular notion of diṣṭiya. In Chapter Six I will elaborate in some detail on aspects of the Siṅhala concept of a malign eyesight in which diṣṭiya participates. Here however, I only want to describe this concept, diṣṭiya, and outline its bearing on other concepts employed in the practice of yaktovil in order to establish a context both for the description of two yaktovil ceremonies in the following chapter, and for the discussions to follow.

To begin with let us briefly consider the word *diṣṭiya*. Diṣṭiya is not a canonical Siṅhala Buddhist category. Indeed it is not even a canonical Siṅhala word. Certainly it is not found in regular circulation in middle class Siṅhala society. But in a town like Devinuwara even little children will be heard to exclaim gaily of someone, a brother, a sister, a stranger, behaving oddly, that, *eyāṭa diṣṭiyak tiyenava* (he/she has a diṣṭiya).

In its colloquial form, *diṣṭiya* (or, sometimes, *diṣṭi*[7]), the word does not appear in any of the major Siṅhala-English dictionaries. This in itself is interesting since the two authoritative Siṅhala-English dictionaries (Clough's, originally published in 1830, and Carter's, originally published in 1924) were compiled by British missionaries who were much concerned to eradicate popular Siṅhala

beliefs and practices associated with yakkū, and who were otherwise attentive to its constituent categories and concepts. There are, nevertheless, related entries which may serve as orienting markers. Clough's *Sinhala-English Dictionary* (1892), for example, provides an entry for the word, *diṣṭa* -- "fate," "destiny," or again, "shown," "seen." A related word, *disnaya* is given as "light," "brightness," "radiance," "gleam," "glimpse" (ibid.: 246). The later Carter's *A Sinhalese English Dictionary* (1924), in its entry for *diṣṭaya* (equivalent to *diṣṭa*) adds a significant twist to Clough's entry. Not simply "fate" or "destiny," but a fate and destiny of a very specific kind: "doom" (ibid.: 289). The juxtaposition of these several senses -- sight/light/fate/doom -- is indeed striking for the colloquial idiom in which the character of yakkū are cast.

The Pāli and Sanskrit sources of the word diṣṭiya are more suggestive still, setting before us an almost endless list of senses, relations, and associations, from which we can nonetheless distill -- at least for our purposes -- a few central themes.

The Pāli word is *diṭṭhi*. Under this entry in their Pāli-English dictionary (1921), T.W. Rhys Davids and Wm. Stede give us the following: "view, belief, dogma, theory, speculation, esp[ecially] false theory, groundless or unfounded opinion." For canonical Buddhism however, the word takes on an added complexity. While all "views" are ultimately disvalued, a distinction is drawn between two kinds of "views": *samma diṭṭhi* and *miccha diṭṭhi*. Continuing, Rhys Davids and Stede state that, "....the right, the true, the best doctrine is as *samma d[iṭṭhi]* the first condition to be complied with by anyone entering the Path. As such *samma d[iṭṭhi]* is opposed to *miccha d[iṭṭhi]* wrong views or heresy" (ibid.: 156). In Buddhist conception then, there is an explicit relation between "seeing" or "view" and knowledge or cognition. As Rhys Davids and Stede put it, quoting them once more, "Since sight is the principal sense of perception as well as apperception ....that which is seen is the chief representation of any sense-impression" (ibid.: 155). Therefore "knowing" or "cognition" is not only linked to a visual metaphor, but this latter representation is always, in a Buddhist context, part of a network of normative and ethical practices. This is worth emphasizing.

The Sanskrit form of the word is *driṣṭi*. Sir Monier Monier-Williams's invaluable Sanskrit-

English dictionary (1899) gives us the following: "seeing, viewing, beholding, (also with the mental eye)"; "sight, the faculty of seeing"; "the mind's eye, wisdom, intelligence"; "regard, consideration"; "view, notion"; "(with the Buddhists) a wrong view; theory, doctrine, system ... eye, look, glance" (ibid.: 492). Then there are such compound forms as the following: *dristi-dōṣa* is given as "the evil influence of the human eye"; *dristi-nipāta*, as "'the falling of the sight', look, glance"; *dristi-pa*, as "drinking with the eyes"; *dristi-bāna*, as "'eye-arrow', a glance, a lear"; *dristi-viṣa* as "'having poison in the eyes', poisoning by means of the mere look" (ibid.). These compound expressions are particularly interesting because, as we shall see, similar ones form part of the Siṅhala conception of the malign action of diṣṭiya.

One of the concepts to which diṣṭiya is related, and a most important one, is that of "binding" (*bandinava*). The Siṅhala arts of influencing yakkū (i.e., *guruka*ma) are performed by practitioners known as *yakäduras* or, simply, *äduras*.[8] They are performed on behalf of persons afflicted by the effects of diṣṭiya, persons who in the context of yaktovil are known as *āturayas*.[9] These arts are, in general, employed by aduras to "bind" yakkū. Or more specifically, they are employed to "bind" yakkū in order to "take work" from them: *yakkū bandala väḍak ganna*, as people say. This work (*väḍa*) which is taken from (or again "gotten of") yakkū can be of two sorts: beneficent or maleficent, that is to say, either to cure or to harm. The Siṅhala yakädura can bind yakkū to make them remove the malevolent effects of their diṣṭiya from the body of someone they have afflicted; or, conversely, they can bind yakkū to make them carry out an act of sorcery (*koḍivina*) against someone, an act that will ensure the effects of diṣṭiya on them. In either case however, yakkū must be "bound" by an ädura, and this in a precisely Siṅhala sense.

"Binding" (*bandinava*) indeed is a resonantly expressive Siṅhala metaphor: bricks and couples and parcels and yakkū are all spoken of as "bound" after some fashion, or, as is more likely the case, as *having been* bound (*bändala*) for respective purposes. And this Siṅhala metaphor of "binding" turns, it would seem, on a certain kind of image of relationship between elements or

objects which is both one of a spatial proximity, and one of a regulatory adhesive energy or force. This practice of "binding" forms perhaps the most elementary principle of *gurukama*, the Siṅhala arts of controlling the malign forces of yakkū. The practice of binding is carried into effect by means of an adura uttering powerful charms (*mantrayas*) in specific sorts of context and with the appropriate accessory paraphernalia. These binding arts of charming (*mantra sāstraya*)[10] constitute a practice of *securing* the obedience of yakkū, of *restraining* their lawless and bloodthirsty extravagance, of *limiting* their field of movement and activity, and of *compelling* them to perform the work required of them.

In its beneficent aspects, I have said that these arts of binding yakkū are concerned with "removal" of the effects of yakṣa eyesight,[11] diṣṭiya. Actually however the metaphor of "removal" is only a partially correct one. More properly speaking, this malign eyesight or diṣṭiya is spoken of as being "deflected" (*maga harinava*)[12] from the bodies of afflicted persons, or else its malevolent influence is spoken of as being "stopped" (*natara karanava*). These arts of gurukama in fact define a wide range of specific beneficent practices -- from the tying of protective threads (*apa nūl bändīma*) to the performing of small offerings (*pidēnna dīma*), from the cutting of limes (*dehi kapīma*) to the charming of oil (*tel matirīma*) -- which can be brought, separately or in combination, to bear on the malign action of yakkū (see Wirz 1954). The most elaborate and complex practice which *gurukama* defines however is the practice called *yaktovil*. This practice of "dancing tovil" (*tovil nätīma*) is the most powerful intervention upon the malign effects of yakkū available to yakäduras. It is at the same time the most comprehensive in its systematic use of the whole spectrum of discrete practices. Yaktovil constitutes the most painstakingly orchestrated display of techniques necessary to bind yakkū, employing strategies of appeasement (with song and dance and food); of coaxing to more reasonable demands; of ruse (to distract and deflect their attention and diṣṭiya from the afflicted person); and of coercion to force them to acknowledge and accept the commands and virtues (*anaguna*) of the Buddha.

Yaktovil is performed by generating the presence of yakkū. Since yakkū *are*, in effect, their

diṣṭiya, generating their presence means in essence generating their diṣṭiya. Yaktovil in short is performed by generating the presence of the malign eyesight of yakkū. And all the major operations and techniques performed in the course of yaktovil are enacted upon this malign eyesight or diṣṭiya. This is important to bear in mind. Yaktovil in a sense is about the control and manipulation of the effects of malign eyesight.

The generation of the presence of this malign eyesight, this diṣṭiya, is effected by äduras who "summon" yakkū from the eight corners (*ata kona*) of the world to put their look (*bälma*) on the yaktovil proceedings: *diṣṭi anḍagahanava*, äduras say. This "summoning" is produced by the uttering of special charms called *diṣṭi mantrayas*. But these charms themselves have first to be "vitalized" in a special procedure accompanying all *gurukama*, the procedure known as *jīvam karanava,* lit., "to endow with life." *Jīvam karanava* consists in endowing a text, words, with "life." What this means in a certain sense, as Piyasena explains, is the literal *utterance* of a text.

> There are dead characters (*mala akuru*) written in a dead book (*mala pota*). Dead characters written on a paper which has no life (*prānayak näti kolayek liyapū mala akuru*). Those characters can't go anywhere, no (*kisima gaman kirīmak ē akuraṭa bä ni*). The mantra-book is simply a dried leaf (*vēlichcha kolayek*). It is lifeless (*aprānika*).... Now *jīvama* is the system that is used to take work from these characters (*mēken väḍaganna kramayaṭa tamay jīvama kiyanne*). It is from these characters that work is taken. Then, having taken from that book we keep it in our mind (*etakoṭa dāē poten aragena tamay api haḍavaṭa tänpat karaganne*). Now those few have to be put together at this place [i.e., where the *gurukama* is being performed]. What is meant by saying charms is reading those few (*kiyavanna ē ṭika*). When it is said, due to the sound made by those *ispillas*, *pāpillas*, *rēpayas*, and *kumbuvas*, the binding is done.[13]

So then the "summoning" and the "binding" of yakkū are actually sides of a single operation because it is this procedure of vitalizing a mantraya that ensures it the power to secure control of yakkū.

Even after the diṣṭiya or malign eyesight is "summoned" and "bound" however, it must still be prepared in yet other ways for the work it is to perform. The procedures by which diṣṭiya is prepared are of intricate complexity involving several stages of charming each one having a specific emphasis. Essentially however the diṣṭiya which is summoned and bound has also to be given "life" (*prānaya*). And this introduces another concept indispensable to the practice of yaktovil, the concept of *sēman gänīma*, or "the taking of *sēman*." Often in the course of certain sequences of yaktovil,

specifically those in which the afflicted person (āturaya) is entranced and "dancing and singing," the ädura will be heard to admonish him or her sharply, saying, *sēman ganna vitarayi!*, take *sēman* only. This concept of "taking *sēman*" turns on the relation between offerings (*dola pidēni*) and diṣṭiya. Let me try to explain.

Yaktovil involves, as one of its principal constituent practices, making offerings to the yakkū responsible for the affliction of the āturaya and whose presence is summoned to the tovil proceedings. A *taṭṭuva* or tray of offerings (*dola pidēni*) will generally consist of a small measure of rice (*bat*), vegetables (*elōlū*), a mixture of leaves, coconut, salt, chili peppers, and paddy (called *mallun*), roṭi (a kind of bread), sesame seeds (*tala äta*), green grams (*mun äta*), paddy seeds (*vī äta*), dry fish and meat (*goḍa diya mas*), an assortment of roasted foods (*pulutu*), several kinds of sweets (*kävili*), and flowers (*mal*). These are presented to respective yakkū, as we will see in my description, in specific sequences in the yaktovil performance. But recall that yakkū can only be made present in their malign eyesight, in their diṣṭiya. And indeed, strictly speaking, it is only diṣṭiya that is present at yaktovil ceremonies. Therefore it is diṣṭiya that must somehow "take" the offerings that are presented. And in order to do so it must be given "life" (*prāṇaya*). This endowment of diṣṭiya with "life" consists in fact in a grant of permission (*avasaraya*) to take the offerings, and thus again inscribes the authority of the ädura over yakkū. As the ädura S.A. Piyasena remarked,

> That giving life (*prāṇa karanava*) means this person [i.e., the yaksayā] is given a permission to eat this (*avasarayak denava mēka kanna*).... If he is not told to eat he doesn't have permission (*eyāṭa avasara nä nokivvot kanna*).

The taking of the offerings by means of the malign eyesight or diṣṭiya, then, is what is referred to in the curious phrase *sēman gänīma*. This richly colloquial phrase actually has the sense of "feasting with the eyes."[14] Note again the metaphor of eyesight. The satisfaction given to yakkū is, like the perpetration of their malevolent actions, restricted to the register of eyesight. The diṣṭiya of the yakkū, having been summoned, bound, and endowed with life, is authorized by the ädura to "feast" on the offerings but only by "imbibing the taste" (*rasa uranava*). As S.A. Piyasena put it,

> Having come to this place and climbed up [i.e., upon the stands holding the offerings] the vitality (*ōjasaya*[15]) of it, the taste that it has, is imbibed (*mēke tiyenne rasaya uranava*).

Interestingly enough, while the phrase *sēman gannava* (taking *sēman*) appears not to have a wide and frequent application, it is at the same time not unknown in *gämibhāsāva* (village or colloquial speech). Its connection here (with food again providing the basic image) is with desire (*āsāvaya*) for something which cannot be actually taken and eaten, and so has merely to be looked at.[16] So for instance, a person hovering about casting covetous glances at the food one is eating may be confronted abrasively with the question: "Are you waiting expecting to take the *sēman* of this?" (*mēke sēman ganna balan innava da*). In this case the hapless person is left to satisfy his or her desire by imbibing the tasty appearance of the food.

The point I want to emphasize here however, as a way of introducing yet another important concept in the Sinhala discourse of yakkū -- that of *āvēṣaya* --, is that the concept of diṣṭiya in the context of yaktovil explicitly involves relations of power. I shall return to this point in Chapter Six but it is important to underline it here. The yakā's eyesight is its register of malevolence. In the summoning, binding, and vitalizing of this malign eyesight, the ädura is constantly marking out a visible area of authority, restriction, and control.

I have said that yaktovil is performed by the generation of the presence of the malevolent eyesight of yakkū. And I have also suggested that yaktovil consists, in some sense, in the control and manipulation of this malevolent eyesight. One crucial dimension of this practice of controlling and manipulating eyesight involves what one might call its *intensification*. The intensification of the presence of the eyesight or diṣṭiya of yakkū in yaktovil is employed by aduras to deliberately induce in the āturaya a condition which the Sinhalas call *āvēṣaya*. The diṣṭiya involved in this procedure is called an *āvēṣa diṣṭiya*, and the practice of its production is called *āvēṣa kirīma*. Now *āvēṣaya* refers to a condition that is characterized by certain unmistakable behavioral manifestations -- principally, shaking (*calitavenava*), trembling (*vevulanava*), and lapses of conscious awareness (*sihinätivenava*). When anthropologists speak of "trance" in yaktovil therefore they are invariably referring to this condition of *āvēṣaya*. In point of fact however *āvēṣaya* need not be induced by an ädura in the

course of the practice of *gurukama*. It might well be simply an effect of diṣṭiya resulting from the malign intentions of yakkū themselves. The point here though is that in the context of yaktovil practice, the adura is involved in the deliberate attempt to control diṣṭiya, and to determine, shape, and employ its effects in the resolution of the āturaya's affliction.

In yaktovil the intensification of the effects of the malign eyesight of yakkū in the condition of *āvēṣaya* is a technique employed for strict and precise purposes: the elicitation of certain kinds of speech. An ädura induces *āvēṣaya* in order to "make" the āturaya "speak with the look of the yaksaya" (*yaksāyagē bälmin katākaravanava*). Induced as part of the practice of yaktovil therefore *āvēṣaya* is an enabling condition. It is a technique by means of which the āturaya is made to articulate the wishes, demands, and satisfactions of yakkū. The ädura is able to determine, by putting questions to the āturaya, whether the commands and virtues of the Buddha will be binding, and whether the offerings and the manner of their presentation are acceptable. These sequences appear to me to enact, in a particularly vivid way, a confrontation in which the ädura engages a number of rhetorical strategies in his effort to gain control (*dapanne dāgannava*) over yakkū, to make them obedient to his commands and virtues (*anagunaṭa kī karu karagannava*).

The intensification of the presence of diṣṭiya in yaktovil is also employed to induce *upon the adura* a condition which bears much resemblance to *āvēṣaya*. I have already suggested that in its beneficent aspect gurukama consists in "deflecting" the malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū from the body of the āturaya, and "stopping" its influence. As I will describe in the following chapter, there is one particular sequence in yaktovil, the *Dekonavilakku Pidēnna* (or Offering of the Double-Sided Torch), in which the diṣṭiya is "deflected" from the body and environs of the āturaya toward the ädura's own body. The ädura, having deeply inhaled the smoke of the incense called *dummala*, and begun to shake violently, literally collects the malign energy (diṣṭiya) and its ill-effects (dōṣaya) upon his body and takes them to a structure called a purālapala where the malevolent influence is "stopped." (The *purālapala* is a platform structure constructed near to the house where the yaktovil ceremony is being performed (usually near a stream or cemetery where yakkū are known to haunt).

It is this procedure that gives to this offering sequence its extraordinary atmosphere of apprehension and danger. And also its importance and authority. As D.A. Ariyadasa, an ädura well practiced in this particular sequence, explained,

> I take the diṣṭiya that is in the house completely unto my body (*gē ätulē tiyena diṣṭiyat sampūrna mama magē ängaṭa gannava*). Then also I take the diṣṭiya of the sick person completely unto my body (*leḍāgē tiyena diṣṭiyat sampūrna mama magē ängaṭa gannava*). All those diṣṭiyas fall upon me (*oyo diṣṭti okkōma maṭa vätenava*). It is that [i.e., the diṣṭiyas] that I take to the *purālapala* and commend there (*ēka tamay mama purālapalaṭa arangihilla bārakaranne*).... Having charmed with the *īgaha* and placed it at our head, all the diṣṭiyas that are taken by the *īgaha* fall upon our body (*īgahin maturala, apē oluvaṭa tiyala, igahin ganna diṣṭi okkōma apē ängaṭa vätenava*).

Therefore it is evident that the control and manipulation of diṣṭiya, or in other words, of the malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū, is central the work performed by yaktovil. This cannot be emphasized too strongly. Yaktovil works in the medium of eyesight, dangerously malevolent eyesight.

Most of the tovil ceremonies I observed in the Matara area of southern Sri Lanka were performed by a single troupe of performers, *tovil kāriyas* as they are called, consisting of four aduras (who dance and sing and charm, and generally lead the proceedings), and two drummers (*bera kāriyas*) who provide the accompanying drum rhythms.[17] The tovils performed by this troupe (whose members I might add, individually and together, were much in demand up and down the Matara district, and beyond) were distinctive in at least one respect. Their performances often, indeed more often than not, involved such sequences in which, a trance having been induced upon the āturaya he or she was deliberately exhausted in repeated rounds of "dancing and singing," and then subjected, after each such round, to questioning by the ädura. In my description of the two yaktovils performed for Leela Amma in October 1987 in the following chapter I present these episodes at length.

Notes

1. *Yakā*, or *yaksayā*, is the Siṁhala form of the Pāli *yakkha* and the Sanskrit *yakṣa*. Unravelling the history of this word and the range of conceptions attached to it has posed many problems for scholars of Indian philosophy and mythology -- complexities which need not detain us here (see Coomaraswamy 1971; Wijesekera 1943; Marasinghe 1974).

2. Lit., "the island mountain of yaksayās."

3. In point of fact diṣṭiya is not always malign, nor is it always associated with yakkū. One can for instance speak of *dēva diṣṭiya*, meaning the beneficent essence or energy of the eyesight of a god. But certainly, in its most common usage, diṣṭiya is associated with yakkū and their malign eyesight.

4. To be fair though, Obeyesekere (1969) has remarked, in the course of a passage on the way "yaksha misfortunes arise," that "When a demon's look falls on a person or object, the latter is infused with the spirit or essence of the deity known as *dishti*" (ibid.: 175). This characterization of diṣṭiya as the "essence" of the yakā is, I think, an accurate one, and I have in large part adopted it. It seems to me necessary to add however that diṣṭiya can also be said to be the *energy* of the eyesight of yakkū, or again their malevolent *propensity*.

5. Indeed this heterodoxical work, and the other proto-ethnographic work that preceded it in the magazine *Young Ceylon* between April and June 1850 (see Gooneratne 1850a, 1850b, 1850c), deserve a study of their own.

6. The etymological root of *guru* and *ädura* are the same, namely, "teacher." I will hereon use these terms interchangeably.

7. Strictly speaking, *diṣṭi* is adjectival, and is used to associate an object or practice with the malevolent energy of the eyesight of yakkū -- e.g., *diṣṭi mantraya* are the charms employed to summon the diṣṭiya of yakkū to the performance of a particular work.

8. There is apparently some regional variation in the name given to the practitioners of the arts of influencing the malign work of yakkū. They are, for example, also known as *kaṭṭādiyas* or *yakdēsas* (see Gooneratne 1866: 10; and Wirz 1954: 14-15). See also O. Pertold (1930: 106n) for a not altogether satisfactory interpretation of the word *yakädura*.

9. They are also known by the term *leḍā* as we shall see in our description of the two ceremonies. But this term can also be used to refer to persons suffering from affliction that have other sources than yakkū.

10. Often the specific charms or mantrayas will be called *bandanayas* (or *bandhanayas*), e.g., Rīri Bandanaya, the mantraya employed in the binding of one of the group of Rīri yakkū. Interestingly, Wirz, who collected his data in the Galle area of the Southern Province in the earlier years of this century, suggests that there are also practitioners who are called "bandhanayas," those "whose task it is to confine the demons and evil forces and so make them harmless" (1954: 14). I, myself, never came across such a usage.

11. The form yakṣa, in its Siṁhala usage, is adjectival. Thus "yakṣa eyesight" is simply the "eyesight of yakkū." I make mention of this here because the form is useful in English translations or transcriptions of Siṁhala phrases and thus will occur elsewhere as well.

12. *Maga harinava* literally means to "turn from the way." Sometimes the phrase *ivat karanava* ("to put out of the way") is also used.

13. These are Sinhala diacriticals. An *ispilla* is the head-piece or vowel sign denoted by "ි" and placed over a consonant as in the character "මි" (*mī*); a *pāpilla* is the foot-piece or vowel sign denoted by "ු" and placed under a consonant as in the character "මු" (*mu*); a *rēpaya* is denoted by the sign "ර්‍" placed over a consonant and giving a rolling "r" sound; a *kumbuva* is a side-piece or vowel sign denoted by "ෙ" and placed before a consonant as in the character "මෙ" (*me*).

14. Here I should like to record once again my thanks to the energetic staff of the Sinhala Dictionary Department in Colombo, Sri Lanka. I would single out Mr. Somapala who with great patience and unflagging interest eventually traced this phrase, "sēman gannava," in the Department's colloquial collection.

15. The word *ōjas* has the sense the "essence" or "power" of the food.

16. For a discussion of Sinhala food practices which however does not mention this intriguing concept, see Yalman (1969).

17. See Bruce Kapferer (1983: 37-48) for a discussion of the sociology of performing troupes in the Galle area of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. Pertold, who visited British Ceylon between 1909 and 1910, and again between 1919 and 1921, has written that, "At present the *Yakun-natima* is regularly performed by a single dancer, only exceptionally a whole band of demon-dancers being engaged. Financial reasons seem to be decisive for this reduction of the ceremonial apparatus" (1930: 100). I was in fact told by one tovil performer (who was actually known more as a mask maker) that he only performs by himself, dancing being an unessential part of the practice of tovil. But, he went on, for this very reason, he is only rarely engaged, because people now don't feel that a tovil is a tovil without dancing. I never saw this man perform however, nor did I ever see a tovil performed by a single performer.

CHAPTER II

TOVIL NÄTIMA:

THE DANCING OF TOVIL

In October 1987 Leela Amma,[1] a Siṅhala woman in her mid to late sixties, had a yaktovil ceremony performed (or "danced," *natanava*, as is more properly said) for her. In fact she had not one but two ceremonies: an Iramudun Samayama or midday ceremony, and, some hours following, a Mahā Kalu Kumāra Samayama or ceremony for the Great Black Prince.[2] The ceremonies took place over a period of two days in the yard of her home in the Matara district of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. A descriptive consideration of these two ceremonies forms the central task of this chapter.

The story of Leela Amma's condition, as far as I could gather it, is fragmentary. Reconstructed somewhat on the basis of her own accounts, it is the following: In 1950 or thereabouts, a few years after her marriage and during her first pregnancy, Leela Amma went to a cemetery (*karakoppuva*) to see the cremation (*ādāhanaya*) of the body of a *bhikkhu* or Buddhist monk. She had been sternly advised not to go, it being well-enough known to Siṅhalas that pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to attack by *yakkū*, and that, moreover, cemeteries are precisely one of those places infested with their malign presence. Leela Amma went nevertheless, and, predictably, no sooner had she returned home that evening than she became ill. And that night the

baby was lost (*babā näti unā*). During a succeeding pregnancy the ceremony called Rata Yäkuma was performed for her. The Rata Yäkuma is a ceremony (or *yāgaya*, lit., "sacrifice") performed specifically for women who are either pregnant with child or in want of a child. Its chief purpose is either to protect the baby in the womb and ensure, at the appropriate time, its safe delivery, or to enable hitherto barren women to conceive (Sarachchandra 1966).[3] The effort for Leela was in vain however, her pregnancy failed to go the term. When subsequently she again became pregnant another Rata Yäkuma was organized. In the course of its performance however it appears that one of the *äduras* planted a *koḍivina* (sorcery) over which Leela Amma was caused to "step" (*ira pänīma*, lit., "stepping over the line"). In Sinhala conception, this kind of sorcery only becomes effective when the intended victim "steps" over it.[4]

That ädura, the reason or reasons for whose maliciousness I was never able to determine, is said to then have told Leela's husband that nothing can be done about the sorcery -- "even if one side is turned," he is said to have declared, "the other side can't be." And having so said he fled (*penala giya*). Curiously enough though Leela Amma still encounters this by now aged adura who, she says, apologizes for what he has done, but insists nevertheless that try as one might the effects of the sorcery cannot be undone. "*Amma maṭa kisi deyak karanna bä*," he says, Mother there is nothing I can do.

The Sinhalas have a complex conception of sorcery.[5] We note that the author of Leela Amma's sorcery maintained that even though *one* "side" of the sorcery might be "turned," the other side cannot be. Herein is contained the elementary principle of the *koḍivina*. According to Sinhala conception the ill-effects of the *vina diṣṭiya* (i.e., the distinctive diṣṭiya of the *koḍivina*) have to be "cut" (*kapanava*), or again, "turned" (*haravanava*) in order to stop its malign influence. There are instances however in which this is impossible, that is, when, because of the particular efficacy of the charms (*mantrayas*) employed, the yakkū are bound too tightly to their destructive work to be deterred in their designs. In these instances, it is considered, "cutting" the *vinaya* or sorcery would lead to certain death, either of the *āturaya* or of the adura who attempts the *koḍivina käpīma* (the

practice of "cutting" sorcery). As a result, at best only a partial and temporary amelioration can be effected, a "turning," as Siṅhalas say, of but one "side" of it.

This was the unfortunate case with Leela Amma. Only one "side" of the *koḍivina* planted during the Rata Yäkuma could be "turned," and that by the judicious intervention of a skilled ädura. He had been able to secure a "limit" or *sīmāva* during which Leela would be protected against the ill-effects of the *vina* diṣṭiya. As the *sīmāva* waned however she would once again feel its malevolent influence (among the signs of which were burning sensations in the chest, and nightmares in which there appeared a large black figure) signalling the impending necessity for yet another tovil. Leela Amma had already had upwards of twelve yaktovil ceremonies danced for her.

The principal malign figure involved in Leela Amma's condition is the yaksayā known as Mahā Kalu Kumāraya, the Great Black Prince. But for Siṅhalas, as I have noted, where there is one yaksayā there are several. And the other main culprit in Leela's case is the Iramudun Rīri yaksayā, the Blood Yaksayā of the Midday Hours. Thus the two yaktovils danced for her: the Iramudun Samayama,[6] and the Mahā Kalu Kumāra Samayama.[7] (See Appendices I and II for Siṅhala stories relating to these two figures respectively.)

Iramudun Samayama

It is about 9:50 a.m., and Leela Amma is brought out of the house by her eldest daughter and accompanied to the make-shift shed, or *äturu pandala*,[8] where she will stay during performance of the tovil. Grave, she is dressed in a spotless white tunic and cloth. Äddin (or *Äddin māma*, Uncle Äddin, to some), the senior adura (*mahā ädura*), speaks to her in a voice barely audible as she holds the lamp of the Four Warrant Deities (*hataravaram devi*).[9] (She is being told, I gather later, that she must concentrate on making her mind clear.) She sits. A curtain (*kaḍaturāva*) is raised before her and held at each end by two young boys drawn from the Leela Amma's household. The curtain separates her from the main activity of the performing area.

Almost simultaneously, as Leela is being seated, the first and inaugurating sequence of the

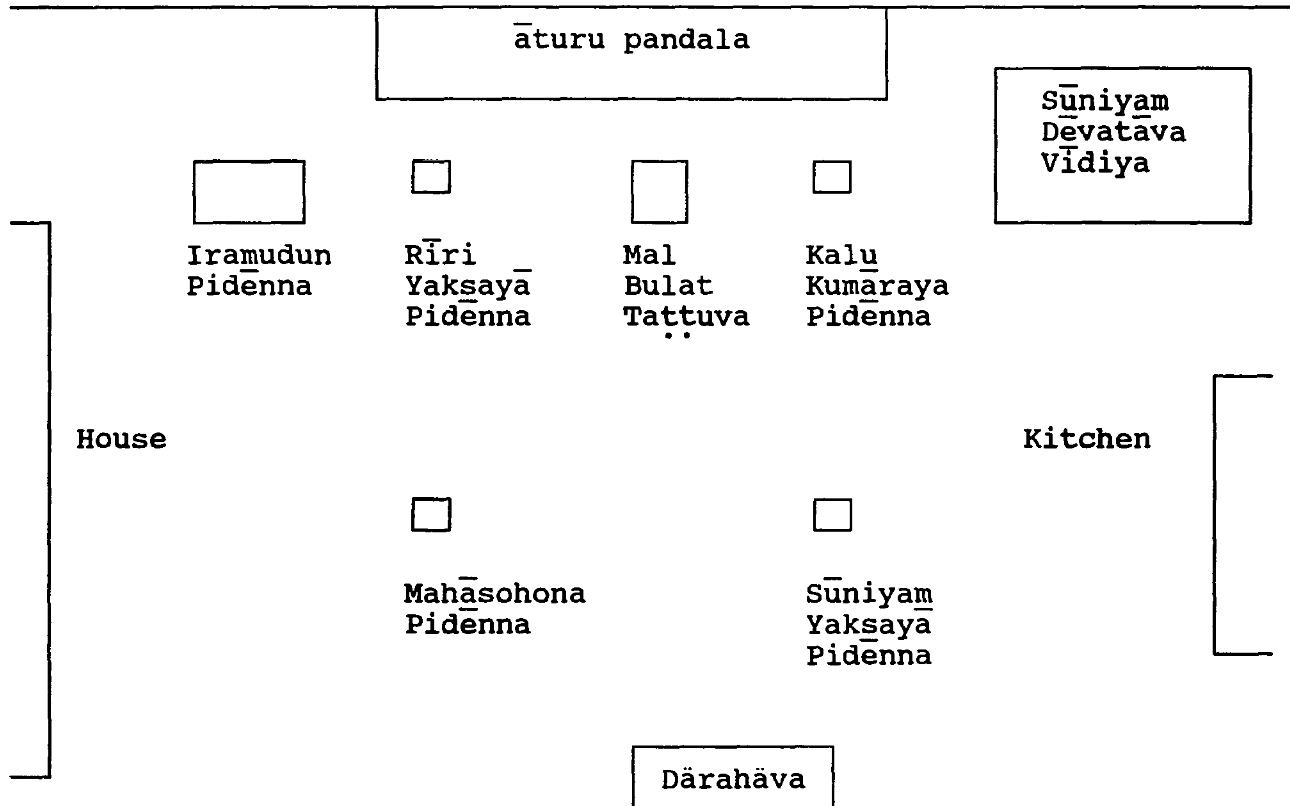
tovil starts, the *Sūniyam Vīdiya Käpakirīma*, the Dedication of the Stand for the Godling Sūniyam.[10] (See Fig. 1. for a schematic lay-out of the performing area.) This sequence, in which the godling Sūniyam (*Sūniyam dēvatāva*)[11] is entreated to watch over the proceedings, and to keep their lives secure (*jīviṭa ārakṣāva tabāgannava*), is the opening sequence of all major tovils I observed. Another ädura, Samarapala, standing before the Stand (a sort of scaffold over which coconut leaves are hung) utters charms softly, shifting lightly from foot to foot. He holds several *pandams* (torches) in one hand, and a *baṭagaha* (a whistle made from a small species of bamboo), and *dummala* (a kind of incense which produces a spectacular blaze when touched by a flame) in the other. An assistant stands nearby with a fire-pan of live coals (*gini anguru*) into which the ädura periodically sprinkles some of the incense so that a thick pungent smoke sweeps over the Sūniyam Stand. Yakkū, it is said, are particularly attracted to the sharp, acrid smell of the smoke of this incense, *dummala*, and the shrill sound of the whistle (*baṭagaha*). After five minutes or so the adura stops. The torches are planted on the Sūniyam Stand, one at each corner, and one in the middle. The cock (*kukula*), its feet bound to prevent its escaping, is also placed on the Stand.[12] And once again the ädura, Samarapala, begins uttering charms. This time however they are uttered quite audibly. (There is apparently a difference between the charms uttered before the planting of the torches on top of the Stand and those uttered after.[13])

Both drummers are beating a steady rhythm. Leela Amma, who has been swaying gently the while, suddenly lets out a loud, piercing scream, and begins to wail, swinging her head from side to side. Her daughter goes quickly to her assistance. Her feet are shaking. She is in evident distress. But the äduras pay little attention to her. And now and again the piercing sound (*yakhanḍa*, as it is called)[14] of the whistle cuts through the drum-rhythm, and the acrid smoke of the incense soaks up the air.

The Dedication of the Sūniyam Stand is a short almost perfunctory sequence. After about five minutes or so, a large flame is thrown over the Stand, a short tuneless sound is made with the whistle, and Samarapala, executing an elegant side-step, clasps his hands, raises them at slight

FIG. 1.

PERFORMANCE AREA FOR IRAMUDUN SAMAYAMA



incline, and bows in a brief, clipped, gesture of obeisance (*namaskāraya*) to the godling Sūniyam. The drums stop. It is just after 10:00 a.m. The torches are removed from the Stand.

The following sequence, or better, set of sequences, is the *Kattrīka Hatara Käpakirīma*, the Dedication of the Four Offering Stands. And it begins as soon as the necessary paraphernalia, already assembled, are put in their appropriate places. The offering stands are made of three slender sticks approximately four feet in height and tied together so as to be able to accommodate a small tray or *taṭṭuva* on top. The offerings (*dola pidēni*) are placed in them.[15] There is one offering stand each for the main yakkū to be propitiated in this ceremony: Kalu yaksayā, Rīri yaksayā, Mahāsohon yaksayā, and Sūniyam yaksayā.[16] It is to these offering stands that the diṣṭiya or malign eyesight of these yakkū will be put when the charms are uttered to summon, one after another, the presence of each of them. As I outlined in the previous chapter this practice of invoking the presence of yakkū is called *diṣṭi kirīma* (lit., the performance of diṣṭiya).

Leela Amma in the meantime has begun to wail once again, intermittently now, and with considerably less energy. The ädura, Äddin, steps behind the curtain and cuts limes over her body. The cutting of limes (*dehi käpīma*), as I have mentioned, is one of several auxiliary practices employed by aduras to effect the "binding" of yakkū.[17] Meanwhile, the charms for summoning the malign eyesight of the first yaksayā to be called, Kalu yaksayā, have started. A torch is planted on the offering stand for this yaksayā. The ädura uttering the charms, Samarapala, moves from foot to foot keeping time with the light rhythm of the drum. Small *gejji*, or bells, tinkle at his ankles. Every so often he sprinkles incense into the fire-pan held by the assistant, and a cloud of smoke lifts over the offering stand and *taṭṭuva* for Kalu yaksayā. The cock is brought from the Sūniyam Stand and placed, squawking and flapping, at the foot of the offering stand. And in this manner the ädura moves on, in turn, to the offering stands for Rīri yaksayā, Mahāsohon yaksayā, and Sūniyam yaksayā, summoning each to send their diṣṭiya, their malign eyesight, to the ceremony ...

It is now about 10:35 a.m., and, after a barely noticeable pause following the end of the sequence of invocation, the *Iramudun Samayama Nätīma*, or Dance-Sequence of the Midday

Ceremony, is about to begin. The presence of the yakkū has been summoned. That is to say, their eyesight has been caused to be brought (*genvanava*) to the tovil proceedings, and they have been "bound" to the work at hand, the *gurukama*. The Iramudun Samayama Nätīma is the main dance sequence of this particular tovil. Ariyadasa, a performer of incomparably charged movement, holds a torch and a handful of incense, and stands in the middle of the performing area. Then, with a sudden piercing shriek he executes a series of fierce, stamping movements. The *gejjis* at his ankles tinkle. He spins around and around the dance area. He shrieks again. Leela Amma's eyes are now wide open, her head rapidly shaking, shaking. And yet again Ariyadasa shrieks as he starts off once more with a fresh torch, the tender-coconut leaf (*gokkola*) streamers of his headdress flying. Meanwhile Leela Amma has herself started to move her hands rigidly back and forth. There is a sort of rhythm to her rigid, jerky movements. Jaws clamped shut, her eyes open but unseeing, she appears little aware of anything but her own concentrated movements. And her daughter looks on with growing apprehension as, with a flourish, Ariyadasa throws a flame before the curtain and it is brought down bringing Leela Amma into full view of the performing area. The dancing that now follows is even more fast and fierce.

Äddin, the senior ädura, uttering charms, again cuts limes over Leela Amma's body. She appears to grow steadily calmer. The malevolence of the yakkū is being restrained. But her eyes remain glassy, unfocussed. And her face is tense with strain -- *mūna tadavelā*, as people say. Her cheeks, too, are sunken, and the already accentuated appearance of pained distress is further set off by the silver-grey hair that, having come undone, falls dishevelled about her shoulders ...

Soon, Ariyadasa throws a high, looping flame, to great shouts of *ayubō!, ayubō!!* ("Long Life!"). He spins and stamps and, holding both torches, transcribes circular movements in the air. His whole body is in motion ...

It is now nearly 11:00 a.m., and time for the Iramudun Samayama to be formally introduced. Äddin, as "leader" of the performing troupe, and as the ädura who has had most to do with treating

Leela Amma, makes the opening remarks. His manner is jocular, and at once authoritative and rhetorical. Though obviously speaking to the audience at large, he addresses himself to one of the drummers. He makes specific reference to Leela Amma's condition, and to the fact that many tovil ceremonies have been performed for her in the past. He is particularly concerned about her shaking (*calitavenava*), he says, because she also suffers from high blood pressure (*presur ekak tiyenava*). Nevertheless, he continues, in a tone of sure inevitability, having performed the necessary preliminary procedures it was clear that a tovil was needed once again. The drummer, tapping lightly on his drum, agrees. "There are some people who play," Äddin then concludes with a sudden, deliberate sarcasm (someone in the audience having apparently made an uncomplimentary remark about him or his practice of tovil), "play at cooking rice. *Those* are good works!"[18]

Two aduras, Äddin and Samarapala, then take small portions of incense and, sprinkling it into the fire-pan, utter charms once more. Now the presence of diṣṭiya is not simply being generated, but also intensified. In other words the procedures for intensifying diṣṭiya such that it induces the condition of *āvēṣaya* are being performed. Leela Amma is going to be made to "dance and sing." A previously prepared necklace of flowers (*mal māle*) is held over the fire-pan from which the incense rises thickly. Leela now begins to shake wildly, screaming, screaming. The necklace is taken to her and, in a loud voice, Äddin asks her whether she accepts it.

ÄDDIN: [to Leela] Do you accept (*piligannava da*)?

LEELA: The verses (*kavi*) must be said (*kiyanna ōnä*).

ÄDDIN: Eh? [as though not hearing].

LEELA: The verses must be said.

ÄDDIN: The verses must be said after it [the flower necklace] is bound. Do you accept? The verses must be said *after* it is bound. Or else it [the verses] can't be said, no.

Leela Amma howls loudly. With some difficulty Äddin manages to secure the necklace

around her neck. The drums roll, and Leela howls again. Flower-strands from the arecanut palm (*puvak mal*) are placed in each of her hands. Then suddenly the drum rhythm rises in pitch. And the adorned Leela shuffles into the performance area to "dance and sing." Really however she sort of trots behind the ädura, Ariyadasa, holding the arecanut flower-strands aloft, and nodding her head up and down. Little but tense weariness can be read in her immobile face. And Ariyadasa, in a stern, commanding, indeed almost rough manner, marks out with the *īgaha* (lit., "arrow tree")[19] the path she is to follow. Leela obeys. And round and round the performing area they go. Then on cue, both the drum and the ädura stop. And propped up by another ädura, Äddin questions Leela:

ÄDDIN: Are the commands and virtues (*anaguna*) of our omniscient All-Wise Buddha who crossed over the ocean of *samsāra*, the *tatāgata*[20] who attained *nirvāna*[21] valid for the yakkū who are in this body?

LEELA: Yes (*Eseyi*).

ÄDDIN: Now, I have been giving offerings (*dola pidēni*) for thirty five, forty years. Once every five years you have accepted those offerings. Isn't that so?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now what I am asking is this. Aren't you going to go beyond five years (*avurudu pahen ehārṭa tama yanne nädda*)? [Five years, recall, is the limit of the period for which the tovil will have efficacy for Leela. The yakkū involved, principally Mahā Kalu Kumāraya, have insisted on that *sīmāva*.]

LEELA: No [i.e., she wants to keep a five-year limit].

ÄDDIN: Now my life has surpassed (*atikrānta*) its expectancy and is going to end. Since that is so won't you extend it beyond five years.

LEELA: No.

DAUGHTER: [To Äddin] Ask why she won't.

ÄDDIN: [To Leela] Why? What is the cause (*hētuva*)? If the *vina* diṣṭiya [i.e., the diṣṭiya resulting from the sorcery] in your body was cut.... That day [i.e., the first time Äddin saw her for her condition] you said that, first of all, under no circumstances must the *vinaya* (sorcery) be cut. Didn't you say that if it is cut you will lose your life?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Yes. Then, when I look I see that it has been thirty five years since that

time. Including today's there have been eleven [i.e., tovil ceremonies]. During those tovils you accepted the customary rites (*vatpilivet*)[22] that were done for you every five years according to the rule (*nītiyen*) ...

Now, I had some trouble (*karadaraya*) last night [i.e., in the Prēta Pidēnaya, the offering ceremony to the *prētayas*, or ancestral spirits, who contributed to her affliction]. Why was there that trouble? Tell a little bit ...

Leela: I will tell later (*Passe kiyanava*).

ÄDDIN: Can't! Can't! Not in that way. If there is any trouble you must tell. Now, were the rites and offerings that were given last night to the *prētayas, bhūtayas, bahiravayas,* and yaksayās,[23] accepted (*bāragatta da*)?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then, during this noon-time period,[24] do you accept the rites and offerings that are being given to you?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: So have you done enough dancing and singing and so on (*nurta-gīta ādiya karanava*)?

LEELA: Not enough (*madi*).

ÄDDIN: Now, in this ... in this noon-time, from the time we started, various offerings were dedicated (*käpa käruva*).... When diṣṭiya was performed for [i.e., summoned to] one of the offerings, you had a greater shaking (*calitaya*) than us. Today there was no trouble, no? Did you have any trouble?

LEELA: Why? I told [you] night before last.

ÄDDIN: Why? Then, according to what was told [to me] night before last I performed these rites and went away. Did you accept that (*piligatta da*)?

LEELA: I accepted (*piligatta*).

ÄDDIN: So?

LEELA: There are [i.e., more] (*tiyenava*).

ÄDDIN: There are again (*āyemat tiyenava*)?

LEELA: There are.

ÄDDIN: So what should [we] do for that (*ēkaṭa mokada karanna ōnä*)?

LEELA: You should know to cut and go (*kapala yanna*) [i.e., "cut" the effects of the diṣṭiya].

ÄDDIN: Very good (*bohōma hondayi*).... Now do you accept the rites and offerings

that I am giving in this noon-time period?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: If we are hampered (*avahira karanava*) in the night, what should we do?

LEELA: You should know to cut.

ÄDDIN: I won't trouble you any more. You are an ill person (*rōgāturaya*) [referring here to her high blood pressure, not to the effects of diṣṭiya]. Then, in the method of blessings (*sānti kramaya*)[25] that is performed for that period, the rites having been performed, are you going to dance and sing and so on?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: At what time?

LEELA: At 9:00

ÄDDIN: At 9:00 you can't (*namayaṭa bä*).

LEELA: At 12:00.

ÄDDIN: 12:00 at night, and ...

LEELA: At 9:00, 12:00, and 3:00.

ÄDDIN: There is no dancing 9:00 no. When these offerings are given at the *āturu pandala* (the āturaya's shed), you will dance and sing and so on. In that case, it is during the dancing of the *mahā samayama pelapāliya* (the great ceremony of the procession) that, having gone to the *rañamaṇḍala* (dancing area), you will dance.

LEELA: [Almost whispering] Can't. [Then more loudly] At 9:00 also.

ÄDDIN: You want to dance at 9:00 also? Again?

LEELA: At 12:00.

ÄDDIN: And again?

LEELA: At 3:00.

ÄDDIN: After that?

LEELA: After that ...? [a terribly querulous note sounding in her voice].

ARIYA: The diṣṭiya [i.e., this ädura prompts the crucial question].

ÄDDIN: At what time is the diṣṭiya being gotten rid of (*diṣṭiya maga hārala yanna koyi velāvaṭa da*)?

LEELA: At 3:00.

ÄDDIN: Then, at 9:00 and 12:00 at night ...

LEELA: At 3:00 ...

ÄDDIN: At 3:00 ... having danced and sung and so on.... It can't go at 3:00 no?

LEELA: At 3:00.... At 3:00 [insisting breathlessly].

ÄDDIN: At 3:00 [conceding].

LEELA: [Very weakly, barely audible] Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then, before 3:00, the dancing and singing and so on must be done. At 3:00, the dancing and singing and so on having been finished, these yakkū are going to their residence (*yakvimānaya*)[26] having given up this interior (*mē abhyantaraya at härala*). Aren't they?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: They are going forever, aren't they[27] (*jīvitāntaya dakvā yanava ne*)?[28]

LEELA: [Forcefully] No.

ÄDDIN: No? I asked it jokingly (*kaṭa boruvaṭa ähuvaṭa*). It can't be said in that way no. It is always at five years that they are going. Why?

LEELA: That is the order (*ana*) that was given.

ÄDDIN: So it is definitely [only] at five years that they are going?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then ...

DAUGHTER: It can't be done in that way, no. Always ...

ÄDDIN: Generally, for at least one more year ...

MAN[29]: [To Äddin] Ask who gave that order (*ana*).

ÄDDIN: [To the previous questioner] It is King Vesamuni who has given that order. [Then irritably] You stay away with that one until I ask.... [Turning back to Leela] It is definitely for five years that they are going?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: They wont go for even one day more than five years [he asks with a chuckle]? Have pity, a little (*anu kampā karanna, poḍḍak*). It is with these children and all the others who are here that, working very hard (*bohōma mahanse velā*), we perform this ceremony of blessing today.... So then, for us, wont you give a chance

for at least one more year. For what that *gurunānse* [i.e., the man who planted the sorcery] said.... Offering flowers and lamps to gods is not for nothing no. Having said "*Anē deviyō*" some benefit (*yahāpatak*) should be received, no[30]... [Silence. He is waiting for Leela to answer. Then, in an urging, sympathetic voice] Say something wont you (*kiyannakō poḍḍak*). [Then, more harshly] You wont say? They are going for five years?

LEELA: [Almost inaudibly] Yes.

ÄDDIN: [After a pause, sharply] Good. Having performed dancing and singing and so on for those three *jāmayas* (watches) what kind of sign (*lakuna*) will indicate [that the yakkū are] going to their residences?

LEELA: I will give three hoots (*hū tunak kiyāgannava*).[31]

ÄDDIN: Then what are we to do for you?

LEELA: Water must be poured.

ÄDDIN: How much?

LEELA: Seven.

ÄDDIN: Can't, no. These days there is an illness which has created trouble for your whole body no [i.e., the high blood pressure]. So at that time when the bathing (*nävili*) is done, is that good?

LEELA: Good.

ÄDDIN: [In a sympathetic tone] Good?... Now, is the dancing and singing and so on enough?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Not enough? [To another adura and the drummers] Make her dance a little more (*tava ṭikak natavanna*).

And again Leela Amma trots behind the adura around the dancing area. The adura, Ariyadasa, making aggressive gestures and shouting abrasively, indicates with his *īgaha* the path she is to take and what actions she is to perform. Then again, when the drum stops, she is questioned.

ÄDDIN: Is the dancing and singing and so on enough?

LEELA: [In a weak barely audible voice] Enough (*äti*).

ÄDDIN: Then you will be dancing and singing and so on again at 9:00, 12:00, and

3:00 at night. Aren't you? [he raises his voice] Now in this noon-time watch, having finished this dancing and singing and so on, during the dancing of the midday ceremony (*iramudun samayama*), you are going to the *purahala*[32] aren't you?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: You can't go today, okay.

LEELA: I must go.

ÄDDIN: You must go?

LEELA: I must go.

ÄDDIN: Nevertheless, it is because your body has an illness that I'm telling you. Must you really go?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Having finished dancing and singing and so on, you, and I also with a *purahala diṣṭiya* (the diṣṭiya that is taken to this structure), are going to the *purahaha*.

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: At that place, having tied the *sīma nūla* (lit., "boundary thread"), you are going to come to this house.... Having done dancing and singing and so on the way that you wanted they are going for another five years.

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: That's all, definitely (*sahātikay*)?

LEELA: Yes.

At this point Äddin begins saying charms inaudibly over a shallow pot stirring its contents, a mixture of turmeric and water. He tries to sprinkle a little in Leela Amma's mouth with areca-flower strands. But unexpectedly, in a show of resistance, she snatches the strands and throws them to the ground. Äddin however, ever measured and sure in the authority he displays, takes another group of strands and patiently repeats the procedure. More subdued, she also drinks directly from the pot. And soon she appears much calmer, and is walked back to her shed.

Now the verses (*kavi*) for the yaksayās to whom offerings are to be made are about to

begin. And Samarapala, holding the *īgaha*, dances before Leela Amma. Suddenly though she screams and starts a stiff jerky movement. And in the next moment she stands and again starts to dance. Äddin quickly intervenes and questions her again.

ÄDDIN: You gave a promise (*poronduva*) didn't you?

LEELA: [?]

ÄDDIN: Ah, for now?

LEELA: Now.

ÄDDIN: There is no trouble.

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: Then while we are doing these rites and singing the verses for these offerings you will be dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Doing.

ÄDDIN: You wont be harassed (*tamanṭa kisi hiri hārayak venne nä*).

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: Then having given up this interior (*abhyantarē at hārala*) in the way you said earlier, at that night watch, having done dancing and singing and so on, [the yaksayās] having gone to their residences at 3:00, and having been bathed with seven pots of water, again, for how many years are they going?

LEELA: [Screaming almost] They are going for five.

ÄDDIN: [Plaintively] Anē, say it is for one year more.

LEELA: [Shouting] Don't create trouble (*karadara karanna epā*).

ÄDDIN: Don't? It is for five years that they are going?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then were the rites that I gave the bahiravayas (mean spirit associated with lower regions) and prētayas (ghosts of deceased relatives) last night accepted?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Were the *yantrayas* (protective inscription) that were arranged on your behalf to protect this yard (*bhūmiya*) accepted?[33]

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then I will prepare and give [the rites] in that way. The way that you want [the rites performed] if someone makes an annoyance that isn't accepted is it?

LEELA: [After a short pause] No.

ÄDDIN: No.

LEELA: Cut (*kapanna*).

ÄDDIN: Are our commands (*ana*) valid? Will [the yaksayās] be obedient?

LEELA: Cut.

ÄDDIN: Right. You are saying that ... having cut the diṣṭiya in that way in those three watches, the dancing and singing and so on having been done, having been bathed at 3:00, it is not forever but for five years that they are going.

LEELA: Going.

ÄDDIN: Definitely.

LEELA: [?]

ÄDDIN: Now when those offerings are given...

LEELA: [Weakly] Those fellows are not singing [i.e., the verses]. Without singing ...

And so the verses continue, for each of the yaksayās in turn: beginning with Kalu yaksayā, and followed by Rīri yaksayā, Mahāsohon yaksayā, and Sūniyam yaksayā. This is the main offering sequence in the tovil. The *taṭṭuvas* or offering trays placed on top of each offering stand contain the offerings to be made to the yaksayās. At the end of the verses for each yaksayā the appropriate offering tray is lifted by the assistant and held before Leela Amma. She places an offering of mixed flowers and betel leaves (*mal bulat*) and a coin offering (*panḍuru*) in the tray. Then she enacts a significant procedure referred to as *mūna ata pisa gäsīma*, literally, "the wiping of the face with the hands." In this gesture Leela passes both her hands down her face three times, bringing them to rest briefly on each occasion on the out-stretched offering tray. This gesture accompanies, and is indeed prompted by, the ädura's uttering of the following formulaic phrases:

The ten great troubles are finished (*daha mahā dōṣa nivāmay*)

The eighty great troubles are finished (*asū mahā dōṣa nivārnay*)
The million troubles are finished (kōṭiyak doṣa nivārnay)
Finished (*tīnduvi*). Finished.

This is done in turn for each of the offering trays. It were as though, in this procedure, the troubles or ill-effects of the malign eyesight of the yakkū, were being transferred from Leela Amma's body back to their origin, back to the yakkū themselves. Indeed it is here that the activity of diṣṭiya is important and, with it, the concept of *sēman gānīma*, the taking of *sēmanaya* (the substance of the food), by looking at it. As I described in the previous chapter, the diṣṭiya which has been "summoned" (*diṣṭi anḍagahanava*) by means of special charms, *diṣṭi mantrayas*, is what "takes" this substance. It is this imbibing through eyesight that provides the satisfaction (*santōsaya*) of the yakkū.

In the meantime, it is now about 11:45 a.m. After the offerings are made all the offering stands are removed to the *purālapala*. And preparations are made for the sequence to follow, the *Därahäva Pidēnna*, the Offering of the Bier. The *därahäva* is a "litter-shaped bier" made of stout stems of the banana plant and hung around with tender- coconut leaf tresses. It will house the body of the ädura in the ruse of death to be enacted in this sequence.

Äddin, a specialist in this sequence, takes a mat (*pädura*) and, holding it over his shoulders, begins uttering charms. He holds several lengths of chord over the fire-pan so that the incense rises around them. The other äduras in the meantime, seated off to the side, begin a fresh set of verses, verses that recount the story of the mat.[34] Almost immediately, Leela Amma begins to wail and flail her arms about. Äddin, with an air of complete unconcern, calmly places the chords on the ground. Charms, recall, summon yakkū. It is therefore to be expected that when charms are being uttered and the presence of the eyesight of yakkū thereby generated and intensified, it will have effects on the afflicted person. And indeed it very often has effects on people in the audience. And the most marked effect that yakkū have is trembling and shaking. The spectators now begin to press closer in their effort to see. Again Leela Amma screams. With the mat slung casually over his shoulder, Äddin sings the verses accompanied by the other äduras and the drummers.

And again Leela Amma wails. Now her movements appear more rhythmic. An odd smile

is fixed to her lips. Then the verses stop, and she hangs her head to one side, exhausted. Äddin spreads the mat on the chords. Leela is made to lie down on her mattress. The *īgaha* rests at her side. A red cloth is then spread over her.

Then Äddin lies on the mat taking the *īgaha*. Uttering the formulaic phrases "The ten great troubles are finished (*daha mahā dōṣa nivāmay*) ... etc.," Leela passes the red cloth from her head to feet and then hands it to Äddin. He covers himself. A large mortar and two pestles are placed nearby. Betel leaves which have been passed over the fire-pan are placed on Äddin's stomach. The mortar is placed on these leaves and held by assistants. Paddy (i.e., unhusked rice) is then poured in by Ariyadasa, and while *mantrayas* are being uttered it is pounded by two assistants. A chorus of *Apō!* (Oh my Goodness!) accompanies the pounding. The paddy is taken out and sifted on Äddin stomach. Replaced in the mortar it is pounded once more. And again it is taken out and sprinkled over Äddin's stomach.[35]

Leela Amma at any rate seems visibly pleased. There is then a flurry of movement as Äddin is wrapped in the mat and lifted into the bier (*därahäva*). The remainder of the rice is taken to Leela who scoops it into a small pot into which coconut water is also poured. The *därahäva* is then moved closer to Leela Amma and Äddin begins uttering charms sprinkling incense into the fire-pan from time to time. A small effigy, or *pambeya*, is brought out of the house where it has been kept till now, and placed at the foot of the bier. An *aila* (small offering tray) with a torch stuck in it is placed on it. Left for a while it is soon taken back inside to Leela Amma's room. The cock is tied to the end of a stick at the other end of which is the pot of rice and coconut water. Hoisted onto the shoulder of an assistant these are taken to the *purālapala*.

In a shallow pot on one side of the bier there is rice cooking over a small fire. In a similar pot on the other side is a skull fragment and egg. These too are being cooked. The bright hibiscus-adorned offering for the Iramudun Rīri yaksayā is placed on top of the bier. And now in an hilarious drama of grief two assistants begin to wail, "ayō Budutātti! ... ayō anney! ... balannakō! (oh Buddhist father! ... oh my! ... look at this!)" The bier is doused with incense, and as the verses that

recount its story are sung Leela Amma sways slowly from side to side. The verses over, she is made to sit up, and in turn she places in Äddin's hand, *mal bulat* (mixture of betel leaves and flowers), paddy, a ring, and coin offering. She then repeats the gesture *mūna ata pisa gasīma* ("wiping the face with the hands") to the familiar phrases signifying the removal or end of the effects of the eyesight of yakkū.

By this time the assistant who had taken the cock and pot to the bier-platform, the *purālapala*, has returned. The cock is taken and tied to the bier, and the contents of the pot are "read" for signs of the progress of the tovil. Satisfied, the rice is distributed around the bier in a number of small trays. Then Äddin from his prone position throws a flame and the bier is hoisted and taken around the house three times. At each of three trays staked in the ground they pause to fan incense onto it. The bier with Äddin in it is then taken to the bier-platform. It is now 12:50 p.m., and therefore, strictly speaking, the proceedings are running late.

During the final stages of the Offering of the Bier, Ariyadasa has been preparing himself for the last and most dramatic sequence of the Iramudun Samayama, the *Dekonavilakku Pidēnna*, the Offering of the Double-Sided Torch. Standing at the Sūniyam Stand Ariyadasa blackens his face with soot. He shuffles from foot to foot so that the ankle bells, *gejji*, tinkle. Feet spread apart he leans against the Stand, shaking it. He inhales draughts of incense.

The double-ended torch is fixed to his mouth and lit. He turns sharply, gives a short, clipped, perfunctory bow (*namaskāraya*) to the Sūniyam Stand and throws a flame. He moves then, staccato fashion, transcribing a half-circle and waving both torches in Leela Amma's direction. Shuffles and steps are alternated with threatening, frozen stances. The gestures are aggressive. The glares, menacing. Doubling back to the Stand he inhales more incense, replenishes the torches and spins back into action. Another ädura, Samarapala, assists him. His air of unconcern cuts a striking contrast to the high-pitched intensity of Ariyadasa's movements, and the expectant gravity that hangs about the atmosphere in the "tovil house" (*tovil gedara*). Ariyadasa is indeed now shaking violently, pulling the Sūniyam Stand this way and that. He makes a sudden turn in Leela Amma's direction

and instantly she stands and starts to "dance." From her he turns abruptly towards the house. He enters it through the open doorway. And Leela Amma follows. Going first into Leela's room he throws a flame, then stands shaking with an outstretched arm waiting for his assistant to give him a lime and the lime-cutter. These, placed in his hand, he cuts the lime and drops them to the floor. Then, taking the *īgaha* he holds it at various points of the door-frame with menacing, admonishing gestures. Before leaving the doorway he throws a flame and in like manner goes through the whole house. He is, as äduras say, collecting the diṣṭiya and dōṣaya from the house onto himself. All the while Leela Amma is shuffling at his side.

The house is then shut up and they return to the dancing area. Both Ariyadasa and Leela Amma are shaking. Ariyadasa holds a lime at Leela's head and shuffles back and forth up to her with aggressive and admonishing gestures. The lime is cut. Then lime and lime-cutter are dropped to the ground and he holds the *īgaha* to her in the same attitudes of threat and admonition. Presently he throws a flame in front of her. It is the sign to set off for the bier-platform.

With Ariyadasa and Leela Amma at the lead, a whole throng of people follow for the distance of about a quarter of a mile to the open area where the platform, or *purālapala*, has been constructed. At the platform Leela Amma mounts it and collapses on Äddin (who had been brought there in the bier). Ariyadasa makes an effort to mount but is prevented, restrained by assistants. He falls against an assistant, is then lifted onto a mat, and immediately and very solicitously attended to. A great deal of urgency surrounds this procedure because the adura must be coaxed back to normal awareness. Samarapala utters the appropriate charms and sprinkles him with turmeric water. Gently he pries his mouth open just enough to take the double-ended torch. His face is cleaned, and he is helped out of his costume. In the meantime Äddin is tying a fresh protective thread (*apa nūla*) around Leela Amma's wrist and neck. It is about 1:20 p.m. The Iramudun Samayama is complete.

[There then follows a slow and filling lunch (*bat*, lit., rice), and a long rest for all. A few people mill around. By 4:00 p.m. the performers and their assistants have already made headway erecting the

new structures for the next tovil ceremony. (See Fig. 2.).]

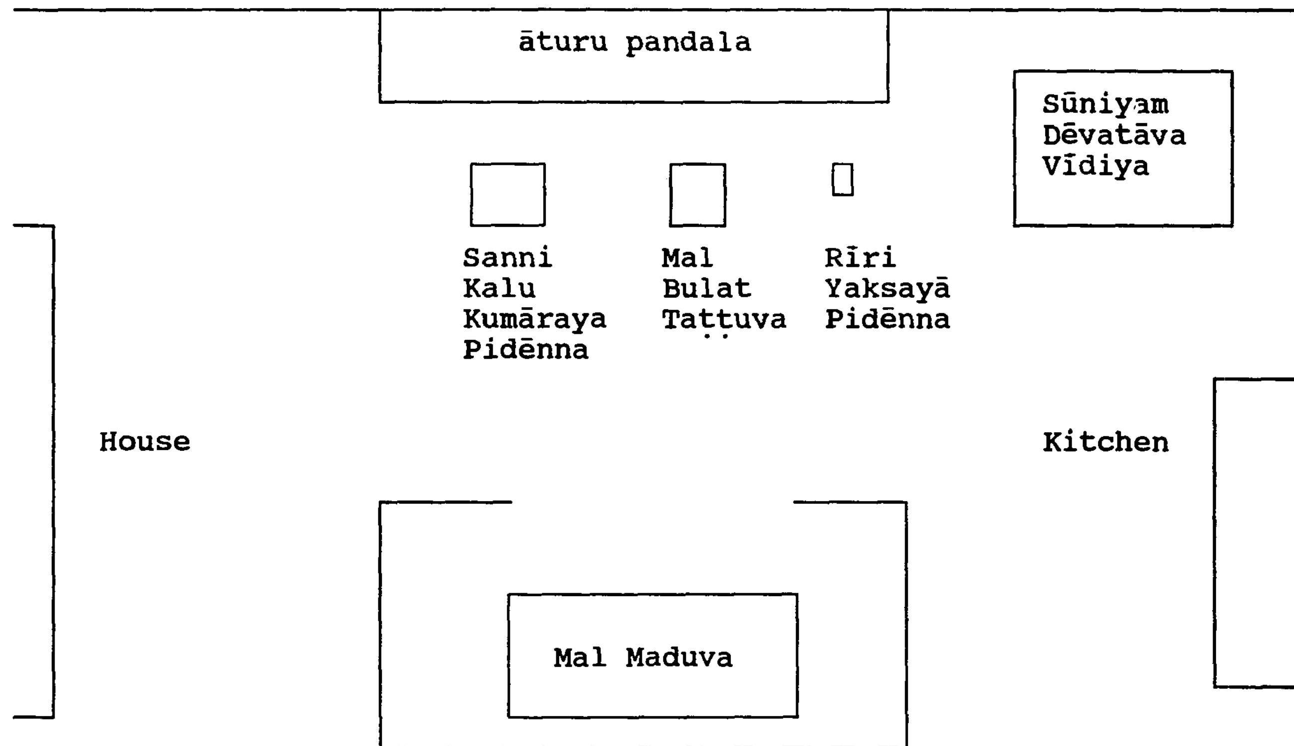
Maha Kalu Kumara Samayama

A pyramidal structure elaborately decorated with loops of tender coconut leaves stands in the middle of the performing area. This is the Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna (Offering for the Illness-making Black Prince). It is the signature offering in this tovil which in many other structural respects differs little from other tovil ceremonies. At its apex are strands of the arecanut palm. The central (or at least most imposing) structure, the *mal maduva* (lit., flower-shed), stands opposite the *āturaya's* shed. Bright red hibiscuses hang from some of the tender-coconut leaf tresses, and small red flowers dot its outer sides. It is now evening. Clusters of people are gathered waiting for the proceedings to begin.

Shortly after 6:00 p.m., Leela is led out of the house -- in much the same fashion as in the earlier Iramudun Samayama. The lamp for the Four Warrant Deities, two of its small flames dancing in the overcast evening, is taken from her and hung from a rafter of her shed. She sits hands clasped, a little subdued it would appear, as the curtain is raised hiding her from view. The Dedication of the Sūniyam Stand (*Sūniyam Vīdiya Käpakirīma*) is about to begin. An offering stand (with the offering tray for Kalu Kumāraya) and the Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna are placed immediately before the raised curtain. After the inaugural invocation to the godling Sūniyam, asking for his permission to perform the ceremony, and his protection throughout the night's proceedings, there follows the *Kattrīka Hatara Käpakirīma*, the Dedication of the Four Offering Stands. There is a slight difference between its performance in this ceremony and the earlier one. Three offerings are initially placed before the curtain. In addition to the two already mentioned -- i.e., the offering stand for Kalu Kumāraya and the Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna -- there is an offering basket for the consorts of Kalu Kumāraya, the Rid yaksanin (or Riddi bisavun). This is called *mal bulat taṭṭuva* (the offering of flowers and betel). Torches are placed in each and Äddin begins the charms for calling the diṣṭiya of these figures. Immediately after these charms, the verses for Kalu Kumāraya

FIG.2

PERFORMANCE AREA FOR MAHA KALU KUMARA SAMAYAMA



(or Kalu yaksayā) are sung, to the accompaniment of dancing.

Leela in the meantime lies calmly on her mattress. The red flower offerings at her side provide a startling aspect against her white clothing. The verses continue. Then the tray for Kalu Kumāraya is held before Leela who makes the requisite offering of flowers and betel, and coins, and enacts the gesture of wiping the face with the hands. The offering stand for Kalu Kumāraya is then removed and the other three offering stands are brought and set in a line before the curtained-off Leela Amma.

During the verses for Rīri yaksayā Leela suddenly sits up. She shrieks and starts to shake rhythmically from side to side. It subsides almost as soon as it starts. The drum-beats intensify and the steps of the dancing aduras quicken. At the conclusion of the verses the offerings are made to each tray.

It is now close to 8:50 p.m., and preparations are being made for Leela to "dance and sing" at the appointed hour, 9:00 p.m. The Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna is placed in the center of the dancing area. The curtain is raised before her. She sits calmly; then lies down. The drum-beat intensifies once more. But Leela Amma does not respond. Äddin disappears behind the curtain to cut limes. Incense fills the air. The necklace of flowers is placed around her neck. Still she does not respond. The areca flower-strands are placed in her hands, but even now she seems unmoved. Then with a dramatic flourish a flame is thrown before the curtain and it is brought down. And Leela stands, but wearily. She is led round and round the Offering Stand for the main yaksayā involved in her affliction, Mahā Kalu Kumāraya, and through the passageways of the Flower Shed before the drum stops and she collapses against her son. She is then questioned by Äddin:

> ÄDDIN: Are the commands and virtues of our All-Wise, noble and Venerable King Buddha, the *tatāgata* who attained nirvana, valid for the gods, godlings, and yakkū who are in this body (*mē sarīra abhyantarē vāsaya karanne*)?
>
> LEELA: Valid (*valangu*).
>
> ÄDDIN: Secondly, is the preaching and the order of the god Sakra, leader of the gods

gods of both heavens, valid?

LEELA: Valid.

ÄDDIN: Thirdly, are the qualities of the commands and virtues of those who have attained the Path to nirvana (*aṣṭārya pudgala*), the Great Jewel of the Sangha, valid?

LEELA: Valid.

ÄDDIN: If the commands and virtues of the Buddha and gods and godlings are valid, what I am asking is ... For a number of years I have known what yakkū are in this body. Now the others who are in this place [i.e., the audience] will think that what this person [i.e., himself] is doing is a great big hoax (*loku boruva*). Because of that, I am asking what yakā, what godling, and what *kumbhāndaya* [is there in this body]?

LEELA: [At almost screaming pitch] Venerable Kalu Kumāra dēvatāva (*Kalu Kumāra dēvatāvun vahanse*).

ÄDDIN: Who else?

LEELA: The Venerable godling Mahāsohon.

ÄDDIN: Who else?

LEELA: Also Iramudun Rīri yakā.

ÄDDIN: And also Iramudun Rīri yakā was contained in this body (*sarīra abhyantarēṭa aḍangu unā*) with an impediment of sorcery (*yam kisi vini tahanciyak*).

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Since that is so the rites and offerings that were given here once every five years were accepted ... were accepted weren't they?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now did the Iramudun Rīri yakkū accept the rites and offerings that were given at midday?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now why it doesn't occur to me to harass you and make you dance and sing like on other days is because you have an illness in your body. Since that is so have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

ARIYA: [To someone, probably Leela's daughter] So you are telling me not to make her dance, not to make her perform dancing and singing and so.

ÄDDIN: [They] are saying "don't (*epā*)!"

ARIYA: [We are] not to harass.

ÄDDIN: [To Leela's daughter] So you are telling me not to make her perform this dancing and singing and so on.

ARIYA: They are saying don't.

ÄDDIN: [To the audience at large and emphatically] She [i.e., Leela] is saying it is not enough. So I have to make her dance as much as she wants no. It gives us a name, no (*ēka loku naraka namayak ni*).[36] When it happens like that, having gone and performed the ceremony of blessing (sāntiya), this person can be made to lie down no. Then it is not good no. Now it seems that the dancing and singing is not enough. So let us perform and singing and so on a little more. You [all] don't be afraid (*baya venna epā*) ...

[Then, turning back to Leela] Now in the morning too I asked [i.e., about the dancing] because there is an illness in the body.... Early in the morning medicine was brought.... Now if the dancing and singing for the yakkū who are in this body was done in the way you wanted will the body be disturbed?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: There wont be any trouble at all?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: [In a sympathetic voice] You should dance as much as you want?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Let go her hand.

The drumming begins again and the ädura leads Leela Amma round the dancing area. Presently they stop.

ÄDDIN: You promised that the commands and virtues of our omniscient All-Wise Venerable King Buddha who crossed over the ocean of *samsāra*, the *tatāgata* who attained nirvana, is valid for yakkū who are in this body.[37]

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

So again, led by an ädura, Leela Amma "dances and sings." This time they go up to the clay effigy (*baliya*) of Kalu Kumāraya. Leela bobs her head back and forth toward and from it. She is executing the gesture called "taking sēman." They circle the Sūniyam Stand, and then the Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna. Here again she pushes her face toward the offering, "taking sēman." They stop.

ÄDDIN: Have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Not enough? That is not the way (*ehema nemē*). There are two more times for you to perform dancing and singing and so on. At 12:00 at night the dancing and singing and so on can be done. Don't you accept? You want to dance more?

LEELA: Yes.

So again she dances. And again she is questioned.

ÄDDIN: [Saying a charm first] Now have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Enough.

ÄDDIN: At what time will you perform dancing and singing and so on again?

LEELA: At 12:00.

ÄDDIN: And after?

LEELA: At 3:00.

ÄDDIN: At 3:00. Then at 12:00 and at 3:00, the dancing and singing and so on having been done, at what time will the yaksayās go to their residence having given up this body?

LEELA: At 3:00.

ÄDDIN: Will there be a sign (*lakuna*) when this diṣṭiya is being gotten rid of (*diṣṭiya maga härala yana velāva*)?

LEELA: Yes.

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: What kind of sign is it?

LEELA: Hooting (*hū kiyanava*).

ÄDDIN: So, then what must we do for you?

LEELA: Water must be poured.

ÄDDIN: Water? How much?

LEELA: Seven.

ÄDDIN: You should be bathed with seven pots of water?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then every time, these yakkū having given up the body, are going for.... This is the twelfth tovil as far as I can remember. You are going for five years. Is it for five years that you are going?

LEELA: For five years.

ÄDDIN: You wont go a little further? At least one month?

LEELA: No. You were allowed [i.e., previously to extend the limit].

ÄDDIN: I was allowed. Why I was allowed is.... The one that was going for three years was extended to five years.... It is your children who have been caused trouble and harassment to drive away (*dakka gannava*)[38] yakkū who have fallen in this body.... They are going for five years.

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: They wont go any further than that?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: So ... can't you move it up one year? Have pity (*anukampā karala*). If that harasses you don't do it. You said, no, that if it was removed you would be harassed for the whole year. You said, "Without harassing me it is for five years that they are going," didn't you? You have promised that no?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Because of that five years is enough. There is nothing I can do. I would be satisfied if they go until the end of your life.... On that day, having made an effigy for the eighteen vidiyas (*dahāṭa vīdiya baliya*), a Mahā Kalu Kumāraya effigy, and done a tovil, I asked whether they will go forever. So what can we do?.... The dancing and singing and so on having been performed at 12:00 and 3:00, having hooted three times and been bathed with seven pots of water, the yaksayās who are

in the body are going to their residences at 3:00.[39]

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: After that [i.e., after the yakkū go] shall we stop this ceremony of blessing (*sāntiya*)?

LEELA: Don't (*epā*).

ÄDDIN: We should do the rites that we have to do?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: After that, when we are doing this ceremony of blessing, will there be any trouble?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: Definitely (*sahātika da*)?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: At this time then, at 3:00, the dancing and singing and so on having been done, as on other days do you give me a promise?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on now?

LEELA: Enough.

ÄDDIN: So what more should I ask eh?

VOICE: Don't trouble her any more ...

Leela Amma, having been given some turmeric water to drink, is led back to her shed. She lies down, exhausted, as the verses for Sūniyam yaksayā (the only yaksayā left to receive offerings) are sung. The offering tray is held out to Leela who makes the usual offerings, gestures, and utterances. It is 9:35 p.m., or thereabouts, and a short break follows.

After about fifteen minutes, the performers sufficiently refreshed with tea, the sequence called the *Däpavila Pidēnna* begins. The Däpavila Pidēnna is an offering sequence in which verses

are sung about the mat (*pädura*), the diṣṭiya of yakkū are called from the eight corners (*ata kona*), and the ädura lies on his back on the mat as though a death offering for the yakkū. It is, principally, a sequence for one of the Rīri yakkū.

One ädura, Ariyadasa takes the mat and begins to sing verses. He holds it over the fire-pan so that incense rises around it. He waves it slowly before Leela as he sings. Then another ädura, Samarapala, joins him, holding the *īgaha*. They sing the verses, alternating stanzas.

Leela Amma lets out two shrieks. Her feet move with an agitated rhythm.

The verses continue. Periodically one of the äduras makes a gesture in Leela's direction which is greeted with shouts of "*ayubōvan!*" (or sometimes lengthened to "*ayubōvēvan!*"), "Long life!" Ariyadasa passes the torch along the mat as he sings. The mat is then spread on the ground and a fierce dance follows. Ariyadasa races to the Flower Shed and shakes it, shrieking. Returning to the mat, he throws a flame, falling onto his back crossing the torches. Getting up he takes a few steps then falls on his knees, crossing the torches and bringing them down at one corner of the mat. This is repeated at each of the four corners of the mat. The sequence is called *ata kona käpa kirīma*, or the Dedication at the Eight-Corners. Between each "dedication" a comic sequence ensues in which Ariyadasa feigns chasing the assistant who holds the fire-pan. The audience delights in this.

The eight corners dedicated, the mat is spread closer to Leela Amma and Äddin lies on it. He covers himself to the neck with a sheet which Leela has passed down the length of her body three times. The *Avamangalla Pidēnna* (Funeral Offering), a shallow casket-shaped container, is placed on his stomach. In it there are nine offering trays each with betel leaves, coins, a small bit of cloth, and a lime. A torch is stuck in the Offering.

Holding the whistle in one hand and the torch in the other, Äddin utters charms. This is followed by verses. Periodically he blows the whistle. Presently the Offering is lifted to Leela who makes the necessary expressions of offering. The gesture of wiping the face and touching the Offering is repeated. And repeated again, touching the cock. While uttering charms Äddin throws a flame before Leela. This signals the end of the offering sequence. Leela Amma is led away briefly.

The four offering stands and the various other offerings are taken away to the bier-platform, and preparations are made for the sequence called the *Mahāsamayama*, the Great Ceremony.

The Great Ceremony is a sequence given over to elaborate expositions of dance. All the äduras participate. Ariyadasa starts. Shricking charging toward to the Flower Shed. Then, all the äduras, holding torches and, to shouts of "Long Life!," charge the Flower Shed and plant the torches. A torch is planted at the clay image of Mahā Kalu Kumāraya.

At this point Äddin formerly introduces the tovil:

ÄDDIN: Is there an *āturumahatmaya* (*āturaya's* husband) here?

DRUMMER: No

ÄDDIN: There is no one. Only she [Leela] as [both] *āturumahatmaya* and *āturuhāmini* (ill wife).

DRUMMER: Yes.

ÄDDIN: If there is anyone who is *āturumahatmaya* [i.e., a responsible male in the family] it is the two sons.

DRUMMER: Yes.

ÄDDIN: These two are very afraid to come to gatherings like this [i.e., tovil ceremonies. They were actually inside the house].

DRUMMER: Yes.

ÄDDIN: They are very innocent (*bohōma ahinsakay*).

DRUMMER: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Because of that, although I have asked them to come I don't know whether they will come ...

DRUMMER: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Because we are given the command and authority (*anavaram*) to perform this ceremony of blessing (*sāntiya*)...

DRUMMER: Yes ...

ÄDDIN: We should get permission (*avasaraya*) from these two. If it is not gotten it is not good no.

Drummer: It is not good.

Äddin: Permission should be gotten from these two. Do you know why?

Drummer: Yes.

Äddin: Now, when I was dancing in the evening I was told, "Oh Uncle, don't make her dance as much as this."

Drummer: Yes.

Äddin: Because of that we have to make her dance at 12:00. Again we should ask from these two [i.e., the sons]: "If we have to make her dance again, if there is a system like this, what should be done?" We can't in that way no [i.e., without asking]. Without asking in that way the *leḍā* of other's [i.e., a sick person who belongs to another family] can't be made to dance no.

Child come here [to one of the sons, the younger (*malli*), who has emerged from the house and is standing at the door]. It is to both of you that I spoke. Where is big brother (*ayya*)? Now I was told this evening too, at this watch, at 9:00, when she was made to dance, not to make her dance in this way. But I was not happy that she was made to dance even a little bit. [Yet] on every occasion that I ask she says it [i.e., the dancing] is not enough. At that time I made her dance. Now at the 12:00 watch in which she is to dance, the sequences (*kramaya*) having occurred, if mother says, "I didn't dance enough," there is nothing I can do. I have to make her dance no. It is because of you fellows that I am asking.

First of all, I was told not to do it no.... Where is big brother? I have to ask big brother too.... Without asking in that way I can [i.e., in fact] perform. Without making her dance while it is like that, having prohibited the ill person (*leḍā hira karala tiyala*), I can perform the tovil. [But] this one is not a work like that.... Because of that, until the ill person says [i.e., to stop], we are going to make her dance. There wont be any trouble. This ceremony of blessing (*sāntiya*) is done in such a way that there wont be any trouble. It is not done [simply] in the way that we want. But you children have a determined mind (*hitē vēgayak tiyenava*). But there is nothing I can do. This is not a tovil performed in order to learn. You both know no. At that time, at the beginning when I was performing tovils, you weren't born. Because of that the tovil is performed in the way that I know.

It is to say this small matter that I spoke. Now this evening it was once again said not to make this mother dance, wasn't it?

Voice: Yes.

Äddin: Then when she is made to dance at 12:00, if we want to make her dance in that way, what can we do? That's right. It is from your childhood that I have been performing tovils. Not only you, there is big sister (*akka*) who is older than you. Since before that too I have been performing tovils. Because of that if I am told to make her dance I will make her dance. I too am not happy, because she is an ill person. She has had an illness since those days no. Medicine was taken for pressure no. I too was afraid. If that happened in that way we wont make her dance. But if we are told that she wants to dance we will make her dance. Now in the evening at 9:00 when she was dancing, having done these things, I asked once

every three minutes. She said she couldn't no. She said she wants to dance no.

I can only ask these two [i.e., the sons]. It is these two who are the heads (*mūlikaya*) [i.e., of the family]. So if the ill person says to me that she wants to dance I will make her dance. Okay (*hari da*)? So you are not angry no.

Then again the äduras dance alternately through the Flower Shed and around the Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna. But it is rapidly approaching 12:00 and it will soon be time for Leela Amma to "dance and sing" once more. The curtain is raised before her, and she is made ready for the sequence. However she seems barely able to rouse herself. Her dishevelled hair accentuates the pall, the heavy weight that seems to hang over her. The flower-necklace is placed around her neck. Weakly she takes the areca-nut strands. A flame is thrown and the curtain is brought down. Ever so slowly then, Leela Amma gets up. An adura solemnly rests the *īgaha* on her forehead. Then off they start. Once at the Flower Shed Leela leans against it throwing her head forward in the action of "taking sēman." She is led to the clay image of Kalu Kumāraya were again she "takes sēman." The drums stop and she is questioned:

ÄDDIN: Did you dance enough?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Not enough? Were the offerings that were given in the evening to the yaksayās accepted?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Yes? In the midday watch, did the yakkū who are in the body accept the offerings that were given to the Iramudun Rīri yakkū and the Avamangalya Rīri yakkū?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Did they accept, giving a promise (*porondu velā bāragatta da*)?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now for the time being have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Why you can't do a lot of dancing and singing an so on is because you are ill no. So wont there be trouble?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: More dancing and singing should be done?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Make her dance (*natavanna*).

So again she dances, this time following behind a different ädura. She is led to the clay image. Then she is made to climb on a pot of water placed on a chair. Weakly she climbs, falling backwards. At this point her children intervene, protesting, imploring -- her daughter in tears. In disgust one of the äduras, Ariyadasa, walks off. But Leela insists on continuing. Slowly she moves behind another ädura, Samarapala. The drums stop.

ÄDDIN: [A charm to begin with. Then] From midday and from evening a promise was given to me that the commands and virtues of our Omniscient All-Wise Venerable King Buddha who crossed over the ocean of samsāra, the *tatāgata* who attained nirvana is valid for the yakkū, gods and godlings who are inside this body (*mē sarīra abhyantaraya vāsaya karana yakun yaksaniyanṭa devi devatāvunṭa*). It was given wasn't it?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Then I was told that the yakkū who are inside you (*tamagē abhyantarē inna yakun yaksaniyan*) want to perform dancing and singing and so on at 9:00 and at 12:00. According to the promise that was made there we have performed it. Was it accepted?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

So again she follows the ädura.

ÄDDIN: You having performed dancing and singing and so on.... I was given a promise that having performed dancing and singing and so on again at 3:00 at night [the yaksayās] are going having given up this interior for five years. Is it definitely at that time that they are going?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Now should more dancing and singing be done?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: Really?

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: A little more. Let go [her] hand.

And again she is led off. And a few moments later again they stop.

ÄDDIN: Is the dancing and singing and so on enough?

LEELA: Enough.

ÄDDIN: At what time will you dance and sing and so on again?

LEELA: At 3:00.

ÄDDIN: Yes. Having finished dancing and singing and so on at 3:00, having hooted three times and been bathed with seven pots of water, for how long are these yakkū who are inside, in this body (*mē abhyantarē inna mē sarīrayē inna yakun yaksaniyan*), going having given up the inside of this body (*sarīra abhyantarē at härala yanne*)?

LEELA: For five years.

ÄDDIN: That's it no. So that is the wrong story (*veradi katāva*) no. Every time you wont go further than five years. It never goes further than that?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: What is the meaning of that. Has a promise been given to you?... It is like this. The obstruction (*avahiraya*), meaning the sorcery, that one has been given with a promise (*ēka dēla tiyenne poronduvak ativa*).... Either the ill person or the adura [i.e., will die if the sorcery is "cut"]. Because of that, it is having promised for [a period of] five years that they are going. That is what has to be understood. Like that. According to your promise they wont go for even one year more than

five years, [but] what I am saying is that I would be satisfied if they went not for five but for six years.... I am saying that this is the twelfth tovil.... They wont go?

LEELA: No.

ÄDDIN: [That] means that you are saying that there is a sorcery (*vina*) diṣṭiya and I am being told to cut that sorcery diṣṭiya. If I can't cut ...

LEELA: It can't be cut.

ÄDDIN: Why? If I can't cut it, somebody else having been brought must cut it.

LEELA: Can't (*bä*).

ÄDDIN: Why? What will happen if it is cut?

LEELA: If [it is] cut this human body will die (*kapuvot mē nara sarīraya yanava*).[40]

ÄDDIN: If that sorcery (*vinaya*) is cut.

LEELA: Yes.

ÄDDIN: If it is like that, that sorcery can't be cut no. That means when they go having given up the interior, when the sorcery is cut, what seems to be said is that her life will be lost. It can't be done in that way.

DAUGHTER: Can't it be done by giving another *billa* (sacrifice)?

ÄDDIN: [Responding to Daughter] I was ready to give two sacrifices. Now on that occasion I said that I would give two sacrifices instead of one. But I was told "don't!" It seems they [i.e., the yakkū] don't want *billas* (sacrifices) either.... There is nothing I can do.... [To Leela] Is it enough?

LEELA: [Barely audible] Enough.

A limp Leela is carried back to her shed. And the dancing of the Mahasamayama continues, each adura taking turns with a repertoire of steps. They sing verses.

It is about 12:00 a.m., and there then follows an interlude called *aḍavva* (dance) in which the drummer beats out a small rhythm and each dancer in turn provides accompanying steps ending it with a gesture of deference (*namaskāra karanava*). A collection of money follows, first from the householders, and then from the audience.

After a break of roughly half an hour there is a short sequence for the *mal bulat taṭṭuva* (the flower and betel offering tray). It is then taken away. Immediately after the preparations begin for the next major sequence, the *Mangara Pelapāliya*, the Procession for the god Mangara. From here on in the tovil the comic sequences begin. The Mangara Procession concerns a letter received from someone that the god Mangara wished to see a tovil. The tovil performers are asked to arrange a procession for his amusement. There is a short comic dialogue with a drummer regarding the letter.[41] The procession is organized with a group of small children, each being given a particular item symbolizing royal paraphernalia. They are then marched through the Flower Shed and around the dancing area to the hilarity of the audience. There is a short juggling act by one of the äduras, and a comic repartee between two of them. Then sequences involving a tusker, an ox, and last of all Kalu Vaḍi dēvatāva who "kills" a cock with his bow and arrow.

This long set of sequences is followed by an offering (of ten offering trays) to Mahāsohon yaksayā (in this sequence referred to as a godling) and his various avataras. (There is a legend that the Mahāsohona was subjugated by the god Mangara.) The offering trays are then distributed around the Flower Shed.

By now it is approaching 3:00 a.m., and the dancing area is once again being readied for the "dancing and singing." The Sanni Kalu Kumāra Pidēnna is again placed in the middle of the area and three torches are planted in it. Charms are uttered and the necklace and areca flower strands are taken to Leela Amma. Two flames are thrown and the curtain is brought down. Leela Amma only barely responds. With effort she stands and follows the path marked out for her by the ädura. Up to the clay image, around the Offering, through the Flower Shed. Then, as the intensity mounts, Leela Amma dramatically climbs the Flower Shed. The audience literally gasps and presses further upon the performing area. In a most precarious manner she walks across the top, pausing now and again to shake her hands and head. People are gathered around the base supporting the frail structure, fearing the worst. She lies down, continuing to shake her feet and hands. Eventually she is helped down and questioned.[42]

ÄDDIN: Have you performed enough dancing and singing and so on?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Not enough? [To the drummers] Beat.

So again she dances. Refusing to follow the ädura she goes off to the Sūniyam Stand, then into the kitchen. The ädura shouts out a reprimand and she returns to the path he marks out. Round the Offering. The drum stops abruptly.

ÄDDIN: Enough?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: In that case, having given answers for what I want to ask do as much dancing and singing and so on as you want.... I was given a promise that the commands and virtues of our Omniscient All-Wise and Venerable King Buddha, who crossed over the ocean of *samsāra*, the *tatāgata* who attained nirvana, is valid for the interior of this body. Then when that promise was given you said that Kalu Kumāraya, Rīri yakā, and the Venerable godling Mahāsohon are inside your body (*tamagē sarīra abhyantarē*). We have done rites and given offerings to the yakkū who are there. Were they accepted?

LEELA: Accepted.

ÄDDIN: Then, you said that the yakkū who are in the interior of your body are going to their residence at 3:00. That time hasn't yet come. Even though our exact time has come [i.e., by the clock it is now 3:00 a.m.] you still have time. At that time with what kind of sign are they going?

LEELA: Having hooted three times. Having hooted three times and been bathed with seven pots of water they are going.

ÄDDIN: Going. Then, again, they are going to their residence for ... years?

LEELA: For five.

ÄDDIN: For five. A great trouble has come to me that they aren't going for more than this five years. Now there was a small indication, but I am satisfied that any one of those gentlemen or whoever will say sometime [i.e., will cast suspicion upon his tovil performance]. Now I am even ready to be hit.... It is not from this tovil alone that I am living. I will earn and eat well. This tovil is a tovil which is done once every five years. Anyone having been brought.... If there is any yakadura gentleman (*yakädura mahattaya*) who can make this ill person go further than five

years, having been brought, do so. I will pay their wage (*poliya*). Why is that? Having performed for twelve years, having performed twelve tovils, I have taken wages for that. For that one [i.e., for extending the five-year limit] I will give one wage to the gentlemen who spoke. Any, any gentleman. [Evidently there were people who were suggesting that Äddin was not "cutting" the effects of the sorcery because he wanted to be assured of future tovils.].... If it is done in that way I wont dance in this courtyard (*midula*) again even for an *ädurukama*, even if one of these children will be angry. Even if these fellows [i.e., the audience] will be angry. None of these fellows are angry. They would even come for a drop of oil to be charmed. If I am going to speak in that way I should say it to their face. To anyone. I also am doing this tovil determinedly (*hari vēgayen karanne mē tovilaya*). That is it ...

[Now to Leela] Is the dancing and singing that was done enough?

LEELA: Not enough.

ÄDDIN: Dance; [she] wants.

So they set off again. Leela takes the cock, holding it above her head. She leans against the Flower Shed pressing the cock to her face. Leaving it on the Flower Shed she turns back to the center of the dancing area. Then suddenly she lets out three piercing hoots and collapses against someone. Immediately the pots of water (already prepared) are emptied over her. She is soaked. But it is over. Her daughter accompanies her into the house.

There then follows a quick offering to the Sanni yaksayās. And following that the *Dahāṭa Pāliya*, the Procession of the Eighteen Figures. Leela Amma has now reemerged, dried and changed. She delights in the biting humor of this sequence. Typically only eight or nine of them are presented: Pandam Paliya, Salu Paliya, Kende Paliya, Kalas Paliya, Tambili Paliya, Panduru and Anguru Paliya, Bille Sanni, and Bhita Sanni.

As morning begins to show itself the final sequence, the *Baliya Pāvādīma*, or the Dedication of the Kalu Kumāra Clay Image, is performed. And once again the accent of the tovil returns to diṣṭiya (and *dōṣaya*). Facing Leela Amma the clay image is leaned against two chairs. At its base are placed three coconuts, a long pestle, *hāl* or unhusked rice, betel leaves, and a few small coins. A lime and red flower is attached by a thread to the image. A little oil is sprinkled on the face of the image (evidently to soften the clay), and with Leela standing before it charms are uttered. (In the

meantime, beyond this, the Flower Shed and other structures are being dismantled.) The charms close with the formulaic phrases, "The ten great troubles are finished/the eighty great troubles are finished/the thousand great troubles are finished/ ... tīnduvi." Then Leela Amma throws the lime and flower at the image where it sticks to the softened clay. Then the sheet which has acted as the curtain is similarly thrown so that it haphazardly covers the image. And then, finally, holding the lamp of the Four Warrant Gods and *īgaha*, and while charms are being uttered, Leela is led into the house. The tovil is complete.

At least, in Leela Amma's case, it is over for the next five years -- as long as the promises that have been secured are kept, and the yakkū remain obedient to the commands of the Buddha.

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In my description of the tovil ceremonies performed for Leela Amma I have given much attention to those sequences in which the adura attempts by rhetorical strategies both to influence the demands of the disturbing yakkū, and to determine whether and to what extent the procedures of the tovil -- the offerings and the "dancing and singing" especially -- have been accepted.

These sequences, as far as I am aware, have received but scant attention in the now quite significant anthropological literature on the Siṅhala yaktovil (see Sarachchandra 1966: 32; and Halverson 1971: 338, for minor exceptions). It is arguable of course that this neglect has much to do with the local variation of the practice of tovil itself in the Western and Southern Provinces of Sri Lanka. The performance of tovil is indeed marked by variation determined by a whole range of factors -- from the vagaries of individual financial considerations to differences in local traditions of performing styles to changes attributable to social and historical currents. Clearly a careful study of such factors would repay the effort.

However it is necessary to at least raise the question whether this neglect may be understood less as some inherent "logic" in the Siṅhala practice of yaktovil itself or its "context"

than something of an *effect* of assumptions and preoccupations in the *anthropology* of Sri Lankan "ritual." Afterall, it is anthropologists and not aduras who produce and circulate them textually as part of the larger archive of the ethnography of "ritual." Certainly much of the work on the yaktovil (or on related Sinhala practices) -- that of Sarachchandra (1966), Obeyesekere (1969), Halverson (1971), AmaraSingham (1973), and Kapferer (1975, 1979c, 1983) for instance -- has concentrated on a certain group of sequences: the sequences of comic drama and dialogue that form a highly expressive and visible aspect of tovil performances. The question here is less about the fruitfulness or otherwise of this emphasis, than about the extent to which it is informed by and embedded in a certain kind of anthropological problematic. In the following chapter I shall endeavour to explore some of the assumptions involved in one prominent ethnography of this Sinhala practice.

Notes

1. For obvious reasons I have changed the name of the actual *āturaya* whose *tovil* forms the basis of the following description. I have however kept the names of the performing *äduras*.

2. In point of fact she had three ceremonies performed. On the evening before the Iramudun Samayama, a combined Prēta Pidēnna and Bahirava Pidēnna (offering ceremonies for two classes of mean supernaturals) was performed. This I am not describing here. I should perhaps note incidentally that I was not the only ethnographer present and recording this tovil occasion. Mr. Noriyuki Ueda of the University of Tokyo, Japan, recorded it on a videocassette recorder.

3. For a description and discussion of the Rata Yäkuma see E.R. Sarachchandra (1966).

4. For a discussion of this notion of "stepping" over a *koḍivina* see Dandris de Silva Gooneratne (1866).

5. For a good general discussion of *koḍivina* see Gooneratne (1866: 68-99), and Wirz (1954: 194-203).

6. The Iramudun Samayama is particularly interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, comparatively little anthropological attention has been given to this yaktovil practice. One probable reason for this neglect is that it is the only large-scale tovil in which there are no sequences of comic drama (i.e., of the celebrated *Mangara Pelapāliya* and *dahāṭa pālaya*). These sequences have been at the center of anthropological examinations of the Siṅhala yaktovil, the general thesis being that the comedy involved in them is the key factor in effecting cure (see for example, Obeyesekere 1969; AmaraSingham 1973; Kapferer 1983). Secondly, the Iramudun Samayama is the most compact and intense of the tovils. It is the tovil of shortest duration and the sequences run rapidly on one another helping to create an atmosphere of acute, almost breathless intensity. Thirdly, the Iramudun Samayama is interesting in that it is the tovil for that yaksayā which is considered the most fearful and dangerous of that malevolent assembly, the Iramudun Rīri yaksayā. At the same time however, the practice of the Iramudun Samayama involves all the techniques and procedures generally employed in the "deflecting" or "stopping" of diṣṭiya.

7. A *samayama* refers to a period expressly marked off for ceremonial activity.

8. A *pandala* generally is a scaffold of sticks over which some vine is grown.

9. The Four Warrant Gods of Sri Lanka are often said to be: Viṣṇu, whose main shrine is at Devinuwara (or Devundara); Saman, whose main shrine is at Ratnapura; Nāta, whose main shrine is at Totagamuva; and Pattini, whose main shrine is at Navagamuva. There are two other deities generally spoken of as warrant or guardian deities. These are: Skanda or Kataragama, whose main shrine is at Kataragama, and who has been a most important deity in contemporary Sri Lanka (see Obeyesekere 1977, 1978); and Vibhiṣaṇa, whose main shrine is at Kälaṇiya. Actually, whereas the idea of *four* Warrant Gods seems to have been historically stable, the actual occupants have changed. Viṣṇu has been the only consistent one (see Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 20 and 30-31).

10. The word *vīdiya* has presented some difficulty of interpretation. Pertold (1930) offers the opinion that it is derived from the Sanskrit *vithi*, or *vithika*, "the original meaning of which is 'road'." Quoting from L.D. Barnett's "Alphabetical Guide to Sinhalese Folklore from Ballad Sources" (1916), he continues that "in the Ceylon demon-worship" it is "'a space of enclosed paths

surrounding the site of a ceremony'" (1930: 115n). Halverson (1971: 336-337) is in general agreement. Sarachchandra on the other hand suggests that the word is probably derived from the Sanskrit *vedi*, meaning sacrificial alter (1966: 34n).

11. The Siṁhala figure Sūniyam (or Hūniyam) is something of a paradox since he can be both benevolent (when the moon is waxing) and malevolent (when the moon is waning). For a discussion of the increasing importance of this figure, particularly in urban areas, see Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988: Chap. 3).

12. The cock is an ever-present feature of all yaktovil ceremonies. They are offerings, or rather "sacrifices" (*billas*). See Nevill (1954a: 298) for a specimen of verse about the "origin of cocks."

13. The first, as I understood it (and, mind you, there were contradictory reports on this matter), is the ädura's personal *mantraya*, or charm, with which he invokes the protection of Sūniyam; the second is the *diṣṭi mantraya*, the charm by means of which the diṣṭiya of Sūniyam is brought to the tovil.)

14. It was explained to me that three "characters" or *akuru*, are blown (*pimbinava*) on the *baṭagaha*. The characters are *hū*, *vī*, and *ī*. They are necessary for "summoning" and "binding" yakkū to the work at hand.

15. As I said in the first chapter, a tray (*taṭṭuva*) of offerings (*dola pidēni*) will generally contain small measures of rice (*bat*), vegetables (*elōlū*), *mallun* (a mixture of leaves, coconut, salt, chilli peppers and onions), roṭi, sesame seeds (*tala äta*), green grams (*mun äta*), paddy seeds (*vī äta*), dry fish and meat (*goda diya mas*), roasted foods (*pulutu*), flowers (*mal*), and kinds of sweets (*kävili*).

16. Notice that this figure, Sūniyam, appears in yaktovil as both benevolent (i.e., as *dēvatāva* or godling), and as malevolent (i.e., as *yaksayā*).

17. Generally the lime is held in an instrument usually used to strip the husk away from the betel nut. While charms are uttered it is passed over the length of the *āturaya's* body a few times before being cut at his or her feet. The number of limes cut depends on the ädura's judgement regarding the unruliness of the yaksayā. See Hugh Nevill (1954a: 306-307) for a specimen of verse, on the "origin of limes."

18. The reference to cooking rice here probably has to do with one of the main practices of determining which yakkū have brought about the affliction of the *āturaya*. In this practice, having marked the side of the pot that faces East, the afflicted person is instructed to pour rice into it. The rice is then cooked and subsequently examined by äduras. By the shapes that appear on the surface of the rice it can be determined which yakkū are involved.

19. The īgaha is made of a slender but sturdy stick of the banana plant. It is decorated at the top with loops of the tender-coconut leaf and a nail is stuck in the tip. It forms an indispensable part of the equipment by which the ädura wields his authority. See Nevill (1954b: 10) for a specimen of verses relating to the *īgaha* or arrow.

20. An epithet of the Buddha alluding to his attainment of the status of a Buddha.

21. The Sanskrit form of the Pāli *nibbāna*, and the Siṁhala *nivan*. Lit., "extinction" -- i.e., of desire, and therefore of the suffering that constitutes the wheel of life. It is the highest and ultimate of Buddhist aspirations.

22. *Vatpilivet* has the sense of religious rites and observances performed in a particular manner by the authorized persons.

23. *Prētayas*, *bhūtayas*, and *bahiravayas*, are all species of mean spirits.

24. Actually the expression here was "*iramudun pālaya*."

25. The word *kramaya* gives the sense not only of "system" or "method," but of a graduated order of proceedings.

26. In Siṅhala, *yak*, like *yakṣa* is an adjective. Therefore, "the residences of yakkū."

27. Actually, as in much of colloquial Siṅhala, there is no pronoun in the surface of the spoken sentence. However I have used the third person plural nominal pronoun "they" wherever the subject of a verb indicating some action related to yakkū is implicit.

28. *Jīvitāntaya dakva*, is perhaps more closely rendered "until the end of life."

29. This was actually my field assistant, the skeptical A.H.M. Harischandra. He felt that this order (*ana*) had something to do with the ädura who had set the sorcery which was responsible for the affliction. Äddin was obviously irritated by his interruption. His response is nevertheless interesting. He seems to suggest that King Vesamuni, the legendary ruler of all yakkū, authorized the five-year limit.

30. For Siṅhala Buddhists offerings are made to deities in the expectation of some benefit in return (see Obeyesekere 1963).

31. Of this sound Dandris de Silva Gooneratne writes: "A *hoo* shout is one peculiar to the people of this island [i.e., Sri Lanka]. It consists of a loud, single, guttural sound uttered as loud as a man's lungs permit. A quarter of a mile is generally considered to be the distance at which a loud hoo can be heard" (Gooneratne 1866: 46n).

32. The *purahala* or *purālapala* is a tovil structure built to support the "corpse" of the ädura. It is erected either in a cemetery or by a stream or other body of water, and to it both the ädura in the bier or *därahäva*, and the diṣṭiya are brought at the end of the Iramudun Samayama.

33. These are usually diagrams with elaborate inscriptions of Siṅhala characters drawn on copper sheets. On the subject of *yantrayas* see Wirz (1954: 123-126).

34. See Nevill (1954a: 101, 188) for samples of verse dealing with the mat (*pädura*).

35. I could not determine what this pounding signified.

36. This more literally may be put, "That is a big wrong name isn't it."

37. This is a gloss of the following Siṅhala: *Sakala Sri Sagara paragataya mana ū Sri Sugata tatāgata apage samma sambuddha rajuttamayanan vahansēgē anaguna mē sarīra abhyantarē yakun yaksaniyan vāsaya karanna ū tama porondu unā valanguya kiyalā.*

38. More specifically, *dakka gannava* has the sense of forcing away by goading.

39. This is a gloss of the following Sinhala: *Mē abhyantarē inna yakun yaksaniyan dolahaṭa tunaṭa nurta gīta aḍiya karala hū tunak kiyāgena vaturu kalageḍi hatak nāla abhyantaraya at härala rä tunaṭa yakṣa vimun gatavala yanava kivva.*

40. Literally, "This human body will go."

41. The ädura "reading" the letter, Ariyadasa, actually borrowed my glasses at this point to enhance the comic effect.

42. It was in fact known beforehand that Leela Amma was going to climb up the Flower Shed. This apparently was one of the more sensational demands made by the yakkū.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUTH OF CULTURE:
RITUAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL IDEOLOGY

The Siṁhala *yaktovil* has been the object of a variety of anthropological analyses, all proceeding nevertheless within the theoretical space of the anthropology of "ritual." Ritual of course is a little doubted cultural phenomenon. It is thought of as universal in scope, and typically identified in terms of routine symbolic behavior as opposed to instrumental action (Leach 1968). Indeed modern anthropology would now speak in terms of a range of specifiable kinds of ritual. So that the Siṁhala yaktovil it is generally claimed, is, specifically, a healing ritual, a ritual of curing. And as such it may be differentiated in important ways from, say, the initiation rites of the Ndembu, or the garden rituals of the Melanesians. Implicit however in all these claims is a shared conception of what "ritual" supposedly is in the first place, and of the relation between "ritual" and those two other central categories of anthropological discourse, "society" and "culture."

In this chapter I propose to explore some of the assumptions and problems involved in recent anthropological analyses of ritual. As with the conception of other objects of anthropological discourse, I shall argue, there has been a general tendency to assume the adequation of the categories employed in thinking and writing about (i.e., in the representation of) the social practices of people being studied. This chapter is concerned to question this anthropological practice.[1] Specifically I will argue that in recent anthropological discourse ritual has acceded to a particularly

prominent position. It has become, one might say, the key term in the anthropological conception of culture. I then propose, in the remainder of the chapter, to undertake a detailed examination of one recent example of anthropological analysis of ritual -- Bruce Kapferer's analysis of the Sinhala yaktovil undertaken in his *A Celebration of Demons* (1983).

Ritual and the Truth of Culture

"Rituals, more rituals, yet more rituals." So, with understandable exasperation, remarked Jack Goody (1975: 34). And indeed, although anthropology has, since the outset of its disciplinary career, given over a select place to the study of what it has called "ritual," more recently, this domain of concern has acceded to a decidedly privileged status. And almost imperceptibly so it would appear. For, as self-reflexive as anthropology now claims itself to be, one does not readily discern among the titles that draw our attention to this field an anthropological self-consciousness of this shift. A fact which itself should be cause for skepticism.

Yet it might well be said, for example, that "ritual" has now displaced "kinship" as what we could call (in a Foucauldian language) the region of the *true* within those special and esoteric knowledges by which anthropology distinguishes itself, and upon which it stands its authority. Or rather, and perhaps more properly, "kinship" -- that cultural object that seemed but yesterday to mark off a whole terrain of anthropological preoccupation[2] -- has been not so much superseded by "ritual," as *reinscribed* in terms of it. That is to say, it has been subsumed within the domain of the symbolic (one thinks in this regard particularly of the work of David Schneider, 1972, 1984). Similarly, "social structure" itself, which Radcliffe-Brown entertained hopes of scientifically codifying, has not escaped this reinscription. Maurice Bloch, for instance, in a now well-known formulation, has offered that what anthropologists have all along taken as "social structure" is really a "system of classification of human beings" which can be understood as having been "extracted from ritual communication" (1977: 286). Ritual, I want to suggest, has now become the *truth* of culture.

This ascendancy of "ritual" to a position where it almost seems now to express the very

substance of the anthropological project itself, its ideal-object so to speak, to a height indeed from which it can be made to appear to us as the very semblance of what "culture" is, is doubtlessly related to certain drifts in contemporary anthropological theory. At one level at least these drifts center on the foregrounding in recent years of questions regarding "meaning," "language," and the "symbolic" -- in the rise in general, that is to say, of a communications theory of culture. Thus for example the veritable proliferation of anthropologies announcing what James Boon (1978) called a "shift to meaning": "interpretive anthropology" (Geertz 1973); "symbolic anthropology" (Schneider 1976; Munn 1973; Boon 1982); "symbological anthropology" (Turner 1984); "semantic anthropology" (Parkin 1982); and "semiotic anthropology" (Singer 1984) -- or one or another combination of all or some since neither are their formal conceptual borders clearly demarcated, nor are their contents exclusive.[3]

This drift to "meaning," and thus to "culture" as the privileged social domain of "meaning," is certainly not unique to anthropology, but on the contrary, characterizes in many respects the general atmosphere of contemporary intellectual discourse (Sullivan and Rabinow 1979).[4] The instance of Marxism is instructive. The vicissitudes of its twentieth century career have both influenced and been influenced by changes in contemporary social and cultural theory. Specifically I mean to note that the attempt within Marxist discourse to break with "economic determinism" resulted in the emergence of a concerted preoccupation with the sphere of "superstructure" -- with what were perceived to be the constituents of *ideology*. This shift was accompanied by a corresponding prominence given to a concept of *totality*, of the "whole" -- a concept meant to designate some sense of a binding social fabric, a collective and organically shaping social integrity. These two concepts, *ideology* and *totality*, set the agenda not only of "Western Marxism" but in general of critical theory which was attempting to formulate a more adequate theory of social change. Now the point I want to emphasize here is that if it could be said that these were concepts that were not unfamiliar to anthropologists, one might venture to say that "culture" has been "born-again" in a variety of (to extend the metaphor) "fundamentalist" texts (e.g., Geertz 1973, Schneider

1968, Turner 1967, Sahlins 1976) as a sort of anthropological expression and elaboration of this preoccupation with ideology and totality.

Anthropology indeed may be said to have only happened inadvertently upon the heady preeminence that now surrounds it. In fact in a recent and timely article, Jonathan Friedman (1987) has justly expressed misgivings at what he nicely characterizes as the "spectacularization of anthropology." Friedman's argument warrants some comment, I think, because his skepticism about the "triumph of culture," while not entirely in agreement with my own, may nevertheless serve as a useful point of departure in a preliminary attempt to mark out the general conditions of this pronounced tendency.

Criticizing the fashionable glorification of "difference" for instance, Friedman argues that it serves to occlude the fact that the ethnographic enterprise is typically constructed out of (and typically constructs, one might add) a specific *kind* of "difference" -- one bound up with the "hierarchical relation characteristic of the world system implying the necessary silence of the other for whom we speak" (ibid.: 164). One need not then follow Friedman in making a plea for some sort of "global anthropology" in which the anthropologist will occupy a "privileged objectivity" to appreciate the importance of this recognition that the relations of difference inscribed in the discourse of "culture" are relations of power.[5] In Friedman's view moreover, the "culturalism" that is today so pervasive in anthropological discourse, is to be linked to a specific form of "sociality" in advanced capitalism -- a sociality characterized by what he calls the "dissolution of modernist identity" (ibid.). Again, it is not necessary to agree entirely with the conception of history or "civilization" to which Friedman ascribes (see also 1983) to underline his insistence that forms of anthropological discourse have determinate historical conditions. In short, the value of Friedman's intervention is that he at least attempts to recall anthropology both to its own history (as discourse founded in particular kinds of relations of power), and to the contemporary historical conditions that establish the institutional and discursive space of its theoretical formulations.

The anthropological formulation of its concept of ritual then, like all its concepts, has a

determinate institutional and discursive space. And tracing out the historical inauguration of that space, that moment when "ritual" comes to be a possible way of identifying and speaking about certain kinds of human behavior, would enable us to grasp some of the assumptions that conceptually organize the anthropological analysis of ritual. Ritual, afterall, was not born anthropological. These, needless to say, are the lessons of Foucault. And they have been taken up by Talal Asad (1988) in his essay on the genealogy of the anthropological concept of ritual. In this essay, Asad shows that the idea that ritual is essentially "symbolic behaviour" that has to be subjected to authoritative interpretation is a modern one -- roughly late nineteenth, early twentieth, century. It supplants an "older notion of rite" in which it is the "proper learning of how to do something, rather than the symbolic meaning of what is done" (ibid.: 79) that is central. However, the idea of representations that require decoding, Asad maintains, is not itself new. It is a theological one; and it is from theology that anthropology derives it. As he puts it:

> The idea that symbols need to be decoded is not ... new, but I think it plays a new role in the restructured concept of ritual that anthropology has appropriated from theology and developed. For by this idea anthropologists have incorporated a theological preoccupation into an avowedly secular intellectual task -- that is, the preoccupation of establishing authoritatively the meanings of *representations* where explanations offered by indigenous discourses are considered ethnographically inadequate or incomplete (ibid.: 77).

Moreover, what is also critical to Asad's project in this essay is to link the emergence of the concept of ritual as symbolic behavior to historical changes in the Western concept of the self and the practices that organize and constitute it.

The concept of ritual as symbolic behavior then is part of the modernity of the Western self. My own concern here however is to suggest that in more recent years, accompanying in fact the "spectacularization" of culture, ritual has become not merely *an* instance of symbolic action, but *the exemplary form* of it. It is in the symbolic action of ritual that the larger symbolic field of cultural behavior is thought to become intelligible. Rituai, one might almost say, is the intensification of culture. It is now quite natural for example for anthropologists to conceive of ritual action, as La Fontaine does, "exemplifying in another medium the cultural values" of a society (1972: xvii).

Clifford Geertz, perhaps one of the most eloquent spokespersons for this point of view has maintained that just as any "particular work of literature brings out certain aspects of the general problem ... so any particular ritual dramatizes certain issues and mutes others (1983: 40). So that the Balinese suttee for instance forms a privileged means through which something of the specificity of the "moral imagination" of Balinese culture can be arrived at. Indeed Roy Rappaport, not at all symbolic anthropologist, goes a step further in his discussion of the "obvious aspects of ritual," and declares ritual to be "the basic social act" (1974: 5).

In the contemporary anthropological analysis of culture therefore it is ritual that is felt to be the privileged domain. And ritual is understood to be privileged in two ways at least. In the first place, it is the exemplary *expression* of culture. In the second place, ritual is the analytic *gateway* to culture. At the same time however there is an unmistakable paradox here because if it is in its ritual that a culture can be best understood, its truth most incisively got at, it is also in ritual that anthropology finds the culture's disguise. Ritual has this double character: it exemplifies cultural values, but it also conceals them. It is the exemplary form of symbolic action, but it is the one which requires the most intricate analysis. Ritual, in other words, is culture's ideology. To take an analogy from psychoanalysis (that neighborly discourse whose generosity in affording anthropology a whole "tradition" of analogies is not to go unnoted), just as the dream is understood to be an acute expression of the unconscious and at the same time the Royal Road to it, so ritual is seen as being at once a singular expression of, and the Royal Road to, culture. Ritual is the dream of culture, as culture is the unconscious of society. It were as though for anthropological discourse, the truth of culture was necessarily something hidden or disguised, something requiring revelation or interpretation.

Now understandably, at least some anthropologists have found good grounds for objecting to such an overarching concept as "ritual" is. In his refreshingly argumentative little article of some years ago, "Against Ritual: Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic" (1975), Jack Goody maintained that the sheer "broadness of the category," "ritual," seriously limited, if not

curtailed, its conceptual usefulness. "The announcement of birth, the celebration of marriage, the burial of the dead," he asks, "what special theory or approach could deal with these grosso modo? Yet the use of the term 'ritual' suggests there is some key we can discover that will unlock this universe of social action, some common code that will reveal all to the inquiring mind" (ibid.: 35). Goody's admirably stated dissatisfaction certainly touches on part of the problem -- that of the delimitation of the concept of ritual, and its presumption of privilege as an analytic key. However the suggestion that a "way out" may be found by translating "the term ritual each time it is used" (ibid.: 41), retaining as it does the assumption of a system disclosable meanings that need to be deciphered, rather begs the question than confronts it. I shall want to argue (following in ways the lead of Michel Foucault and Talal Asad) that the entire object of anthropological inquiry -- in this case, "ritual" -- needs to be re-cast. Rather than beginning with the ahistorical assumption that "ritual" hides/discloses meanings of one sort or another, it may be preferable to set out with the problem of the construction of authoritative discourses and practices (both "anthropological" and "local") in which certain effects of subjectivity and knowledge are produced.

But let us consider in a little more detail one ethnography that illustrates this conception of ritual, Sherry Ortner's *Sherpas through their Rituals* (1978). The very title of this ethnography provides us with some indication of the working assumptions of contemporary anthropological theories of "ritual." It is illustrative in critical respects of the conception of ritual as the expression of, and gateway to, culture.

This metaphor, Sherpas *through* their rituals, forms the master trope in terms of which the relation between the ethnography (as narrative/analytic text) and the culture it purportedly represents is thought. "One may envision," writes Ortner in the first passages of this work, "the task of ethnography as opening a culture to readers, unfolding it, revealing it, providing not only a sense of the surface form and rhythm, but also a sense of inner connections and interactions" (ibid.: 1). Now, such a "culture," we are given to understand, may be "opened" in more ways than one: by way of the "representative anecdote," here associated with an early text of Geertz's; or by way of a

"cultural performance." Each has its virtues, but Ortner opts for the latter approach. And here we see the metaphor (Sherpas *through* ...) situated at the level of the relation between the cultural members and their lived culture. Ortner suggests that "every society has some major events, activated by culturally defined life crises, or geared to the rhythms of the calendar, that are for its members deeply meaningful, and that can reveal to us the sources and forces of meaning in its culture" (ibid.: 2).

A few remarks may be made about this conception of ritual which, as we will see in the discussion of Bruce Kapferer, is perhaps not so uncommon in contemporary anthropological writing. To begin with, we might take note of the curious notion of culture as "opened" by the ethnographer. This metaphor marks out the ethnographic project as one of disclosure. The writing of ethnography for Ortner consists in the revelation of a "meaning" always-already anterior not only to the ethnographic text (the authoritative site in which it is encountered by the reader), but also to the "cultural performance" itself (the definitive locus of its disconcealment). And this "meaning" moreover, is taken to be, in condensed, microcosmic and thus highly evocative form, the given Real or Truth[6] of the people/culture studied. And whether "meaning" is understood as the latent level of culture, or "culture-as-meaning" is understood as the latent level of social interaction (something which is never too clear in the various strains of symbolic anthropology), certain supposedly universal cultural practices, namely "ritual," are held to be its unique embodiment, or sanctum. Thus "ritual" is thought to be a representation of culture (sometimes of its enactment); and the ethnographic text is the self-styled representation of both culture and ritual -- and sometimes of culture through ritual. Or, put another way, the ethnographic text stages itself as an arena at once innocently transparent so that the now absent culture can be made fully present to the expectant reader; and a veritable theoretical marvel in which an original puzzle of meaning is finally unravelled by its closing pages.

Ritual and the Location of Anthropological Knowledge

The assimilation of ritual to idealogy -- i.e., to procedures that "say" something, and, moreover, something mystifying, is also evident in the work of Bruce Kapferer. It will be useful therefore to examine at least some elements of this work in some detail, particularly aspects of the monograph *A Celebration of Demons* (1983), since it seems to me to both typify the kind of problematic involved in much of contemporary anthropological writing on "ritual" and is, moreover, specifically concerned with that discourse and practice upon which we shall be inquiring in the remainder of this dissertation: the Sinhala discourse of *yakkū* and practice of yaktovil. This monograph, it might well be added, is of particular importance because it is the first full-length anthropological study of the Sinhala yaktovil to be published.[7] All the more reason therefore to subject to a close reading the arguments it employs. It should be noted however, that my concern is not to disqualify Kapferer's ethnographic claims such as they may be. Rather my aim is to bring into question the field of assumptions upon which the object of his analysis is staged as a way of problematizing some of the theoretical claims of contemporary anthropological knowledge, and of distinguishing thereby the endeavour I myself intend to pursue.

My concern in short is to affirm that critical principle to which Talal Asad refers when he writes that the "uncritical reproduction of an ideological object is itself ideological and *therefore* theoretically faulty" (1975: 251). Now Kapferer of course may object that he is not in fact reproducing ideological objects uncritically, because he begins his entire discussion with an attempt to specify what he considers to be the mystifying functions of yaktovil ritual. In my view however this would hardly be an adequate defense because it is precisely this concern to identify the supposed ideology of native discourse that I wish to criticize. This is why two aspects of Kapferer's work in particular interest me. The first has to do with his conception of the object-domain of his anthropological project, his notion, that is to say, of the anthropological investigation of "ritual." The second has to do with the assumptions embedded in Kapferer's conception of the Sinhala yaktovil as "demonism," and as a practice transformative of self, identity, and experience.

One of the things that Kapferer (1983) is concerned to specify at the outset of his discussion of the yaktovil, as a way of setting the stage as it were for his analysis of this practice, is the object about which his discourse will speak. That is to say, ritual. Kapferer is concerned to state explicitly the general conceptual arena in which his arguments are to take place. This is especially pertinent here since Kapferer does not intend his study to have a merely parochial relevance, but rather he sees it as informing more generalizable theoretical claims. His analysis of the Sinhala yaktovil in otherwords, is, at least in part, employed as an instance of how certain kinds of social and cultural practices might (indeed, should) be studied.

In Kapferer's view, ritual is essentially to be understood on the model of ideology. Discussing the Sinhala yaktovil, Kapferer speaks of ritual as a form of social practice which involves the "production of ideas which are illusory and mystifying of the objective conditions of human existence" (1983: 4). "Ritual," it is said, "makes statements about the world and achieves resolutions and transformations in terms of ideas which disguise the real and objective conditions of existence from its participants and/or is integral in the reproduction of those conditions the effects of which the ritual is directed to alleviate or overcome" (ibid.). Ritual, in other words, is supposed to be involved in the creation and reflection of a vicious circle, producing at one and the same time the mystifying discourse about the world, its conditions, and the counter-effects. Note too the universalizing mode in which ritual is cast, a problem to which I shall return.

But more importantly here, these purportedly "objective conditions" which the ritual is said to mystify are claimed as the privileged domain of anthropology -- anthropology, that is to say, understood as "objective" or somehow unimplicated discourse. It is anthropology which (or rather the anthropologist who) is said to have a privileged access to these "objective conditions." "Anthropologists or observers whose own conditions are not those of the people whom they study," Kapferer continues, "may be able to discover such illusory and mystifying processes in the cultures they examine" (ibid.). Now the observation that the "conditions" of the investigator are somehow

linked to the creation of specific knowledges is, of course, a potentially useful one. It enables one to begin to problematize, for example, the question of the *location* -- particularly the discursive and institutional locations -- of systematic discourse. Certainly this is one of the pressing contemporary questions for anthropology, as for other theoretical knowledges (Haraway 1988). However, for Kapferer, the only "conditions" that are seen to be operating upon the formation of knowledges are those of being inside (as the native is) or outside (as the anthropologist is) the culture under investigation. And it is precisely because the native is said to be enmeshed in his/her culture, that Kapferer sees him/her as being subject to (in fact encumbered by) mystifying conditions. The "conditions" of his own position and discourse remain unproblematic, or rather, more positively, are assumed to actually *facilitate* the production of objective knowledges. So that in Kapferer's discourse anthropology is able to claim for itself an epistemological privilege denied the hopelessly mystified native, a unique and asymmetrical relation to the object of its gaze.

In Kapferer's view then, the anthropologist (and, generously, the occasional native) can, from his or her vantage, discern the means "whereby they [the Siṅhalas in this case] delude and mystify themselves." And, so doing, they are able to disclose the supposedly "real conditions" of Siṅhala culture. But he does not appear to recognize that this very vantage from which his anthropologist or enlightened native accedes to the truth of Siṅhala culture is not neutral but an always discursively and therefore ideologically produced site.

The problem with Kapferer's conceptualization is that it turns on a confused notion of "objectivity" and, consequently, on a faulty conception of the construction of adequate theoretical discourse. For Kapferer there is a place (that of his own discourse) from which it is possible to read off the true meanings of other places and practices. Recognizably, this is a conceptualization founded on the premise that anthropology is fundamentally an epistemological discourse concerned with making statements about the true or ultimate nature of the social realities of others. Whether one accepts such a definition of the anthropological project (and it must be evident that I do not) what is significant, and especially so where a comparative discipline like anthropology is concerned, is

that these kinds of claims about the "objective conditions" of the social and cultural realities of others are typically nonreciprocal -- that is to say, they are made, and moreover are secured, by the West about the non-West.[8] The point more generally is that theoretical claims about the adequacy of knowledges is inseparable from the power relations in which these knowledges are embedded.

One consequence of these assumptions about the status of anthropological knowledges is that for Kapferer, as indeed for many others, the objects which anthropology takes up in its discourse, "religion," "ritual," "social structure," "kinship," for instance, are treated as self-evident and unproblematic. The only problem perceived has to do with the argued claims of divergent theoretical perspectives (psychological, semiological, sociological, etc.) each of which however, in as like a manner as the other, has already assumed the coherence and self-evidence of the object as identified and represented. This is obviously another aspect of the typically unquestioned discursive and institutional nexus of power and knowledge in which anthropology participates, and in terms of which it arrogates to itself (often by way of this curious silence) the privileged space of authoritative identification. Therefore, the prior question of the founding "visibility" of these objects is neatly occluded. The question of the way in which these objects come to be identified and represented as such in anthropological discourse is suppressed. So that by the closing narrative sequences of its privileged discourse/text, anthropology as truth science will have uncovered an anterior Siṅhala reality that was, in any case, already there.

In such a project, "ritual" always occupies a predetermined site -- that is to say, a site which is representable precisely in virtue of an identifiable and verifiable set of features. And indeed, Kapferer joins other recent anthropologists (Rappaport 1974; Tambiah 1981, among others) who would propose *a priori* definitions of what "ritual" *is*, and who are concerned to identify in advance of the discourses and practices which would locally specify it, its supposedly universal features. Warning that "the definition of cultural phenomena is always a hazardous activity," Kapferer nevertheless proposes the following definition:

> I define ritual as a multi-modal symbolic form, the practice of which is marked off (usually spatially and temporally) from, or within, the routine of everyday life, and which has

> specified, in advance of its enactment, a particular sequential ordering of acts, utterances, and events, which are essential to the recognition of the ritual by cultural members as being representative of a specific cultural type (ibid.: 2).[9]

Now even granting that we accept this comprehensive definition as being a more or less adequate *characterization* of those practices that anthropologists are accustomed to identifying (in the field) and representing (in their texts) as "ritual," it is not at all clear what, *analytically*, is to be gained by it. Even if the Sinhala yaktovil, the specific practice with which Kapferer is concerned, can be described in the general terms he proposes, this hardly enables us to grasp how these practices are locally produced to have their essential effects. What I am getting at can be made clearer by attending to certain aspects of Kapferer's definition.

The definition specifies a demarcation between "ritual" and the "routine of everyday life." The point to note here is the implicit authorization of this demarcation. In its assertion there is a hardly noticeable operation at work by which the *identification* of what is to count as "ritual" is made simultaneously a function of the anthropologist's discourse ("I define ritual ...") and of the native's ("... essential to the recognition of the ritual by cultural members as being representative of a cultural type"). The ambiguity in Kapferer's conceptualization arises from his curious notion of objectivity. The unique validity of this anthropologist's definition of ritual is supposed to inhere in its conformity with the native's point of view. Yet of course the place where the truth of yaktovil is authoritatively produced is unambiguously Kapferer's text. More importantly however, the distinction upon which his formulation rests -- a version of the emic/etic distinction -- assumes a conception of culture (whether theirs or his) as an identifiable *a priori* system of essential meanings. A "ritual," then, is ever in advance of the arrivant anthropologist. It is, so to speak, already there in the field, anticipating its realization in the anthropological text. And this is the critical point. For what cannot be accounted for in the problematic organized by this definition of ritual is the extent to which certain local practices are "spatially and temporally marked off" *as an effect of the production of local authoritative discourse*.[10] Once this becomes the anthropological question, one need no longer be preoccupied with attempting to establish the universal grounds of a general theory of

ritual.[11]

One of the things of course which this strategy of Kapferer's tidily obscures is the specific ideological/discursive determination of the object of his own (i.e., anthropological) discourse. For if the Siṅhala yaktovil is an authentic "ritual" then it must already accord with what is (anthropologically) known about "ritual," in some sense exemplify it. (Kapferer indeed will, later on, constantly make an appeal to what music, dance, and drama supposedly *are* in order to guarantee his analysis of the practices he is writing about.) But if on the other hand yaktovil is a practice produced within certain local historical conditions, and which comes, in a determinate genealogy of Western knowledges, to be constituted within the anthropological discourse of "ritual," then it is necessary both to argue against any *a priori* definitions of "what ritual is about" (Kapferer's phrase), and to engage other sorts of approaches entirely.

One kind of approach might attempt to examine the relations between the local discourse of yakkū (the discursive field in which the practice of yaktovil is established) and the rhetoric of Siṅhala Buddhist authorization. This in fact forms the subject of a subsequent discussion (see Chapter Four).

Another sort of approach might be concerned with the specific ways in which the Siṅhala yaktovil has been constructed as a visible object in that archive of Western knowledges to which anthropology is heir. Here the question might be asked: what made the constitution of such an object of knowledge possible, even necessary, for Western discourse, and what kind problematic did it establish. In other words, "ritual" is, if anything, an area of *anthropological*, not local, knowledge. And the (anthropological) assumption that there is "ritual," one instance of which is the Siṅhala yaktovil, makes it impossible to ask a question regarding the relation between Western power/knowledge and local discourse, namely, how the practices under the observation of the former, and the discourses to which it so meticulously attends, have come, as discourse, to form an area both solicitous of scrutiny and possible of inquiry.

Clearly this raises the question of the complicitous relation between anthropology and colonial discourse (and specifically, where Sri Lanka is concerned, with orientalism[12]). At this level the question obviously has little to do with the politics of this or that individual anthropologist. Rather what is at issue here is the question of the reproduction of a distinctively colonial *object*. For anthropology, afterall, is only the latest Western discourse to concern itself with Siṅhala (religious) practices, and not the first to presume in so doing a privilege in representing its supposed truth. Part of the dilemma (poetic and political) of contemporary anthropological discourse surely centers on its failure to interrogate much less re-think its relation to the economy of discourses -- military, administrative, missionary, etc. -- through which various practices of the colonized and ex-colonized came to be identified, demarcated, and subjected to inscription at the level of Western knowledge. Colonial discourse is a practice of appropriation. Through its devices not only is an area *of* knowledge organized, but an area *as* knowledge is instituted. Colonial discourse authorizes and regulates the categorial frames, images, metaphors, through which the "native" is seized, represented, and established as "real" -- and this not only for the consumption of the colonizer, but for at least elements of the colonized as well. Insofar as anthropology, taking up its place in the genealogy of the great Western discourses of difference (and indeed, as I have suggested, acceding to a privilege within it), does not reflexively inquire upon those objects which inform its analytic accounts, their inception in the colonial economy of power and knowledge, their deployment in fixing the essential truth of the colonized, it is reproducing a colonial problematic and is, therefore, theoretically faulty.

In Kapferer's text for example (and indeed not unlike those of others who have studied/observed the Siṅhala yaktovil),[13] it is unreflexively assumed that such concept-metaphors as "exorcism," "demons," and "possession" are adequate translations of the respective Siṅhala words *tovil*, *yakkū*, and *āvēṣaya*. Yet these conventions of translation practice have a determinate historical location -- the missionary discourse of nineteenth century British Ceylon. And this, going completely unproblematized as it does, sets the stage for the reinscription of a colonial discourse of "demonism"

(a theme I pick up in the following chapter).

Ritual, Power, and Subjectivity

The theme of "subjectivity" is central to Kapferer's analysis of the Sinhala yaktovil. This is a theme of course that has become increasingly visible in contemporary anthropological discourse. The renewal of this theme of subjectivity -- because, at least in American cultural anthropology, it is a renewal[14] -- coincides precisely with that emergence of a preoccupation with cultural "meanings" already pointed to. The analysis of culture as a system of signs has seemed to provide a more sophisticated way of speaking about such domains as "self," "mind," "emotions," and "experience" (e.g. Shweder and Levine 1984; White and Kirkpatrick 1985). Needless to say, one question which anthropologists have failed to ask themselves is what the historical conditions are that have facilitated this turn in their own discourse. What changing practices of the *Western* self, for instance, have made this preoccupation possible? Not that this would preempt the concern with subjectivity, or should, but it might have cautioned a reflection on the premises of their theoretical enterprise.

In Kapferer's work, the theme of "power" is added to that of subjectivity. A major effort on Kapferer's part has been to emphasize what he calls the "power of ritual." Indeed Kapferer would seem to have two general objections to contemporary anthropological conceptions of ritual, both centering on this question of the "power" of ritual. The first of these objections is directed against "structuralist and symbolicist studies" (associated here with the name of Claude Levi-Strauss) which, concerning themselves with "an often esoteric level" of analysis of "the meaning of symbol and act" (1979: 109), are unable to adequately answer the question of how so-called rites of passage (such as the Sinhala yaktovil) effect their transformations. The questions that, so to put it, inaugurate Kapferer's analytic engagement with the Sinhala yaktovil are explicitly concerned with how the effects of transformation are brought about in ritual. In an early article on yaktovil, having made a few general introductory remarks, Kapferer pauses to raise the following questions:

> How does a healing ritual cure? Or better: how does the performance of a healing ritual facilitate the transition of a patient from an agreed state of illness to a publicly recognized

> condition of health? What is it in the performance of a ritual, in the organization of word and action, in the manner and form of presentation of magical incantation, in the gesture and style of dance, in the rhythm and cadence of music, which effects and eases the way for a patient and audience to reach an agreement that a cure has been achieved? (1975: 16-17).

Thus Kapferer, much in keeping with a number of other recent writers on ritual (e.g. Tambiah 1981; Schieffelin 1985) influenced by the renewed attention given to language performatives,[15] has argued for a focus on ritual as *performance*.

The second objection is rather more implicit than explicitly stated -- if nonetheless significant for that. In foregrounding his notion of the "power" of ritual, Kapferer would appear in some sense to be taking issue with an anthropological argument of late particularly associated with the work of Maurice Bloch (1974, 1977, 1986, 1989). Bloch too has been much concerned with the theme of power and ritual. His perspective however is markedly different to Kapferer's. Bloch has maintained that ritual, far from being a source of transformation, or even in itself a transformational process, is but a site of repetition. As he says for instance in an almost epigrammatic phrase regarding ritual communication: "A frozen statement cannot be expanded, it can only be made again and again and again" (1974: 76).[16] Certainly this is a conception against which the tenor and argument of Kapferer's analysis of yaktovil is turned.[17]

The elaboration of this theme of power in Kapferer's work on ritual may be said to fall along two distinct if related axes. On the one hand, he is concerned to extend and develop the ideas of Arnold Van Gennep and, particularly, of Victor Turner, on the processes of transformation in rites of passage. Kapferer is indeed an intellectual heir to an anthropological tradition much preoccupied with the relation between ritual and forms of transformation.[18] Although Turner's familiar conception of the key transformational moments of ritual (articulated through such seminal categories as "liminality," "communitas," and "anti-structure") is admiringly regarded as an advance on Van Gennep, he is felt nevertheless to fall somewhat short of an adequate consideration of what is termed the "dynamic" of transformation itself (1979a; Handelman and Kapferer 1980). Kapferer wishes to explore the "transformational process within ritual" (1979a: 3).

> This is important [he says], for many rituals derive their power to transform identities and

> contexts of action and meaning, which are located in the mundane order of everyday life, through effecting transformations within the organization of their performance (ibid.).

In this analysis, Kapferer continues, it is necessary to inquire into,

> the nature of ritual performance, and the expressive or performative modes in which ritual symbol and action is organized in effecting ritual transformations of meaning and action. This will also involve a discussion of the transformational properties of specific symbolic elements in ritual, and the role of particular "cultural logics" as they are produced and revealed through performance, in facilitating some of the transformational work of ritual (ibid.).

In his analysis of the "transformational logic of exorcism" (1983: 180) then, Kapferer attempts to demonstrate the "transformational properties" of music, dance, song, and comic drama.

On the other hand, Kapferer is concerned with how the "transformational efficacy" of ritual "is communicated to and made part of the experience of participants" (ibid.). Here the theme of subjectivity enters explicitly into his analysis. Specifically Kapferer wishes to argue that in such rites as yaktovil, "self," "identity," and "experience" undergo transformation. In this argument the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1934) (and, more generally, a social phenomenology inspired by Husserl and Shutz) are employed to demonstrate the "construction" and "negation" of "self" in the course of ritual performance. Thus for Kapferer, the "power" of ritual consists in that it *transforms*; and what it transforms are what are referred to as "identities and contexts of action and meaning" (1979: 3).

Perhaps the link between these respective foci on ritual is to be found in Kapferer's emphasis on "experience." The supposed "properties" of certain "symbolic elements" will be perceived by Kapferer to have determinate effects on the "experience" of participants in the ritual. As he puts it,

> The thesis I develop is that transitions and transformations in meaning and experience are communicated, received, and engendered among ritual participants through the dynamic properties of the major aesthetic modes of exorcisms and by the way participant standpoint or perspective is ordered in ritual action (1983: 178).

This notion of "experience," it might be added, is also influenced by the later work of Victor Turner (see 1980, 1982) on theater and social dramas. It has indeed come to the foreground in a domain referred to as the "anthropology of experience" (Turner and Bruner 1986). Turner's argument need

not be discussed here,[19] but it is be noted that Kapferer is explicitly arguing that ritual, specifically yaktovil, has an aesthetic aspect (or perhaps more strongly *is* an aesthetic mode). And as such, ritual employs special devices to organize "experience" toward the specific end it "intends" (Kapferer 1986).

My principal concern in the rest of this chapter will be to critically discuss this theme of the transformation of experience in Kapferer's work.

At the outset of his discussion of the "aesthetic of exorcism" Kapferer states explicitly his guiding assumption:

> [M]y analysis is based on the assumption that possibilities for the ordering of experience and its meaning inhere in the structure of artistic form (1983: 178).

This assumption, I shall argue, is a fundamentally misguided one. However, before tackling it directly, let us follow Kapferer in the development of his argument. Art, he continues, invoking the authority of T.S. Eliot, can "evoke among those who are embraced by it a subjectivity appropriate to the emotion and feeling which art formulates" (ibid.). Art, or more precisely, *artistic form*, in other words, is imbued with the essential quality of being able to "formulate" not only specific human emotions, but "appropriate" ones. And note that what is "appropriate" here has nothing to do with a set of social conditions which have *made* that particular response apt or fitting in specific situations, but with a determining quality of artistic form itself.

Exorcisms, Kapferer maintains, referring to yaktovil, are transition rites having the structure described by Van Gennep and Turner. Specifically, they are divided into three periods, namely, the evening, midnight, and morning watches.

> In these, respectively, the patient is separated from the mundane world, then placed in a liminal world of the supernatural where demonic and divine forces are fully elaborated and joined in struggle, and then replaced within the paramount reality of everyday life in which the patient is freed from demonic control and returned to normality (ibid.: 179).

This "triadic phasing" Kapferer will call the "objective structure of major demon ceremonies" (ibid.: 180).

Such rites as these, Kapferer continues (drawing on the work of Terence Turner 1977),

"effect a passage between two states of person," a movement described as one from a "lower possibility of being to a higher" -- or, where exorcisms are concerned, from a "lower demonic possibility of being to a higher nondemonic being" (ibid.: 179). The "objective structure" of exorcism is said to "model the vertical order of relations in the cosmic hierarchy along a horizontal plane," so that as the patient moves through the rite he or she is "progressively reordered" in terms of the cosmic hierarchy. For Siṁhalas the cosmic hierarchy is one in which demons are at the base and the Buddha and deities are at the apex. The three periods of exorcism can therefore be restated in terms of this movement.

> The separation phase (the evening watch) encompasses a period when the demonic is largely dominant and, because demons constitute a low level of ordering, cannot constitute the everyday world of human beings within it. With the emergence of the divine in the liminal or marginal period of the midnight watch, the reconstitution of an everyday world within the context of ritual action becomes possible. This is fully realized in the reaggregation phase (the morning watch), which objectively asserts the dominance of the divine and the subordination of the demonic (ibid.: 180).

For Kapferer, this is the "transformational logic" of exorcism. The sequences of the exorcism ritual through which the patient is moved have a correspondential relation with the cosmic hierarchy of the Siṁhalas. However, what this leaves unanswered is the question how the "transformational efficacy" of the ritual is "communicated to and made part of the experience of participants" (ibid.). Kapferer's answer of course, already adumbrated, is that this efficacy is achieved through the symbolic forms of the ritual.

> The symbolic forms of the rite are the media by which ritual participants become subjectively oriented in the ritual process. They link the inner experience of the subject with the objective structure of the rite. Through the manipulation of these mediating symbolic forms, the inner experience of the subjects can be made to parallel the transformations taking place in the objective structure of the rite (ibid.).

Exorcism, says Kapferer, is a "communicational field." And what is communicated in this field,

> and the transformations it may effect as these are revealed to participants, occurs on at least two planes: that of experience, the immediately felt individual subjective encountering of a context of meaning and action, and that of the conscious reflective grasping of this experience in terms of the idea constructs and typifications of the culturally objectified world (ibid.).

So that Kapferer's conception of yaktovil is that of a field of messages which get transmitted to subjects at two different levels: one of experience, and the other of reason. This Experience/Reason opposition echoes, and is indeed a particular elaboration of that other, as it were, master-opposition, Nature/Culture, through which the whole of Kapferer's argument is cast.[20] Experience, like Nature, is supposedly an unmediated domain or zone, being in some sense what comes *before* -- both temporally and ontologically -- Reason and Culture. Re-written in a Freudian schema (that Kapferer would doubtless reject), Experience takes place in the register of the primary process, whereas Reason takes place in that of the secondary process. This assumption of an inner "authentic" region of subjectivity ("experience") anterior to its cultural "typification," will then offer itself up as a theoretical guarantee of Kapferer's conception of the "dynamic" of transformation.

Now specifically, in his concern to elucidate what he calls the "aesthetic of exorcism," Kapferer maintains that this artistic form has "inherent possibilities for experience and meaning" (ibid.). And music, dance, and comic drama, are identified as the signal and constituent aesthetic modes of exorcism, and are moreover invested with certain essential qualities and potentialities. Again I quote Kapferer at length:

> In their form, the music, dance, and comic drama of exorcism organize perception in distinctive ways and, through this, the meaning and experience of what is presented in them. Essentially, music and dance have their meaning constituted in the directly revealed experience of them. Their form is such that they can potentially achieve an existential unity with their subject. They can produce in experience what is already integral to their form. Exorcists are concerned to construct in ritual that which they aim to transform. Music and dance have the capacity to engender in experience that which is objective in the rite and, at the same time, subject those who are embraced in their realm in a process of change which the rite intends. However, the unity which the musical or dance object achieves with its subject can place that which is directly revealed or disclosed in subjective experience beyond the objective grasp of those who are engaged in the immediate process of experiencing music and dance. Hence the movement to comic drama in exorcism. Drama, and comic drama in particular, places the object at a distance from its subject and, further, in its specific dynamic ... tests and explores the objective truth of that which was revealed directly in the music and dance (ibid.: 181).

Music and dance then, the forms which are elaborated most fully in the early sequences of yaktovil, are said to "have their meaning constituted in the directly revealed experience of them" (ibid.). They are, one might even say, less cerebral, more visceral. Music and dance, Kapferer

proposes, have the capacity to "engender in experience" what is "objective in the rite"; and in so doing, "subject those who are embraced in their realm in a process of change which the rite intends" (ibid.). Now this curious notion of the ritual "intending" a process, a notion that recurs in Kapferer's discussion of ritual, is left unclarified. One is left with the impression that yaktovil is itself a sort of conscious subject, with attributable volition and agency.

More importantly however, I want to note two ideas. The first is that the idea that music, as he puts it elsewhere, "*demands the living of the reality it creates*" (ibid.: 187; his emphasis) is clearly an unfounded one. The very fact that Kapferer himself is not enveloped in the "experiential possibility" of yaktovil music is reason to think that what is important is not some supposed essential quality of music (or dance for that matter) but the formation of dispositions to subjective states that count as "experience." And if it were to be objected here that the argument is not about some universal essence of music but about the specific potential of *cultural* music for *cultural* subjects, Kapferer would still need to specify the authoritative discourse by which Siṅhala subjectivities are formed to respond appropriately to certain kinds of music in certain kinds of situation.

The second thing to note is the distinction Kapferer makes between the "experience" of the subject on the one hand, and the "objectivity" of the ritual on the other. Music and dance are supposed to produce a correspondence between the two, or rather, to create in the former what is already present in the latter. Again I want to point to the curiously ambiguous notion of "objectivity" at work in Kapferer's text. In talking about the "objective structure" of yaktovil it is never altogether clear whether the attribution of this "objectivity" is supposed to be the anthropologist's (e.g., in terms of Van Gennep's and Turner's theory of the stages of rites of passage), or the native's (e.g., in terms of the cosmic hierarchy of the Siṅhalas). In either case however, it ought to be understood that what is made to *count* as the "objectivity" of a Siṅhala practice is a product of strategies of discursive authorization not the inherent principles of an essential reality. What is left unexplained in Kapferer's text, and indeed what cannot be explained, is how these periods of yaktovil (the evening, midnight, and morning watches) come to be inscribed

with the authoritative meanings ascribed to them..

It is also necessary to point to the faulty conception of "subjectivity" employed by Kapferer. For Kapferer, the subject has a passive and an active side, corresponding to "planes" of experience and reason respectively. On the one hand, the passive subject receives the impress of the outer, supposedly objective, world, in the form of unmediated experience (the figure in other words of the subject "enveloped" in music). On the other hand, the active subject takes stock of this experience in the rational categories provided by culture (the figure in other words of the subject of a sovereign reason stepping back to "test and explore" the "objective truth" of experience). But surely this is erroneous, since for experience to be known *as experience* it has already to have been cognitively and therefore discursively organized as such.[21]

More importantly however, I want it to be noticed how these supposed aspects of the self are arranged hierarchically so that "experience" is assimilated to what is "lower" and reason to what is "higher." The ideological ramifications of this conception become clear when seen in terms of Kapferer's notion of a specifically "demonic experience" among the Sinhalas.

Whereas music and song characterize the performance of the evening watch of yaktovil, dance characterizes that of the midnight watch. Dance, Kapferer maintains is like music in that it "can draw those are attending to it into the realm of its creation" (ibid.: 193). Dance like music is an experiential mode, but one in which there is an "externalization of the existential properties of music" (ibid.: 192), and a loss of formal "flexibility."

> The music of the evening watch has a degree of flexibility which can move the patient in and out of the demonic, a movement which nonetheless is productive of instability. The demonic music of the dance, however, loses its flexibility and is dominated by the beat (ibid.: 193).

It is in this period that the "demonic" is said to be developed to the point of trance by dance's "inherent capacity to limit perception and to inhibit the subject's ability to reflect upon himself or herself at a distance" (ibid.: 196). And as a result subjectivity is said to collapse into an almost totalizing "experience." As Kapferer puts it,

> Trance ... is the point when the object of the demonic enters into a direct communion with the subject. Trance is the dissolution of any subject/object distinction, and in exorcism

> emerges as a natural gesture out of the virtual gesture of the dance. It is in trance that the nature of the object as directly experienced discovers its validity, a validity which is defined in the subjectivity of the subject (ibid.: 195).

The trance marks for Kapferer the crucial moment of the "transformation into a demon self" (ibid.: 196). In order to illuminate what he calls "the possible experiential process leading to trance" (ibid.: 198), Kapferer employs some ideas of Mead (1934). Specifically he takes up the notion that the "Self" emerges in a process in which a subjective "I" interacts with an "Other" such that a "me" is produced. This "me," the reflection of the "I" in the "Other," is then in a constant relationship or dialogue with the "I." This dialogue is the supposed space of the "Self." Now this Meadean dialectic, it is necessary to note, its sense of process and interaction notwithstanding, is problematic by itself inasmuch as it assumes that the constitutive space of the "I" and the "Other," that is, the loci out of which the supposed objective referent -- the "me" -- is formed, are at once unitary and given in advance.[22] However, according to Kapferer, in the "Midnight Watch" of the exorcism there is a breakdown or what he calls a "negation" of this Meadean process of "Self" formation. In this breakdown or negation, it is argued, the multiplicity of Meadean selves is reduced to a single Self said now to be completely dominated by demons which have, as it were, erupted from their place outside of culture. Writes Kapferer,

> The multiple selves of a "normal" and healthy individual become suspended and the process of self construction in the mundane world is reversed. The self of the patient is reduced to a single demonic mode of being, which is dangerously outside cultural constraint. Demonic possession is the emergence to dominance of nature over culture, nature in its disorderly aspect, as the display of aggression, passion, and violence, often appearing in the behavioral display of demonic trance (ibid.: 201).

Or as he has written elsewhere,

> Demons in the mind of the patient are no longer distanced from the world of human beings, but have directly and illegitimately entered it, threatening the patient with their unrestrained capricious, lusty, greedy, grasping, and bloodthirsty natures (1979: 115).

Here he had suggested that this demon-dominated Self is to be better understood as a "basal Self," "equivalent to the Jungian 'shadow'" (ibid.: 118) -- i.e., a Self representing "the dark characteristics of the human personality that are normally suppressed by culture and social convention" (ibid.).[23] It

is interesting that in attempting as he does to formulate his notion of a suppressed, but always latent pre-cultural self in terms of this curious mixture of Meadian and Jungian categories, Kapferer lapses into the very psychologism that he would claim to have avoided by his social phenomenological approach.

"Demonism" remains the latent potential, the deep inner core, or "basal" aspect of the Siṅhala self. For Kapferer the "demonic" and "experience" are assimilated to each other. The "demonic" is represented as occupying a special relation to subjectivity, a relation characterized by "direct communion." The "demonic" is then a kind of primeval force, unreflective, dormant, and anterior to rationality, a force brought to the surface (or made to "emerge" to use Kapferer's metaphor) by the peculiar reason-suspending qualities of music, song and especially dance. The whole conception rests, as I have already showed, on an assumption of an authentic subject. Kapferer does not pause to ask himself, as well he might have, how the disposition to this ("demonic") experience is produced and effected as an appropriate response in particular conditions to music and dance. Such a reflection might have led to the theoretically more sound inquiry into the formation among the Siṅhalas of specific aptitudes, habits, and dispositions -- that is the formation of a specific cultural *habitus*.[24]

Now what is critically important to recognize here in the conception established by Kapferer's text is that this representation of the essential experience of the Siṅhalas in terms of a "demonic mode of being ... dangerously outside cultural constraint" is not new in Western discourse. Its roots are at once colonial and Christian. Such a conception of the essential experience of the Siṅhalas has its founding moment (as I will show in detail in the following chapter) in the evangelical Christian discourse established in nineteenth century British Ceylon. In this discourse, "demonism" is represented as the ineradicable sub-terrain of Siṅhala religion, as a level akin to "nature," and thus essential to the latent level of Siṅhala subjectivity. Moreover, this demonism -- the natural or true religion of primitive or pagan peoples -- was represented as being "outside" (in the sense of being temporally prior to, and continuously resistant of) that albeit limited and flawed reason and

culture which Buddhism attempted to introduce. And it would remain, for the Christians, the essential reality of the religious "genius" of the Siṅhalas inasmuch it would constantly reemerge, no matter the labour employed to erase or suppress it, to threaten the order which Christian conversion attempted to impose.

Now the point here of course is not that Kapferer is, even willy nilly, an accomplice to colonial Christian ideology. Far from it. The point is that in employing a *problematic* (in the Althusserian sense of that concept) in which revealed experience is assimilated to demonism, and demonism to the latent underground of Siṅhala subjectivity, he repeats that problematic in which colonial Christian discourse in nineteenth century British Ceylon attempted to identify and represent the truth of Siṅhala religion. And it bears repeating that anthropological discourse that does not inquire into the ideological conditions that make its specific objects possible, visible, must find itself reproducing the faulty theoretical assumptions of discourses it claims to have supplanted.

Thus we see a problematic emerge articulated in terms of an "authentic discourse" organized through an Experience/Reason dichotomy. In this opposition, an "immediately felt experience," supposedly outside (cultural) "ideas," or at any rate prior to them, is counterposed to a cultural reason, "culturally typified" "idea constructs." This latter register is understood to reflect (and reflect upon) and secure the disclosable "truth" of the former. And music, song, dance, and comic drama are, like "ritual" (of which they are in this case its principal formal constituents), categories with an essence that can be defined without reference to the practices which signify them, and which moreover, they are held to explain. What this schema fails to address much less problematize, is how, that is by means of what discursive and non-discursive practices, such Experience comes to be produced and authorized as the Truth of this specific rite, and how the anthropologist comes to identify it as Experience.

Now the problem is not only that Kapferer would like to ground his argument about the self in some kind of fundamental "experience" (as "ritual" itself is to be grounded in a fundamental "consciousness" or "condition"). But having posited an essential Siṅhala cosmology (an authentic

discourse about the relations between humans and various supernatural figures) on the one hand, and an essential Meadean processual self on the other (in an effort to speculate about what Siṅhala people might or might not actually experience), Kapferer is at a loss to explain their connection. He thus has recourse to his Nature/Culture dichotomy to secure his argument. He appeals to an area not only outside of the discourse of yakkū, and "cosmology" generally, but of discourse as such; an area ever ready to erupt into discourse, disrupting its order.[25]

What is lacking in Kapferer's inevitably psychologistic argument regarding self, identity, and the transformation of experience in the yaktovil, is a conception of relations between power, subjectivity, and knowledge. He presupposes a theory of the subject and an essential culture, and proceeds to the analysis of an historically determinate set of relations, discourses, and practices. It is however these very *a priori* which have to be put into question. This of course constitutes an area to which the "final" Foucault was addressing his attention: the intersection of relations of power, subjectivity, and what he called "games of truth." "I have tried to discover," he says, "how the human subject entered into *games of truth*, whether these be games of truth which take the form of science ... or games of truth like those found in institutions or practices of control" (1987: 112. His emphasis). The problem, as Foucault has formulated it (displacing both the substantialization of the subject, and the essentialization of culture), is to understand how, in a particular set of circumstances, a certain ensemble of rules, techniques, and procedures--i.e., a particular "game of truth"--is articulated to produce given *effects* of subjectivity and knowledge.

In anthropological discourse, this direction has been taken in the recent work of Talal Asad (1983a, 1983b, 1986a, 1987, 1988). In his critique of Geertz's influential definition of "religion," Asad (1983a) emphasized an inquiry situated in terms of relations between power and religion,

> not merely in the sense in which political interests have used religion to justify a given social order or to challenge and change it ... but in the sense in which power constructs religious ideology, establishes the preconditions for distinctive kinds of religious personality, authorises specifiable religious practices and utterances, produces religiously defined knowledge (ibid.: 237).

Here then, it seems to me, is provided a different set of conceptual coordinates through

which to take up an inquiry into the Sinhala yaktovil. Rather than pursuing an inquiry resting on a priori assumptions about "experience" and "reality," the yaktovil may be understood as a particular kind of "game of truth" -- as an ensemble of (ritual) discourses and procedures, that is to say, constituted within relations of (religious) power, in which distinctive effects of subjectivity and knowledge are produced. Specifying this nexus of relations is the concern of the ethnographic project.[26]

Conclusion

Ritual has become the exemplary anthropological object. It has always been close to the heart of the anthropological self-consciousness of "culture." But now it has become that area of "culture" which, circumscribed, periodic, singularly visible, is seen to be at once its prismatic expression, and the key to its deciphering. For anthropology ritual is, in a word, culture's "truth" -- though, as it would appear, an always paradoxical one. Ritual is culture's way of simultaneously disclosing itself (ritual as the intensification of culture), and concealing itself (ritual as the mystification of the reality of culture). On this model, "culture" is understood as a sort of latency, an organic presence, always anterior, always totalizing, whose configuration can be disclosed in the examination of its forms by the keen, disinterested, and objectively situated anthropologist.

Making use of a distinction between "authentic" and "authoritative" discourse employed by Talal Asad (1979), I have inquired upon some aspects of one recent and influential ethnography of the Sinhala ritual, the yaktovil -- Bruce Kapferer's *A Celebration of Demons* (1983). I have tried to emphasize two things in particular, both of which are, in their ways, elaborations of Asad's criticism that anthropology, in failing to reflexively interrogate the ideological (i.e., historical and discursive) determination of the objects it constructs for itself, reproduces a theoretically faulty object. The first is that in Kapferer's text, ethnographic discourse, qua discourse, is conceived of as unimplicated in, as incomplicitous with, the object it represents -- in this case, Sinhala "demonism." In so doing it fails to recognize, in this supposed "demonism," its specifically colonial location as a Western

concern. The second is that in Kapferer's attempt to represent Siṅhala "experience" in terms of a priori conceptions of self and identity, and the efficacy of music, dance, and comedy, it fails to see the realities of the Siṅhala as themselves constructed within local, historically constituted authoritative discourses -- in this case, Siṅhala Buddhism.

Notes

1. See Wood (1981) for a criticism of some aspects of this practice. See also Skorupski (1976).

2. The domain of kinship had of course, almost since its inception in the work of Lewis Henry Morgan in 1871, been considered to lie at the heart of what anthropology was all about. Its preeminence was such that Robin Fox could have remarked that "Kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy or the nude is to art; it is the basic discipline of the subject" (quoted in Needham 1971: 1).

3. See Roger Keesing (1974), and Sherry Ortner (1984), for overviews.

4. Witness for example the rise of "Cultural Studies" both in Britain and the United States.

5. To be sure, this recognition was already part of critical anthropology of Stanley Diamond. In his unforgettable essay, "Anthropology in Question" (1974), Diamond wrote of the relativism that had already begun to redefine the "new anthropology" that it was "the bad faith of the conqueror, who has become secure enough to become a tourist" (ibid.: 110).

6. For an extremely useful formulation of the question of cultural Truth, one informed by the work of Michel Foucault, see Hacking (1982).

7. Prior to the appearance of Kapferer's monograph, Paul Wirz's *Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon* (1949), a compendious, sympathetic, and generally keenly observed description of a large variety of low country Sinhala healing practices, served as a sort of source-book. Dandris de Silva Gooneratne's monograph "On Demonology and Witchcraft in Ceylon" (1866), was the seminal work on these practices, one indeed that can be called proto-ethnographic in its studied attention to the details of local knowledge. See also Gananath Obeyesekere's *Medusa's Hair* (1981).

8. There have of course been various critiques of attempts to establish scientific truths on the terrain of epistemology. Much of this work has been associated with work of Jacques Derrida (e.g., 1978) and Michel Foucault (e.g., 1980). See also the very lucid work of Ian Hacking (e.g., 1982). In anthropological discourse, this has been a concerted effort in the work of Talal Asad (e.g., 1979, 1983). See too Rabinow (1986).

9. In a later work, Kapferer (1986) even remarks, somewhat disparagingly, on what he characterizes as "the grail-like anthropological concern with discovering a unifying definition of ritual" (ibid.: 191). All to the good. But he complains only because, as he sees it, this attempt "often denies or obscures the significance for analysis of the many different forms that are actualized in what we call ritual performance" (ibid.). In otherwords, attempts at a general definition of ritual are inadequate not because the very conception itself is fundamentally flawed, but because they do not account for all the empirically probable features of what anthropologists are given to calling ritual. In this, though rather more feebly argued, Kapferer comes close to Goody's (1975) complaint.

10. The concept of "authoritative discourse" employed here is derived from that elaborated by Talal Asad (1979).

11. See Asad (1979, 1988) for discussions of the impossibility of a universal theory of ritual.

12. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) of course, forms a seminal intervention upon colonial discourse. This text itself has been subjected to several critical readings. For a discussion which is particularly concerned with its anthropological implications, see James Clifford (1988).

13. See for example Yalman (1964), Obeyesekere (1968), and Halverson (1974).

14. I am alluding of course to the culture and personality theory of the 30s, 40s, and early 50s, associated with Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Cora DuBois, and Anthony Wallace. In many ways A. Irving Hallowell (1955) is a sort of bridge between the two periods.

15. I am referring here to anthropological attempts to make use of J.L. Austin's (1962) famous distinction between constative statements (i.e., utterances which are strictly declarative, having the property of being true or false), and performative statements (i.e., utterances which neither describe nor express anything but *do* something). See Finnegan (1969) and Tambiah (1973).

16. Or, in a later work: "Rituals cannot form a true argument, because they imply no alternative" (1986: 182).

17. The collection of articles, "The Power of Ritual," edited by Bruce Kapferer, and which features three programmatic articles of his own, appeared as a special inaugural issue of *Social Analysis* no. 1, 1979. The volume can in many ways be read as a response to, and rebuttal of, Bloch's controversial Malinowski Lecture (December 7, 1976), "The Past and the Present in the Present" (1977).

18. Kapferer is a third generation member of the Manchester school of British social anthropology founded by Max Gluckman. See Kapferer (1987).

19. For Turner, theatre stands in a direct line of descent from ritual. In a lyrical passage he writes,

> Theater is one of the many inheritors of the great multifaceted system we call "tribal ritual," which embraces ideas and images of cosmos and chaos, interdigitates clowns and their foolery with gods and their solemnity, and uses all the sensory codes to produce symphonies in more than music: the intertwining of dance, body languages of many kinds, song, chant, architectural forms (temples, amphitheaters), incense, burnt offerings, ritualized feasting and drinking, painting, body painting, body marking of many kinds including circumcision and scarification, the application of lotions and the drinking of potions, the enacting of mythic and heroic plots drawn from oral tradition -- and so much more (1986: 42).

Kapferer would endorse this view, claiming as he does that "Exponents of the arts and scholars in the East and West have long related artistic forms to their roots in ritual" (1983: 178).

20. See for example Chapter Five on, "Exorcisms and the Symbolic Identity of Women."

21. There is in this conception of course a long Western tradition, the exemplar of which is Hegel.

22. This whole conception of subjectivity and identity has been criticized from various points of view. But see for example, Julian Henriques et al (1984), Ian Hacking (1987), and Stephen Greenblatt (1980). They all in some measure are indebted to the work of Michel Foucault on the question of the subject and power (see Foucault 1980, 1982).

23. It might be noted incidentally that John Halverson had previously used almost exactly the same terms in his article, "Dynamics of Exorcism" (1974), an analysis of the Sinhala *Sanniyakuma*. Kapferer would appear unaware of this though he himself sites Halverson elsewhere (see 1983: 253n). "The most critical phase of the process of transformation," writes Halverson, "is what Jung calls 'the meeting of the Shadow,' that is, a recognition in oneself of the instinctual, irrational, primitive, violent side of one's own nature" (1974: 351).

24. I am referring here of course to Marcel Mauss's (1973) insightful notion, elaborated upon by Bourdieu (1973, 1985, 1986). The *habitus* for Mauss consisted of "techniques of the body" -- the "ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies" (1973: 70). This concept needless to say foreshadows many of the ideas Michel Foucault was to pursue much later. Bourdieu, while not mentioning Mauss in the lineage of the concept of *habitus*, offers that it constituted an attempt to break away from "the philosophy of consciousness without doing away with the agent, in its truth of a practical operator of objective constructions" (1985: 14).

25. Michael Taussig (1987: 442) has commented on this presumption and valorization of "order" in Kapferer's discourse.

26. The Foucauldian problematic is an eminently anthropological one. Foucault, afterall, as Asad has suggested, was the "consummate ethnographer of Western culture" (1983b: 293).

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSION AND DEMONISM: COLONIAL CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE AND SINHALA RELIGION

The early formation of Western knowledge about the Sinhala *yaktovil* was largely the work of British Protestant missionaries and Christian colonial administrators in Ceylon in the nineteenth century. Knowledge about the yaktovil was itself part of the larger colonial production of knowledges regarding the religious doctrines and observances of the Sinhalas. This production of knowledges formed an important part of the practice of nineteenth century British colonialism in Ceylon. And one of the things that this chapter will be concerned to examine are the conditions of the production of these colonial knowledges.

My principal concern (as I have suggested in the previous chapter) is to argue and demonstrate that discursive objects -- in this case, "demonism" -- treated within disciplines such as anthropology are not arbitrary. They have a determinable history, that is to say, following Foucault, a genealogy. This genealogy gives shape to the general problematic in which that object of knowledge is produced and reproduced (in reflective but in unreflective discourse as well). And "demonism" is a metaphor that has been central to the organization of the anthropological study of the Sinhala yaktovil. The aim of this chapter is to inquire into some aspects of the genealogy of this notion "demonism" as it has informed Western ideas of what Sinhala "religion," and the Sinhala subjects who practice it, are about.

Tracing the conditions that produced a demonology of Siṅhala religious practice requires a grasp of the general conditions in which that island which the Siṅhalas call Lankā was incorporated into the framework of British colonialism.[1] This is important not only for the obvious sociological reason that ideas are informed by their context, but more critically because it is not often enough appreciated that that "context" which is in question -- here, British colonialism -- does not constitute an internally unvarying unity. British colonialism itself constituted a changing practice of power, and therefore produced and organized historically varying conditions and effects of knowledge. I shall, for instance, particularly wish to differentiate the practices of power and knowledge in the "Old" and "New" (or First and Second) British Empires. What I am suggesting more generally then, and indeed wish to emphasize, is that the play of power and knowledge in colonial practice must also be approached genealogically.

British Ceylon formed part of the New or Second Empire, the reconstituted British colonial enterprise that began to take shape at the end of the eighteenth century in the wake of the irrecoverable loss to England of the North American colonies. The English Parliament abolished the administrative instruments of colonial policy (the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the Board of Trade and Plantations) in 1782.[2] Even then however, England -- that "least ungenerous of mother countries," (the phrase is Benians's 1961: 2) -- was already moving swiftly to recover the influence she appeared in danger of losing as premier colonial power. The East would be central to that design.

On the morning of February 16, 1796, the British took possession of the Dutch East India Company's garrison at Colombo on the southwest coast of Ceylon. It marked the final capitulation by the Dutch of the Maritime Provinces of the island which they themselves had captured from the Portuguese a century and a half before, in 1656.[3] Before the end of the Seven Year's War the British had scarcely shown any serious interest in Ceylon. Following the formation of the East Indies Squadron in 1744 the British had been content with the Dutch provision to their ships of access to the harbour at Trincomalee on the Eastern coast of the island.[4] However, the Anglo-French struggle for control of South India, and the seeming possibility that the Dutch, declining as was their colonial influence, might transfer their allegiance to the French, forced the island more

materially upon British notice (de Silva 1973: 2). At the end of 1795, taking advantage of the weakened and anomalous position of Dutch colonial power, the British began the occupation of the island.[5] Not until the Peace of Amiens in 1801 however was the British claim to the island officially recognized. The Maritime Provinces of Ceylon became British possessions then because of the strategic position of Trincomalee for the defense of colonial interests in India. The strategic value of Trincomalee would sharply decline however after 1805 when the British finally became undisputed masters of Eastern waters. But even then it would be another twenty years before a settled and committed policy toward Ceylon would emerge.

The Second Empire differed in important respects from the First, the so-called Old Colonial System. A full account of these differences is of course outside the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to sketch something of its general outline and to highlight that aspect of it most germane to my present concerns.[6] The Second Empire may be said to have transformed the old colonial relation between power and wealth in which the value of oversea possessions was conceived in terms of the exclusive control of resources out of which the state could enhance and exert itself. This idea of commercial monopoly which informed the mercantilist desire for a "self-sufficient Empire" (Knorr 1944: 129) was overthrown by the resilient ideology of Free Trade being advanced by the new captains of industry. A more disseminated thrust toward commercial power was advanced. At the same time, there was a more deliberate move to formulate a coherent imperial policy for the governance of the increasing diversity of peoples being brought within the purview of colonial rule.

More importantly for our consideration, the Second Empire involved what we might call a transformation in the "political technology" of colonial control. The First Empire of the great sugar plantations of the West Indies rested on the application of a mute physical force directly on the bodies of uprooted African slaves. The whip is the symbol of this exercise of power. The Second Empire by contrast, while never entirely relinquishing its ability to take physical hold of the body of the colonized, reduced its proximity to it. It was concerned rather to develop techniques of subjectification, surveillance, and discipline; and the colonial missions are the emblems of this civilizing project.[7]

Indeed critical to this new modality of colonial power in the nineteenth century was the rise of "vital religion" and its corollary evangelicalism as social and political forces in England. Originating in the "methodism" of John Wesley at Oxford in the early eighteenth century this reforming attitude assumed broader importance when it allied itself with the social forces of the nascent middle classes and their political ideology of economic liberalism. In social and cultural terms evangelicalism was a reaction against the rationalism, skepticism, and general worldliness of the eighteenth century. It gave to Victorian society its sense of high moral tone, and facilitated the generation of the regulated and disciplined subjects necessary for the Industrial Revolution.

The "Evangelical mentality" (to borrow a phrase from Eric Stokes[8]) rejected the prevailing practice of Christianity in which God appeared all too marginalized. It sought to invest Christian practice with an earnestness and conviction, with an urgent sense of the depravity of man, and the need for salvation through an intensely individual and "transfiguring religious experience" (Stokes 1959: 29) of conversion. Conversion in fact was central to the expressly simple but powerful message of the Evangelicals. As Ian Bradley has put it: "The doctrines of the depravity of man, the conversion of the sinner, and the sanctification of the regenerate soul represent virtually the sum total of the theology of early nineteenth-century Evangelicalism" (1976: 22).

From the outset "vital religion" demonstrated an evangelizing or missionary impulse. If the Evangelicals were concerned with the individual experience of salvation, with being re-born, they were equally preoccupied with the dissemination of the Word. As Stokes comments: "The communication of the saving knowledge to the millions that dwelt in darkness could only be accomplished by preaching the word among them in a direct assault on their mind" (ibid.: 30). And this assault was soon to extend beyond the home constituency. The evangelicals -- William Wilberforce and Charles Grant prominent among them -- early demonstrated a keen interest in the fate of the heathen races in the far-flung outposts of the ever-expanding colonial Empire. Mired in the abominable worship of false gods as the natives were, the Evangelicals felt an acute sense of responsibility for the reformation of their souls. And by the first decades of the nineteenth century evangelicalism had begun to exert a material and political influence in shaping the colonial enterprise. The same religious fervour that spearheaded the attack on the slave trade and slavery

itself in the West Indies found expression at the other "fag" end of the Empire in Wilberforce's celebrated call for an evangelical mission to the East (Bradley 1976: 74-93). It is largely in the context of this "mission," as it took form in Ceylon, that the British colonialists encountered the practices of the Sinhalas.

In this chapter I am concerned with this encounter. Principally I am concerned with the knowledge about Sinhala religion, and, at a particular stage, about the yaktovil, that this encounter produced. As I have suggested, following the instructive intervention of Talal Asad (1979), anthropological discourse in general (and anthropological writing on the Sinhala yaktovil not excepted), have neglected to inquire into the ideological determination of the objects that it constructs for, and considers in, its discourse. Anthropology as an authoritative discourse of cultural difference in other words has need to be self-reflexively cognizant of the Foucauldian dictum that knowledges are always produced through, and inscribed within, relations of power. Urging the abandonment of the scholarly tradition that would split these domains -- power from knowledge and knowledge from power -- Foucault suggested that,

> We should admit ... that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (1979: 27).

These relations of power and knowledge are of course always simultaneously several and intersecting. One aspect of their (over)determination however, has a specifiably colonial location. Colonial power in British Ceylon I wish to argue, produced as part of its multifaceted practice, a "political economy" of representations of Sinhalas and their society -- an interconnected archive of ideas, images, themes, narratives -- through which their practices could be made manageably visible, could be fixed and named, that is to say, could be brought more or less securely within an horizon of Western knowledges. In short colonial power produced a *discourse*.[9] And specifically, as I shall show, British colonial power in Ceylon produced a demonological discourse. This demonological discourse, forming what Edward Said in his seminal discussion of orientalism would call a "restricted number of typical encapsulations" (1978: 58), established the stereotypical modalities -- perceptual, linguistic -- through which the religions of the Sinhalas would be marked out and experienced. And

it is this *discursive* relation between colonial power and the fabric of colonial knowledge as it related specifically to the British colonial encounter with the practices of Siṅhala "religion" that is the subject of this chapter.[10]

Indeed nowhere is the process of the production of colonial knowledges more evident than in the colonial encounter with the practices of "exotic" religions. For "religion" indeed was central, in an almost inaugural way, to the tropic economy of colonial representation. From the outset of their Renaissance voyages, Western Europeans were compelled to find ways of assimilating -- or, in another sense, of defamiliarizing -- the exotic peoples they were encountering at what from their point of view was the outer margins of the world. They did so first and foremost, Michael Ryan (1981) argues, through the readily available trope of "paganism." "As a focus for assimilation," he writes, with specific reference to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "paganism was timely, unambiguous, and emotion laden. More important, it was familiar" (ibid.: 525). The colonial mode of this assimilation was to change historically with changes in the practices of colonialism. This figure of the exotic as heathen would be, now the past of Europe, now its unregenerate Other (a shift that will in fact form part of my concern in this chapter). However "religion" would remain a constant point of reference in colonial attempts to manage the world of the colonized.

The point I want to emphasize here though is that what was constructed as "religion" in colonial discourse was itself subject to change. So that part of the problem to be sketched and investigated here has precisely to do with the instability of what gets identified and counted by authorized knowledges as "religion," how, by whom, and under what conditions of power. In this case, particularly in question are authoritative knowledges of *cultural difference* (colonial, anthropological, etc.). The point is that the practices, the determining conditions and effects of what gets categorized as religion is historically and culturally variable, a fact which anthropologists too often ignore in their attempts to identify universal effects and essential processes.[11] In this respect anthropologists are not unlike the evangelical Christian missionaries in nineteenth century Ceylon who had their own assumptions about what "religion" was all about, and in their mission of conversion among the heathen were much concerned -- and for very practical reasons too -- to discover, identify and represent the prevailing "religion" of the Siṅhalas.[12]

Orientalism, Religion and British Ceylon

The place of Ceylon and Sinhala Buddhism in the discursive economy of British orientalism has been the subject of but little scholarly attention. Why this should be so is not immediately discernible. Indeed historically, Ceylon, though legendary for its enchanting beauty, its spices, and its gems, was to figure only belatedly, and even then, derivatively, in the political imagination of British colonialism. England was far more preoccupied with the allure and complexity of the conquest and rule of India.

And yet as early as the late seventeenth century, in Robert Knox's inestimable *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon*, published in 1681 under the auspices of the East India Company, the British reading public had before them an incomparably detailed account of the customs, institutions, and natural habitat of the Sinhalas of the Kandyan Kingdom.[13] As Robert Hooke, secretary of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, remarked in his preface to that work, the redoubtable Knox, escaping after nearly twenty years in captivity, had been able to "Transport the whole Kingdom of Conde Uda in his Head" (1958: lxxiv).[14] It would be another hundred years however -- at the end of the eighteenth century -- before Ceylon became critical to the British colonial project in South Asia, and Buddhism to the regulation of its relations with the Sinhalas.

In his recent work on the hitherto neglected but quite remarkable career of the Pāli scholar Thomas William Rhys Davids, *The Genesis of an Orientalist* (1984), Ananda Wickremeratne has made a welcome contribution to the inquiry into the place of Ceylon in the economy of British orientalism. T.W. Rhys Davids, ill-starred in his comparatively short career as a member of the British Ceylon Civil Service between 1866 and 1873,[15] was nevertheless to make a most distinguished mark on the early study of Buddhism (See for example Rhys Davids 1877, 1882, 1896). I do not wish to discuss Wickremeratne's study at length here however. Rather my immediate interest concerns some very pointed remarks of his on the attitude of the British toward Sinhala Buddhism in the nineteenth century. Discussing the differential in responses to Buddhism and Hinduism on the part of the British colonialists, Wickremeratne suggests that more than anything else it was the atheism of

the Siṅhalas that aroused the sustained and peculiarly vituperative indignation of the Protestant missionaries and colonial administrators. In contrast to Hinduism, Wickremeratne writes,

> Buddhism ... was a different kettle of fish. Christianity and Buddhism were totally divergent faiths. Ethically there seemed to be common ground, but the ethics sprang from widely dissimilar assumptions. Small wonder that Christian Protestant missionaries in South Asia should have hurled their bitterest shafts at Buddhism rather than Hinduism, although the latter -- no doubt on account of political reasons connected with the British presence in India, especially in the time of the East India Company -- loomed larger in the picture. The moral was plain. Buddhism, the personification of atheism, was deadlier than Hinduism (ibid.: 180).

If this observation is not without a certain substance, it does nevertheless stand in need of careful qualification.[16] That British colonialism adopted different attitudes toward the various religious practices -- Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu -- that it encountered in South Asia is an important point and one perhaps not often enough recognized.[17] However it is a point that requires studied analysis and careful elaboration. (It is a point in fact to which I shall have need to return.) For it seems to me that whereas it is certainly arguable that the "atheism" of the Siṅhala Buddhists did serve as a measure of Buddhism's inferiority to Hinduism in the evaluation of the British (as we shall see), Wickremeratne's remarks miss at least two important points. And both these points turn, it seems to me, on the necessity for an adequately historical (or again, genealogical) conception of the production of British colonial knowledges about Siṅhala religious practice.

The first point is that Wickremeratne's assessment assumes an homogeneous colonial history. It seems to me however that it is important to distinguish, as far as is possible, the particular conditions in which at different periods aspects of Siṅhala cultural practice were incorporated into the knowledges of Empire. Indeed one of the things I want to emphasize (both in this chapter and more generally) is the need for a more discriminate and differentiated conception of cultural histories, colonial, but local as well. Ceylon was incorporated into the British Empire in terms of determinable colonial practices. The nineteenth century Victorian evangelicalism whose presuppositions and colonial project played such a vital role in producing Western knowledges about Siṅhala religious practice for example was not identical to the late Enlightenment eighteenth century discourse which produced the classical Orientalist work on Hinduism.

The second point is related to the first -- related in the specific sense that it concerns what is discernible in the changing practices of colonial knowledges between early and later periods of British Ceylon. In short, objects of colonial knowledges cannot be assumed to be stable and unchanging. What was so discrepant and unaccountable to the Victorian English Christians in Ceylon in the mid-nineteenth century was, it seems to me, more the observable popular *practices* of the average village Siṅhala than the avowedly lofty and metaphysical precepts of the Buddhist Canon. To be sure, the colonial Protestants ridiculed and disparaged the principles of the Siṅhala Buddhist Canon -- that is, as far as they could gather them at the time. But even here they could often allow themselves some small gesture of appreciation. What was irreconcilable however were the popular practices. For these practices seemed to the Christians to countenance a range of what they perceived (and named) as "demonism" or "devil-worship." What is more, these practices were frustratingly impervious to the great civilizing work of Evangelicalism. And for them, the Evangelical Christians, these practices would define the "real" as it were of Siṅhala religion.

The rest of this chapter is organized around the problems posed by these two points. I shall suggest that one can roughly plot two phases in the early production of British colonial knowledges about Siṅhala religion. These two phases were distinct in (a) the conditions (political, administrative, economic) of the production of colonial knowledge; and (b) in the kinds of problems for which resolutions were being sought. These phases, I shall propose, are related to changes in British colonial practice in Ceylon, changes that can, in a qualified way, be conceptualized within the historiographical distinction between Orientalists and Anglicists. I now turn briefly to a consideration of the conceptual appositeness of this distinction to our purposes.

A discussion of the orientalism in which Siṅhala religion was initially inscribed in British colonial discourse necessarily requires a reflection on the Orientalist/Anglicist distinction so critical to the historiography of British India. British Ceylon may be said in ways to have been inserted into British colonial practice in the transition from the one to the other. In a recent debate, the question has arisen whether Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is adequate or even pertinent to the comprehension of this distinction. David Kopf for instance, whose work on modernization in India (1969) turns on this

distinction, has criticized *Orientalism* for what he perceives as its lack of "historical precision, comprehensiveness, and subtlety" (1980: 497). Central to Kopf's argument is that Said takes no cognisance of the historiographically significant Orientalist-Anglicist controversy of the 1830s around colonial cultural policy toward India. So doing says Kopf, he fails to recognize the specificity and difference of what he calls "historical Orientalism," a "concrete reality" which, as he would have it, was "born in Calcutta in 1784" (ibid.: 499). It is to be wondered whether a latter-day Orientalist like A.J. Arberry would agree with such a birth-date (see for example, 1943). Be that as it may however, Kopf's main purpose is to maintain that Said's choice of the term "orientalism" is misleading because it is rather the anti-Oriental and anti-Orientalist Anglicists who are the real "villains." "It is *their* ideology," writes Kopf, "and not that of the Orientalists which Said reviews in his work" (ibid.: 503. His emphasis).

Without belaboring the point I think it may be said that Kopf, in his enthusiasm for that singular quartet of William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, Charles Wilkins, and H.H. Wilson (whose contributions no one would wish to deny) has completely missed Said's point. *Orientalism* is not about discerning where and when "low esteem of Orientals ... originated" (ibid.: 506); and thus "orientalism" is not merely a "sewer category for all the intellectual rubbish Westerners have exercised in the global marketplace of ideas" (ibid.: 498). Rather "orientalism," as Said deploys it, is above all a politically invested theoretical category concerned to facilitate a mapping of those economies of representation by means of which colonialist/imperialist power constructs essential and authoritative knowledges about what the East is supposed to be. In this sense the rise of the Anglicists -- foreshadowed in the influence of Charles Grant and William Wilberforce and culminating in Macaulay's Education Minute of 1835 -- did not signal the beginning of "orientalism" (as indeed it did not the complete demise of the concerns of the Orientalists -- a fact which the career of T.W. Rhys Davids well illustrates). What it did signal rather was a *refiguration* of the point of intersection of power and knowledge in the discourse of orientalism.

Thus the distinction between the Orientalists and Anglicists remains useful, and the historical displacement critical to bear in mind (and this particularly in attempting to understand the colonial *inscription* of Ceylon), because they indicate a moment of redistribution of colonial power

and a transformation in the technique(s) of colonial practice. Henceforth British orientalism would answer different imperatives, would be differently empowered, would engage a different object, and would operate through different channels of force. More precisely it would cease to be a means through which (in the manner inaugurated by Warren Hastings [1772-1785] and institutionalized by Marquess Wellesly [1798-1805]) a secular Company official-cum-scholar would acquaint himself with the languages and cultural traditions of the people over whom he ruled in order (at least theoretically) to make himself a more responsive and efficient administrator. It would become the means through which Victorian missionaries and civil servants would attempt to exert and exercise control over the ruled people. Orientalism in other words became part, perhaps the most significant part, of the evangelical Christian technology of subjectification and colonial discipline.

To be sure, the Orientalists and the Anglicists shared much in common. They shared the idea for example of the contemporary degenerateness of "Asiatic" society, and the implicit faith in the superiority of European civilization. Moreover they both felt keenly that "native society" should be transformed and that European ideas and means would have a beneficial effect in this process. However they differed in their conception of this process and in their image of the change. Whereas the Orientalists felt it possible to reinvigorate debilitated native institutions and traditions, the Anglicists wished to supplant these with European forms. Perhaps most importantly for our consideration, they shared a common assumption about the place of "religion" in the social life of the "Asiatic."

It is precisely at the inchoate beginnings of this transformation in the economy of orientalism that Ceylon becomes inserted into British colonialism. And the effects on colonial knowledge were considerable. The absence for instance (with one or two notable exceptions -- e.g., George Turnour in the early period, and Hugh Nevill in the later) of a cadre of scholar-civil servants in British Ceylon to which Vijaya Samaraweera (1980) has referred was hardly fortuitous. By the middle of the nineteenth century the missionary-scholar (such as Daniel J. Gogerly) and the evangelical-minded administrator (such as Sir James Emerson Tennent) had effectively supplanted them.

Buddhism and Hinduism: Orientalism and Asiatic Chronology

The Asiatick Society of Bengal was founded in Calcutta in 1784, in years when British colonial interest in Ceylon was just taking shape. Although the scope of the Orientalist's concerns, as defined in the opening address to the Society by William Jones, was almost breathtaking in its comprehensiveness,[18] their relation to the East India Company made it almost inevitable that Persian, and in particular Sanskrit, were their principle foci. Persian, as the language of the Mogul Court, and Sanskrit as the language of the texts which codified Brahmanic law, were crucial to the administration of the Company's commercial interests. (This, it is important to bear in mind, was to change as the extent and character of British colonial interest in India changed in the early nineteenth century, and it became necessary for instance to give emphasis to Hindi.) It is understandable then that neither Buddhism, nor Pali, the language of its canonical texts, formed part of their central concern.

At the time of the arrival of the British in Ceylon -- in early 1796 -- therefore the Orientalists at Calcutta knew very little either about the doctrines of Buddhism, or about the historical personage, Gautama the Buddha, its founder.[19] Because of their trade relations with southeast Asia and China they were aware of the geographical spread of the doctrines associated with its name. And there was even speculation that knowledge about Buddhism could potentially fill-in some of the gaps of their knowledge of what they called "Asiatic history." The most authoritative and celebrated of the Calcutta Orientalists, Sir William Jones, for example, had expessed the opinion that the philosophy of the Buddha was "connected with some of the most curious parts of *Asiatic* history" (Jones cited in Harington 1809: 529). For want of material evidence however he didn't, partly because he couldn't, elaborate. Speculative conclusions were informed by, and arrived at, through readings and interpretations of the ancient Sanskrit texts and conversations with Brahmin pundits. Consequently the Orientalists were anxious for information regarding the religious doctrines and observances of the neighboring island of Ceylon.

One of the great tasks that preoccupied the Calcutta Orientalists was the construction of a proper "chronology" of the Hindus. This in fact was the subject of a seminal lecture by Sir William Jones in 1788 in which the great Enlightenment belief in "sound reasoning from indubitable

evidence" was to be exercised upon the East. In the name of those "who seek truth without partiality," who neither suffer themselves to "be dazzled by a false glare, nor mistake enigmas and allegories for historical verity" Jones wished to construct a "concise account" of the "Chronological System" of the Hindus who professed themselves to be of "great antiquity" (1803: 88).

Thus not unexpectedly, one of the critical Orientalist problems regarding Buddhism concerned its place in "Indian" chronology.[20] This question of the age of Buddhism, obviously turned on another, equally puzzling, that of the historicity of its founder, Gautama the Buddha. As J.H. Harington (jurist, an active and highly esteemed member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and a resident of Colombo for a short period in 1797) put it:

> The real time at which BUDDHA, the son of SUDHODUN ... propagated the heterodox doctrines ascribed to him by his followers, and for which they have been branded as atheists, and persecuted as heretics, by the Brahmens, is ... a desideratum which the learned knowledge, and indefatigable research, of Sir W. Jones have still left to be satisfactorily ascertained (1809: 531).

Obviously, to have been able to decide the "real time" of the Buddha would have enabled the Orientalists to determine the original time of Buddhism, and thus too its chronological relation to Brahmanism. The issue was however complicated by another aspect, that of references in the ancient texts to a certain "Budha." The question thus arose, Harington continued,

> whether BUDDHA, the ninth *Avatar* of the *Hindus*, be the same with the heretic BUDDHA, now worshipped at Ceylon, and in the eastern peninsula; as well as in China, Bootan, and Tibet (ibid.: 532).

In his early and classic essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" (originally written in 1784), Sir William Jones had suggested tentatively that the Buddha, though a "reformer of the doctrines contained in the *Vedas*," was nevertheless "admitted as the ninth *Avatar* even by the *Brahmans* of *Casi*" (1788b: 199-200). This view however, seeming as it did to collapse the doctrines of the contemporary followers of the teachings of the Buddha with the illusive figure of the Brahmanic texts, was contradicted by Brahmans. And therefore in his later essay, "On the Chronology of the Hindus," Jones offered the modified view that there was a second Buddha who assumed the character of the first and attempted in his name to overthrow the system of Brahmanism.

With the conquest of the maritime provinces of Ceylon, then, it was anticipated that "the authentic materials for a history of the Singalese, their religion, manners, and customs" (Harington

1809: 530) would be communicated to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and thus enable a resolution of these issues. Three articles were published on Ceylon in the journal of the Calcutta Orientalists, *Asiatick Researches*, in the early years of British rule. And in keeping with the prevailing interests of the Orientalists these were concerned largely with the Buddhism of the Siṅhalas and, more specifically, with the chronological relation Buddhism and Brahmanism.

The first of these articles, entitled, "Remarks on Some Antiquities on the West and South Coasts of Ceylon" (1803), was written by a certain Captain Colin McKenzie in 1796. McKenzie must have been part of the British forces occupying the Maritime Provinces. He tells us himself that it was while "employed on objects of a very different nature" that he availed himself of the unprecedented opportunity created by the "late reduction [of the island] to our power" of promoting "the interesting objects of the [Asiatic] society" (ibid.: 425). His principal object of interest (informed clearly by the Orientalist preoccupation with chronology) was the supposed "remains of *Hindu* antiquity" in the island. This interest rested on his assumption that Hinduism rather than Buddhism was the original religion of the Siṅhalas. His visit to the southern town of Devundara or Devinuwara -- "Dewunder-head, or Divi-noor, (called in the charts Dunder-head)" -- provided him evidence (in figures carved on stone pillars and scattered objects "indicating some connexion with the *Lingam* and *Phallus*") to confirm this theory. The Captain advanced the opinion that in the "revolutions of religion" Buddhism had displaced Hinduism and in the process destroyed "almost every vestige of its worship" (ibid.: 441).

This view of the relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism however would soon be eclipsed by the first adumbrations of the progressivism which was to dominate the nineteenth century, and according to which Buddhism, lacking as it did a supreme godhead, was judged the more primitive of the two religions.

Capt. McKenzie's visit to the southwest, this time to Weligama ("Belligam or Velli-gam") also afforded him the opportunity of meeting a Buddhist cleric or *bhikkhu*. This must have been his first meeting of this kind, and something of its novelty tells in his description of the event:

> At the gate, to which we ascended by some steps, the priests received and conducted me to the door of the temple; they were bare-headed, and their hair cut close; they had none of the distinguishing marks worn by the Hindus, on the forehead; their garment consisted of a cloth of a dusky snuff colour, which folded round the body and descended to the feet; their

> dark complexion, and inanimate features, exhibited no symptom of superior intelligence, of deep penetration, or of keen genius; nor did any of that mild cast of countenance, or chastened resigned features, which sometimes distinguish the recluse, or devotee of every nation, appear here; neither severe, nor shy, their looks rather indicated a kind of apathy, or indifference (ibid.: 435).

The studied sense of discrepancy is barely disguised. Notice how his expectation has been framed by his perception of the Hindu. The Sinhala Buddhist could only be described in negatives. The last passage moreover, with its theme of complacency, that trait which the Victorian sensibility was to find so unaccountable and irredeemable in the Oriental, already anticipates the nineteenth century image of the Sinhala perhaps best exemplified in the writings of Sir James Emerson Tennent. Yet on the other side their is a measurable mixture of captivation and solemnity in his description, shortly following, of the image of the Buddha.

> The countenance was mild and full, and the top of the head painted to represent the hair in several small curls of black colour. This was the grand idol of the place, but on it, placed thus at full length on a raised terrace on which several lamps and a profusion of flowers were placed, no external signs of adoration or respect were shewn by the priest (ibid.: 435-436).

The second article, "On Singhala, or Ceylon" (1803), was also written by a military man, a Captain Mahony. This Captain Mahony, it appears, was an "officer of the *Bombay* establishment" (Harington 1809: 529). Unlike the somewhat superficial and impressionistic McKenzie however, Mahony was more explicitly concerned with a consideration of the "Doctrines of Bhoodha." He seems to have acquainted himself more carefully with some of the details of Sinhala Buddhist cosmology and mythology and even to have secured translations of passages of "some books of the Singhalais."

In his account, Mahony describes at some length the cosmological system of the Buddhists and the Buddha's place within it. He notes the number and names of Buddhas (1803: 32) and of the "heavens" in the Sinhala system (ibid.: 33); he comments on the fact that "Bhoodha is not properly speaking considered a god" (ibid.: 34), on the Sinhala's "denial of a Supreme Power" (ibid.: 35), and on the indifference to "what is understood by us under the term of Paradise" (ibid.: 36); and he notes also the hierarchical arrangement of "the characters in their mythology" (ibid.: 37). He then goes on to offer a few cautious but sensitive remarks on what he understands to be the main precepts of the doctrine:

> The religion of BHOODDHA, as far as I have had any insight into it, seems to founded in a mild and simple morality. BHOODHA has taken for his principles, Wisdom, Justice, and Benevolence; from which principles emanate Ten Commandments, held by his followers as the true and only rule of their conduct. He places them under three heads; thought, word, and deed; and it may be said that the spirit of them is becoming, and well suited to them whose mild nature was first shocked at the sacrifice of cattle. These commandments comprise what is understood by the moral law, which has generally preached by all the BHOODDHAS, in the empire of Raja GAHA NOOWERAH (ibid.: 40).

Also included in Captain Mahony's article is a translated extract from a text entitled *Maha Raja Wallieh*. In this extract there is recounted a version of the great origin story of the Siṅhalas. This must have been the first appearance in English translation of any portion of this now well-known legend.

If Mahony did not seem interested in the chronological preoccupation with the relative historical priority of Buddhism and Hinduism, yet his article could not conclude without addressing the perplexing and related Orientalist question, "how far this BHOODDHA [of the Siṅhalas] is the one of the Hindoos" (ibid.: 52). Mahony is worth quoting at length here because it is interesting that in arriving at what appears to be his conclusion -- the refutation of this claim -- it is the authority of Hindus in the island rather than Siṅhala Buddhists that is to determine the identity of the latter's Buddha.

> Having always conceived, from what I had an opportunity of reading and hearing, that BHOODDHA was one of the nine *Avataurams*, and that, notwithstanding his having contradicted, in his doctrines, some of the most essential points in the divine authorities of the Hindoos, his praises were nevertheless sung by some of the first order of Brahmins, I stood forth in asserting his dignity to the persons above-mentioned [i.e., some "learned Hindoos whom I lately met on *Ceylon*]; when I was informed, that he was not included in the nine *Avataurs*.... The incarnation of BHOODDHA, it was added, arose in the following circumstances: 'In former ages there were three giants, named *Trepooras*, (so entitled from their cities of iron, brass, and gold, which cities had wings, and were ambulatory,) who were votaries to SEVA [Siva], and continued to adore his sacred emblem, *Lingam*, so that they were invincible. They often oppressed the Gods, who having besought VISHNOO, he assumed a form under the title of BHOODDHA, who entering the cities, wrought miracles, and preached his seducing doctrine to the inhabitants, who embraced his religion, and became in every respect his proslytes. By this stratagem the *Trepooras* fell into the hands of BHOODDHA, and were destroyed by SEVA.... Hence BHOODDHA is considered as the promulgator of an heterodox religion. The adherents to BHOODDHA are looked upon as infidels; and their religion, though commendable with respect to morality, yet is reckoned as one of the 339 sects, or branches of the well-known heresy, or rather schism, among the Hindoos' (ibid.: 55-56).

The third article on Ceylon to appear in *Asiatick Researches*, "On the Religion and Manners of the People of Ceylon" (1803), was perhaps the most interesting of the three. Certainly, in treating as it did both the "religion" and "manners" of the "Singalese" it was the most comprehensive. But

more importantly, because of the position of its author, Mr. Joinville, it gives us a first hint at the emerging relation between colonial knowledge and local colonial practices in this early period of British rule in Ceylon. Mr. Joinville (his full name actually was Joseph Endelin de Joinville), described as a very "learned naturalist"[21] was the only one of the early writers on Ceylon to actually reside in the island. Joinville was in fact a Frenchman who came out to Ceylon to join the Administration of the first Governor, Frederic North, in 1798. And by the time of his article, he was Surveyor-General in the North Administration.[22] What is more, Joinville's article bears the authorizing imprimatur of an introductory letter by Governor North himself. In this letter, dated 27th September 1801, North is at pains to emphasize the seminal character of his Surveyor-General's researches on the "religion and customs of the Cingalese." He writes:

> It is necessary to mention, that this Essay was concluded before the arrival on this Island of the Embassy of Colonel Symes, and of the Account of the Religion and Customs of the Inhabitants of *Burmah* by Doctor Buchanan, contained in the Sixth Volume of the Researches of the Society (1803: 396).

Indeed Joinville himself was acutely self-conscious about inaugurating a whole new area of research. Mindful of the fact that his "information," as he called it, was "not altogether complete," he nevertheless waxed confident that it would "serve as a clue for further and deeper researches" (ibid.: 397). "The first person who treats on such a subject," he declared, already looking ahead to his successors in the field, "labours under disadvantages, which succeeding authors know how to turn to their own account, by finishing what a former hand had sketched, claiming the merit of the whole work. Regardless, however, of this consideration, I have the consolation to think, I shall be useful to him who may next treat of the present subject" (ibid.).

Again the question of chronology was uppermost, the first section of the article being entitled "Antiquity of the Religion of Boudhou." And Joinville sets out to resolve the puzzle of the historicity of the Buddha.

> If BOUDHOU be not an allegorical being, he was a man of genius, who made laws, established a religion, over a large tract of Asia. It is hard to say whether he, ZOROASTER, or BRAHMA, were the most ancient (ibid.: 397).

Joinville offers the suggestion that in order to decide the question it is necessary to establish whether "these three legislators had really existed, or rather if these names are not merely

attributes" (ibid.). In fact however, Joinville has little problem deciding in favor of the relative historical precedence of Buddhism over Brahminism. "I am rather of the opinion," he writes,

> upon a comparison of the two religions, that of BOUDHOU is the more ancient, for the following reasons. The religion of BOUDHOU having extended itself in very remote times, through every part of India, was in many respects monstrous and unformed. An uncreated world, and mortal souls, are ideas to be held only in an infant state of society, and as society advances such ideas must vanish. A fortiori, they cannot be established in opposition to a religion already prevailing in a country, the fundamental articles of which are the creation of the world, and the immortality of the soul. Ideas in opposition to all religion cannot gain ground, at least cannot make head, when there is already an established faith; whence it is fair to infer, that if Boudhism could not have established itself among the Brahmins, and if it has been established in their country, that it must be the more ancient of the two (ibid.: 400).

Of course it was not exactly "fair" to so "infer" since the premises themselves were ill-founded. But Mr. Joinville was simply applying the yardstick of an incipient historicism according to which notions of *creation* and *immortality* necessarily belong further up the scale of civilization.

After these three articles, nothing of note (indeed, so far as I can tell, nothing at all) on Ceylon or Buddhism was published in the pages of *Asiatick Researches*. What occasioned this curious abandonment of a field of such interest and potential for the Society is not readily forthcoming. It seems most likely however that the British Government's decision to relieve the East India Company of administrative responsibility for the island in 1802 must have discouraged further investigation.[23] The Orientalists were first and foremost Company men afterall. Moreover the whole Orientalist project itself was at that moment -- in the face of the emergent Evangelical challenge -- battling for its very survival (see Kopf 1969: 127-213).

For the Orientalists, in summary, the question of Buddhism and of the Buddha were, for the most part, *exegetical* problems bearing upon the "chronology" of Asiatic religions and customs. "Religion" was the fundamental object of focus. And "Buddhism" as represented in these early articles derived from an interface between colonial assumptions about the authorizing emblems of "religion" (official institutions, clergy, texts), and those in Siṅhala society who claimed for themselves the authority to represent Siṅhala religion (the *bhikkhus*, and the canonical texts). Thus in these articles whereas there is the reproduction of a temple scene there is no mention of the yaktovil, or of those popular practices associated with the Siṅhala pantheon of deities. But the Orientalist

preoccupation had little or no immediate practical, that is to say, *political*, significance. And herein lies a (perhaps *the*) critical distinction between the Orientalists and the later Evangelicals and Anglicists. Indeed when the latter took up what we might call the second phase of colonial writing about Sinhala religion, other problems than the academic one of the chronological relation between Buddhism and Brahminism were to come to the fore.

Buddhism and Demonism: Conversion and Colonial Knowledge

In what I am proposing to call the second phase of colonial writing about Sinhala religion, the political and ideological atmosphere of colonial rule in Ceylon was very different from what it had been in the earlier phase. There were at least two reasons for this. First of all, the British had by now committed themselves not only to keeping the island, but as well to exploring ways of developing it economically and improving the efficiency of its administration. This became particularly evident with the increasing British consolidation of colonial rule that followed the suppression of the Great Rebellion of 1818[24] in the Kandyan Provinces. And if neither economic solvency nor administrative reform were to be achieved until the 1830s -- with the coffee boom (de Silva 1953) on the one hand, and the implementation of a diluted version of the Colebrooke-Cameron recommendations (Mendis 1956) on the other -- there were nevertheless signs by the 1820s that the island was now more than a mere strategic outpost for the protection of British possessions in India.

Secondly, evangelicalism was beginning to exercise an influence on the determination of colonial policy, and missionary organizations had begun to play a prominent role in the shaping of colonial society. Responding to William Wilberforce's rousing call for an Eastern mission, there was a general evangelical interest in those "neglected regions of the Eastern World." The idolatry of India was, since Grant's famous treatise on "the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain" (1793), uppermost in the minds of evangelical sentiment. But Ceylon was, in many ways, a particularly attractive prospect to the missionaries. There were, first of all, reports of large numbers of nominally Christian natives in the island who were, as a result of a want of proper instruction, in

imminent danger of relapsing into their former idolatry (Fernandez 1949b). Moreover, and this must have been a weighty consideration, there was the anticipation that, Ceylon being a Crown Colony, there would be a greater degree of tolerance towards missionary work than existed in the Indian territories under the control of the East India Company (Fernandez 1949c).[25] The Baptist Mission began their work in 1812, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission soon after, in 1814, and the Church Missionary Society in 1818.[26]

These two factors -- the movement towards the liberal political and economic development of Ceylon, and the growth of the missionary enterprise -- intersected in a paradoxical but significant way in the problems that arose out of the celebrated fifth clause of the Kandyan Convention of March 2, 1815, by which the provinces of the Kandyan Kingdom were ceded to the British.[27] They were two sides, as it were, of the transformation of the "political technology" of British colonial practice, and they made for a change in the way Siṅhala religion was identified and represented.

The fifth clause of the Kandyan Convention stipulated that,

> The Religion of Boodhoo professed by the Chiefs and inhabitants of these Provinces is declared inviolable, its Rites, Ministers and Places of Worship are to be maintained and protected.[28]

If British rule in Ceylon may be said to only really begin with the extension of their political and territorial control over the entire island after the cession of Kandy, then the British colonial encounter with Siṅhala Buddhism -- or at least, this more significant phase of it -- was inaugurated in unprecedented compromise and curious ambivalence. In order to mollify the Kandyan chiefs, Governor-General Robert Brownrigg assured the Secretary of State, Earl Bathurst, in defense of the wording of this clause of the Convention, he had had to agree to the maintenance of the traditional Siṅhala relation between the State and religion.

Not unexpectedly the Evangelicals in England, William Wilberforce particularly, objected strongly to the wording of the fifth clause, feeling that it could be interpreted as being prejudicial to the active Christian proselytization of the Siṅhalas. However, as K.M. de Silva (1965: 67) has suggested, in 1815 evangelicalism lacked the influence it would later wield in matters of colonial policy. As this political influence grew however, especially during the long term of office of James Stephen as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, this relation with Buddhism would

become the object of considerable missionary agitation. British accession to colonial dominance in Ceylon in the nineteenth century therefore immediately involved them in a *political* problem regarding native "religion" which the emergent evangelicalism would both define and endeavour to resolve.[29]

In one of the early nineteenth century works on Siṅhala religion, Edward Upham's *The History and Doctrine of Budhism*, published in London in 1829, there is a vivid and dramatic representation of Siṅhala worship remarkable for the fact that it was unrepeated (because perhaps already unrepeatable) in the orientalist literature on British Ceylon. For in it, precisely at a time when colonial rule in the island was relatively settled and even advancing toward its review and progressivist rationalization in the 1830s,[30] we are presented with an imagined colonial "scene" (Upham's word) of singular ambivalence: both dark and light. An Oriental scene which, while explicitly inscribed within the Evangelical and Anglicist endeavours then taking root, simultaneously called up, and for the last time, the comparativist and classicist preoccupations of the late Calcutta Orientalists. This scene Upham sets before us thus in the concluding paragraph of the Introduction to this work:

> We have now before us a map of the vast portion of the human race, who derive their opinions and faith from Budhist doctrine, who profess to regulate their hope and notions of future bliss wholly by its moral instructions and rules. These important and striking considerations (for so every cause operating on millions of human beings may justly be deemed) will convert into matters of deep interest the most minute details, and secure patient attention to the astrological puerilities of their demon worship, and to their opinions on the character of infernal punishments. All these matters supply traits, without which the picture would be imperfect; and it may be considered a very useful lesson to set before the pride of man, that, in reference to the most important of subjects, the state and quality of future existence, the most refined Greek philosophers, and the darkest and most ignorant of the followers of the Budha, were much on a par as to external religious observances, and any advantageous views of what becomes of the soul after death. It seems, therefore, to warn us that, on these great subjects, very little advantage can be gathered from the utmost stretch of the human understanding; *the teacher must be divine*. However high his intellectual attainment, philosophy could not lift her greatest follower, at his death, above the standard of the humblest disciple of the Budha, whom, sacrificing a cock to the Bali, or planetary influences, as he lay languishing under sickness amid the woods of Ceylon, we see under the same vow, and offering the same tribute to the Deity, as marked the last hours of Socrates. "Uncovering his head, for his head was covered, that nothing might trouble him, 'Crito,' says Socrates (these were his last words), 'we owe a cock to Esculapius, discharge this vow for me, and not forget it'." A midnight scene, which was witnessed in the forests of Ceylon, wherein a magical practitioner was addressing the sparkling host of heaven, "the Bali," in behalf of an unfortunate individual languishing under sickness, will demonstrate

> how precisely this last act of the greatest philosopher of the Athenian school sprung from the same root of doctrine as that of the sick Singalese.

We cannot read this long passage without being astonished by its serenity, its lack of animus. It has not yet been overcome by what Homi Bhabha has referred to as "those terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy which are the signal points of identification and alienation, scenes of fear and desire, in colonial texts" (1983: 25). Upham is not unwilling to raise a warning about the "pride of man" by elaborating a cross-cultural affinity incompatible with the missionary evangelicalism which had already begun to disfigure and efface it. His text rings perhaps one of the last notes of the theme of the noble savage. But what for us is of particular interest here is the very setting of the scene itself, "the woods of Ceylon."[31]

If the knowledges of the Orientalists at the end of the eighteenth century derived in the main from their prodigious translation and examination of texts, that of the Evangelical missionaries of the nineteenth was fashioned in large part through their actual contact with the everyday practices of broad sections of the native population. The production of colonial knowledge depends on the production of privileged "scenes" where what counts as true knowledge is to be found. The physical and symbolic place of this "scene" shifted according to the imperatives of the colonial enterprise. That for instance Calcutta once constituted such a "scene" was the reason for the establishment there of the College at Fort William in 1800 (Kopf 1969). That it had already effectively ceased to be so early in the nineteenth century, and particularly after 1813 with the change in the East India Company's policy toward missionaries, was the reason for its decline. In these years colonialism became authorized through a discourse of subjectification and discipline -- in short, the civilizing mission -- requiring a different modality of power, and a different site of application. And what emerged as one of its privileged techniques was the evangelical practice of *conversion*. With the emergence of conversion as distinctive to the micropolitics of colonialism, the "scene" of the production of knowledges about native religions, languages, and customs, moved from the conclave of scholars in the commercial and administrative centers, to the "outstations," the villages and "hamlets" and isolated mission houses that regulated the round of solitary labours of the intrepid missionary.

The practice of missionary conversion in British Ceylon, changed the problematic of orientalism and with it, the productive gaze of colonial knowledge. And transforming this productive gaze it brought into play, into the field of colonial "visuality,"[32] a new object: *demonism*.[33] As long as orientalism had a purely scriptural site, and as long as orientalist knowledge about native religion was conceived to have a secular and educative effect on the colonizer rather than the colonized, it could, as it did for the Orientalists, preoccupy itself solely with the authorized texts and their select interpreters. Once the missionary had set himself in the "moral wilderness" of the natives themselves however, with the task not of understanding their popular discourses and practices but of militantly confronting and changing them, the "gloomy" and "monstrous" observances before his eyes destabilized the received boundaries of the textual tradition and transformed the identified object, Sinhala religion.

The first articles on Sinhala religious practice as we have seen make no mention of demonism. Admittedly the writers, some of whom were visitors based in India, must have had only the slightest acquaintance with the range of practices of the people who had so recently "passed beneath British rule" (to use A.J. Arberry's infelicitous phrase). In the post-1815 period however, when colonial rule in Ceylon had become more settled and regulated, and when the missionaries of the various denominations (particularly the Wesleyans) had established themselves in village areas, the whole character of writing about Sinhala religion changed. The question of the relation between Buddhism and Hinduism though by no means resolved gave way to a concern with the relation between Buddhism and demonism.

The Rev. William Martin Harvard's *A Narrative of the Establishment and Progress of the Mission to Ceylon and India*, published in London in 1823, provides one the earliest Evangelical representations of Sinhala religion. Harvard had been a member of the first group of Wesleyan missionaries to set out for Ceylon, arriving in February, 1815. He was stationed at Colombo. Setting the tone of nineteenth century missionary writing on Sinhala religion his *Narrative* provides not so much a considered description of Sinhala practices as a militant declamation of them. In it nevertheless we can discern the emergence of something new in the field of Sinhala religion.

In the section of his Introduction entitled "Ceylonese superstitions and idolatrous ceremonies," Rev. Harvard maintains that there are "two principal religious systems" prevailing among the Siṅhalas -- "Kapooism, or, the worship of Demons; and that which inculcates the superstition of Budhu" (ibid.: xlix). These were both "systems of heathenism" and, as he continued, represented "another district" of that vast "empire of darkness" which was beginning to yield to the "cheering and vivifying beams of THE TRUE LIGHT" (ibid.). In a conception different to that of the Orientalist's, Siṅhala religion is now represented as double, as consisting of two forms or "systems" -- Kapooism or demonism, on the one hand, and Buddhism on the other. It was not the first time that Siṅhala religion had been so represented (Governor North, we saw, had used similar terms in 1799). But now, in different conditions of colonial practice, it would be endorsed, repeated, and elaborated. And indeed it would become the defining feature of Siṅhala religion.

In his account of these "two religious systems" Harvard turns first to that of Kapooism. This strategy of representation is not accidental. Harvard wishes to ascribe a certain differential status to Kapooism and Buddhism, and underline a very particular kind of relationship between them. Kapooism, Harvard claims, consists in "the worship of evil spirits" and is, according to the "ancient Singhalese records," the "primitive religion of the Singhalese" (ibid.: l). In otherwords, for Harvard, as for many early nineteenth century European Christians, the "superstitious fear and worship of evil spirits, is in fact the universal *religion of nature*" (ibid. His emphasis). This meant at least two things. First of all it meant that Kapooism could be assimilated to the Christian view of pagan practices as Satanic. Ceylon, Harvard charged, was one of those "benighted lands" where "the sovereignty of that malignant spirit, known among us by the name of the devil, (because in the Scriptures is so termed), is openly and officially proclaimed" (ibid.).

> The ascendancy of Satan is THERE not merely *intimated* by the features of human conduct, as they are opposed to virtue and goodness. It is *avowed* in the most unequivocal manner. The visible kingdom of the Wicked One stands THERE erected, with unblushing front -- in frightful images -- in venerated temples --in an order of priesthood -- in a round of ceremonies -- in A DIRECT WORSHIP -- in a series of terrifying fears and apprehensions -- in amulets, and offerings -- and in various abominable evils! (ibid. His emphasis).

And he continues, giving an account of its nature and functions.

> This gloomy system is founded on the supposition, that all the pains and sufferings to which man is exposed, are occasioned by the baleful influence of daemons on his person and concerns. Every misfortune and disease has its presiding daemon; and prayers are offered,

> and sacrifices made, to avert the evils which they are supposed to inflict. Their images represent Satanic beings, of the most horrible forms and propensities. Some of them have the semblance of men, of gigantic size, with several hands, each armed with an instrument of torture. Others are represented as monsters with tremendously large eyes, mouths, and teeth, in the act of devouring a human being; holding several more, suspended by the hair, in readiness for the same fate: and some are pictured as feeding on the reeking entrails of expiring men, whom they have massacred for the purpose. There are others of a character which forbids description! (ibid.: li).

Secondly (and a point that was critical for the practice of conversion), it meant that Kapooism was older, more original, and thus more real to the Siṅhalas than Buddhism. One of the textual authorities on which Harvard relied for his *Narrative* was Dr. John Davy's *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of its Inhabitants* (1821).[34] Finding in some remarks of Davy's on the word "Kapooa" a substantiation of his own conception, Harvard noted that,

> According to Dr. Davy, this word is derived from *kapu*, proper, and *ralle*, chief. If this be its real derivation, may it not be considered as indicative of the "proper," or legitimate claims to ascendancy and influence which the Singhalese assign to this order of native priests; and thus afford a strong presumptive evidence of what the Author assumes to be the fact, that the worship of daemons is the primitive offspring of the imagination of fallen man: and hence the "proper," or real and actual, religion of nature? (1823: lin).

Only after discussing Kapooism does Harvard turn to Buddhism, the position of which is in turn described before his discussion of the virtues of Christianity and the difficulties faced by its emissaries. This "superstition," he says, is the "established religion of the Singhalese" (ibid.: lii). His discussion of it is concerned with two issues primarily -- the "introduction" of Buddhism into the island, and its "principal doctrines." When Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon has not been satisfactorily determined, he writes, and indeed the circumstances of its introduction are "set forth by the Singhalese histories, in all the extravagant hyperbole of an Eastern fable" (ibid.: liv). Nevertheless, Harvard asserts, divested of the "absurdities in which it is clothed," it is gathered from these "fables" that the Buddha was a religious reformer, who, finding the Siṅhalas

> devoted to the Kapooa system of demon worship, endeavored, by preaching some portion of truth, though mixed up with much error, to raise their minds from the degraded and enslaved state in which they had been held for ages; success followed the persevering promulgation of the system; until it gained the ascendancy, and became the established religion of the island (ibid.: lv).

As always, colonial missionary representation entailed the appropriation and assimilation of indigenous discourses. The story of the relationship between Buddhism and demonism is thus cast by Harvard in an evangelical language familiar to the missionary and his audience. The Siṅhalas, in

their original state, and for ages, were "enslaved" to "demon worship." At a later, and as yet undetermined period however, the Buddha, "religious reformer" that he was, had attempted to "raise their minds" from its "degraded" state, and had, after much perseverance, achieved a measure of success. Indeed wasn't this just what the colonial Christian missionary was now attempting to do? So that in Evangelical discourse, Buddhism is made to stand in the relation to demonism that it accords to its own relation to both. For note that Buddhism is assigned "some portion of truth," though a truth that is, nevertheless, "mixed up with much error." The authority and justification that the program of Christian conversion could therefore claim for itself was the benevolent one that it set out to complete a task ineffectually started by Buddhism. For afterall, "civilization and Christianity" were the "most powerful counteractions" against all vestiges of superstition.[35]

This theme of the failure of Buddhism to overcome the deep-seated vice of demonism among the Sinhalas was to repeat itself throughout the nineteenth century, and it still lingers in the twentieth century anthropological idea that an abstract Buddhism was forced to accommodate itself to popular supernaturalism.

In fact this latter idea is more directly related to the adjunct and more important missionary theme regarding the character of the relation between these two systems. If Kapooism, as it was conceived by the evangelical mind, was older, more primitive, and more original to the Sinhalas than Buddhism, and if it had been supplanted by it as their "established religion," it had also formed a curious yet very visible connection to it. The precise formulation of this connection however was open to some dispute. Here, for example, the Rev. Harvard disagreed with Dr. Davy. Davy had suggested that it was "not merely tolerated, but *quite orthodox*" to have a *dēvāla* (shrine-house for a god) and a *vihāra* (Buddhist temple) "contiguous, or even under the same roof." Harvard begged to differ.

> The general correctness of this respectable and learned author ... cannot be questioned; but I apprehend him inadvertently to have adopted a mistake in supposing that the worship of either the Brahminical gods, or the Kapooistic daemons, is consistent with pure Budhuism; than which nothing can be more *heterodox*. It is true, the followers of Budhu, and even the priests themselves, will perform acts of worship to the Kapooistic deities, and have figures of daemons painted on the walls of their own temples. But this, so far as I have been able to learn, is a corruption of the Budhuist system (ibid.: lv-lvi).

Writing somewhat later, the noted lay missionary and scholar of Buddhism, Daniel J. Gogerly (1908), was to offer this connection on slightly more sociological grounds (grounds, in fact, prefiguring those of latter day anthropologists). Gogerly made a distinction between "the views of the learned and reflecting part of the Buddhist community," and those of "the great body of the people" who, thinking little on the subject, "merely tread in the footsteps of their forefathers" (ibid.: 6). These latter, he asserted, had "united demon-worship with Buddhism." But this was "in direct opposition to the system" (ibid.: 4), that is, to the views and practices of the "reflecting" Buddhists. In short, Gogerly argued significantly that: "The practical working of Buddhism is essentially different from its system " (ibid.: 6). Or as he had put it, and somewhat less elegantly, in the pages of *Friend*, the Wesleyan propaganda journal,

> whatever opinion there may be formed of the morality of some of its precepts, or the refinement of its metaphysics, no one conversant with the people can fail to observe that its effects are to render them earthly, sensual, and devilish (1837: 101).

This linking of Siṅhala character with their religious practices, and particularly with their resistance to conversion became a preoccupation of mid-Victorian evangelical writing on the practices of the Siṅhalas.

The explicit object of the colonial Evangelical project was conversion not knowledge, its concern was to displace not understand the religious practices of the Siṅhalas. Yet within a short decade of the inauguration in the island of that inspired civilizing enterprise it was clear to the most sanguine of Christian protagonists that it was little more than a dismal failure. One of the recurrent themes in missionary writing of this period is the profound dismay and bewilderment over this fact which they attributed to the "character of the Singhalese people" and the peculiar "genius of their religion."

One of the most illuminating expressions of this idea is to be found in Sir James Emerson Tennent's *Christianity in Ceylon* published in 1850. Tennent was Colonial Secretary to Viscount Torrington and was recalled with him after the debacle over his handling of the "rebellion" of 1848.[36] One theme that repeats itself in the nineteenth century literature on Siṅhala religion and Christian conversion is that of the extreme apathy and pliancy of Siṅhala character. To be sure all "Asiaticks" were, to an excessive degree, "apathetic," in contrast to the bristling "vigor" of the European. But

the Sinhala Buddhist character, according to Tennent, appeared peculiarly marked by a deceptively yielding quality which differentiated it from the Brahmanic character, and which had definite implications for the colonial Christian practice of conversion. Whereas the Brahmanism of the Tamils of the Jaffna peninsula for instance was "exclusive and fanatical," the Buddhism of the Sinhalas, in its singular "self-righteousness," extended a "latitudinarian liberality to every other faith" (1850: 191). Paradoxically however, this served to make the Buddhists, with their "habitual apathy and listless indifference" not less but more resistant to conversion. In "the hands of the Christian missionary" -- and the metaphor is instructive for the image of moulding so central to the micropolitics of conversion -- the Sinhalas were not "plastic," but,

> a yielding fluid which adapts its shape to that of the vessel into which it may happen to be poured, without any change in its quality or any modification of its character (ibid.: 193).

Another, earlier, writer, had recorded his impression in a slightly more exasperated tone:

> No race of people appear so easily convertible to Christianity as the Singhalse; for they have no fixed principles or prejudices.... They have *no objection* to the Christian religion; but for their amusement are apt to attend the Budhuist festivals. Numbers of them make no difficulty in asserting that they are *both Budhuist and Christians*; and are willing to be sworn *either way*, or *both ways*, in a court of justice! (quoted in Harvard 1823: lxi).

The evangelicals found this a "perverse" and "embarrassing" obstacle to the advance of Christianity in Ceylon. They were better prepared to deal with the direct opposition they perceived among the Hindus and Muslims. It was something of a paradox because, at the same time, Tennent repeated Harvard's view that Buddhism was, in the ethical content of its doctrine and the ascetic restraint of its practice, "superior" to Islam and Hinduism. The British appear indeed to have conceived a curious regard for the ethic of Buddhism. Buddhism was given neither to the "fanatical intolerance" of Islam nor to the "revolting rites" of Hinduism. On the contrary it seemed characterized by a benevolence, a modesty, and a severity, that appealed to the evangelical Christian. But the strategy of the Sinhala Buddhist's of nominally acceding to Christianity while continuing their indigenous practices struck at the heart of the evangelical conception of the inner experience of conversion. And this moreover confirmed the evangelical idea that the "Buddhism" of the Sinhalas was only a superficial veneer covering a deeper more entrenched reality.

Yet for all that, as religion, it was an ineffectual failure. As Tennent wrote:

> No national system of religion no prevailing superstition that has ever fallen under my observation presents so dull a level, and is so pre-eminently deficient in popular influence, as Buddhism amongst the Singhalese (1850: 229).

Among the Siṅhalas Buddhism had followers enough, but few "votaries." Here was a conception, that of the votary, the devotee, central to the evangelical identification of "religion" and the religious subject. The "warmth," "fervour," and "earnestness" that were to the evangelical Christian of the nineteenth century the definitive indices of individual "faith" and religious commitment were "utterly foreign and unknown to the followers of Buddhism in Ceylon" (ibid.). And this fundamental inability to evoke the visible signs of Victorian religious desire was, for the evangelical, the reason for Buddhism's supposed lack of influence.

> Beautiful as is the body of its doctrines, it wants the vivifying energy and soul which are essential to ensure its ascendancy and power (ibid.: 226).

If the sincerity of Tennent's estimate of the aesthetic value of Buddhist doctrine is not doubted, what nevertheless needs to be appreciated is the discursive strategy in which it functioned. It was meant to underline an essential discrepancy between the claim Buddhism made for itself and its actual condition. Buddhism had been able to achieve only an "ostensible prevalence" among the Siṅhalas. Indeed this exalted doctrine which lacked even the power to "arrest man in his career of passion and lust" was, when subjected to the discerning scrutiny of the Christian, found to reveal beneath it a whole underground of darker idolatry. It was this idolatry that really commanded the "reverential awe" of the Siṅhalas. It was this idolatry to which those Siṅhalas who professed Christianity inevitably returned. And therefore, it was reasoned, it was this idolatry that was the true religion of the Siṅhalas. Wrote Tennent,

> Yet, strange to tell, under the icy coldness of this barren system, there burn below the unextinguished fires of another and darker superstition, whose flames overtop the icy summits of Buddhist philosophy, and excite a deeper and more reverential awe in the imagination of the Singhalese (ibid.: 229).

This "darker superstition" consisted of course in the "worship of demons."

After a masterly demonstration of the seeming virtues of an elaborate doctrine then, the evangelical Christian calmly but resolutely flings away the superficial deception to disclose the horrible reality of demonism. So that, in fact, Tennent inverts the earlier strategy of Harvard of presenting Siṅhala religion developmentally, or, chronologically, from Kapooism through Buddhism.

Tennent, concerned less with chronology than with revealed truth, presents first the surface, Buddhism, and then proceeds to uncover what lies smoldering below it, demonism.

In summary, the evangelical project of converting the Siṅhala natives produced a dilemma which colonial Christian discourse attempted to resolve. This dilemma grew out of a perceived discrepancy between the "doctrine" of Buddhism (as authorized by the canonical Siṅhala Buddhist texts, and the Buddhist clerics in the Sangha) on the one hand, and the popular "practices" of Siṅhala Buddhists as witnessed in their villages and hamlets on the other. This was a dilemma which had not arisen for the Orientalists in the first years of British occupation of Ceylon. Demonism therefore was at best marginal to their identification and representation of Siṅhala religion.

For the evangelicals however, demonism was at the heart of Siṅhala religion. The practice of missionary conversion involved colonial discourse in a particular kind of strategy of identifying and representing Siṅhala religion. This strategy rested on premises about "true" religion and the authentic attitude of the true religious subject. These premises in turn were important for the practical reason that they enabled the evangelical to distinguish the merely nominal from the authentic Christian convert. Applied to the Siṅhalas, the evangelicals did two things: Firstly, they assimilated the canonical Siṅhala Buddhist representation of the "establishment" of Buddhism in Lankā to the nineteenth century European conception of the historical evolution of religion. Siṅhala supernaturals were not only older and more primitive than Buddhism, they were identified with demonism. Secondly, Buddhism was represented as admirable but, in the end, ineffectual. Beneath it the Christian revealed the latent actuality of the Siṅhalas: demonism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have been concerned with the production of colonial knowledges about Siṅhala religion. I have suggested, following in particular the lead of Talal Asad (1979), that modern anthropological discourse has in general neglected to inquire upon the ideological determination of the objects it constructs for, and considers in, its discourse. One aspect of this ideological determination has a *colonial* location.

Specifically, I have attempted to problematize the way in which Siṅhala religion was inserted as discourse into the economy of British orientalism. I have attempted to do so by inquiring upon the problematic involved in what are roughly plotted as two phases of its colonial inscription. In the short almost forgotten Orientalist phase between 1796 and 1802 when the island was administered by the East India Company, a few articles were written about the religion and customs of the Siṅhalas. Their principal concern was the chronological relation between Buddhism and Brahmanism. Their assumption that the religion of the Siṅhalas could be read through the canonical texts (hardly any of the Siṅhala versions of which had been translated into English, and certainly none of the Pāli), their interpreters the *bhikkhus* (monks), and the inspection of their *vihāras* (temples), could appear unproblematic insofar as it had little if any political implication for colonial practice.

The Evangelical and Anglicist phase on the other hand, beginning in the post-1815 period, was the more sustained and the more significant because replete with practical colonial consequences. Briefly, in this phase, the production of colonial knowledge about Siṅhala religion was inseparable from the evangelical project of Christian conversion, and the concomitant necessity of missionaries to live in daily concourse with the popular practices of ordinary people. This practice -- conversion (and, in a critical way, its failure) -- constructed for colonial knowledge a new object, distinctive of this phase, and through which Siṅhala religion could be fixed, got at, transformed. That object was *demonism*. In the confrontation with and representation of Siṅhala religion the evangelicals, I suggest, found themselves in a seeming practical and conceptual dilemma. On the one hand there was the authorized version of Buddhism, a version which appeared in ways to bear intellectual and ethical affinities to their own notion of "religion," but which seemed for all practical purposes ineffectual. On the other hand there were the unauthorized practices of persons who were avowedly Buddhist but which were disavowed by authorized Buddhism. These practices, collectively called *kapooism* or *demonism*, appeared to provide the essential affective aspect of what the evangelicals thought of as "vital religion," and so were seen to define Siṅhala religion in some more fundamental a way than "Buddhism."

It is this evangelical reading, I would maintain, that the Western characterization of Siṅhala religion as comprising two systems has its founding moment. The anthropological literature on

Sinhala Buddhism has in many respects repeated this assumption.

Notes

1. It is of course true that the British were not the first Christians to colonize Lankā. The Portuguese Catholics and the Dutch Calvinists preceded them. Both involved evangelizing missions. And it is probable that the Catholics at least had an impact on indigenous practices in the South of the island. Certainly the attempt to trace this impact would form an important chapter in the overall attempt to sketch the impact of colonial Christian relations with Lankā. However, this is not the task that this chapter has set for itself. The question with which I am concerned has to do with the *conceptual* preconditions of the modern anthropological *concept* of the Sinhala *yaktovil* as demonism. Neither the Catholic Portuguese nor the Calvinist Dutch were as influential as the British in fashioning *Western knowledges* about Sinhala practices.

2. The Act was known as "Burke's Act." On the conduct of "colonial business" during this period, see J.C. Beaglehole's "The Colonial Office, 1782-1854" (1941).

3. For a discussion of Portuguese colonial relations with Lanka (1505-1656), see especially P.E. Pieris (1920). For less specialized and more recent treatments see C.R. de Silva (1953: Chap. 1), and E.F.C. Ludowyk (1967: Chap. 6). A good source for Dutch colonial relations with Lanka (1656-1796) is K.W. Goonewardena (1958). P.E. Pieris (1918), dated, is still an exemplary work. See also the useful summary in Ludowyk (1967: Chap. 7).

4. The naval force known as the East Indies Squadron came into being in 1744 to police the Indian waters during the Anglo-French conflict. It first put in at Trincomalee for refitting in July 1746. Trincomalee was valuable to the British because it provided a safe shelter from the northeast monsoon where ships defending the Coromandel Coast could be refitted. For details see the interesting article by H.A. Colgate (1964).

5. There are several important historical works on the British colonial period. I have found most useful the two volumes of Colvin R. de Silva's *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795-1833* (1953, 1962), G.C. Mendis's *Ceylon Under the British* (1948), Lennox A. Mill's *Ceylon Under British Rule* (1933), and E.F.C. Ludowyk's *The Modern History of Ceylon* (1966).

6. Klaus E. Knorr's *British Colonial Theories* (1944) is still perhaps one of the most useful and comprehensive works on the vicissitudes of the ideas that informed British colonial policy between the mid sixteenth and mid nineteenth centuries. I have drawn upon it in my characterization of the difference between the Old and the New Empires.

7. I have taken the term of course from Michel Foucault. I have in mind something of the transformation in the strategies of power -- from the ritual marking of the body in the spectacle of public torture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the systems of subjectification in the nineteenth -- which he describes in his *Discipline and Punish* (1979). There is articulated, I would argue, a similar kind of transformation between the First and Second British colonial empires. Indeed some would argue (incorrectly it seems to me) that it is with the latter phase that colonialism proper -- that is as a "psychological" problematic -- begins. See Ashis Nandy's "The Psychology of Colonialism" in his *The Intimate Enemy* (1983).

8. "The most important features of the Evangelical mind," Stokes writes, "were its intense individualism and exaltation of individual conscience, its belief that human character could be suddenly and totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind, and finally, its conviction that this required an educative process" (1959: 30).

9. My use of the concept *discourse* here is influenced as much by Michel Foucault as by Hayden White. "Discourse, in a word, is quintessentially a *mediative* enterprise. As such, it is both interpretive and preinterpretive; it is always as much *about* the nature of interpretation itself as it is *about* the subject matter which is the manifest occasion of its own elaboration" (1978: 4). And this discourse, White emphasizes, is always (pre)figured *tropically*. That is to say, discourse employs linguistic means of marking out and indeed constituting the field of objects to be considered and the manner in which they are to be considered. Troping, says White, is the "soul of discourse." And as such always involves a certain "intention" or (in Michel Foucault's terms) will to power. Thus we may speak, in our context, of the "tropics" -- and specifically as we shall see, the *demonological tropics* -- of colonial Christian discourse.

10. In work which intersects with the concerns of this chapter Lata Mani (1987) is engaged in an inquiry upon the relation between colonial power and the construction in nineteenth century India of the practice of *sati* as colonial knowledge.

11. For an elaboration of this point see Asad (1983a).

12. To reiterate, my principal concern in this chapter then is not to address the historical sociology of Sinhala Buddhism during the disfiguring period of British colonial rule, though aspects of this history are certainly pertinent to the endeavour I wish to engage. For an historical sociology of Sinhala Buddhism during this period, see Kitsiri Malalgoda's excellent study, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900* (1976).

13. There are two other seventeenth century accounts of the island which bear mention. One is *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon* (1672), written by the Rev. Phillipus Baldaeus, a Dutch predikant who arrived in Ceylon upon its conquest by his countrymen in 1656. An abridged English translation of Baldaeus's work first appeared in 1703. For introductory details see Saparamadu (1960). The other seventeenth century work is *The Historic Tragedy of the Island of Ceilao* (1685), written by Joao Ribeiro, a Portuguese Captain who spent several years in the Portuguese garrison in the Maritime Provinces. The first English translation of Ribeiro's work was apparently that "issued in 1847 by Mr. George Lee of the Ceylon Civil Service" (Pieris 1948).

14. Knox's book was an instant success in late seventeenth century London. The first edition was quickly sold out. In the author's own lifetime (and on his own testimony) *An Historical Relation* was translated into Dutch and French. As the late Sri Lankan critic E.F.C. Ludowyk has written of its popularity: "Whether they were interested in it as a description of an as yet unknown land, or an exciting narrative, or the record of the goodness of the heavenly dispensation, or an incentive to the shrewder spirits to seek their profits in Eastern trade, it was read and enjoyed by English readers for over two centuries" (1948: ix). The book too is reputed to have been influential in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Again see Ludowyk (1948, 1952).

15. As Wickremeratne maintains, T.W. Rhys Davids stands alongside Max Muller as one of the great orientalists of the nineteenth century. He arrived in British Ceylon in 1866 to take up an appointment as Writer in the Ceylon Civil Service. He was twenty three years old. In 1873, while serving as Assistant Government Agent in Anuradhapura, he was relieved of his duties and subsequently dismissed from the Colonial Service.. He was charged by his superiors with, among other things, having arbitrarily imposed fines on peasants and appropriated the funds for his personal use. In 1874 he left Ceylon to return to England where he soon established himself as the foremost authority on Buddhist and Pāli studies. In 1881 he founded the Pāli Text Society.

16. One of the weaknesses of this remark of Wickremeratne's is that it is unsubstantiated. Whereas he does cite his D. Phil. Thesis (Oxford, 1966) as a reference, it would have been most useful if he had shown just how the British represented Buddhism as being "deadlier," as he puts it, than Hinduism.

17. The British of course were not without their very marked antipathies toward Hinduism. And it is not at all clear to me that Wickremeratne's claim is an accurate one. Consider for example the following passage written by one of the early Wesleyan missionaries in British Ceylon.

> Compared with the prevailing religion of the Hindoos, Buddhism wears an aspect amicable and humane. Unlike the worship of *Juggernaut*, (to instance one Hindoo deity only) whose rubric prescribes impurity and blood, as acceptable and even essential *acts of worship*, the worship of Budhu is simple and inoffensive. The sacred books of this system forbid cruelty, dishonesty, unchastity, and falsehood; and inculcate kindness, sympathy, and subordination in civil society. The system tends to correct the inveterate prejudices of *caste*; and has even produced institutions of benevolence and mercy in different parts of the island. On such a system the infidel looks with complacency; and latitudinarian, in the exercise of a spurious candour, pronounces it to be *safe*. But the believer in Divine Revelation, while he admits its comparative excellence, when weighed in the balance with the impure and sanguinary systems of India, and other Pagan lands, beholds written on its portals in the indelible characters of inspired truth -- "WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD" (Harvard 1823: lxi).

See also, for example, K.A. Ballhatchet (1961) for a discussion of missionary writing on India. Also, Marshall (1970). One is reminded too, to cast a glance at a somewhat later period of South Asian colonial history, of E.M. Forster's slightly more favourable characterizations of Muslims than Hindus in *A Passage to India*.

18. See Jones' "A Discourse on the Institution of a Society" (1788a).

19. If knowledge of the historical Buddha, Gautama, and his doctrines, was lamentably superficial at the end of the eighteenth century, this situation would be slow in changing. In fact without a knowledge of the Mauryan period of Indian history -- that of the Emperor Asoka; and of Pāli, the language of the classical Buddhist Canon, it was impossible to arrive at reliable conclusions regarding either the historical personage of, or the doctrines attributed to, Gautama the Buddha. And both of these took a long time to develop. A breakthrough in the former began with James Prinsep's translation in 1837 of a *Brahmi* inscription, and the, coincidentally, almost simultaneous translation by George Turnour in the same year, of the Sinhala epic, the *Mahavamsa* -- which enabled a linking of Asoka to the Buddhist period. And competence in Pāli, and a corresponding familiarity with the canonical texts, grew slowly through the nineteenth century. Beginning with the seminal work of Turnour, Rev. Benjamin Clough, and Daniel J. Gogerly, in the '30s and '40s, excellence was achieved in the work of T.W. Rhys Davids only at the end of the nineteenth century. And if Rhys Davids was the orientalist *par excellence* of Ceylon, as Ananda Wickremeratne would suggest, and correctly so, a vast distance separates him from William Jones -- the distance, in short, of Victorianism, and most especially, of one of its defining aspects, evangelicalism.

20. The Orientalists it might be noted conceived of "India" as spanning a quite broad geographical area (see Jones 1788: 345-346).

21. Quoted in Colvin R. de Silva (1953: 227).

22. Frederic North, the first Governor of the British possessions in Ceylon (arriving in October 1798 to replace the East India Company representative, Robert Andrews. See de Silva 1953: 57), was something of a classicist himself, with a particular love of Greece. He was a patron of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and a friend of the Marquess Wellesley (see Burrows, 1929: 403, 403n). Jonville (or Joinville) was appointed Surveyor-General when, as part of the reforms carried out by North, the first Surveyor-General's Department was formed in August 1800 (de Silva 1953: 237; and Peiris 1953: 256-267).

23. See K.M. de Silva, "The Coming of the British to Ceylon, 1762-1802" (1973).

24. See P.E. Pieris, *Sinhale and the Patriots* (1950) for an account of the factors leading up to the rebellion; also de Silva (1953: Chap. 4).

25. The missionaries of course had much cause to feel apprehensive about the East India Company's attitude toward their work. The first group of missionaries of the London Missionary Society, for example, who in 1804 attempted to set out from England on their way to Ceylon, were delayed because "no vessel of the East India Company was permitted to grant this company of missionaries a passage as they went out in face of the open hostility of the government" (quoted in Fernandez 1949b: 199).

26. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch had had contingents of missionaries working in the island during their respective periods of rule (see Fernandez 1948). The first British missionaries to arrive in British Ceylon were actually members of the London Missionary Society. They arrived in Mannar, in the north of the island in January, 1805. It appears however that their activities were confined mainly to Dutch congregations in Jaffna, Colombo, Galle, and Matara (see Fernandez 1949b: 198-202). C.N.V. Fernando's series of essays (1948, 1949a, 1949b, 1949c, 1950a, 1950b, 1950c, 1951a, 1951b) provide a very useful account of the Christian Missionary enterprise in colonial Ceylon.

27. For a fine account of the last phase of the last Sinhala kingdom, see P.E. Pieris, *Tri Sinhala, The Last Phase* (1939).

28. P.E. Pieris (1950) has argued that the published English translation of the document embodying the articles of the Convention (the original apparently has never been found) "does not adequately reproduce the Sinhalese text by which the Great Chiefs bound themselves ..." (ibid.: 591). He offers therefore a more accurate one, the fifth clause of which reads as follows:

> The Doctrine of Buddha and the Cult of the Devas in which the officials and inhabitants of the aforesaid Rataval have faith must be so maintained that they cannot be broken and their ceremonies, Sangha, Viharastana and Devala maintained and protected (ibid.: 592).

29. For twenty five years after the Kandyan Convention, between 1815 and 1840, there was no substantial change in the colonial Government's relation to Sinhala Buddhism. The missionary agitation against the connection between the British colonial Government and Sinhala Buddhism took shape in the context of the mounting campaign in England against the Government's connection with idolatry in India and in particular the campaign against the Pilgrim Tax (Ingham 1952). In British Ceylon, the agitation against the Ceylon Government's connection with Buddhism was launched in 1839 with the publication of a stinging pamphlet by the Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. Robert Spence Hardy, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon*. The principal argument advanced by Hardy was a comparatively simple one. He maintained that the connection between the British Government and Sinhala Buddhism was in essence a relation between a Christian Government and a system of idolatry. As such, it was in principle a morally inadmissible relation.

30. This was the time of the great coffee boom in Ceylon which was attracting settlers from England. William Knighton's *Forest Life in Ceylon* (1854) gives a vivid account of settler life in Ceylon in a slightly later period. The failure of the new colony to begin to pay its way, and the constant talk of administrative high-handedness and mismanagement led to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of Inquiry of 1829, which ushered in a period of judicial, administrative, and educational reforms in the 1830s. On this see C.G. Mendis's "Introduction" in *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers* (1956). See also Vijaya Samaraweera's "The Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms" (1973).

31. It is the more remarkable for the fact that Upham himself appears never to have witnessed such a performance in the "woods of Ceylon." The full title of Upham's work is *The History and Doctrines of Buddhism with Notices of the Kapooism, or Demon Worship, and of the Bali, or Planetary Incantations, of Ceylon.*

32. I take this concept of "visuality," of what, within any given practice of knowledge it is possible to "see," from Michel Foucault (e.g., 1973). See Deleuze (1988) for an illuminating reading of this aspect of Foucault's thought.

33. Demonism of course was not itself new to Christian discourse. Geoffrey Scarre for instance, referring to the European Middle Ages, suggests that it was official Church policy to place a "demonological interpretation on beliefs it held to be pagan; in a similar way, all pagan deities were identified with demons" (1987: 14). My argument then is not that demonism was invented in British Ceylon. Rather, what came to be *identified* a~ Sinhala religion, and how, depended on the specific conditions of the production of knowledge prevailing at the time. Whereas demonism was already part of the conceptual baggage of Christian imagination at least before the nineteenth century it was the transformation in colonial practice that brought it into the vanguard of colonial Christian discourse.

34. Davy was a physiologist and anatomist who served as surgeon and physician to Governor, Sir Robert Brownrigg, between 1817 and 1819. See Yasmine Gooneratne (1980: 111-119) for a useful discussion of Davy's *Account*.

35. Moreover, Buddhism was a false and anomalous doctrine. Not only did it profess to be godless, but the very founder of that doctrine was himself transformed into a god. Harvard wrote, affecting a sort of ironic astonishment,

> Budhuism, in its original form, is probably the only system of undisguised Atheism ever promulgated; and presents the curious anomaly of the founder of a system (who himself denied a Creator) being at length constituted a god by his own disciples. He who rejected all religious worship, as vain and foolish, has now temples reared to his name, in which he is worshipped: and his image is reverenced as a deity, wherever it is seen! (1823: lvi-lvii).

36. Tennent, who in 1859 also published a long history, *Ceylon*, was much admired among the contemporary Ceylonese English-speaking elite for his erudition and his style. He wrote in the progressivist tradition of James Mill and Thomas Macaulay coloured by the Victorianism of his day, and evinced a like-minded contempt for anything from the East. Tennent was reliant in his writing on Sinhala religion on the Wesleyan missionary-scholars D.J. Gogerly and Robert Spence Hardy. There were also Ceylonese scholars upon whom he relied, particularly on matters concerning Sinhala literature. The most prominent among these were James D'Alwis and Maha Mudaliyar Ernest de Saram. Yasmine Gooneratne has suggested that this latter fact gave to Tennent's work a guarded, watchful quality not found in Mill. "Tennent," she writes, "was conscious, as Mill never was, of a literate Ceylonese audience that looked over his shoulder as he wrote their history" (1968: 83).

CHAPTER V

MINOR KNOWLEDGES:
SINHALA BUDDHISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF YAKKU

With this chapter the thrust of my inquiry shifts registers somewhat. In Chapter Four, the concern with the relation between power, knowledge, and Sinhala religion, centered on that authorizing discourse -- colonial evangelical Christianity -- through which Sinhala religion was inaugurated as a visible area of a specifically *Western* knowledge. My concern there was to argue that "demonism" as an identified aspect of Sinhala "religion" emerged as a disturbing element of Western knowledge within the context of a specific colonial problematic -- a problematic articulated through the evangelical pursuit of Christian conversion. Within the discursive economy that this problematic set in motion, I suggested, the "scene" of the production of colonial knowledge about "religion" shifted from what it had been in an earlier British colonial phase, and Sinhala religion came to be represented as double: a thin surface of Buddhism revealing beneath it the deeper, older, more entrenched reality of "demonism."

This kind of investigation I would insist -- an investigation that is, that inquires into the ideological determination of the objects of *anthropological* discourse -- is a necessary endeavour for a critical postcolonial anthropology, and one of course brought forcefully to our attention by Edward Said (1978). However it is important to realize that in unmasking colonial discourse, in making visible the specifically colonial space of a theoretical object, the *anthropological* problem is not thereby exhausted. The interrogation of the *Western* texts in which local practices are represented can only form one axis, if an important one, of an anthropological investigation. At the same time

however, the (anti-essentialist) criticism of Said that it is necessary to avoid the assumption that there is, beyond representation, a "real" East, while legitimate is not itself unproblematic.[1] This kind of argument it seems to me often tends toward an oversimplification of the problems of ethnographic representation. It tends to preclude, for instance, any discussion about the *adequacy* or otherwise of particular attempts at representing societies and cultures. Not all representations are equal or equally admissible. Moreover it retains a location in an argument whose principal preoccupation is *Western* reading and writing. It were as though the whole problem of anthropology, whether positively or negatively, was about the West. And even if we can grant the importance of calling the West's power into question, what we have still failed to appreciate is that authoritative discourse is not restricted to colonial practice; the theme of power and knowledge has a specifiably *local* register as well. And therefore there remain important anthropological questions regarding the local production of local authoritative representation -- religious, for instance -- of what counts as (religious) "reality" and (religious) "truth."

But by the same token it should not be thought that here, at this juncture in my own discourse, I shall be able to, as it were, step outside its narrative and display the actual operations of local schemas. To the contrary. These too are *within* the text. It were as though anthropological writing were ever caught up within the networks of a paradox of representation: telling stories about stories other's tell, and telling stories about the stories it tells about the stories other's tell.[2] The anthropological text might then be understood as a constantly oscillating narrative site, drifting now to this side, now to the other.

In this chapter, then, I so to speak re-site my concern at a *local* level, taking up an inquiry into Sinhala (religious) discourses and practices. As we will see however, the problem that I shall attempt to articulate remains fundamentally one of an analysis of relations between power, knowledge, and Sinhala religion.[3]

The reason is this. If colonial Christian discourse effected, in the nineteenth century, a radical refiguration of relations of (religious) knowledge and power in British Ceylon, as I have in fact argued it did, instituting a dimension of (cultural) difference and (military) force hitherto

unprecedented in the island, it was by no means the first (religious) discourse to constitute itself in a (political) space of authority. A self-consciously Buddhist discourse had, since its ancient "establishment" in Lankā, been much concerned to preemptively authorize what *counted* as the truth of Sinhala religion, and what did not. It occupied a privileged relation to State power, and it was associated with distinct symbols (e.g., the Tooth Relic), institutions (e.g., the Sangha, or Order of Buddhist Monks), and events (e.g., the Äsala Perahara) of public sanction and authority.

Moreover, the *level* of Christian *effects* in British Ceylon was rather different -- more (to use a shorthand) "political" than "cultural," more at the level of "colonial," than "local," knowledge. In other words, in comparison with Buddhism, Christianity had but a slight impact on the formation of Sinhala (religious) identities, and moral dispositions. The Sinhalas are, for the most part, Buddhist, not Christian. The general point I want to make is that the relation between religious discourse and Sinhala religious identity is an *historical*, not an essential, one -- and this is no less the case whether one is talking about Buddhism or Christianity. One important aspect of this *historical* problem turns on the relationship between the discourse of *yakkū* and Sinhala Buddhism. And it is this relationship that is my primary focus in this chapter.

I shall examine some aspects of the anthropological problem of Sinhala Buddhism. In so doing I will focus on Gananath Obeyesekere's early essay, "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism" (1963). The distinction between the great tradition of the town and elite, and the little tradition of the village and peasant, has of course now become a much employed schema for the anthropological analysis of religion. Obeyesekere's essay, trying to advance beyond the limitations of this schema, remains in my estimation the most important attempt to conceptualize Sinhala Buddhism as an object of an anthropological analysis. My concern, I should stress, will not be to criticize Obeyesekere's argument, but rather to try to understand the debate into which it inserts itself and the particular resolutions it proposes. This is necessary because my main concern is to understand why, in the anthropology of Sinhala religion, an *historical* approach has posed the kinds of conceptual difficulties it has. A properly historical approach, I will argue, should enable us to ask hitherto neglected questions about the relations between power and

knowledge in the Siṅhala Buddhist tradition. To illustrate my point I will inquire into the problem of the discourse of yakkū in relation to the "establishment" of Buddhism in Lankā.

The Great/Little Tradition Debate Revisited

In writings about Siṅhala Buddhism there is often an implicit counterpositioning of Buddhism and Christianity such that the former, Buddhism, is represented as the "true" or authentic religion of the Siṅhalas, and the latter, Christianity, as an "alien" or imposed religion, the religion of the (erstwhile) colonizers. Both are acknowledged to have originally been "foreign" to Lankā, the one from India, the other from Europe, but the Siṅhalas are typically thought of as having *adopted* Buddhism, as though from below, whereas they were *subjected* to Christianity, as though from above. There is, of course, a more or less discernible politics served by this opposition. It is a plainly "anti-colonial" strategy of Siṅhala Buddhist representation, and one that has in fact a quite determinate historical location. It emerged in the late nineteenth century in the Great Buddhist Revival that explicitly defined itself in opposition to the Christianity of British colonialism (Malalgoda 1976). The rhetorical construction of the idea of the authenticity of Buddhism to the Siṅhalas enacts a powerful Siṅhala fable -- the great founding narrative of the lion race (Siṅhala) and the civilizing of Lankā by Buddhism (see Gunawardana 1976). It should be clear that the problem I want to identify here is not about the use of this idea *as* political strategy. Rather it is that this opposition often tends to obscure *in systematic discourse* -- and this is what I am particularly concerned to emphasize here -- the historical character of the Siṅhala Buddhist tradition itself.

Nowhere perhaps is this problem of "history" in the scholarly analysis of Siṅhala Buddhism more evident than in the anthropological debate regarding the proper conception of the relationship between Buddhism and popular religious practices. The Western inception of this distinction in nineteenth century colonial Christian discourse about "demonism" has already been discussed (see Chapter Four). What I am concerned to examine here is the more recent *anthropology* of Siṅhala religion in which this distinction operates. As I shall argue, the anthropological analysis of the relation between Buddhism and popular belief has largely been ahistorical and functionalist in character.[4] What has preoccupied this not inconsiderable body of work (e.g., Ames 1964a, 1964b,

1966; Leach 1962; Obeyesekere 1963, 1966; Gombrich 1971) is the attempt to reconcile the seeming contradiction between a radical ascetic discourse of other-worldly salvation (represented by Theravada Buddhism) on the one hand, and a popular discourse of this-worldly gratification (represented by the propitiation of supernaturals) on the other. These attempts, to be sure, have by no means been identical (e.g., Ames 1964a and Obeyesekere 1963). But what is interesting to note here is that whereas in the progressivist historicism of nineteenth century evangelical discourse, the story of Sinhala religion was cast as one of an antagonism which ended in Buddhism's dismal failure to overthrow the reigning worship of devils, modern anthropology takes refuge in a cautious functionalist allegory according to which Buddhism has not so much failed as *adjusted*, making allowances at various levels of its doctrine and practice for the indispensable role played by the supernaturals in ministering to the compelling worldly affairs of their constituents.

Now obviously I am not refuting the argument that Buddhism has been, and indeed is still being, transformed (See Malalgoda 1976; Gombrich 1988; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988). To the contrary. This is precisely the substance of my concern. However I shall wish to critically examine this functionalist problematic in which the relation between Buddhism and popular religion is cast, and to ask, specifically with regard to the discourse of yakkū, whether it is not possible to introduce an *historical* perspective -- one that is irreducible to the narrative of nineteenth century historicism.

In anthropological discourse, the debate about the proper conception of the relation between Buddhism and popular Sinhala belief has typically turned on the theme of the so-called Great versus Little Tradition, a theme whose influence derives in large part from Robert Redfield's *Peasant Society and Culture* (1956). While it is not necessary to outline Redfield's argument here, it might be useful to recall that the theoretical significance of *Peasant Society and Culture* -- and of the conceptual distinctions between great and little traditions and great and little communities, that it introduced -- was that it emerged in the 1950s as part of the post-war attempt in anthropology to enlarge its attention to the analysis of "peasant" as opposed to "primitive" societies. If "primitive" societies had been studied as relatively autonomous, self-contained social formations (so went the thrust of argument of Redfield, Melville Herskovits, Julian Steward, and others), this was not the

case with "peasant" societies which had necessarily to be understood in their interconnection with the larger "civilizations" of which they were a part.[5]

Certainly the most nuanced and suggestive attempt to think about Siṅhala religious discourse and practice in terms of a critical reformulation of the Great/Little Tradition metaphor is that of Gananath Obeyesekere (1963, 1966). His seminal essay, "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism" (1963), is still unsurpassed more than a quarter of a century after its pointed intervention in the debate about religion in Buddhist societies of South and South-East Asia. This essay, it seems to me, provides a particularly useful textual vantage (more so perhaps than even later essays) from which to think about the anthropology of Siṅhala religion because its deliberately conceptual character is worked out precisely in the attempt to reformulate -- at a specific theoretical juncture -- this anthropological problem.

In this essay, as we know, Obeyesekere is concerned to take issue with a compartmentalizing conception of Siṅhala religious practice in terms of "levels" or "strata" -- "the image being that of horizontal layers, one on top of the other" (ibid.: 141). Important to note is that in this kind of conception, Obeyesekere, anticipating in fact our own argument in the previous chapter, himself discerns elements of a missionary fable couched in terms of a curiously lingering "animism." As he writes,

> The image of cultural layers has led ir turn to the notion of a supernatural or "animistic" residue. The bogey of "animism" has long haunted missionaries and intellectuals interested in peasant communities in South Asia. To most people, the practices and beliefs of the village seemed flagrantly to violate the ideologies of the great tradition of the area. Although subscribing nominally to a great tradition, these people were "animists." Rarely was the term animism clearly defined; it became a convenient label under which one could subsume beliefs or customs he did not fully comprehend or was impatient with.... The social scientists wedded to the image of cultural layers have perpetuated the "animistic myth"; the residue of beliefs and rituals which could not be subsumed under a single great tradition or traditions were conveniently lumped together as animism, or supernaturalism (ibid.).

Against this kind of view Obeyesekere argues cogently that, at least "synchronically" and "behaviorally" (i.e., "from the actor's standpoint"), such dichotomies as Buddhism/animism, and Hindu deities/Siṅhala Buddhism, are neither tenable nor indeed relevant since observably Siṅhala people participate in a continuum of religious practices conceived within a "framework" of

Buddhism. Obeyesekere, it is well to stress, does not want to abandon the Great/Little Tradition metaphor so much as to reconceptualize it systemically. To be useful to a Sri Lankan religious context, he maintains, the metaphor needs to be rethought in terms of a distinction between a Great Tradition of Theravada Buddhism (Pāli texts, temples, monks) and a Little Tradition of Sinhala Buddhism. This latter, consisting of the practices of lay villagers (and forming the typical domain of ethnographic description), is to be understood as a culturally integrated "whole" structured by an hierarchically organized pantheon.

> As we see it, in any civilization there is a great tradition and a great community, and on the other hand, many peasant societies or little communities. In Ceylon, the religious great tradition of the civilization is Theravada Buddhism, with its corpus of Pali texts, places of worship, and a great community of monks. The doctrines of Theravada Buddhism are embodied in this corpus, and their expositors are the Buddhist order of monks. But what about the little community or the peasant society, which is after all the focus of anthropological inquiry? Could we view its culture as compounded of a great tradition and a little tradition? Methodologically, nothing is gained by approaching the religion as Buddhist in a great traditional sense. It is best to see what the existent reality is, for it is too much to hope that the speculations of orthodoxy would be the equivalent of the whole or part of the religious tradition of the masses, whether of the village or the town (ibid.: 141-142).

He then goes on to suggest that,

> It would then be desirable to approach the religion of the Burmese or Thai impersonally or holistically, simply as Thai or Burmese Buddhism, and the religion of the Sinhalese as Sinhalese Buddhism. Viewed in this perspective, Thai or Sinhalese Buddhism is the little tradition -- that is, the religion of the masses (little community) in these countries, whereas the great tradition of Theravada Buddhism is really the religion of the greater community of monks, intellectuals, and scholars. Such a conceptual separation has its utility, for it follows from this line of thinking that the religions of the masses in these countries may be vastly different from each other, whereas the great tradition they all share (Theravada Buddhism) is the same (ibid.: 142).

Sinhala Buddhism then, as Obeyesekere argues, is a "single religious tradition." And the remainder of the essay is devoted to demonstrating the integrated character of this tradition. For example he shows that the Sinhala "theory of causation" is articulated at a number of interrelated levels, drawing on the great tradition concept of *kamma*, as well as non-great tradition concepts of astrological, demonological, and divine causality.

This is perhaps the central argument: the main problem with the Buddhism/animism dichotomy, Obeyesekere maintains, is that it "results in a failure to see the religious tradition of a people as a coherent whole" (ibid.: 146). The heterogeneity of Sinhala religious discourse and

practice he therefore proposes is underlined by a "core of shared meanings" or a "common cultural idiom" that gives to the whole culture a cohesion and unity. As one might put it, it is not (Theravada) Buddhism that determines Sinhala religion so much as the *idiom* of Sinhala culture that determines the character of a properly or distinctively Sinhala Buddhism. This idiom, to be sure (that of "salvation" for instance) is in some sense derived from the great tradition, but it is always "refashioned to fit the peasant world view" (ibid.: 153). It is by invoking this concept of cultural unity -- "a shared commonality of meanings which define the central values of the people and constitute their governing ethos" (ibid.) -- I would suggest, that Obeyesekere succeeds in transcending the Buddhism/animism dichotomy.[6]

One can hardly overemphasize the importance for the anthropology of Sinhala religion of this intervention and conceptual remapping that Obeyesekere undertakes. It is one however which (despite the fact that it is a much cited text) has generally gone unrecognized. And this for the reasons pointed to in the two previous chapters regarding the chronic failure of anthropology to critically examine the ideological conditions and implications of its discourse. The anthropology of Sinhala religion has to this point (and Obeyesekere gives examples relating to Thai and Burmese Buddhism as well) been defined in terms of the essentially colonial Christian idea that Sinhala religion consists of two separable parts, one "Buddhist," and the other "animist." And these two parts are thought to occupy a curiously hierarchical relation to each other. In two senses: Firstly, Buddhism is associated with the religion of the elite, the intellectuals, and animism with the religion of the peasant, the unlearned. This assumption of course replays the familiar colonial assumption that Buddhism was ethically higher, historically more recent, and therefore more civilized than animism. Secondly, animism is designated the "real" religion of the Sinhala masses, and Buddhism but a superficial veneer to which people had only a nominal allegiance. This assumption similarly replays the colonial conception that Buddhism had never been able to win a real place in the heart of the Sinhalas. It is these entrenched colonial views of non-Western (and indeed non-Christian) practices that Obeyesekere's essay at once unmasks and displaces. And by arguing that the religion of the Sinhalas constitutes a "single tradition" of Sinhala Buddhism linked but not reducible to

Theravada Buddhism, the image of authentic and inauthentic layers of religion through which the object of Siṅhala religion has been constructed is replaced by one of cultural cohesion.

My own concerns, as I have stated, are historical. This is because what I find important to try to understand is the relation between religious power and religious knowledge. More specifically, my concern is that the representation of Siṅhala religion as constituting a single tradition consisting of systemically integrated aspects tends to preclude an analysis of the theme of power and knowledge in Siṅhala religion. And the questions that I have in mind have to do with the general problem of the *formation* and *authorization* of specific Siṅhala religious knowledges and specific Siṅhala subjectivities. Accordingly I will attempt to draw out some further implications of Obeyesekere's essay.

In making his argument, Obeyesekere sharply criticizes what he sees as "historical-diffusionist" approaches which, in their preoccupation with the "origins" of contemporary religious symbols, confuse historical with behavioral perspectives. As he puts it,

> It is certainly legitimate (and often necessary) to study the origin of various beliefs in a given religious tradition, but in doing so one must maintain a strictly historical perspective. In confusing the historical dimension with the behavioral, these writers [i.e., those who speak about such things as Hindu deities in Sinhalese Buddhism] have posed a fundamental methodological dilemma (ibid.: 140-141).

The criticism is important because Obeyesekere is attempting to separate out levels of conceptual confusion in the anthropology of cultural phenomena, the confusion between how social practices come to be as they are or come to be composed of their distinctive elements (the problem of historical origins), and how individuals in a specific social setting observably conduct their lives (the problem of the integration of social functions). It is interesting however that the historical problem in Siṅhala Buddhism is not thereby resolved. For I want to note that in his own essay, in which it is *function* and not *history* that is the defining theoretical concern, the *historical* problem emerges again and again, sometimes marginally sometimes not. For example, when Obeyesekere speaks about the important concept *varan* (warrant) as enabling the "*incorporation* of a supernatural being *into* the Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon," or when, in the same breath, he goes on to refer to the "*proselytization* of 'non-Buddhist' supernaturals" who accept "the suzerain position of the Buddha in the pantheon" (ibid.: 146; emphasis added), or again, when he states unambiguously that,

> Sinhalese Buddhism cannot be equated with Theravada. Instead it should be seen historically as a fusion and synthesis of beliefs derived from Theravada with other non-Theravada beliefs to form one integrated tradition" (ibid.),

is there not an allusion to, or indeed a positive evocation of, a *process* whereby supernatural beings are "incorporated" into a Siṅhala Buddhist pantheon in which the Buddha has *been secured* a "suzerain position"? For what these passages allude to, evoke, but do not really specify, is the image of an historical intervention by which a now unreadable past (populated by anonymous figures, and crossed by irretrievable discourses and practices) was *reconstituted* in/as a (Siṅhala) Buddhism; *and*, a radical disparity of power in the confrontation of these knowledges which eventually *authorized* and *secured* the Buddha's "presidential status."

Yet Obeyesekere's essay does explicitly raise the question of religious authority. Indeed the concept *varan* (warrant) is central to the argument he outlines precisely inasmuch as it is one of those "mechanisms," as he puts it, that facilitate the "linking" of elements or levels in the hierarchical structure of the pantheon -- a linking through what he calls a "distribution of power and authority." The argument is in fact crucial to an understanding of popular Siṅhala religious discourse. In Siṅhala Buddhism, it is the Buddha that "is the ultimate repository of power and authority possessed by deities and demons; these latter have their power relegated to them by the Buddha. In other words, these beings have a *varan* or 'warrant' from the Buddha to accept sacrifices from humans and bring relief from their woes" (ibid.: 145). Thus the malign figures, yakkū, are linked to the Buddha through the concept of *varan* (as indeed through others, such as *anaguna* or "authoritative efficacy"). The idea of a delegated authority, Obeyesekere continues (and it is this that is critical to our question),

> is surely an attempt made by Sinhalese Buddhism to meet a great-traditional assertion: the demons, by virtue of the supremacy of the law of universal causation (karma), have no real power. Sinhalese Buddhism, like any other institutional religion, could not dispense with supernatural beings possessed with power (or capacity to do good or ill), and it meets the doctrinal challenge by stating that these beings do not intrinsically have power but derive it directly or indirectly from the Buddha (ibid.).

The question that I might raise here, however, is the following: why should "Sinhalese Buddhism" *need* to "meet a great-traditional assertion" about the proper status and character of demons? Or what precisely does it mean to say that Siṅhala Buddhism was unable to "dispense with

supernatural beings possessed with power" and therefore had to state that this power was derived from the doctrinally authorized source, the Buddha? Indeed Obeyesekere himself points us toward the answer when he alludes to the question of "institutional religion." In other words I am trying to suggest that the fact that demons have to be *defined* and *represented* as submissive to the Buddha and dependent upon his varan surely implies the *ideological* construction and resolution of a specific danger to Buddhism in Lankā, and *therefore* implies relations of power in the constitution and consolidation of the *authority* of Siṅhala Buddhism. This, I think, opens up an area of potentially interesting questions for an historically informed anthropological analysis of Siṅhala religion.

It might be suggested therefore that there is an "history" that is not reducible to a preoccupation with the disclosure of originary sources, but rather with what Foucault would want to problematize in terms of the "genealogical" relation between (religious) power and (religious) knowledges. The question here then for an anthropology of Siṅhala Buddhism would have nothing to do with either the historical priority of "Buddhist" as against "Hindu" practices (an issue that, as we have seen, fascinated nineteenth century observers), or the systemic relation between two seemingly contradictory religious practices (the twentieth century anthropological solution), but rather would concern itself with the conditions -- ideological and political -- through which (religious) power authorizes certain (religious) discourses and practices as *true*, as, in this case, authentically and meaningfully "Buddhist." To put it more concretely I am suggesting that the anthropological problem of Siṅhala Buddhism might more usefully be considered in terms of (a) the specific institutional and ideological conditions in which Buddhism emerged in Lankā, conditions which gave to it a particular ecclesiastical character, and a particular relation to the institutions of secular power; (b) the main locus of what counted (and for whom) as authentic Buddhism and as an authentic Buddhist, i.e., the monasteries with their inculcation of programmatic rules of obedience, habits, etc., the learning of specific texts, and so on; and (c) the political and ideological conditions under which Buddhism began to extend the terrain of its authority, to enable it to impinge on, regulate, and direct the formation of specifically Buddhist subjectivities, identities, and dispositions -- process that would not only have brought it into direct contact with already existing practices, but would have forced upon it the necessity of defining the proper place for these practices, devising

strategies for incorporating, transforming, and excluding them from the field it authorized as authentically Buddhist. In short, Sinhala Buddhism, as the object of an anthropological analysis may more usefully be understood in terms of a "discursive tradition."[7]

THE MINOR DISCOURSE OF YAKKU

So far I have tried to show the necessity for an historical approach to the anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism in order to problematize the theme of religion and power. I now want to turn to look more closely at the specifically historical problem involved in the anthropological analysis of the relation between Buddhism and the discourse of yakkū.

The contemporary Sinhala propitiation of yakkū is generally held to be a remnant of pre-Buddhist religious practices in Lankā. In a seminal essay on "pre-Buddhist beliefs" published in 1929, for example, the distinguished Sri Lankan scholar Senarat Paranavitana wrote that,

> when the missionaries of Asoka preached the doctrines of the Enlightened One ... the great majority of the people of Ceylon worshipped nature spirits called yaksas, who were supposed to dwell in rivers, lakes, mountains, trees, etc (1929: 327).

Now I have shown that some notion of "pre-Buddhist" practices forms a more or less implicit part of conceptions of Sinhala Buddhism. I want to suggest however that there are serious conceptual problems with the way these practices are identified, and in the claims that are made regarding the establishment of Buddhism in Lankā. Let me begin with Paranavitana's essay from which I have already quoted. In opening this essay Paranavitana points directly at what he sees as the principal problem involved in the attempt to study "pre-Buddhist" beliefs. He remarks that:

> The religious beliefs that were prevalent among the Sinhalese people before they accepted Buddhism in the third century before Christ have been very little studied. The materials available for such a study are very scanty. From the chronicles, we learn very little on this subject; and even the meagre information they furnish us with has not received the attention that is due (ibid.: 302).

Paranavitana's essay is an attempt to give this "meagre information" that attention due to it. In so doing he examines the "the religious foundations of Pandukabhaya" who founded Anuradhapura in the fourth century B.C. Anuradhapura would later become the sacred city of the Sinhalas. Significantly, Paranavitana mentions that his study is based largely on the account given in the sixth

century chronicle, the *Mahāvamsa*, and he goes on to state his assumption regarding the accuracy of it's account in the following terms:

> Anuradhapura, in later times, became the holy city of the Sinhalese Buddhists; and, as such, the monks must have preserved authentic tradition about its origin. Therefore, it may be assumed that this account in the Mahavamsa is based on facts (ibid.).

Now, surely this is untenable. Certainly one could as plausibly argue the very reverse, namely, that precisely because Anuradhapura became the holy city of the Buddhists there was every reason to distort its history. But the more important point to be made has to do with the assumption of an "authentic tradition" which is "preserved" by the monks. Since the place where that "authenticity" was authoritatively established was their own discourse it would be more accurate to say that the monks *produced* a pre-Buddhist tradition for Anuradhapura in their textual *account* narrated in the *Mahāvamsa* -- a text to which I will return in a moment. (It would be well to recall also that it was the Buddhist *bhikkhus* who introduced writing to Lankā.) So understood, one would not have to assume a pre-Buddhist "authentic tradition" represented accurately or not by the *Mahāvamsa*. Rather one could then be concerned to understand *how*, in what terms, and by producing what kinds of *heterodoxical* spaces, the *Mahāvamsa* constructed this "authentic" pre-Buddhist tradition, and *thereby* constructed its own "authentic" *Buddhist* tradition.

The discourse of yakkū, I wish to argue, is a Siṅhala Buddhist discourse. But this is not because it belongs functionally to the "integrated whole" of an authentic Siṅhala culture, or is part of its unifying "idiom." What I mean to get at is that the Siṅhala discourse of yakkū is constituted within a narrative or narratives whose authoring and authorizing figure is that of the Buddha. There is no question here in other words of speaking of an "originary" discourse of yakkū; one that so to speak stands outside of and *before* the advent of Buddhism in Lankā, that continued alongside it, and that, while eventually incorporated into it, can still be discerned through it. Whatever practices were circulating upon the arrival of Buddhism, and whatever their name, were reinscribed within its terms. The institutional power to make that possible begins at least with Devanampiya Tissa and the "establishment" of Buddhism in the third century B.C.

At the same time, if this discourse of yakkū is a Siṅhala Buddhist discourse, it has to be understood as what might be termed a "minor" or "disseminated" Siṅhala Buddhist discourse. I

mean this in at least two related senses. Firstly, I have in mind a distinction employed by Michel de Certeau (1986) in discussing the work of Michel Foucault. De Certeau suggests that the nineteenth century panoptic practice which Foucault investigates did not constitute the entire space of its social formation. Rather it was one among other practices which for various reasons had become historically privileged. In a similar sense, Siṅhala Buddhism constitutes the discourse of yakkū *as* a marginal discourse. Secondly, they are "minor" in the sense given to this word by Deleuze and Guattari (1986). Not only is the discourse of yakkū marginalized by the canonical practices of Siṅhala Buddhism, but it also in turn "deterritorializes" this authorized religious discourse, "appropriating" its major figures (the Buddha, the *bhikkhus*, the *rahats*) employing them for its own "minor" arts and uses.

The Establishment of Buddhism

"The narratives of the world," wrote Roland Barthes, "are numberless" (1977: 79). And indeed the Siṅhala narratives about those implacable malign figures, yakkū, must be uncountable. But, as Barthes himself suggests, there are narratives, and again there are narratives. There are in Sri Lanka for instance, authorized and authoritative narratives about yakkū, that is narratives which can and do claim, in virtue of their relation to religious power, a preemptive space for their representation of these figures and their relation to the Buddha. And again there are "minor" narratives which while not occupying a position of religious authority nevertheless employ other strategies of representation.

Now the authoritative narrative account of the introduction of Buddhism into Lankā is, of course, to be found in that extraordinary Siṅhala text, the *Mahāvamsa* or Great Chronicle. The *Mahāvamsa* was written, it is estimated, about the sixth century A.D. by a *bhikkhu* named Mahānāma. The *Mahāvamsa* indeed is the principal literary source for the historical reconstruction of ancient Lankā (Perera 1959). All of the major descriptive representations of the early period of Lankā and Buddhism -- i.e., the so-called Anuradhapura period, roughly the third to tenth centuries A.D. -- are based on the account provided by the *Mahāvamsa* (e.g., Rahula 1956; Paranavitana 1959; Geiger 1960). This is important to bear in mind because the *Mahāvamsa* narrates a very particular

kind of account of the founding of Buddhism in Lankā. My intention here, let me emphasize, is not with rewriting the history of Sinhala Buddhism, much less with introducing perhaps new, more convincing material to demonstrate the special place of yakkū in the antiquity of the Sinhalas. In fact although I do think that a reexamination of this history is necessary in terms of the factors I have indicated, my concern here will be a more limited one. I intend only to make one or two observations about the *kind* of representation of the founding of Buddhism the *Mahāvamsa* authorizes, and indicate some of the problems for the anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism that stem from the uncritical adoption of its assumptions.

In an essay on the "introduction" of Buddhism into Lankā Paranavitana (1959) suggests that it is possible that Buddhism was known in Lankā before the arrival of Mahinda in the third century B.C. since there was constant trading contact between India and Lankā (ibid.: 136). However, as he goes on,

> From the evidence now available... it cannot be stated that any considerable group of people were adherents of Buddhism in Ceylon before the middle of the third century B.C., though there might have been, here and there, individuals who had some knowledge of its tenets, and had inclinations towards them. At any rate, there do not appear to have been Buddhist *bhikkhus*, leading a corporate existence, in those early days, and the establishment of the *Sasana* from the Buddhist point of view, is synonymous with the establishment of the *Samgha*. And this took place, for the first time, in the reign of Devanampiya Tissa (ibid.: 137).

Now what is interesting about this passage is not the issue whether or not there were actually Buddhists in Lankā before the establishment there of the Sangha (to determine which in any case depends not simply on more "facts," but on the authoritative discourse by which one *identifies* a true Buddhist), but Paranavitana's assumption that (a) there is an historically *unvarying* "Buddhist point of view" from which it could be held that the establishment of the Sasana[8] was synonymous with that of the Sangha, and therefore that (b) *what* counts as Buddhism and *who* counts as a Buddhist is historically unvarying in Lankā. (Surely the significance for instance of the recent work of Gombrich and Obeyesekere [1988] is that it records contemporary changes in precisely this.) Paranavitana's assumption in otherwords is the ahistorical one that the "tradition" authorized by the Sinhala Sangha and narrated by the *Mahāvamsa* at a particular historical moment (i.e., in the sixth century A.D.) is a unitary and timeless one.

In the *Mahāvamsa* the inauguration of Buddhism into Lankā is represented as, on the one hand, a victory of the Buddha over a race of beings called yakkhas (Pāli form of the Sinhala *yakā*, or *yaksayā*), and on the other, as the rise and struggles of institutionalized religion. In his splendid work, *The Story of Ceylon* (1962), E.F.C. Ludowyk has closely examined the stages through which this epic retrospectively authors the founding episodes of Buddhism in Lankā. Ludowyk's thoughtful work is especially interesting because (perhaps because a literary historian) he is particularly concerned with the *construction* of the *Mahāvamsa's* argument. What he says therefore is instructive and I will make use of his insights.

Ludowyk suggests that in these founding episodes, in which we are given to believe that the inaugural moment of Buddhism in Lankā is to be traced to Mahinda's arrival in the island at Asoka's behest in the mid-third century B.C., "*more than the introduction of a new religion* to Ceylon is at issue" (ibid.: 44. Emphasis added). From the consecration of Tissa (250-210 B.C.) as King by the Mauryan Emperor Asoka (269-232 B.C.) to the latter's exhortation to the former to accept the "religion of the Sakya son," to Mahinda's mission to Lankā and the instantaneous conversion, first of King, then gods, court, and people, to the King's donation of a park as the physical site of the new religious order, what is most noteworthy is that the *Mahāvamsa* is less concerned with the probable impact made by the new doctrine on the people at large, than to inscribe an intrinsic connection between Buddhism and (State) power. The popular idea that Sinhala people simply flocked to Buddhism is obviously implausible (though scholars accept it), or rather it functions within the authoritative tradition inaugurated by the *Mahāvamasa* (though interestingly one that it marginalizes in to its own narrative project). What is at issue in the *Mahāvamsa*, Ludowyk (quoting Rahula 1956) maintains, is the establishment of a *State* religion -- that is to say, the *fixing* of Buddhism in Lankā in an inaugural register of power. As Ludowyk cautions in this immensely illuminating reading,[9] it is necessary to keep firmly in mind that the narrative and dialogue of this founding discourse were "framed" by a "later age," by "the commentator's clear understanding of the particular position of Buddhism in Ceylon at his own time" (ibid.: 48) -- that is to say,

> when the early stages of missionary zeal and conversion were long past, [and] when what was important was not a message which the hearer had to understand, but institutionalized religion which had left its mark on the history of the island for over seven hundred years (ibid.: 49).

One of the problems faced by the *bhikkhu* chroniclers who were urged -- in the fourth and sixth centuries -- to fix the great establishment of Buddhism in Lankā in the form of a *written* narrative (in a form, that is, that would self-evidently be open to future, and thus, in a critical way, indeterminate, readings), was the question of how to represent the relationship between Buddhism and those discourses it sought to displace as authoritative ideology. The great episode of the subjugation of yakkhas (Pāli) by the Buddha (and that too, subsequently, by that irrepressible and inaugural Siṅhala Prince, Vijaya) form a sort of fable of the rise of Siṅhala Buddhist civilization. The yakkhas, those "frightful, cruel, bloodthirsty" beings, figures of an almost unutterable depravity, are confronted and vanquished by that supreme figure of Salvation, Compassion, and Light: the Buddha. It is of course an old story. And the triumphalist and unilinear narrative form of the epic secures from the outset a teleological guarantee of the Civilizing Mission of Buddhism in this "most excellent island of Lankā." And yet what is interesting is that even the Canon is, on this score, marked by certain crucial incongruities.

The two early chronicles, the *Dipavamsa* or Island Chronicle (written about the early fourth century A.D.), and the *Mahāvamsa* (written, as I have said, two hundred years later, in the sixth century A.D.), are well known to be unequal in their attempts to construct the Great Story of the subjugation of the yakkhas and the founding of Buddhism in Lankā.[10] But this has almost always been taken to be mostly a technical artefact, a discrepancy at the level of maturity of style and polish. "The defects of the Dip[avamsa]," writes Wilhelm Geiger, one of the most eminent scholars of Siṅhala Buddhism, "which naturally neither can nor should be disputed, concern the outer form, not the contents" (1912: ix). Instructively too, the *Mahāvamsa* itself adopts this strategy of self-promotion, ascribing to the earlier text an ungainly and repetitious character. Writes the author,

> That (Mahavamsa [i.e., the chronicle now known as the Dipavamsa]) which was compiled by the ancient (sages) was here too long drawn out and there too closely knit; and contained too many repetitions. Attend ye now this (Mahavamsa) that is free from such faults, easy to understand and remember, arousing serene joy and emotion and handed down (to us) by tradition... (1912: 1).

But it needs to be considered whether this seeming technical difference may rather mark the *historical* distance travelled between the two chronicles in their attempts -- in respectively given institutional and ideological conditions -- to emplot, in as univocal a narrative as possible, the authoritative establishment of Buddhism over existing (perhaps recalcitrant) indigenous practices.

Let us now briefly consider the narrative accounts of the subjugation of yakkū and establishment of Buddhism in Lankā provided by these two Chronicles. I shall compare them with each other, and then with two narratives I collected in the field, one concerned with the subjugation of yakkū, and the other with origins of the arts of gurukama. The narratives are all concerned to represent the relation between Buddhism and yakkū.

The account of the subjugation of yakkhas in the *Dipavamsa* (1959) is characterized by a noticeable ambivalence and indecision regarding the conflict between the Buddha and yakkhas. The narrative appears to advance and retreat. In open hostility, the Buddha, having, with his All-Seeing vision, caught sight of Lankā languishing under the tyrannical inhabitance of yakkhas, determines that these "detestable" beings are to be "rooted out" in order to "cause men to live there." But then a certain unexplained conciliation prevails and a sort of reprieve is granted so that the yakkhas might live out the remainder of their lives. Then, with no indication that these lives have been so lived out, the Buddha, having again caught sight of Lankā, becomes resolute and recalcitrant. The yakkhas are subjected to such severe treatment that they flee. But then another note of conciliation is sounded when the Great Sage pauses in all his munificence to consider ways of giving pleasure to these beings, and alights upon the convenient and economical idea of transferring them to another island. But this compassionate moment too is short-lived, for no sooner has the Buddha decided to expel the yakkhas from Lankā than a starkly condemning picture of them is painted, the Buddha himself calling them "wicked hosts" before summarily dispatching them. But yet again, this vehemence is curiously compromised by the mood of festivity and satisfaction with which the yakkhas are made to take up their new abode.

The later *Mahāvamsa* will have none of this vacillation. In contrast to the *Dipavamsa*, it opens with a shorter more compact and straight-forward account of the Buddha's subjugation of the

yakkhas. The Buddha here is full of vigour and might. In the ninth month of his buddhahood, "the Conqueror" "himself set forth for the isle of Lanka" (1912: 3), the future home of the Doctrine, with the express purpose of driving away the yakkhas. He goes directly to their customary meeting-place where "there was a great gathering of (all) the yakkhas dwelling in the island" (ibid.). Here, "hovering in the air over their heads," "he struck terror to their hearts by rain, storm, darkness, and so forth" (ibid.: 3-4). As a result the yakkhas are overwhelmed by fear and beseech the Buddha to relieve them of their distress. The Buddha, that "Vanquisher [and] destroyer of fear," responds by requesting a place to sit, whereupon the awed and distraught yakkhas themselves offer up the whole island to the Great Sage. Spreading his rug, the Buddha causes a fire to surround it daunting the yakkhas still further with its "burning heat" (ibid.: 4). While so affirming his superior power, the Buddha causes the "pleasant" neighboring island of Giri (*Giridīpa*) to come alongside Lankā, whereon, and without further ado, he "settled" the yakkhas, and returned it to its former place.

The account is not only sparer and less long-winded than that contained in the *Dipavamsa.* More importantly, the attitude of the Buddha constructed in the *Mahāvamsa* preserves an unambivalent singleness of purpose completely lacking in the earlier Chronicle. The *Mahāvamsa*, too, has nothing to say with regard to the character of these beings, whereas the *Dipavamsa* waxes energetically on their maleficent nature. (Interestingly also, there is in the *Mahāvamsa's* account of this episode a conspicuous absence of any reference to the Buddha's likeness to a yakkha.) The entire episode is narrated in a lower key and flatter tone. It tells in short a more convincing story of power and civilization. So much so indeed that one is left with the impression that the later Chronicle constructs the image of a Buddhism with a surer and more unequivocal estimate of its capacity to displace as authoritative ideology whatever discourses and practices it encountered in Lankā.

This, at any rate, is the canonical narrative. Epic in its structure, it may be said to authorize the canonical representation of the installation of Buddhism as the true religion of the Sinhalas. In so doing it attempts to preempt the space of potentially competing discourses. However the *Mahāvamsa* cannot be read as constituting the *entire* space of Sinhala conceptions of yakkū. There are other discourses, "minor" or, "disseminated" discourses that have remained, in de Certeau's

sense, historically "unprivileged." The discourse of yakkū is perhaps such a discourse, one that generates other narratives, differently cast, differently emplotted, differently flavoured, which form part of a "minor" local knowledge. One such narrative is the following, the more elaborate version of two similar stories related to me by two different persons regarding this inaugural event -- the Buddha's subjugation of yakkū in Lankā. I do not know how widely known it is. It was told by the *kapurāla*, and erstwhile *ädura*, S.A. Piyasena, a man of a seemingly inexhaustible store of stories.

The story as told, was situated in the context of an exhaustive narrative recalling, in turn, the birth of the hosts of yaksayās (*yakṣā samuhaya*) in the Great City of Visāla (*Visāla Mahā Nuwara*)[11]; their destructive rampages; the inability of the gods (*dēvas*) and godlings (*dēvatāvas*) to put an end to this reign; their appeal to the would-be Buddha or Bodhisattva (Sin. Bōsat) then in the divine world (*divya lōkaya*) called Tav Tissa; the latter's decision to be born in the human world (*naralōkaya*) and his selection of a suitable mother and father to be born to, and a suitable place, day, and time; the celebrated three dreams of the Great Queen Maya, and the Brahmanas equally celebrated interpretations of them; and the birth of Prince Siddhartha who, in time, becomes Gautama, the fourth Buddha in the current Bhadrakalpaya (the period in which the doctrine of a Buddha prevails). It is at this point then that our story begins, for the *dēvas* and *dēvatāvas* again approach the now Enlightened One exhorting him to intervene upon the desecration being wrought in Lankā by the yaksayās. And the Buddha agrees to do so.

This is the story:

> The Buddha, getting ready to go to Mayyanganaya[12] to subjugate the *yaksayās*, asked who will go with him. He called Viṣṇu. But Viṣṇu exclaimed, "Appo!, we can't go to the place where those *yaksayās* are!"[13] Then he called the Mahabrahmaya, but he too exclaimed, saying, "Appo! I can't go." The gods (*dēvas*) and godlings (*dēvatāvas*) too, having been called, said they couldn't go. Then the Great Venerable rahat Ananda[14] got ready quickly saying, "I am coming."
>
> The Buddha then took two robes (*sivuru sangala*) and the alms bowl (*patraya*). At that point, the god Sakra also got ready, saying, "I too am coming." He took the book and

the umbrella. With Ananda too taking an alms bowl[15] they all set off for the place where the *yaksayās* lived.

Seeing them coming, the senior *yaksayās* said to the junior yaksayās, "Look at those three people going along the street below (*pata vidiye*). Seize them and bring them here to be eaten (*Allanvara mehāṭa kanna*)!" But when these junior *yaksayās* looked they recognized that these weren't simply three ordinary people. Those *yaksayās*, having been born in previous Buddhist epochs (*Buddha sāsanaya*), had heard sermons (*bana*) of Buddhas. And although the period of suffering the effects of their wrong-doing (*pav*) had not yet elapsed, upon seeing, these *yaksayās* realized that this was no one but a Buddha.[16]

[The Buddha asked them:] "Why did you come?

[The *yaksayās* replied:] "We have brought a message (*panividaya*) from the godling Rakusa[17] that the three of you are to come."

At that point [the Buddha] said: "Good, we will come." Having dispatched those people, the Buddha asked Ananda, "Are you going?" But Ananda replied, "I can't." [The Buddha then asked Sakra,] "Sakra, are you going?" But Sakra also replied, "I can't." So the Buddha said, "Then not a soul must come. I will go simply in the costume of a decrepit old man (*mahalu vesayen naki golahadi*)." Then the Buddha created the costume of an old man, an old man who has become decrepit, wears rags (*varahali*), and carries a walking stick (*hamitiya*) like a beggar (*hinganna*).

Then [that is, having gone, the Buddha] said, "Anē *yaksayās*, in order to receive divine possessions in the divine world, seven divine possessions in the seven divine worlds, and human possessions in the human world, give us a little space for today."[18] So said the old man (*mahalla*). "Give the three of us a little space for today."

At that point the *yaksayā* asked [the Buddha], "From whom are you asking like this for lodging?! Do you know who I am?"[19]

So the Buddha asked a second time, "Anē *yaksayās*, in order to receive divine possessions in the divine world, seven divine possessions in the seven divine worlds, and human possessions in the human world, give us lodging for today."

The *yaksayās* are [by this time] becoming increasingly angry, and make to hit him [i.e. the Buddha] with dead bodies.

The lodging is still not given. So the old man asked a third time, "Anē *yaksayās*, in order to receive Brahma possessions in the Brahma world, seven divine possessions in the seven divine worlds, and human possessions in the human world, give us lodging for today."

Now it had become a little clearer to those [junior] *yaksayās*. The old man had said the same thing three times using the same words. So the power was being recovered little by little (*pava ṭika ṭika honda venna enne*).[20] It became a little bit valid due to the authoritative efficacy (*anaguna*) [of the Buddha].[21]

At that point, the chief godling, Rakusa, said to those *yaksayās*, "Tell him to stay in a corner. Having allowed him [to stay], chase and beat him with a switch in the morning."[22] *He* did not know the power of the Buddha.

So they then gave [the Buddha, Ananda, and Sakra] permission to stay (*inna avasara dunna*).

At that point [the Buddha thought], "Now I want to show my power to these people.[23] It is the power of these people that has been shown to me as many times as this. Now I want to show my power." Then the Buddha resolved (*adistāna kalā*) that the rocks of Rock Sakwala (*Sakwala Gala*) should be become hot (*rat venna*).

"Ammata udu!"[24] [the *yaksayās* exclaim]. The rocks having become hot, they can hardly stand. They can't endure it (*inna bä*). [The ground] is ablaze because of the increasing heat. "Budu ammō!"[25] [the *yaksayās* exclaim again]. These *yaksayās* attempted to go through the air (*udin yanna bäluva*). But they can't go through the air (*udin yannat ba*). They attempted to go around (*vatin yanna bäluva*). But around is also ablaze (*vatet gini*). They can neither see nor go (*pēn nä yanna bä*). And now when they looked again at the place where the old man had been he is no longer there. When they looked up the old man was above like a golden statue.

At that point the *yaksayās* payed obeisance (*namaskāra karanava*) keeping their hands at the top [i.e., clasped just above the head]. And they said [pleading], "Anē Swamini,

we are the people who did wrong in those days, who did wrongs formerly. Because we did wrongs in this soul too we couldn't know that you are Gautama Buddha. Because of that, for the ill that happened due to us, don't end our lives.[26] We are obedient to you Lord." Crying, they repeated this three times.

Then the Buddha, smiling (*hinā velā*), said [reprimandingly], "Wrongdoing *yaksayās*, don't do wrongs (*pāpakarma yaksayō pav karanna epā*)! I am not giving you authority until the period for which wrongs have been done has elapsed."

Then god Sakra was sent for and he brought a handful of rice produced from hill-paddy (*alavi*). The rice was cooked, and a cone of blue rice (*nil bat goṭuvak*), a cone of red rice (*ratuven bat goṭuvak*), and a cone of yellow rice (*kahavārnayen bat goṭuvak*) were made. Having placed the seven cones of rice separately, this sanction (*vivaranaya*) was issued [to the *yaksayās* by the Buddha]: "Until the 5,500 years of my epoch (*sāsanaya*) have elapsed, if a *yakṣa ädura*, a *yakṣa väḍakaruva*, or a *yakṣa kaṭṭāḍiya*[27] came and uttered my Authority and the Name, or even if a *rēphaya*, a *pāpilla*, an *alapilla*, an *ispilla*,[28] or a character was uttered, take these roasted offerings (*dola pulutu*) which are being given, and give up (*at harinava*) entirely the illness (*leḍa*) that has been made by you.

That sanction having been issued, those *yaksayās* were put into the island of Yak Giri (*yak giri diva-ina*), into the city of Yak Giri (*yak giri patanaya*).

The narrative enacts a popular version of a Siṁhala story about the confrontation between the Buddha and yakkū. The power of the Buddha is always most vividly represented in his confrontation with, and victory over, yakkū. As in the canonical narrative of the *Mahāvamsa* it is story about the defeat of yakkū by the Buddha. But noticeably it is one performed through a very different strategy of representation. The story is not plotted as an epic in which the Buddha is cast as the leading figure and force in the great teleologically assured establishment of Civilization. This recall is the tropic structure of the *Mahāvamsa*. The latter is an undisguised master-narrative and that of course is consistent with the institutional and ideological *position* from which it is enacted --

the position of the state extending the political terrain of its authority. Piyasena's minor narrative does not occupy any such relation with secular power.

In this narrative Lankā is represented as being overrun by yakkū. The Buddha is asked by the gods to subjugate them, no doubt because they themselves are incapable of accomplishing this. Indeed they do not even want to accompany the Buddha on the mission. Only the Buddha therefore is ultimately able to triumph against yakkū. In embarking on his mission however, the Buddha goes *in cognito*, as a beggar looking for a night's lodging. In contrast to the narrative of the *Mahāvamsa* he does not present himself directly, transparently. Rather he assumes a disguise to in order to dramatize his power over yakkū. The junior yakkū, knowledgeable about the Doctrine from previous Buddhas, suspect that this must indeed be a Buddha, but nevertheless first attempt to attack him with the dead bodies they have accumulated round and about them. Dead bodies are of course the mark of their unworthiness. When at last the Buddha decides to unveil himself by direct use of a show of spectacular power he immediately secures their obeisance. In proscribing their wrong-doing (i.e., their cannibalism) however, the Buddha nevertheless allows them a restricted and diminished power. They can no longer kill and eat people (as Rakusa and company wanted to do with the Buddha), but only make them ill. And to this are attached conditions, a whole area of sanctions. According to the Buddha of this narrative, if a *yakädura* utters his Name or his Authority, the yakkū are bound to accept the proffered offerings and, as they say, "give up" the illnesses they caused.

The point that I want to emphasize here is that this is not the "Buddha" of the *Mahāvamsa*. In this narrative the Buddha figure is appropriated for "minor" uses and practices excluded from the authorized version of Sinhala Buddhism -- specifically those of the yakadura called *gurukama*. And it is this local practitioner of the specialized arts of influencing the ways of yakkū who will invoke and utter the name and authority of the Buddha not, that is to say, the canonically authorized *bhikkhus*.

The direct link between the yakädura and his arts and the Buddha is made more explicit in the following fascinating story told to me by the same kapurāla/ädura, S.A. Piyasena.

The history of the *yaktovil* and the arts of charming (*mantra sāstraya*) is not readily reconstructed. Once again however, there is a story, a *katāva* -- indeed there are perhaps several --

told about the origins of this knowledge and practice. One of them is the following. It is the story about an enigmatic group known as the Issivarayo and Russivarayo.

The story:

In Dambadiva [India] there lived the nine Issivarayo and the nine Russivarayo. They were skilled in the whole arts (*sāstraya*). These eighteen fellows, having bound the knowledge (*vijjava bändala*) and the characters (*akuru bändala*), made these arts (*sāstraya hăduva*). They were written in palm-leaf books (*puskola pot*). They were written separately (*vena venama*), line by line, one by one (*pelin pelaṭa ekeka*).[29]

These Issivarayo and Russivarayo learned the arts of charming by taking and putting together the characters of the *pirit* (protective charms) and *bana* (sermons) of the Buddha. It is that doctrine [i.e., the Buddha's] that made these charms. It is also according to the sermons preached by the Buddha that these fellows made *vedakama*.[30] The Issivarayo and Russivarayo were the original leaders (*mul nāyaka*) in the arts of charming. It was they who taught the arts to the Brahmanas in Dambadiva.

These Brahmanas were coming to this Lankā from Dambadiva to perform *yāgayas* (sacrificial rites) for the Kings. Having performed these *yāgayas*, *hōmas* (fire offering rites), and *sāntiyas* (rites of blessing) for the King, shiploads of gifts (*tagi bōga navganan*), goods (*baḍumuttu*), grainwealth (*dhāna dhaniya*), money (*milamudal*), and cloth (*redi pilli*), were taken away to Dambadiva.

During that time, while this was happening, it occurred to the monk Sri Rahula of Totagamuva, a wise and educated man, that, "having come every day as often as this a great amount of the wealth of this country is taken away. It is our wealth (*ē apē dhānaya*). Because of that I must become learned (*puhun venava*) in this one [i.e., in the arts of charming]. But even though we asked these fellows [i.e., to share this knowledge] they aren't giving, aren't giving anything at all (*mē golangen illuvaṭa denne na, mokutma denne nă*)."

At that point one Vidāgama from Totagamuva called out, "Rahula!" -- that is, this monk Rahula is the disciple (*gōliya*) of this Vidāgama. And the disciple is more skilled in

everything than the teacher.[31] So [Vidāgama] said to the disciple, "Gōlanma, get ready (*lähästi karanna*)! Take the stylus (*panhinda*), palm-leaf books (*puskola pot*), and leaves (*kola*), and tell the Brahmanas to perform these things [i.e., a ceremony]." Then a *yāgaya* was caused to be performed (*kerevva*), a complete *yāgaya*. The monk Rahula then wrote down everything they said and did.

The book that was written was big; a big *yāgaya* book (*yāge visāla potak*). It had been a seven-day *yāgaya*. The *yāgaya* and the book having been finished, the monk from Totagamuva said, "Here, Brahamana, I also have one of those books. I still haven't applied *kalu* (*tavamat kalu mandet nä*).[32] I brought it to see if it really is about this *yāgaya* (*mē yāgaya da kiyalā balanna genaya kiyalā*)." Having been brought it is shown to the Brahmanas. "This is it!" [they think in dismayed surprise]. Then these Brahamanas saw stars (*mē Brahmanyinta taru penuna*)! They became very ashamed (*visāla lejjāvakaṭa patuna*) and frightened (*baya-unā*). And the monks considered throwing them over the precipice (*mun prāpate danna mēka api karanna onä kiyalā*).

Then the monks in all the temples were told to study what had been written [i.e., about the ceremonies]. And having studied they performed *sāntiyas*, without asking for payment [i.e., as distinct from the practice of the Brahmanas]. Moreover, the monks thought that the power of the Brahmanas should be reduced even more, so the lowest [caste] section, the drum beaters (*bera vayana*) were also instructed in the arts. And it is from that time that the arts of *mantraya* and *vedakama* have existed among us from generation to generation (*paramparāven paramparāvaṭa*).[33]

As in many Siṅhala stories, India/Dambadiva provides the originary setting. A group of eighteen, the artful and resourceful Issivarayo and Russivarayo, extract certain characters (*akuru*) from the discourses of the Buddha. With these they construct another knowledge and practice -- a sort of *para*-Buddhist knowledge and practice. Since the Brahmanas then learned this, note, Buddhism-derived, knowledge from the Issivarayo and Russivarayo, it may be said that what they performed for the Kings of Lankā were already, in some sense, *Buddhist* practices. Thus the

bhikkhus of Lankā (that rightful home of Buddhism) had more claims than one to this knowledge and practice. These unscrupulous Brahmanas were, afterall, also extracting the very wealth of the country!

Here, what is most interesting about this story, is its juxtaposition of perhaps the two most famous poet-monks of fifteenth century Lankā (the so-called Koṭṭe period) -- Sri Rahula Thera of Totagamuva, and Maitreya Thera of Vidāgama. The narrative, its small slips notwithstanding,[34] nicely represents these two poet-monks as teacher and disciple. It would appear however that, while certainly contemporaries, not only were Sri Rahula Thera and Maitreya Thera *not* teacher and disciple, they were, of a sort, irreconcilable antagonists, championing quite opposed opinions about Buddhism and literature. The Koṭṭe period was one in which (Siṅhala) Buddhism was undergoing considerable transformation in the direction of popularization. It was thus also a period of resistance to such change. There were at the time, as Martin Wickremasinghe writes in his valuable study of Siṅhala literature (1948), two major schools of (scholarly) thought on what counted as (Siṅhala) Buddhism: that represented by the Vanavasi Nikaya (or forest-dwelling sect), and that represented by the Gramavasi Nikaya (or village-dwelling sect). "Sri Rahula," maintains Wickremasinghe, "as a leader of the Gramavasi Nikaya did not hesitate to write poetry dealing with the physical charms of women, and he believed in certain pseudo-sciences condemned by the Buddha. He accepted moreover, the worship of gods as part of Buddhist ritual. The monks of the Vanavasi Nikaya, on the other hand, were as vehemently opposed to the worship of gods as to the writing of poetry.... Vidagama was violently intolerant of the superstitious beliefs of the Brahmins" (ibid.: 142). Indeed, as Wickremasinghe continues somewhat later, "It is not unlikely that Vidagama's spirited defense of Buddhism against such intrusions [i.e. the so-called Brahminic practices] was indirectly an attack on Rahula himself" (ibid.: 149).

At any rate be this conflict and the interesting historical question it raises as they may, what I want to emphasize is that the narrative is manifestly more concerned to appropriate these two estimable and unimpeachable "Buddhist" figures to authorize a specifiably "Buddhist" space for the discourse of yakkū. The first practitioners of the arts of *mantraya* were *bhikkhus*, Buddhist monks. (Indeed it is said that some of the most powerful *mantra*-books are still to be found in certain

temples. And moreover, there are, it is said, still *bhikkhus* who practice these arts on a small scale.) But somehow they did not maintain the knowledge. It was passed on to yakäduras who therefore stand in a direct line of descent from the original practitioners of these arts -- *paramparāven paramparāvaṭa*. It is they who preserve and practice these "minor" Siṁhala Buddhist arts.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to argue for an historical approach to the anthropological study of Siṁhala Buddhism. I began by suggesting that the criticism of colonial discourse, important as it is, needs to proceed to a more comprehensive study of authoritative discourse, one that recognizes that there are not only Western but as well local structures of power/knowledge that require critical analysis. One of these structures in Sri Lanka, I proposed, that might be understood in terms of an analysis of authoritative discourse, is Siṁhala Buddhism.

I then went on to suggest that the often implicit representation of Buddhism as the "authentic" religion of the Siṁhalas tends to obscure historical questions about the character of Siṁhala Buddhism, and therefore to leave unproblematized questions about religious authority and power in the construction of Siṁhala Buddhist tradition. Specifically I tried to show how and why the early essay by Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism" (1963), marks such a critical advance on lingering nineteenth century assumptions in the anthropology of religion, and to propose that we use these gains to embark on an historically informed anthropological analysis that does not concern itself with simply identifying the "origins" of religious symbols.

This historical approach, I suggested, would be concerned to understand the construction in Sri Lanka of a Siṁhala Buddhist tradition. It would attempt to show that this tradition is not a unitary one but rather one in which certain kinds of discourses have a particular relation to the institutions of secular power and are therefore authorized as canonical discourses, and others, having no such relation and seeking none, continue to circulate in popular practice as "minor" or nonauthoritative discourses. These "minor" discourses I suggested -- and the discourse of yakkū is one of them -- are part of Siṁhala Buddhist tradition, and, operating within it, appropriate the major

figures of its canon to its own minor uses. I tried to illustrate this by looking at the way in which the relationship between the Buddha and yakkū is represented in canonical and minor narratives.

Notes

1. I am thinking here of Clifford (1988: 260) in particular.

2. This is perhaps the lesson Michel de Certeau teaches us in his brilliant reading of Michel Foucault. He writes: "In order to clarify the relationship of theory with those procedures that produce it as well with those that are its objects of study, the most relevant way would be a *storytelling discourse*. Foucault writes that he does nothing but tell stories ('recits'). Stories slowly appear as a work of displacements, relating to a logic of metonymy. Is it not then time to recognize the theoretical legitimacy of narrative, which is then to be looked upon not as some ineradicable remnant (or a remnant still to be eradicated) but rather as a necessary form for a theory of practices? In this hypothesis, *a narrative theory would be indissociable from any theory of practices*, for it would be its precondition as well as its production" (1986: 192).

3. This theme has been pursued in relation to medieval Christianity by Talal Asad (1983a, 1983b, 1986a, 1987).

4. Kapferer (1983) has attempted to introduce the theme of history into this debate. He is concerned to argue that the Great/Little Tradition "typification" is "largely a construction of the [Sinhala] middle class. It is this which scholars as critics or proponents of the distinction have failed to emphasize" (ibid.: 31). It is a distinction which, as he sees it, emerged during the Buddhist Revival of the late nineteenth century as part of Sinhala middle class ideology. "The movement of Buddhist revitalization was partly responsible for the distinction which many Sinhalese middle class now draw between 'Buddhism' and 'folk religion'" (ibid.: 23). Indeed Kapferer would go further and argue that during the British colonial period the yaktovil was reduced to a largely working class and peasant practice. "Prior to colonial rule," he suggests, "exorcism was probably common among all ranks and classes of Sinhalese" (ibid.: 18). It needs to be noted that, besides the unsubstantiated character of these claims, this is not the sense of the "historical" with which I am concerned.

5. This general turn to the study of "peasant" societies in the period after the Second World War gave rise to other notable and related concepts such as "acculturation," and "syncretism."

6. Michael Ames (1964) offers a very different conception of the object of Sinhala religion, one which, in effect, repeats the old dichotomy.

7. For a discussion of the problem of an anthropology of Islam to which this conception is indebted, see Asad (1986b). Asad has suggested the concept of "discursive tradition." He writes:

> Islam as an object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges (1986a: 7).

And he goes on to propose that,

> A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history (ibid.: 14).

8. For a discussion of this concept in Sinhala Buddhist tradition see Ludowyk (1967: 46-48). Quoting *bhikkhu*-scholar Wolpola Rahula, Ludowyk maintains that the word *sāsana* literally means "doctrine," "teaching," "message," "order." In Sri Lanka however *sāsana* has meant the ecclesiastical structure of Sinhala Buddhism -- i.e., not simply beliefs but more importantly the monasteries, and the organized Order of *bhikkhus*, the Sangha. So that for Sinhala Buddhists, the

words *sāsana* and *āgama* (religion) are virtually synonymous. The point to understand is this that the *Mahāvamsa*, arrogating to itself the space of authoritative statement, inaugurates the discursive tradition in which religion (*āgama*) is defined not in terms of "belief" (as is modern Western Christianity) but in terms of the institutional practices of the ecclesiastical establishment.

9. What is important in Ludowyk is that he reads the *Mahāvamsa* as a literary/historical *text* which employs various tropes and narrative devices to stage an historically located signifying purpose. In contrast, Rahula (1956), whose work is itself of eminent value, is more concerned with a sociohistorical interpretation and recuperation.

10. For a discussion of the Pali chronicle of Sri Lanka see Geiger (1912), and Perera (1961).

11. Very curiously, Piyasena paused at one point to indicate that as far as he knew there was still a Great City of Visāla to be found in South Africa. The idea of yakkū as essentially a cannibalistic species and the powerful well-travelled image of Africa as a land of cannibalism seemed to come together in his mind.

12. A large jungle area crossing what are today the Central and Uva Provinces. It is the scene of many Sinhala stories involving yakkū.

13. "*Appō! apiṭa oyo yakkū inna tanaṭa yanna bäriya kivva.*" "*Appō!*" is an expression of alarm or astonishment.

14. Ananda is the most renowned of the Buddha Gautama's disciples. A *rahat* is a *bhikkhu* (monk) who is but a step away from *nirvana*. They will not be born again, and thus stand beyond the wheel of *samsāra*. For a discussion of these and other Buddhist concepts see Nyanatiloka (1950).

15. Robes, alms-bowl, and umbrella, are of course the distinctive accessories of the village *bhikkhu*.

16. "*Tavama mē pava gevaganna bäri-unāṭa mē yaksayō däkkapu gaman denagatta mē kavaruvat nove budurujānam vahanse kenek bava.*" The passage speaks not only to the idea that having done wrong (*pav*), one must inevitably suffer for a commensurable period, often in a degraded form (generally, the idea of *karma*); but also to the idea that the ability to perceive/know things correctly is intimately connected to a moral register of right/wrong actions.

17. In another version of this story the figure of King Vesamuni (*Vesamuni rajuruvō*) occupies the place of this personage. Vesamuni is of course the celebrated King of the yaksayās.

18. "*Anē yaksayin topaṭa divya lōkaye divya sampattiya sadivya lokaye sadivya sampattiya manusya lōkaye manusya sampattiya labena pinisa adara apiṭa inna navatänak adaṭa denne.*" A beggar's discourse. "*Anē*," is a plaintive expression. Very common in colloquial speech.

19. "*Tō kāgen da mehema navatänak illanne?! Tō dannavay man kavda kiyalā?*" Note that the second person pronoun *tō* carries definite lower status markings, and is used often in this imperative mood.

20. Power, that is, of discernment. See note 16. These yaksayās, recall, had in previous Buddhist epochs heard the Doctrine. Note also, interestingly, that the storyteller uses the English (or, more properly, "Singlish") "power" (phonetically, *pava*), rather than a colloquial Sinhala word such as *balaya*.

21. The Sinhala is, *Poḍḍak anagunayaṭa valanguvela giya*.

22. The Sinhala is, *Onna oya konakin innaya kiyanna ida arala uda ipalin tala tala elavanna.*

23. The Sinhala is, *dān munṭa magē balaya penvanna onä.*

24. An exclamation of distress and surprise.

25. An exclamation of distress and surprise.

26. If their lives were ended there would be no time to do good or virtuous works (*pin*).

27. A *yakṣa ädura*, *yakṣa vädakaruva*, or *yakṣa kaṭṭāḍiya*, is a practitioner of the arts pertaining to yakkū -- i.e. *ädurukama* or *gurukama*.

28. These are Sinhala diacriticals. A *rēphaya* is denoted by the Sinhala sign "ර්" placed above a consonant, and gives the "r" sound in the word *dhārma*. A *pāpilla* is the "foot-piece" or vowel sign placed under a consonant in such characters as "කූ" ("kū"), or "මූ" ("mū"). An *alapilla* is the "side-piece" or vowel sign represented by "ා" placed after a consonant, as in the character "බා" ("bā"). An *ispilla* is the "head-piece" or vowel sign denoted by "ි" placed over a consonant as in the character "මී" ("mī").

29. In another version of this story, one group, the Issivarayo, *wrote* the *mantrayas*, and the other, the Russivarayo, *performed* the various rites and ceremonies. A tidy division of labour.

30. The practices of indigenous healers known as *vedarālas* or *vedamahattayas*.

31. Piyasena explained, rather matter-of-factly, that since a disciple was still studying (*pādam karanava*), and the teacher, by contrast, had long ceased to do so, the former must necessarily be more knowledgeable than the latter.

32. Black substance applied to the surface of the inscribed palm-leaves so as to make the inscription legible.

33. For a different story about the first practitioners of the arts of *gurukama* see Wirz (1954: 22-23).

34. The latter is referred to in the narrative as Vidagama of Totagamuva, both names of villages. Indeed, however, both monks *are* often referred to by these village where the temples with which they are respectively associated are/were located.

CHAPTER VI

THE SINHALA POETICS OF EYESIGHT:
FORMATIONS OF SELF AND THE STRATEGIES OF YAKTOVIL

The burden of the previous three chapters (Chapters Three, Four, and Five) was to critically examine the way in which the Siṁhala discourse of *yakkū* and practice of *yaktovil* has been constructed in anthropological and local discourse.

In this chapter I want to turn to a more direct consideration of the practice of yaktovil itself. I have (in Chapter One) introduced the Siṁhala concept of *diṣṭiya* and discussed aspects of its relation to the Siṁhala arts of controlling yakkū, *gurukama*. I have also (in Chapter Two) given a descriptive account of two performances of yaktovil. It will be recalled that diṣṭiya refers to the malign eyesight of yakkū, or sometimes simply to the "look" (*bälma*) of yakkū. And it will also be recalled that, according to minor Siṁhala legend, the authority for this particular register of malevolence is the Buddha, one might say, the "minor" Buddha. Diṣṭiya, I suggested, is the single most important concept in the minor discourse of yakkū and in the practice of yaktovil that discourse informs. This whole discourse and practice turns on a conception of the malevolence of the eyesight of yakkū.

In Chapter Three I critically examined in detail one recent anthropological analysis of yaktovil, that presented in Bruce Kapferer's *A Celebration of Demons* (1983). It will be useful to reiterate here the main features of Kapferer's argument in order to more clearly differentiate the one I will outline in what follows. Employing a model which combines the insights of Victor Turner with ideas drawn from social phenomenology (Shutz, Berger and Luckmann) and symbolic

interactionism (Mead), Kapferer suggests that yaktovil is a "communicational field." His is concerned to understand how yaktovil achieves transformations of "meaning and experience." He proposes that yaktovil be understood in terms of the way in which the "aesthetic modes" which predominate in successive stages of its performance -- principally those of music, song, dance, and comic drama -- allow experience to be, in turn, induced, and then subjected to the "cultural typifications" of the norm.

In the evening sequences of yaktovil when music and song predominate, Kapferer argues, a sort of unmediated domain of experience begins to exercise itself, and this domain becomes progressively enlarged when dance takes over towards midnight. It is in this period that, as a function of the alleged ability of dance to induce a more or less complete suspension of reason that trance occurs and signals the onset of a form of experience in which "the demonic" is said to enter into "a direct communion with the subject" (ibid.: 195). The "demonic," as Kapferer sees it, represents the "emergence to dominance of nature over culture" (ibid.: 201), or at any rate that aspect of "nature" which is supposedly aggressive, passionate, and violent. Then in the final stages of yaktovil, when comic drama predominates, the self is able to recover a "distance" from which to impose a sort of reason on the experience that has been passed through and thus restore itself to normalcy.

I suggested that this analysis is theoretically faulty on a number of grounds. To begin with, the argument that certain "aesthetic modes" have intrinsic formal qualities which lead to kinds of experience which are specifiable in advance, I maintained, is an untenable one since one could easily demonstrate the historical and cultural variability of responses to music, song, dance, and comic drama. The more important question to ask is how the Sinhalas come to produce the appropriate responses they do to these kinds of song, dance, etc. I argued further that Kapferer's assumption of a Nature/Culture dichotomy, and his assimilation to it of an experience/reason one, is theoretically unsound since at the least it presupposes a domain of subjectivity which is at once prior to, and the foundation of, discourse, and raises the question how this domain comes in the first place to be identified by the native (since *identification* obviously involves categories of thought and therefore discourse), and by the anthropologist. Moreover I maintained that the further assimilation of

"demonism" to "nature" and "experience," to a domain "dangerously outside cultural constraint" (ibid.: 201) not only assumes the existence of an essential (or "basal" to use Kapferer's term) self, but reproduces the demonological problematic of nineteenth century colonial Christian discourse.

My general aim in this chapter is to suggest another and, I think, more adequate way of approaching the analysis of the Sinhala yaktovil, an approach which does not depend on notions about fundamental experience or the intrinsic qualities of cultural forms. My plan is as follows: Firstly, I will introduce the Sinhala poetics of eyesight by trying to illustrate its breadth, and by trying to convey something of what "sight" entails for Sinhalas. Secondly, I will outline the relation between that specific form of malevolent eyesight known as diṣṭiya and specific "modes of being" of the Sinhala body and self. And thirdly, I will attempt to show how the procedures of yaktovil operate to reorganize and reconstitute the Sinhala body and self in relation to the register of malign eyesight.

A Cultural Poetics of Eyesight

Let me begin with a story, not about yakkū however, but about a particular local deity whose eyesight is legendary. It was told to me on more than one occasion by some of the more elderly residents of Devinuwara (literally, remember, "city of the god"). It is a story that embodies I think what we might usefully call a Sinhala poetics of eyesight, a distinctive metaphorical or, here, allegorical practice, through which particular aspects of Sinhala cultural life are constructed.[1] If cultural discourses and practices are marked by the idiom in which they are enfolded, lived, the local discourses and practices of the Sinhalas are, I want to suggest, *set off*, by a distinctive troping of "eyesight."

Here is the story:

> In Devinuwara, the King of the Southern Kingdom of Ruhunu, Dapulusen, once offered a reward to any man who could carve, out of the red sandalwood he would make specially available for the purpose, an image of the deity of the town, Upuluvanna. Many tried, and as many failed. In time however there appeared a man of humble bearing who made known his desire to try as others had done. He shut himself in the room with the

sandalwood and there remained for days on end. At length the King himself, growing curious and impatient, went to inquire as to the progress. He opened the door, and there before him stood a nine foot sandalwood image of Upuluvanna. The man, however, was nowhere to be seen. Nor was there any evidence, in the way of wood shavings say, of the sandalwood having actually been worked. All who saw were astonished.

The image was then taken to the top of a small hill [the site it is said of the original *dēvāla* or shrine-house of this deity[2]], and there installed such that it *looked* directly over the southernmost tip of the island.

In time the Portuguese came and conquered the maritime areas of Lankā. They came to Devinuwara. But try as they might they could not sail across the line of the deity's eyesight. Enraged, they committed an atrocity upon the image, cutting the legs so that the sight of the deity now fell upon the ground. The deity was thus rendered powerless to stop their rampage. Or so the Portuguese thought.

Eventually, in retreat from their colonial successors, the Dutch, the Portuguese ransacked the ancient town of Devinuwara. They loaded their ships with the loot. And of course, they loaded the red sandalwood image of Upuluvanna whose eyesight had so impeded their marauding designs. But taking flight their ships sank. And the sandalwood image of Upuluvanna floated around the western coast of Lankā beaching itself at the town of Chilaw. From there it was taken to the great Rock Temple at Dambulla in the central highlands. And even today it can still be seen there.[3]

For Sinhalas then, the eyesight of their supernatural figures is invested with an energy, an uncanny force: in the case of the deity of this suggestively anti-colonial narrative, Upuluvanna, an energetics of protection. His unblinking sight stretching out over the ocean formed as it were a transparent wall preventing the trespass of the invaders. Now what is particularly interesting in this narrative is its implicit distribution of knowledge. The narrative attributes to the Portuguese themselves the implicit knowledge that the source of their obstruction is to be found in the eyesight of the deity. It is not a native who divulges this critical piece of local knowledge. Rather it

something which is treated as self-evident. So that it functions as an ingenious self-confirmation to Sinhalas of the poetics of eyesight, of the fact that eyesight constitutes a zone of potency, of energy, and force. In a word, eyesight for Sinhalas is a powerfully invested cultural register.

The troping of eyesight therefore, not unlike the troping of sex and sexuality elsewhere, can form a distinct element in the framing and production of cultural discourses and practices, and in the fashioning of the distinctive subjectivities implicated in them. The troping of eyesight in otherwords can form a crucial element in a local cultural poetics. "Eyesight," like any other human potentiality, can be marked off as a distinctive zone, made to stand as the epicenter of a whole battery of radiating discourses, invested with special and unique qualities, surrounded by sanctions and restrictions and dangers, and associated with distinctive mental and physical dispositions and aptitudes.

In an interesting article on visual interaction in Hindu practices in India for instance, Lawrence A. Babb (1981)[4] discusses just this kind of cultural troping of a visual register. This article is worth considering briefly since not only is it one of the few attempts to inquire into the constitutive and expressive visuality of a cultural practice (see also Eck 1985), but it also converges at several points on aspects the Sinhala cultural poetics I will be discussing.

Hindu devotees, Babb maintains, want both *to see* their deities and *to be seen* by them. The eyes in Hindu practice are central to the interaction between worshipper and deity. They are associated with the "life" of the deity. And the presence of the deity (or, of course, that of its image) is almost synonymous with its facility and power of sight. In Hindu practice the sight of a deity can in fact have benevolent or malevolent effects on what is seen, the glance that is to say can be one of "compassion" or one of "anger." And at least one object of Hindu worship is to attract the benevolent gaze (*darṣan*) of the deity. Underlying this belief, Babb suggests, is a particular conception of "seeing" which he describes as an "extrusive flow-of-seeing that brings seer and seen into actual contact" (ibid.: 387). Or, as he puts it later,

> The point is that in the Hindu world, "seeing" seems to be an outward-reaching process that in some sense actually engages (in a flow-like way ...) the objects seen. Therefore glances can affect the objects at which they are directed, and bad glances can have harmful effects (ibid.: 393).

It is this constitutive and expressive visuality of Hindu cultural practices, their ***authoritative figuring*** in a register of eyesight, that constitutes what I am calling a cultural poetics.

As the story of Upuluvanna indicates, among Siṅhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka one finds a similarly distinctive practice of visual interaction. One need hardly be in Sri Lanka long before one notices how important a place eyesight plays in the daily lives of Siṅhalas. Encounter (if you are a man) a young woman on the street and no sooner have your eyes made four than she will have averted her own, generally letting her gaze fall to the ground. Similarly with children. Interestingly however (and a clue to the link between eyesight and power), this is not the case either with older women or, generally, with men. Their glances are undeterred. One is immediately left with the impression that eyesight among Siṅhalas is not only invested with a distinctive value, place and force, but that value and place is connected with some idea of authority and power, and that force with some acute sense of vulnerability. My particular concern in this chapter is with an especially dreaded aspect of this local Siṅhala poetics of eyesight -- that having to do with the eyesight of those malevolent Siṅhala figures called yakkū.

Robert Knox, that indefatigable seventeenth century English sailor, was certainly one of the first Europeans to recognize this Siṅhala poetics of eyesight and to make some mention of its importance for Siṅhala religious practice. In his *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon* (1681), Knox, singularly attentive to cultural detail as ever he was, had keenly observed the workings of this preoccupation with eyesight. Noting the definitive place of the eyes in the cultural *figuring* of their deities, he wrote,

> Before the Eyes are made, it is not accounted a God, but a lump of ordinary Metal, and thrown about the Shop with no more regard than anything else.... The eyes being formed, it is thenceforward a God (1958: 130-131).

In fact however not only deities but *all* figures in Siṅhala Buddhist cosmology are attributed at least a potential power or force in the register of eyesight.

Images of the Buddha too, for instance, are understood to have a power at the level of eyesight. As Richard Gombrich's (1966) description of a *nētra pinkama* (eye-laying ceremony) suggests, the eyes of Siṅhala statues of the Buddha are invested with a considerable and potentially

harmful force. Performing the rites of the eye-laying ceremony (the last and consecrating act in the fashioning of a Buddha statue in which the "eyes" are painted on) much care has to be taken not to neglect the various precautionary procedures (e.g., the use of a mirror to deflect the direct glance of the image) in order to avoid the effects of what one adura referred to as *vas dos* (lit., poisonous ills). However the "look" of the Buddha has other, rather beneficent, effects as well. And these are perhaps of more importance for the everyday lives of most Siṅhalas. The popular Siṅhala image of the Buddha for instance is that of a continuous All-Seeing presence. It is characteristic of local Siṅhala Buddhist stories (at least of those I heard) that at the critical moment the Buddha, with this facility of omni-prescience, would intervene upon an impending calamity -- e.g., as in one such story, the devout Ananda about to succumb to the solicitous charms of a beautiful woman from whom he has taken water at a well -- and sets the would-be back-slider once again upon the right and enlightened Middle Path.[5] In this sense the "look" of the Buddha is linked to a concept -- more precisely, an ethic -- of right knowledge. In the following passage S.A. Piyasena, makes this clear.

> The Buddha's look can cause someone to be sent along the Good Way (*buduhāmuduruvangē bälma ē yam kisi kenekuṭa honda magaṭa yavanna puluvan*). To explain good things (*honda deval*) to him.... By the light of his divine eyes he can see that he should explain something good to that person. That means that due to that power [of divine eyesight] the sadness of a person who is any number of *yodun*[6] away appears to the Buddha. Having seen, the Buddha goes to that place and preaches the Doctrine (*dharma darṣanaya karanava*) explaining the Way to the good side (*honda ata*).... When these compassionate sentiments are expressed he is convinced (*hita pähädenava*).[7]

So that it were as though for Siṅhala Buddhists the life and power of the images of their supernatural figures consisted in this facility of sight or *bälma*.

This cultural poetics of eyesight however extends to the "look" (*bälma*) of humans (*manuṣya*) as well. The "look" of human beings is at least potentially imbued with a malign energy. In certain situations, this malign energy emanates from the eyes of certain human beings and, "touching" (*vadinava*) another, causes a *dōṣaya* (illness). This malign energy is called *äsvaha* (lit., eye poison),[8] and the effected condition is known as *äsvaha dōṣa* (lit., eye poison illness). One generally cannot determine in advance the persons having this facility, although certainly they are typically thought to be women.[9] The victims at any rate are usually little children, women, and shopkeepers (*mudalālis*), in that order. *Äsvaha* is said to be the result of desire (*āsāvaya*) for

something *seen* but not possessed. The case of a woman's unfulfilled desire to have a baby is often illustratively used -- in fact almost invariably so. The scenario might be as follows: A woman who doesn't have a baby visits a household in which there is a delightful little baby. She looks and thinks desireously (*āsāven*), "this baby is very beautiful; it has no illnesses (*mē babā hari lassanay. Kisima rōgayak nä*)." She then compliments the parents accordingly and departs. But no sooner has she left than little bumps (*bibili*) appear on the baby's face and body. The parents of this baby will be in no doubt that they have been the victim of envious "looks."[10]

There is another perhaps more important facet of *äsvaha* however which emphasizes in an interesting and very illuminating way a relation between desire (*āsāvaya*) and anger (*krōdaya*), and between these two and the *transmission of an effect* in the medium of the energy of eyesight. This is particularly well illustrated in the following passage, again quoting from Piyasena.

> Now when I see a beautiful thing (*lassana deyak*) a desire for it occurs to me (*maṭa ēkaṭa āsāvak hitenava*). The desire having been formed, I think, "I don't have a beautiful thing like that (*ē vagē lassana deyak maṭa nä kiyalā*)." Because of that I become angry (*krōdayak hitaṭa hatagannava*). Because of my bad intention (*tamangē naraka cetanava*) and bad thoughts (*naraka hitīma*), that anger causes a humor (*dōṣa*) to become upset (*dōṣayak mēvavenava*[11]). The person seen is touched by an ill-effect (*dōṣayak vadinava*). By thinking about that [i.e., the beautiful thing] a power touches the thing that is seen (*ē gena hitīmen pavar ekak vadinava ara däkkapu deyaṭa*). Then the thing becomes spoilt (*narak venava*). It becomes unsightly (*avalakṣana gahanava*).

This passage provides a very clear sense of the action of (the energy of) eyesight. Anger, a mental state, arising (in this case) as a result of desire, causes one of the humors (*dōṣas*) of which the body is composed (see below) to become agitated. The ill-effects of this agitation (also referred to as *dōṣas*) are *transmitted* by the act (and in the medium) of "seeing" the object or person. So transmitted, this energic ill-effect adversely affects what is seen.

In the Sinhala sense therefore "sight" is not a mere passive registration of external objects in the physical or reflecting eye of the inert seer -- as if the "eye" were simply an organ-receptacle catching the refracted light off the objects passing within its field. Nor on the other hand is it the simple inverse of this in which the "inner" or "psychological" eye constructively perceives and thereby establishes, as it might be put, its field of vision. These latter metaphors belong perhaps to another cultural poetics elsewhere, and organizes a different relation between sight, knowledge, and

physical and mental dispositions. But they are far removed from the Sinhala conception. In a Sinhala cultural poetics the image of "sight" and "seeing" is rather that of an internally generated activity, a mobile *energy*, a continuous flow, precipitated *outwards*, as it were, from the seer *to* objects. And these objects it should be understood are not merely brought within the field of the seer's gaze, illuminated (in either the active or contemplative sense), but *brought into contact with the force of its energy*. Among Sinhalas then, sight is something that can actually, deliberately, be "put" (*lānava*) on, or, more vividly, "cast" (*halanava*) upon, an object by the seer so as to be able to "touch" (*vadinava*) it. Sight can be deliberately placed and displaced, but this place-ment does not imply thereby a detachment or interruption of its flow of energy. This is important to bear in mind. You will recall that Upuluvanna's eyesight was not cut off (he was not, for example, blinded) but rather "deflected" (*maga harinava*, an important Sinhala notion). But recall also my description (in Chapter Two) of that sequence in yaktovil when diṣṭiya is "taken" (*aragannava*) from one place (the *āturaya's* immediate environs) to another (the area where its effects will be "stopped").

However there is a more important aspect than mere "extrusivity" to be emphasized. And that is that for Sinhalas "sight" or more properly "seeing" is not only connected to a particular system of knowledge, it is a thoroughly *ethical practice*. Thus it is not altogether surprising that this generative sight or look (*bälma*), moving out from some ethically coded agency and coming into contact with an object (also ethically coded), is able to effect changes -- changes of ill or good -- in it. Eyesight organizes at once a distinctive "rationality" of practices and an "ethics" of subjectivity. To see and to be seen occupy expressly moral and therefore normalizing registers. By this I mean that seeing and being seen are involved in the organization of specific culturally defined dangers and of the strategies to control, restrict, avert or reverse those dangers. And therefore eyesight enters the domain of the power processes of subjectification. It is involved in the organization of specific forms and practices of subjectivity, specific mental and physical dispositions, vulnerabilities, propensities, and aptitudes relevant to those dangers, to their identification, their regulation, and their management.

Like the other figures in Sinhala Buddhist cosmology, the dangerously malevolent yakkū are also attributed a mobile and extrusive energy in the register of eyesight. Indeed they are attributed the *most* dreaded energy, diṣṭiya. For the Sinhala discourse of yakkū, yakkū come before the Law, that is, before the *Dhamma*. And what perhaps more than anything else signifies this originary, "pre-Buddhist" condition for Sinhalas is a state of unbridled cannibalism. A Buddhist power is thus understood to have a subduing or even civilizing effect inasmuch as it inaugurates the Law and brings yakkū within the narrow or at least restraining purview of the authorizing discourse of the Buddha. In the minor appropriation of this Sinhala discourse "sight" is constituted as the register of a dangerously malign energy, and *being seen* as a register of vulnerability. And it is to a discussion of the distinctive subjectification involved here that I now want to turn.

Diṣṭiya and the Sinhala Body

What does malign eyesight do to the body? What does it do with the mind? When does it strike? What are the signs? How is it prevented? How is it treated?

The malevolent energy of the eyesight of yakkū, diṣṭiya, defines a distinctive relation between eyesight and the Sinhala self and body. The "look" (*bälma*) of yakkū works its malign effects directly upon the selves and bodies of their Sinhala victims. It is the Sinhala body that harbours the ill-effects of diṣṭiya (i.e., the *dōṣaya*), and it is the Sinhala self that is transformed by the malevolence of eyesight. Let me begin by trying to outline something of the relation between diṣṭiya and the Sinhala body.

In anthropological discussions of cultural practice the body has only recently become a field of deliberation. But this focus, welcome as it is, has often remained relativist and ahistorical in tendency.[12] In a recent volume on the "anthropology of the body" for instance, the editor, John Blacking (1977), argues a concern for discovering and describing "the latent repertoire of the human body from which cultural transformations are ultimately derived" (1977: 2). This anthropologizing endeavour however, in its explicit effort to avoid the nature/culture paradigm, only reproduces its generative problematic in the assumption that cultural practices are "externalizations and extensions of the body in varying contexts of social interaction" (ibid.). The view which Blacking advances has

as its grounding assumption the idea of a fundamental, material substrate, a "real" body, which comes *before*, and so to say substantializes its varied cultural representations.

In this conceptualization the kind of question to be put to Siṅhala material is familiar enough. It would ask: *given* the human body, how do Siṅhalas imagine or represent (or indeed experience) the action and effects of the malign eyesight of the supernatural figures called yakkū? This is a question of course which, in effect, repeats the whole archive of the science/ideology (and culture/biology) problematic in which an allegedly universal body enveloped in ideological or cultural representations is supposed nevertheless to be accessible to science for confirmation or correction.[13]

However, as that seminal lecture of 1934 by Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," first brought to our attention, there is no universally invariable body but rather several historically and culturally specific bodies. These have to do with the several locally concrete and pragmatic ways in which the body is constructed, in which the body comes to be *taken* as what it is and *lived* through its attributed capacities, potentialities, and vulnerabilities. The point here is that these capacities and vulnerabilities themselves constitute a density and not a mere symbolic transparency. Here in other words the body may be said to be subject to a variation which is not that of its ideologies or symbolizations, but that of its living and use.[14]

In a conception so recast, a different sort of question becomes immediately visible, one indeed quite outside the discursive field of the one previously raised. And it may be posed as follows: In light of the characteristic power attributed to the malign nature of the eyesight of certain supernatural figures, what kind of body must the Siṅhalas endow themselves with, what kind of body must they produce in their cultural practices? For the body in this conceptualization is an *effect* of the cultural practices that produce it. The Siṅhalas, I shall attempt to show, inhabit a certain kind of body -- a body vulnerable in specific ways to malign eyesight; a body upon which specific states can be induced in order to extract from it a certain order of speech; a body easily susceptible to fevers (*una*) when the mind (*hita*) becomes frightened (*baya venava*); a body from which the effects of malign eyesight can be "deflected."

This way of posing the question of the relation between cultural practices and the body (that is, in Mauss' phrase, the question of body's embeddedness in a cultural *habitus*, or, as Foucault

would propose, *technologies*), is of particular interest in the Sinhala context of diṣṭiya and its effects. For, as I have earlier suggested (see Chapter Three), in those Western discourses which have described the Sinhala yaktovil and related practices, the effects of diṣṭiya have been unreflexively read through a general thematics of "possession." Indeed the whole Sinhala discourse of yakkū and practice of yaktovil has been unproblematically constructed through the metaphor of "exorcism." Nur Yalman (1964) for example maintains that the *bali* ritual (the practice in which the malign effects of inauspicious planetary arrangements are removed) "is intended ... to get the yakkuva *out* of the patient's body (1964: 122. Emphasis added). Similarly, John Halverson (1971), talking about a "patient" being interrogated by an "exorcist" refers to the "demon *in* him" and to his "incubus" (1971: 338. Emphasis added); and further on states that "though the demon may not be *of* him, it is unequivocally *in* him" (ibid.: 348. Emphasis added). Kapferer's conception of a "demonic self" that "emerges" in exorcism has already been mentioned and need not be rehearsed.

Now of course it might be argued that these statements are but marginal to the arguments offered in their respective texts. However one needs no proficiency in that practice (of reading the margins) which Derrida made famous to recognize that this deeply Christian metaphor, "possession," has conditioned the kinds of themes and problems (needless to add, the kinds of images) produced in analyses of yaktovil. Moreover, without an analysis of the specific Sinhala categories through which a distinctive practice of the body is connected to a distinctive practice of eyesight, it is not in the least clear to me how one can make these assumptions about "possession." To be sure, as I will try to make clear in my own discussion, this relation between malign eyesight and the body forms an intricate webb, and tracing out all the connections is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, at the least these characterizations indicate that a whole area of Sinhala cultural poetics is left to be investigated -- that area in which the Sinhala body is *organized* (in the sense of constituted as an *organism*) as the condition for a variable subject potentially *subject* to malevolent eyesight. One would need perhaps to begin with Obeyesekere's (1969) remark that the "*essence* [i.e., diṣṭiya] of the demon resides in the patient" (1969: 176. Emphasis added). It seems to me however that this notion of the "residence" of the malign "essence" of yakkū suggests but leaves unproblematized that cultural thematics of the Sinhala body which is precisely what needs to be inquired into.

The Siṁhala concept of diṣṭiya is, without question, one of considerable complexity. One searches for a metaphor that might adequately translate something of its character. Embedded in Siṁhala statements however, particularly (though not only) those of the specialists, aduras, whose task it is to engage it, are often sharp metaphorical expressions which convey something of the connotations which surround and inhabit it. For instance, one might hear diṣṭiya being likened to a kind of force (*balavēgaya*), and more specifically a force of "attraction" or "magnetism" (*ākarsana gatiya*). Or again, the uncanny swiftness of the movement of diṣṭiya might be likened to that of the wind (*vātayen men*).[15]

Now in colloquial Siṁhala there are a variety of ways of referring to the malign disposition of diṣṭiya in relation to the body of the afflicted person. In the first place, the action that constitutes an attack by yakkū who have "cast down" their "look" (*bälma halanava*), as people say, upon Lankā, is one of diṣṭiya "falling on the body" and, again, of diṣṭiya "covering the body." Often, in response to an inquiry after someone for instance, one might be told that, "a diṣṭiya has fallen on that person's body" (*ēyaṭa äṅgaṭa diṣṭiyak väṭila tiyenava*), or else, "a diṣṭiya has covered that person's body" (*ēyaṭa äṅgaṭa diṣṭiyak vähila tiyenava*). In Siṁhala discourse then the body is organized as a certain kind of place in relation to the malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū. It is a place upon which that look can "fall," and one which that look can "cover."

An afflicted person might also be spoken of as "having" a diṣṭiya (*diṣṭiyak tiyenava*), meaning that his or her body "has" in some sense the malevolent energy of "the look." Or again, a person's body may be said not simply to have a diṣṭiya but more specifically to have a diṣṭiya "in" or "on" it -- *ēyage äṅgē diṣṭiyak tiyenava* (that person's body has a diṣṭiya in/on it). Here it is the locative form of the noun *äṅga* (body) that expresses the disposition of diṣṭiya. And this more definite location of diṣṭiya can be further emphasized in those not unusual instances in which the adjective "*atulē*" is used to give a positive sense of diṣṭiya actually being "inside" or "within" the body (*äṅga ätulē diṣṭiyak tiyenava*).

In a Siṁhala sense therefore one "has" a diṣṭiya or the body has a diṣṭiya "in," "on," or even "inside" it. But this is a far sight less straightforward than it appears. And it most certainly does

not warrant the kinds of familiar assumptions made by the anthropology of possession. Rather it requires a patient attempt to trace out the relations between the body and eyesight that Siṅhala discourse constructs. For it is still not immediately clear how these senses of the malign disposition of diṣṭiya are related to one another. It would appear that for Siṅhalas there is little or no significant difference between these characterizations of the disposition of diṣṭiya in relation to the body. For example, one young woman who claimed herself to be afflicted with the diṣṭiya of the yakā named Kalu Kumāraya (the Black Prince) was adamant that diṣṭiya does *not* go "inside" the body even though this might be how it is commonly put. As she articulated it:

> Diṣṭiya does not go inside the body (*äṅga ätulaṭa yanne nähä*). When a diṣṭiya covers anyone's body, "diṣṭiya has covered the body," and "the body has a diṣṭiya," is said for that; otherwise "the body has a diṣṭiya inside" is said (*diṣṭiyak yamkisi kenekugē äṅgaṭa vahunahāma diṣṭiya äṅgaṭa vāhila tiyenava kiyena ēkaṭay diṣṭiyak äṅgē tiyenava nätnam diṣṭiyak äṅga atulē tiyenava kiyala kiyanne*). Sometimes many people say, "a diṣṭiya is inside the body" (*samahāraviṭa huṅgāk minisu kiyanne diṣṭiyak äṅga ätulē tiyenava kiyalā*).

The distinctions, one is tempted to say, are more a Siṅhala manner of speaking. Or as one adura remarked,

> it is indeed "inside" that we are thinking (*ätula kiyala tamay api hitanne*). But that is common for wherever in the body (*namut ēka äṅgē koyibatat ekay*).... Generally it [diṣṭiya] is an energy (*vēgaya*) of the body. So when a diṣṭiya fell upon the body nobody can say whether it is outside or inside (*itin äṅga ätulet äṅgaṭa diṣṭiya vatunāma ēka piṭa tiyenava da ätulē tiyenava da kiyanna bä ni*).

What we are trying to understand is the kind of body this discourse presupposes. And the conception that diṣṭiya "covering" the body, the body "having" a diṣṭiya, and the body having a diṣṭiya "inside," are virtually one and the same suggests at the least a body which is not organized as the same kind of spatial organism as is the Western body. It would appear that diṣṭiya does *not* go "inside" the body where "inside" is understood as a place where, for example, food and drink go. The Siṅhala body therefore is not a hollow vessel to be entered, as though through an orifice, and occupied by an anthropomorphic presence.

This is in fact illustrated in an very interesting way in the following passage about the relation between diṣṭiya and food. As Siṅhalas have it, certain kinds of foods, specifically oil-mixed food (*tel misra käma*) -- such things *kavum* and *kokis* -- are known to attract the diṣṭiya of yakkū as a

result of their pungent odour.[16] In the course of talking about the relation between diṣṭiya and food this woman went on to emphatically deny that diṣṭiya could enter the body.

> Diṣṭiya falling on food" means [that] if we, having eaten any food and gone here and there, that diṣṭiya covers that food (*kämakaṭa diṣṭiya väṭenava kiyala kiyanne api yamkisi kämak kāla ivaravala ehe mehe giyot diṣṭiya väṭenne ara kämaṭay*). But a diṣṭiya cannot enter the body through the mouth, or nose, or any other means (*namut diṣṭiyakanṭa katinvat nätnam nāsayenvat ehemat nätnam venat vidiyakinvat änga ätulaṭa yannama bähä*). It is only after eating food that the diṣṭiya falls (*kämak kävaṭa pasu diṣṭiya väṭenava vitaray*). But before we eat, diṣṭiya hasn't fallen on that food (*namut api kämak kannaṭa issella diṣṭiya ē kämaṭa vähila tiyenne nä*). Because of that the diṣṭiya cannot go into a body through the mouth or nose (*ēeka nisā kiyanne diṣṭiyakaṭa katinvat nāsayenvat sarīrayakaṭa ätulu venne bähäy kiyalā*).

Eating certain kinds of food, then, subjects the body to a specific kind of vulnerability.

At the same time however if the metaphor "inside" *is* nevertheless employed, and if this usage is equivalent to those other forms, what positively is meant? The diṣṭiya that "falls" on, and "covers" the body, becomes "attached" (*sambandavenava*) to, and "contained" (*aḍanguvenava*) in, the body. The Siṅhala body is positively constituted as an organism that can "contain" the malevolent energy of the eyesight of yakkū. Consider Piyasena's description:

> "To be contained" means, [diṣṭiya] having come as though by the wind becomes attached to the body (*aḍanguvenava kiyanne vātayen men avillā sarīrayaṭa sambandavenava*). When it becomes attached to that one [i.e., to the body], because the power that it has is different to [that of] this person's body, a shaking results (*ēkata sambanda unāma arayagē tiyene balaya meyāge sarīrayaṭa venas nisā calitayak ätivenava*).... It is in the three, skin (*sam*), flesh (*mas*), and blood (*lē*), that this one [i.e., diṣṭiya] is contained (*sam mas lē tun denāṭa mēka aḍanguvenava*).... Then when it [i.e., diṣṭiya] has touched the skin it penetrates (*etakoṭa dan samaṭa vädila vinivida*).[17]

The Siṅhala body therefore offers a rather different conception of a spatial organism. Diṣṭiya becomes attached to the body and is contained in the skin, flesh, and blood. The presence of yakkū -- in the malign energy of their eyesight -- does not enter the body as through an orifice, but "penetrates" or "perforates" the skin. This remarkable conception suggests to us the idea of an energy or force cast upon the body, covering it entirely, and slowly seeping, after the manner of an absorption through the skin and into the blood. Moreover notice the conception of "force" or "power" which Piyasena employs. Not only diṣṭiya, but the body also constitutes a force, or a power. Indeed the Siṅhala body, as I will describe in a moment, is an energic system. However the force of diṣṭiya is "different" than the force of the body, and therefore when it touches it the differential makes it shake and tremble.

The Siṁhala body consists of three vital humors (*tun dos*): wind (*vāta*), bile (*pita*), and phlegm (*sema*). Along with blood (*lē*) these are the fundamental elements of the body's energic system. In its normal state these three humors are in a delicate equilibrium. However any disturbance to the mind or body will result in these humors becoming agitated (*vā pit sem tun dos kipenava*). All bodily and mental afflictions register at this energic level of the organism (see Obeyesekere 1976).

Diṣṭiya, then, also has effects on the humors of the body. It is ultimately by agitating the humors that the *dōṣayas* or ill-effects are generated. In fact the diṣṭiya of certain yakkū have specific effects on particular humors. One elderly adura however felt that it was the blood-substance (*lē datuvay*) that was the principal factor involved in the ill-effects of diṣṭiya. He said,

> If a diṣṭiya falls on anyone it is the blood-substance that it influences (*koyi kenekuṭa diṣṭiyak vaṭunot mēka balapāne lē dātuvay*). It is the blood-substance that is being controlled (*lē dātuvay tamay mē palanayavenne*).... It is that substance that makes the body weak (*ē dātuven tamay mē sarīraya duruvala karanne*).

The Siṁhala body therefore may be said to be constituted as a spatial organism with a distinctive predisposition. It is vulnerable to a potential *reconstitution* of its elements by the malevolence of the energy of the eyesight of yakkū. That energy works by "covering" the body and becoming "contained" in its constituent elements -- skin, flesh, and blood. Precisely because it is an energy with a different force than that of the body, it disrupts and reorganizes the delicate balance of its vital humors.

Diṣṭiya and Formations of the Self

This body forms the condition for the constitution of a distinctively variable Siṁhala self, a subject potentially exposed to the *subjectifying* force of eyesight.[18] Eyesight, I have suggested, defines and organizes a distinctive Siṁhala truth. That is to say, it is linked to the acquisition of specific aptitudes and vulnerabilities, and it stands at the center of a radiating network of practices (or what Michel Foucault would call "games of truth") through which Siṁhalas fashion themselves as, and recognize themselves in, particular kinds of subjects.

How do Sinhalas learn to recognize themselves as potentially *subject to* the modifying force of eyesight? This is the kind of question to which an anthropological concern with formations of the self must address itself. In what follows I can hope only to provide a partial answer.

In Sinhala "self-fashioning" (to borrow another term from Stephen Greenblatt[19]) therefore eyesight organizes a particular set of vulnerabilities and dispositions. The malevolent eyesight of yakkū constitute specific kinds of danger to avoid which a whole *habitus* is constructed, and *strategies* employed. The Sinhala day for instance is meticulously divided into watches or *jāmayas* when it is likely that one will meet with the malign eyesight of yakkū. Similarly there are certain places to which it is expressly inadvisable to go out alone, especially at certain hours -- wells at midday for example, cemeteries at night, etc. -- because these are favourite haunts of yakkū. Again, there are certain foods which it is inadvisable to eat on certain occasions (e.g., fried foods) unless one follows such a repast with certain practices (e.g., drinking water). So that a whole repertoire of practices to avert the danger are employed.

The vulnerability to eyesight is connected to and indeed is central to the organization of other vulnerabilities to which the Sinhala self is acutely disposed. Perhaps the most important such vulnerability, is the vulnerability to the possible consequences of "being alone" (*taniyama*), or the "*condition* of being alone," or "aloneness" (*tanikama*). Another, which is in fact inextricably linked to the condition of being alone (*tanikama*), is the vulnerability to fright (*baya*, or *hadisibaya*). I want now to discuss these -- the potential danger of eyesight, the condition of being alone, and the disposition to fright -- in their relation to the problem of formations and practices of the Sinhala self. Having so done we will be able to more adequately think about the practice of yaktovil.

In discussions of Sinhala subjectivity the concept of tanikama has, it seems to me, been much misunderstood. In the discourse of yakkū, the malevolent effects of diṣṭiya is often linked to a subjective predisposing condition called *tanikama* (a or condition or state of being alone). And indeed the ill-effects themselves of diṣṭiya are often referred to as *tanikam dōṣa*. Now certainly one of the earliest accounts in English of the relation between yakkū and tanikama is that given by Dandris de Silva Gooneratne (1866). Gooneratne wrote,

> When a man is frightened by a demon, and has the influence of that demon on him, it is called TANICAMA, which literally means "*loneliness*" or "*being alone.*" Fright is in most

> cases a necessary agent in bringing down *Tanicama* on that man; but it is also possible that a person, who has neither been frightened by a demon, nor been ten yards from his own door for five or six months, may also get the Tanicama influence on him. In this case, the explanation is, that the demon has taken advantage of some unguarded moment in the daily life of the man, as when he has been sitting in the open compound, or when he has happened to go to the back of his house at any of the Yamas, when a demon has happened to be in the vicinity; or when he has eaten roasted fish or eggs, while sitting outside in his Verandah on a Wednesday or Saturday. In this case the man is neither frightened by anything, nor even aware of his danger at the time (ibid.: 47; author's emphasis).[20]

And he continues,

> The literal meaning of the word Tanicama gives us a key towards the understanding of many of the mysterious and wonderful circumstances connected with this part of our subject, especially when it is taken in connection with the other doctrine of Demonism already alluded to, viz., that, though a demon try his utmost by means of terrible apparitions or by actual seizure to frighten a man and give him the Tanicama, which results in sickness, yet the man will seldom get ill, if he do [sic] not get frightened (ibid.: 48).

These passages are extremely valuable I think because they make the connection between *tanikama* and fright. Fright is typically a necessary condition for "a man to get the Tanicama influence on him." And even where there is no clear instance of fright, the yakā has nevertheless somehow "taken advantage of an unguarded moment" in the victim's daily life. So that what is at any rate common to both situations is the sense of the suddenness of the yakā's action (the swiftness of the malign glance), and the sense of the victim's unpreparedness and exposure. Similarly Piyasena remarked the indispensable precondition of fright:

> At the time that you are going along [yakkū] are waiting to put the look on your body (*yana velāva obagē sarīrayaṭa bälma lāna innava*). Without [your] seeing anything the look is put. However without inducing fright (*baya karanna nätuva*) it [i.e., the tanikam dōṣa] can't be made regardless of the disturbance made by the yaksayā.

Gooneratne's passages remain misleading in at least one particular however. And it is an important one because it is one that has been reproduced and elaborated upon in uncritical ways in the modern anthropology of yaktovil. Gooneratne translates the word "*tanikama*" as "loneliness" or "being alone," as though these two English words necessarily connoted equivalent conditions, equivalent practices of subjectivity, and were, therefore, equally adequate to the translation of the Sinhala concept of *tanikama*. Now it may be a question whether they did in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Gooneratne wrote, connote identical (European) conditions, but it is certain that if they did then and if they do today it is because of the specific conditions of formation of the modern Western self. And these, needless to say, are not conditions identical to those of the

formation of the Sinhala self. And therefore in either case these two words do not both equally translate the Sinhala notion of *tanikama* which is more accurately glossed simply as a condition of "aloneness." So that when Kapferer for example interprets *tanikama* as "a state of isolation, of existential solitude in the world" (1983: 50), he is I think very much mistaken. He is not only uncritically recasting Gooneratne's conflation in a more updated language, but he is investing it with a very specific kind of modernist psychology. For while *tanikama* does involve a *mental apartness*, so to put it, this does not convey anything of the flavour of that modern Western psychological condition of "loneliness."

Discussing this concept of *tanikama* with Piyasena, I suggested a scenario in which three people are walking along when suddenly a noise (*sabdaya*) is heard by one of them. How is it possible, I wanted to know, that in such a situation the condition of that one person who heard the noise could be described as *tanikama*, and that he should fall victim to *tanikam dōṣa*. Piyasena responded thus, in part:

> When this noise was heard, one's mind ran to that side (*sabda ähenakoṭa tamangē hita ē ataṭa divva*). The other two [persons] are not concerned about that noise. It is one's mind that became concentrated on it (*ēkaṭa tamangē hita yomu unā*). The mind is drawn to that side (*hita ē pataṭa äduna*). It became startled (*gässila*). Having heard that noise that person's mind was shaken (*ē sabdaya ähila tamangē hita helluna*).... Having gone to the head that noise is contained there (*mulayaṭa gihilla adanguvela ē sabdaya*). Going along, you are still thinking about that noise. It has been taken to the head, no. And you think straight away (*kelima hitagannava*) that this is a yaksayā, a disṭiya for me. Then by thinking about that one, the blood becomes agitated (*dän ēka gena kalpanā kirīmen lē kupitavenava*).

In Sinhala conception therefore *tanikama* is a condition in which the mind (*hita*) is at once relatively undisturbed (*tänpat*), silent (*nissabda*), on, as it were, an even keel. It is, moreover, unguarded. This latter, already suggested in Gooneratne's description, is perhaps its distinctive characteristic. One's mind must be relatively unengaged, attending to some everyday household chore, for example, or taking a bath at the well. There is, on these occasions, little to think about in a concerted fashion, and so the mind is not being "directed" to, or "concentrating" (*yomuvenava*) on, anything in particular. It is then, in such a state, that one is potentially exposed to fright and its consequences. Any small movement, a noise, startles the mind, catches it off guard.

Let me illustrate this Sinhala self-fashioning practice of *maintaining the self's composure and guarding it against the possibility of fright* with a small but highly interesting anecdote. It was related

to me (in English) by a Sinhala friend, a young man. He had been on his way to his home in the hill country late one evening, he said. Getting off the bus in his home town he set off on foot for his house. It was dark by then, night having fallen and there being no street lights. Unfortunately too he had forgotten his flashlight and therefore he had to make his way with not even the company of some light. Becoming somewhat alarmed at his situation, he said, he "took his mind in his hand" and proceeded on his way, secure in the knowledge that, so "holding" his mind, he was no longer in danger of being startled and therefore unsteadied by a sudden noise or sight.

In this extraordinary metaphor -- keeping the mind in the sure grip of the hand -- a distinctive practice of Sinhala self-fashioning is illustrated. The composure of the mind is disposed to being disturbed, and therefore it must be protected. In putting his mind in the safety of his hand, he had secured himself against his vulnerability to fright, exposure to which is a constant possibility.

It follows then from what I have said thus far that *tanikam dōṣa*, the ill-effects of diṣṭiya, cannot be translated as "alone illness" as Kapferer does (ibid.). This is mistaken not only because it conveys too much of the flavour of modern Western psychological condition of loneliness, and the psychopathological disorders now associated with it. But more importantly, the *dōṣa* or ill-effects in the case of *tanikam dōṣa* do not derive from the condition itself of being alone or of being by oneself (as indeed is suggested in the Western conception of the psychological state of "loneliness"). Rather it derives, as I have shown, from the condition of *vulnerability* to which tanikama disposes one, specifically a vulnerability to a fright that, as we might say, catches one off guard -- a fright, of course, invariably associated with yakkū.

And this fright sets in motion a train of events familiar to all Sinhalas. As a result of the fright , the mind, as Piyasena put it, is "drawn" toward the noise and becomes "concentrated" on it. As Piyasena continued,

> It [i.e., the noise] is taken to one's mind (*hitaṭa hitagannava*). And one's thoughts become solely about that (*tamangē kalpanāva niterama ēkagena*). When thinking about that one [the noise] one's blood becomes unclean (*ēkagena kalpanā karanakoṭa tamangē lē apirisidu venava*). That means the blood, the blood in the body, becomes lifeless due to the state of fright in the mind (*kiyanne lē sarīraye lē, ara hitē bayagatiyaṭa, apranika venava*). The phlegm (*sema*) becomes agitated. The wind (*vātaya*) becomes agitated. And having become agitated, fever results (*una häduna*).

It is this consuming thinking that, as it were, heats up the blood and results in the familiar dōṣas. Then one can say that one is "touched by an aloneness" (*tanikamak vädila*), or else that "an aloneness has occurred" (*tanikamak velā*).

It is clear therefore from the foregoing discussion that when Siṅhalas become the victim of the malign glances of yakkū, there is no "lapse," as some would have it, into a "lower" or "basal" self, one dormant, closer to nature, and ready to "emerge" and disrupt the order of "culture." There is no "negation" of a "dominant" self by a "demonic" one. This demonological conception merely replays a nineteenth century Orientalist theme about the submerged demonism of Asiatics. Rather, as I have tried to make clear, malign eyesight potentially organizes or reorganizes a distinct mode of Siṅhala subjectivity. Eyesight, or the other concepts to which it linked, invests the self with a structure of vulnerabilities and dispositions, and defines modes of appropriate conduct to avoid potential dangers.

The Strategies of Yaktovil

So far I have tried to outline the Siṅhala poetics of eyesight and to show the way in which the malevolent eyesight of yakkū, diṣṭiya, is related to specific Siṅhala practices of the "body" and to specific practices of the "self." The Siṅhala self and body, I showed, are potentially organized and reorganized in relation to "the look" (*bälma*) generally, and "the look" of yakkū in particular. The self and body are constituted as domains of vulnerability (by a whole range of cautionary narratives, sanctions, and interdictions) to the force (*balavēgaya*) of "the look" of yakkū. For Siṅhalas, recall, eyesight is a mobile and extrusive energy (*vēgaya*) that can be likened to the wind (*vātaya*). When the malevolent look of a yakā "falls" on the Siṅhala body and "covers" it, the self and body are reconstituted in relation to the force of the look. The fright (*hadisibaya*) which occurs sets up a disturbance which changes the relation among the humors (*dōṣa*) that make up the body.

Two final anecdotes. A young woman and her (female) friends were walking down a lane upon a late evening (a most inauspicious thing for young women to be doing, since the evening watch -- *händäve jāmaya* -- is well known to be a time when yakkū are likely to be about). As they were going along, they saw, indistinctly, a curious light at the far end of the lane, and immediately

became alarmed. Yakkū! Yakkū ēvi! ("There might be yakkū coming!") the young woman shouted, and in fright she turned and ran leaving her friends. When she got home she was hot with fever. Yakkū no doubt. But in this instance "the look" was not severe enough to cause a lasting disturbance. She was given a medicinal decoction (*kāsaya*) and by the following morning the fear and fever were gone. There was nothing more to be done (her mother however properly admonished her for walking about at such an hour).

Another young woman was not so fortunate. This woman, married with a small daughter, was walking alone along a lane shortly before midday. She was returning from a visit to her mother's and, going along, there was nothing in particular on her mind. Suddenly a *talagoya* or monitor lizard ran, she said, "over my feet." Startled, she fell in a faint (*sihinätivenava*). Neighbours came to her assistance and by the time she had been taken home she was hot with fever and trembling. Now the dreaded yakā, the Mahāsohona, is known to use the eyes of the *talagoya* to cast its glances. And since this woman was so evidently frightened there could be no doubt that the diṣṭiya of the Mahāsohona had "covered" her. An adura was summoned and it was soon determined that a yaktovil ceremony should be performed.

These two anecdotes illustrate the kind of "self" and "body" that, refashioned and reorganized in relation to "the look" of yakkū, potentially become the subject of the procedures of yaktovil. And it is to that practice that I now turn.

In turning to an analysis of the practice of yaktovil I should like to propose the use of a concept of *strategy*. The use of a concept of *strategy* in the analysis of social practices is of course not new. In anthropology, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu has employed the concept of strategy in order, he argues, to "get away from objectivism without falling into subjectivism" (1986: 111-112). It is an attempt to leave the field of this opposition; and in this, it resembles his use of Mauss's notion of *habitus*. Indeed, the two concepts, strategy and habitus, are necessarily interconnected because strategies operate not upon essential subjectivities but precisely upon dispositions, vulnerabilities, and aptitudes which are constituted within the very field of social discourses in which its instrumental

procedures are implicated. For Bourdieu, the concept of strategy enables one to distinguish between "theoretical aims" and "practical aims." As he puts it, it was his awareness of

> a gap between the theoretical aims of theoretical understanding and the directly concerned, practical aims of practical understanding, which led me to speak of matrimonial *strategies* or *social uses* of kinship rather than rules of kinship. This change of vocabulary is indicative of a change of viewpoint. It is a matter of not grounding the practice of social agents in the theory that one has to construct in order to explain that practice (ibid.: 111).

Strategy therefore refers to a "practical sense of things," "a feel for the game," as he further puts it, a "practical mastery of the logic or immanent necessity of a game, which is gained through experience of the game, and which functions this side of consciousness and discourse" (ibid.).

However, this formulation of Bourdieu's, of practices operating "this side consciousness and discourse" would appear to suggest an unconstituted domain of pure practical activity (a sort of counterpart to Kapferer's domain of pure experience). Talal Asad has in fact raised some doubt about Bourdieu's dichotomy of "theoretical aims" and "practical aims." Referring to the famous nineteenth century work on the theory of war by Karl von Clausewitz, and thus emphasizing its "military sense," Asad argues that "strategy" presupposes not just any practical aim but a "special kind of practical aim":

> of antagonistic wills struggling for supremacy over a terrain that may not always be delimited, with forces that are not always constant, in conditions whose changing significance cannot always be anticipated. Such an aim *does* require some theoretical understanding and knowledge of rules, although of course that is not all it requires (1987: 197n).

Perhaps this is closer to the conception offered by Michel Foucault some years ago when, employing the images of games and war, he wrote of the concept of strategy being employed in three ways.

> The word *strategy* is currently employed in three ways. First, to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective. Second, to designate the manner in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others. Third, to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the struggle; it is a question therefore of the means destined to obtain victory (1983: 224-225).

The analysis of certain social practices in terms of a concept of "strategy" is potentially useful therefore for at least two principal reasons. The first is that such a concept need not rely on the old dichotomy between agentless structures (objectivism) and structureless agents (subjectivism). Rather the concept of strategy speaks to the procedures involved in the organization, regulation, and

reorganization of socially conditioned subjectivities. The second is that the concept of strategy focuses on the specifically practical uses of techniques, rationalities, and procedures operating in a field of power. Strategy operates in otherwords in a domain of confrontation of socially constituted forces in which the outcome -- failure or success, loss or victory -- is not given in advance.[21]

Now I wish to propose that rather than undertaking an analysis of yaktovil in terms of the familiar metaphor of a "communicational field" in which effects are said to be dependent upon the correct interpretation of "experience," we might more adequately employ the metaphor of strategy. The Sinhala yaktovil, I will argue, is a specific "rationality" (in Foucault's sense of historically varying instrumentalities embodied in determinate social practices) employed by Sinhalas to achieve a specific practical objective -- that of ridding an afflicted person of the malign influence of the eyesight of yakkū. Yaktovil is a distinctive *strategy* employed to reorganize the Sinhala self and reconstitute the Sinhala body in relation to the malign eyesight of yakkū.

Yaktovil, as I have shown (in Chapter One), consists of specific micro-techniques whose medium of operation is the malevolent energy of the eyesight of yakkū, that is, diṣṭiya. The work of yaktovil, the *gurukama*, consists in the regulation and manipulation of this diṣṭiya. This work however, as I have been concerned to emphasize (in Chapter Two), is a work of confrontation between aduras and yakkū. It is also, of course, a public confrontation inasmuch as the struggle between these two socially constituted forces must be seen to be enacted and resolved. And part of the reason for this is that the exact result *cannot* be known in advance. Not that aduras are not confident that they can subdue yakkū. But many are the stories of failures, and, moreover, there are limits to the powers of aduras themselves. Remember that this was the unfortunate state of affairs in Leela Amma's case. Whereas the skilled ädura was able to "turn" "one side" of the kodivina (the sorcery), that is to "cut" the effects of part of it, he was unable to remove entirely the effects of the yakkū.

Let us now examine some of the procedures and techniques in yaktovil which are directed specifically at attaining various aspects of this objective.

One such very prominent technique is the one referred to in the phrase, *muna ata pisa gasema*, which I glossed as "wiping the face with the hands." In this technique, as I described it (see

Chapter Two), the āturaya, having placed the requisite offerings (coins, flowers, betel leaves) in the offering tray (*taṭṭuva*), brings her hands up to her face and with a downward action brings them to rest momentarily on the outstretched tray (*taṭṭuva*). This is done three times as the ädura repeats the significant phrases,

> daha mahā dōṣa nivārnay (the ten great ill-effects are finished)
> asu mahā dōṣa nivārnay (the eighty great ill-effects are finished)
> kōṭiyak dōṣa nivārnay (the million ill-effects are finished)
> tīnduvi, tīnduvi.

It is necessary to repeat this whole procedure on every occasion on which some item is being passed on to yakkū -- e.g., to conclude all offering sequences including those when the cock is touched, during the *avamangalle pidēnna* when the red cloth is passed to the ädura, and similarly during the *baliya pāvādīma* when the curtain (*kaḍaturāva*) is thrown over the clay effigy marking the formal end of the tovil ceremony. Such a procedure, I would argue, is impossible to grasp unless the relationship between eyesight as energy and its action of "falling" on and "covering" the body is understood. By means of this practice the ill-effects of the eyesight of yakkū are, as it were, passed back to yakkū. The malign presence of yakkū is literally "wiped" (*pisanava*) from the body of the afflicted person. So that yaktovil constitutes a practice in which the body of the āturaya is progressively relieved of the eyesight that has "covered" it and become "attached" to it.

Another prominent technique in yaktovil in which the āturaya's relation to diṣṭiya is reorganized is that embodied in the practice known as *dekonavilakku pidēnna*, the Offering of the Double-Sided Torch. Yaktovil, I have explained, is about the "deflection" (*maga harinava*) and "stopping" (*natarakaranava*) of diṣṭiya. (For Siṅhalas recall, eyesight is at once a presence and an energy.) In this extraordinary procedure in which there occurs a rapid intensification of the whole atmosphere of the tovil, the adura "deflects" the ill-effects of diṣṭiya, i.e., dōṣaya, from the āturaya, and indeed from her immediate environs, onto his own body. This is considered a highly dangerous procedure because the adura must attract the malevolence of yakkū to himself. He then "takes" the malevolent energy (*diṣṭi aragannava*) and runs to the *purālapala*, where the malevolent action of eyesight is "stopped."

Again, my argument is that to grasp this procedure and the effects it produces, it is necessary to understand the local poetics of eyesight. As with the Portuguese and the sandalwood statue of Upuluvanna, eyesight is something that can be "deflected," moved from a particular path or direction and sent along another. So "deflected" its malevolence is effectively "stopped."

Yaktovil is a public confrontation of "antagonistic wills." As I outlined in Chapter One, yaktovil is the most elaborate practice of the arts of gurukama. Its fundamental principle therefore is that of "binding" yakkū. This "binding" always involves the adura in a more or less difficult struggle with the recalcitrant yakkū. Yakkū, having "cast" their "look" on someone are ultimately obliged to accept the offerings made to them by an adura. This recall, is the *vivaranaya* (permission) issued to them by the Buddha. However, yakkū only accepted the Buddha's terms under duress so to put it. They are still inclined toward their old designs, looking for blood and corpses, and wanting to dance and sing. So on each tovil occasion they have to be cajoled, bribed, supplicated, coerced, entreated, tricked, to take the offerings and remove the ill-effects of their malevolent eyesight. Here then is the significance of those sequences I described in Chapter Two in which the ädura appeals, instructs, admonishes, and questions the āturaya to both find out whether the rites and offerings are satisfactory and to make them less refractory and more responsive to the *anaguna* of the Buddha.

In these sequences, as I explained, a condition of *āvēsaya* is induced in the āturaya by means of techniques used to intensify the presence of yakkū, to intensify the presence of their diṣṭiya. It is a condition induced in order to elicit a certain kind of speech from the āturaya, one directly conditioned by the intensified presence of yakkū. When questioned, the āturaya is said to speak *with* the *āvēsa diṣṭiya* of yakkū. In the sequences I described, when this condition of *āvēsaya* was induced, the adura utilized various rhetorical strategies not only to determine whether the offerings were satisfactory and the Buddha's commands and virtues (*anaguna*) valid, but also to try and persuade the yakkū to extend the period during which Leela Amma was untroubled by diṣṭiya.

According to Leela Amma, however, the sīmāva or limit could not be extended. The yakkū were unwilling. They could not be persuaded despite the appeals made by the ädura. However the rhetorical strategies were not thereby a failure. The fact that the larger object was not obtained is not of primary significance. The procedures employed to try to secure a longer time-limit -- the

drama of speeches, appeals, etc. -- makes all the more convincing the significance of the minimal limit.

Conclusion

Let me now restate the main arguments of this chapter. I will do so in some detail because I think it important that both the *kind* of argument I have been advancing, as well as the argument itself, be kept in mind.

I began by recalling us to the Sinhala concept of diṣṭiya introduced in the first chapter, and particularly to the idea that this malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū effectively constitutes their very presence. I then went on to describe what I called a Sinhala poetics of eyesight, meaning by this the distinctive metaphorical practice through which aspects of Sinhala cultural life are authoritatively constructed. The concept of diṣṭiya, I proposed -- the concept, that is, of its potential effects, and of the possible ways of preventing and reversing them -- has to be understood in terms of this broader poetics of eyesight.

Sinhalas, I suggested, have a distinctive conception of eyesight. It is at once extrusive, and mobile. And, most importantly, it is energic. Eyesight for Sinhalas in other words, is a *force*; and a force moreover that is *transmitted* in this medium of "the look." Not only does eyesight move outwards from the seer to the seen, but, so moving, it *makes contact* with the seen: when "put" the look (*bälma*) "touches." A simile might be the image of a transparent beam of energy (recall Upuluvanna). And therefore Sinhala eyesight can potentially *change* or *modify* the objects brought into contact with it.

It is this potential in the register of eyesight, I have argued, that is important to an understanding of the *subjectifying* effects of diṣṭiya. For seeing, and (most particularly), being seen, is for Sinhalas a fundamentally *ethical* practice. Eyesight organizes and defines a distinctive Sinhala truth. It forms a register marked off and invested with special qualities and attributes. And it is involved in the formation of distinctive physical and mental dispositions.

The Sinhala body, I showed, is formed as a *distinctive spatial organism*. It is constituted as an organism vulnerable to the energy of eyesight, an energy that can "fall" upon, and, so falling,

"cover" the body. This body moreover, is an organism which can "contain" this malevolent energy of eyesight, diṣṭiya, in a special way. It "wraps" the blood and causes the humors -- wind (*vāta*), bile (*pita*), and phlegm (*sema*) -- of which the body is made to become "agitated." I suggested however that it is necessary to distinguish this Siṅhala idea of the body "containing" the malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū, and therefore also, in some sense, the very presence of these dreaded figures, from popular anthropological conceptions of "possession" in which the body is *entered*, as it were through an orifice. The Siṅhala body, I argued, cannot be read through the Christian simile of a hollow vessel capable of containing, in an inner space or cavity, an anthropomorphic presence.

This body, I went on to argue, forms the condition for the constitution of a distinctive Siṅhala subject, a subject potentially exposed to the *subjectifying* force of eyesight. The vulnerability to eyesight, I showed, is linked to other constitutive dispositions, principal among which are the related dispositions to fright (*baya*) and to the consequences of a state of being alone (*tanikama*). *Tanikama*, that settled condition in which the mind (*hita*) is, as it were, apart, and in an unguarded state, is an especially exposed one. For, apart and unguarded, the mind is susceptible to being "startled" and "shaken" by a fright. And fright is an indication that one has been "touched" by the force of diṣṭiya. And with this fright, the mind becomes preoccupied (*yomuvenava*), and this preoccupation results in the blood (and thus the humors it contains) becoming "agitated."

Finally I turned to the practice of yaktovil, in my discussion of which I employed a concept of *strategy*. Yaktovil, I argued, constitutes a practice of confrontation between the socially constituted forces of aduras and yakkū. Yaktovil consists of micro-techniques of "binding" yakkū. In order to accomplish this however, aduras must engage in a more or less difficult contestation of positions, by turns propitiating, urging, reproaching, yakkū to abide by the commands of the Buddha. Yaktovil moreover is a confrontation that takes place in the medium of diṣṭiya. Yaktovil consists in the regulation and manipulation of diṣṭiya. By means of specific procedures this malevolent presence of yakkū, the malign energy of their eyesight, is removed, or, more accurately, "wiped" (*pisanava*) and "deflected" (*maga harinava*) from the body of the afflicted person, and its influence "stopped" (*natarakaranava*).

It might have seemed as though it took a long detour to arrive at this discussion of yaktovil. However my argument has been a quite simple one, namely, that unless we are prepared to accept anthropological analyses in terms of demonological assumptions and presuppositions about the intrinsic efficacy of specific, historically constituted cultural forms, we cannot understand yaktovil until we try to understand the local poetics of eyesight that informs the Siṅhala discourse of yakkū, and particularly the minor practices of *gurukama*.

1. For succinct statements on cultural poetics see Greenblatt (1980, 1988).

2. See Paranavitana (1953) for a study of the archaeological ruins of Devinuwara. In this invaluable work the author argues that Upuluvanna and the contemporary deity of Devinuwara, Viṣṇu, are different figures. The latter he maintains supplants the former sometime in the post-Portuguese period. This position appears to be contestable (Obeyesekere, G., personal communication). At the least, for the people of Devinuwara there is no difference to be made between them.

3. Visiting this famous Rock Temple at Dambulla myself in early 1987, the *kapurāla* or officiant of the Viṣṇu *dēvāla* showed me the sandalwood image of the deity, Upuluvanna/Viṣṇu, repeating the story in all its essential details.

4. I am particularly grateful to Preminda Jacobs for bringing this very useful article to my attention.

5. The Middle Path is "the noble eightfold path which, by avoiding the 2 extremes of sensual lust and self-castigation, leads to enlightenment and deliverance and suffering" (Nyanatiloka 1950: 83).

6. One *yoduna* is equal to somewhere between nine and fifteen miles.

7. *Hita pähädenava* means, literally, "the mind is given clarity."

8. It is typically related to two other malign energies, *katavaha* (lit., mouth poison), and *hōvaha*, the malignity of a merely grunted expression.

9. On one occasion I was told that these malevolent people are recognizable, at least in part, by the special quality of their spittle (*kela*). It tends to be sticky, adhering to the lips while the person speaks: *tolen toleṭa kela nūl adena vagē venava katakaranakoṭa* (when speaking the spittle is pulled from lip to lip like thread).

10. For a sort of survey of the phenomena of the "evil eye" in South Asia, see Maloney (1976).

11. *Mēvavenava* is an interesting Sinhala verb. Literally it means something like "to become like this." It is typically used to indicate something happening where precisely what it is that happened is either assumed to be known (because it is in any case what generally happens in such instances), or is not easily describable, at least in the current context. In this instance the verb usually used is *kupitavenava* or *kipenava*, both of which may be glossed as "to become agitated."

12. An exception to this is Asad (1983a).

13. For a displacement of this problematic in the field of the body's visibility see Foucault (1973).

14. See Michel Feher (1989).

15. Or again, in response to my question whether one can *see* diṣṭiya, one adura described a situation in which one sees, not the diṣṭiya itself, but the immediate effects of its presence:

Now people go to the cemetery to do *gurukama*. When [aduras] go to perform koḍivinas (acts of sorcery], and this and that, the diṣṭiya is called (*diṣṭi anḍagahanava*). Those *pulutu taṭṭuvas* (the offering trays with roasted food) having been prepared, some people can see. There is simply pestering (*nikan hirihara karanava*). Sand is thrown (*väli gahanava*), stones are thrown (*gal gahanava*), there is hooting (*hū kiyanava*). That means that it is when the diṣṭiya fell that those signs occur.

16. It might be useful to recall here that yakkū never actually *eat* food (as much as they would like to). The Buddha has expressly forbidden it on account of their former cannibalistic ways. They can therefore only "imbibe the taste" (*rasa ūranava*) of food with their desiring eyes. This is the meaning of the concept *sēman gannava*, "to feast with the eyes."

17. *Vinivida* also has the sense of "perforating," "piercing," or "passing through." It is often used with the verbal noun *penīma* to connote "transparency" (*vinivida penīma*).

18. One kind of clarification is perhaps necessary at the outset. As is well known, doctrinally Buddhism denies the existence of a "self"; it is the doctrine of *anattā*, the "not-self." This is, as Nyanatiloka puts it, "the only real specific Buddhist doctrine, with which the entire Buddhist structure stands and falls" (1950: 11; see also Collins 1982). However, to argue on this basis that it is therefore illegitimate to speak analytically about "self," or more specifically, "formations of self" in Sinhala Buddhist society is, it seems to me, to confuse conceptual levels. The analytic use of a concept of "self" does not necessarily commit one to the attempt to identify and represent, a priori, some essential, eternal, Sinhala Self, an immortal Soul. The concept of "self" may mark out, analytically, specific formations of ways of speaking about moral dispositions, vulnerabilities, apptitudes, etc. The important question then, it seems to me, is not whether Sinhalas have or do not have a "Self" (which in any case is not something *essential* to the Western individual, but authoritatively *established* in the Christian tradition that constitutes her/him), but rather what kinds of figures, statements, etc., are employed pronominally to mark a distinctive mode of address within social life. My argument is simply that one of the elements that make up a distinctive Sinhala mode of address is *eyesight*.

19. See his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980). Self-fashioning has to do with the more or less deliberate imposition upon oneself of a distinctive "sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires" (ibid.: 1).

20. Wednesday and Saturday are *kemmura davas*, days when it is especially auspicious to ask favours from the *devas* or gods.

21. Asad (1987) uses a concept of "programme" for those monastic practices in which the outcome is already known. The concept of "strategy" he reserves for pre-Christian practices.

CONCLUSION

I have been concerned in this thesis with an anthropological inquiry into the Siṁhala discourse of *yakkū* and the practice of *yaktovil* that discourse informs. It has been a study, I have emphasized, in anthropology and history. In the course of trying to analyze aspects of this Siṁhala discourse and practice, I have attempted to show how and why for a critical postcolonial anthropology an historical approach is indispensable.

In this enterprise, I suggested, the work of the late Michel Foucault -- that inestimable "historian of culture" -- is invaluable. Foucault's work defies summary identification (recall his splendidly irreverent remark closing the Introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*[1]). The sense of what I wish to emphasize about the theoretical opening provided by his work however is well conveyed by Maurice Blanchot who wrote of Foucault that,

> In any event, Foucault is the man always on the move, alone, secretive, and who, because of that, distrusts the marvels of interiority, refuses the traps of subjectivity, asking where and how there emerges a discourse entirely surface and shimmering, but bereft of mirages -- a discourse not alien to the search for truth, as was believed, but one that finally reveals the perils of that search and its ambiguous relations with the myriad configurations of power (1987: 68).

These are lessons for a postcolonial anthropology. I have suggested therefore that whereas there is little doubt that the *object* of anthropological discourse, "culture," stands in need of reformulation -- and in my own treatment of Siṁhala practices I have attempted to mark out some possible avenues -- kinds of criticism that argue, on the one hand, that cultures are mobile, open-ended, unbounded systems ("postmodernist"), or on the other that attempts to construct representations of cultures are by definition acts of violence ("postcolonialist"), are in the end unsatisfactory. It has seemed to me that a more fruitful way to proceed is one which tries to analyze

historically produced configurations of authoritative discourse: both in theoretical practices (such as anthropology), and in local cultural practices (such as Siṁhala Buddhism).

Now one of the things that I have been particularly concerned to emphasize in this thesis is the need for anthropologists to pay close attention to the specific poetics of local discourses and practices. Anthropology has, of course, to be a properly theoretical discourse. No one denies it that. This thesis too endeavours to work with specific theoretical categories -- e.g., authoritative discourse, strategy, etc. However there is a distinction to be insisted upon here between a priori and decontextualized schemas based on elaborate preconceptions about cultural subjects and those that attempt to use theoretical concepts to understand the work performed by local discourses and practices in producing variable subjects. The basic point, of course, is that the problematic within which one operates determines the possible field of questions that can appear.

One of the problems with the anthropology of the Siṁhala yaktovil is precisely the use of uncritical preconceptions. And the result has been the virtual neglect of a surprisingly prominent local concept in the Siṁhala discourse of yakkū, namely, the concept of *diṣṭiya*, the malign energy of the eyesight of yakkū. I have suggested that this neglect cannot simply be fortuitous, but must be understood in terms of the *kind* of object anthropologists have constructed for themselves when they talk about yaktovil.

It was part of the project of this thesis to examine this object. I suggested for instance that the theoretical problematic in which the anthropological analysis of yaktovil it is embedded was inaugurated in a specific British colonial Christian enterprise -- the evangelical attempt to refashion native subjects and the ensuing concern to identify (in order to eradicate) authentic native practices. Anthropology, a secular discourse, has in determinate ways taken over these concerns.

In a related but not identical way, I also suggested that there is a need to carefully rethink the anthropological object of Siṁhala Buddhism in more adequately historical terms, that is, in terms that facilitate a grasp of the local theme of power and knowledge. My concern was that the very eloquent plea for a systemic appreciation of Siṁhala religious discourses and practices, though critical of colonial Christian assumptions, stopped short of raising questions about the way or ways in which

what was/is made to count as the authentic Sinhala Buddhist tradition was established. I suggested that this "establishment" created specifiable spaces for certain unauthorized practices -- e.g., *gurukama* -- spaces which are however utilized and mobilized in ways other than those authorized by the Canon. My point was that this is a relation of power/knowledge.

Sinhalas fashion themselves, as do all peoples, in distinct ways within determinate "games of truth." And for Sinhalas eyesight constitutes a register in relation to which physical and mental dispositions are formed and re-formed. I have however, in my discussion of this Sinhala poetics of eyesight only introduced an area which seems to me a potentially useful one for further investigation. How does power invest the Sinhala body with this acute vulnerability to the energy of eyesight? What are the ways in which Sinhalas turn themselves into subjects disposed to a fright linked to the movement of a malign glance? How do Sinhalas learn to recognize themselves as subjects of eyesight?

NOTES

1. I refer of course to the final paragraph of that unforgettable Introduction in which Foucault wrote, in answer to his own rhetorical question,

> What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing -- with a rather shaky hand -- a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write (1972: 17).

APPENDIX I

THE STORY OF IRAMUDUN RIRI YAKSAYA

The Iramudun Rīri yaksayā is one of several Rīri yaksayās. I was given the names of eight besides the Iramudun: Lē Rīri yaksayā, Avamangalla Rīri yaksayā, Maru Rīri yaksayā, Darahava Rīri yaksayā, Madana Rīri yaksayā, Rata yakungē Rīri yaksayā, Sohon dapavila sohon balana Rīri yaksayā, and Diya keliya Rīri yaksayā (see also Wirz 1954: 27-28). Each of these is said to have been born under a different set of circumstances. The following is a story which was told to me by S.A. Piyasena about the birth of Iramudun Rīri yaksayā.

> The Iramudun Rīri yaksayā was born in Sawatpuranuwara in Dambadiva. His mother was the Venerable Queen Rangiri (*Rangiri bisavun vahanse*, lit., the Venerable Queen of the Golden Rock) who lived at Ratran Māligava (Golden Palace) in Sawatpuranuwara. One day, having conceived an affection (*premayak karala*) for the God-King Sūriya (*Sūriya divyarājaya*), it occured to her to go and see him. Ordinarily the Queen is not allowed to leave the Palace. But at any rate it occured to her to go and see God-King Sūriya at the time of the rising sun (*pāyan ira*). When this desire (*āsāva*) occured to the Queen she informed the King who ordered the servants to make preparations for the journey. The Queen was adorned with a red cloth (*rat saluvak*) and a divine cloth (*diva saluvak*), and so adorned she was presented to the God-King Sūriya. In his presence she bowed, hands clasped in a gesture of worship and respect (*namaskāra kara*). She bowed three times. As a result of her faith (*sraddha*) a child was conceived in her womb (*darugabak hatagatta*). After ten months the baby was born. It was born during the

auspicious time of *Anura* (an auspicious period). When it was born the King had the Brahmanas come to tell him what lay in store for the child. Having looked at the signs on the baby's body, they said, "King, this prince is a fiery one, he has the countenance of a yaksayā (*yakves*)." They said that they were unable to save him. The baby however was cared for lovingly.

One day at the age of seven the prince asked, "Who is my father?" But the Queen can't say who his father is. There is no father (*tātta kenek na*). Then the Queen realized that it was from her gesture of worship (*namaskāra kalā ēken*) to the God-King Sūriya that the baby was conceived. She had been desiring (*āsāvakin sitiya*) him. The child however insists on her telling him who his father is. And when she can no longer elude the question the Queen tells him that his father is the God-King Sūriya. She tells him, "son, go to the Sūriya Audience Hall *(mandalaya)* and secure (*illagannava*) a warrant (*varama*) from your father."

Then at the age of sixteen years old this prince, having dressed in a red cloth (*rat saluvak*), covered one side with a blue cloth (*nilavarna saluvak*), and, bearing a death crown on his head (*mini ottuvak dāgena*), a *cakrayudhaya* (discus) in his left hand, a large sword (*loku kaduvak*) in his right, he set out for the Sūriya Hall. His height was about three *gavvas* (approx., twelve miles). The prince climbed to the top of the death mountain peak (*minikuta pārvataya*), and asked for and received permission (*varama*) from the gods in the divine world (*divya lōkavala*) to go to the Sūriya Hall.

The Sūriya Hall had four doorways. At the north doorway he called three times. The God-King looking out and seeing a beautiful prince (*lassana kumāraya*) asked who he was and where he came from. The prince replied, "I am Prince Kantarāma (*Kantarāma kumāraya*) who was born on your behalf (*oba venuven upan*)." He then asked Sūriya to give him permission (*varama*) to go with him when he travels on his *ratacakraya* (spinning vehicle). This permission was given. And from that harshness (*tadagatiya*) the prince became a powerful (*balagatta*) and dangerous (*napuru*) yaksayā.

APPENDIX II

THE STORY OF MAHA KALU KUMARAYA

This story, the story of Mahā Kalu Kumāraya, was told to me by S.A. Piyasena. Piyasena insisted that the three figures Kalu Kumāraya, Sanni Kalu Kumāraya, and Mahā Kalu Kumāraya were not the same, and that indeed they have different birth stories. Perhaps not all Siṁhala adepts would agree with this, but among aduras and kapurālas I met in Sri Lanka Piyasena was unmatched in his gift for the minor legends of the Siṁhalas. The story of Mahā Kalu Kumāraya is as follows:

> In the territory of Sandagana there was a kōvil (Hindu temple) called Sandagana. It was a very beautiful rock (*alankara parvataya*). There were blue lotus ponds everywhere. It was a beautiful place, like a divine city (*divya purayak*). Here lived a Queen named Murtu Mala. This esteemed Queen Murtu Mala, having gotten married, conceived a baby in her womb (*kusa darugabak hatagatta*). When the baby was conceived a desire (*dola duk*) not to see beautiful women occured to her. As a result no woman could come to that province. It was a very dangerous wrath (*bohōma darunu krōdayak*) that was generated by the Queen. This Queen Murtu Mala had very good qualities (*guna yahapat*), was obedient (*kī karu*) and saintly (*sānta*). But after this baby was conceived, because of the wrath, she could not bear the sight of beautiful women.
>
> After ten months a Prince was born. He was a resplendently beautiful Prince. When the child was born the King was told to name him and feed him rice. The Brahmanas were called to give an account of his future. What they told the King was very frightening. They said that when this Prince grows up he will act in a hostile manner

(*antima naturukam karanava*) toward pregnant women and beautiful women. In whatever way he can, he will destroy pregnant women and babies. This is what the Brahmanas said to the King.

However because he is a Prince nothing could be done. He had to be brought up. At the age of seven years he began hiding in places where beautiful women come and go. Seeing them he would frighten them and make them ill. Seeing a pregnant woman he would touch her stomach, and so doing the baby would be lost. Or if the baby was born it would be blue (*nil pāṭa gahenava*). It would die. It was then that the name Mahā Kalu Kumāraya was given to this Prince.

He started to destroy the whole country. And it was from then that he had to be supplicated to (*kannalav karanava*) and given all sorts of food and drink. Only then could the ill-effects (*dōṣaya*) be put an end to (*nivārana karanava*). And since then the ceremony (*yāgaya*) called Mahā Kalu Kumāra Samayama was performed.

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