

Yak Tovil

Between health and entertainment



Hege M. Larsen

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"What time is it", I asked.

"It is noon", you said,

and in the very same moment

you gave your reply,

the truth of time forced a new answer

As with time, as with this thesis

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Part 1

1 Introduction

Sri Lanka is an island located in the geographical area of South Asia, close to the very southern seashore of India. The population of Sri Lanka counts 17 million and they are all part of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The most prominent group is the Sinhalese, comprising 74% of the population. The second largest group are Tamils, which make up about 18% of the entire population and are split into two fractions, the Sri Lankan Tamils (13%) and the Indian Tamils (5%). The Indian Tamils came to the island during the British colonial period. The Moors represent the majority of Muslims, accounting for 7 % of the Lankan population. The aboriginals of Sri Lanka, the Veddas, today count only 0.3 % of the population, and lastly, there is a small minority commonly referred to as Gypsies and Burghers.

The mythological ancestor of the Sinhalese, Vijaya, came to Sri Lanka on the same day as Buddha passed into Nirvana. The legend (Mahavamsa) tells that the last thing Lord Buddha said before he died was; «*Vijaya, son of king Sihabahu, is come to Lanka from the country of Lala, together with seven hundred followers. In Lanka, O lord of gods, will my religion be established, therefore carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka.*» (Aksland 1990:4-5). In other words, Vijaya with his followers were sent by Buddha to Sri Lanka in order to establish the Buddhist religion, under the protection of Sakra, the lord of gods. The legend further tells us that Vijaya marries a female yaka (a Sri Lankan aboriginal girl), whom he begets a son and a daughter. Vijaya later marries a princess from Madurai in South India, and abandons his yaka wife and two children. The female yaka gets killed by her own people, but her children hide in Adam's peak, a holy mountain on Sri Lanka. The boy marries his sister when they grow up, and they become the ancestors of the Pulinda-tribe. Vijaya becomes a benevolent ruler, and reigns for 38 years. (M. Aksland 1990).

This myth refers to three important historical facts from the island's history. Firstly it tells us that the ancestor of the population referred to as Sinhalese, came from the northern part of India. Moreover Vijaya marries a South Indian lady, which again refers to the important cultural connections between Sri Lanka and Southern India. Another consequence of migration is the development of two commonly used languages, Sinhala and Tamil, today distinguishing the two main "ethnic groups" of the country. Secondly the myth refers to the aboriginal population of Sri Lanka; «*Vijaya marries a female yaka*» (*ibid.*). *yaka* in addition to *naga* are terms referring to people who worshipped spirits given these names. In other words the ancient Sri Lankan folk belief was that of believing in *yakku* (plural for *yaka*) and *nagas*. Thirdly this myth foresees the mythological conversion from folk belief to Buddhism, which according to the legend (Mahavamsa) took place when Asoka was the emperor of India, during the years 250-210 BC. This was the time when Asoka's son Mahinda came to Sri Lanka and converted the ruling emperor Devanampiya Tissa to Buddhism (K.M. De Silva 1981:9).

For this thesis the relation between the ancient folk belief and the doings and teachings of Buddha is of highest significance. The *yak tovils*, the Buddhist ritual healing-practise in focus, is a marginal Buddhist practise which are preserved in the southern region of Sri Lanka. This practise is a direct consequence of the impact Buddhist ideology has had upon the ancient spirit cults. Further, the religious syncretism between the Hindu vedas and tantrism, the *yaka* system, Buddhism and many more, has made the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon as well as its religious practises extremely complicated. Anyhow, in contemporary Sri Lanka, the *yakku* are regarded as illness-causing malevolent spirits, as agents of human misfortune. Following the Buddhist pantheon, there are millions of *yakku*, still only a few are of fundamental importance for the practise in focus. *Yaksadosa* (*yaka* trouble) is the term referring to any misfortune caused by *yakku*. Before you get to know more about this phenomenon, its "nature" and cure, it is in its place with a general introduction of the content to this thesis and the leading theoretical approaches.

A phenomenological approach to the study of social practise.

"To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted; in the first place we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities. But this analysis is still abstract, for we exist in both ways at once. There is, therefore, never determinism and never absolute choice, I am never a thing and never bare consciousness. In fact, even our own pieces of initiative, even the situations which are chosen, bear us on, once they have been entered upon by virtue of a state rather than an act."

Merleau Ponty (1962) quoted in Michael Jackson (1996:23).

I have chosen a phenomenological orientation to the study of the *yak adura's* ritual healing-practise. Phenomenology is a philosophical direction, developed by Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau Ponty and others, which is concerned with "being-in-the-world". *"Phenomenology is the scientific study of experience. It is an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematizing"* (Michael Jackson 1996:2). A phenomenological approach to the lifeworlds of humans, is to take what people say and do seriously, as well as putting focus upon how cultural phenomena are constituted by humans who are intersubjectively related to each other. Further, the phenomenological approach to the study of social lifeworlds maintains that; *"The world is never something finished, something which thought can bring to a close; the world is always in the making, and our thoughts, like our actions, have meaning only in relation to the practical and social life in which we are engaged"* (Michael Jackson 1996:4). In other words, phenomenology is a philosophical direction that takes aboard the existence of cultural complexity and variation. I will argue, however, that even if the lifeworld is in flux and in constant change, humans everywhere have the capability to articulate generalised knowledge about their "being-in-their-world".

As Michael Jackson points to in the same article, magicians and the positivist scholars in many ways perform the same task. A positivistic scientific approach to culture seeks to «freeze» social dynamics in order to find generalised objective social knowledge for the purpose of being able to manipulate and control human action. The practise of a ritual healer (or magician) like the *yak aduras* to be studied in this thesis, also seeks to understand human interactional dynamics in order to influence their very being as well. It is the case, however, that there is a wide difference between the work of *yak aduras* and that of positivistic social science. Drawing on the general conceptualisation of the positivistic science as worked out by Schaanning (1992), the main difference is to be found in the conception about mind and body, man and nature. According to Schaanning, a western positivistic orientation tends to hold that man and nature, mind and body are separable, and that the former works instrumentally upon the other. In contrast, for the *adura* the distinction between man and nature, mind and body is not valuable, as they sustain that "everything" in the world is substantially related with each other. Furthermore, balance of bodily substances is the ideal for every being. This is not any easy ideal to live up to since one's "substance" is affected by both the worldly elements and of substances of other beings. In other words, the mind/body dualism is not present, and intersubjectivity as a fundament for "being-in-the-world" is already claimed.

Bourdieu is another important inspiration for this work. Michael Jackson claims that; *"Bourdieu repudiates phenomenology because it fails to account for the historical and cultural conditions under which forms of self-consciousness and sociality emerge"* (1992:20). Bourdieu in this way finds the phenomenological ideal too culturally relativistic and descriptive. Nonetheless, he brings forth their critique of the positivistic science since he finds that an objective ideal in the studies of human and society fails on its own premises since it distinguishes practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge (Bourdieu 1990:25). Bourdieu's project is then to get to know human society through their cultural practises. Bourdieu does not give up, however, the project of recognising structure. A structure of a practise is, he argues, its restrictions and regularities, its

«opus operatum», and in practise these knowledge structures engage phenomenological qualities he calls «modus operandi». The generative principle of a practise he further calls "habitus". As I understand "habitus", it is peoples' predispositions into a field of practise, and habitus influences action and experience. Further in Bourdieu's terms, the internalisation of a habitus, an access to a field of a practise is limited to its field of operation. (Csordas 1994)

Michael Jackson argues that the main advantage gained through a phenomenological approach to the study of lifeworlds is that; *"Any theory of culture, habitus or lifeworld must include some account of those moments in social life when the customary given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended and negated. At such moments, crisis transforms the world from an apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of possibilities"* (1996:22). This means that lifeworld is full of possibilities which when engaged, shape and change our worlds. This is a phenomenological potential which, when actualised, becomes our experiences of being. In my view, it is useful to link Bourdieu's theory with phenomenology since his focus on structure, practises and habitus gives the phenomenological orientation a frame to discuss the human lifeworlds within, not only see that "change" opens up to possibilities, but moreover highlight how the possibilities of lifeworlds gets constituted with recognisable form and content within their specific fields of operation.

Based on these assumptions, my intention is to try to grasp the phenomenological qualities recognised in the *yak aduras'* practise, and how these are engaged through their work. The *aduras* themselves are ritual healers, and among western scholars it has been important to find rational explanations of why the *aduras* ritual practise is capable of bringing cure. The practise has been read as ontology, as a question of belief, rather than epistemology, as a knowledge-practise. The term "knowledge-practise" is adopted from Kapferer (1997),¹ a work which pursues a similar approach to the *aduras* practise. In my view the work of the *aduras* is pragmatical, and therefore I choose to term their work a knowledge-practise which has both an

¹ Kapferer has changed his analytical perspective from his work "A celebration of demons" (1983) to "The feast of the sorcerer" (1997). This change of perspective is highly significant for the general argumentation of this work, and will be clarified in Part 2 below. Still I will use both works in this thesis as a whole and ask the reader to keep these references distingusihed.

opus operatum and a modus operandi as well as being a part of the habitus of people in its area of operation. In other words, the main intention of this thesis is to get to know the *aduras'* practise in their own terms, in their own field of knowledge, and in their own field of operation. In order to highlight the efficacy of the *aduras'* healing practice, I will point to the phenomenological potentials of their practise, and what an actualisation of these effect when engaged in ritual performance.

By taking the *aduras'* point of view I hope to supplement earlier literature on their rituals. I will try to give them a voice, to convey how they explain their practise, and how they experience their work as *aduras*. Further, to accept the *aduras'* concepts about their work is very suitable in order to build an argument on some accepted theories about ritual practise. My main focus is the dynamism between healing rituals, public shows and the cultural policy of the present government. Since the *aduras* and their work are my main focus, important anthropological discourses which their work highlights, will primarily be included in my analysis in order to clarify interesting aspects of the *aduras'* knowledge-practise.

My major ambition in this thesis is then to show how the professional healers of *yaksadosa*, the *yak aduras*, commonly called *adura*, adopt their professional skills of *mantras* (charms), dancing, acting, singing, drumming and offerings throughout performance of the *yak tovils* (*yaka* offering-ceremonies) in order to cure *atureas* (patients). This will be done in main chapters containing a presentation of the *yak aduras*, their ritual tools (and skills), the diagnostic process and a detailed description of a healing ritual named *Mahasona Samayama*. My second ambition, still not less ambitious, is to follow the *aduras* into another field of occupation, that of performing secular shows, and lastly I will make some reflections about how this practice has effects upon their ritual work. The ritual concept² in focus is the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual which

² I will use the term ritual concept in this thesis with reference to the Norwegian meaning of the term which is useful in order to point to that "public performances" has generating "forms", content and modes which makes them distinctive from each other. I.e. a houseparty is a generic term for a "public performance" where different music genres like "trance", "ambient", "chill-out", "drum and base" etc. is a part of the concept of "house party". The content of a "house party" differs from place to place, from night to night, but the generating

is only one of the rituals I saw performed. The *Mahasana Samayama* is mainly chosen since it was the one ritual which was most frequently performed during fieldwork, (it was also the most "exiting" one), but also since it is the ritual Kapferer (1983), built his analysis upon.

Chapter outline

This thesis is divided into three parts, where the first part is intended to clarify important concepts relating to the healing-practise in focus, in which Buddhism and ritual "tools" are the most essential "opus operatum". In this part I also intend to answer the question: «who are the *yak aduras*», i.e. who are they seen in relation to the Sinhalese caste system, to Buddhism and to the practise they preserve? I follow a thesis that the question of caste-relationship as well as the fact that various *adura* communities preserve "different" "healing traditions" point out that the practise the *aduras* preserve is fluid in its form and content. Their knowledge practise is always in the making. It is also my intention to show the various fields of specialisation which their practise invites to, and that the *aduras'* talents and skills decide which kinds of work they do. Further I discuss Obeyesekere's (1969) claims about the «role-transformation» the *aduras* are subject to by being a «normal» villager and at the same time a "healer", and argue that the *aduras* themselves do not verify Obeyesekere's notions.

The *aduras'* practise is a knowledge-practise, divided into many subjects. Their "theory" is recorded in the myth material they preserve, and to actualise the process these myths refer to, (in practise), requires hard training and guidance. In Chapter 4 I put focus upon the various categories of texts, *mantra* (charms (cosmic sound)) and *yantra* (cosmic form), dancing, and the special ritual items which *aduras* use in the *Mahasana Samayama* ritual. It is my intention to clarify the relation between these «tools» and the cosmic and bodily processes they refer to and engage.

principle of the "concept" stays the same. *Tovil* is already a generic term with reference to "great offering rituals", so by making reference to the distinct *tovils* as concepts, I suggest a more nuanced distinction and indicate at there is both special kinds of ritual acts which the separate concepts of *tovil* includes, and simultaneously I point to that every "tovil" of the same category is not identical.

Diagnosis is an important part of the *aduras* practise. If there were no way to detect the spirits' influence on the patient, there would have been no rituals to perform either. In my view, this is the field of the *aduras'* practise which is less uncovered by anthropologists. I myself also did not have any access to such consultations, since the *aduras* wanted to protect their clients. According to the *aduras'* practise, diagnosis and cure are two sides of the same coin, and because of this it might be that a lot of the potency of bringing cure of their practice, could be more deeply clarified by such a study. Anyhow, the diagnostic process will in this thesis (Chapter 5) therefore be clarified by the help of the *aduras'* own reconstructions of diagnostic consultations, and by the help of secondary sources of literature like the works of Wirz (1954), Kapferer (1983) and Rhodes (1984). The *aduras'* reconstructions indicates that important knowledge is overlooked in these works, and because of this, I hope to bring this field of knowledge a little step further.

The second part of this thesis, intends to follow some *aduras* into the "modus operandi" of their practical work and through a focus on a *Mahasona Samayama* ritual performed for a girl frightened by a "bull" on the lane. In this presentation, I emphasise the three different audiences which are engaged throughout the performance; the patient, the yakku and the spectators, as well as the actualisation of the potential ascribed to the various ritual «tools». In Chapter 6 I will clarify my theoretical approach to the analysis, and in Chap. 8 I reach the main goal of this thesis, which is a reconsideration of Kapferer's work « A celebration of demons» (1983). My main argument is that a focus upon ritual structure and order is of limited value when trying to understand how the ritual healing-practise in focus effects a transformation of a person's self (body).

My last approach is to get closer into phenomenology as discussed in the sign theory by Peirce. This section (three) is also an attempt to show the dynamics in how cultural habits possibly change. The thematical focus is the public shows that the *aduras* perform and the cultural policy and commercial art industry that they are engaged by. My thesis is that these, and in particular the traditional art shows which all are a part of the *aduras* occupation today,

influence and turns back upon the ritual practise they preserve. I will question if this dualistic role interfere with ritual efficacy.

The order of the special sections of this thesis is chosen in order to "make a story" of my material. Nonetheless, Part 1 and 2 in particular could be read in the opposite order. This is because Part 1 is a clarification and an introduction of terms and concepts which is the fundament of the healing ritual as discussed in Part 2. Part 1 is therefore rather technical and factual while my main empirical material is discussed in part 2 and 3. Part 3, however, is a development of analysis rooted in Part 1 and 2, and must be read in the end.

First out is then an introduction of the setting of fieldwork, as well as an introduction to essential Buddhist concepts which constitute the Buddhist ritual healing-practise in focus of this thesis.

A short backdrop to Sri Lankan history.

I will return to Sri Lankan religion below, but before doing so, let us have a brief look at Sri Lankan history³. The main issue throughout Sri Lankan history is that of kingdoms ruling and falling. Rarely through history have Sri Lankans been assembled into one kingdom only. The Anuradapura kingdom (300 BC- 900 AD) was the last kingdom with political autonomy over the country as a whole for centuries. When the Portuguese came to Sri Lanka in the 16th century, Sri Lanka was divided into three kingdoms. The Portuguese and later the Dutch succeeded to colonise the maritime regions of Sri Lanka, but it was only with the arrival of the British (1795) that the last Sri Lankan kingdom fell (1815). This was the Kandyan kingdom located in the hill centre of the island, an area of Sri Lanka which is popularly referred to as "up country". The British were then the first colonial power who gained control over the whole island, and the English were moreover the first political power to maintain control over the whole country since the Anuradapura period. British rule lasted until February 1948.

³ The following is drawn from K.M. De Silva 1981, and the Cambridge encyclopaedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 1989.

During the British colonial period the major population of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese, felt discriminated by the ruling power, and during the early post-colonial period a Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalist movement arose which sought to shape a pure Sinhalese-Buddhist identity. This attempt was reflected through the new governmental policy (Lawrence 1994). Nationalisation meant the imposition of traditional «Sri Lankan» culture, but unfortunately such homogenous culture did not exist in this multi-ethnic society with the consequence that this policy led to hard discrimination of the Tamil speaking non-Buddhist minority. Concretely, the government defined the Tamils who had emigrated from India during the British colonial period as not Sri Lankan, and disenfranchised them back to India. Furthermore, English was suggested to be replaced with Sinhala as the official language in 1956. The Tamil resistance against this discriminating policy turned into public riots in the seventies, a resistance which developed into civil war in 1983. Today the LTTE, the «Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam» is the leading Tamil opposition. The Tamil's (Tiger's) goal is that of gaining Tamil political autonomy in the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lankan government is fighting to keep the country assembled. Up to now the civil war has cost the lives of 65000 Sri Lankans without bringing any solution to the conflict.⁴

Fieldsetting.

In July 1996 I settled down in the Matara district, in a village which is located by the very southern beaches of Sri Lanka, in order to do research on the local ritual-healing practise. This village is mainly inhabited by fisher men, and the average population is Buddhist, but the considerable share of Muslims also has great impact on village community life. (See map, Appendix 1, below).

An important historical event which was still in the "minds" of the people living in this district of Sri Lanka, and which can not be overlooked, was the government army's "execution"

⁴ For further reading about the ethnic conflict see; V. Daniel «Charred Lullabies» 1996, B. Kapferer «Legends of people and myths of state» 1988, Tambiah «Buddhism betrayed» 1993, and Kapferer "The Feast of the Sorcerer" 1997.

of the members of the Communist party (JVP) in 1989. This was a massacre which led to the execution of about 60 000 "boys and young men" during a period of 3-4 months. To be a young male in this area at this time was a threat to their life in itself, since both the government (UNP (United National Party)) and the JVP killed those who were identified as their "enemies" as well as those they viewed as "potential" enemies to their party. The historical background for this "bloody" event in Sri Lankan history, was that JVP was in opposition to the UNP and President Premadasa's policy which had failed to create the growth of income and employment in this district as promised. JVP gradually gained supporters and political control of this area during the eighties, and at last their influence was too strong to be overlooked by the government, and a politically motivated civil war took place. During my fieldwork, however, there were strong signs of that the political opposition from the JVP was not "beaten back" for good, since the University of Ruhunu was more or less closed during my time of fieldwork as a consequence of "open conflict" between the fractions of students who sympathised with JVP and the liberals. This university was the "headquarter" of the JVP when they had their strongest influence in the district. However, the election for the district council in spring '97 showed the UNP as the strongest candidate. It is also important to note that the present government-army, who today brings forth the civil war against the LTTE in the northern peninsula, mainly recruits their soldiers from "poor" families living in the southern region of the island, like the Matara district. In fact the most important "training camps" of the army is located in this area.

I myself lived with a Sinhala speaking Buddhist family belonging to the Goigama (farmer) caste. (See Appendix 2 for the contemporary hierarchy of caste among the Sinhalese). My family's occupation was not that of cultivating though. The head of my household was a money lender and her husband had left the household 8 years ago in order to become a Buddhist priest (*bhikkhu*). Previously this man had been an important local politician and for some years he was a devotee of a demon/god called *Suniyam*. Because of this he worked as a local godly gifted oracle for 13 years, but at the end he lost his «powers» due to heavy drinking, and decided that the only

way he could "survive" was by joining the Buddhist sangha (order of monks). At the time of my fieldwork he was the head priest of 4 temples. Occasionally he visited our place in order to arrange family affairs. This household turned out to be a brilliant place to experience the variety of Sri Lankan coastal life. So far I have mentioned Buddhist religious practises and money lending affairs, but my household head, Marli, had 7 children who represented a great spectre of occupations.

Marli's youngest daughter was married and lived in France, but before she left she had run a dancing school in our house, and her former students occasionally came by to borrow costumes and drums on their way to wedding performances. The second eldest daughter and her husband were working as local welfare officers and a lot of people came to our place in order to collect their monthly social security money. The eldest daughter was about to be married; and one matchmaker, one astrologer and one soothsayer appeared first, thereafter a suitable husband and his family. And finally the second youngest daughter was newly separated from her husband and lived in our house together with her two children. Marli's two sons were both business men. The eldest was running a shop and he was a candidate for the district council during the elections in spring '97. The other son was running a tourist hotel nearby and was the director for a fishing company owned by a German couple.

In this way my household was a place which contained a great spectre of Sri Lankan occupations. Activities within Buddhism, politics, private international co-operation, tourism, local social services and traditional arts were some of these. Still this household was not my main focus of research. One could say that this was a place where I relaxed, ate and prepared for my main research which was taking place in the district of Matara as a whole. Still, I can not underestimate the value of the knowledge I gained through my host family, and to you as a reader, please keep this in mind throughout the rest of this thesis. They will not be mentioned explicitly after this.

In order to pursue my fieldwork topic of getting to know the local healing practise, I was in need of various assistance. Firstly, my knowledge of the Sinhala language was weak and I needed someone to translate for me. Secondly I needed some kind of «protection assistance», more correctly, to show that I as a young woman "belonged" to someone, during my stays at ritual houses and travelling. Both these things were taken care of by my assistant, Mahattea, who was also fortunately initiated into the healing practise in focus. Mahattea had learned the practise from his father who was a famous healer, and for some years he worked for the Ministry of cultural affairs as a dancer of the national ensemble. After his father's worldly departure, when Mahattea was about 26 years old, he got other responsibilities in his household and his mother insisted on him finding a «proper job» instead. So from then on he worked as a clerk, however when I met him he was temporarily out of work. Nonetheless, he earned some money as a priest (*kapurala*), that is to say that he performed beneficial prayers (*Set Kavis*) for worshippers, at the local temple for goddess Pattini on full moon days. He also earned some money by performing small curative ceremonies for people afflicted by bad planetary, spiritual or sorcery influence.

We both benefited from our working relationship, and by joining me on rituals he experienced a kind of revival among the other healers. He had not had the chance to meet many of them for years, and through these meetings he got the chance to "advertise" his own knowledge. I hope he still benefits from this revival. The last news I heard was that he has started to join some of our common healer friends (*aduras*) on small offering ceremonies such as ghost offering rituals (*Preta Pidenis*) after my departure.

Every fieldwork is always in the making and in dialogue with your informants wants, characters and needs. To concern about friendship, tolerance and respect while I carried out research was not any uncomplicated task, and especially since the social "codes" differed widely from those I was used to from before. To me, it was not always easy to work together with an assistant. Most difficult I found the limitations I experienced by being dependent on others' translations to get any data filed. Mahattea also knew the profession and he functioned both as

my translator and my teacher. This gave him a dualistic role which I sometimes appreciated and sometimes felt was problematic. Still, I could never have got as close into the practise as I did without his assistance since his knowledge about the practise was invaluable. Mahattea's house was located close to many of my healer friends, and therefore it functioned as a free talk-zone where healers dropped by at «no-ritual-to-be-undertaken-days», and a lot of my interviews were recorded here.

In order to collect my data I had to do a kind of «exorcism tour», that is I followed the healers I got to know to the rituals to be performed. The rituals were held at the houses of the afflicted, and the district my healer friends covered were that of Matara, but they also crossed the district borders up to Hambantota and Ratnapura during healing missions. This kind of "travelling fieldwork" limited my data in various ways. The most important bias is that I rarely met the patients before my arrival at the ritual houses, and that I only paid a revisit to these a few times afterwards. This was due to the fact that time was a limited resource viewed in relation to the geographical area I covered. Further, in order to pursue the focus of my project I stressed the healer's knowledge as the most important. This operative focus of fieldwork led to a lack of knowledge about the socio-cultural processes which penetrate the patients' lives apart from the factors engaged through the medium of the rituals themselves. To underline this point; the voices of others than the healers (*aduras*) themselves, their close relatives and those I met at the ritual houses, are more or less absent throughout my work. Nonetheless, I maintain that this fact should not make my general argumentation less valuable.

My meetings with the *aduras* were always times of honesty and respect, still I will never be sure about how many *guru mustis* (teacher secrets) they shared with me. What I received is reflected more or less in the insight into the practise one will get throughout the pages to follow.

Buddhism in Sri Lanka

During the centuries Buddhism, as brought to Sri Lanka by Asoka's son Mahinda 2300 years ago, has been incorporated into the cosmology of ancient folk beliefs and Hinduism. Today the average Sinhalese is Buddhist, but one also finds some who have converted to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The Tamils are commonly categorised as Hindus.⁵

Buddhism is of fundamental importance in the present thesis, and a small introduction to the Buddhist pantheon and some important concepts will hopefully clarify its relation with the healing practise in focus of my study. Buddhism is especially important since the healing practise is that of restoring the health of persons inflicted by illnesses caused by malevolent demons called *yakku* (plural for *yaka*) and other spirits and ghosts, spirits who have to obey the powers of Buddha's words as well as other spirits who are superior to them.

Buddhism is a spiritual path which is thought to lead to salvation from the endless circles of rebirths, and therefore also to the end of all worldly suffering. To be in the world is suffering, suffering which is mainly caused by attachment to the worldly. To overcome attachment and to transcend this world is the only way to be released from suffering and the endless chain of rebirths. The state of transcendence is called Nirvana. The belief in endless rebirths are also common in other Southern Asian religions (i.e. Hinduism), in addition to a belief that the worldly actions in this life affects the next (*karma*). Due to this it takes numerous lives to reach worldly transcendence. Gotama Buddha was a human who reached this goal, (there have been many other Buddhas also), and his teachings constituted the religion we now know as Buddhism. Put shortly, one can say that Gotama Buddha received enlightenment due to his experience of getting to see things as they are. After receiving enlightenment he performed a series of "miracles" and deeds, these deeds were transferred to stories, stories whose powers still affect mundane Buddhist life. In Sri Lanka these stories are called *Jatakas* (Obeyesekere 1991). *Jatakas* are stories which mainly refer to Buddha's words and actions performed when he (after enlightenment,

⁵ Sri Lankan religious life has gained a lot of attention from researchers in the field of religion and social science. In the following I draw from the important contributions of; Gombrich & Obeyesekere (1988) Obeyesekere (1984,1991) Kapferer (1983,1988,1997), Stirrat (1992), Brow (1996) and Holt (1991).

before transcendence) visited Sri Lanka by the help of his supernatural powers (Aksland 1990). The deeds of later Buddhas are also a part of these *Jataka* stories.

Gotama Buddha is the only Buddha who has delayed his transcendence to Nirvana and shared his gained knowledge with others, taught them how to reach the state of enlightenment. That is why his teachings are essential for Buddhism. Most important is the triple jewel of the Buddhist doctrine; that the true Buddhist must take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Buddha refers to Gotama Buddha, Dharma to his enlightenment, and Sangha is the order which preserves the truth of his enlightenment. The teachings of Gotama Buddha further constituted the Buddhist precepts, the rules to be followed in everyday life. The five precepts which are ideally followed by the average Buddhist, teach to abstain from; taking life, taking what is not given, wrong sexual conduct, telling lies, intoxicating liquors that cause immoral behaviour. The Ten precepts- the five precepts plus five additional abstinences, which are ideally followed by the priests are to abstain; from eating solid food after midday, from seeing musical entertainment, dancing, singing and so on, from wearing finery, from sleeping on high beds, and from accepting money (Scott 1994:254).

Following Theravada Buddhism (as distinctive from Mahayana Buddhism as practised in for instance Tibet, China, Nepal etc.), Sri Lankan Buddhists believe in collective salvation from worldly existence. The deeds of the Buddhist priests are in this way the actions of the community as a whole. By supporting the Buddhist priests, people gain merit for their own salvation and, in contrast, by accepting this support the priests gain merit themselves through the actions they perform based on such support (Holt 1991). For instance during a performance of a Buddhist prayer (*pirit*) the supporters gain merit through their offerings to the priests, and the priests gain merit through the performance of the prayer. A specific ritual act in the healing ritual with which I concerns, has merit giving qualities for its supporters (see Chapter 7 below), but in general these rituals is not viewed as such. (The *Suniyama* rite is an exemption, but it is neither classified as a *tovil*, but as a *santi karmaya*, a rite of blessing).

The Buddhist Pantheon

The Buddhist Pantheon represents the hierarchical order of spiritual influence in the world. This pantheon is constituted by principles of *varanan*, warrant or permission. As Obeyesekere says; «*The notion of power is crystallized in the crucial concept of varan, again derived from South Asian kingship. In Sinhala Buddhism varan will be translated as warrant, or permission. The term is derived from the ideology of kingship. The king as supreme lord of the soil delegates his authority to others*» (Obeyesekere 1984:57). In other words, in the former kingdoms in Sri Lanka the kings represented the central and ultimate power within a defined territory. His power was further represented in the districts by his governors who still had to obey the orders of their king. More correctly, the governors had *varanan*, warrant, from the king to represent him and his power in the districts. Further the village headmen represented the king but in an even more secular way than the governors, and these were overruled by both the king and his governors. To have *varanan* is then to have permission to perform power in a degree related to the territory of influence one's warrant (*varanan*) represents (Obeyesekere 1984, Scott 1994, Holt 1991). The same principle of *varanan*, warrant, counts for the Buddhist pantheon where the supernaturals' powers are secular and territorial. I will return to the pantheon in a second, but before we do so we have to pay attention to a fundamental principle of Sri Lankan cosmos, the two principles; "of this world" and "beyond this world", or; «*Laukika and lokottara are two Sinhala terms that previous scholars have taken to have definitive categorical importance for the structure of the Sinhala Buddhist worldview. Laukika and lokottara, both derivate of Vedic loka (space or world), can be used in Sinhala as contrasting terms: the former can mean "of this world," while the latter can mean "above" or "beyond this world."* Holt (1991:19).

These two worlds are then thought of as qualitatively different and separated worlds. The Sri Lankan Buddhists believe that Buddha has departed from "this world", *laukika*, to the "other world", *lokottara*. In *laukika* there are aside from humans various animals, gods and spirits. The gods are, unlike Buddha, worldly because they are subject to decay, death and re-becoming, but

they are closer to Nirvana than human beings (Gombrich/Obeyesekere 1988). It should be noted that it is only by being reborn as a human (*buddhe*⁶) in *laukika* that one can transcend to *lokottara*. In *laukika* there are moreover various numbers of worlds. The worlds of supernaturals are thought to be located other places than the human world, still these worlds interpenetrate. The consequence of this is that contrary to beings like Buddha who has transcended, reached *lokottara*, the beings of *laukika* interfere with each other's lives.

In the Sri Lankan Buddhist practise one then finds two goals for religious actions. One is thought to lead to transcendence from this world to nirvana, and the other leads to a more beneficial life in this world. These practises are not separate from each other since a beneficial life in this world (*laukika*) makes it easier to perform good deeds and again gain merit in order to transcend beyond this world (to *lokottara*). (Holt 1991). In Sri Lanka one therefore also often finds «mixed» temple grounds where images of Buddha and gods are placed side by side and where Buddhist monks (Bhikkus) and Priests mediating contact with gods (*kapuralas*) are at «work». The Buddhist monks mainly deal with religious practises influencing the "path" to *lokottara*, and the Priests (*kapuralas*) with practises influencing peoples' life in this world (*laukika*). One also sees Buddhist monks who perform both practises; these are however not viewed as equally noble to those who do not. In other words there is a principle concerning purity of religious actions, where the «purer» Buddhist *lokottara* oriented practises are regarded as better than the *laukika* oriented ones.

Summing up, Buddha has departed from this world, but he has impact on worldly life through his former deeds and demands. In this world, the lives of humans, gods, animals, spirits and so forth are separate, nonetheless they interpenetrate. The overarching goal of every being of this world, *laukika*, is moreover to transcend beyond it and to reach Nirvana (*Nibbana*), which for the Buddhist correspond with *lokottara*.

⁶ The persons of this world becoming the next Buddha are addressed *Buddhe*.

The hierarchy of the Buddhist Pantheon

The Buddhist Pantheon is as noted earlier, constituted in a hierarchical manner reflecting the order of former kingdoms. In the Buddhist pantheon one finds Lord Buddha as the overlord. Lord Buddha was reborn beyond this world centuries ago, but still the powers of his teachings and *Jataka* stories, stories about his deeds on earth, prevail in this world. (Obeyesekere 1984). This belief, that Buddha still has influence in this world, is essential for our understanding of the healing practise. Before leaving this world Lord Buddha gave the *varanan* (warrant, permission) to the god Sakra to look after Sri Lanka. In this way Sakra became the lord of the gods, the one everyone of Sri Lanka has to obey since he represents Buddha's power in this world.

Obeyesekere (1984:54) says that "*Gods, like kings, have areas of jurisdiction and divine authority over people within a physical area or territory*". Further Aksland (1990) notes that just as the Buddhist cosmology counts four guardian gods of the four continents, so does Sinhalese cosmology count four guardian gods of Sri Lanka. What both these scholars refer to are the gods named Natha, Saman, Vishnu and Kataragama⁷ which are collectively called *lankapalas*, and as Obeyesekere notes, their powers and influence are territorial and these gods each "controls" the northern, eastern, western and southern part of the island. For instance in the southern area of Sri Lanka where I worked, god Vishnu is the most important protective god. The only god who is superior to the four guardian gods are Sakra, the god mentioned as the protector of Sri Lanka as a whole.

The Buddhist pantheon is complex and a variety of supernaturals are counted within it. Still the principle of *varanan* is maintained and all beings within it have got the permission from someone superior to themselves to have impact on the fortune of those less superior. The supernaturals' powers are territorial and the more local the power becomes, the lower they are placed in the hierarchy of karmic excellence as well as in the pantheon. Gunasekera (1994:87) has presented tables which indicate the supernatural hierarchy, and how close the various beings are

⁷ As noted by Aksland (1990), who the four guardian deities are, differs with time and place. The gods' powers and influence changes through the centuries, due to their popularity and powers. (Obeyesekere 1984) These names of the guardian gods, are those suggested by Kapferer (1983).

to worldly transcendence. For instance, Natha, the guardian god of the western province, is thought to be the next Buddha due to his "karmic excellence". Below follows a presentation of the pantheon which I have designed after the model presented by Gunasekera. The main difference of this model in contrast with his model, is the more specific categorisation of the supernaturals in the Buddhist pantheon. This specification is created in accordance to the hierarchical order as I could figure it out from my own field material.

The Sinhalese Buddhist Pantheon

-Lord Buddha

-
- | | |
|---|---|
| - Sakra, the lord of gods | |
| - <i>Lankapalas</i> (guardian deities) | i.e.; Natha, Saman, Vishnu, Katarangama |
| - <i>Devayas</i> (deities) | i.e.; Gana deva, Kali Amma, Devol Deva, Pattini |
|
 | |
| - <i>Devatas, Bandaras</i> (demon/gods) | i.e.; Suniyam, Dadimunda |
|
 | |
| - <i>Gama devayas</i> (village deities) | i.e.; Laksmi |
| - <i>Rakse</i> (demons) | i.e.; Naga rakse |
| - <i>yakku</i> (demons) | i.e.; Mahasona, Riri yaka, Sanni yaka |
| - <i>Buthe</i> (earth spirits) | |
| - <i>Prete</i> (ghosts) | |
| - <i>Pitte pantie</i> (spirits outside domestic ground) | |

Hierarchy of karmic excellence

- Gods
- Human beings
- Animals
- Demons
- Ghosts and evil spirits

I stress that this presentation of the Buddhist pantheon is only a simplified presentation of a complex and fluid pantheon. Through history the different supernaturals' position in the pantheon has changed, and in fact there are some important deities I do not know where to put since their "original role" has been replaced by others. These deities are the "ancient" guardian gods of Sri Lanka, gods with territorial influence and with the warrant to control the different

"ancient" local spirits such as *yakku* (Vesamuni), *buthe* and *nagas* (see Chapter 7 below). For the healing-practise in focus, the *yakku*, *prete* and *buthe* are of main relevance, since these are the illness-causing agents, and consequently their "lords" are important as well. Following the principle of *varanan* (warrant), the *yakku* in particular have to obey the powers of Vesamuni, who is «the lord of *yakku*». A myth which illustrates the origin of this relationship is to be found in Appendix 3, myth 1, a myth which tells how Buddha and Sakra handed over the responsibility over the *yakku* to Vesamuni. Another important issue that this myth takes up, is the restriction the *yakku* got from Buddha to only bring diseases, that they should not take anyone's life.

There exist a number of gods and demons, and it is only their myths of origin and powers that reflect their influence and position in the pantheon. When offerings are carried out in a ritual the order of offerings concerns the supernaturals' internal hierarchical order. The *adura* therefore evaluate the "royalty" or "purity" of birth and deeds of the specific supernaturals, and by the help of this information their hierarchical order is constituted.

Below Lord Buddha, the guardian gods (*lankapalas*) and *devayas* (deities) we find the *devatas*, demon/gods whose powers are janus faced: they are both positive and destructive. They are also called *bandaras*, which refer to the territorial (regional) borders they protect. In the pantheon the *devatas* are placed between deities and village deities, and they are often given two (or more) names separating their good or bad nature. The (sorcery god) *Suniyam*⁸ is one of these. As every supernatural in the Sri Lankan pantheon, *Suniyam* is represented through an iconical image, and as Kapferer notes; «.. he is often represented astride a blue horse, a mare, the potency of his *sakti* [female potency/aspect]. In his left hand he carries a broken pot of fire, a symbol of his fragmenting power and destructive heat. His right arm is raised, his hand holding the sword of his judgement and punishment. *Suniyam's* body is covered in snakes, representations of the world-destroying, body-enveloping poisons of sorcery that *Suniyam* both sends and controls.» (Kapferer 1997:27). Due to the principle of rebirths (*samsara*)

⁸ *Huniyam* is commonly translated as sorcery, and refers to the way people through their looks, thoughts and intentional malevolent actions, often by the help of supernatural agents, can interfere with the fortune of others in a negative way. *Suniyam* is then thought to be the manifestation of sorcery powers (*Huniyam*).

Suniyam has also been born as *Suniyam yaka*, as a demon. As a god he is primarily referred to as *Suniyam devata*. Being associated with sorcery, he represents a destructive force and his janus faced nature makes him into both an agent of sorcery attacks, and an agent of anti-sorcery powers. However, all supernaturals are known to perform good as well as bad impact on humans lives. Supernaturals like the *devatas* (demon/gods), *yakku* (demons) and *prete* (ghosts) are thought to vehicle more negative than positive influence though. By presenting *Suniyam*, it is about time to present the healing practise in focus of my study, a healing practise which *Suniyam* is in fact (one of) the protector(s) of.

Yaksadosa and Yak Aduras. A presentation of the agents of illness and of healing

Yaksadosa ("yaka trouble") is the term for the special types of disease brought to the inhabitants of Sri Lanka for various reasons, by *yakku* (plural for *yaka*) as well as other malevolent spirits. Through this thesis I intend to clarify the concept of *yaksadosa* through a presentation of the professional healers of *yaksadosa* called *yak aduras*, or simply *adura*, and the content of their practice. This practise is incorporated into the Sri Lankan Buddhist belief system and the *aduras* are the ones chosen by (i.e. have received *varanan* from) Lord Buddha in order to withdraw evil influence affecting humans (see Appendix 3, myth 2 (p. ??)). The knowledge of *aduras* thus includes the mythological origin of the spirits, the diseases they bring and how the spirits affect humans. Finally, they are also the ones who know the keys to withdrawal of such malevolent influence from the human body.

In cases of *yaksadosa*, people often believe that the patient has been in touch with *killi*. *Killi* is polluting substance which makes the body ritualistically impure, and therefore attracts *yakku*. Special kinds of food, for instance fried food, menstruating women and contact with dead bodies are all factors associated with *killi*. Jealous thoughts or looks from other people and sorcery can also attract the *yaka's* look; moreover to be alone or to feel lonely is also a state where one is regarded as being vulnerable. Following the principle of *varanan*, the *yakku* on their side

has to seek permission from a supernatural named *Vesamuni*, the "Lord of demons", in order to bring disease.

It is important to notice that the *yakku* cast their look at the patients (*atureas*) and bring disease through their glance, not through possession of the body. (Scott 1994). There are special diseases where the spirit of the *yaka* enters the body of the patient, but in most cases this does not happen. *Disti* is the term given to the polluting substance *yakku* bring through their look, which again leads to *yaksadosa* (*yaka* trouble). *Disti* has a quantitative quality so that people can get more or less of it, which again leads to less or more serious bodily/mental afflictions. One way to cure *yaksadosa* is through the performance of *yak tovils* (*yaka* offering-ceremonies), headed by the *yak aduras*, but there are also a lot of other "healers" to be consulted in cases of illness. Astrologists, doctors of ayurveda (herbal medicine), soothsayers, Buddhist monks (*bhikkus*), temple priests (*kapuralas*) and finally western trained doctors can all be consulted to perform their kinds of cures. For the patient's healing often more than one healing method is tried out.

Summary

This introduction to Sinhalese Buddhism only grasps the surface of the religious magnitude it presents. Nevertheless I have chosen to highlight some basic principles which directly underline the practise of the *aduras*. The principle of *varanan*, to have permission to perform power in a declared field, is also the principle which legitimise the *aduras* role as those who can end the illnesses given to humans. The belief in two kinds of worlds is essential, and one could say that the world of the gods is thought of as mundane since the supramundane world is defined as Nirvana. Life on earth interpenetrates with that of the supernaturals, and in order to gain merit to be reborn higher on the karmic ladder in their next lives, Sri Lankans have to make sure that this life is well lived. A person suffering from *yaksadosa* is "polluted" by the bad karma of lower demons and spirits, and has to end this influence so it does not infect his/her own karma. As noted, to be in the world creates suffering, and malevolent spirits are agents of such, and by this

follows that to end suffering is both the overarching goal of the *yak aduras'* ritual healing-practise, as well as for the Buddhist religion as a whole. The *yakku* and other spirits are thought to infect humans by their "pollution-hitting looks" (*disti belma*), and the *yak aduras* are "demon controllers" who are capable of purifying such "polluted bodies".

In order to give an introduction into the ritualists' (*aduras'*) practice, and clarify essential concepts of their work, I will in the following reconstruct some hours I spent with an *adura* at his house, and thereafter, the next time I met him at a ritual house.

One day at Subasinghe's house

In a small village suburb outside Matara town lies Subasinghe's house. Subasinghe is a famous *yak adura*, and one of the healers I got to know from this area. His house is located in his wife's village, and they both belong to a sub-caste of the *goigama*⁹ caste. *Goigama* is ranked as the highest caste among the Sinhalese, and there are not many *yak aduras* to be found among them. Subasinghe is an exception.¹⁰ One day I dropped by his house in order to ask some questions connected with earlier *toivils* (large scale offering-rituals) I had witnessed. Outside his house his *toivil* costumes were laid on the ground to be "cleaned" by the sun, and his wife was sitting on the doorstep, sewing. She warmly welcomed me and Mahattea, my assistant, and sent a young neighbour to find Subasinghe. Their two daughters were at school, and their three sons at work. Two sons worked as mechanics, and one as a guard. While we were waiting, his wife informed us about two rituals which would be held in the near future.

The first was a *pideni* for their niece, who had suddenly got epilepsy. *Pideni* is a generic term used for small offering rituals. The content of these rituals is various offering acts "belonging" to the big *toivils* (great offering rituals). The second was a *Mahasona Samayama*. *Mahasona Samayama* is one of the *toivils*, and is the ritual performed to end *yaksadosa* (*yaka* trouble) brought on by *Mahasona*, the great cemetery demon (*yaka*). The *aturea* (patient) in the latter ritual was to be a girl who had got *yaksadosa* (*yaka* trouble) one night while Subasinghe was performing a *pideni* at her neighbour's house. She had been walking on the road on her way to work together with a friend when suddenly a bull jumped out on the road. The bull is according to the myth,

⁹ See Appendix 2 Caste rank and main job occupation associated with caste identity.

¹⁰ The ritualists I worked with mostly belonged to Berava, Salagama and the Karava caste, and among those I got to know, Subasinghe was the only representative from the Goigama caste. Still I am sure that there are others.

one of *Mahasona's* animal vehicles¹¹. Both of them had felt a sudden fright, and days later they got shivering attacks. One of the girls was already healed, but the other one had to wait, until her family had collected enough money to arrange a *tovil*, since this can be a rather expensive affair.

Shortly afterwards Subasinghe appeared. After exchanging greetings, all of us were seated inside the house. Subasinghe honoured me by telling that he would teach me everything I needed to know about the *tovals*, and about his profession. I was more than thankful for this gesture. Then he showed me his small altar which was located in a corner of his house. Placed on the altar were statues of *Suniyam devata (demon-god)*, *Katarangama deva*, *Vishnu deva* and *Lord Buddha*. From these gods and *Lord Buddha*, Subasinghe receives the protective power needed to perform the *tovals*. Since he functions both as god and *yaka* according to his different manifestations, *Suniyam* is the most important of these gods. *Suniyam* is the protector of not only Subasinghe, but all *aduras* and their profession. According to the myth told to me by Subasinghe; *Suniyam* under the name Oddisa Raja, was in lead of the first anti-sorcery ritual (*Suniyama*)¹² performed in this world. The techniques Oddisa Raja used to bring cure in this first ritual, were later taught to the priests (Brahmins) and finally to the *aduras*.¹³

I started to question Subasinghe as intended, but soon after we were interrupted by other guests dropping by to seek his advice. Subasinghe became too busy to bother about my questions, and my questions got a different turn. I decided to change my focus of attention.

A pregnant girl with yaksadosa, could she visit a funeral house?

The first guests were two young boys who needed to know whether it was safe for their elder sister to visit a funeral house. One of their neighbours had killed his two children by drowning,

¹¹ All supernaturals in the Sri Lankan pantheon have animal vehicles, which they ride. The god Vishnu has Gurula, a bird, Katarangama a peacock, and *Mahasona* has a bull, horse and pig. These animals, when appearing in the human world, can be manifestations of the supernaturals they serve.

¹² This ritual's myth of origin is to be found in Appendix 3, myth 3 (p. ??)

¹³ Kapferer (1997) stresses that the Brahmins failed to cure the first sorcery victim, only Oddisa as *Suniyam*, the demon god, managed to break the spell. Contradictory to this, some of my informants regarded Oddisa as a supernatural Brahmin (Hindu priest), the very first Brahmin who by the god's help cured the first sorcery victim.

and then committed suicide. The tragic circumstances connected with their death made them uncertain about whether it was safe for the sister to be close to the deceased.

In fact, this particular suicide led to the performance of two *Mahasona Samayama rituals*, one for the man who had taken the children's bodies out of the water, and one for a relative of the deceased. The main explanation for their suffering was that the deaths attracted *Mahasona's* glance upon two of those who had been in touch with the dead bodies. These patients also thought that their suffering was the revenge from the man who had committed suicide after drowning his children. The first patient thought that this was the revenge from the children's father since he had left his corpse in the water. He had met *Mahasona's avatara* (manifestation) on the beach a short time after the tragedy, when a dog suddenly appeared and jumped right through his body. In the time after this appearance, he had got belly ache and diarrhoea, symptoms of *Mahasona's* influence on one's body. The second patient thought that this man was reborn as a *prete* (ghost), and that he took revenge for the «evil» talk his household and neighbours had done about his wife and her relationship with other men, talk which again led to this tragedy. The second patient told that the «*prete*» appeared in the night and threw the peoples in his household out of their beds, and made a lot of noise so it was impossible to get a good nights sleep. This patient had also got *Mahasona's avesa*, i.e. demon-trance attacks, a swollen body, headache and bellyache, and a *Mahasona Samayama* was recommended in order to bring cure. His relatives were also highly traumatised by this tragedy, and showed a clear identification with the patient when they cried out their sorrow and fear throughout the ritual performance. In other words, to be in touch with dead bodies makes oneself vulnerable of attracting the glance of the *yakku* due to the impure bodily substance (*killi*) such a body contains. Furthermore, the *yakku's* influence upon one person's body, affects the patient's community as a whole.

The girl whose request the boys represented, was pregnant, and unfortunately she had attracted some *yaka's disti* (*yaka's glance*) and got *yaksadosa* (*yaka trouble*). To be pregnant is generally thought to be a vulnerable condition for a girl. Pregnancy is a condition which is

associated with *killi* (ritual impurity). After a diagnostic consultation some months ago, Subasinghe had advised her to perform an offering ritual (*tovi*), called *Rata Yakuma*, for safe delivery. She had then made a promise to the *yakku* to arrange this offering ritual after she had passed the 7th month of pregnancy. In return the *yakku* had to give her a healthy pregnancy in advance, and after the offering ritual, a prospective safe delivery.

At this time, Subasinghe did not know the consequences this tragedy caused, told the boys not to worry, she could safely visit the house of the deceased, but promised anyhow to visit her later the same evening to tie a new protective thread.¹⁴ The thread (*epa nula*) contains protective and curative potential and in order to make sure that the impure substances from the corpse should not give her *killi* (polluting bodily substance), and make her attract the *yakku's* glance, this thread tying was recommended. She thus received one charmed thread for protection, since this is the way to bind (or cure) *yaksadosa* temporarily, in the period before the ritual performance itself. But its effect is only short term, since the charm's effect fades out.

A patient was admitted to hospital, could it be Yaksadosa as suggested in her horoscope?

Later the same afternoon, a three-wheeler stopped outside the house, and two men and one woman came to the door. They were people from Galle, 30 km west of Matara and Subasinghe's village, and had come to him to seek his advice about a close relative who was taken to hospital in Galle. They told Subasinghe that the medical treatment had not helped the patient, and they had consulted an astrologer to find out why she was ill. The astrologer had read the patient's horoscope and could inform them that her astrological time was connected with bad planetary influence, and that in this period she was in special danger of attracting the glance of *Ira Modum Riri Yaka* (the-sun-at-its-high-blood-thirsty-*yaka*) and *Mahasona* (the great cemetery *yaka*). The astrologer then advised them to consult Subasinghe to find out whether the patient suffered from *yaksadosa*. Since her physical condition was really critical, they decided to follow the astrologer's

¹⁴ The thread binding procedure is closely described in Chapter 5, below.

advice. These people presented their problem with great earnesty, the woman silently weeping. Subasinghe himself showed his characteristic firm, caring look and promised to come to the hospital the next morning for consultation. These people were obviously middle-class Sinhalese, and even promised to pay him for a three-wheeler ride to the hospital. After this visit we returned to our discussion, but again we were interrupted by a man making his entrance with yet another difficult errand.

A father had lost his son's confidence, could it possibly be regained?

The man was in his late forties and showed a strike of sadness when he started to talk. He had come to consult Subasinghe because his son was very angry with him, and he could not understand why. Every attempt to get his son to talk was ignored, and he wondered if Subasinghe knew a trick that could end this situation. They were talking very quietly, and Mahattea, my assistant had problems to hear what was being said. Subasinghe promised to make a *yantra*, a magical drawing, which had the power to bring the father and son together again. What would happen next was up to them. When the man left, Subasinghe fetched a book with hand drawn *yantras*. He started to draw one *yantra* on a copper plate. The *yantras* are geometrically designed, and on this particular one there were also drawings of symbols representing the gods to be called for. There were also several letters, which read together, made a *mantra* verse. *Mantra* (charm) is the magical language used to call for supernatural beings, and to "activate" the power of the *yantra*, one must repeat the *mantras* as many times as prescribed. Subasinghe got busy with his drawings, and I left together with Mahattea.

The tovil performed for the girl frightened by the bull on the lane.

Some weeks later I met Subasinghe again in a *tovil* house (*gedderè*), the house of the patient which where the *tovil* took place in the garden. He was performing the *Mahasona Samayama* (the great-cemetery-demon summoning-time ritual) for the girl (I give her the name Sandun) who was

frightened by the bull, which was *Mahasona's avatara* (manifestation). Sandun was badly attacked, and from time to time she fell into a trance, she had *avesa* (demon-trance). *Avesa* is interpreted as a sign of the *yakku's* presence in a human body. This concept may need a clarification. The patient is thought to get or have demon-trance (*avesa*), and not to be possessed by the *yakku*. The distinction is important since it points out that the patient is always responsible for his/her own actions. Even in demon trance the demon has only temporary impact upon the patient's body, and even then the *yakku* can not fully take it over. The *yakku* just have influence upon a body, and this influence can be removed.

Subasinghe had called for assistance and asked two dancers (*aduras*), two drummers (*bereva kàriyàs*) and one man well skilled in the *mantra* art (*mantra kàriyà*) to help him with the ritual preparations and the performance.

This *tovil* was performed in order to withdraw the influence of *Mahasona* and his spiritual followers from the *aturea* (patient). The *yaka's* followers are as a rule included because a *yaka* never "hunts" alone. As all the supernaturals belonging to the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon, *Mahasona* has a birth story, his story of origin (*upete kavi*). *Mahasona* is regarded as a powerful *yaka* indeed, and there are various myths available concerning his origin. Following the Buddhist cycle of rebirths, *Mahasona* is said to have been born 8 times, i.e. to have appeared in 8 different *avataras* (manifestations). Then he should ideally have had only 8 different¹⁵ myths of origin, not more than eight that is the case. In any case, the most important story of *Mahasona's* origin is the following:

"The main myth tells that he once was a giant, Jayasena, born from the union of King Parakrama-Bahu and a woman from the potter caste, at Pollonaruwa. He was a renowned military general, feared by the gods and by human beings. Jayasena lusted after the wife of Gothaimbara, who was a human being of normal size. Gothaimbara heard of this and challenged Jayasena to mortal combat. Gothaimbara's followers warned him against the impending duel, fearing for his life against such

¹⁵ The number of origin myths to collect is many more. Most of them agree however about the number of guises *Mahasona* is born into, one for each corner of the world i.e. eight.

a powerful adversary. However, Gothimbara took no heed of their warnings and faced Jayasena alone and unarmed. The fight occurred at a cemetery ground. Gothimbara avoided Jayasena's blows and then leaped into the air and kicked the giant's head from off his shoulders with a mighty blow from the little toe of his left foot. Jayasena's friend, the planetary deity, Senasuru (Saturn), was passing overhead at the time and took pity. He saw a bear caught in a thicket and instructed some nearby villagers to cut the bear's head off and place it on Jayasena's shoulders. This they did in great haste - so much so that they placed it on back to front. Nevertheless, by this act Jayasena was reborn as the great cemetery demon, Mahasona"

(Kapferer 1983:167-168)

A similar myth was told me by an *adura*, Loko banda, and his version also included the queen, *Mangara devi*, who was the ancient queen of the Rohunu area, which today is a part of Matara district. *Mahasona* got the permission from her to dwell in her district, and Loko banda's story ended with; "*Then after all he was ready to seek revenge from the mankind. While he was living in the forest he began to frighten the people, and still he is haunting the villages, making illness to the people.*"

The *atuera* of this night's performance had been harmed by *Mahasona's* "revenge", and the ritual to be performed was a *tovil* designed to end her suffering.

Ira Modum Samayama. The-sun-at-its-high-summoning-time ritual

The ritualists had arrived early in the morning in order to prepare all the ritual buildings, offerings and decorations. Midday they performed an *Ira Modum Samayama* (the-sun-at-its-high-summoning-time) ritual, in order to end the suffering caused by *Ira Modum Riri Yaka*¹⁶ (The-sun-at-its-high blood-thirsty *yaka*). The poor patient was in demon trance (*avesa*) throughout the whole offering sequence. Lying on her bed with each hand's fingertips kept together while her body was moving in accordance with the drum rhythms, she had *Riri Yaka's avesa*. According to Subasinghe, the drum rhythm "activated" the spirit. Subasinghe told me that at the first consultation, the patient had wanted to "demon-trance dance". Then she had licked blood, and in this way shown a strong physical sign of *Riri Yaka's* influence. Throughout the ritual the ritualists

¹⁶ A closer description of this ritual is to be found in David Scott's book: "Formations of Ritual" (1993)

called for the *yakku*, pleaded with them and finally bound their power by the help of offerings, *mantras*, songs and dance.

Before the final offering from the patient to the *yakku*, one *adura* brought her out of trance by sprinkling charmed saffron water all over her body. She showed great resistance, and cried silently "amme" (mother), while she was battling to reopen her hands, to regain control over her body. After the final offering, the patient had a whole pot of water thrown all over her and by this act the *Ira Modum Samayama* was over. The offerings given in this midday ritual were not enough to bring cure to the *aturea*, however, there were more *yaka* trouble agents to be offered for. Therefore a long period followed with preparations for the next *tovil* to come, the *Mahasona Samayama*.

The Mahasona Samayama. The-great-cemetery-demon-summoning-time ritual

The *Mahasona Samayama* is one of the 5 main *toivils* in Sri Lanka, and it is the one that will be in focus in this thesis. The separate *toivils* design is created according to the offerings required to please the main agent of *yaksadosa* (yaka trouble). According to the *aduras* knowledge-practise, the *aduras* bring cure to the *atureas* whose misfortune is caused by *Mahasona*, and his followers, by the help of the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual which contains specially designed offering acts for him. In other words, the *Mahasona Samayama* concept is a vehicle of the potential of curing the illnesses habitually caused by *Mahasona* (and his followers). The *Sanni Yakuma* on its part, provides main offerings for *Sanni Yaka*, the *Rata Yakuma*¹⁷ for *Riddi Yaksini* (or *Bishaus*), *Suniyama*¹⁸ for *Suniyam* and *Maha Kalu Kumara Samayama* for *Kalu Kumara Yaka*.¹⁹ The other kind of ritual concept,

¹⁷ The *Rata Yakuma* is a fertility ritual.

¹⁸ *Suniyama chanti karmaya*, or just *Suniyama* is an anti-sorcery ritual. For closer description of this rite, I highly recommend Bruce Kapferers book «The feast of the sorcerer» (1997).

¹⁹ These *yakku* plus *Riri Yaka* are the most malevolent ones, and also those which are most often responsible for the patient's suffering through their different qualitative powers. There are a lot of other *yakku* or spirits in the pantheon as well, but they are not said to be as powerful as these. Roughly *Kalu Yaka* is especially fond of women, *Mahasona* is most often associated with death, and *Sanni Yaka* is most often responsible for different psycho somatic illnesses. *Riri Yaka* is however the one who is thought to give the hardest attacks. He is responsible for blood illnesses, frightening (bloody) visions or dreams and madness. The *Riddi Bishaus* do cause harm to those who are pregnant, and a offering ritual to these, grants safe delivery. *Suniyam devatava* is

performed by the *aduras*, is called *pideni* (small offering rituals). There are many kinds of *pidenis*, but compared to the *toivils* they are normally performed without the dance offerings and mask performance which are so characteristic for the latter.

Since I will return to this case in the main analysis of the *Mahasona Samayama* in Chapter 7, I will just make a sketch of the ritual contents and dynamics below. I ask the reader to have attention to the different watches, since these are emphasised in a comparable analysis of this ritual made by Kapferer (1983). Furthermore, I will draw the reader's attention to the transactionally quality of the ritual offerings, to the way the ritualists «bind» the *yakku's disti* (polluting substance) to the offerings, and to other actions which effect purification of *disti* and end diseases caused by its influence on the patient's body. Later I will argue that the ritual drama, the dance and other bodily actions refer to this transactional-purificatory-healing process, and that the *Mahasona Samayama* in this way both a vehicle of an entertaining as well as a healing potential.

The *Mahasona Samayama* should preferably last for 12 hours, from dawn to dusk, and be performed through three watches, the evening- (*hendeyama*), midnight- (*meddiyama*), and morning watch (*alluyama*). The *Mahasona Samayama* performed for Sandun, was performed throughout these watches as well, and started in the evening, just after sunset. The *adura* had sprinkled saffron water charmed with protective *mantras* (charms) all over the performance area. According to the *aduras*, this was done in order to protect the ritualists themselves and the audience present. For personal protection, the ritualists charmed a special kind of incense (*dumalla*), with which they smoked their costume and other personal ritual items like drum and demonpipe.

The first part of the ritual consisted of offerings to *Mahasona* and his followers. Firstly an *adura* recited *mantras* which attracted the *yaka's* look, one by one. Then he pleaded with a particular *yaka*, and told stories to flatter him. This act was followed by the *aduras* who recited the

associated with sorcery. Because of his double nature *Suniyam* is a *devatava* which brings great luck to those he protects, but oppositely he could harm the same people if he is not satisfied with their offerings. He is in other words, a difficult and dangerous demon-god to associate with.

yaka's birth story while they were performing the dancing steps, dancing steps which accord to this special category of songs. The drummer played the dancing rhythm. In other words, the *yakku* were called for, pleaded for and offered to, one by one. These offering sequences ended with a *sirisipade*, a «head to toe» verse. *Sirisipade* is a special category of songs whose curative potential is similar to that of *mantra* (charms). Its aim is to end all the various diseases caused by the *yakku*, from the patient's head to toe. While reciting the *sirisipade* verse the *adura* took an *igaha*, a specially designed stick, and drew lines from head to toe and between the skeletal joints of the patient's body. This action was followed by a hand movement where the patient wiped her face and «gave the disease» to the offering-basket presented. This action was repeated three times. After this important offering, an *adura* cut three limes charmed with special *mantras*, and by this action several diseases were ended.

The next act in the ritual was a *depavila*, (the human sacrifice trick), which was performed for the demons *Riri Yaka*, *Mahasona*, and *Suniyam Yaka*. The *depavila* is the offering of a symbolic human sacrifice. By reciting *mantras*, the *adura* asked the *yaka* to accept a cock in exchange for the patient's body. This part was performed with an *adura* lying on a mat, simulating a corpse, with the offering baskets on his body. This act is also ended with a *sirisipade*, "wiping face" hand-movements and lime-cutting. This was the final offering act in the first of the three watches, the evening watch, and the assistants brought all the offering baskets down to the cemetery. One *adura* went down to the cemetery as well to make a last charm in order to perform the final binding of the *yakku's disti* to the offering baskets.

The second part of the ritual, the midnight watch, started with the main offering to *Mahasona*. The *aduras* lighted the *vidiya*, the main offering place for the ceremony, and summoned *Mahasona* to come. They performed five different offering dances which ended with one *adura* dancing in the *vidiya* placing offerings consisting of a feather, spit and a hair on the different offering stands and the *bali*, a clay image of *Mahasona*. *Mahasona* then appeared in the masked guise of one *adura*, this time Subasinghe, and by his indicative movements he «ate» the hair, spit

and feather offerings. Then he went to the patient, «ate» the *disti* out of the patient's body, and drew it out with the ritual stick. This time Subasinghe was unlucky, and got the *disti* on himself. He fell back and crawled slowly around on the ground. But another *adura* knew how to deal with this situation; he cut three limes and broke the connection. These offering acts shares the potential of *sirisipade* (head to foot verses), since the "*Mahasona*" "licks" the *disti* from head to toe. The patient gave her *disti* to the cock, by wiping her face and handing it over to it. Thereafter Subasinghe guised as "*Mahasona*" took the cock with him and disappeared. Another *adura* made the final *disti*-breaking move, by cutting limes. Lime cutting, more precisely its citrus smell, has the quality of purifying the air from *disti* as well.

After a long tea break, it would "normally" have been time for the offering to the earth gods and to the god *Mangara*, but since the patient had *avesa* (demon trance) and wanted to dance, this offering was skipped. According to the myths²⁰, *Mangara* was a king that *Mahasona* worked for, and before doing offerings for this god, his "arrival" is saluted with a *perahera*, a celebrating procession.

The *Deraheva depavila*, the «human sacrifice trick» to *Riri Yaka*, followed next. The *adura* lay down inside a "funeral bed" (*deraheva*) and began reciting *mantras*. Again he tied the *yaka's disti* by the help of *mantra*, and transferred the *disti* from the patient to the cock with the *Igaha* (the ritual stick). The offering ended with a *sirisipade*, three wiping face hand-movements and lime-cutting. The *depavila* offering-act finally ended at the grave yard (*porale*), where one *adura* brought the offerings, and tied the *yaka's disti* to this place.

The act called *Avatara balima* which followed next is also a kind of *depavila*, in which the *adura* transfer the *yaka's disti* from the patient to the cock. One *adura* went into trance in order to

²⁰ The relationship between *Mahasona* and *Mangara* is not uncomplicated, and there are various myths referring to it. According to one tradition, *Mangara* and his men were hunting a buffalo, but the animal killed them. The very same animal was, however, defeated by some others, and the gods participated in a ceremony which revived *Mangara* and his men. Further the Indian buffalo god *Mhasoba* is probably the inspiration to the Sri Lankan *Mahasona*. So according to this tradition, *Mahasona* is probably a manifestation of the bull who killed *Mangara*, but later had to pay his own life, and *Mangara* was revived (Weerakoon 1985). This makes *Mangara* and *Mahasona* into oppositional figures. The tradition this thesis relies on counts *Mahasona* as one of *Mangara's* servants. That is to say that *Mahasona's* former life as the warrior *Jayasena* is incised into the *Mangara* myth. In both traditions, however, *Mahasona* is associated with a bull.

get the power to see *Mahasona's avatara* (manifestation) and "hunted" him down to the graveyard while he was purifying the places he passed by throwing fire blows of resin (*dumalla*), inflamed by the torch, in the air. Before he ran off to the graveyard, he carried out a kind of *sirisipade* (a «head-to-foot» verse) where he drew three lines from the patients head to toe with the ritual stick. The *aturea* wiped her face and gave her *disti* to the cock, which the *adura* took with him to the graveyard. At the graveyard he drew three lines in order to tie the *disti* to this place. To finally end the diseases caused by the *yakku* being offered for, one of the *aduras* cut three limes.

The time for the last watch had now arrived and the ritualists prepared for the *Daha-ata Sanni*. The *Daha-ata Sanni* is a masquerade of the eighteen *Sannis* (*Sanni yakku*), where the *Sannis* appear in the guise of the *aduras* in order to accept the offerings given from the patient to «themselves». The eighteen *Sannis* are the agents of eighteen different psycho-somatic illnesses, which the *aduras* imitates in their performance. Before the *Daha-ata Sanni* started they gave a collective offering to the *Sannis*. The *Sannis* then appeared, one by one, presented by one *adura* performing a kind of mask theatre performance. This is a thrilling comedy that raises the entertaining value of the ritual, but every mask presentation ends with the patient giving the offerings being demanded to the *Sannis*. The common closing act, with the patient wiping her face, thus giving *disti* to the cock, was also done.

The final offering of this particular ritual was the offering of *Mahasona bali*, the clay image of *Mahasona*. The patient transferred her *disti* to the image of *Mahasona* himself. An *adura* recited a *sirisipade* for the patient, and finally ended all the diseases being tied by cutting limes. The *bali* (clay image) was carried down to the graveyard, and *Mahasona's disti* was again tied to his favourite dwelling place. By these actions all the various diseases were ended.

Summing up

Above I have indicated that the *aduras'* practise is directly related to the cosmology of the Sinhalese Buddhist, where the supernaturals have impact upon humans lives. By the powers

received from Buddha and gods, their knowledge of *mantra* (charms) and *yantra* (magical drawings), as well as songs, dance, drama and offerings is capable of breaking this connection. Like Kapferer (1997) I regard the practise occupied by the *yak aduras* as a knowledge-practise, since their healing relies on their knowledge and skills, actualised in ritual performance. In other words, the *aduras* do not generally possess supernatural powers themselves,²¹ but techniques, skills and a wide knowledge about concepts of illness referring to the human body as well as to the Buddhist pantheon and cosmology. The *aduras* are protectors of this special healing practise and their healing powers are related to the concept of *varanan* (warrant) (Scott 1993). I will return to the *Mahasana Samayama* ritual in Chap 7, but before that, I will give a more detailed description of the *aduras*, who they are and how they become *aduras*, the diagnostic process of their practise, the origin of the various ritual «tools» they use, and what these "tools" are thought to effect.

The intention of the present chapter was to give a glimpse of some cases which the practise in focus handles. As these cases indicate, the *aduras* deal with misfortune which has struck people in their experience of various «vulnerable» passages in life, as with pregnancy, enmity, and death. I hope that I have clarified the connection between human misfortune and the way people in such conditions «attract» *yakku's* look (*belma*). In other words, the *yakku* both create misfortune and get attracted to misfortune, (in accordance with the concept of flow of substance between every being in every world), and this fact makes the patient's communities vulnerable as well. The healing rituals thus contain the potency of removing the influence the *yakku* have on the human body.

²¹ Among the *aduras* I met, there was one exception from this. *Asiri* (*adura*) was also a devoted man who in possession mediated between humans and gods.

Who are the Yak Aduras?

A presentation of the professional diversity

"The adura is a scholar (pandit) from the purest lineage of the four castes.

He is one who has observed the five precepts and rules of celibacy correctly (as they should).

He is one who takes refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the rightful field of merit.

If such an adura performs the rituals he will bring about cures."

Weeraratne (an *adura*) referred me to these lines, in a letter I received after my fieldwork was ended²². Weeraratne descends from a *karava* (fisher man) caste community, and these words are a part of his family's heritage. The first sentence is important since it in my interpretation claims that the *yak aduras* descends from the highest category in the Varna system, the Brahmins (priests). The next two lines are a well-spoken description of the *aduras'* "Buddhistness", and a man who takes up the qualities of the first three lines, is the one who manages to "bring about cures".

In my view, these lines point to some relevant discussions, and in order to understand the importance of these stanzas it is significant to know that the reason why Weeraratne found it meaningful to send me these words in the first place, was that they should clarify that *aduras* from *karava* (fishermen) and *salagama* (cinnamon peelers) were superior *aduras*. He tried to point out that they were ranked higher than the *aduras* I knew who belonged to the *bereva* (drummer) community. These lines thus point to the presence of the Sinhala caste system, and most important for the following representation is the history of the *karava* and *salagama* castes in the Southern region of the island (Roberts 1982). The issues to be discussed in this chapter is however much more manifold than the question of caste. From the discussion of caste I will

²² Thanks to Prof. Ranjini Obeyesekere for the translations of the introductory stanza.

draw a line between the *aduras'* caste communities and the South Indian influence recorded on the ritual practise. Furthermore, I intend to show the diversity of the ritual practise in focus. I will highlight the existence of an ideal in the knowledge-practise of "doing things correctly" and rise the thesis that there is regional and caste related influence/exchange which makes it difficult to preserve this ideal.

In the last part of this chapter I intend to give a description of the different subjects the *aduras* specialise into, and how these affect what kind of work they do. I will moreover question Obeyesekere's (1969) claims that the *aduras* are subjected to a process of role generalisation in order to do their work, and finally I reflect on of the fact that there is a problem of recruitment to the *aduras'* practise.

The Yak Adura as a man from the superior caste communities

Just before my departure from Sri Lanka, it became clear how strongly the *karava* (fisher men) and *salagama* (cinnamon peelers) *aduras* thought of themselves as superior in comparison with *aduras* from the *bereva* (drummer) caste communities. The stanza above were given to me so I should understand that the *aduras* belong to the lineage of high caste, and that ideally they should perform the rituals, not the *berevas* (drummers) which are regarded as a low caste. (See Appendix 2 for typical occupation and hierarchy of caste).

Even if there are no terms given in the vocabulary of the Sinhalese²³ which makes reference to the varna system²⁴, yet the Sinhalese have castes which they rank higher than others and one finds the Jati system present. In Sri Lanka this have been called the *rajakaraya* (king-servant) system, where all the castes have had specific occupations and some castes even more

²³ According to Stirrat 1982.

²⁴ The Sinhalese are Buddhist and this religion communicates other "governing rules" for social organisation than the Varna system. The Varna system on its part is closely connected to the Hindu pantheon, ritual service, and conceptions of "ritual" purity and pollution given by birth. To the Sinhalese, ritual purity and impurity concerns with bodily conditions of *killi* and with *pilli*, which is affected by ones' observance of the Buddhist precepts. The concepts of *Killi* and *pilli* do not make fundamental reference to a quality given by birth. It is furthermore a fact that one do not even find Brahmins among the Sinhalese, the category which is the superior caste in the Varna System.

specific roles at ritual service. In general the high castes are easiest identifiable since they have most to gain of social prestige when communicating their caste descendancy. The contemporary hierarchy among my informants put the goigamas (farmers) on the top, then *karava* (fishermen), *salagama* (cinnamon peelers), *durava* (chair men) and finally *bereva* (drummers). The Sinhalese communicate their caste relationship and social status in general through the name of a person's village, occupation and family name.

To discuss the caste system of the Sinhalese is not any easy task, especially since it is not made explicit in most social situations. Drawing from Stirrat (1982) one could say that one's occupation, money and power is a lot more important than one's caste descendancy in daily social interaction with others. Yet ideally one should marry people from one's own caste, but in these days with "love" relationship ideals among the youths, education and "cash" labour available, and with governmental regulation of land, the importance of caste seems to decrease. These resources have "traditionally" been preserved within caste communities and been the important assembling factors.²⁵ It is therefore my own impression that "capitalism rules" in Sri Lanka and this is to me best illustrated by the fact that important scholars like Obeyesekere & Gombrich (1988) classify social hierarchy in terms of a class system, rather than caste. The debate on caste is thousands of pages in itself, and I have chosen not to go any deeper into this literature here. What I find important though is the way caste became a topic for discourse in connection with the *aduras'* practise and the knowledge they preserve. What I will turn to next is a deeper discussion of Weeraratne's claim of that his caste is from the purest lineage in the caste system, based on the work of a scholar who has studied Weeraratne's caste in particular, in very village district where Weeraratne lives.

Michael Roberts (1982) provides that *karava* (fishermen), *salagama* (cinnamon peelers), (and *durava* (chair men) are immigrants from Southern India, (from the 13th to the 20th century), and that through the centuries they succeeded in getting a position among the other casts in Sri

²⁵ Gunasekera (1994) shows how caste has changed in Sri Lanka from the "ancient" Rajakaraya, king-servant (Jati) system to a more fragmented system of class hierarchy.

Lanka. If Roberts is right in his claims, it follows that the introductory stanzas must be questioned. The *goigama* (farmer) caste is the superior caste among the Sinhalese, especially the members who inhabited the Kandyan area, and the other castes have traditionally functioned as *rajakarayas* (king workers), and servants for the *goigamas* (farmers). In the 15th century these castes did not have any position either as servants for the *goigamas*, nor were they viewed equally or superior to them, as their position is seen today. Michael Roberts goes on to show how the *karava*, *salagama* (and *duravas*), through the different colonial periods gradually gained social influence through their emphasis on gaining education, governmental jobs, business and land-ownership. The *karavas* for instance, also claim to descend from the South Indian kshatriya communities, and has emblems belonging to these as a part of their heritage. These emblems are, as also Weeraratne explained to me, used in important transitory rites as marriage and funerals. Roberts sustains that these emblems have been used tactically by the Sinhalese *karava* communities in order to gain position within the Sinhalese caste system, to be superior to or at least equal to the *goigamas*. From Roberts' argument it is possible to suggest that the fact that *karavas* and *salagamas* claim superiority over the *bereva*, which in ancient times, as well as today, were regarded as ritual drummers, might be a result of the process described by Roberts. However, if one follows him, the *berevas* are the ones with longest occupation in ritual service as *aduras*, and the *karava* and *salagama* castes in particular have adopted their profession later on.

Some *karava* and *salagama* caste informants claimed that they were the only ones to be entitled *yak adura*, the others were to be entitled *yakdessa*. Perthold (1930:106) translates *yak adura* as; "he who removes demons", and *yakdessa* as; "he who holds discourse with demons". Both titles refers to one who undertakes the same ritual work. However, Perthold himself does not make any specific reference to caste here. I have also heard *yakdessa* used as reference to those who performed religious rituals in ancient Kandy. A caste relative distinction between the usage of *yak adura* and *yakdessa* is therefore not clear to me.

Based on the discussion above I will question the claims of informants belonging to the *salagama* and *karava* about being the only ones who can be entitled *yak adura* and ideally perform as such. As shown, the varna system is irrelevant in the constitution of caste among the Sinhalese. Since occupation is considered when ranking people socially, I guess that it was important for the *aduras* who belonged to the "high" castes to communicate a higher "rank" than the *berevas* whose occupation is that of ritual work as *toivils* and who have "always" been regarded as low caste. The *aduras* of *karava* and *salagama* caste then draw on the status of their caste's typical occupation and "glorious past"²⁶, and not on their factual occupation and the associations given to this. In my interpretation, however, the stanza above refers to the principle of *varanan*, permission, where the *yak aduras* are the ones with warrant to control demons, and where these stanza indicate the qualities of those chosen.

Roberts' work also has other implications for our understanding of the *aduras'* ritual practise. I will argue that there exists a strong Indian influence on the *aduras'* ritual concepts. Looking to India one finds offering rituals (Vedic sacrifice), mask drama (Kutiyattam from Kerela), dance (Natyasastra) and theatre (Sanskrit drama) whose principles are similar to those of *toivils*. As Kapferer (1997) points out, parts of the *Suniyama* ritual are identical with acts performed in a temple ritual in the South Indian province Tamil Nadu, a ritual called Nityasumangali²⁷. Following Roberts' evidence that the *karava* and *salagama* castes came to Sri Lanka from the southern part of India, especially from Kerela, they have probably brought with them a ritual practise which has become incorporated into the traditional healing rituals prevailing in Sri Lanka. Furthermore Obeyesekere (1984) finds historical evidence for this connection with regard to the rites for the goddess Pattini, who seems to be a "newcomer" in Sri Lankan ritual practise, brought to Sri Lanka by South Indian Buddhists. An illustrative example of the hold of their argument could be found in Weeraratne's (he is *karava*) address; Pattini gewatte, which indicates

²⁶ In fact Weeraratne thought that his *karava* community had been warriors for the latest king in the Rohunu area.

²⁷ This ritual practise is fully described by Saskia.C Kersenboom-Story (1987) in her book "Nityasumangali".

that his house land "belongs" to the temple of Pattini. The name of his house relates to his family's former role as priests (*Kapuralas*) in the Pattini cult. However his contemporary occupation is *yak adura*. I speculate on this information and suggest that the syncretisation between the Pattini cult and the *toivils* could have been a part of an occupational move as well. If we then agree with Roberts and Obeyesekere's claims, his family has probably migrated from South India, transported South Indian ritual practise knowledge to Sri Lanka, situated themselves on the southern sea side as *kapuralas*, and later on worked as *yak aduras*. A move of immigration and of profession which has influenced the knowledge practise of the *aduras*.

Discourse between preservers of differing ritual traditions

This discussion of caste and cultural exchange is in my view a secondary topic for discourse among the *aduras* themselves. To me they were mainly concerned about the "correct" way to carry out the rituals, and whom who knew how to do things right. To do things "correctly" has in their view implications for the ritual's potency to effect cure, and is therefore essential. I stress that the "correctness" of the *aduras'* work was an important subject for the *aduras* themselves and that I myself hold that this discussion is pointing to the existence of an ideal of practise more than a factuality. Matching conceptions of their practise seem to be held by Kapferer (1997) who emphasises in his work on the *Suniyama* ritual, that the *aduras* maintains that every performance of the *Suniyama*, is performed as the original one. Said in another way, the *adura's* not only think that the content of the *Suniyama* rite is "correct", but also as the original one. I hasten to say that Kapferer himself do not provide that every *Suniyama* is performed as the first rite, but that he moderate the *aduras* claims, and uphold that the *aduras* provide that the potency of every *Suniyama* rite, is the very same as in the first rite. I myself must modify the *aduras'* claims, and to me they emphasised the "correctness" in their work.. In the introduction of the book "Indian Theatre" I found some lines making this into a central topic for the ritual professionals of Sri Lanka's neighbour country as well: "*Ritual performances, once established, remain relatively closed systems, in which a*

specific sequence of events must be precisely enacted in order for the efficacy of the ritual to be attained. The guardian of the received tradition is usually a priest or ritual specialist who is responsible for maintaining the purity of the form." (Richmond/ Swann/ Zarrilli 1990:11). To maintain the purity of the form has shown itself problematic for various reasons, I have already pointed to the transportation of ritual knowledge between South India and Sri Lanka, and more examples come just next.

The *aduras* I focus on belong to different castes. My informants were *bereva*, *salagama* and *karava*, but a few were also *goigama* and *oli*. Wirz (1954) mentions that most *aduras* belong to the *karava*; "The *edura* generally belongs to one of the lower castes, such as the *karave* (fishermen), the *hakami*, (land workers) the *berawaya* (drummers), and the *duraya* (chair men). Most often, however, at least in the southern coastal area, they are of the first caste". (Wirz 1954:14) Kapferer for his part mentions the *berevas*, and I am not sure what the typical occupation for the *aduras* is. What I do know is that people related to the same caste are recruiting their students among relatives, but when it comes to the ritual performance what one knows and what one can do, is regarded as more important than which caste one belongs to. Among my informants I can point out three main groups of performers with whom I worked, and all were of mixed caste identity. By following the *aduras* who specialised in dancing I got access to more rituals than if I had followed others, and as a consequence of this, the network of *aduras* continually expanded. I rarely went to any ritual without being introduced to some new. People from the different families and caste communities had to work together if there should be enough people to do the jobs.

Once I joined a ritual where the household itself had decided the constellation of *aduras* for their ritual performance. This ritual was the 8th ritual performed for this lady, and the same household had arranged 35 *toivils* for her mother, so they had first hand knowledge about who were the superior *aduras*. The *aduras* pointed out to the "audience" before the ritual started that this constellation was not made according to the customs of this profession, in which relatives is supposed to perform together, and that the *adura* in lead of the ritual are the one who should decide his troupe. But out of respect for the household, they had decided to accommodate their

wish. The ideal communicated then by the *aduras* at this ritual emphasised that relatives are supposed to work together, and further, the son should learn the practise from his father or another close relative.

Some *aduras* I spoke with moreover thought that students ideally should have only one *gurunanse* (teacher). Still the *aduras* honoured a number of teachers in return for their personal skills and knowledge. Some of the youngest *aduras* I met, had no close relatives who could teach them all the skills needed and were thus students of other caste communities. In these cases their *adura* fathers were dead, or were too old to perform rituals, or their fathers had specialised in *mantra* and could not teach them drumming and dancing the way a fully schooled *adura* could. It is important to clarify that even if the *aduras* did not necessarily work with close relatives or others from their caste communities, their bonds of loyalty were strongest to their relatives and to those they regarded as their teachers. At rituals the man in lead of the rite was the one to be respected, if caste differences occurred, however, those from high castes should be honoured by those from lower ones. Some ways of showing others respect were through the way one addressed oneself to someone, how deep one bowed down when saluting someone, who one handed over food to at meals and probably other things of which I was not aware.

The different knowledge of or opinions about how to do things "correctly", has also something to do with a wider classification of healing traditions which crosses the borders of caste communities. The *Mahasona Samayama* ritual as I observed it differs slightly from the ritual Bruce Kapferer presents in his book «A celebration of demons» (1983) (See Chap. 8 below). In my case it was performed by *aduras* who lived in the Matara area in the southern part of Sri Lanka. The tradition Kapferer describes is performed by *aduras* from Galle, one hour's drive west of Matara. (See map in Appendix 1). I also met *aduras* who performed the ritual the way he describes and have seen their rituals in performance. I was told by an old *adura* living in Nilvala that there are at least four different traditions in the performance of the *toivils* in the southern part of Sri Lanka. The borders are fluid, but can roughly be drawn between Hambantota up to

Nilvala, from Nilvala to Matara, from Matara to Galle and finally from Galle to Ambalangoda. Main differences are to be found in the order of *yakku* who are said to be the patient's agents of misfortune. It is an accepted belief in Dondra that the *Riri Yaka*, *Totupala Yaka* and *Bille Yaka* follow Mahasona. In Weligama on the other hand they count *Suniyam Yaka*, *Riri Yaka* and *Sanni Yaka* among the followers. Every *yaka* requires separate kinds of offerings, and as a consequence of this, the content of the *tovils* naturally differs between these traditions.

My material is too limited to deepen these differences, but what I noticed further was differences in costumes, constructions of offering baskets, orders of offering acts in the rituals, and in the "mask appearance" manifestations of the *yakku*. The songs were also different, and I was told that the *mantras* differed as well. I also got differing explanations about the meaning of some ritual offerings, and a new invention recorded by me is the *bali* (clay image) offering at the end of all *Mahasona Samayamas* I viewed.²⁸ This is an offering which is not mentioned in Kapferer's (1983) material, and further, it is an invention which has crossed the regional borders, and is, as far as I can tell, today performed within all the traditions. It should be noted that the *bali* (clay image) offering itself is not a new act since there are *Bali tovil* (rituals effecting planetary influence on humans, which turn bad astrological times to less bad) where such offerings are the most central ones.

There was a heated discussion among my friends about who were performing the "right" way, I was not even invited to two performances since my friends did not approve of the *aduras* leading the ritual. For instance "incorrect" acts were carried out by an *adura* who performed the offering to Mangara devi, *Mangara pela paliya*, in one *Sanni Yakuma* ritual.²⁹ Mangara devi was regarded as *Mahasona's* protector and not *Sanni Yaka's*, and the offering act for her was performed in the *Mahasona Samayama* rituals I witnessed only. G. Obeyesekere (1984), in his studies of the community rites which celebrate goddess Pattini, (*gammaduva*), writes about the

²⁸ At least, when I mentioned this to Bruce Kapferer, he claimed that this offering was never done when he recorded his material.

²⁹ Since I was not invited, I did not see it with my own eyes, but this point was confirmed by others than those who performed this special ritual as well.

performance of an act called *Dolaha pela paliya*. This act is similar to the procession for Mangara devi and G. Obeyesekere writes; «...that this ritual, and all of the dolaha pelapaliya were for Mangara and an indigenous collectivity of deities known as Dolaha Devio (the twelve gods). In the gammaduva tradition this earlier collectivity was replaced by another one- the Twelve Gods (kings)...» (1984:170). He further tells that there has been a special ritual cult for Mangara devi and finds it logical that this is the place of origin for this act. From this I assume that the offering to Mangara devi is an "invention" into the *Mahasona Samayama* as well.

These "differences" and "inventions" have probably always been a topic for discussions, and I guess that the ritual practice is just following "trends", like every other work of art. Such "trends" could be triggered by change in the Buddhist pantheon, or ideas the *aduras* as creative artists get, as well as influences linked up to local or global social dynamics. The parts which are commonly performed, I view as the most important constitutional rules for the rituals. Such "parts" include the ritual sequences which are held within the four watches, the transaction of "substance" between patient and *yaka*, the cutting of limes and so forth. An act which occurs in every ritual, both in *toivils* and *pidenis* (small offering rituals) is the *depavila*, the human sacrifice trick offering act.

To do things "correctly" is not only regarded as important for ritual efficacy, it is also highly related to the *aduras'* own safety. They say if they perform anything in a wrong way, that the *disti* easily turns against themselves. Their job is to control the powers of the *yakku* they say, not the opposite. The *aduras* sought protection (took refuge) in the "triple gem"; Buddha, Dharma (Buddha's teachings) and Sangha (The Buddhist order of priests), in the protection of *Suniyam* and other guardian or personally chosen gods, as well as in protective *mantra* and different purifying protective "tools" given in their knowledge-practise. So to do things right, and to learn to do things right, is not as easy as it may seem at first sight. There are community, caste and regionally related discourses about the "correct" way to perform rituals. This also points to a

lot of creative possibilities in the knowledge-practise of *aduras*, a fact which will be deepened in Part 2 & 3 of this thesis.

Diversity of knowledge and a spectre of subjects to specialise into

"*Aduras*" is the general term I use to refer to all the people who work in healing rituals. But this usage of the term do not fully accord to its Sri Lankan meaning. The term *adura* refers to those who know how to perform dancing, drumming, songs and mask drama, those who know the performative aspect of the practise. Those who know all of this, as well as all the *mantra* (charms) for all the five *toivils*, are entitled "*Mantra chari*". A *gurunanse* (teacher) should preferably be a *Mantra chari*. Those who beat the drums, the drum specialists, are entitled *Bereva karaiya*, and the ones who perform *mantra* and songs only; "*Mantra karaiya*". The *aduras* also brought along assistants whose job was to help out with the ritual preparations, carry their baskets and so on, although I do not know their titles. However, during the ritual performance all are called *gurunanse*, which is an honourable term.³⁰ As the *adura* Rajpala, who belong to the *durava* pointed to, this is done in order to avoid caste problems.

These titles indicate that different people are seen to have the different kinds of knowledge needed throughout the ritual performance, and only a few are *Mantra chari*, fully schooled performers. The *toivil* as a knowledge-practise belongs to a larger community as a whole, not to a single actor. In Appendix 4 I have made a list which clarifies the specific skills of some *aduras* and which mirrors their diversity of specialisation. Some of my informants were *Mantra chari*, but most of them I regard as ordinary *aduras*. The main difference was between those who knew a lot of *mantra* (*Mantra karaiya*), those who knew the performative part of the ritual (*aduras*) and the drummers (*Bereva karaiya*). These were seen as categories they could specialise into. The *Mantra chari*, as well as some of the *aduras* were involved in determining the diagnosis, and were in

³⁰ In Sinhala there are specific terms used when one direct oneself to different people. This terminology clarifies one's own status in relation to that specific person.

lead of the following rituals.³¹ As leaders they could decide who they wanted to help them out with the ritual performance. On the other hand, the *aduras* had learned only bits and parts of their heritage, and this coloured what kinds of jobs they were called for and what part of the ritual they would perform. The drummers were often related by kinship to one or two *aduras* that they accompanied, and in this way the drummers were often dependent on the skills of their companion *adura*. The same is the case for the *adura's* personal assistants.

The aduras as social persons

In his article about the Sanni Demons, Obeyesekere (1969) stresses the fact that outside the ritual context the *aduras* are inseparable from ordinary villagers; «*The nature of the cult he specializes in, is such that his services are not continuously required, and hence his status-role as priest is not continuously operative. Outside the context of his specialized role activity he is like any other villager of his caste, a bearer of statuses common to others of the group. In normal village life he wears lay clothes and is indistinguishable from the ordinary villager. He is, in this sense, the incomplete contrast to the Buddhist monk, or Catholic priest whose religious calling requires a permanent status identity which isolates him from the rest of the group. (1969:179)*».

As Obeyesekere notes, the *adura* is not a priest in the same way as a Buddhist temple priest whose life is only related to that of being a temple servant. The *adura* lives a normal family life and has other social engagements as well. The *aduras* who know drumming and dancing are often related to dancing schools, where they teach. One finds *aduras* as leaders of dancing troupes performing in *peraheras*, processions at temple-festivals, and often they also engage their own family in such performances. Some *aduras* are farmers or fishermen as well, others offer a helping hand in their relatives' businesses in their spare time. Political engagement is expressed through participation in party meetings and other gatherings, and as all other villagers they associate with friends, care for their children's education, well being and other family related concerns.

³¹ This is only in the case their diagnosis and tying of protective thread had given positive results.

These facts rise the question of how the ritualist succeeds in transcending his normal everyday status role into one which identifies him as an *adura* during the ritual. Obeyesekere points to the change of clothes, the protective acts being carried out and the transformation of his physical body through trance as important elements in his status change. In any case this role transformation is difficult to realise in the *adura's* own village; *«In the eyes of the public the priest who cannot effect this role metamorphosis is viewed as ritually inferior and does not inspire the same confidence. There cannot be in such a case, any marked social distance between public and priest. The attitude that the public have towards the priest as a villager is generalized to the context of his role performance in the ritual. When the ritual specialist is a fellow villager, or a person from a village nearby, some role generalization is inevitable. This kind of role generalization can be avoided if one hires a ritual specialist from a distant village with whom one does not interact normally. It is indeed a Sinhalese custom to hire a «well known» priest from a «distant» village when «serious» rituals have to be performed.»* (1969:180)

During fieldwork, a *Sanni Yakuma* ritual was performed for the mother of an *adura* friend of mine, Chevan, whose mother had been paralysed in one side of her body. Chevan insisted to others that I was the one who recommend to use a *tovil* as a cure, and how could I refuse? Translation problems do lead to some good things as well, and this time it lead to his mother's healing. Interestingly, neither Chevan nor his father participated in the ritual. This is practical advise because their personal concern for the patient can easily make them lose concentration. The ritual efficacy, as noted earlier, is closely connected with the idea of doing things "correctly" and to do things "correctly" is in the *aduras'* view also dependent on their abilities to concentrate.

This connection is also given as one of the reasons why their close family never came to the ritual houses where they performed.³² Another reason mentioned for their family members absence was that during the rituals they crack bad jokes, make a lot of obscene gestures and go into states of trance, things they are ashamed to show their closest relatives. As a result Chevan's wife had never seen him perform, not even during the frequent public shows. Comparing

³² There were exceptions though. Most of the *aduras'* male children had seen their fathers perform, and Weeraratne's whole family frequently showed up on rituals.

Gananath Obeyesekere's notions about role generalisation with the *aduras'* sayings, it thus seems in a way correct. My information accords with his in the way that an *adura* avoids to perform rituals in his own village and that this has to do with his ability to perform his "role" as he should. Seen from the *aduras'* point of view it is in addition associated with their reliability as ritual performers, their emotional concerns which influence their concentration, as well as the capability of some acts to elaborate social stigmas. While Obeyesekere views the *aduras* as performers who seek to play out a convincing role. That the ritual efficacy relies on the *aduras'* ability to transform themselves from villager into healer in performance, the *aduras* regards themselves as healers by virtue, and not as someone performing a role as such.

The *aduras* are regarded and honoured as healers during their visits to houses of ritual. But even if their job is to cure patients and they are awarded for the aesthetics of their practise, they are also associated with *killi* (ritual impurity), they are seen as bearers of *yaksedosa* potential. Comments upon the *aduras* practise presented them as harbingers of misfortune and healers of misfortune at the same time. In a sense these public assumptions, comments given to me by non *adura* related informants, were justifiable. According to my material, the *aduras* claimed to know both curative as well as malevolent *mantras* or *yantras* and also worshipped gods like *Suniyam* or the *yakku* themselves in order to get more patients. Their dualistic position, imply an important fact, which is that it makes the *aduras* into people many fear and avoid to associate with.

One of the five Buddhist precepts advice good Buddhists to sustain from hot liqueurs (strong alcohol), and this was a precept that most *aduras* ignored. According to notions about ritual purity/pollution, alcohol is associated with *pilli*, which is pollution affecting ones own karma. That is to say, a drunk man present at a ritual is not affecting its efficacy, while one with *killi*, like a menstruating woman does. Still, any priest as well as *adura* in this condition impinges on the ritual efficacy due to his work as mediator between the various kinds of worlds. The ritualist cannot be more impure than the spirit he offers to since spirits refuse to accept offerings from beings more impure than themselves, and in this sense the ritual could fail. The *aduras*

explained their habitual drinking by emphasising the anaesthetic intoxicant qualities of alcohol, which reduce bodily tiredness. Alcohol made the *aduras* capable of performing rituals, many nights in a row, and in their own words they drank to get strength to cope with their work. Due to the principle of *pilli*, the *aduras'* own rule was not to drink while they were offering to the gods, but when it came to the *yakku* (and other low spirits), they claimed that bodily impurity caused by alcohol did not affect the ritual efficacy.

From the public the *aduras'* fondness of hot liqueurs met comments which implied a disbelief in their power to control *yakku*. Questions such as; "How can *mantras* (charms) work when the *aduras* drink?" were commonly given. The *aduras* on their side stuck to their belief that, drinking hot liqueurs or not, they were still purer than the *yakku*. The dangers of alcohol for them were more closely connected to the "correctness" of their practise. A drunk *adura* was in danger of forgetting the "correct" *mantras*, unable to perform the "correct" dancing-steps and so on, and this could on the one hand interfere with the ritual efficacy, and on the other hand put the drunk *adura* himself in danger of getting the *yaka's disti* (polluting substance).

As these examples show, the *aduras* are associated with the nature of the spirituals they engage in ritual performance. By the public they are both welcomed as healers, celebrated as great artists and at the same time feared as representatives for the destructive powers of the demons they control. They are shown respect at the ritual houses, but are treated as low caste members when meals are served. The household-members never share a meal with the *aduras* as they do with important guests. Many people doubt the effect of the *aduras'* work, and use every opportunity to disarm their "powers" by questioning their drinking as was the example here, but also the "powers" of other more specific parts of their ritual practise.

Problems of recruitment

In the field I met very few *adura* students, actually only two in their twenties and two in their early teens. The reasons for this could easily be ascribed to a social dynamics which has created other

work opportunities for the *adura* communities. This was emphasised as one of the most important reasons concerning the lack of recruitment into their practise in general be the *aduras*. I received statements which indicated that this was a new time with competitive work abilities, that children went to school and that this was difficult to correlate with ritual training. All this refer to social dynamics penetrating the practise from outside. However, I find it more interesting to focus on other kinds of comments given by the *aduras* themselves, other explanations illuminating the same phenomenon. Firstly, everyone commented that the obscene jokes they cracked during rituals, their bad humour, were rather embarrassing to perform in the presence of their relatives. Secondly, they did not want their sons to inherit their addiction to alcohol. Thirdly many *aduras* commented on the hard work they had. Chevan for one complained; "It is just such a big job to cure these patients".

When I hinted that their work was perhaps "out of date", a descendent of the past, they countered that their knowledge-practise was of the greatest importance.³³ Their work relied on the teachings of Buddha, and they dealt with spirits influencing on the world, so their assistance would always be asked for. Only a drummer, Degayu, thought that they now managed to cope with the *yakku*, that is to say that the *yakku's* influence on the world had weakened, but he emphasised that the *prete* and *bahirewas* were still a big problem, spirits mostly associated with dead relatives and sorcery.

The most important reason for the *aduras'* reluctance to teach their practise to their own children, however, is the bodily transformation which occurs in some ritual acts. The *avatara balima* act, which is a trance-dance act in the *Mahasona Samayama*, is one of these.³⁴ Another example mentioned was the bodily transformation occurring by the use of some special *mantras*. Some make the *adura's* tongue hang out from the mouth down to the chest. How could a father show himself with respect to his son under these bodily conditions?

³³ In Sri Lanka, especially in urban centres like Colombo, people regarded the *aduras'* work as folklore, and I will elaborate this point in Chapter 9 below.

³⁴ There are also trance-dancing acts in the Ira Modum Samayama, the *Suniyama* ritual, and in the Rata Yakuma.

To me this last statement is the one of greatest importance, since it refer to the most vulnerable part of the ritual practise. These examples are practises where the *adura* goes through bodily danger by "sacrificing" himself on behalf of the patient. In his own view, this is the part where his ability to do things "correctly" and to trust his ability of being more powerful than the *yaka*, is determined. This is the part where the *adura* loses control of his own bodily actions, and relies on the powers engaged within his practise for a safe outcome.³⁵ The question the *aduras* rise are whether it is worth going through these bodily transformations in order to bring about cures. In contrast, from a non *aduras* point of view, this is also the action where the *adura* does the "impossible" and in this way manifests their powers and courage of "controlling demons", the forces they engage.

In their own reasoning then, the proud *aduras* are reluctant to involve their families into their work because of all the difficulties they face during performance, problems caused by the fact that they do things which challenge accepted social behaviour. Other reasons are that they were given "low" treatment at some houses of rituals, and that they did not want their relatives to experience the same. I once asked the oldest and most honoured *adura* I met, Anura, what he thought was the main difference between being an *adura* today, in contrast to when he started out about 80 years before. He replied that the most striking part for him was that people did not show the healers or their performance the same respect as before, a statement which indicates that their social prestige as healers has weakened. *Aduras* have a hard life with much travelling and ritual performances lasting from 12 up to 48 hours. Often they perform 3-5 rituals in a row, and this demanding practise is unfavourable when it comes to giving their share of social obligations. Weeraratne had even handed the responsibility of his family affairs over to his youngest son. The *aduras* do love their work, but they are fully aware of the drawbacks of their practise. The consequence seems to be problems of recruitment.

³⁵ I stress that even if the *aduras* fully loses control over their bodily actions, the social opinion is that they are simultaneously themselves and even in trance they are associated as themselves.

Summing up

Looking back at the stanzas which became the motivation for this chapter, I have argued that the *yak aduras* do not have to belong to the most noble of the four castes, the Brahmins, in order to "bring about cures". The *yak aduras* I got to know were both *goigama*, *bereva*, *karava* and *salagama*. However, the question about the *karavas'* descent from a higher varna category is unclear. Perhaps some *karavas* descend from kshatriya castes, or maybe Roberts is right in claiming that they are lower castes which have just adopted this varna category's emblems and symbols. Further, according to these stanzas, the *yak aduras* should ideally "observe the five precepts" and rules of celibacy. My argument has been that the non-*aduras* claimed this as more important than the ritualists themselves, an argument which I rooted in the discourse about whether the *aduras* should drink or not. I must emphasise that this did not count for every *yak adura* I know. There were some who strictly observed the ritual taboos, but they were exceptions and not representative of the average *adura*. So due to my knowledge, the only line which is strictly followed is that the *adura* "takes refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.." in accordance with the fact that all I met were Buddhists.

The second discussion here was the relation between the *aduras'* social position and their work and I argued that they are healers by virtue not by role generation. Moreover I argued that they do not easily escape the fact that they deal with spirits of "dirty nature" in any social context, thus "others" associate them with the "nature" of their occupation.

Nonetheless, the main issue of this chapter is the question of the "purity of the ritual form" which is stressed by the ritualists as fundamental for the ritual efficacy of the healing practice. I have tried to illuminate how the knowledge of different healing-traditions is being complicated both when it comes to constellation of the ritual troupes and the issue of preserving the ritual knowledge of various *adura* communities. Further, I have tried to highlight the variety of knowledge that the singular *adura* represents. This discourse was then linked to the importance of doing things "correctly" in order to grant ritual efficacy and personal safety, a focus chosen in

order to show how important this discourse really is. Looking at comparable ritual practises from South India one finds evidence of syncretisation between ritual practise and theatre and the discourse among the *aduras* shows the practice's resistance against such influence. Resistance or not, the Sri Lankan healing rituals will always be adaptive to artistic innovations and cultural processes.

In Part 3 below, I will return to some of the other arenas where the *aduras* use their skills, and try to show how these engagements affect their healing profession. The dancing schools, local public shows, contact with commercial show-business, and the interests of the Ministry of cultural affairs all interfere with their profession as healers in various ways. Before that, however, I will introduce the *adura's* most common practise, that of the performance of healing-rituals. I will begin by introducing the major tools and styles of the *Mahasona Samayama*, then the process of diagnosis. This is important introductory chapters to the presentation of a specific healing ritual which follows, so I ask the reader to be patient with the complexity of the information given in these chapters, and to not give up on them too easily. This knowledge-practise is extremely complex, and the *aduras* themselves use years to learn it all. If it can comfort you, the following might be difficult to catch, but it is still just a short and narrow introduction into this great tradition.

The adura's most important tools

In this chapter I intend to introduce the "tools" that the *adura's* work is dependent on. By "tools" I mean both objects, words and actions which are said to contain curative potential. The following presentation is related to the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual which will be analysed below (Chap. 7), and does not include all the "tools" available for the *aduras*, but only those of particular relevance for this one. The chapter then seeks to give an introduction into the *adura's* practise through a presentation of various kinds of texts, *mantra* and *yantra*, dance, drums and ritual objects. I also intend to clarify important "cosmic" concepts, and related supernaturals powers, which are crucial to the ritual practise. In the following I will therefore not give preference to analytical points, but rather clarify important concepts and terms which are essential for the understanding of the *Mahasona Samayama* in Chapter 7.

The fundamental ideas in the *aduras'* healing practise are related to concepts of cosmos and body. Cosmos as well as body are substantial, and as cosmos contains the worldly substances, *butha*; earth, water, fire, air and ether, the body does the same. That is to say that the essence of the human substances, *vata* (wind) *pitte* (bile) and *sema* (phlegm) share the quality with the *butha*. In this way every being in every world are shares the essence of their being, the *buthas*. The *yakku* infect on the human body through their essence, *disti*. *Disti* refers both to the substance of the *yakku*, and to the *yakku* themselves at the same time. To remove the *disti* from a patient's body is therefore a double sided task. On the one hand, the *aduras* are addressing the *yakku*, demanding them to leave the patient. On the other hand, they are purifying the patient's bodily substance (and his/her surrounding environment), as well as "binding" *disti* and "cutting" its relation with the patient. The leading questions I ask in this chapter are; which "tools" do the *aduras* have available to "attract" and control, "purify", "bind" and "cut" *disti*, and what are the specific potential of these tools?

Texts as memory keys

First of all it is important to introduce the myths presented through texts the *aduras* use, in the form of *kavis* (songs), *kannalauva* (summoning verses) and *mantras* (magical formulas). There are too many *kavis*, *kannalauvas* and *mantras* written and performed in the rituals, to give examples of all in this thesis, but examples of the most central ones are given in Appendix no. 3.³⁶ To compensate, I will in this general introduction try to clarify their special content, meaning and healing potential. The mythical origin of the different tools mainly refers to the *Suniyama* ritual. That is to say that according to the myth, the tools were created by gods, *rsins* (the seers) and other supernaturals in order to break the (first) spell cast on the wife of the first king of the world.³⁷ I was told that the *Suniyama* ritual is the most essential ritual in the whole *adura* practise, and one *adura* stressed that this was because all the stories about the mythological origin of "tools" were recited during this performance. The *Suniyama* ritual is thought to be the first anti-sorcery rite ever performed, and the "tools" invented for this rite has been transported into other ritual concepts like the *toivils*.

The ritual texts are essential for the *adura's* practise in various kinds of ways. In my interpretation, they contain the "cultural capital"³⁸ which is essential for their knowledge-practise. The texts explain among other things the origin of the spirits, the diseases, the ritual acts, the offering baskets (*pideni, tatoe, ile*), the design of the offering structures (*vidiya, messe, torana*), and the origin and design of the ritualists "tools". These myths are the memory key of the *aduras*, it is by learning these texts that the *aduras* get introduced to and manage to reproduce their practise. To me this became clear when most of my questions directed to the ritual practise were answered by

³⁶ The best collection of classical texts is Hugh Nevill's (1954) collection containing 800 myths. Obeyesekere's (1984) texts from the pattini rites are instructive and the works of Kapferer (1983, 1997), and Paul Wirtz (1956) also contain some texts. In addition to these highly valuable collections, I want to recommend R. Weerakoon's "Sri Lanka Mythology" (1985).

³⁷ The myth of origin of the *Suniyama* ritual is given in Appendix 3. Myth 1.)

³⁸ I am referring to Bourdieu's meaning of this term, since most essential texts as *mantras* are available only to specific social groups, caste communities; more precisely they are handed over from a *gurunanse* to his student.

"there are some stanzas saying...". Some *aduras* found the answers in their memory, others in hand-written as well as published books. The *kavis* (songs) are learned through participation at rituals, but the *aduras* also learn verses at home by reading and singing them. *Mantras* (charms) are taught secretly from gurunase to his student, and the most powerful *mantras* are regarded as *guru musti*, teacher secrets.

Myths themselves have the potential of mediating between the various kinds of worlds, and pay active influence on beings living within them. The myths are in this way seen not only as cultural heritage, but also as containers of an active potential. Obeyesekere (1969) uphold the ritual texts to be independent of the forces of time and place, that the recitation of a myth within a ritual context re-actualises its potential. The phenomenon described in the myth, and most importantly the force of its course of events, is re-engaged and exists in "this" very moment, not in the past. Kapferer (1997) makes a similar point when he argues that the myths are important in the creation of the multi-sensoric (virtual) "generated" within the ritual concepts (*toivils*) put to play. In this sense ritual texts are an important part of the reality (virtuality) engaged within the context of the rite. This is a point I will return to and explore further in Chapter 8.

In the myths there are lots of names of different figures of legends, which remain unknown to me. In fact it is only specialists who know all the names that the different gods, demons and spirits are known under. As Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) emphasise, it is important to understand that every god can die as everyone else. The principle of rebirth makes it possible to be re-born with the same powers and attributes by others. The trouble for a non-specialist is that of recognising these qualities under a new name. Another important point in relation with the extremely complex pantheon, is that during the centuries, there have been a manifold of ritual practises in Sri Lanka, ritual practises related to cults of specific deities and healing (Obeyesekere 1984). Obeyesekere argues that the powers of the different gods, which in his view are personification of cultural phenomena, are more or less relevant under specific historical times. Therefore specific cults rise and fall, and with them the powers of the specific

supernaturals. Obeyesekere (1984) maintains that in this process, often one practise takes over from another, and through time traces of the "original" cult are still left. Traces of supernatural's stories, what offerings they required, and what they effected have been transported into new cults and accordingly into new myths. The reference to the first *Sunijama* rite in the story of origin of the "tools" used in the *Mahasana Samayama*, is an illustrative example of this process.

Often the names of the supernaturals are lost, and only their number remembered. In fact Obeyesekere is ironic about the various practises' gentle agreements of numbers of diverse categories of supernaturals, and their tolerance of disagreement of content. One example of this is the lost knowledge of the origin of the Dolaha devio, the twelve gods. Their names and history differs greatly from comparable ritual practises, and occurs both in the Pattini rites and the *Mahasana Samayama*. In these dissimilar ritual practises they have a contrasting relationship. In the first rite the twelve gods are connected with goddess Pattini, in the second with god Mangara and their names differs as well. But as Obeyesekere says; "*Numerology is maintained and everyone is happy*" (1984:293). This inform that numbers are essential in all ritual practises. Numbers are auspicious, and the numbers of three, seven, nine, ten, eighteen and others frequently occur as reference for how many offerings are required, how many manifestations various beings have and categories of diseases etc.

In Sri Lanka ritual texts have been written on palm leaves for centuries back, probably for more than 2500 years. Palm leaf manuscripts are short lived, but many have been copied by others and in this way preserved for future generations. Written texts have been most available for the schooled ones, whereas others learned their knowledge through participation of ritual performances. From this it is reasonable to think that oral transportation of myths through the medium of ritual performance, which is fluid, has effected the "development" of stories. This is since, in my regard, ritual performances as a "medium of knowledge transportation" can have been the fundament for re-constructions of the myths into other stories. Texts put into ritual

performance are therefore also an important source for the spectators to learn about the various gods, devils and other beings, their origin, and their powers.

In the following I will draw on Hugh Nevill's collection of myths (1955), collected in the middle of the nineteenth century, which is the most complete collection of "Sinhala verses" to be found. I have to draw on myth material of Nevill and others, since I has only collected a few myself.³⁹

Kavis (songs)

Kapferer mentions 5 different kinds of *kavis* (songs) used during the rituals. "*The asirivada kavi, which relates aspects of the myth's relation to the demons and praises their powers and also the powers of the deities; the ambun kavi, which tells how the offering baskets and other ritual structures are made; the Yadini kavi, which is basically similar to the asirivada kavi, and which tells of the ancestry and origin of the demons; the atacona kavi, which calls the demons from the eight directions; and the sirasapada (head to foot) *kavi*, which is principally curative and is sung to remove the illness from the patient.*" (1983:198, my emphasis). In accordance with my own field material, these different categories of songs moreover affect four different qualities of engagements of the *yakku*. The first one is thought to be flattering for the *yakku* to hear, the second is a description of the offerings given due to the promise they made to Buddha about giving up their influence if they receive such and such offerings. The fourth category is attracting the demons from every direction of the worlds, and finally the last one has the power to end various categories of illnesses caused by them.

Set kavi and *vas kavi* is also a part of some *aduras'* repertoire. The *set kavi* is recited to call for the blessings of gods, the *vas kavi* to call for the destructive powers of gods and spirits. These songs are used outside the *tovil* context, at temples or *kovils* (small temples, most often located at the priest's private ground).

³⁹ I tried to get some texts translated, but the textual mixture of Pali, Sanskrit, Telegu, Tamil and Sinhala was difficult for my assistant to translate, so I decided to rely on these other sources instead.

The last category of songs to be mentioned is the *kannalauva* (summoning verses) which share the positive protective quality of *set kavis*. *Kannalauva* addresses supernaturals dwelling in "other worlds" and is performed with the purpose of attracting their attention. "The ritual as a public ceremony may be said to begin with the *kannalauva*. It states why the ceremony is being held, describes the nature of the patient's affliction, and makes plea to the gods to come and bless the ceremony and to the demons to act benevolently and remove the disease." (Thambiah 1968:177). It should be noted that *kannalauva* verses are frequently recited throughout the whole performance, and not only in the beginning as Thambiah claims. According to my experience, every important offering "sequence" starts with recitation of such verses to worship gods, placation to *yakku* and low spirits and the granting of successful healing in return for the offering acts to follow.

Mantra and Yantra; Magical words and drawings

Mantra could be called "spirit language", since its letter combinations address and attract spirits. Moreover, special letter combinations contain demanding powers. Mythologically the nine *rsins* (the seers) are said to be the creators of *mantras*. According to the story of origin of the *Suniyama* ritual, Attaroan *rsin* is the first creator of *mantras*. This indicates that the first time the *rsins'* *mantras* were used for curative purposes in the human world, was at the first *Suniyama* ritual performed.⁴⁰ Weeraratne, gave a wider content to the concept of *mantra* and the powers of *yakku* this way; *Sakvala* means space, universe. In that universe there exist various worlds (*loka*) nine planets, sun and moon. There are some other places, worlds like that in the solar system (all worlds are six in number), unknown for scientists. We believe that *yakku* are living in such worlds. When they are called for with peculiar sounds they can hear. This is the psychic powers of the *mantras*. The *yakku* put *disti* (pollutive substance) through their *belma* (glance). They have psychic powers like planets. As sun puts its light on earth. *Mantras* have the *ghana* sound which is very powerful. *Sabdaya* (speech), produces high sound waves. These sound waves drive away the devils.

⁴⁰ The *Suniyama* ritual is widely described in Kapferer's book "The feast of the Sorcerer" (1997), and the origin myth of the *Mantra*, is given in the myth about the first *Suniyama* performed.

At first sight, Weeraratne's explanation may seem rather cryptic, but his argument is of greatest importance. What he points to is the idea that there exist several worlds which are connected with each other. *Mantra* is then viewed as a sound system with which one can intermediate between this world and the gods and demons living in other worlds. Furthermore, Weeraratne compares the way the *yakku* place their look on the earth with that of the sun shining. The quality of sunshine is that of giving light and heat to the human world, a quality which is capable of interfering with earthly as well as bodily substance. In this view, comparable to the particular sickness caused by *yakku*, the quality of *yaksadosa* is that of interfering with bodily substance, *just as the sun puts its light on earth*. The quality of *mantra* sounds has in Weeraratne's statement a specific potential of withdrawing *disti*.

Weeraratne's explanation, as it was given to me, further gave an introduction into physics, into the theory of cosmic resistance and attraction, but I could not fully understand his argumentation. Grete Smith Andersen (1993) seems to have got similar information, and in her discussion of *mantras* in Sri Lanka she states that; "*cosmos consists of sympathies and antipathies, similarities and differences, still they manifest themselves in various categories. Sound and sound combinations are in this way connected with elements which both constitute macrocosms and human microcosms, and (mantra) sound combinations are capable of creating both relieving and destructive interference with these.*" (1993:56-57, My translation.) In my interpretation the lines above try to explain how *mantras* are capable of reaching out to other worlds, and they have this capability because they share quality with them. Cosmos is structuring and influencing the life of humans and other beings, and the *mantra* sounds are capable of turning the direction of the cosmic forces, of turning disadvantage to advantage and sickness to health. *Mantras* can thus be interpreted as antipathies acting upon cosmic sympathies.

I heard talk about *mantras* in terms of good, bad, very powerful, highly curative, or less curative. But the best statement made about *mantra* qualities and their effect which I have come across, is provided by Gooneratne (1865), who is one of the oldest contributors to the study of

this topic in Sri Lanka. In my view, Gooneratne illustrates Andersen's notions, and exemplifies various categories of quality manifest in destructive and relieving *mantras*; " *The virtue and efficacy of a charm...consists, it is said, not so much in the meaning of the language used, as in a peculiar arrangement and combination of certain letters, each having its own peculiar power. According to this classification, some letters are called poisonous, others deadly, a third class fiery, a fourth quarrelsome, and a fifth causing banishment. On the other hand there are others called prosperous, some pleasure giving, a third and fourth class health-giving and friendly, and a fifth divine; while a few are called neutral.*" (Gooneratne "On demonology" 1865:53, In D. Scott 1994:217).

Moreover I learned from *aduras* that *mantras* addressing gods start with the letter combinations "Om Namoh". These sound- (letter-) combinations address the main Hindu god⁴¹ Brahma (some also counted god Iswara (Shiva) and god Vishnu). In long *mantras* "Namaste Ganahai", a salutation to Ganesa, is the phrase that follows "Om Namoh". It is easier to learn and remember anything with his blessings as he is the god of knowledge. *Mantras* addressing *yakku* or other malevolent beings begin with "Om hrin". The sounds of *mantras* is their power, but the *adura* does not have to shout the *mantras* to make the forces they address attentive. The *mantras* can be thought as well as said, and most *mantras* recited through a *tovil* are mumbled.

In my view, the theory which best grasps the *mantra's* power must be Austin's (1962) thoughts about verbal utterances as "speech acts", where he points to how certain words are potent with action. Ronald Bouges (1990) writes that Deleuze and Guattari talk about language as an active element within a regime of signs, a discussion which is rooted in the work of Austin (and similar scholars of language). " *The primary function of language...is not to transmit information or to allow communication, but to issue mots d'ordre...orders and commands which enforce an order - law and order.*" (1990:136). According to this statement, language is not made in order to transfer facts, but to create human order and rules of interaction. *Mantras* on their part exist as a hierarchical sound system, (addressing gods ordered in this way) as its own regime of signs, which not only includes

⁴¹ According to the Hindu Pantheon, Brahma is the world's creator, Vishnu the world's balancer and Shiva the world's destructor.

the world of humans, but also those of cosmos as a whole. *Aduras* claims that its creation is to effect the various beings' influence upon each other.

Further; "*Deleuze and Guattari explain the operation of mots d'ordre by relating them to the Stoic theory of incorporeals... Words and things are bodies, but words and things also have an incorporeal dimension... What links words and things is the inseparable relation between sense and attributes... Language therefore may be seen as the vehicle through which an incorporeal attribute is assigned to a thing, as the vehicle of an incorporeal transformation... transformations of bodies through language.*" (Ibid.; 137-138) It is not my intention here to discuss the general consequences of their statement, but I argue that they are definitely pointing to important qualities of *mantras* as they are perceived among the *aduras*. When *aduras* (or others) recite a *mantra*, it contains an expected effect, not because of the words themselves, but because the sounds shares the quality of the intended actuality they represent. *Mantras* potency is also that of transforming (misfortune) bodies, its incorporeal nature works directly upon ones being within the world and has the capability of engaging destructive as well as constructive influence upon human bodies within their lifeworlds.

It is interesting that the *aduras* compared *mantra* with the powers of other ritualistic tools like resin (*dumalla*), drum sound (*bera tala*) and the demon pipe (*vasdanda*). Ariyadasa told me that; *Mantra is the language we call the yaka with, we ask the yaka to put their belma (look) to this place. Resin, flute and drum sound also travel where demons are living and attract their attention.* This does not differ from other *aduras'* explanations about the potential of *mantra*. Their point is that the *mantra*, flute, drum sound and so on, are capable of reaching the other worlds in cosmos.

The *mantras* uttered are dangerous for those reciting them, and I was told how *aduras* died under "un-natural" circumstances after performing rituals. They had not recited the *mantras* correctly, with the consequence that the *disti* had turned against themselves. Therefore the most important *mantra* for the *aduras* is *Araksa mantra*, which is the first they learn. *Araksa mantra* contains protective potentiality, and they recite these *mantras* many times throughout rituals for their own protection. The *aturea* (patient) may also face problems connected with incorrect

mantras. As Asiri said; If you fail to recognise the spirit who has brought the patient's disease, the mantra will only make the aturea worse.

It is important to note that since the different *kavis* (songs) follow special poetic rhythmical patterns, which is the linguistic structure from which they are created, the *aduras* know how to make *kavis*. The same is the case for *mantras* and *kannalauva*. Weeraratne also had a sort of *mantra* dictionary, where the potential or the virtue of the different sound combinations were given. This provides a creative opportunity for the *aduras* to design new texts to be performed through the rituals, and as noted earlier, there are different "healing traditions", and *adura* "communities", which emphasise different ritual acts and which perform different songs. By putting focus on structure and form, rather than content, I will argue that the *aduras'* goal of doing things correctly according to the ancient tradition shows flexibility, a flexibility which includes the variety of myths and actions. The *aduras* stressed the sound of magical words (*mantras*) and drum beat accompaniment of *kavis* and *kannalauva*, as the most essential element in the ritual performance, in other words they emphasised sound and not textual meaning. Thus for themselves the texts on their part contain the most important knowledge for an *adura*, since every *adura's* action is made according to "receipts" given in the texts. But how to putting the textual contents into a ritual performance, requires years of training under learned *aduras'* corrective guidance.

Mantras are connected to *yantras*. *Yantras* are geometrical designs, where the geometrical centre is thought of as a re-creation of the centre of the world, the pure *potentiality* of cosmos. The *yantras* are in other words taken to contain mediating potentiality, it is iconical/indexical with cosmic unity. When *mantras* (which are often written on the *yantras*) are charmed to the *yantras*, their potential is intensified. In an introductory book about *yantra*, written by Khanna a scholar of western and eastern philosophy, it is argued that; *"..the mantra and the yantra form a complex dialectic of form and sound. Although the yantra and the mantra are two distinct principles, and operate on two distinct levels, they are mutually influential and complementary: every yantra can be reduced to certain frequencies of vibration*

(*mantra*) and every sequence of vibrations can be grouped into particles of matter to form an appropriate geometrical shape (*yantra*). The *yantra* and the *mantra* are meant to substitute for each other....it is possible to "see" sound as form and "hear" pattern as sound." (Khanna 1979:44). That is to say that both the *yantra* and *mantra*, according to Tantrism, are containers of the same potential.

Both *yantra* and *mantra* were used in the Vedic rituals, and the first Vedic scripture (ca. 3000 BC), called Rg-veda is a reflection about the *mantra* Om, which is the most essential cosmic sound. (Tantrism is thought of as a reinterpretation of the earliest Veda scriptures.⁴²) One could say that it contains the whole repertoire of cosmic qualities. In the *aduras'* offering rituals the offering baskets and the main ritual structure used in the *tovis*, are made according to the *yantra* designs. According to the *aduras'* practise *yantra* drawings are useful in other ways as well, and *yantras* charmed with *mantra* contain various efficative powers. For instance Asiri could make *yantras* which protected the bearer from sorcery, *yaksadosa*, bad planetary influence and other kinds of misfortune. Ariyadasa, as we saw in the Introduction, promised to make a *yantra* which would bring together a man and his son. The potential of some *yantra* designs, charmed with *mantra*, is to separate people, run a man down, to guarantee success in court, and to gain economical success in business.⁴³ There are also special *yantras* used in worship of gods. It is not unusual to see a ritualist make a protective *yantra* in the night during the rituals, which is tied around the *aturea's* neck the following morning. The *yantra* drawn on copper plate, is then prepared on a small altar (often designed as a small three-sided shelter) with offerings to the gods invoked⁴⁴. Throughout the night the *adura* will frequently recite *mantras*. The more repetitions of *mantras* required, the more forceful is the *yantra's* potential thought to be.

The Buddhist priests also make *yantra* designs which are charmed with *pirit*, a Buddhist prayer, and the *adura* Ranatunga kept one of these drawings in his house for protection. He told me that it was a *lakse-yantra*, a *yantra* charmed 108.000 times by a Buddhist priest. Another *adura*,

⁴² According to Khanna (1979).

⁴³ For more detailed information about the *Yantras* produced by the *aduras*, see Paul Wirtz (1954).

⁴⁴ Flowers, incence, thread, needle, fruit drinks, small oil lamps, are among other things nice gifts given, suitable for gods.

Soddu malli, had charmed oil in a small container tied around his neck for protection, an oil charmed with 108.000 repetitions of *mantras* and three days and nights of *pirit*. It is important to note that he never wore his protective *yantra* during the rituals, since it would have obstructed the attraction of *yakku* to the rituals. Soddu malli's explanation was that his *yantra* was so powerful that he would fail to act as a "mediator" between *yakku* and the patient. *Mantras* would be ineffective.

Natya, the performative art of dancing

To build a suitable bridge between the texts of the *aduras'* knowledge-practices and their performative art, I want to quote Rajpala, who by these words connected these different aspects of their practise; *For the art, dancing is the most important skill. In curing the patient, mantra is most important, dance the second most important thing. Both things are going hand in hand when the tovil is going on.* Rajpala stresses the aesthetical value of the *aduras'* dancing and the curative powers of the *mantras* as separable qualities of the ritual performance. Nonetheless, I intend in the following to show that it is not easy to say that the one or the other contains curative powers, since dancing like *mantras* is strictly observed as done correctly or incorrectly. Dance is following a defined structure of rhythms and moves, just as the textual scriptures are following a poethical rhyme.

Hugh Nevill (1955:297) says that the art of dancing; *"is divided into three heads, gitarya or singing, nrutya or dancing, and berapada or drum accompaniment... Dancing was first invented under the constellation Rehena, on the seventh day of the light moon, under the sign Makara, on a Guru day or Thursday, in the month Maedindina or Phalguna, by the Rishis, at the ceremony to disenchant King Maha Sammata."* As he illuminate, dancing is inseparably connected with songs and drums, but not necessarily with both at the same time. The dancing steps are essential to the ritual since the drum plays up to the dance, not the other way around. Still the drum sound is thought of as the thing that attracts and pleases the *yakku*, and therefore they have to pay close attention to the dancing steps performed. The dancers have jingles on their legs, whose sound has the same quality as that of the drum.

Another myth tells that Iswara (Shiva), who is one of the *rsis*, was dancing with an arrow while he exorcised the devils, a myth which accords to the Indian belief that dancing was first performed by Shiva and his wife Paravati, each one representing the masculine and feminine form of dancing. This myth says: "*Iswara took the sun and moon, and decked himself for the dance. In his right hand a jaya-saka or victory-chank, he danced graciously, while yakku, Devas, men and Maha Bamba came to look on. He danced the evening dance, the dawn dance, the tadam dance; the latter is apparently the dandava dance, which was taught by Shiva, to his attendant Tandu.*" (Hugh Nevill 1955.2:98). *Tandu* is the common term referring to the masculine aspect of dancing, and *lache* to the feminine, a difference which again makes reference to two dancing forms. In Sri Lanka there are two different dancing traditions roughly divided into the regions of up-country (Kandy area) and low-country (the southern seashore region). Their main difference is to be found in the different dancing styles. The former mainly follows the *lache* pattern, and the latter *tandu* (or *baratto*). The performative difference is that *lache* tradition when compared to the *tandu* dance, is slow and simple. Where beauty and elegance is expressed in the former, bodily strength and energy is expressed in the latter. My informants also thought that the *tandu* style is most suitable for dances in honour of malevolent spirits, and the *lache* pattern in honour of gods.

An interesting comparison between Sri Lankan and Indian dance is to be found in Richmond, Swann, Zarrilli (1990:5). They claim that in an early stage of performative development there were three forms of dancing; "*First there is nr̥tta, or pure, abstract, or decorative dance. Next is nr̥tya, mime or gesture based on interpretation of the narrative or thematic content of performance. Finally there is natya, which is best thought of as performance in which acting and dance are combined in dramatic form.*" As far as I can see, it is possible to recognise all three forms in the dancing of the *adurās*. Further, Hugh Nevill's myth uses the word *nr̥tya* for dance, which is also mentioned in the other text, and the common terms used by the *adurās* is *natya* and *natum* or *natuma*, which are all similar to the Sanskrit terms, *nr̥tta*, *nr̥tya* and *natya*.

Another clear influence from Indian performative art is the concept of *rasa*, which is commonly translated as sentiments. The theory of *rasa* in Indian performance is the theory of the different body gestures employed to express various states of the human condition. According to Baumer & Brandon; "*Rasa is the spectator's experience of «tasting» or «savouring» those specific emotional states which the characters in the play are portraying on the stage through words, actions, costume and makeup, and psychological expression appropriate to those emotions. Sanskrit theatrical theory recognises eight basic human emotions (bhava) that can be portrayed on stage and hence eight corresponding rasa experiences possible to the spectator.*" (1981:210). In other words; *rasa* is the sentiment evoked in the spectators through the medium of expressions of *bhava* (emotion/state of being) put into play by the performers.

The *adurās* stressed that their dance was keyed into the concept of *rasaya*, which is the same as the Indian *rasa*. When they learned to dance it was important to learn the dancing steps, to follow the hand movements by the eyes, to make their limbs «vibrate» and to be capable of making "strong" difficult movements. Finally the concept of *rasa* was emphasised, the way the dancer must be able to express the different emotional looks. No *adurās* made more intimate reflections about the way *rasa* according to *Natyasastra* (a theory of Indian dance) is thought to evoke the emotional states of the spectators. The expressive qualities Ariyasena linked to *rasaya* were; kindness, happiness, warriors' look, unbearable or disgusting look, sorrow, seductive look and madness. *Rasa's* connection with purification of the mind, the relief of a laugh is brilliantly stated by Gandhi who says; "*It is necessary to recognise that rasa experience is «aesthetic joy or bliss»; it is a means of transmuting pain or unhappiness into pleasure*" (Gandhi in Baumer/ Brandon (1981:211).

Initiation into the art of dancing

The dances performed by *adurās* are highly complicated, and it takes years of training to learn all of them. Some basic dancing combinations are used in every ritual, but one also finds special steps (*pade*) which "belong" to specific types of rituals. The *samayama pade*, *sirisipade* (head to foot) *pade* and *adav pade* are performed in every ritual and the 35 dancing combinations for *Sanni yaka*

are only performed during the *Sanni Yakuma*. A wider important consequence of this are that some offering dances are strictly observed as correct for a specific offering act, while others open up for creative possibilities where the *aduras* themselves are free to choose how to dance. Their dances are restricted by the style they are trained into. When the *aduras* learn to dance they will train every day with a *pol*-stick (a coconut tree-stick) in order to bend and stretch their knees, which are turned outwards, again and again, until they are strong enough in their legs to perform the dancing steps correctly.^{45/46} The young students often learn both drumming, dancing, singing and the most essential *mantras*, and only later, after some years of training, they choose a specialisation. When the dancer is practising basic dancing steps, he repeats the drum-rhythms verbally. When he has learned the basic steps and hand-movements (and to follow the hand with his eyes), he learns how to express the eight (or nine) *rasas*, the different emotional looks.

Ideally the student should follow one *adura* teacher's (*gurunanse*) guidance and first learn to perform the *Rata Yakuma* (the fertility ritual), since its dancing steps are basic and not very complicated. When the *adura* has learned various parts of a whole ritual's songs, *mantra*, dancing-steps, offering decorations and so on, the student goes through an initiation ceremony, which makes him a fully acknowledged *adura*. Thereafter he can participate in *Rata Yakuma* and earn money from his performance, while he is learning the other rituals. As soon as the *aduras* are fully initiated they are allowed to wear full costumes during the rituals. Second the student learns the *Sanni Yakuma*. The *Sanni Yakuma* is the most complicated of all the rituals, in the sense that the dancing combinations are the most difficult ones, and since the *Daha-ata Sanni*, the mask drama is a part of this ritual. For the *adura* as a dancer this is the most complicated step into the practise. Thirdly, the initiated *adura* participates in and learns all the other rituals.

As stated earlier the different dancing combinations accompanied by the drum sound, contain curative potential. To see something nice is told to have a purifying effect, just as humour

⁴⁵ A brilliant dancer is thus often rather bandy-legged after years of training.

⁴⁶ For this general presentation of how the *aduras* learn to dance I draw on information from Rajpala, Jagath (an *adura* who runs a dancing school), Chevan, Ranatunga, Jayantha and Weeraratne.

contains this quality through the mask drama. As Rajpala formulates it: *The adura must dance in such a way that he proves that he is more powerful than the yaka*. This is a statement which points to the main issue of their work, which is that of dancing offering dances for the *yakku*. One could ask, though, who Rajpala refers to when he says that he must prove his powers, is it to the *yakku* or to other spectators at the ritual performance? In accordance with other statements I have heard, I maintain that he refers to both. Rajpala's statement also indicates that there are dangers connected with their work as demon controllers, that *aduras* regard the forces they engage as powerful.

Bereva, the art of drumming

The Bereva (drum) also has its story of origin, and I quote Hugh Nevill (1955:96); *"At the festival of Buddha, when Wasawatu Mara was defeated by the Buddha, a Gandharva to celebrate the victory brought a drum a gawwa (four miles) long, and beat upon it the 32 tunes; some of which are given as follows: Tam tari tari jen kiri kiri jenan kuru kuru tam takata taka jen. ... the teacher of the Gandharvas, with a drum on his back, visited king Maha Sammata, and gave it the name of "dawula"...."*. Asiri explained that the Gandharva god was a musician, and that the humans learned to make a copy of this drum, with the same shape as the original. The drum used during the healing rituals is called *bereva* and is three hand-lengths long. Hugh Nevill also notes three different drum beats, 12 *haramba* (or notes), 32 *talán* tunes (basic rhythms) and 69 *saudem* (rhythm combinations). Remember that the drum accompanies dancing, and therefore these also refer to the number of various basic dancing steps and the number of *saudem* dancing combinations (also called *adav*), which is fundamental in the *aduras'* training in the dancing art.

I noted that the drum used during the rituals is really like a tuned instrument which both accompanies the songs and dance, and at the same time sounds like a musical instrument. The drummers frequently tuned their drums during the ritual since untuned tones did not sound good, neither were they "correct". I emphasise that in the opinion of the *aduras*, drumming,

dancing and singing are inseparably related since they together give form to the universal sound and rhythm whose potency is that of reaching out to and pleasing everyone dwelling in every world.

Important objects used as ritual tools

Ritual objects, or tools, are potent with specific potentials, and have specific functions that they fulfil throughout the rituals. These potentials are indexical with those of the gods who "invented" these objects, but they also make references to more general principles of the healing process which for instance could be to bind, cut, purify and stop the *disti* influence upon a human body. Both the origin of these objects and some of their specific functions will be clarified below.

Igaha, is the ritual stick. The *igaha*, which translated into English is "arrow", is made of a wooden stick, and an iron nail is fixed on its end. (See picture 4). It is decorated with arecanut flowers, and is a pointed weapon. In discussion with some *aduras* they suggested that the *igaha*, the ritual stick used in the *toivils* to withdraw illness from the patients body, had this origin and powers; The iron nail has "antimagnetic powers". The principle is that of two antimagnetic poles which are pushing each power source apart, but still when moving one pole the other follows due to their negative repulsive relation. For instance on the "negative pole", demons have resistance to this iron-nail, and due to this potency, the *adura* controls the demons' powers (*disti*). For instance it is a good advice to leave an iron-nail at places where one prepares oils to be used for ritual protection. This is done in order to contain its purity, i.e. to keep the *yakkus disti* away from it.

God Iswara (Shiva) was the one who made the first *igaha*, he gave it to Ganesa, Ganesa gave it to Katarangama and Katarangama gave it to the *adura*. On images of Katarangama one can see that the *igaha* is his weapon, and today the powers of the *igaha* is associated with him. In

the myth that Hugh Nevill (1955.2: 10) presents, the potential of the *igaha*, which have originated in the first sorcery ritual (*Suniyama*) is; "*dispelling evil from the arrow, long life was ever extended*".

Throughout the rituals the *igaha* actualises various potentials, and has a great number of functions to fulfil. In principle the *aduras* as well as the patients are protected by the *igaha*, and if the patient takes a short break from the ritual arena during the rite, s/he brings the *igaha* for protection. By giving *mantra* to the *igaha* the *aduras* can lead the patient in demon trance (*avesa*) and control their directions of dancing. For the *adura* the *igaha* both protects him against *disti*, and helps him control the patient who has *disti*. The *adura* charms the *igaha* with *mantras*, and these specific *mantras* are addressing a *rakse*, a kind of demon that is regarded as more powerful than *yaka*, and therefore has powers to control the *yaka*.

After the ritual offerings are finished, and the *yakku's' disti* bound to these, the *aduras* take the offering baskets to the *porale* (graveyard) which is the "*disti* stopping"⁴⁷ place. By drawing three lines on the ground underneath the offering baskets with the *igaha*, the *yakas' disti* is kept to this place. During the performance of *sirisipade* (the head to toe verses), the *igaha* is used to withdraw the illness from the different parts of the body. The *adura* then points to the bodily parts mentioned in the text of the *sirisipades*, and "leads" the *disti* out of these parts. There is also a special *igaha* *pade* (steps) performed after the *sirisipade* in order to end the illnesses caused by the *disti* being lead out of the patient's body. Finally the *igaha* is used in the part of the ritual when the *adura* symbolically "shoots" the cock representing a deer as an offering for Mangara devi, or when the "death of the cock" (*kokola depavila*) act is performed.

The *igaha* is one of the most essential objects used by the *aduras*, because of its powerful potential and flexible functions. The *igaha* controls, withdraws, moves and binds *disti*, which all are essential qualities engaged in order to remove *disti* which afflicts the body of patients.

⁴⁷ The exact meaning of *Porale* as the *disti* stopping place, is not clear to me. It could be that this is the place they stop *disti* that this is the "*disti's* stopping place" and simultaneously it could be that this makes reference to a quality of the place itself. Thus in my view both interpretations is possible.

Gire is the *arecanut cutter*, and its origin (*gire upete kavi*) is ideally recited in the *Suniyama* ritual only. The myth that Hugh Nevill cites states that the *gire* was first used in the first *Suniyama* ritual, a ritual held in order to break the spell cast on Manikpala, Maha Sammata's wife by king Wesawarti. Oddisa, (for some *aduras*, the first one of their kind), was called for to cure Manikpala, and during the ritual he cut limes with a *gire*, accompanied by *mantras*, which removed the enchantment under which the Queen suffered. The myth describes the design of the *gire* thus; "Its left eye or rivet had a moon, the right was the sun, the handles were the four guardian gods, the blade was Rahu, and to forge this the anvil-hammer was first invented. Golden limes were cut for the cure. In a *gire* the following gods reside; in the rivet's two eyes the Andun Mala devis, in the junction of the blades the Sandun Deva; Sandu the moon, Senasuru Saturn, are in the blades" Hugh Nevill (1955:97). The arecanut cutter is used to cut betel nuts by everyone, but is especially used to cut limes in the rituals by the *aduras*. So in the ritual context it helps to cut and to purify *disti*, but the *gire* itself is just a nutcracker made of iron.

Delhi is *lime*. According to the myth the limes were given as a ritual tool from the *rsins* to break the spell given to Maha Sammata's wife, queen Manikpala. The limes were collected from various worlds and brought to the human world by the *rsins*. It is said that there are 9 different limes, one for each *rsin*, but in the rituals only one kind of lime is used. In the rituals different limetree twigs are also used, five different ones for the fire used during the *Deraheva depavila* act, (the symbolic human sacrifice for *Riri yaka*). The limes contain purifying potential due to the citrus smell which flavours its surrounding air when cut with the *gire*, and its potentials is that of breaking spells and cutting demonic influence on persons. The lime is also used in order to detect sorcery, and I will return to this specific technique in the next chapter.

The *Vasdanda*, the *demonpipe*, should also be mentioned. The demonpipe is used by the *adura* to call for the spirits. It makes an untuned sound. Its origin is unknown to me. Its potential is

that of attracting the *yakku's'* attention to the rite, since its sound travels to where the *yakku* are living.

Ata Paliya; the procession of the eight agents of healing

Kapferer (1983:243) notes that; "*Exorcists understand their rituals as composing the five essences of sound (sabdha), visual form (rupa), touch and feeling (sparsa), taste (rasa) and smell (gandha). These are the essences which are "materialised" in the five elemental substances (panca maha bhuta).*" These elemental substances are, as I have mentioned, the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Drawing from the lines above, Kapferer's informants have linked the ritual's potency with the idea that ritual "tools" share the quality of cosmic essence in general. I noted, that the *aduras* resist making use of any object which is not made from natural material in his ritual dress, close to his own body. The construction-materials of offering-baskets should come from nature itself and fresh leaves were required for its creation. Furthermore the ritual mats, (earthen) pots etc. should be made of natural materials and should ideally be "newly made" or not used before. This was done in order to meet the ideal of pure "elemental" qualities which furthermore "protected" the ritual efficacy. Kapferer goes on and links these essences with the qualities of the ritual performance and argues that they are engaged through the music, dance, drama, incense, *mantra*, and other sources of manifestation of these. I have already discussed some of the tools which share qualities with these essences, *mantra* as potential with sound, dancing and *yantra* as examples of visual form and so forth. What I have overlooked are important representations of *bhutas*, the elements, but they are presented in their pure form, as they are presented by the *Ata paliya* which is eight "demonical" figures with the warrant to bring cure to patients from particular gods. I make the reader aware that the link between the *Ata Paliya* and the worldly essences as presented in the text below, is based on my own illustrational ideas and not the *aduras'* own.

Paliya means procession and *ata* is eight. *Paliya* also refers to mythological figures, eight in number, thus the correct meaning of *Ata-paliya* is the procession of the eight *paliya* (figures). I will

present the *Ata-paliya* in a rather unconventional way, since this is a ritual act, one of the *aduras* mask theatre acts, and thus not directly a ritual "tool". Still each of the *paliyas* re-presents important objects which are used throughout the rite, and by showing the selection of these objects to the *paliyas* I hope their potential will be clearly presented.

Within the ritual context, the *Ata paliya* is an offering act where certain objects are brought to the ritual (and the patient) by the *aduras* in the enmasked guise of *paliyas*. The *Ata-paliya* is normally performed before the *Daha-ata sanni*, (the parade of the 18 *Sannis*), and it is performed with great entertainment value. The different objects that the *paliyas* bring are given to them by gods, the *paliyas* have the warrant (*varanan*) from these gods, so that they can bring their objects to the rituals in order to be able to cure (to do *chante karmaya*). The objects they present are a collection of ritual "tools" used throughout the ritual, in my interpretation their stories also tell the origin of these objects. The verses recited in this mask-drama offering act is thought to have curative potential, they share the potential of *set kavis* (songs of blessing). In the following presentation I will refer to an interview with Rajpala.

The first *paliya* is *Pandam paliya*, (see front page), and he received his two *pandams* (torches) from *Devol Deva*. *Devol Deva* came to Sri Lanka from India, and is dwelling at the Sinigama devale (Sugar-village temple). *Devol Deva* is superior to the *yaka* and the torches provided by him are empowered to bring cure to patients. Its potential must be obeyed by the *yakku* or other spirits which are inferior to *Devol Deva*. The *pandams* (torches) are the element (*bhuta*) of fire in its pure form, and are used by the *aduras* throughout the whole ritual. With the *pandams* the *aduras* burn resin (*dumalla*) and its flame contains purifying potential. In other interpretations it is regarded as a means to light up the path to *porale* (the graveyard), or as one of the offerings to the *yakku*. In an act called *Avatara balima* (to see the *yaka's* manifestation) it serves as a "lamp" which lights up the path of the *yaka's disti*, making it easy for the *adura* to see. Gananath Obeyesekere notes that *Devol Deva* who came from India, had problems entering Sri Lanka since his sister Goddess

Pattini created 7 fences of fire which he and his followers managed to pass. "This was the beginning of the fire walking ritual in Sri Lanka" (1984:151). In other words Devol Deva is the god who controls fire, and the god whose power is indexical with *pandams* (torches).

Sallue paliya brings a cloth (*sallue*) from Goddess Pattini. This cloth is presented as a canopy in the *Ata-paliya*. The same cloth is used throughout the ritual as a scene curtain, separating the patient from the ritual arena. My informants referred to the curing powers of goddess Pattini as that of healing every sort of sickness (*dosa*), skin-diseases, bodily humour diseases (*tundos*), jealous thoughts or looks (sorcery), in short anything caused by any *yaka* or spirit. The *sallue* is made of cotton, since all products of nature could be said to be containers of all worldly essences.

Kendy paliya brings the water from a sacred pond in India called Anontotavilla. The original potential of the water is transmuted into the saffron water (*kayadiyara*), which the *Kendy paliya* brings. The saffron water contains water from five different sources; well, river, sea, rain and moisture. Added with saffron, *sandon* (sandalwood-paste), coconut-milk and rosewater and thereafter charmed with *mantras*, this water gains protective and purifying power. The *Kendy paliya* is ordered to sprinkle the water over the *aturea* to cure him/her. The saffron water will help to end all sorts of diseases prevailing among the humans. All the diseases caused by demons will end by sprinkling this water. The saffron water, charmed with *mantra*, is used for various reasons throughout the ritual. For instance, it protects the audience from getting *disti* when sprinkled on the ritual ground before the ritual begins. Further it helps people who have got *avesa* (demon-trance states), to regain their consciousness. The water is sprinkled on the patients (three times) after every offering act in order to purify their bodies from *disti*.

Kalas paliya has received a pot of soil (*pund kallas*). *Kalas paliya* is the earth goddess (Polova mahi kantava) herself disguised as this figure. As Somatillaka commented; "this soil is not like ordinary soil,

but has powers to cure". During the ritual this earth pot is placed in each corner of the ritual structure (*vidiya*). Just as with fire and water, the element earth is represented also.

Tambili paliya brings the coconut as a gift from God Ganesa (Gana deva). The Tambili is a king coconut. *Tambili paliya* came to the human world to make diseases, but Ganesa forbade him to, and he, together with his mother/father Shiva⁴⁸ and his brother Katarangama presented this coconut to *Tambili paliya*. They forbade him to bring disease and ordered him to bring cure to patients instead. The *tambili* is offered to the *preta*, and after the ritual is over, it is normal to give a charmed *tambili* to the patient to drink since the *tambili* has a cooling effect on the bodily humours. In front of Ganesa deva shrines in Sri Lanka, people often crack coconuts and make a wish. *Tambili* is a young fruit of nature in growth, and contains all elements.

Dallumoro Palyia comes from the Naga world; he has received the *bulat* (betel leaf) from the Naga king and is sent to the world to cure patients. The myth recounted in Hugh Nevill (1955 Section2:96) tells that the Naga king took some betel leaves from Maha Sammata and Manikpala's wedding, and planted them in the Naga world. These betel-leaves were presented by god Sakra, Sri Lankas protective god⁴⁹, to this wedding. The betel leaf is used as offering during the rituals, and to break a leaf into two pieces is parallel to breaking the connection between *yaka* and patient, similar to breaking any curse (sorcery). In other words betel leaves contain purifying potentiality.

Anguru-dumalla paliya is coming to the ritual with *dumalla* (resin). This figure is called a *yaka*, and he has done many bad deeds. Once he was on top of a rock called Kalesondegala⁵⁰. He

⁴⁸ One *adura* explained to me that, because of the Buddhist ideals stating that higher persons or beings should abstain from sexual pleasures, many Hindu gods worshipped in Sri Lanka have "lost their wives", and in the case of Shiva this has made him into both the mother and father of *Ganesa* and Katarangama.

⁴⁹ God Sakra received warrant from Lord Buddha to protect Sri Lanka. (Scott 1993).

⁵⁰ I am not sure weather this is the correct transliteration of this mountain's name.

charmed *dumalla*, put it into a bowl and then put it on fire. Its incense produced a beautiful smell which filled the world. *Dumalla* travels by air, and where air ends, only ether is left and therefore *dumalla* represents both elements. The smell contains purifying potential, and at the same time it is highly attractive to demons. Why *Anguru-dumalla paliya* has to come to cure the patients, and why he has the power (warrant) to order other spirits to give up the disease, is unclear to me, but this power he has.

Kokulu paliya received the cock in the first place to cure queen Manikpala, during the first *Suniyama* rite. He got the cock from Ambara rsin, yet still he must come to rituals to cure the patient. The cock was offered in the first *Suniyama* ritual being performed, and as an offering it has the potential to break evil influence. Hugh Nevill (1955:298) recounts this first use of the cock; "It was then discovered that fowls had been born in the belly of Kala Rakshi, their father being the Rishi Iswara himself, and the cock was then in the Asura world, residing in the Asura flag... *Widul Wala-haka Deva*, the god of lightning, went for it... Since that day *yakku* receive fowls as offerings." This myth depicts the cock as a bearer of the potential powers of another *rsin*, god Shiva (Iswara). In the rituals the cock is mainly regarded as a compensate victim for the patients. The *adura's* trick is to make the *yakku* accept the cock as compensation for the patient's body.⁵¹ I must emphasise that due to the Buddhist ideal the cock is ideally not killed, but survives its sacrificial role.⁵²

Summing up;

I started out this chapter by asking one question. This was a pragmatism question in its essence since I claimed that the *aduras* have "tools". These "tools" allow them to control *yakku*, who

⁵¹ Kapferer (1983) also mentions that the *igaha* paliya occurs in rituals, but "he" was absent from the rituals I viewed.

⁵² It is not clear to me which ritual the *Ata paliya* is said to have originated from. The only hint I got was that the different tools were provided by the gods. The gods use the *paliyas* to represent their curative potential at the *tovil* ceremonies since they regard themselves as more "pure" than the spirits offered for throughout a *tovil*. Today this parade always occurs just before the *Daha-ata sanni*.

sustains *disti*, and further to bind, cut and purify the influence of *disti* upon a human body. The perspective I adopt and use in this analysis may be interpreted as instrumental. This has not been my intention. I have tried to highlight that "tools" have phenomenological qualities, potentials, which when engaged in performance effect transformation. Texts are the ritual practice's "memory keys". In the text one finds reference to the potential of the ritual acts and the nature of the supernaturals they address. Texts are therefore both a part of the content and the potential of the rite, it both reproduces and instruct the ritual practise. Some ritual texts have as well the quality of spells or charms. The ritual texts are divided into separate categories, a division which refers to their effects. Some texts engage the *yakku's* attention, others the ending of diseases and some engage the binding of *disti*. Ritual texts have no effect though if they are not recited within their field of operation, i.e. in the ritual contexts. *Mantras* and *yantras* convey a forceful mediating potential between the worlds, since they have the potential of creating the centre of cosmos, its sound and form.

All ritual "tools" have a supernatural origin, and the powers of these supernaturals are a part of their potency. The qualities of the different "tools" resemble with the nature of cosmos, its elements and essence. Dancing has the potential of evoking sentiments (*rasa*), and the jingles on the *adurās'* legs accompany drum beats and creates sound. The ritual "objects" are potential with, controlling, binding, and purifying the *yakku's disti*. The *adurās'* knowledge-practise as engaged in ritual performance activates the potential of the essences, the elements and the powers of gods. The engagement takes place through their dancing, acting, singing, *mantra* chanting, use of incense and all the other ritual tools. A ritual performance is in this way related to and is capable of mediating between the worlds and of changing the patient's "bodies" within it.

The diagnostic process. Illness and detection

Yaksadosa and the three bodily humours

An essential part of the *adura* profession is the diagnostic process. If there were no way to detect the spirits' influence on the patient, there would have been no rituals to perform. *Yaksadosa* is the category of illness the *aduras'* practise deals with, and their public reliability as healers greatly depends on their capability of distinguishing between "normal" misfortune and those caused by supernaturals, or said in another way, to recognise the kinds of diseases which is possible to cure with their ritual knowledge-practise.

According to Wirz (1954) the *aduras'* healing rituals are seen as one of the eight branches of traditional ayurvedic medicine. Other practitioners are hypnotherapists, medical doctors, practitioners of ayurvedic medicine, holy men, Buddhist priests, godly devotees (*arudhaya*) and astrologers. The different practitioners are consulted according to various symptoms of illness, but in terms of treatment many of the practices are potentially complementary rather than opposites. Kapferer argues that the beneficial healing qualities of the *adura* practise can be recognised: "*It is in the serial or simultaneous combination of practices that Sinhalese can deal with illness in the fullness of its potential significance as these may be conceived of, and interrelated, through cultural ideas. Much of the strong appeal of major demon ceremonies to many Sinhalese is because these rites combine in performance the multifarious personal, social and cosmic aspects of illness*" (1983:24). Kapferer maintain that it is in the way the *toivils* manage to unite concepts of cosmology, religion and ayurveda (the local natural herb-medicine) that makes this specific treatment valuable for people.

One essential concept from the ayurveda which the *aduras'* knowledge-practise takes up is the concept of *dosa* which could be translated as faults or misfortune. According to ayurveda *dosa* is faults in the three bodily humours or substances; *vata* (wind), *pitte* (bile), and *sema* (phlegm).

Humoural imbalance can according to this theory both be a consequence of illness as well as its cause. *"Symptoms are caused by the upsetting (excitement, anger) of the homeostasis of the three humours (Sannipata). The treatment of illness is also based on humoural nosology. Once the excited dosa has been detected, the treatment is to prescribe a medicine that can counteract this dosa so as to restore the normal homeostasis of the humours."* (G.Obeyesekere (1984:41). The logic of regaining substantial homeostasis also makes sense in relation to *yaksadosa*, which is recognisable in terms of an humoural imbalance producing various physical as well as psycho-somatic illnesses. Humoural nosology is related to concepts of hot and cold as well as pure and impure substantial affliction, and the *yakku's disti* can be used as an exemplification of how this works. The *yakku* are thought to be "attracted" to "impure" substances in the patient's humours, or in inversely the *yakas' "disti"* is capable of afflicting the *aturea's* humours with "impure" substances. Impure substances, categorised as *killi* or *pilli*, are attractive to *yakku* since they share the quality of their own essence, their *disti*. *Killi* and *pilli* as well as *disti* are "dangerous" for a human body since they exaggerate bodily humours, disturb the substantial balance, and as an effect bodily heat or coldness rise. What this theory points to is that a body is substantially related and adaptive to its environment, and that bodies are vulnerable to such substantial interference. The differentiation between hot and cold, pure and impure, substances is helpful in peoples' attempt to control substantial interference and to keep up a humoural equilibrium which is their ideal.

According to Wirz there are generally speaking five categories of disease (*roga*) in Sri Lanka, but only one category (*ummada-roga*) of diseases, or as he prefers, disorders, can be traced back to spiritual influence. He informs that; *"The symptoms of the Ummada-roga are lack of appetite, vomiting, aches in the head and in the limbs, convulsions, fainting fits, distended stomach and diarrhoea, but a real illness is seldom to be found."* (Wirz 1954:9). These symptoms can be traced back to the diagnosis of specific spirits. For instance, from my own material, it seems that *Mahasona's* influence is often associated with stomach cramps, swollen body, blood vomiting, dehydration, diarrhoea and

madness, symptoms which are categorised as *Ummada-roga*. Further *Riri Yaka* is often associated with blood poisoning or high blood pressure.

The 18 *Sanni yakku* represent eighteen different specific mental or physical disorders due to humoral imbalance, in Sinhala *sannipata*. *Sannipata* is in my interpretation a part of the *Ummada roga*, but still classified as special kinds of misfortune. *Vata Sanni's* illness for instance is characterised by trouble in the bodily humour *vata* (wind) and causes symptoms of rheumatism and motorical problems. *Amokko Sanni* gives serious stomach troubles and dysentery. (All these signs and symptoms of the various diseases and which specific *sanni* cause are given in the *aduras* myth material). The cure prescribed for a patient suffering from *yaksadosa* is not so different from the one prescribed by ayurveda, and a part of the *adura's* cure is to use the same kind of medicine. It differs however in the way that the *aturea* (patient) has to offer, through food, a compensation to the *yaka* for their own bodily substance which the *yakku* find attractive in the first place. In addition to offerings, the rituals also contain other "techniques" which balance the troubled humours. One example is the common "removal" of *disti* from "head to toe", a move which is always repeated three times, one for each of the humours. The principle of regaining equilibrium is therefore considered to be one of the main objectives of the *aduras'* ritual practise.

The diagnostic complexity

The *adura* is often asked to place a diagnosis after the patient has consulted one or more of the other "helpers" available; an ayurvedic doctor, a western trained doctor, a psychologist, an astrologer or people with devotional skills either as priests, spirit mediums or devotees. There are even *Bhikkus* (Buddhist priests) who may suggest that the disorders are caused by spiritual influence. The healing practise of *aduras* is limited to curing diseases caused by lowly ranked spirits such as *yakku*, *preta* (ghosts), *bahirewas* (earth spirits) and some other spirits, or diseases or misfortune caused by sorcery. A patient may be referred to an *adura* by other healing professionals, for instance an astrologer or a spirit medium can recommend the *adura's* cure.

Most often though, the *adura* makes the diagnosis himself, and thereafter decides if his cure can be used to relieve the patient from his/her suffering or misfortune or not.

As I said in chapter 1, I was not invited to come along with any *adura* to his first meeting with a patient since they wanted to protect their clients before their diagnosis was verified and publicly announced. Therefore I have to rely on recollections by the *adura*, and statements in the literature when describing the diagnostic process. To make the diagnosis is regarded as the most difficult work in this practise since it requires a thorough knowledge of the *yakku's* nature, the bodily symptoms they effect and the discovery of their interference through special techniques. This is the last step in their teaching and simultaneously the most important one. Before turning to what the *aduras* told themselves, let us have a closer look at the comparative literature, and how scholars have chosen to comment upon the diagnostic process.

Wirz's work is old, but still valid and he points out some decisive factors connected with the diagnosis process. He argues that; *"The edura listens to what is told him and then indicates the time he will come to the patient's house. There, he first of all makes his diagnosis, examines the patient, and asks him a few questions. He wants to know, above all, where the patient stayed before his ill-health, what he did, etc., and on the basis of the answers received and the state of the patient he says that it is the work of the yakku or preteo, to whom an offering must be presented. He will also say that the patient has come into contact with a certain yakka or several yakku, or that he has imprudently eaten something baked or fried, through the odour of which the yakku have been attracted"* (1954:13). In other words, Wirz's emphasis is put on the dialogue between *adura* and patient, that it is through an interpretation of the patient's "story" of what s/he has done, where s/he has been, and when these symptoms occurred that diagnosis is made. This dialogue is emphasised by Wirz as fundamental to the diagnostic process, but as I will argue, Wirz overlooks what the *adura* actually carries out.

Kapferer (1983) stresses the influence of psycho-social factors in the ways the illnesses is created in the first place. His cases show how the patient's illness catalyses the patient's family's and the surrounding community's life, and that in many ways *yaksadosa* deals with "broken

relationships". These factors are then viewed as determining in the diagnostic process. He argues elsewhere that; "*Demons attack individuals who are understood to be in a state of physical and mental aloneness. Solitude, and its correlate, fear, are among the key essences of the demonic*" (Kapferer 1986:195). Illness thus indicates that the patient is experiencing a period of personal misfortune. So, what Kapferer emphasises in his cases is the causal "development" of illness and the social factors which are connected with these. Kapferer himself does not comment upon how the *aduras* themselves make their diagnosis, but presents the patients' own recollections.

The last contributor to be mentioned is Lorna Amarasingham Rhodes (1984), who carries out an analysis of the diagnostic process as it is developed in a fluid network of explanations, and in un-linearity with time. Remember that in cases of illness there is a great spectre of healing practises available. This implies that the patient's choice of cause for his/her sufferings is arbitrary in the sense that s/he has the opportunity to choose those factors which seem most relevant, those which seem rational in accordance with the different healing methods adopted to bring cure. Through a long period of time the patient can choose to put his/her belief into, or stress, the one treatment that seemed most effective. Then the stories (happenings) that underline or makes the «effective» cure valid, are often not in a linear relation to the disease.

The diagnostic process as carried out in the examples above, all make reference to the myth material that the *aduras* preserve. Moreover, according to these scholars is it the patients' stories about inter-related factualities in their lives, and these factors' resemblance with the cultural phenomena and bodily symptoms the *yakku* create, which guide the *aduras* diagnosis and hence predispositions for cure. I think it is in its place to point to some presuppositions which underlie these arguments.

Kapferer (1983) mentions that patients under a certain age will not be recommended a *tovil*.⁵³ This is because the *aduras*' view the patient's capability of understanding the text recited

⁵³ I have once seen a *tovil* performed for a 12 year's old boy, who according to his horoscope was in the middle of a period with *yaka* influence. Some, however, made a point of this and argued he was too young for this

through *mantra* and *kavi* during the ritual performance as decisive for the ritual's efficacy. From this Kapferer draws the following assumption: " *This is possibly the effect of socialisation into the culture of demonic illness whereby individuals learn, through social experience, illness displays appropriate to the recognition of demonic attack.*" (Kapferer 1983:77). In other words, patients are patients because they have internalised myth models, and at the same time learned to respond in accordance with inherited "contextual" signs of demonic presence. The recognition and understanding of these throughout the rite, are maintained to be essential for the patient's cure.

These assumptions fit well with G.Obeyesekere's (1981) notions about how the priestesses devoted to Katarangama deva became Katarangama deva's devotees. He is interested in understanding how myth models are involved in establishing the status and practise of these devotees. Theoretically he separates psychological symbols into two qualities: «*Personal symbol where deep motivation is involved, and psychogenic symbols where deep motivation does not occur.*» (1981:13). He goes on to distinguish the priestesses who subjectify myth models (cultural idioms) from those who objectify them. That is to say «*Objectification is the expression (projection and externalisation) of private emotions in a public idiom*" (1981:77). " *Subjectification is the reverse of objectification: cultural ideas are used to justify the introduction of innovative acts and meanings. Subjective imagery is to subjectification what personal symbols are to objectification.* (1981:123). Obeyesekere indicates that an objectification of cultural symbols occurs when a person adapts the cultural idioms as a personification of qualities pointed to through the idioms. But, this is not the only way cultural models work; he suggests that there are creative possibilities for people to actively use cultural idioms in order to verify and deal with specific experiences.

In this way a subjectification of cultural idioms is the possibility a person has to create his/her own web of causal explanatory stories. Linked up to Kapferer's argumentation about how ill persons become *atureas*, these notions around myth models are of greatest importance. Adopting Obeyesekere's subjectification - objectification model, one could say that the *aturea* has

ceremony. I was told about special ceremonies performed for children suffering from *Yaksadosa*, but I never saw any of these performed.

been negotiating with the "cultural heritage", the available myth models or cultural idioms if one likes, in their attempt of getting an explanation of their own misfortune. Patients who show the physical signs of *yaksadosa*, and a "correct" combination of such symptoms and simultaneously remember one occasion (or more) which are habitually thought to be associated with the yakku's looks, can be said to objectify the cultural idioms. In my interpretation it is possible to connect the dynamics presented by Obeyesekere with personal agency, whether personal agency is said to be engaged or not in cases of illness or misfortune. The case presented in Chapter 2, a case which will be elaborated below, could fit into the subjectification process as Obeyesekere presents it. Sandun is a suitable case since she had strong "physical evidence" of *yaksadosa* through her demon trance. Furthermore, she also had met the "cultural idiom" of *Mahasana's avatara* (manifestation), a bull. In this case the agency of her disorders was socially accepted as being the agency of *yakku*, and particularly *Mahasana*, and not herself. On the other hand if a patient fails to clarify causal explanations of misfortune as the cultural idioms invite to, s/he has to comply with less apparent stories which s/he ascribes to his/her afflicted condition, and in this way engage a personal agency in her/his misfortune. In such cases the patient subjectifies cultural idioms in order to gain social acceptance for his/her explanation of experienced misfortune.

Obeyesekere's theoretical model still differs widely from Kapferer's since the first scholar attempts to conduct a psychoanalytical analysis of the "goddesses'" narratives. If we ascribe to this point of view in the case of *yaksadosa*, the suffering of *atureas* would in Obeyesekere's perspective be sexually motivated. His habitual use of the term cultural idioms as a term for the "knowledge" given in the *aduras'* myth material, is further strongly connected to Freud's psychoanalysis. Kapferer on his part emphasises social factors as determining in the patient's disorder, and not personal motivations. Said another way, where Obeyesekere puts emphasis on personal motivations, Kapferer has his perspective upon society in general and highlights wider social processes which a person is affected by and respond to. What both scholars have in common is the view that the "so-called" spiritual influence on patients' lives is a cultural

construct which people internalise and which becomes a part of peoples' behavioural patterns. Cognitively, it provides interpretations of their misfortune.

The most apparent critique of Obeyesekere's perspective in particular, is the lack of a qualitative distinction between when personal experience ends and cultural model construction begins. Obeyesekere does in his analysis of the goddesses suggest an answer to this "problem" with his theories of psychoanalysis, where the experiences articulated through culturally constructed idioms are rooted in mental disorder, and especially, sexual distress. To me, however, a theory which argues that the experience of being a "devoted body" is a catharsis of sexual disturbance is not easily acceptable. What I miss is a wider clarification of how the phenomenological qualities engaged through embodied experience of sexual distress and godly devotion interconnect. Furthermore, I am critical to his claims that embodied experience is a cultural construction of cultural idioms which people subjectify or objectify, a constructionist approach to culture which provides the existence of a distinction between a subjective and objective reality, since this perspective is rooted in a philosophical direction which projects a rather mechanical deterministic view of humans. As I started out with in my introduction; what can be claimed to be constructed, can also be deconstructed, and this is a scientific approach which convey manipulative and hegemonic intentions for research. My own perspective might not bring the understanding of cultural dynamisms further, but I sustain that one should avoid deducing mechanical cultural constructions from cultural phenomena, since people themselves do not experience nor engage their lived life in this way. Moreover, a cultural model/construction perspective could only be performed by people who claim their knowledge to be superior to existing cultural knowledge about the phenomenon in focus. In my view, this is what Obeyesekere does when he uses psychoanalysis and its terminology in his own analysis of the goddesses' narratives. I suggest that in order to avoid constructing models of peoples' lived realities, one should rather focus upon peoples' constitutions of reality, its potentiality and the phenomenological qualities these constitutions are a vehicle of. My intention with a

"constitutional approach" to culture attempts to understand lifeworlds from within, to understand how people are phenomenologically engaged in these. This perspective maintains that it is not valuable to distinguish between, culture, articulated knowledge and embodied experience, or subjectification and objectification of cultural idioms. These are indistinct qualities of human lifeworlds and should therefore be analysed through a comprehensive theoretical framework. I emphasise this perspective as important since I provide that one must take peoples' knowledge and experiences seriously, and most importantly, one must show people respect for their own conceptions of their lifeworlds. So in the following I will present the *aduras'* own explanations of the diagnostic process, explanations which again include the potency of cosmos as a whole in the process, and not only human agency.

Often the *aduras* stressed the history that the patients told as important, and compared the patients' stories with their myth material. The *aduras'* myth material, among other things, contains knowledge about the *yaka's* "hunting grounds" and the different symptoms of illness given by the various *yakku* and so forth. Time and place is essential for the *yakku*, their "hunting grounds" and "hunting times" are well known. For instance, it is common "knowledge" in the southern part of Sri Lanka that to pass a three roads' junction after dark while carrying food, especially fried food, is dangerous since food can attract the spirits' look. If one still takes the risk and experiences sudden unreasonable fright (*baya*) at the same time, this could be a sign of *yaka's disti*. There is also the risk that one can get *disti* just by eating food carried in such a "thoughtless" way.

In my introduction (Chapter 2) I said that Subasinghe made a promise to consult a patient at the hospital in Galle. This specific patient had turned to Subasinghe for assistance, since according to her horoscope, she was a likely victim of *yaka's disti*. Ratnavira explained that according to the horoscope there are nine different planets which all affect various parts of the body. The twelve houses of the horoscope are associated with the nine planets. The twelve houses are then related to twelve different parts of the body; to head, chest, neck, belly, belly button, abdomen, genitals, heart, knees, spinal cord, legs and finally the whole body. The planets

move with differing "speed" through the twelve houses. For instance one planet can be said to have a cycle of 7 years in one house before it gets to the next, another 3 etc. This system is a numerological system, and astrology can therefore be said to be "pure" mathematics. The "presence" of the different planets in the various houses, and the combination of these, direct the astrologer's interpretation of a person's fortune. The nine planets are again associated with specific spirits, for instance the sun with *Ira Modum Riri yaka*, the moon with *Sanni yaka*. Moreover Jupiter in the seventh house indicates that it is not fortunate for a person to get married in this period. These examples show that there are conventional interpretations of planetary combinations, and in this way astrology can be used to diagnose *yaksadosa*.

I did not join Subasinghe at the hospital, but he told me what went on during the consultation. After examining the patient's various symptoms, the patient had taken three handfuls of rice, and put them in a new earthen-pot as the first step in the "rice pot reading diagnosis" to follow.⁵⁴ The pot was then placed over fire. When the rice was fully steamed, Subasinghe drew lines for the four sky directions in the rice. The northern direction was already marked on the pot before the rice was steamed. The rice had a lot of holes in it which produced different patterns. For instance, a big hole in the centre indicated that *Ira Modum Riri yaka* was one of the agents behind the patient's disease. Subasinghe read the rice pot, and could tell that there was no sign of *yaksadosa* given. Anyhow, he had brought a special kind of oil (*nanomora*) with him to the hospital, which he applied to the patient's forehead. The same oil was applied to a thread, made of seven threads. He charmed the thread with *mantras* seven times, and tied a knot for every repetition. This special thread is called *epa-nula* and is yellow in colour due to the saffron added to the oil. The act of tying the protective tread, *epa-nula bandima* and a closer description of the potency of threads made by the *aduras*, is next to come.

⁵⁴ I saw a rice pot read during a ritual where *Mahasona* had asked for a live sacrifice (billa). He demanded a living cock offered by the patient. When all the offerings to his followers were finished, the Mantra Karaiya prepared the rice pot, to make sure that they were satisfied. They were, since the only mark given in the rice was a cock's foot- print in one corner, the sign of *Mahasona's* presence.

The potential of epa-nula and araksa nula (protective threads).

There are two kinds of threads tied by the *aduras*, the *araksa-nula* and the *epa-nula*. One informant, Asiri, explained that the *araksa-nula* contains this expected effect; *The thread bound around the upper arm, the brachial joint and the waist are called (araksa) nula, and is a protective thread with no promised offer ceremonies. These threads are strong enough to stop the yaka's disti immediately.* In Asiri's view, the *araksa-nula* is therefore a curative thread which ends the patient's suffering as soon as it is tied. Concerning the *epa-nula* Wirz notes; *"In more serious cases, if a more extensive ceremony is intended to be performed later on, he ties a so-called epa-nula to the patient in order to prevent the illness progressing and to inform the yakku that a more comprehensive offering ritual can be expected."* (Wirz 1954:13). The *epa-nula* is bound around the patient's neck.

Since Subasinghe's patient was seriously ill, an *epa-nula* was required, not simply an *araksa nula*. To tie an *epa-nula*, as also noted by Wirz, contains a promised ritual offering in return for the release of *yaksadosa*. Comparatively, the obligation of promised offerings is not a part of the *araksa-nula* act, but neither is its healing potential regarded to be as strong as that of the *epa-nula*. Therefore the *araksa-nula* is curative when there is a "weak" *yaka* influence only. I thus understand the *epa-nula* as something which contains the power to tie the *yaksadosa*. The power of the *epa-nula* contains a healing potential, but just temporarily. If the patient recovers by the power latent in these charmed threads, the patient will again call for an *adura* to prepare for a ritual since the *epa-nula*'s charm promises the *yakku* offerings in exchange for the patient's cure. This offering must be carried out within a specified period of time, if not, the patient's illness will increase again.

A somewhat different view of this, is held by Rhodes (1984). She thinks that the *Epa-nula-bandima* action shows that the diagnosis and the cure are inseparably related to each other in the case of *yaksadosa*. In connection with the thread tying, the patient makes a vow to the spirits and promise to give an offering, performing a ritual, if the spirit ends his/her suffering. She argues

that the diagnosis is therefore also the cure. «*The diagnosis is the treatment (that is, it corresponds to the period of the existence of the problem), and the treatment is «diagnostic» in the sense that it takes some of its meaning from its confirmation of the truth of the diagnosis.*» (Rhodes 1984:56). Supplementing Rhodes with my material, I do verify her notions, nonetheless it is important to note that the patient has to fulfil his/her vow if s/he wants to keep the gained state of health. The cure given by the *epa-nula* is only temporary, but still it is indexial with *yaksedosa* in the way that it's effect on the patient's state of health verifies or falsifies the *aduras'* diagnosis.

In other words, in this case as retold by Subasinghe, it was the special methods adopted that were taken to be determining factors in his diagnosis. Firstly he emphasised the planetary influence, secondly the signs in the pot, and thirdly the protective powers of the thread which again would be the final determining technique in diagnosing *yaka* influence on the patient's illness. Rhodes argues that the thread tying in this way can be regarded as both the cure and the diagnosis at the same time, but the *epa-nule* is given temporarily efficacy only, an offering ritual must be held within the promised time.

Since none of the scholars studying the *aduras* mention the reading of rice pot, beetle leaves and so on, it might be that these methods are new techniques adopted by the *aduras* in order to verify their own diagnosis. Wirz mentions similar techniques, but not as a part of the *adura's* practise. The case related above is not a special case, most *aduras* regard the signs in the rice pot as really important and others use methods like "reading" betel leaves or lime cutting. It might be that these techniques are newly adopted into the *adura's* practise, but I can't say this for sure. Still, I emphasise that these are techniques used by the *aduras* today, and that they are viewed as essential in the diagnostic process.

Diagnosis made in an Arudhaya adura's way

Asiri's ritual healing-practise differed greatly from the other *aduras* I got to know. He had learned the practise from his *adura* father in the traditional way, but at a young age he also became an

arudhaya, a devoted person. In his work Asiri adopted knowledge from both sources, i.e. from his *adura* tradition, and from the advises given him by different gods. He labelled his work "*deva-gatta*", which means work based on the advice of *devas* (gods). When I asked him to explain how he carried out the diagnosis, Asiri told me that he questions the patient about his/her symptoms and doings, and then measures the pulse with three fingers. He counts the different pulses for the three bodily humours, and since unbalanced humours refer to different *yakku*, this was the way he could tell which *yaka* was the main agent in the patient's illness. The correspondence are:

Finger	Humour in Sinhala	Humour in English	Associated <i>Yaka</i>
fore-finger	- <i>vata</i>	-wind	- <i>Mahasona</i>
middle finger	- <i>pitta</i>	-bile/ blood	- <i>Riri Yaka</i>
ring finger	- <i>sema</i>	-phlegm	- <i>Sanni Yaka</i>

This technique is normal practise in the ayurveda, and I regard this pulse taking as a "technique" used in addition to the common diagnosis made by other *aduras*. The different bodily humours, *vata*, *pitta* and *sema* are also related to the *buthas*, the elements; "*According to Ayurvedic theory the universe consists of several constituent elements known as bhuta.... Three of these bhutas are especially important; the element of wind (vata, vayu) manifests itself in the human body as vata (air, breath); fire appears in the form of bile (pitta), and water is present as phlegm (kapha or slesman)*. (Obeyesekere 1984:41). These statements put together show a clear relation between *yaka* and substance, and substance and elements, which again is related to the essences of the ritual practise as they were discussed in Chapter 5.

After taking the pulse, Asiri would make use of his "devotedness" into the next steps of the diagnosis process. He would take the patient into his *kovil*, small temple, in his garden, where he kept images of several gods from the Buddhist pantheon. There the patient lit small oil lamps and placed flower offerings while Asiri sang *set kavi* verses and played the drum. Then his body

would start shivering, and the gods spoke directly to him about what had caused the patient's misfortune, and what kind of cure they recommended. Once I appeared at his house when such a session was about to take place, but unfortunately I was not invited with them into the *kovil* (garden temple).

Another technique he used was to visualise deities (i.e. Vishnu deva) through a light. Asiri told me how this could be done; one should put a camphor-cube (*kappara*) on a betel leaf, light the camphor-cube and place it on an oil-lamp, then place a mixture of king coconut oil and medicine oil on the lamp, and finally roll a wick out of a white cloth and place it on the lamp. Then through the light, the images of different *devas* appear and give the advice sought for. Asiri regarded his body-shivering "oracle"-condition and the light visualisation as two different methods to get in touch with the gods. He stressed that the deities often told him what kind of offerings should be carried out, and his rituals were therefore extremely improvised compared to the "traditional" *toivils*. Finally Asiri like the other *aduras* would tie a *nule* (thread) for curing, protection or promised offerings.

When sorcery is suspected

The *yaku's* agency of misfortune could have been activated through sorcery. When patients think sorcery (*kodivina*) has been carried out against them, the *aduras* charm four limes and bury them in the four corners of their garden. Later they dig them up again, and if any of the limes are rotten inside when they cut, the patient's assumptions are verified. Another technique used is to charm and cut three (or nine) limes and put them in a pot of water. If any sink, this would be a sign of sorcery.

Different offering rituals considered

As mentioned, the most "powerful" malevolent *yakku* have specially designed *toivils* carrying their name. For instance, the *Mahasona Samayama* is named after *Mahasona*, and this ritual is only

performed when *Mahasona* is the main illness causing *yaka*. The five different *toivils* are more or less "frozen" concepts of offering acts. These concepts are performed to cure various kinds of patients. The *toivils* are "more or less" "frozen" concepts since, and this is my point, the various symptoms being diagnosed are all related to the different spirits, who again have prescribed specific offerings in return for giving up their *disti*. Often a combination of the various *toivils* are performed, for instance when a person has got *yaksadosa* where big offerings to both *Sanni Yaka* and *Mahasona* are needed, the ritual will be named *Maha Sanni Samayama*, referring to both *Mahasona Samayama* and *Sanni Yakuma*. A ritual lasting for 48 hours is the *Maha-Sanni-Kalu-Kumare Samayama*, which is a ritual performed for women who fail to get pregnant. This is a combination of both *Mahasona Samayama*, *Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama* and *Sanni Yakuma* rituals (*toivils*).

The *pidenis* are rituals where acts from all the *toivils* are performed in a perfect fit with the patient's *yaksadosa*. In the *pidenis* one finds anti-sorcery acts and offerings to *yakku*, *preta* and other spirits who are rarely paid attention in cases of illness where *toivils* are needed. There are *pidenis* with *mantra* and offerings only, but also performances where dancers and drummers take part. A common term for these performances is *Pideni Daha-ata Sanni*, which indicates that there will be offering dances as well, and a performance of the *Daha-ata Sanni* mask appearance.

Roughly one could say that there are different levels of *yaksadosa* which place patients into one of three categories. First there are those patients whose disease is ended by the tying of *Araksa-nula*, or other small oil chanting or lime cutting ceremonies. The *pidenis* are performed for the second category; those patients whose main suffering is caused by *preta* or *bahirewas*, who have made the patient attract a *yaka's disti*, or those patients who got a "weak" *yaka* attack. Finally the *toivils* are performed for the most serious afflictions, for those whose *yaksadosa* is mainly caused by *yakku*, those who fall into the category of "badly haunted".

It should also be mentioned that the *aturea's* economical situation is considered when the *adura* decides what kind of ritual offerings the patient will have to provide. The *toivil* is the most

expensive ritual; a ritual which lasts 48 hours, like the *Maha-Sanni-Kalu-Kumare Samayama* cost even more. The ritual efficacy is according to the *aduras* related to the offerings given, but also to how many offering acts are performed, and to the number of performers used.

After the diagnostic process is over it is time to determine the day for the ritual. An astrologer is often consulted to find the most suitable day. Further; *"In no case may a ceremony take place on the days of a full or new moon, or the days of the first and last quarters of the moon, as on these four days the mantra are ineffective.* (Wirz 1954:21) In addition the *aturea's* household has to prepare and collect all the things needed for the following ritual. The time between the diagnosis and the ritual performance can thus be between two weeks and up to several months in accordance with the advice of the astrologer and *aduras*, as well as the time it takes to raise enough money.

Summing up

To sum up the various factors that are taken into consideration through the diagnostic process, I argue that this part of the *aduras'* practise relies on a special insight into the nature of *yaksadosa*. Wisdom which is not given in their diagnostic "techniques" only, but also in their experience and wide knowledge of the practise of traditional medicine. Kapferer and Wirz give the impression that the stories told by the *atureas*, and the symptoms of their diseases are the main sources of diagnosis. These matters are certainly being considered, and they are the reason why the *aturea* calls for the *aduras* in the first place. Rhodes further illustrates the un-linearity in time in these reconstructions of why the *aturea* became an *aturea*, and has shown that most patients has a great spectre of stories or events in their past to ascribe into their development of misfortune. The Sinhalese cultural heritage is filled with potential explanations of peoples' sufferings, and therefore there are often many potential occasions which can have led to the *aturea's* misfortune. On the other hand, the *aduras* themselves stress the factors which are most appropriate according to the myth-material which belongs to their own practise, since this is what they put their trust into.

Further I emphasise that the *aduras'* practise relies on their abilities of making the correct diagnosis, and on the reputation they gain through this. The *aduras* stressed their own diagnostic techniques as important and in my understanding they rely on the rice-pot reading, betel-leaf reading and finally the question of whether the patient recovers after the tying of the thread or not, as "proof" of *yaksadosa*. These are the signs the *adura* himself - as a healer and the one in charge of the offering rituals emphasises during the diagnostic process. In other scholars' works, the *aduras'* own techniques have largely been ignored and furthermore, the constructionistic view adopted in the literature upholds that the *aduras'* practise is a model of reality and therefore distinctive from it. The *aduras* on their hand did not make this distinction and argue that their practise are dealing with phenomena of their lifeworld and not cultural constructs.

Part 2

Mahasona Samayama



In this section I intend to present and analyse the performance of one of the *toivils*, the *Mahasona Samayama*. Chapter 6 is a clarification of important analytical concepts which directs the presentation of the *Mahasona Samayama* in Chapter 7. In Chapter 7 I intend to present a healing ritual as it was performed for one patient. In this chapter I follow the perspective of the *aduras*, and their comments about the ritual development. I will also highlight how the *aduras* throughout the ritual performance engage an actualisation of the potential given in the ritual tools. In the last Chapter of this section I finally reach the most important analytical discussion of this thesis. The intention of Chapter 8 is to carry out an analytical critique of the work of Bruce Kapferer (1983) on a similar ritual.

Positioning of my analytical perspective

A well occupied idea in much ritual theory is that rituals assimilate culture i.e. that culture can be "read" through ritual practises. This is due to the shift in anthropological theory from a functionalistic and structuralistic focus on rituals and society in general, into a direction which provides that rituals can be viewed as a model for or of culture and society. The most important contributors to this change of perspective in ritual studies have been Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. The greatest inspiration before my field work, however, was (the late) Victor Turner and his co-work with Richard Schechner. Together they affirmed the studies of ritual in relation with the study of theatre and performance. Victor Turner tried to link the study of society (structure), experience and cultural performance in one perspective, while Schechner contributed with his knowledge of how theatre and dramaturgical methods affect experience. Consequently, my initial intention, before my fieldwork took place, was to build an awareness of the way the medium of theatre articulates cultural and social processes. My approach was based on the assumption that:

Theatre is a form of activity that articulates cultural and social idioms. By idioms, I mean signs and symbols as cultural codes which deal with and are a part of social life. Stated differently; I want to see theatre as a source for the understanding of sociocultural processes, with a special focus on how sociocultural processes come to light by the work of the artists and in the way they transport their insight to the audience through the act. Secondly I will emphasise the ritual context for the drama which I have in focus. Is there any fundamental difference between the ritual's morningwatch drama and the other sequences, and if so, how does this difference come to sight? If there is any difference, can it tell us something about the relationship between theatre and ritual?

My chosen research «object» at this time was the special mask theatre performed during the *Tovils*, the *Daha-ata sanni* (the procession of the 18 *Sannis*). I had read literature on the anthropology of performance, and my main questions were closely linked up to performance

theory. Questions of the type: What separates theatre from reality, ritual from theatre? Do the actors transport or transform their role characters? That is to say; do the actors as private persons «become» the role-character they present on stage or not? Does the artists' training rely on emotional vs. mechanical learning techniques, or asked differently, does it rely on the imagination of a state of emotional affection or on looking at and imitating facial and bodily movements? After some time in the field I realised that the *Daha-ata Sanni* mask-theatre was not the kind of theatre I had imagined it to be. The main essence in the *Daha-ata Sanni* seemed to be to play out the real (virtual) nature of the *Sannis*, and its symbolic content was un-separable from the other ritual acts. In my interpretation it engages the transactive qualities of offerings just as the other acts, and it is not, as I thought, a medium assimilating public discourse. Consequently, it was not valid to focus on the secular elements in the ritual drama as constructions of Sinhalese Buddhist culture. Nonetheless, the *Daha-ata Sanni* is interesting since this term is also the name of public "traditional art" shows, a point I will return to later in part 3.

In accordance with my phenomenological orientation I claim that the ritual in performance is a part of reality, and shares the phenomenological quality of other realities, and in many ways intermediate these. The "new" position I take is to study the ritual practise within its own doxa. In my view the practise vehicles a field of possibilities to engage human experience. The focus on these phenomenological qualities illuminates the "doxa" as a field of practise which deals with specific kinds of embodied experiences, rather than the social processes which this ritual practise could be said to be a part of and "explain". My concern is the phenomenological qualities that the ritual practise vehicles.

The introduction into the ritual practise I have given in previous chapters has been an illustration of abstractions of cosmical dynamics and important concepts of order and action. Further, I have presented the ritual tools that the *aduras* use as something which has a phenomenological potential. In this section, the time has come to illustrate the actualisation of these potentials in a specific ritual performance.

The dialectical mode of efficacy and entertainment in performance

R.Schechner (1988) has developed the analytical categories of "efficacy" and "entertainment", and I find this distinction valuable for the analysis of the knowledge-practice of *aduras*. Schechner suggests that the analytical opposition is not between theatre and ritual, but between efficacy and entertainment. Performances with high efficacy value has an overarching goal, "*to effect transformations*" (Schechner 1988:129), whereas the opposite pole is performances with high entertaining value. He further upholds that; "*Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum..... Whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends mostly on context and function.*" (Schechner 1988:120). Thus: "*No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment*" (ibid.; 1988:129). Performances in this view mediate the qualities of efficacy and entertainment in stronger or lesser degree.

The knowledge-practise of *aduras* could roughly be said to rely on three main skills. Firstly, it is the skills of *mantras*, songs and ritual offerings, secondly the art of dancing and mask drama, and thirdly the art of drumming. Often these three categories are regarded as fields of specialisation. Nevertheless, the knowledge of one field requires the wisdom of the others. During my fieldwork I (mainly) followed *aduras* who had specialised in dance and mask drama, and whose work was connected to two main types of performance, *yak tovils*, (big healing rituals) and public shows (commercial performances). Performance in both contexts relies on acts derived from their knowledge-practise of *yak tovils*. On the other hand there are *aduras* whose main skill is that of mantra, songs and offerings. This field of knowledge itself made them capable of undertaking "small" offering rituals called *pidenis*. Most often, however, they were accompanied by a drummer as well. I make a point of this because it informs us that it is possible to perform healing rituals without the dance and drama which are so characteristic for the *tovils*. The question this fact rises is; what is the potential of the ritual dance and drama said to be when an offering ritual is said to cure also without the engagement of these?

I suggest that Schechner's distinction between efficacy and entertainment is a suitable analytical tool to understand the qualitative difference between these three fields of specialisation. These terms suggest that there is a qualitative difference between shows, *tovals* and *pidenis* in the sense that the entertaining and efficacy aspect of these differs.

Throughout this section, I will convey the *aduras'* own comments about the ritual efficacy and entertaining values of their practise, and what these are thought to effect. I will describe the efficacy and entertaining value of the *aduras'* work, and show how these change throughout the ritual acts. Moreover in section 3 below I will, highlight how actualisation of potentials are being "triggered" in different contexts of performance. These notions of efficacy and entertainment are unseparably linked with the audience the *aduras* address, and with the nature of these audiences, and it is to the dissimilar engagements of these, I now will turn.

The different audiences present at ritual performance.

To make my analytical points clear, I will include the audience which the *aduras* play up to during the ritual performance in my analysis. As Ranjini Obeyesekere (1990) has pointed out, the audience is an important part of the performance. In Kapferer's work (1983) however, reference to the audience as "the others" gives them an homogeneity which is not representative for their actual presence at the rituals, where the degree of involvement or participation varies greatly. Ranjini Obeyesekere argues that there is a difference between "participant" and "spectator". Participants are those involved chiefly in the efficacy of the performance, the spectators are those interested in the entertainment aspect. She thus categorises people in the audience after their degree of involvement with the ritual performance: "*The patient is completely involved, though sometimes involuntarily, in the ritual performance. Similarly, the immediate family and kin group comprises an equally involved participant audience. There is another category of visitors, outsiders, sometimes even passers-by, however, for whom the performance is a spectacle, to be enjoyed as entertainment.*" (R.Obeyesekere 1990: 125). Ranjini Obeyesekere stresses that these different degrees of involvement colour the manifold audiences'

experience of the performance as well. However, since I have decided to look into the ritual practise from the *aduras'* point of view, my view of the different types of spectators differs somewhat from Ranjini Obeyesekere's categories.

Reading Blackburn's book «Inside the drama house» (1996) about a puppet theatre performed in a temple ground of South India led me to rethink the nature of the audience. The puppet theatre was performed for the benefit of the group of sponsors, but the performance took place entirely without a human audience, the puppet masters performed for themselves and for the gods being honoured. This made me aware of the fact that also my informants continually distinguish between what they do to please the audience at the patient's house, and what they do to please the spirits.

Bringing her argument further, Ranjini Obeyesekere⁵⁵ also puts emphasis on a distinction between entertainment for the onlookers, efficacy for the patient and placation for the gods, which again creates three main types of audience in the rituals, three special audiences with manifold expectations which the *aduras* try to please. These three audiences are the patient, the supernatural agents of misfortune, and the spectators present at the scene. The divergent things that the *aduras* stress as important during the ritual performance vis-à-vis these separate audiences, are highlighted in the dialectic between *entertainment* and *efficacy* as well. I argue that this dynamics is suitable for analysis, since the *aduras* claimed that the entertaining aspect of their performance was mainly created in order to please their earthly audience, and not the supernaturals.

Another interesting aspect with Blackburn's work is that even if the sponsors of the ritual were absent at the scene, they thought that the ritual actions would be beneficial for them in itself. In this way the very performance of the ritual, the engagement of the ritual text (epos) to its supernatural audience, was what they considered as beneficial for themselves, and not their own participation as spectators at the venue. I find Blackburn's work highly useful since it points

⁵⁵ Personal conversation.

out a belief about that rituals' effects upon human life, even without peoples' presence at the venue, or their experience (emotional engagement) of the story (the epos; Ramayana) put into play. To them their monetary support to a performance in honour of gods and the fact that it takes place at all is what counts. This example I claim illustrates the *aduras'* practise as well. The *aduras* never said to me that the ritual efficacy is independent of the spectators' presence at the sight, but they never suggested the opposite either.⁵⁶ The major idea they stressed was that mediation between *yakku* and patient was the most important thing, and that mediation required specific "tools", "tools" with specific potential that could be actualised when engaged "correctly". On the other hand there are ritual acts which open up for creative innovations. These are acts which are observed as "correct" in lesser degree than others (i.e. the dance at the *hende pideni* has such a creative space), and which therefore can be elaborated into highly entertaining themes. I must emphasise though, that ritual dance and drama are not easily diverted between "efficacy" and "entertainment" qualities. The dramaturgical mode of the rite can be entertaining for some, but it is also an intensification of the actualisation of the potential given to the ritual acts.

Lastly I will elucidate that if I should suggest an answer to the initial question about the difference between ritual, theatre and reality, I would uphold that the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual differs from a pure aesthetic performance (like theatre) in the way that it deals with the patient's life, it does something with the patient's misfortune and tries to change it. A ritual has a transformative quality since it contains the potential to affect a human being. Ritual performance is neither a closed static field of practise, (as a theatre play is) neither is it a free improvisational "organic" performance which assimilates and accommodates cultural processes. By this statement I mean that the ritual practise in my study has its own field of knowledge and operation which limits its fluidity and openness for cultural innovations. In my view the healing-ritual is closely connected and in deep dialogue with the "context" of performance. It is therefore not useful to

⁵⁶ It should not be overlooked that Blackburn shows how the ritualists compensate for their "absent" audience. What they do to counterbalance the absence of "earthly" spectators, is to entertain and impress each other with creative comments and articulated improvations around the story (the Ramayana).

distinguish between ritual and reality. I will later (Chapter 8) discuss how the ritual performance engages manifold phenomenological qualities, and there the term reality as distinct from the ritual "world" again becomes an issue.

I also maintain that the anthropology of performance has been useful for this thesis since it is suitable to describe the dialectical mode in ritual performance. It has also given valuable insight into how deeply connected bodily expressions, text, music and dance, or concrete bodily movements or positions, create "specific states of mind" and embodied experience. The ritual practise can, moreover, not be analysed in accordance with anthropological theories of dance, theatre and drama only. since these are intentionally concerned with ritual practises as cultural constructions, focused as they are on the dramaturgical modes and techniques. Consequently, the anthropology of performance and similar approaches, becomes a study of the subfield of artistry more than a study of cultural constitutions.

An important inspiration to my analytical perspective of the adura's practise;

A book which I read during fieldwork, "Formations of rituals" by David Scott (1993), has been a greater inspiration for my analytical perspective than I have clarified. Therefore it both deserves and needs some elucidating comments. This work contains two important discussions which I will make an issue of here. Firstly it is a contribution to the subject of "post-colonial discourse" illuminated by literature on the *Yak Tovil* practise, and secondly it is a general critique of the field of the anthropology of experience, as exemplified by Kapferer (1983).

David Scott did his fieldwork in Matara district and some of his "key" informants were mine as well. Handelman (1993) has pointed out that the "absent ethnographer", referring to other anthropologists whom your own informants have been connected to, influences the information and "role" oneself gets in the field. The "absent ethnographer" has an influence on the way one's informants verbalise answers to similar questions directed to them. To me Scott's

former visit simplified my access into the practise. I had to negotiate, however, about his habits in the start in order to fulfil or falsify the *aduras'* expectations of a foreign anthropologist.

Even if Scott and I had access to some of the same informants and their knowledge, his theoretical project is dissimilar from mine. The thematic of his work is the *yak tovil*, but his theoretical project is a part of the anthropological study of "post-colonialism". Consequently his main argumentation is illuminating the metaphors used in the "post-colonial" literature on the *aduras'* practise. He points out the common usage of the "key" terms "demons", "possession" and "exorcism" as generic terms in the healing practise. Scott looks back on colonial history and argues that these terms became common in the time of British colonial power and that they make reference to Christian concepts and terminology of spiritual influence on humans. The consequence is that *disti* was conceptualised as "demon possession", and *tovil* as "exorcism". Scott points out the difference between possession, as a term referring to an embodied possession by a demon, and *disti*. *Disti* is connected to a quite different concept of the body: "*The Sinhala body, we can see, is [therefore] dependent upon a distinctive set of metaphors. It is, in the first place, a system of energies regulated by the continuous innervation and distribution of the three humours, wind, bile and phlegm. It is a body, therefore, potentially vulnerable to the force of other energies acting upon or coming into contact with it. One such energy is disti. The malign energy of the eyesight of yakku disti, as in the account just given, can be likened to the wind. When disti "touches" and "covers" the body it becomes "attached" to and "contained" in the blood, skin and flesh. And because of the difference in energy, its touching and becoming attached to the body disrupts the balance of the humours. It seems to me, therefore, that the metaphor of "possession" needs to be explicitly qualified to make it relevant to the Sinhala body.*" (Scott 1993:58)

I acknowledge Scott's usage of *disti*, and has taken his general critique on board. That is why I have used the local terms and concepts which are illustrative for the knowledge-practise of the *aduras* in this thesis. *Disti* is then to be understood as the "pollutive" or malevolent substance the *yakku* transfer through their glance, a substance which is capable of interfering with a human body. Moreover, it is not only the concept of *disti* which has become essential for my work. I also

acknowledge Scott's conceptualisation of how the patient's body is being purified from *disti*, that the *aduras* "bind", "cut", "end" and "stop" *disti*.

The next section of Scott's work is a critique of the experience perspective that Kapferer adopts in his analysis of the *Yak Tovil*, and at the same time he also argues against Bruner (ed. 1986) and Turner. He argues against the "objectification" of cultural phenomena, that the ethnographer claim to represent (objectify) and understand the dynamics of the lived experiences of others. In his view, this analytical project will always be biased by the "author's" own subject. More specifically, Scott argues against Kapferer's analysis of how the healing-rituals transform self, identity and experience and maintains that neither of these concepts is to be found in the *adura's* own vocabulary. For instance in Kapferer's analysis he finds analytical articulations like that a patient has "an experience of a demonic self". He therefore claims that Kapferer's analysis of the *tovils* is an anthropologically constructed object. Scott also criticises Kapferer for declaring universal validity for his approach to the *yak tovils*, that his analytical model can be used in studies of rituals in general, a statement which criticises the positivist science, which sustain a belief in the universal truths, as a whole.

As you might see by now, Scott is a scholar who has taken the post-modernist critique of the discipline of anthropology seriously; his claim that anthropological knowledge itself is a constructed object points to this. Moreover he says that the "western" conceptualisation of cultural subjects /objects (as Kapferer sees it, see Chapter 8. below) makes the distance between "local reality" and anthropology as a genre of presentation of cultural worlds more larger. My reply to Scott is that he himself uses anthropology as an object of discourse within itself. His discussion focuses on local syntactics (verbal articulation) and not on practise, and is based on a theoretical critique of the conceptualisation of the *Yak Tovil*, rather than on empirical examples from ritual performances which can demonstrate his claims. The last fact is what I see as the greatest weakness in his analysis, since the experience of *yaksadosa* and a performance of a ritual is so much more than a verbal articulation of the nature of these phenomena.

Scott complements Kapferer's analysis and suggests that the efficacy of the *tovil* is to be found in its strategies and ends and not in a phenomenological approach. The two ends he recognises in the *toivils* are; first, to bind the *yaka's disti* in order to end the *aturea's yaksadosa* and secondly, to please the *aturea's* mind, which again harmonises the bodily humours. This end is reached by the strategy of binding the *yaka's disti* to the offerings given. Moreover, the four most important underlying concepts in reaching this end are; the concept of *varanan* (warrant), the power in the stories about Buddha's meeting with the separate *yakku*, the nature of *disti* and finally the nature of *yaksadosa*. The second end is reached by performing acts for entertainment, as the *Mangara Pelle Paliya*, or the *Daha-ata sann*i. I myself acknowledge Scott's notions about these strategies, but as shown in Chapter 4, I regard the ritual acts as more than strategic actions, and treat these as "tools" vehicling a phenomenological potential. The missing link in Scott's analysis is how these "ends" is engaged in performance, and notations of the phenomenological dynamics and qualities of the rite, since he is basically concerned with verbal articulations connected to the ritual practise in focus. Therefore, I do not agree with Scott that dance, music and drama are working to another end than the other "strategies" (if I must say so), but that "all" "tools" are inter-related parts of the dynamics of "binding", "cutting" and "stopping" *disti*.

The Mahasona Samayama revisited

Introduction

The *Mahasona Samayama* is the ritual I found most frequently performed, and therefore it is the one I choose to analyse. The ritual has formerly been thoroughly described and analysed by Bruce Kapferer (1983), and in many ways my contribution could be viewed as a development of his analysis. (See Chapter 8). My ambition is, however, wider. I intend to focus on the different audiences that the *aduras* play up to during performance, a matter Kapferer does not treat thoroughly (as already pointed out by R. Obeyesekere 1990), and I will argue that this approach will provide a more nuanced understanding of the *aduras'* practise. The audience is divided into three different categories the patient, supernaturals and the "other" spectators present, and the *adura* emphasises different things in order to please each of these. I would say that the *adura* shows a tendency to emphasis the correctness of their work in their relation with the supernaturals. To do things correctly is important in order to be "granted" ritual efficacy (cure) as well as to not put themselves into danger under the powers they ideally control. In relations with the patient, the *adura* has a role as mediator. He is the one who "negotiates" with the *yakku*. This role is most clearly seen in cases of demon-trance, which the following case clearly illustrates. The *adura* has to perform a convincing role as demon-controllers to all "audiences", but in order to please the spectators assembled and the patient they emphasise the aesthetical aspect of performance as well.

As indicated in Chapter 5, the rituals are designed according to the specific supernaturals identified as the agents of the patients misfortune, and the offerings recommended to them in order to break the influence on the *aturea's* body. In this way I regard the deeper meaning of the offering rituals to be that of the patient fulfilling a promised transaction of offerings in exchange

for "giving" up their influence, *disti*. The main essence in all the ritual offerings is food, food which for humans produce "heat in the body" and "troubles the bodily humours", but for the *yakku* is balancing their substance. In this way I will view the *Mahasona Samayama* as an offering ritual which shares the quality of transaction more than that of an altruistic gift, or sacrifice. I root this assumption in the knowledge of how the perception of bodily substance is inter-related with all substances of the world, and that the offerings thus are offerings which contain a substitute of the "human substance" the *yakku* have been attracted to in the first place. This transactional claim to the analysis of the *Mahasona Samayama* could be countered by Kapferer's work on the *Suniyama* ritual where he puts the "*agony of the gift beyond reciprocity*" (1997:203). This statement indicates that Kapferer sees the force of the gift as having another potency than just that of exchange of things and duties or of creating or equalising personal relationships. What he sees is that the gifts given (i.e. seeds and young fruits), in the *Suniyama* has a life generating potency. In his analysis of this rite, Kapferer; "*regard sacrifice as a total act of (re)origination by means of which human beings radically reconstitute, remake, or maintain their life and its circumstances*" (1997:187). His main argument is that the "*given-ness of the gift*" (Ibid. 199) is a counterforce of the destructive forces which have interfered the patient's life through the medium of sorcery. Kapferer finds evidence for his claims in the texts performed and in the sacrifices carried out throughout this anti-sorcery ritual, which he reads as vehicles of "altruistic" gift force potency. Comparing the *Suniyama* with the *Mahasona Samayama* I will argue that the process of sorcery is qualitatively different from *Yaksadosa*, and that the focus on transaction which is emphasised in cases of *Yaksadosa*, even as a part of the diagnostic process, is absent in the ritual process of the *Suniyama*. So when the ritual sacrifice of *Suniyama* might be interpreted as a Potlatch, the destruction of wealth as a performance of power, I argue that this meaning can not be ascribed as the main one to the ritual of *Mahasona Samayama*. Positioned in the interpretations above, I argue that the force of transaction is the main one throughout the offering acts performed, and this is the leading perspective which guides my presentation of the *Mahasona Samayama* below.

As an important principle of the *Mahasana Samayama* ritual, the *yakku* are (according to the myths) under the power of Lord Buddha, who during his journeys to Sri Lanka forbade the *yakku* to kill, and restricted their influence to only bring disease. He also commanded them to give up their influence on humans if they received the offerings as prescribed. Due to the Buddhist ideal of not taking life, the *yakku* can not claim the death of any being as offerings, but this can happen in rare cases when the *yakku's* influence is regarded as extremely strong. This indicates that the cock offered throughout the ritual to be described below is the same in every offering-act, and that it will be sacrificed but (most often) save its life.

In line with the principle of *varanan* (warrant) the *yakku* cannot do any harm without the permission from "the lord of demons" Vesamuni. The *Yak Aduras* on their hand are enforcing the power of Buddha and gods, powers the *yakku* as well as the lord of "demons" have to obey. They engage the warrant of this power by constantly reminding the *yakku* about Lord Buddha's words and good deeds throughout their performance of *mantras* and songs. Obeyesekere points to this fact and puts it into connection with the Buddhist perception of the power of the truth. He says; "*According to Hindu and Buddhist views, truth has power- as for example the magical powers of rishis and arhats because of their knowledge of religious truths*" (1984:48). In my interpretation, the *adura* are authorising the power of truth, the truth of Buddha's enlightening, the truth of the rsins and other supernaturals, through their knowledge preserved in their professional heritage. The *adura* has the warrant (*varanan*) to enforce these truths and this is a part of the premises for ritual efficacy.

In Chapter 2. I presented the *Ira Modum Samayama* and *Mahasana Samayama* rituals. In the following presentation I will go straight to the *Mahasana Samayama* ritual without making any further comments upon the *Ira Modum Samayama*. Nonetheless I emphasise this ritual as an important part of the patient's cure. Further, I presented this patient as one suffering from *avesa*, demon-trance, and not as a fully possessed person. People is vulnerable of getting *disti*, which is the malevolent energy given to people through the *yakku's* look. Commonly the patients suffering

from *avesa* are themselves made responsible for the actions they perform throughout their demon-trance. In this way, the patients are always a sign vehicle of themselves as well as of the demons who influence their actions. In order to highlight this dualistic "personality" throughout the text, I have chosen to refer to the patient, with her name followed by "demon-trance", (i.e. "Sandun-demon-trance").

MAHASONA SAMAYAMA

In the following presentation of the *Mahasona Samayama*, I will analyse in depth the ritual performed for the girl frightened by the bull on the lane, let us call her Sandun. This is the same ritual as I presented in short version in Chapter 2. First I will present Sandun and her illness, then follows a presentation of Subasinghe's "healing crew". Notes on the preparation of the ritual arena and the potential it is thought to contain is then leading up to a presentation of the ritual itself which will be described in detail throughout the last part of this Chapter.

As previously said Sandun, a young good looking girl in her late teens, thought that her disease was caused by an incident during a *Pideni Daha-ata Sanni* ceremony held for her neighbour, a girl from her mother's sister's house. Sandun had then met one of *Mahasona's* *avatars*, *Mahasona* in the manifestation of a bull, and during this meeting she felt a sudden fright (*baya*), which put her into *avesa* (demon-trance). Sandun's *yaksedosa* (*avesa*) was diagnosed as caused by *Suniyam yaka*, *Kalu Kumare yaka* and *Riri yaka* which in this case were the companions of *Mahasona*.

Sandun lived together with her mother, father, three sisters, and some children, in a village located in a plantation area with banana-, cinnamon- and cashewnut tree gardens and paddy fields close to their house. The road to her house was muddy and narrow and took me from the main road a long distance into the plantation area. Sandun's house was located just half a meter from her aunt's, and it was made of brown bricks with straw mats as roof and without a proper floor. According to local evaluation, it was the house of a relatively poor family. Her two

brothers did army-service up north in the war-zone, and one of her sister's husband was doing business in Colombo. Her mother had married at the age of thirteen, when her husband was 22. Some months before this ritual was held, there had also been a *pideni* ritual for one of Sandun's elder sisters in addition to the one held for her cousin living in the neighbouring house. In other words, this was the third ritual performed for the family within a short period of time. Two years ago, during the Dondra temple festival, which celebrates Vishnu, Sandun's mother had become the devotee of *Suniyam devata*. She also regarded god Vishnu as her protector since it was at a festival celebrating him she became devoted in the first place,⁵⁷ but only *Suniyam* "possessed" her when she got *arode* (god trance)⁵⁸.

Suniyam is a demon god, and is also regarded as the *adura's* protector. Subasinghe cleverly tried to turn this into his own benefit, and frequently worshipped *Suniyam* at home asking him to get more patients. I found the fact that that *Suniyam* was said to influence both Subasinghe and Sandun's mother interesting, especially since Subasinghe was convinced that *Suniyam* helped him to get patients like Sandun, and her formerly afflicted relatives. In other words *Suniyam* was thought to have impacts on all the central people related to this ritual.

Sandun's mother, a grey haired tiny woman dressed in a colourful cloth and blouse, told me that her godly "powers" made people come from far away to consult "*Suniyam*" about different matters. During Sandun's ritual, she carried out small offering ceremonies at mid day, just before the *Ira Modum Samayama* ritual was held, and also later before the *Mahasana Samayama* started the following evening. She kept a small oil-lamp lit in the garden temple throughout the whole night. *Suniyam* is regarded as a risky god to associate with, and if punctual offerings from the devotee are not carried out the less fortunate sides of his double nature will show forth. As noted, Sandun had got *disti* from *Suniyam*.

⁵⁷ God Vishnu is furthermore the guardian deity of the south-eastern province of Sri Lanka where she lives.

⁵⁸ There are many people devoted by/to gods in the way Sandun's mother is. This phenomenon is closely described by Gananath Obeyesekere (1981), where he presents some priestesses devoted by/to God Katarangama and in his co-work with Gombrich (1988). A more specific description of *Suniyam's* devotees is to be found in the work of Kapferer (1997).

I will suggest that the relationship Sandun's mother had with *Suniyam* indirectly could have produced the cases of demonic influence on people of her household. In my Sri Lankan "home" the head of the household had been a devotee of *Suniyam* for thirteen years. I recorded stories about how *Suniyam* influenced the lives of people in my house during this time. One of the girls living in my house, had once had a *tovil* performed to cure her *yaksedosa* mainly caused by *Suniyam yaka*. My impression from these stories is that to "live" with a demon-god like *Suniyam* is regarded as dangerous since his powers affect the lives of his devotees both in a positive and a negative way. His "presence" is possibly attracting other more malevolent spirits, and because of this view I presume that the same could count for Sandun and the other cases of demonic influence on people in her household.

At Sandun's house there were many signs of domestic tension, which could have been expressed through the ritual for Sandun and those for her relatives. If we look at Sandun's illness psychologically, I would say that her demon-trance was a physical reaction to emotional stress. Sandun's responses to her father's hot temper expressed many times through my stay at their house, made me aware of their tense relation, especially since she "responded" by getting demon-trance when this happened. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, her demon-trance was making her upper and lower parts of body move, but paralysed her hips. By having in mind the knowledge of how godly devotees must avoid sexual intercourse, in other words her mother was not sexually accessible for her father, I saw the possibility that Sandun might have been an object for sexual harassment. I stress that this is how I read Sandun's case, since to me she related her illness to the malevolence of *Mahasona* and his followers. Her own explanation is the one that will be the basis for the following analysis.

The following presentation of the *Mahasona Samayama* has some biases to be mentioned at the outset. Since the *Mahasona Samayama* is very complex, I noticed and learned different things about its nature every time I saw it performed. My main intention however, is to present the ritual as it was performed for Sandun, and the comments linked up to her case are drawn from

my notes made this particular night. Detailed descriptions concerning the various offering acts will, however, be drawn from material collected during my whole fieldwork.

Preparation of the ritual arena

To construct all the different offering stands and the offering baskets take hours. The patient's household has during the previous weeks collected all the things needed such as banana tree stems, banana tree leaves, arecanut flowers, arecanut leaves and other materials of "ritual carpentry". Mud and paint are required for the construction of the *Mahasona bali* (clay image of *Mahasona*), *dumalla* (resin) is bought and other ritual offerings collected and prepared. The cost of these materials is very high. For instance, all the banana-tree stems required, make the household loose years of banana harvest. The list is long and is given to the household the very day they decide to make a ritual offering. The kitchen has prepared food for the guests and made coconut-oil cakes called *kaun* and other snacks which accord with the traditional ritual menu. The offering menu is prepared the same day as the ritual is held. All of the *aduras* as well as their drummers and assistants participate in the making of the offering decorations. The special design of leaves, which smarten up the offering baskets, is cut by the ritualists themselves since this is an art they protect within their community, but in the building of the main stem structure the household's assistants give a helping hand. Often a rain-shed of straw-mats is built, or tin plates which roof the whole ritual arena.

The most important constructions of the Mahasona Samayama

The *Mahasona vidiya* is a huge offering-structure made to the great offerings presented to Mahasona. (See picture no. 5 & 6). This structure is made of five *toranas* (offering-pedestals). Each *torana* is rectangular in shape and about 160 cm high. The centre *torana* is called *panca messe* and is slightly bigger than the four others. The different *toranas* are placed at the same distance from the one in the centre, and the *vidiya*, which means "road", creates an eight corner entrance

for the *yakku*. The four *toranas* are connected with the one in the centre with "portals" and with a "demon net"⁵⁹ created out of a big leaf cut in a special way. By each corner a pot of earth with aereca nut flowers (*bol mal*) and an oil lamp are placed as offering to the earth goddess. Offerings to *Mahasona* is placed on top of every *torana*, and later offerings to *Mangara deva*⁶⁰ are put on the *panca messe* which is this god's special offering stand.

Obeyesekere (1984:52) notes that the meaning "road" could mislead us to think of a road mediating the various kinds of worlds. The term for the main offering-structure in the *Gammadove* ritual practise, a ritual consisting of offerings to gods, is *mandala* or *madupuraya* which could be translated as hall, or cityhall. In this way Obeyesekere provide that the term *vidiya* refers to the roads which surrounds a city hall, and that this name of their offering structure corresponds with the remote role the demons and spirits has in the Buddhist pantheon. The construction of the *vidiya* is made according to the principle of *yantras* which has the quality of mediating between the different worlds, so in my view, both interpretations are possible.

The *Deraheva depavila* structure (see picture no. 2) is used in the "human sacrifice trick act" and is made like a traditional death bed. This structure is only used during the *depavila* for *Riri yaka*.

The *Suniyam vidiya* is an offering stand made for *Suniyam devata*, the protector of the *adura* practise. The structure is built as a small hut, where the ceiling has *yantra* designs, and all the important offering baskets are kept at the top of this *Suniyam vidiya* until they are offered some time during the night. *Suniyam vidiya* is the offering place to which the *adura* summons the protective gods like *Suniyam*, *Dedimunde* (the chief of the *yakku*) and the four guardian gods (*hattara devaya*).

The *Daha-ata Sanni vidiya* (see picture no. 11) is the place where the different *Sanni yakas* pop up and show their appearance during the *Daha-ata Sanni* sequence. It is designed as an one

⁵⁹ I rely on Kapferer's (1983) term and interpretation of this decoration. In his informants' view this is a substitute for the iron demon net created by a god named Brakma.

⁶⁰ In my notes I have consequently referred to Mangara as "she", but literature like Weerakoon (1985) presents Mangara devi, as a god, not as a goddess.

walled "hut" with a hole in its centre. To the *Daha-ata Sanni* sequence an offering basket called *gotuvatie* is made. It consist of a round plate made of straw with eighteen small betel leaf offerings placed on small banana-stem pieces.

Other ritual structures are the offering baskets *Tatoe* and *Pideni*. The first refers to offering baskets placed on a three-legged structure, the others are large baskets placed on chairs. Both contain a *yantra* designed chamber where offerings are put. The last offering baskets to be mentioned are the *Iles* which are small banana-stem pieces where offerings are placed.

Finally the *Mahasona bali*, the clay image of *Mahasona* and his "vehicles" (pig, ox, bull and horse) was constructed. The art of making *bali* is protected by the drummers, and at this performance *Bereva karaiya* (drummer) Jayantha was its designer (see picture no. 1). All the drummers I knew had different artistic styles and in some ways there was a competition going on between them, a quest for the nicest *balis*. The clay image is created within a frame made of banana-stems. The mud is placed inside the structure, and out of the mud the drummer forms a three dimensional image of the *yaka*. The image is then painted in black, white, blue, red, green and yellow and its teeth are made of areca nut flowers. Jayantha's *Mahasona bali* strikingly shared his own facial feature, and it was really nicely made.

I will not go into detail about what kind of offerings the various spirits are given. The reader will find closer descriptions of this matter in Kapferer's "A celebration of demons" (1983). My main point is that the content of the offering baskets is made in line with the idea of giving the spirits what suits their "character" and bodily substance. "Hot" substance is regarded as more «impure» than "cold". The spirits' rank is also involved when the offerings are made. The "purest" *yakku* get fried food, the *preta* get both arrack (spiritus) and *ganja* (hashish) as well, and the only spirits given meat are the *Pitte pantie*, spirits who are regarded as the lowest of them all. All the receipts to these offerings are to be found in the *aduras'* myth material. The number of offerings is also regarded as important, and for instance, *Ira Modum Riri yaka pideni* (the offering basket for the sun at its high blood thirsty yaka) contains nine *iles* (plates) with fried rice, nine

limes, nine kinds of flowers, one fried egg and drops of chicken blood. *Riri yaka* is the blood thirsty *yaka* and that is why he is given chicken blood, and the number nine refers to his nine *avatas* (manifestations), but also to the nine bodily openings. The cutting of nine limes after the offering act is said to "cut" possible sorcery directed at the patient. The general principle are that numerology is important, and the numbers both accord to the human body and the *yakku's avatas*.

The ritual arena

The ritual arena is very consciously constructed, (see drawing), and the main rule is to avoid that the supernaturals who according to the Buddhist pantheon are superior to others, shall be "polluted" by the presence of the substance of more inferior beings. Knowledge about the internal order and directions of appearances is then considered as of greatest importance. The *Mahasona vidiyā's* opening is facing the *aturea* who is again seated in a direction where s/he is not facing the Maroa, the death spirit. The Maroa changes direction every week day, but never appears from North East.

The different offering baskets and stands for the different *yakku* should be placed in such a way that the different offerings are not "polluted" by each other. This follows a concept of substantial purity among the *yakku*, similar to that concerning their food offerings. The relationship between the *yakku* and other supernaturals follows a caste hierarchy based on the principles of noble or less noble births, more correctly how they were born and from whose womb they came, which again is associated with their more or less "dirty" nature.

The lowest "caste" of *yakku* should be kept in the northern directions, and the highest in the southern. If offerings are given to spirits which are similar in caste simultaneously, their offering baskets are placed at the same level. When the caste differs between spirits offered for throughout specific acts, their baskets are placed on higher or lower stands in accordance with their place in the Buddhist Pantheon. During the *Mahasona Samayama*, if the *Riri yaka*, *Kalu yaka*

and *Sanni yaka* are the main followers of *Mahasona* as agents of illness, the *tatoes* (offering stands) for *Mahasona*, *Kalu yaka* and *Riri yaka* would be offered first, and the one for *Sanni yaka* last since he is regarded as lower than the others, because he according to his myth of origin, was born after his mother's death and nurtured on her corpse. This again has made him more "polluted" than the others mentioned. I must stress that in my experience the *aduras* rarely care for the spectators (the human) when they prepare the arena. The offering directions and their own dancing place seemed most important, secondly where to place the patient's bed. The spectators (the human) could often have had a much more effortless view of the ritual performance, if the *aduras* had created the arena slightly differently, but the *aduras* did not mind.

The ritual ground is purified by the charmed saffron water (*kahadiyara*), and makes it safe for everyone to stay on the arena. If asked for, the *adura* also prepares an oil, *nanomora*, charmed with *mantras* which all people, except from the *aturea* and the *adura*, apply on their forehead for protection against *yakku's disti*. Various techniques provide differing degrees of protection from *disti*; the *yantra* is viewed as the most powerful, the *nanomora* second and then the saffron water. The *aduras* on their hand have to avoid the first two kinds of protection. This is because their role is that of mediating between the patients and the *yakku*, and a protective oil or *yantra* is repulsive for the *yakku*. I will come back to this mediating role of the *aduras*, but until then, just keep in mind that the powers of such protective items are that they make people "resistant" against *yakku's* glances (*belma*) and their polluting substances (*disti*).

The potential of the ritual arena

The quality of the ritual arena cannot be called holy, nor profane. It is an arena whose designed potential is only given when the ritual performance is put into action. It is an arena which makes a "passage" from the other worlds into this world possible, but on a transcendental level due to the power given to the offering structures that *yantras* design. As Obeyesekere notes for the Pattini rites: "*The ritual arena is a meeting place for the three worlds...* [the world of material form, desire

and no form], where humans interact with gods and demons." (Obeyesekere 1984:53). Comparably, Zarilli notes from Indian rituals; «Ritual practises are understood to establish a mediating bridge between the daily world and the «unseen» and powerful world of the gods. The ritual specialist establishes the bridge, mediating between the tangible daily world and the intangible other world by means of his or her ritual practises». (Zarilli 1990:122). These two scholars both stress the mediating potential of the ritual arena, but Zarilli's notion about the priest is essential. It is the priest who "activates" this potential, and in the *tovils* this is the work of the *Yak Adura*. *Aduras* are then those who have the power to create and control mediating contact between the world of demons and humans.

Throughout the rituals many people cross over or sit within the ritual arena, and if it starts raining, and no rain-shed is made, the *aduras* just move the patient and the actual offering baskets inside the house. (This is, however, impossible to do with the *vidiya* (offering structure) since it is stuck into the ground). This fact points out that the ritual arena in itself is not a defined place of "demonic presence" or "ritual danger". On the other hand the presence of "impure" substances is regarded as a threat to the ritual efficacy. The principle of *killi* (ritual danger caused by bodily impurity) and *pilli* (personal danger caused by bodily impurity) is only understandable in relation with the preparatory taboos which is to be followed by who⁶¹. One example which illustrates this are to be found at a *Gara Yakuma* I once witnessed.

At offering rituals which mainly celebrate gods, as at a *Gara Yakuma* I witnessed, the taboos to be followed during the days before the ritual were much stricter than those who counted for the *tovils*. All taboos are connected with the principle of "pure" bodily substance, or more correctly avoidance of those things which can make the bodily substance impure. Throughout the days before the *Gara Yakuma*, the *adura* had to "purify" their bodies by not eating meat, not having sex, not being in touch with menstruating women, not drinking, not visiting funeral houses and so forth. Before the *tovils*, however, these rules were recommended but not

⁶¹ There is a distinction between *killi* and *pilli*, where the former concept is "pollution" causing ritual danger, and the second is causing personal danger. As the example below illustrates, I as a female represented a "pollutive" danger which could make the ritual as a whole into failure, while the drunk man put himself into a personal risk of "loosing points to Nirvana" due to his unsuitable behaviour in the presence of gods.

strictly observed. To communicate with gods, whose substance is "pure" demands stricter preparatory taboos than communication with demons whose substance is "impure". For instance, my presence at the *Gara Yakuma*, as a female seated within the ritual arena was "read" by the villagers as highly "polluting" (but a "dirty" drunk man was not) and I had to move out. On the other hand I never represented such "danger" at the *tovis*.

The dichotomy between pure and impure substance is really difficult to grasp, but the taboos give us a hint about what kinds of substances are impure, and the avoidance of these keeps the bodily substance pure. Since the supernaturals offered to throughout the *tovis* are "impure", the break of taboo restrictions like those held for the rituals for gods does not create any ritual danger for the people present.

The potential of the ritual offering stands, baskets and the *yantra* design of the *vidiya*, as well as the "tempting" offerings (which share the substantial quality of the ones offered for), is to attract the *yakku's'* look (*belma*) and to catch their *disti*. The *aduras* in their role as demon-controllers mediate the contact between those to be offered for and the patient. The offerings share the quality of the illness-causing *yakku* and contain the same sort of substance which the patient is inflicted by due to their presence in his/her body. By giving offerings to the *yakku*, there is a transaction between patient and *yakku*, where the *yakku* receives offerings as a substitute for giving up the patient, and this is the transaction that the *adura* mediates. The offerings are presented one by one, and due to this, the mediating potential of the offerings are temporarily activated. The *aduras* are demon-controllers and have to prove themselves as such. Sometimes people other than the patient show signs of demonic influence by getting into trance, fainting and so on, and this could be interpreted as a sign of the loss of *adura* powers. The *adura* himself, however, insists that in such cases, these "new" patients must have got in touch with *disti* somewhere else, and that their presence at the rituals just exaggerates something which is already there.

The ritual potential, an analytical approach

Kapferer (1997) uses the term "virtuality" to grasp the multi-sensorial qualities engaged through the *aduras'* performance and the potential inherent in the ritual arena. In his view the ritual is virtual in the sense that it is a part of reality, but nonetheless constitutes a reality of its own. To say that the ritual creates a reality of its own, is a notion which directs a critique at his former work (1983) and that of others who adopt a constructionist view and read rituals as mere representations of society. This critique would for instance count for Geertz (1969) interpretative mode which reads rituals as models of and models for culture. As Kapferer argues about the anti-sorcery rite which is a part of the *adura* repertoire; *"The Suniyama does not function to represent the world, rather the world of the rite - which receives heightened expression in the context of the rite - might be said to function, if I must talk this way, in the interest of the internal processes of the ritual. The audience provides a wider field of meaning supporting the inner meaning dynamics of the rite. The rite does not look out upon the world so much as the world looks in upon the rite "* (Kapferer 1998).

Kapferer's analysis is based on the *Suniyama*, the anti-sorcery rite whose potentiality is (as he says) that of restoring the destroyed consciousness of the patient. In his analysis he distinguishes the ritual reality, from other lived realities which he glosses actuality. The ritual's potential is then to mediate between ritual reality and actuality, and thereby change the premises for the life outside of the ritual itself. The crossing of the borders between ritual reality and lived actuality is "activated" in just a few sequences of the *Suniyama* ritual, but these sequences are very essential "closing" acts.

In my view the ritual arena in the *Mahasona Samayama* has different main qualities. It is a place which is a potential demon-controlling space, a "passage" between all the worlds, a place which transcends cosmos' potential, a place where the *atureas* can be healed. The potential of the ritual arena shares those of the various ritual tools mainly, but also an aesthetical quality connected with *rasa*, which is the theory of how dramaturgical expressions evoke sentiments (*bhava*). The ritual arena is also a place where different kinds of negotiations can occur, and this I

regard as the dialogical potential of the rite. In many ways the *aduras* and the patients negotiate with the *yakku*, especially in cases of *avesa* (demon-trance). Both the patient, the *yakku*, the *aduras* and other onlookers have an opportunity to break into the ritual performance and change its contents and development: The onlookers by comments and actions, the *yakku* by their *disti*, the patient with her offering acts, oral statements and moves, and the *aduras* as controllers of the ritual "dialogue", gestures and creativity.

The constellation of ritual performers, Subasinghe's "healing crew"

Ideally, for the performance of the *Mahasona Samayama* there should be at least three dancers, one *mantra* specialist and two drummers. Since the various *aduras* all know bits and pieces of the practise, Subasinghe had chosen his crew for their skills. Subasinghe himself avoids to perform *mantras*, and therefore he had asked Baas (age 57) from the *bereva* (drummer) caste to come and perform these parts. Baas is a *mantra karaiya*, a man specialised in *mantra* and songs to all the *toivils*. For the dancing performance he had asked for Chevan's (age 31) assistance. Chevan belongs to the *salagama* (cinnamon peeler) caste, and is an *adura* specialised in the performance of *Mahasona Samayama* and *Daha-ata Sanni* mask drama. When I met Chevan he was still learning the special dancing, songs and acting performed in other *toivils*. The other dancer was Kumara (age 20) who belongs to the *durava* caste (chair men). Kumara was a young student who is fully learned in the dancing and songs belonging to *Sanni Yakuma* and in almost the whole *Mahasona Samayama*. He intends to be a *mantra chari* one day. Both Chevan and Kumara regarded another *adura*, Rajpala, as their *gurunanse* (teacher). Subasinghe (age 49) himself belonged to the *goigama* (farmer) caste, and he is fully learned in the dancing, acting and singing for all the *toivils*. He has not specialised into *mantra* as well, but since he knows how to make the diagnosis, he is often in lead of rituals.

The drummers chosen for tonight were Pieris appu (age 62) who belongs to the *bereva* caste, and he is a drummer who performs as such only. Jayantha (age 27) belongs to the *salagama* caste, and he is a drummer who "always" plays up to Chevan's dancing. Jayantha has begun to

learn *mantras* as well, and intends to be a *mantra karaiya* one day. Wherever one finds Chevan one also finds Nisanta (age 32) who is Chevan's personal assistant. Nisanta helps the *aduras* to dress, takes care of their costumes and masks, makes decorations to the offering baskets, prepares the offering food, and knows the songs and drumming, but rarely does he play up to the dancers or join the *adura* chorus.

05:40 P.M. Preta Pideni

Before the *Mahasona Samayama* begins, it is important to make sure that the lower «caste» of spirits like the *bahirevas* (earth spirits) and *pretas* (ghosts) have received their offerings. For Sandun's cure only the offering for *preta* was required. This offering is only performed if there have been signs of any influence of *pretas* in the *aturea's* disease, and most often it is only necessary to give offerings to *pretas*. The *preta's* offering basket is constructed with a magically designed bottom. It is squared with five different chambers, one for each corner and a square centre. From each corner there are sticks which are tied together on the top, where a coconut is placed. On top of the coconut a black cloth is placed, since black is regarded as the *preta's* colour.

The different offerings required were prepared and placed in the *pideni* (offering-basket) by Sandun herself. She had now dressed up in her ritual dress, a foot-long white cloth wrapped around the hips and a white blouse. Since the *preta* is a domestic spirit, this is very important. The *preta* has to be pleased before any other spirit is invited to come. One could say that the *aturea* serves the main treat to the malevolent domestic guest first. The logic behind this timing is clear; if the domestic spirits do not receive a satisfying offer, there is a chance that they may cast their glance on the offerings for the *yakku* instead. The result would be that the *yakku* refuse to accept their offerings, since they have been «occupied» by someone regarded more impure than themselves, and the ritual would fail.

In the meantime Sandun's mother carried out her *pudja* (offering) to *Suniam* and Vishnu, first inside her house, and later in the small "temple" in the garden.

The content of the *pideni* offering was put into it outdoors, by the main entrance of the house. When the *preta tatoe* is filled with the food and items required, the mantra chari will make a charm, inviting the *preta* to accept the offerings given. The *preta tatoe* is not finished before four o'clock the next morning, since the charm has to be done in every room of the house where the patient uses to be, and since, given the fact that *preta* is a low spirit, its *disti* will be the last to be tied. The first charm is however made to keep the *preta's* attention away from the ritual arena, and it is performed by the main entrance of the patient's house. If there have been signs that *bahirevas* are present as well, eight small *iles* (small offering baskets), one for each corner of the house (*ata corna*), will be prepared for them, encircling the *pideni*. The first offering for them is carried out, and thereafter the *iles* are placed in the eight corners of the garden fence, this time encircling the house.

06:25 P.M. A short meal and the preparatory actions are carried out

Now it was time to offer the *aduras*, who had been working all day, a meal before the ritual started. The *pretas'* potential to bring *disti* to anyone's meal had now been avoided. Afterwards the *aduras*, seated inside the *Mahasona vidiya*, found their costumes and got dressed up to the ritual performance. Their personal assistant handed over all the different costumes to the performers, and helped them putting together their rather complicated dress. The *aduras* and the drummers protected themselves from the spirits' *disti* by charming the skirt cloth, their head band and other costumes with *araksa* (protection) *mantras*. The drummers charmed their drum, as well. It is often the household ladies' "pain" to provide enough white cloth and saris, (which are worn by all performers and the patient), and sari blouses for the dancers. While the others were dressing up, Subasinghe started the ritual on his own. The *aturea* entered with an oil lamp in her hand, a lamp lit for lord Buddha, and Subasinghe carried out a *namaskaraya*, a saluting of the guardian gods and Buddha. The patient got seated on the "bed" (*aturea pandala*), which was separated from the ritual arena by a white curtain held by two young boys. Young boys were chosen because they are

thought to be more ritually "pure" than others. These boys often belong to the household, and this was also the case here.

SANDAYAMA, (evening watch);

07:15 P.M. Suniyam Devata Pideni. Offering to Suniyam demon/god

The first of the three watches started, with *Suniyam devata pideni*. The *adura* in lead of the ritual, Subasinghe, summoned the highest protectors of the ritual practise: god Vesemuni which is the chief for all *yakku*, Virudha the chief of *pretas*, Dhrtarastra chief of gandharvas and Virupaksa chief of nagas, and *Suniyam devata* which is the protector of the ritual itself and the *adura*. The four corners of *Suniyam vidiya* were lighted up with torches, the cock was placed under the offering-stand, and Subasinghe summoned the gods for protection. Subasinghe was holding the *vasdanda* (demon pipe) and the *igaha* (ritual stick) in one hand, a *pandam* (torch) in the other. *Dumalla* (resin) was charmed and put on fire in a brassier held by the ritual assistant, who made sure that the whole *pideni* had been incensed, while he recited summoning verses (*kannalauve*), asking the deities to come and accept the offerings given and to protect the ritual. The ritual assistant, from now called the "'dumalla boy" ", was a mentally retarded man I had seen function as a ritual assistant on former rituals in the area as well.

In the *Suniyam devata pideni* act Subasinghe shifted his bodily weight from foot to foot and looked around him with spastic head movements, like he was looking for the unseen. At the same time he was reciting verses which could not be heard by the people present, whistling with the flute and moving his torch in circle patterns. *Mantras* are often muttered like this, since *mantra* knowledge must be protected within the *adura's* community. The drummers, Jayantha and Pieris appu, tuned their drums to their opening act. When Subasinghe was finished, the play of *mangul bere*, the opening ceremonial drum rhythm followed. Subasinghe had already moved into the main ritual arena bringing with him all the ritual tools needed to call for protection, now facing the

patient who was hidden behind the white cloth. He grabbed the *Mal tatoe* (flower offering basket), the offering basket for *Riddi Yaksinis* (*Kalu Kumare's* wives) and saluted them by moving it in circles three times in front of his body. Then he charmed *dumalla* and finally threw three fire blows with *dumalla* at the curtain in front of Sandun. The curtain fell and she was included into the ritual arena as Subasinghe assured her; «*You will be cured, the countless numbers of devas who have heard the sound of this drum will protect you*». By these introductory actions, which direct the attention and protection from gods, (and so far, not the earthly audience), the ritual had begun.

07:25 P.M. Hende Pideni. The Evening watch offering, first act



The offering baskets of the evening watch offering act were placed into the ritual arena, the four *tatoes* (offering stands) with offerings for the main illness causing *yakku*. Sandun's diagnosis had shown signs of affliction by *Mahasana*, *Riri yaka*, *Kalu Kumare yaka* and *Suniyam yaka*. The *tatoe* for *Kalu Kumare yaka* was placed in front of the patient, and a fire-stick lit and placed on it. The three

other tatoes were placed in a row in front of the *Mahasona vidiya* (the main offering structure for Mahasona). The first offering act had to be made for *Kalu Kumare yaka* since he is especially fond of (young) women, and therefore regarded as women's main *disti* agent.

First Baas (the *Mantra karaiya*) recited the *disti karanneva*, the calling upon *Kalu Kumare*, followed by the *Njatjna kannelauve*, the pleading of him. He also called for *Kalu Kumare's* seven wives, the *Riddi Yaksini*. Chevan and Kumara sung the *yaka kavis* while dancing. These songs are about the *yaka's* birth and life and are a reminder of how the Lord Buddha fought him, and how he has to follow his demands. For this summoning there are no special dancing steps, and the dancers are free to move as they like. As we will see later, this is a part of the ritual where the dancers really can display their dancing abilities, if they think the context and the audience are worthy of it. This night the *adura* made a plain performance, they even did not dress properly, they had skipped the glittering vest and belt. While the *adura* were dancing and pleading the *yaka*, Sandun sat on her bed and watched their movements. Suddenly she got a helpless look in her eyes and fell back in demon-trance. Nobody had paid any special attention to her up to now, and suddenly she got a lot of caring looks upon her. As during the *Ira Modum Samayama* described in the Introduction, only her hands and feet were moving, not the whole body, and again her toes and fingers were stacked together. The *adura* ended their act, and Subasinghe with the *igaha* in hand, started to talk with the patient, now possessed by the spirits in demon-trance.

Subasinghe asked who was inside her, and she answered *Suniyam yaka* and *Kalu Kumare yaka*. Subasinghe then asked the «*yakku*» whether they would promise to leave the patient, and she answered that they would leave her at 03:00 AM⁶². But Sandun-demon-trance also informed Subasinghe that she was in need of a protective *yantra* the following morning, and Subasinghe promised that this would be arranged. Finally Subasinghe asked if Sandun-demon-trance wanted to dance and was given a positive reply. After getting these answers Subasinghe left the patient

⁶² The point of time the patients mentioned varied from case to case, but mainly the *yaka* promised to leave between 00:00 A.M and 05:00 A.M.

and went back to the *Mahasona vidiya* (the main offering structure), while Chevan and Kumara continued the offering dances to *Kalu Kumare yaka*.



The last song in this sequence was a *sirisipade*, the singing of a head-to-foot song. Kumara and Chevan was standing in front of the patient, who was still in demon-trance. Chevan had the *igaha* in hand and drew a line between the joints of her body that the song referred to and made short dancing steps between each verse. Chevan and Kumara acted out the stories, by reciting each second verse like in a dialogue, with nice movements which underlined the content. The first verse recited was *Kalu Kumare yaka sirisipade*, (by the powers of Buddha's good deeds, leave the patient), then they sang a *sirisipade* about the good deeds of the twelve months (by the powers of these deeds the patient will be cured). In general the different *sirisipade* verses recited during the ritual, have the power to end all sorts of diseases (see Appendix no. 3. myth 2 & 3).

When the songs were finished the *adura* finally touched the cock with the *igaha*. The cock is regarded as the substitute for the *aturea*, because of its quality as a domestic two-legged animal (Kapferer 1983). Finally Baas sprinkled saffron water over the patient's body and she "came back" again. Then he recited *mantras* and cut three limes in order to end the diseases caused by this specific *yaka*, and Sandun gave the last offerings to him; *mal/bullat* (flower/ betel leaf) and coins. Sandun carried out the "*mono ata pisa damina*" three times, a hand movement where she

"wiped" her face and "gave" her *disti* by hand to the *Kalu yaka's* offering basket, which was held by Baas. The number three both refers to the Buddhist triple gem (Buddha, dharma and sangha), as well as the three bodily humours in her body. The offering basket was held up over Sandun's head three times, while her closest relatives shouted, «long live», «long live», (*aibowewa, aibowewa*) and it was placed on its stand and put away outside the main arena. The place where the *tatoe* of *Kalu Kumare yaka* had been standing, was purified with three *dumalla* fire blows.⁶³

A short break followed in which the ritualists sat inside the *vidiya* (main offering structure) and shared some glasses of tea. The patient was taken care of by her female relatives, and the others present were chatting. I had the patient's nephew (age 12) as company, a great boy with an impressing mimics and body language which he had developed through his life long friendship with a deaf boy who was seated next to him. My young friend gesticulated and told to me that one of the patient's brothers had finally arrived. His grandfather had "beaten" him earlier the same day, in frustration over the trouble they faced when trying to finish all the preparations in time. He was now in a good mood again, and my young friend felt relieved. He further explained that his grandfather felt that his responsibility for the household was too heavy for him, since he was the only male living there, and therefore he frequently drank too much hot liqueurs.

08:40 P.M. Hende Pideni. Second act

The *tatoe* for *Mahasona, Suniyam yaka* and *Riri yaka* was placed in a row in front of the patient, and a fire stick was lit on each. Kumara and Baas started to recite *mantras* while the household assistant incensed the offering stands. Chevan's personal assistant played the drum beat, while Jayantha and Pieris appu just chewed betel nuts and chatted. The *mantra karaiya* Baas continued on his own with the calling (*disti karannewa*) and pleading (*njatnja kannelauve*) of two *yakku*, and Kumara got seated again. Firstly Baas called for *Riri yaka* then *Mahasona*. Subasinghe who had noticed his "crew's" lazy attitude, shouted to them that they had to pull themselves together, and

⁶³ Fire blows is my expression for *killa gahanava*, which Kapferer (1983) has translated as pollution hitting.

so they did. Suddenly both Jayantha and Pieris appu played the drum, and Chevan and Kumara put on makeup and their glittering costumes for the offering dance, while their personal assistant gave a helping hand. Subasinghe?, yes he fixed himself up as well.

Subasinghe, Chevan and Kumara got up, and there was time for the *Riri yaka kavi* to be sung and danced. The drum rhythm intensified and Sandun fell back again, this time in a very intense demon-trance. The *adura* moved in circles performing various dancing steps, singing *Riri yaka's* story of origin. In-between the *adura* with torch in hand threw some fire blows around the arena. All three recited the *sirisipade* verses, and Subasinghe pointed with the *igaha* at the joints of Sandun's body. This time the stories referred to *Riri yaka* and Lord Buddha. Sandun herself was in trance, lying on her bed, taking quick short breaths and moving her arms and feet. The onlookers who had been talking among themselves focused their attention on the ritual performance again. I noted that now there were about sixty boys present, and about ten girls; all the girls were from Sandun's household. When the *sirisipade* ended, the cock got the *disti* "collected", transferred from Sandun to the cock by a soft touch with the *igaha* on its back. Kumara rounded off the act by making three fire blows for purification.

The same procedure followed for *Mahasana*, and after the end of the songs and dances for him, the *mantra karaiya* cut three limes, each for the three bodily humours since he this time moved the limes from head to foot first. Sandun's body just stopped moving, and she was conscious again immediately. She sat up and performed her offering acts, this time both for *Riri yaka* and *Mahasana*. The onlookers consciously followed the *aduras'* moves, it was a silent audience present this night, only thoughtful looks in caring faces.

Subasinghe and Chevan took a break, only joining the choir when Kumara and Baas called for and pleaded the *Suniyam yaka* to arrive. Sandun was seated with her mother's arms around her throughout this act. Also the dancing offerings were done by Kumara and Baas, and Baas realised some dancing combinations that neither Kumara nor the drummers grasped at first sight. Chevan commented that they were old steps. Two girls from the household commented on

the dancing abilities of the different *adura*. The girls themselves were attached to the dancing school of a friend of mine and thought that Chevan was the nicest dancer, while Kumara was second best. Subasinghe was a slow dancer. Nishanta, Subasinghe's son, confirmed this comment: "My father knows to do things correctly, but his dancing is slow and not so nice. The nicest dancing is the really fast one, the one everyone appreciates most." Kumara and Baas finished these offerings with a *Sirisipade*, collected and transferred *disti* from the patient to the cock, and Sandun gave her offerings as well. The spectators wished Sandun long life; shouted Aiboo, Aiboo, Aibooo (*aibowewa*), the *tatoes* (offering stands) were taken away, and three fire blows purified the air around their former stands from *disti*.

Now there was a short break again, talking time. The patient went for a personal errand and was provided with the *igaha*, for protection. I asked Chevan why only males had come to look at the ritual tonight, since at other rituals I had seen there were a lot of neighbouring women and children as well. He answered that they were absent since they were afraid of getting *disti*, a comment which was reasonable having in mind the way Sandun said she had got her supplemented with the common belief that women are more vulnerable for *disti* than men.⁶⁴

To sum up the meaning of this offering act, the *aduras* have «tied» the *yakku's disti* to the offering baskets, which are very attractive to the *yakku*. The *yakku* have to obey among others, the power of Buddha, and to Buddha all *yakku* have promised to end their disease if they receive the kinds of offerings given tonight. By the help of the *igaha's* «magnetic» powers, the *aduras* have also transferred the *disti* from the patient's three bodily humours and tied it to the cock, which is a substitute for the human. The patient on her part has brought the gifts demanded by the *yakku*. The cutting of the limes finally breaks the connection between the patient and the *disti* which caused the various diseases up to now. The main offerings for *Kalu Kumare* are completed at this stage of the ritual, but he has stated explicitly that he wants to go on dancing in Sandun's body. Only at 03:00 AM. will he give up his *disti*, a moment everyone is waiting for. The offerings to

⁶⁴ See Kapferer 1983, and his discussion about the way womens' positions in the communities studied are mirrored through this practise.

Mahasona will not be finished before the next morning, the *disti* of *Suniyam yaka* is not fully tied, and neither is *Riri yaka's*. The following ritual, the "human" sacrifice act, will serve to tie more of both *Mahasona's*, *Riri yaka's* and *Suniyam's disti*.

11:40 P.M. Padure Kavi. Preparation of the ritual mat

Depavila starts with recitation of the *padure kavi*, the song about how this mat (*padure*) should be made. Today Subasinghe took a straw mat, which was rolled together, put it underneath his arm and placed the *igaha* in his other hand. Baas carrying a torch joined him in a nice dialogue, conducted in a singing-acting way. The *paddure kavi* is said to belong to the *Rata Yakuma* (fertility-ritual), and tells how the women (Riddi Yaksini) made the first mat, and all the obstacles they had to avoid doing so. This is one of the most beautiful songs in the *adura's* collection, and singing it always attracts great attention from the audience. At this stage, Sandun just fell back again, in her special kind of demon-trance, and moved her body in accordance with the song rhythms. When the song ended, Subasinghe drew three lines on the ground with the *igaha*, before spreading out the mat. These three lines are associated with Maroa, the death spirit. When somebody dies, his/her dead body is said to belong to Maroa, and the three lines are the symbol of the three bodily humours. This is one way to capture the «*disti*», which later will be transferred from the patient through the *adura* to the cock, within this place on the ground.

Subasinghe moreover spread the mat and sang the *ata kona kavi*, summoning the eight corners of the world. This song is performed at high speed, and Subasinghe who really knows how to look angry and play out his demon-controller «role», danced around the mat with his torches while singing the song. Sandun regained control over her body again after Baas had gone over to her and sprinkled some charmed saffron water on her. It should be noted that the saffron water is said to have only temporary powers, and that it can have various kinds of effects, in accordance with the various kinds of charms (*mantras*) used. It can in other words do just what the *adura* tells it to, the saffron water's potential is actualised with a kind of intentional speech act.

Subasinghe's speed around the mat gradually increased, and he was followed by the «dumalla boy» who run after Subasinghe with the pot of *dumalla*. This is a very enjoyable sequence of the ritual. Subasinghe made a point of chasing the «dumalla boy» faster and faster while he was singing, stopping after each verse, briefly purifying the mat's corners one by one by throwing a (*dumalla*) fire blow (see picture no 3.) Pretending not to find the *dumalla* pot with his hand, turning direction and putting his torch pointing to the assistant's bum, this was really funny.

Finally the *iles* (small offerings) for the four illegal wives of *Suniyam*, (*Takkari*, *Makkari*, *Jammi jammedoti* and *Kali raks*), was placed at each corner of the mat, and the fire-sticks placed into each of them was lit.

00:00 A.M. Mahasona, Riri Yaka and Suniyam Depavila. The human substitute sacrifice trick



Now the time had come for the human substitute offering, and Baas was the one who knew how to transport the *yaka's disti* safely from the patient's body, through himself and into the cock. Simultaneously offerings are made for *Mahasona*, *Suniyam* and *Riri yaka*. This type of offering acts

is regarded as the most dangerous for the ritualists, since if they fail to do it correctly, the *disti* easily turn against themselves. In a way this act proves that the *adura* are superior to the *yakku*.⁶⁵

Subasinghe showed Sandun how to move a white cloth, (it can also be red), three times above her head, and then from head to toe three times. The cloth was given to Baas who had lied down on the mat, and he covered his body with it (see picture no. 4). *Mallakande pideni* is an offering structure for *Mahasona*, *Riri yaka*, and *Suniyam yaka*, with three offerings to each, also symbolising the three bodily humours. One *adura* claimed that its nine offerings referred to the nine bodily openings as well. The structure (*Mallakande pideni*) was placed on top of Baas's belly, the cock by his feet, the *igaha* by his side, and with a torch and flute in his hand he started reciting *mantras*. Sandun was safely placed in her mother's protective arms. The dumalla boy incensed Baas's body and cried Aiyo as they do during funerals, and started to express his grief for the deceased *mantra karaiya*. Often this is an act of great fun, but today the audience only made "silent" laughs, and since there were no humorous replies to the assistant (which were frequent at other rituals I have witnessed), his complaints silenced as well. The people talked among themselves instead and simultaneously Baas talked to the *yakku*. The other *aduras* were in the meantime dressing up to the next main offering sequence, the *Maha Samayama* (the great summoning time), with the main offerings to *Mahasona* coming up.

After a long period with *mantra* muttering, Baas turned up the volume of his voice and started to sing a *sirisipade*, the voices of the other *aduras* joined the chours. Lying on his mat, he transferred the *disti* from Sandun to the offering structure on the top of him, and then to the cock. Sandun took a betel leaf, tore it into two pieces and threw one piece over each of her shoulders. She, moreover, offered a beetle leaf with a small piece of rice, and finally she took a ring from her hand and placed it on the *mantra karaiya's* finger. The ring is thought to end the power of sorcery, in case sorcery was involved in her illness. Baas asked her to light one fire stick,

⁶⁵ Asiri, the godly protected *adura* mentioned in Chapter 6 above, would put himself in trance at the end of the depavila, and he told that he had to be awakened within 3 hours; if not, he would die. He regarded this as a real death.

blow on it, and give it back to him. After that he took the *igaha* and charmed it, put it on the forehead of the patient and made more charms and finally touched the cock (*kokula*) three times, each one purifying the bodily humours. Baas chanted a special *mantra* and finally cut three limes and threw three hands of *dumalla* lit on fire, and the *depavila* was finished. Baas who had been lying on the mat all the time was now wrapped into it and carried just outside of the ritual arena by two helpers.

Baas stood up and walked down to the *porale*,⁶⁶ (*porale* is the name of *Mahasona's* graveyard, and therefore the term used for every graveyard visited in connection with rituals), followed by male helpers who carried all the offering baskets, now containing the *yakku's disti* as well. Baas brought with him a torch, the *igaha*, *dumalla* and the cock. The offering baskets were placed into the *porale* and the *mantra karaiya* chanted charms whose potential is to tie the *disti* to the *porale*. The offering baskets were charmed one by one, and each time he threw a fire blow (*killi*) with *dumalla* and drew three lines on the ground with the *igaha*. The cock's *disti* was also placed within these three lines, by charming the *igaha* and transferring it from the cock to the ground.⁶⁷

In sum, with these actions Baas had bound and purified more *disti* which he transported from Sandun's body through his own to the cock, and finally he "bound" the *disti* to the graveyard. Firstly, Subasinghe prepared the mat and through his performance he marked and simultaneously created a "mediating passage" from the eight cardinal directions to this place. Secondly Baas presented himself to these *yakku* as a human substitute for Sandun, and his trick was to control the *disti* over to the offering-baskets and the cock instead. Finally another *sirisipade* were performed, and more *disti* was transferred out of her body and placed into the cock with the help of the *igaha*. This is one of the singular transactions with the highest degree of *disti*-binding potential that the *aduras* perform, but more offering acts were needed in order to purify Sandun's body completely.

⁶⁶ If there is no graveyard close by, the offering baskets could also be taken to water places, or three or four road junctions. All are auspicious places for *yakku*.

⁶⁷ I only went along to this act once since the patient's household became really upset the time I joined. It was something about me being a girl and girls' *killi*, and therefore it was assumed to be dangerous for me.

MADU YAMA, (midnight watch)

01:00 A.M. Maha Samayama



Kumara, Subasinghe and Chevan are now dressed up with a special kind of crown, with a pony tale in the neck made from banana-leaf tusks. With their (protectively charmed) black soot (-oil) spots under their eyes they look rather frightening. Up to now the *Mahasona vidiya* (the offering structure) has not contained any *disti* binding potential, but everyone and everything inside it, was now moved out, and the lamps in the earth pots were lit.⁶⁸ The time has come to get *Mahasona* to place his look on the *vidiya*, but first the *aduras* have to create a stronger protection against the *yakku's disti*. They incensed their clothes and inhaled the *dumalla* smoke, charmed their torches and other items with a special *mantra*, *kalleli bandele*, which creates protection for the entire body.⁶⁹

A short, fast dance followed and the *vidiya* was lit, while the *adura's* charmed the lights and danced, by placing ten fire-sticks (*villaku*) on the important places, one on each of the eight

⁶⁸ Kapferer argues that the earth pots, belonging to the earth goddess, can be seen as a part of a godly fortress surrounding the *vidiya* into which the *Mahasona's disti* should be caught. (1983:184)

⁶⁹ Kapferer (1983:203) argues that the *aduras* do this to attract the *yakku*, but none of my informants mentioned this ability, but emphasised the protective powers in these mantra only.

corners, one for *Mangara devi* (a god who protects *Mahasana*) and the last for the *Mahasana bali* (the clay image of *Mahasana*).

By the first drum beat Sandun, who had been sitting silently on her bed covered behind the white cloth curtain, again became Sandun-demon-trance and fell back. Her mother arranged Sandun's body in a better position, a move I am sure Sandun did not notice. Again the *aduras* were in action, and this time they attracted the attention from almost everyone present through the spectacle they made. The dance ended by Subasinghe throwing three fire blows at the curtain separating Sandun from the arena, and it fell down. The midnight-watch had begun.

The first dancing sequence only lasted for five minutes. After that the *aduras* created a triangle position on the ritual arena with Subasinghe in front facing the patient, and Kumara and Chevan behind him on each side (see picture no. 5). Subasinghe uttered a meta-comment on the ritual, and explained why he and his crew had come, the patient's diagnosis, the tradition they represent, the offering acts to follow, and finally how the patient would be cured. He informed that Sandun's *avesa* (demon-trance) agents had promised to leave her body at 03:00 A.M. Sandun's hands slowly opened, she opened her eyes, and was conscious for some minutes while this talk was going on. The *adura* saluted Buddha, the four guardian deities, the patient's parents, and the rest of the people present, me for instance, by claspings their hands over their heads. This is a strong honourable gesture.

The *Maha Samayama* begun, and the three *aduras* accompanied by heavy drum rhythms and with their torches in hand, danced pirouette circles on the arena in front of the patient. They rushed back to the *vidiya*, shaking it brutally, singing (calling), throwing fire blows, screaming and whistling at the same time (see picture no. 6). They were «angrily» calling upon *Mahasana* to appear from the eight corners of the world, with their hard and fast movements they provoked him to come. From time to time they rushed up to the patient and made frightening moves in order to scare her, but Sandun's *avesa* had taken control over her body again, so Sandun did not notice. In other words the *adura* created a real spectacle, impossible to ignore by anyone present.

Subasinghe went up to the patient and cut the protective thread around her neck, in order to allow her to dance as the *Kalu Kumare yaka* and *Suniyam yaka* had demanded. But Sandun "woke up", and became «Sandun-body-only» again instead.

Chevan and Subasinghe started their torch-juggling act, while singing about its origin. Jayantha (drummer) challenged them, and claimed that they could not juggle with two torches in one hand. They intentionally misunderstood him and kept their torches in the hand while moving it, instead of throwing them up in the air, and other variations over this comical theme followed. Subasinghe finally managed to juggle with three torches in the correct way, with Chevan following just behind. Chevan simulated that he was drawing up Subasinghe's «clock work» by circling a torch upon his back. This was a humorous moment, as well as an act where the *aduras* could display their juggling skills.

Polloto pideni which followed is an offering of hair, spit and feather to *Mahasona*. Chevan was the chosen *adura* for this offering act. Before he started Chevan inhaled some *dumalla* (incense) smoke, took the cock, whose feet were tied together and hung it upside down on his arm. He got started and danced the special *kokulu pade* (cock steps) dance, around the arena. Chevan was never nice to the cock in this act; in fact it is a wonder that the cock was not killed by accident. The cock as a "*disti* container" is by these actions controlled and flirted with. Chevan, with a torch in hand, danced the special *avatara* steps which give the ultimate wild look. He took one feather from the cock and burned it, a strand of hair from his own head and spat on it, and placed these offerings inside the *vidiya* on one of the *torana* (offering pedestals). Following this he placed such offerings, one by one, on the rest of the eight corners of the *vidiya*, one at the *Mangara deva's* stand and finally one at the *Mahasona bali*. He followed the direction of the sun, making a star move from the *panca messe* centre out to the four *toranas*.⁷⁰

As *Mahasona's* story of origin explains, he has been born eight times and therefore he appears in eight different manifestations. Further, his eight manifestations are said to dwell in the

⁷⁰ Kapferer notes that this direction is the opposite of the direction people move around shrines for Buddha or deities (1983).

eight corners of the world, and therefore Chevan placed offerings in each corner of the *Mahasona vidhya*, whose architectonic *yantra* structure summons *Mahasona* from all these directions. An offering for *Mangara* who is *Mahasona's* associate followed, and finally one offering for the *bali* (clay image) which is representing all the *Mahasona's* in one image. It is not a rule, but most often figures like *Mahasona* who are born in many manifestations have an image which represent them all. Comparably *Sanni yaka* has eighteen manifestations and all eighteen are represented through the image of *Deva Sanni* only.

After placing these offerings, Chevan performed the round-off-act simulating to bite the head of the cock, and threw it on the ground. After this energetic dance, Chevan's body was shivering like in trance, and Baas had to sprinkle saffron water on him to calm him down. The "confused" cock was covered with a white cloth, and two fire sticks was lit on each side of it and a small ile (offering plate) with some burned rice was put on its back. Subasinghe charmed *dumalla* and put it in the *dumalla* boy's brassier, who again incensed the cock. When the cock was fully incensed, Subasinghe took a new hand with *dumalla* and threw three purifying fire blows on it and the cock jumped up, utterly alive. This act symbolises purification of the *disti* bound to the cock.

Mahasona Mask appearance

In the meantime Subasinghe changed clothes and disguised himself as a manifestation of the bear-faced big-bellied *Mahasona* (see picture no. 7). The conscious Sandun was again hidden behind the curtain, while the other *aduras* sang the song about *Mahasona* and his nature. They were introducing *Mahasona* who was soon expected to come. Subasinghe himself, seated behind the *Mahasona vidhya*, was looking into a mirror and trying out *Mahasona's* moves and gestures. He was preparing for his "show *Mahasona's* nature"-act. As Rajpala told me once: "By looking at the mask's features, they know how to act."

The "*Mahasona*" quietly entered the arena, slowly, sniffing and searching for his victim. He jumped around four-legged, and disappeared again. Another verse of his song of origin was sung, and "*Mahasona*" re-entered the arena. This pattern of appearance/disappearance between every new verse was repeated some times, and finally the cloth obstructing Sandun's eyesight fell down and *Mahasona* threw three fire blows in front of her. Sandun was frightened by this sight and tried to hide. Her friends seated beside her, shouted; Aiboo, Aiboo (long live), and "*Mahasona*" searched for Sandun again. He found her and jumped up on her, while she cried and screamed in fear and tried to hide by covering her eyes. "*Mahasona*" came back with the *igaha* in his hand and read some *mantras* which remove the *disti* from head to toe. A *disti* binding charm was recited (see Appendix 3. myth no. 4.). Then he took an areca nut flower twig, charmed it and repeated the movements over Sandun's body, three times from top to toe.

This particular night something unusual happened during this act. While Subasinghe guised as "*Mahasona*" made the third *disti* tying act, by "licking" Sandun's body from head to toe, he suddenly fell back and started to crawl slowly around resting on his back. Subasinghe had got *Mahasona's* *avesa* himself. Baas came to his assistance, he sprinkled charmed saffron water on Subasinghe's body, cut three charmed limes which were moved from head to toe. After a few seconds Subasinghe regained control over his body. After this Subasinghe, guised as "*Mahasona*", ended the ritual act, (he left out the lime-cutting this time). With the cock on his arm he turned around and found the offerings which were given to him (*Mahasona*) at the top of the offering pedestals (*torranas*) in the *vidiya*, at *panca messe*, and finally the *bali*. The offerings given in the *Polluto pideni* are feathers, spit and a strand of hair. He ate it all (not for real) hungrily with pantomime gestures. When he had finished his meal, he threw one fire blow, saluted Sandun's "personal" offering three times with the half-circle hand movements which symbolise long life (*aibowewa*), and disappeared behind the *vidiya* bringing the cock with him on his arm.

At this stage the audience was attentive; they talked loudly, obviously exited by the recent happenings. I went to look for Subasinghe and found him rather exhausted, seated on a chair

behind the *vidiya*. He said that the patient was really causing trouble tonight. When I made a point of the fact that the *disti* had turned on him, he just smiled his rough brave smile, and said that such things just happen sometimes⁷¹. I looked at Sandun, and she was sitting quietly in her bed with a thoughtful look in her eyes. Chevan and Kumara, however, continued the performance and were singing the song about the origin of the *igaha*, which also explains the way of dancing. Shiva is the creator of both dancing and the *igaha*, and therefore this song is also a remembrance of the powers belonging to this particular god. This song was followed by a *sirisipade*, a head to toe verse. Finally Sandun placed some betel leaf offerings in the *Mahasona pideni* (another name for this offering is *dolaha pideni* which means ten offerings) and gave her *disti* from her head to the basket by «wiping» her face with her hand and touching the basket. Baas moreover cut three limes that had been charmed, while he held them upon Sandun's forehead. People wished her; Aiboo, Aiboo (long live), and Baas put the basket outside the arena. Baas now purified the whole ritual arena by throwing *dumalla* on fire around.

Hatt pelle paliya; The procession of the seven offerings

Since Sandun should dance at 03:00 A.M. there was no time or need for the *Mangara Pelle paliya* tonight. In short *Mangara pelle paliya* is a parade of offerings given to *Mangara devi*, a goddess who protects *Mahasona*. In cases of *avesa* like tonight, this act was left out but the *aduras* gave offerings to this goddess, whose offering stand was in the centre of the *Mahasona vidiya*. Tonight only *Hatt pelle paliya* was performed, an act consisting of presentation of seven items with curative potential, an act which went un-noticed by most people present. Chevan carried out this offering and sung a short song about the holy cloth of goddess *Pattini* while facing the *panca messe* (the centre of the *vidiya*, *Mangara deva's* offering stand). Chevan sprinkled saffron water on the ground, showed a pot of holy earth to the *panca messe*, followed by the show of a *Tambili geddie* (king coconut), the *ulakkha geddie* (young coconut), two betel-leaves with coins and finally the vessel of firebrands to

⁷¹ Sometimes it might happen that...was a normal explanation I got for various things. i.e. sometimes he will come tomorrow!! A confusing statement for a rational time-fixated anthropologist.

the same place. For each item he saluted the *panca messe*, placed the items inside its structure and finally he danced seven short dancing combinations, one for each offering. As the reader might have recognised from Chapter 4, the *hatt pelle paliya* is an offering of the same objects that will be presented by the *ata paliyas* later in the night, with the exception of the cock.

Saudem, or Adav dance. Merit-giving dancing -combinations

Chevan now prepared for the *Avatara balima*, a trance-dance sequence where the specific *adura* who undertakes this act gets the ability to see *Mahasona's avatara* (manifestation). Simultaneously, the time had come for Sandun to get *avesa* and dance. Tonight, however, Kumara and Subasinghe used this time to perform some *saudam* dance-combinations. Since the various dancing combinations is addressed to various gods, the *saudam* is thought to give merit to those that the *adura* address the dance to. It might be instructive to know, that in Sri Lanka, one of the Buddhist merit collection rules is that one gains merit when one gives money to someone, and to give money to holy people pays even more. It is thus a common custom to give money to the temple priests when they have undertaken a prayer for someone, and it could be said that the *aduras'* *saudam* dance functions this way. To give money to the *aduras*, after their *saudam* performance is also a way for their earthly audience to show that they appreciate the aesthetical value of the performance and to communicate their appreciation for the dance. To dance the different *saudems* correctly is valued highly among the *aduras*, and to know many *saudams* is also a sign of being a good dancer.

After honouring the people they addressed this special *saudam* to, Subasinghe and Kumara sang a verse praising the god whose dancing combinations was to be performed. Thereafter they verbally uttered the rhythms of the dancing steps, and the drummers joined in when they repeated the same rhythm combination in dance. Firstly they performed Pattini *saudam* for Sandun and her parents, secondly, Vishnu *saudam* for the ladies, and finally Katarangama *saudam* for all the boys present. Tonight the *saudam* for the ladies was no good business, but they

received a notable amount of money from Sandun's father. This was also the first time since my arrival that Sandun's face showed something close to a smile.

02:55 AM. Aavatara Balima. To see Mahasona's Avatara



As I previously said, Chevan got himself dressed up to do the *avatara balima* act, the uttermost test of his courage, and the act Chevan was especially called for to perform (see picture no. 8). Subasinghe regarded himself as too old to do this, and Kumara was just not brave enough yet. This is the time when the *adura* gets the power to see *Mahasona's avatara* (manifestation) which is kept unseen for the average person present. *Avatara balima* is an act which opens up for various interpretations, but for now, I only suggest that this act's principle is that the *adura's* bodies is a kind of "*disti* container", where into they "collect" *Mahasona's disti*, and finally takes it to *porale* and "binds" it to this place. Chevan charmed the *anduna*, a mixture of soot and oil, and used it to paint his face black. He put on his long-armed black sweater, in order to avoid burning marks on his body. The *dekanu villaku* (the double sided torch) is kept in the *adura's* mouth in order to lighten up his look throughout this act. This double-sided torch had a betel leaf placed around its centre, and he put on its "mouth piece" made from young coconut leaves and red flowers. He

charmed it and incensed it with *dumalla* smoke and put the double-sided-torch into his mouth.⁷² It was fastened with a thread around his neck so it should not fall off. Sandun was again lying down, and Chevan was now finally ready to hunt *Mahasona's avatara* to *porale*, the graveyard.

The act started out by the *panca messe*. Chevan had placed his hands at the top of the *panca messe*, and stood with his feet spread out. The drummers who had for the most time been seated, stood up and started the suggestive fast drum-beat characteristic for this act only. The household's "dumalla boy" held the burning brassier under Chevan's body. Baas charmed *dumalla* and put it into the brassier, and Chevan inhaled it. The *dumalla* was smoked under his feet, which one by one started to shiver, and shortly after his whole body was shivering, working himself into trance. He kept his hands placed at the *panca messe* which now moved back and forth in accordance with his swinging bodily movements. From now on Baas would follow Chevan and say the charms on his behalf, since Chevan for now was incapable of making any utterances. Sandun meanwhile got *avesa* again. Suddenly Chevan loosened his grip on the *panca messe* and got a torch immediately placed in his hand.

Now Chevan was in trance, he had got the power to see *Mahasona's avatara* and he ran off, heading for a place behind the audience seated on the left side of the arena. As Weeraratne, once explained; "*The yaka's disti is running here and there*". It created chaos among the audience, and all the people being "threatened" fled. Suddenly Chevan fell to the ground, and while lying there, his body was stiff and shivering. Chevan got some *dumalla* in his hand and threw a fire blow at the ground beside him and some boys helped his stiff-shivering body up to vertical position again, and he started to run after the black spots of *Mahasona's avatara*. After running and falling around the ritual arena for some time, he ran into the house belonging to Sandun's aunt and Baas followed after him.

⁷² Ranijini Objeyesekere (personal communication) suggested that the *adura* used this torch in order to avoid to bite their tongue off during the state of trance. Trance locks the cheek bones, and if the thounge gets between it can be bit off.

In the meantime Subasinghe had put on Sandun a necklace created from young banana-tree leaves and flowers and had ordered her to dance but Sandun neither replied nor made any signs of getting up to follow his demands. After a while he gave up, took the necklace off and sat down again.⁷³ I had also sought protection from Chevan's «falls and throwing fire blows» actions behind the *vidiya*, and got the chance to ask Subasinghe why Sandun did not dance as promised. He explained that she just moved the upper and lower parts of her body, and that she needed to move the body as a whole in order to dance. He also told me that he did not think Sandun would be cured by this ritual, but by *yantra* only. However, they were going to finish the offerings as planned.

Inside the house Chevan was "purifying" the various rooms by throwing fire blows, by marking every entrance with the *igaha* and by cutting limes while Baas uttered the charms. They went into both Sandun's aunt's house and Sandun's own. Ajithabanda, another *adura*, told me once what happens when he performs this act: *I see the yakku, Bute and Prete dwelling in the house. I throw fire blows, and take them out of the house. I mark the entrance with the igaha and cut lime over the entrance. With the charms I deny the spirits to go inside. I think the powerful mantras that are simultaneously uttered by the mantra karaiya. Only halfly I am concious.* Chevan came outside, looked at the nice *bali* placed up against the wall and was fascinated by the image of *Mahasona*. After this he rushed up to *avesa* Sandun, and Baas cut two limes on her forehead, charmed the *igaha* and tied the *disti* with charms from her forehead to the cock with it three times. The *igaha* was left by *avesa* Sandun's body in order to protect her and in order to avoid a possible return of *Mahasona's disti*.

⁷³ If Sandun had danced, Ariyadasa would have controlled her moves with the *igaha*, made her follow it, and tried to tire her out. Some patients I viewed dancing like this, had to crawl under chairs, through the panca messe, torranas and other places. I even saw one man dancing at the top of a torrana once, and it is not exactly a safe place to dance since its structure is rather weak. After a while Ariyadasa would have stopped her, and asked if the *yaka* had danced enough and if it promised to leave her. Often the *adura* forced the demon-trance-patient to promise to keep their word to their closest relatives. After consulting the aturea-demon-trance, the *adura* would keep on the dancing if it was required until the *yakku* were pleased. He would finally cut tree limes at the patient's head, and pull a pot of water over their bodies which is a cooling act. Some patients danced down to the porale (the graveyard) and were taken out of trance down there, and one patient went to the particular place he had met *Mahasona's avatara* the first time.

Chevan was now back by the *panca messe* inside the *vidiya*, and this time he had the cock with its feet tied up, placed over his arm and a pot of *dumalla* with a handle placed over the other. He put his hands at the top of the *panca messe* and repeated the act of inhaling *dumalla* smoke in order to get back into trance. A boy put more paraffin oil on the torch in Chevan's mouth, and another boy made sure that the torch was securely fastened. Baas charmed the *dumalla* and ordered Chevan to *porale* (the graveyard). He ordered Chevan to; «*porale disti dannewa*», that is to say that he had to «give» the *disti* to *porale*, and then he ordered Chevan to return from *porale* when he had done as he was told to.

Again Chevan's body started to shiver while he contracted and stretched out his back in heavy swings, and his head moved from side to side in accordance with the drum beat. After getting into trance, he got a torch in his hand and danced up to the patient and carried out three *aibowewa* (long live) hand movements, turned and run off to *porale* in a fast speed. Some curious boys ran after him, but all that was seen from the *tovil* house-ground was his fire-light moving in the darkness. It is a common belief that the *adura* who undertakes this act does not know where the *porale* (graveyard) is, but the road was secretly marked with small decorated sticks, showing him the way down. In other words, according to at least some spectators I talked with, to find the way down to *porale* without knowing where it is, was regarded as an «impossible» act, which again paid credit to the *adura's* status as powerful healers⁷⁴. Subasinghe now followed Chevan down to *porale*, where he drew three lines on the ground with the *igaha*, and made a "*disti* stopping place" charm. *Mahasona* had to accept not to come behind these lines.

Chevan came back after only a few minutes, and he returned to a ritual arena where the excited audience was standing in a mess of fallen chairs and an almost totally destroyed *Mahasona vidiya* (it was not properly constructed tonight). Chevan was stopped before he came up to the house again, and three boys lifted him up and carried his stiff-shivering body from which the

⁷⁴ In fact this was the most discussed ritual act of them all, and all comments by others than the *adura* had to do with their authenticity as healers. That is to say, if they really had the power to «chase» the spirits to *porale* or not. One man insisted that he could perfectly well have done this himself, but when he tried to he could not. This discussion fitted well into other similar discussions regarding mantra powers.

torch, cock and *dumalla* hung down. A mat was spread out, and Chevan laid down. Baas sprinkled saffron water over his body to end the shivering, to cool his body down. The torch was wriggled out of his hand and the torch out of his mouth. Chevan screamed in pain, while his trance-locked body joints gradually loosened. Baas cut some charmed limes over his head. The boys present surrounded his mat, this was such an intense moment, and they eagerly absorbed every detail. Baas and the "dumalla boy" tried to get people away and shouted at them, and suddenly Chevan rose up with a wild look, and the curious boys fled with a laugh.

It should be noted that the *aduras* claim that to do the *Avatara balima* act is not anything they learn, but that the power is given in the charms, and further, as Rajpala told me; *It is not the state of trance, or the chasing after Mahasona's disti which is dangerous, but the fact that the aduras are out of control and can hurt themselves badly in the falls, and the fact that their teeth easily get stuck into the villaku placed in their mouths.* After this statement, he showed me his toothless mouth with a smile.

03.25 The final preta Pideni, the offering to preta

Avesa Sandun became Sandun again only after Baas had sprinkled some purifying saffron water over her body and charmed some limes which he cut. Sandun's body did not move, but her face showed great pain, and slowly she became Sandun-only again. She sat up, and the *preta pideni* (the offering basket to ghost) was taken out from the house and placed in front of her. Baas made some charms, and Sandun offered her own strand of hair to the *preta pideni*, and a thread and nail which she spat on. She wiped her face and gave the rest of *preta disti* to the basket, a suitable gift to a low spirit. People shouted Aiboo, Aiboo (long live), and the "dumalla boy" took the basket out of the ritual arena. Baas finally threw some fire blows to purify the air from *preta disti*.

03:55 A.M. Tying of yantra protection



In the *aduras'* opinion the *yakku* were too strong tonight, and the only way to finally cure Sandun, i.e. the way to stop the *yakku's disti* from causing her more trouble, was by giving her a powerful *yantra* for protection. In my interpretation this must mean that the *aduras* had purified Sandun for *disti*, but that she was in danger of getting more; her connection with *yakku* was not fully broken. Since the *yantra* was not finished yet, Subasinghe poured a protective oil into a small container and tied it around her neck, while uttering some *araksa mantra*, protective charms. This oil was given just for temporary protection. The *yantra* would be tied later.

Jayantha (drummer) now said goodbye, and left for Trincomale where he should perform at another ritual the following night. Chevan on his part fell asleep. The main part of the audience also left, and only about 30 people were holding stand.

04:00 A.M. Deraheva Depavila. The human sacrifice trick for Riri yaka

Baas now crawled inside the *deraheva*, (see picture no. 2), which is built as a traditional funeral-pyre structure, and muttered some short *mantras*, while the "dumalla boy" smoked *dumalla* over it all. This night Baas only asked *Riri yaka's* nine *avatars* to accept the offerings provided.

Normally this is a really serious act in the ritual, an act which relies on the *aduras* capability to control the *yaka* with their ritual tools, and especially the power of *mantra*. (An example of such a mantra is given in Appendix no. 3, myth no. 6). This is interpreted as the death of *Riri yaka*. Nine different offerings to the nine *Riri yaka* are placed on the top of the *deraheva*. Moreover two fireplaces are made, fireplaces whose wood is that of five different lime trees. A pot with cereals, eggs and rice is put on one fire, and on the other a pot containing five kinds of seeds. The eggs are regarded as a blood sacrifice, and together with the seeds, cereals, and rice which all contain life potential, this offering is viewed as a life-destruction offering. In contrast to the *depavila*, the *aduras* not only tie the *yaka's disti* to the cock with charms, but finally transfer it to a *pambaya*, a straw doll, which is placed inside the *deraheva* and brought to the *porale* (graveyard) to be burned.

However, today the *adura* regarded this offering as too weak to release Sandun from the *yakku's* influence, and they just made a less powerful charm during the offer to *Riri yaka*. Baas furthermore brought the *deraheva* down to the *porale*, together with the *preta pideni* and the *dolaha pideni*, all the offering baskets which were finished so far.

Summing up this passage of the rite, it engaged the most important offerings to *Mahasona* and the purification acts which removed his *disti*. The *aduras* started out with "activating" the mediating potential of the *vidiya* (the main offering structure) by attracting the *Mahasona's* glance to this place with dance, drumming, incense, the lighting of torches, whistling and songs. Then followed the offering of torches. In this act the *aduras* both offered the torches to *Mahasona*, purified the air from *disti*, and simultaneously played out a comic and entertaining performance to the earthly audience present with their jiggling torches and comic dialogue. Then followed the offering of the cock's feather, spit and hair, which were charmed and placed at ten different offering places which was especially arranged for *Mahasona*. Subasinghe, dressed himself up as *Mahasona* and simulated that *Mahasona* ate the offerings given to him. The fact that Subasinghe got *disti* himself when he carried out this act, points out that the *aduras* do not just simulate how

they imagine that these offering transactions take place, but that they also engage themselves as "disti-containers" in this process. Subasinghe's body got a dual position as both demon-controller and "disti container", and one could say that the last function took control this time. In fact this way of simulating that the *yakku* (or *preta*) feed on the offerings given, was occasionally done by patients who had got *avesa*. Therefore I suggest that this is a "habitual" sign of *yakku's* presence in one's body. The difference between an *adura* and a patient with *avesa* is not the physical expression, but the fact that the former ideally controls the *disti* without getting affected.

After the offering transactions were completed, and Mahasona's *disti* bound to the offerings in the *vidiya*, Sandun "gave" her *disti* to his offering basket, and more *disti* were bound to the cock. The *saudams* were performed in order to bring blessings to the patient and her community, and after this other purifying acts followed with *avatara balima* as the most essential act. Sandun-demon- trance was supposed to dance, and since she did not, Subasinghe held that her *disti* would be controlled by the protective force of *yantra* only. Therefore the offerings which was prepared to follow, was carried out in short version.

ALU YAMA (morning watch)

04:20 A.M. Ata Paliya, Daha-ata Sanni

Now the time had come for the famous mask drama comedy of the *Daha-ata paliya*. *Ata-paliya* is the *aduras'* enmasked manifestations of the *Ata paliyas* mentioned in the Chapter on *adura* tools. The *paliyas* are seen as manifestations of the powers of some gods whose power is transferred into the tools they bring. The *Daha-ata Sanni* is the eighteen followers of *Maha Kola Sanni yaka*, and the 18 *sannis* each represents different disorders, such as *Bute Sanni* who is the manifestation

of madness and *Amokko Sanni* of diarrhoea or stomach trouble.⁷⁵ It should be noted that even if every *adura* counts 18 *Sannis*, the names of the *sannis* differ from *adura* to *adura*.

Weeraratne once claimed that the use of the term *paliya*, which means procession, indicates that the *paliya* invites the *Sanni* to come and salutes their arrival. In contrast I myself think there is another reasonable interpretation for this order. The *paliya* arrives in order to bring cure to the patient in accordance with the potential of the objects (tools), and the power of the gods they represent. I therefore think the *paliya* is performed prior to the 18 *Sannis* just because they are superior to them according to the Buddhist pantheon. What the *paliya* and the *Sanni* have in common, is that both come to bring cure.⁷⁶ In the following I will not go into the humorous dialogue between drummer and the *paliyas/Sannis*, but pursue the potential they manifest, the idea that *paliya* has come to bring cure, and the offering transactions between the *Sannis* and Sandun.⁷⁷

Tonight's performers were Kumara and Subasinghe who had seated themselves behind the *vidiya*, in front of a mirror. The basket containing the *mono* (masks) was opened and the various costumes brought out. The *Daha-ata Sanni vidiya*, the "sanni popping out" structure, was placed in front of the *Mahasana vidiya*. The *Gotowatie* (betel-leaf offering-basket) with the fifty-four betel leaf offerings to the 18 *sannis*, (three offerings to each, symbolising the three bodily humours), was prepared and a fire stick lit. Sandun's bed was again separated from the ritual

⁷⁵ Gananath Obeyesekere (1968:198) in his article about the Sanni Demons, analyses in depth the concept of the Sanni *yakku*. The concept of Sanni comes from the Sanskrit term Sannipata, which refers to illness (delirious states or / and convulsions) caused by humoral disequilibrium in all the three bodily humours, (wind, bile and phlegm). He further states that in Mayalam (an Indian language), they classify 18 separate physical illnesses under the concept of Sanni pata. This is probably the origin of the idea of 18 Sanni *yaka*. Maha Kola Sanni is then viewed as the sanni who causes the trouble represented by the 18 Sannis. The 18 Sannis cause 18 physical disorders but through the comedy of the Daha-ata sanni their corresponding psychological symptoms are stressed as most important. Kola in Sinhala refers to coma, but today the word's connotation is more commonly ludicrous behaviour, or foolish babbling (1968:203).

⁷⁶ The *aduras* do not present everyone of these palies or sannies in the rituals. The main reason for this is, I believe, that it would take the humour out of this sequence. The *adura* would only have time to sing the kavis, and little time for the associative dialogue between the drummer and the palie or sannie which follows, the dialogue which carries the greatest entertaining value. In addition Obeyesekere (1969) suggests that the reason why the *adura* do not show all the Sannis is that some of them represent physical symptoms, and only those whose disease have a psychological aspect are made relevant in cases cured by Yak *tovil*.

⁷⁷ I refer to Kapferer 1983: Chapter 8, where he makes a brilliant analysis of the comedical dialogue that this act contains.

arena by the white cloth held up by two young boys in front of her bed. Baas held the *Gottowatie*, charmed it and placed it on a chair in front of Sandun's bed. Sandun had gathered her collection of betel-leaves and coins to be offered to the enmasked *adura* to come.

Normally the audience would grow larger when this act takes place. Often the children living nearby and others would have been woken up for this act, but today this did not happen. Nevertheless, this mask-drama act was the one with the greatest entertaining value for its human audience.

Subasinghe and Kumara both dressed up, disguised themselves as *Pandam paliya* (torch *paliya*) and started to sing the song about his origin while they put on his mask. *Pandam paliya*'s feature has huge eyes and nose, tusks, long bushy hair of straws and is dressed in a black sweater with a green and red shirt made of dyed straws. They tried out some of his movements, put on his hair, and played out his features imaged in the mirror, corrected their movements. Jingling with their legs as well, they sang and danced while seated and prepared themselves for their appearance. The song was about *Pandam paliya* and the origin of his torches, why *Devol Devaya* had sent him here, about the curative potential of his torches, and finally that *Pandam paliya* got the *varanan* (permission/ responsibility) from *Devol Devaya* to come to ritual houses in order to do "*Santi karmaya*", to bring cure. In a group interview I conducted, some *aduras* classified the songs referring to the *paliyas* as *set kavi*, as songs with curative potential.



After the verses were sung, the drum beat faster and the two *Pandam paliya* (torch *paliya*) came out from the *Mahasona vidiya*. The *Pandam paliya* is one of the *aduras'* favourites, and therefore both Subasinghe and Kumara had enmasked themselves as him tonight. The *Pandam paliyas* displayed their frightening look, held two torches in front of their face and slowly looked around; again they disappeared and after a verse they re-entered the arena. They moved faster and faster, and suddenly they stopped in front of the patient's bed and threw three fire blows directed at the curtain, which fell down. Sandun screamed, frightened by their outfit. The *adura* danced a little bit more, and finally made an *aibowewa* (long live) gesture to Sandun before they disappeared.



Sallu paliya was the next to arrive, and the song of his cloth's origin as goddess Pattini's shawl was sung. Kumara enmasked himself as *Sallu paliya* and entered the arena with his specially humorous movements. *Sallu paliya's* features are the happiest anyone could imagine. Yellow faced with a big, big smile and shaking shoulders he is not serious at all. He walked around accompanied by the drum rhythm, suddenly stopped and pointed his finger in Pieris appu' direction, and just started to laugh.... A conversation between *Sallu paliya* and the drummer followed. «*Kohedde janne*» (where are you going) is often the drummer's salutation to the enmasked *aduras* that arrive, and none of the *paliyas* nor the *Sannis* admit that this is their final place of destination. This greeting creates a moment of dialogue with the quality of a local man meeting a stranger, a wayfarer. *Sallu paliya* made a big point of having fallen in love with Baas and sang a popular love-song where a lot of words were exchanged with similar words with obscene connotations. Finally *Sallu paliya* went up to Sandun, showed her the goddess Pattini's shawl, saluted her with his shawl by making the *aibowewa* (long live) hand-movement and disappeared.



Subasinghe appeared enmasked as *Kendi paliya*, bringing with him the holy water. *Kendi paliya* is a fat old man with a stick in one hand, and the pot of holy water in the other. He walks with his bottom moving back and forth, a rather obscene entrance if I may say. Baas stopped him, and asked where he was going, and he said he was on his way to his family's home. *Kendi paliya* talked about his family's (physical) qualities, and he tried to count his children, but was unable to count properly. He came over to me noting that I had pen and paper in hand and asked me to sum up for him. Well, I could not. Baas noticed his pot of water and asked him what it was good for, and *Kendi paliya* told him he could make great spells with this water, love charms. He babbled nonsense mixed with obscene words to his pot, and stirred the water with an areca nut flower twig. Between each line recited he took the twig up to his bottom. Finally, he went up to Sandun and saluted her with his hand moving in a half-circle *aibowewa* (long live) gesture, in the name of goddess Pattini.



Then followed the show of *Kalas paliya* with her pot of holy earth, looking for her lover, and bringing cure to Sandun in the name of the earth goddess (*Polova mahi kantava*). *Tambili paliya* came next with his king coconut. He pretended to be young and beautiful, which he definitely was not, by comparing himself with a young coconut and how its features fitted his. Before he disappeared he saluted Sandun in the name of Gana deva (Ganesa). This was the end of tonight's *Ata paliya*, the three other *paliyās* were never performed.



Then followed the *Daha-ata Sanni*, and the first song sung was *Maha Kola Sanni yaka upete* (*Maha Kola Sanni yaka's* story of origin), followed by the birth story of the 18 *Sannis*. There are separate dancing steps for every *Sanni*, which is performed when they appear from behind the *Daha-ata Sanni vidiya*. They appear after the *aduras* have recited their poetry of origin, what kind of disease they represent, what offer they require in order to give up their disease and finally the name of the god, or Buddha whose power they must obey in order to bring cure to the patient.

Buthe Sanni, showing his madness, *Amokko Sanni*, showing his stomach trouble and diarrhoea, and *Bihiri Sanni*, showing his deafness now appeared. They all received a betel leaf with a small coin placed on it from Sandun, which they accepted. Sandun "wiped her face" three times and "gave "their" *disti*" back to them. In return Sandun got their blessings in the name of the different Buddha's that the specific *Sannis* obey.



The sun light was now breaking in the horizon, and the song sung announced *Veddi Sanni's* entrance⁷⁸. Sandun's view of the ritual arena was again closed by the white cloth, held up as a curtain in front of her. *Veddi Sanni*, the "modern" hunter who comes in bush camouflage (his skirt and waist coat are made of fresh green leaves), black haired and black faced with his torches in hand, is the absolute public favourite character in the *Daha-ata Sanni* as a whole. He is also the *Sanni* performing the most eventful act. *Veddi Sanni* is armed with a gun, in opposition to another similar character named *Veddha Sanni*⁷⁹. *Veddha* refers to the aboriginal bush man and as we know, the *Veddhas* hunted with bow and arrow. *Veddi Sanni*, however, and not the *Veddha Sanni* came looking for his bow and arrow, and not his gun, in the rituals I viewed. Therefore it seems that *Veddha Sanni* has just changed his name.

Kumara enmasked as *Veddi Sanni* appeared through the hole in the *Daha-ata Sanni vidiya*. Seated down in the hole, with the torches in front of his face, slowly moving his squint-eyed glance, he looked rather terrifying (see picture no. 11 &12). This glance is *Veddi Sanni's* characteristic feature. He came out of the *vidiya*, and slowly jumped four-legged across some

⁷⁸ Comparative literature (Kapferer (1983) and Obeyesekere (1969)), also mentions the appearance of Maroa Sannie, which looks quite similar to Veddi Sanni, as a character frequently performed. Maroa sanni is the harbinger of death, but in the rituals I viewed he rarely appeared. But I guess since both are harbringers of death, (Maroa Sanni of human death, and Veddi Sanni of animal's death,) they represent the same qualitative threat against wordly beings. The dialogue recorded from this act in Kapferer (1983) is similar to that of Veddi Sanni in the rituals I saw performed.

⁷⁹ Obeyesekere (1969)

young boys seated close to the arena. He stopped and met their glance, kept it for a while, and suddenly jumped up, and scared them....with a laugh. The boys jumped back. He found some other "victims", and slowly he moved himself towards Sandun's bed. The drum rhythms started again, and *Veddi Sanni* and Sandun finally met. Sandun was not happy for this meeting and while screaming in fear, with tears pouring down her cheeks, she crawled back on her bed, while *Veddi Sanni* threw three fire blows in front of her. He sat down by her side and tried to catch her eyes, but Sandun just hid herself. *Veddi Sanni* gave up at last and disappeared again.

Veddi Sanni could now be heard from behind the *vidiya*, shouting angrily, looking for his bow. He needed the bow since he was going to hunt a deer. He appeared with a bunch of leaves, walking directly up to Pieris appu who he claimed had stolen his bow. He threatened him, became more and more violent and finally he beat him with the bunch of leaves. Pieris appu got «angry», took the bunch out of *Veddi Sanni's* hands, stood up and ran after him. *Veddi Sanni* the coward ran and hid himself behind the *vidiya*, and Pieris appu sat down again. Finally *Veddi Sanni* found his bow, hunted the cock (a deer), spread out a mat and sat down in front of Sandun with the cock in his lap. He started to sing a song about how lonely this cock was in the world, as it had lost its father and mother. He clasped the cock's legs together like clapping hands, plucked lice out of the cock's feathers and his own hair and "ate" it, and he put his finger up to the cocks anus and "ate" its shit also. This was disgusting and fun at the same time. *Veddi* now apparently thought that his cock was going to sleep, and he sang a popular lullaby; "doi, doi, doi, doie baba", while he gave breast to the cock. Suddenly the cock bit his nipple and *Veddi* cried out in pain; in anger he packed the cock into a white cloth and threw it away.

Veddi Sanni now went around with a thoughtful look in his eyes, and suddenly he caught up an "imagined" telephone at the *vidiya*. His wife was on the line. A humorous monologue followed where he explained to his wife that he was busy looking for a patient, but could not find any. He hung up, and aha... he had found a big queue of potential patients, pointing to some boys standing by the arena. He joked and told that he would come to their *toviks* as well. Baas showed

him the way to Sandun (who was now laughing), and told him that this was the patient he looked for.



Veddi Sanni (with a wondering voice); Are you sick?

Sandun; Yes.

Veddi Sanni; What kind of disease are you having? Is it in your head, neck, eyes? Do you dream frightening dreams? Are you crazy?

Sandun; Ehh ...(interrupted)

Veddi Sanni; If you have any of these diseases, just leave it as it is... (and he went off).

The drum beat started again, and *Veddi Sanni* picked up the cock, Sandun gave him her betel leaf and coin offering, wiped her face and gave *disti* to the cock. *Veddi Sanni* mentioned some kinds of disease which ended in the name of Divegoro Buddha, saluted her with three Aibo hand circle movements and disappeared.

The rest of the audience present now went home.⁸⁰ Now only Sandun's house-folk were left at the arena.

⁸⁰ In fact at every ritual I viewed, the audience lost interest in the mask performance after this act and went home. For the visiting audience this was the end of the ritual performance.



Devi Sanni who is a mixture of all the *sannis*, appeared. Her mask has all the other 17 *Sanni* images surrounding "her face". She danced her special dancing steps, saluted Sandun, and the *Daha-ata Sanni* was over. Baas took the *Sanni's* offering basket (the *gottowatie*), held it in front of Sandun and charmed it. Followingly he took the *igaha* and drew three lines from head to toe over Sandun's body and struck the cock with it. He claimed tht all the various illnesses caused by the *Sannis* had ended, and Sandun wiped her face and gave her *disti* to the basket.

06:20 A.M. BALI PIDENI. The final bali offering



After this comical interlude which ended with *Veddi Sanni* and *Deva Sanni*, there was a short refreshment break and everyone except Sandun's closest relatives went home. The *Mahasona bali* (clay image) was now moved and taken up to the patient, facing her. A fire stick was lit and placed into *Mahasona's* hand. The "dumalla boy" placed small food offerings on the *bali* and tied a thread with a lime at its end, decorated with small red flowers. Pieris appu charmed some *dumalla* and incensed it with *dumalla* smoke. Subasinghe with the *igaha* in hand accompanied by Pieris appu' drum beats sung a long version of the song about *Mahasona's* origin, and next followed the *Mahasona Sirisipade*, (see Appendix no. 3, myth no. 3), the *disti* tying actions as performed earlier, and lime cutting. Sandun held the lime in her hand and smelled it. The smell of the lime is thought to contain the same purifying potential as *dumalla*, fire and saffron water, and by sniffing it the rest of *Mahasona's disti* was caught in the lime. Sandun then threw the lime on the *bali* and some rice offerings. Her attentive relatives shouted Aiboo! Aiboo! (Long live). The *bali* was removed and taken to the *porale* together with the *mal tatoe* ((flower offering basket), the *pideni* for the *Riddi Yaksini* where all the limes were kept during the ritual) and the *Gottovatie*, the offerings

for the *Daha-ata Sanni*. Baas returned and purified the house and the ritual arena, threw some fire blows and sprinkled saffron water on the ground. Sandun took the *igaha* and the lamp lit for Buddha and the guardian deities in her hand, and went into the house. It was a nice quiet round off.

At last the *Mahasana vidiya* was torn down, the ritual arena swiped, and the banana stems and leaf decorations were left outside the garden fence. In Sri Lanka there is a joke indicating that it is really messy around someone's house, ironically stating that a *tovil* must have been performed at this place. So cleaning up, it looked like a mess outside. The cock had his feet freed and got a great cereal meal (which it highly deserved), and Sandun got a charmed king coconut to drink in order to purify and cool her body. Finally a protective thread was tied around Sandun's upper arm. The *adura* dressed up in their traditional shirts and sarongs, had breakfast and one hour later we were all gone.

Comments on the Daha-ata paliya

Aduras learn to perform this mask drama by watching other *aduras* perform and by imitating their movements. It is difficult to learn how to co-ordinate the mask with hand and feet movements and to produce dialogue or songs at the same time. It takes long time and conscious training to master this in a convincing way. In Zarilli's (1990) terms, this is a mechanical learning technique, where the "embodiment" of characters lie more in special patterns of movement, and in repetition of others' comical lines, than in evoking personal emotional states and creativity. I must stress though that a performance of the *Daha-ata Sanni* with high entertaining value always breaks this restored performance by creative dialogues and surprising movements. Some *aduras*, however, rely heavily on the features of mask and costumes in their performance, with the consequence that their performance fails to trigger emotional states in their audience. As a result it becomes a rather "plain" performance.

Moreover the movements underline the songs and dialogue and the *yaka's* features, and not necessarily the illness in the patient. As Ajithabanda once said, "*There are too many different kinds of illnesses troubling the patient, so it is impossible to imitate the illness as it is during this act*". This statement underlines the point of the *Daha-ata Sanni*, which is to show the (dirty) nature of the *Sannis* and the trouble they cause, and that it is not directly a representation of the specific patient's misfortune. Another point stressed by the *aduras* is that the *Daha-ata Sanni's* potential is to please the patient and the minds of other human audiences (Scott 1993), to make them laugh. The dramaturgical method of this mask theatre is the depiction of emotions (*bhava*) which evoke *rasa*. *Rasa* is then the joyful consciousness which a spectator experiences while witnessing a dramatic performance. A great performance ideally evokes all sentiments and harmonises the body.

Kapferer (1983) emphasises the dialogue in this act as being demon-controlling in the way they are being poked fun at. The demons show themselves as stupid and weak. He further argues that on a psychological level this way of objectifying the miserable nature of the *Sannis* is important, and will finally bring cure to the patient (see Chapter 8 below). Kapferer (1983) further notes that in opposition to the other offerings these are given from the patient to the *Sanni*, and furthermore from *Sanni* to the drummer. The fact that the *Sannis* do not take the offerings, but leave them with the drummer is in his interpretation a sign that the *Sannis* now have to obey the wish of every human. They have lost their power and control. I think this is a valid complementary interpretation of the underlying humorous theme, and I also want to add the fact that the *Sannis* each salute the patient with the name of one special god who is superior to them, which indicates that the *aduras'* work as demon controllers with a warrant from gods to do this is also an important part of this act.

I agree with Kapferer in that the comedy of the *Daha-ata Sanni* has a relieving effect. One should not forget, however, that this is an offering act, where the patient offers the betel leaves to the *Sanni yaka*, in exchange for release from *disti*. Therefore it is a visual sacrifice, that is carried out and not an illusory act as suggested by Kapferer (1983). This procession is in my

interpretation, as all the enmasked performances during the ritual, intended to show the imagined process that the ritual potential refers to and its visual aspect underlines its meaning, intensifies its potential. The *aduras* play out this act, but as I have shown in the *Mahasona Mask* appearance, for the *aduras* it is not only illusions at play since the *aduras'* body contains a double potential, that of being the demon-controller, and that of being a "*disti* container".

Drawing from the assumptions above, there is in my view five important qualities which are vehicled throughout the *Daha-ata Sanni* act. Firstly, there is a curative potential connected with the principle of general "shock therapy"; by getting frightened the patient will be cured. Secondly I see an important learning potential for the less schooled *aduras*, patients and other spectators, since the song about *Kola Sanni* and his origin as well as that of the *18 Sannis*, were performed, and stressed as most important in this performance. Thirdly, I see a curative potential connected with the potency of the tools presented in the *paliya*. Fourth, there is a transactional potential where the patient gives offerings to the different *Sannis*. Finally I see an aesthetical potential building up to the theory of *rasa* and notions connected with pleasing and harmonising the mind.

I think this last potential is the most significant one in this act, but comparing this notion with Kapferer's (1983), I must agree that there is also a curative potential in the objectification of the human fear. As a dancer from Greenland whom I met on a festival once stressed, the Inuits' mask dance was played out in order to conquer human fear. She told that the Inuit performers enmasked themselves with black soot in the face and put a stick into the mouth, which created a really terrifying look. With surprising frightening movements the dancer triggered the onlookers' emotional state of fear, and by knowing this feeling, it became easier for the spectators to conquer its force. It is not too difficult so see parallels between the quality of the Inuit's practise and the *Daha-ata sannis*. In addition to the potentials I see above, one of my visiting friends, who is a psychologist and who came along to two rituals in the field, suggested that the reason why some patients were really frightened by the sight of the *Mahasona* during the mask appearance act,

could share the quality with a rape victim getting frightened by the look of the person who did the assault. Both misfortunes are for real. In my interpretation of her comment I maintain that I find it more correct to say that the patients ascribe their misfortune into this image and therefore imagine it as real, since I regard imagination as one of the potential forces of *Daha-ata Sanni*.

An analytical summary

Initially I started out with the assumption that the *aduras* have three categories of audience they play up to during the ritual performance; the *yakku*, the spectators and the patient. I also indicated that the *aduras* emphasise different things in their relation to these three. As Rajpala said in Chapter 4 *mantra* is most important for the cure of the patient and secondly comes the dance. *Mantra* and dance address the supernaturals, and from this I suggest that for the *aduras*, the supernatural audience is most important for the patient's cure. Special dancing combinations have the quality of *mantra* and address supernaturals. The three audiences defined analytically is, however, not easily separable in performance, and especially not when I say that some ritual "actions" are more or less concerned with ritual efficacy or entertainment. In order to illustrate these distinctions it might be useful to see which "roles" the different audiences got in the ritual performed for the cure of Sandun.

Firstly the *aduras'* role as mediators between *yakku* and Sandun is interesting. The *aduras* engaged the potential of their ritual tools, and mediated the offerings given from Sandun to the *yakku*. They transferred, bound, purified and cut the *disti* that was affecting Sandun's body. In some ritual acts the *adura* even used his own body as a temporary "*disti* container" before the transaction or *disti* transportation was complete. In this particular rite the *aduras* functioned as "*disti* containers" in the *depavila* acts and in the *avatara balima* and moreover in the *Mahasana*-mask-appearance act. The *aduras'* mediating role does therefore also include temporary embodiment of *disti*. To succeed in their mediating role the *aduras* strictly observed that the songs, *mantras* and special dancing combinations addressing supernaturals were done in the right way. In fact I have

seen at other rites that the *aduras* re-started songs or dancing combinations since the drummer did not play the according drum rhythm. To do things in the right way, one could say, "guarantees" a strong actualisation of the potential of their "tools". The *aduras'* actions and moves actualise the creation of a "mediating bridge" in cosmos, moreover they also actualise the transactive quality of the offerings and the transportation, purification, binding and cutting of *disti*.

The effect of the *aduras'* work also depends on their ability to communicate themselves as demon-controllers to all their audiences. Actions and moves throughout the rite give the *aduras* a lot of possibilities to communicate themselves as such. One of the *aduras'* main strengths is that their artistic repertoire includes actions which are seemingly "super-human". The speed of some *aduras* dance gives the image that they are beyond gravity, in fact I can not find words to explain how fast and complicated some of their dancing acts really are. Their torch jiggling skills are regarded as highly difficult and risky and in other rites they act like "fakirs", "eat fire" and "roll torches" over their bare skin. In the *Suniyama* rite, occasionally an entranced *adura* dances with a "jungle-machete" and destroys the ritual structures. The most apparent proof of their courage (and powers), however, is shown through the *avatara balima* act, where the *adura* fall over chairs, the bush and even, as I saw once, barbed wire fence without showing any signs of pain. (At least it seems like that for their spectators). Following the *aduras'* own statements as discussed in Chapter 3 & 4, these actions prove their courage and powers to control the *yakku*, but they are simultaneously communicating themselves as tough guys with a risky work for their spectators.

Sandun's role in this healing ritual was to place special offerings to the *yakku*, as well as to "give" her *disti* to the offering baskets or other items. She was actively involved in her own cure. Sandun was regarded as an "agent" in her demon-trance, and this fact is in general rather embarrassing for family members of *avesa* patients. I guess the "public embarrassment" is connected with the sexual associations given to the state of trance. Often patients do rather "obscene" moves towards the *aduras* or people present. For the *aduras* this can be discomforting

as well, and a funny example of this was told me by an *adura* who had been "harassed" by a female patient in demon-trance and had to crawl inside the *Suniyam vidiya* for protection. This action had created a great amusement for those present at the scene.

The spectators had one important role in the healing ritual, and that was to wish Sandun a long life after every important offering act. Often it is just the "dumalla boy" who does this, but ideally family members and others present should join in as they did this night. The people present participated as spectators and were treated as the household's guests at the site. They were, moreover "taken by" the performative "flow" of the rite more than one time throughout the night.

The *yakku* on their part, interfered with the ritual performance in a much stronger degree than the spectators and the patient. With their *disti* manifest in *avesa*, they had the opportunity to comment upon the ritual development and effect. In this case *Mahasona* showed a strong influence on Sandun. Her *avesa* agents even held that this ritual alone would not be powerful enough to cure Sandun, only the protective powers of *yantra* could. Sandun-demon-trance wanted to dance, and the consequence of the *yakku's* announcement was that some offering acts were left out and others performed in short versions. In this particular ritual *disti* also "fell" on Subasinghe in his "*Mahasona* mask appearance" act, and the *disti* was removed with charmed limes and purifying saffron water. As a consequence of this occasion, the completion of this "*Mahasona* mask appearance" act, the lime-cutting remained undone. The supernaturals are through their interference the only ones who can totally change the ritual's content and efficacy.

The discussion above gives a generalised summary of the different "roles" the three audiences had in the rite. In the following I intend to illustrate how these three audiences were engaged in a specific ritual sequence, the *depavila* act or the "human-sacrifice-trick-act". The *depavila* started out with the recitation of the song about the creation of the ritual mat. I was told that this song "originate" from the fertility rite, and that it is basically performed in order to entertain the audience in this ritual. Still this is a salutation to the *Riddi Yaksini*, the seven wives of

Kalu Kumara who were identified as one of the *yaksadosa* agents of Sandun. Then followed the "purification" of the ritual mat. This act is completed by the reciting of *mantra* verses and throwing of fire blows of *dumalla*. However, in this particular ritual, this act was elaborated into a humorous theme where the *adura* "hunted" the "dumalla boy". Here the creation of the mediating bridge from cosmos to the mat is actualised. The humorous elaboration is entirely unnecessary for ritual efficacy though and is performed in order to entertain the spectators and the patient. This act is then a typical example of an act which is both entertaining for the spectators and "mediating" between cosmos and the world of the patient. Then, the *adura* draws the "*disti*" attention to his body, "talks" (*mantra*) to the *yakku*, and "transports" the *disti* from the patient through himself and to the cock. Sometimes the spectators participate in this act and make it humorous by commenting upon the death of the *adura*, and thus reversing the "seriousness" of this part into a humorous act. Anyway, for the *adura*, the "lack" of this kind of comedy dialogue between the "dumalla boy" and the spectators as it was this night, is not regarded as a threat to the ritual efficacy. This kind of dialogue is then a typical example of how it is possible to distinguish entertaining themes from ritual efficacy. I hasten to say however, that comedy dialogues in general makes reference to the ritual theme, and that it therefore is a part of the ritual content.

I maintain that the elaboration of offering acts is in many ways up to the *aduras'* own abilities, improvisational creativity and interest in entertaining their spectators. Yet, the elaboration of ritual acts containing dance, music and drama is at the same time engaging and intensifying the actualisation of their "healing" potential. In my view the dramaturgical aspect of the *aduras'* practise in general has the quality of simulating the process which the texts articulate and through this simulation actualising its potential in a higher degree. One should note that the *aduras* never claim that a ritual fails due to a plain performance of ritual acts, it is only *mantra* and the "in-correctness" of their performance that can cause failure. According to Weeratunge the ritual offering acts are few in the *Mahasana Samayama* today, compared to the rituals he

participated in thirty years ago. This comment could indicate that there is more "space" or time within the rite to elaborate humorous themes today than before.

What I have intended to illuminate through the distinctions between the various audiences and between efficacy and entertainment, is the existence of a dialectical mode of ritual performance, that the three audiences are in a dialectic with the ritual performance through comments, participation in dialogues, phenomenological engagement and moves. By distinguishing between efficacy and entertainment I wanted to grasp the dynamics of the ritual performance show, that it is possible to elaborate offering acts or play out short versions of the same. The practise has thus space for artistic improvisation and creativity. An elaboration of an ritual act can both be entertaining and engage a stronger degree of actualisation of the ritual efficacy simultaneously. The "dramatisation" or "simulation" of the dynamics of the phenomena the rite engages (i.e. the Mahasona mask-appearance act), do in my view intensify the actualisation of the ritual potential. The short versions of an offering act, and less "actualised", is the offering engaged with the performance of the "basic" songs, mantra, and dancing steps. I intended to highlight that there is no performative end in the *Mahasona Samayama*, but that it is flexible in form, order and content. This point is essential in the discussion to follow in Chapter 8 below, to which I now will turn.

From ritual-illusion to virtuality

"A celebration of demons" reconsidered

Bruce Kapferer's work titled "A celebration of demons" (1983) has been of critical value for my studies of the *Mahasona Samayama*, especially since it contains rich empirical material. However, I find it appropriate to question Kapferer's analytical project as performed through this work. But first, a summary of Kapferer's book is necessary.

An approach to an anthropology of performance.

In his work Kapferer pursues a phenomenological approach to studies of cultural phenomena, and; *"sees all human orientations to reality as constructions"* (ibid. xviii). To acknowledge a phenomenological stance is to accept these constructions as peoples' reality; *"and taking what people do and say seriously"* (ibid. xix). The leading questions he rises elsewhere are; *"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 recognised condition of health? What is it in the performance of ritual, in the organisation 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 affects and eases the way of a patient and audience to reach an agreement that a cure has been achieved?"* (Kapferer 1979:108, in Scott 1992:305).

Due to the anthropological trend of the time, Kapferer adopts a constructionalist view on culture in order to develop his analysis. Further, his work is highly inspired by the approach of Victor Turner and his focus upon "ritual" studies rooted in theories of performance, as well as an assumption that human experience is mediated and finds its objective expression through "cultural" performances (such as rituals). As Turner argues; *"Cultures are most fully expressed in and*

made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances...A performance is a dialectic of "flow", that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and "reflexivity", in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen "in action", as they shape and explain behaviour". (Turner, quoted in Schechner and Appel 1990:1). In this way ritual is viewed as cultural models for cultural (/personal) experience put into play. In opposition to this approach to ritual one finds i.e. Fortes who sees ritual more as the handling of otherwise unmanageable powers than the communication of important cultural knowledge (Turner 1986). Turner's reading of rituals as theatre is based on the assumption that theatre traditions have historical roots in the ancient ritual practises, and what we today call artistic performances have changed its meaning and function from that of rituals by being transformed into mainly aesthetic expressions (Turner 1990:8).

An important result of this representational orientation comes to sight in Kapferer's work through his definition of the cultural phenomena with which the work of the *aduras* concerns as the creation of "illusions". The *Mahasana Samayama* is then viewed as theatre, as a staged performance of cultural idioms and an objectification of the "illusionary" quality of *yakku*. Kapferer relates the essence in the *aduras'* work to the concept of illusion and says that the *aduras* are tricksters of illusion, and through the medium of *toivils* they create and break demonic⁸¹ illusion. Due to this the different acts performed are re-representative creations or manifestations of demonic illusions and further they play up to the illusion of demonic influence in the patient. In other words, the *toivils* are read as objectification of demonic illusion, an objective quality which Kapferer, I will return to this, views as essential in the transformation of a patient from a state of demonic victim into one who is not.

Kapferer also mentions the concept of *maya* as a part of this argument. *Maya* is translated into English as illusion; however, it is difficult to determine the meaning of this term indeed. In my material there are no references to *maya*, but i.e. Sankhya, an Indian philosopher, argues that

⁸¹ David Scott (1994) has criticised the usage of the words demons, exorcism and possession as terms being translatable to *yakku*, *toivils* and Avesa. Still, for my discussion I make use of Kapferer's terminology since these are the ones used in his work (1983).

what we conceptualise as real through our perceptions, really are illusions, and further, that to acknowledge that everything are illusions is true knowledge attained. Kapferer stresses; *"that among Sinhalese Buddhists, exorcists and lay people, ideas and terms to the concept of maya are in everyday use and are not confined to the esoteric realm of theological discourse"* (ibid. 155-156). In other words, he argues that illusionary perceptions are thought of as existent, and further that these are widely acknowledged by Sri Lankans. The most essential part of this discussion is that Kapferer points to the way the demons are capable of visualising themselves in various kinds of *avatars*, manifestations, as a part of their illusion-creating potential. The *aduras'* work is thus said to be to break illusions created by *yakku*, and as he says; *"Exorcists insist that demonic victims concentrate on the purity and wisdom of the Buddha's thought and teaching, for it is through this that the illusion and disordering power of demons can be broken."* (ibid. 158). Buddha is the enlightened one, and one of his qualities is by this statement recognised as being able to see through demonic illusion. I am not capable of making any deeper argumentation of this philosophical "problem", since the philosophical work which has given critique to Sankhya (i.e. the Vedanta philosophy) that I have access to (Chatterjee & Datta 1984), are from India and related to Hinduism and not Sri Lanka and Buddhism. Therefore I have to leave Kapferer's analysis of *maya* unchallenged for now.

Illusion and cosmic hierarchy

Kapferer claims a relation between demonic illusion and the cosmic hierarchy, the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon. This relation can be illustrated by his interpretation of the phenomenon of *yaksedosa*, about which he states that; *«Human beings are subject to demonic power and the illusion of demonic control when they are disordered in themselves and in their relations. Further, human beings are deluded by the illusion of demonic power when their perception of a wider cosmic unity, its hierarchy and principles of order, is obscured or restricted"*.(ibid. 177). In other words, *yaksedosa* is in Kapferer's view representing a broken (social) order. Further he states that the healing potential of *toivils* are connected to hierarchy in the sense that; *"It is through a conscious and reflective awareness of the hierarchy of the cosmic*

order and the further principles according to which the cosmic hierarchy finds its essential unity, that the demonic illusion and the power of demons can be broken.» (Kapferer ibid. 177). That is to say that Kapferer views the overarching principles of hierarchical order as being restored through performance due to tematisation of it through the medium of *tovil* as the important "force" which breaks demonic illusion. The structure of the social hierarchy which the patient is "living within", he argues, is objectified at the site of rituals in the way that the important guests get meals first, in who get rice and curry in contrast to those who only get snacks and tea, and in how the audience is seated, (women close to the house, men at the other sides of the arena). Social hierarchy and cosmic hierarchy are in this way, viewed as inter-related and essentially important.

Kapferer is by this view verifying Dumont's theory of the hierarchical nature of social organisation (the caste system) as a "cultural ideal" which human actions work upon to preserve. He argues that the main subject in ritual myths refers to the hierarchical order. The main goal of *tovil* is then to reconstitute a cosmical order that has been interfered with. Following the Buddhist cosmological hierarchy in Sri Lanka, as described by Obeyesekere and presented in Chapter 1, Lord Buddha is on the top, followed by *deities, devatas*, humans, *yakku* and on the lowest level *buthe* and *prete*. The *yakku* and other spirits sometimes interrupt this order by paying influence upon the life of humans. The *aduras* who have got warrant from Lord Buddha and other gods to fulfil their powers, will then drive the *yakku* back into their given place. The result will be a re-establishment of the cosmic hierarchy.

Ritual order, the quality of the sequential watches

Another perspective which has influenced Kapferer's (1983) work is Van Gennep's general theory about "rites de passage" in which he argues that rituals of transitions are following a three-phased structure which is recognised as the separation, liminality and re-aggregation phases. Kapferer argues that the three watches in the *Mahasana Samayama*, the evening, midnight and morning watches are following this structure. As he says; "*Indeed, their division into the time periods of*

evening, midnight and morning watches could hardly make this more apparent. 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. 246). The re-establishment of the cosmic hierarchy is in this way viewed as being dependent on the ritual order and its three watches.

Demonic I and Me, critical qualities of self emphasised in self-transformation

Into these phases, as well as the potency of music, dance and drama, Kapferer further emphasises a psychological dynamism, based on Mead's theory of self (Kapferer 1983:276). In Mead's view the self is separable into the I and Me, which implies two qualitatively different, but still inseparable qualities of self. The I is a subjective unreflective quality of the self and the Me is an objective reflective qualitative awareness of the self. Kapferer argues that the transformational potency of the ritual is related to the way the patient through the three watches respond to the music, songs and drama which represent the demonic as well as the divine in their expressions. The first watch has mainly songs and music as its aesthetical components, and in the second watch the potential of music and song are intensified. Finally the comical interlude is the characteristic quality of the last watch. The main difference between music, song and comedy drama is that; *"Comedy, unlike music and dance, is quintessentially a reflexive form which places the objects of experience at reflective distance and, furthermore, does not restrict perspective to that which is included within it. (Kapferer 1983:327)* In other words music, song and dance are able to evoke human emotions and affect the human state of mind in a subjective unreflective way, while the comical interlude is objectifying and therefore reflexive.

In Kapferer's book then follows an analysis of the ritual in accordance with Mead's theory of the I and Me. During the first watch, the separation phase, the patient is thought to slowly be taken into the "world" of demonic illusion which the *aduras'* acts represent. In this watch the

patient is more and more losing touch with his/her reflexive me, and his/her I gets the quality of the demonic. Then in the second watch, the "demonic" in the acts of music, drama and dance intensifies. In this phase the objective contemplation of all the people present is more or less lost, and everyone is grasped by the illusionary powers of the demonic. All the people present get moved, and "experience" the powers of the demonic.

Most intense is this for the patient who has lost his/her Me, and fully experiences his/her demonic I. Finally the second watch ends with either the patient or the *adura* or both being in trance. The patient in trance embodies the demonic in its full force and the state of demon-trance has according to Kapferer this effect; *"The movement to the demon palace culturally symbolizes the transformation of the self of the patient. It is a move from the patient's house (culture ordered) to the house of the demons (nature disordered) and indicates the dominance of the consuming and potentially passionate and violent nature of the demonic in the patient. The exorcists sprinkle pure turmeric water on the patient, "cool" the patient, and touch the patient's head with the igaha. They subordinate the demonic to the order of the divine and simultaneously remove the demon from the patient's body. The patient typically collapses (all music and dance has stopped prior to this and appears to be "lifeless". In terms of the Meadian analysis I have adopted, the patient is now not even in possession of a demonic self. The demon removed is now placed in the demon palace, externalised once more, but this time placed in structure, there to wait the emergence of the deity which lies hidden within and which will destroy and fragment the unity with the demonic has momentarily achieved"* (ibid. 280-281). As I understand Kapferer in this passage is the state of trace the highest experience of a demonic I, and the acts taking place afterwards has the potency to break the demonic I of the patient fully since the demonic in its full force is controlled. The morning-watch's drama with the comical interlude of the *yakku*, and the drummers hassling is argued to contain an objectifying quality, and the patient is gradually through this watch fully cured. That is to say, s/he gets back her objective me, and when watching the *aduras* hassling with and fully controlling the *Sannis*, the patient shares a laugh with all the others present, a proof that s/he is now getting an objective

insight into the demonic I s/he experienced in the midnight watch drama, and by this s/he is cured.

The quality of food in the tovils

The last passage in Kapferer's analysis, which I find of great importance, is his recognition that the mundane and supernatural receive the same treat on ritual occasions. Kapferer argues that; *"The ritual use and social use of food at exorcisms have similar functions. In the ritual, food mediates relationships between human beings and the supernatural and is engaged in the active reordering of a cosmic hierarchy. In the social world which surrounds the exorcism performance, food mediates the social relationships of those who gather to witness the ritual events and is involved in structurally rearticulating a household into its social world. One might observe that the simultaneous ritual and social use of food points to essential parallels between the process in the ritual and the process in the surrounding social domain of an exorcism. Within the ritual events a cosmic order and its hierarchy come into being while at the periphery of these events a social world and its hierarchy is formed, defined and publicly communicated."* (Ibid. 103). Stated differently, food has in Kapferer's view a mediating quality, which creates and manifests relationships, and in this way effects the social hierarchy the patient is a part of.

Summing up

Reading the ritual efficacy of the *Yak tovil* Kapferer suggests that; *"In the context of music and dance, the exorcists restore the physical equilibrium of the patient and withdraw the essence of demonic disturbance. In the comedy, they restore a balance of mind, destroy the demonic illusion, and draw the patient back from isolation into a social world."* (Ibid. 250). In other words Kapferer emphasises the aesthetical mode of performance as being activated through the ritual's capability to reach out and affect the patient's emotional state. Further he argues that it is the passage from the patient's subjective experience to objectification of his/her demonic self that transforms a patient from a demonic I to a socially accepted healed Me.

As I understand his difficult analysis of the rite's relation to the cosmic hierarchy, the "horizontal structure" of the rite's relation to the "vertical axis" of the cosmic hierarchy affects this transformation since this in his view is the thematic of the rite. Firstly the demons, those who symbolise the broken hierarchy, are summoned, and during the midnight watch they become strongly manifested through the *aduras*' dancing, acting, singing and drumming. Then in the performative symmetry around midnight there occurs a turn in performance and the demons' powers are gradually weakened, the demons are gradually tamed and controlled. As the counter-force the powers of gods are become slowly more and more apparent. In the morning-watch the cosmic hierarchy is re-ordered, and the demons are objectified as controlled and hassled with by the *aduras*.

The social acceptance of the cure is also connected to the aesthetical mode, since music, dance and drama does not only affect the patient, but also those others present at the ritual. The quality of the ritual is then that the demonic as experienced by the patient also will be shared by the others present due to the qualities of performance which are recognised to affect emotions.

Apparent critical points in Kapferer's analysis

In the following I intend to rise some critical questions connected with Kapferer's analysis which concern ritual efficacy. The comparison will be based on ethnographic examples which does not fully fit into the model of efficacy which Kapferer sketches out. Firstly I will challenge his focus on ritual structure, secondly the potential he reads into the cosmic hierarchy as objectified throughout the rite, thirdly, the essential qualities he gives music, song and dance and lastly some analytical problems occurring from the last three questions connected to his analysis of a transformation of a "demonic I" into a non-demonic one. Lastly I intend to discuss some problems which occur in relation with reading the *toivils* as performance, and the representational bias that this theoretical perspective entails.

Ritual order interfered with;

Throughout his analysis Kapferer roots his argumentation in the ritual structure, (ritual order), and argues that it has an essential value for the patient's self transformation. Looking at my own ethnographic material there are some apparent cases which make this focus on structure of limited value. Comparing my own ritual material with Kapferer's, the tradition my *aduras* represented was that of Matara district, whereas Kapferer's *aduras* were from Galle district. As I pointed out in Chap. 2, this fact implies discussions concerning the "correctness" of ritual acts among the *aduras* today. The diversity of offering acts is read as representing separate traditions, and this has probably always been a "heated" subject of discourse.

The regional variation of ritual "traditions" also affects perceptions of "correct" ritual order. In my discussion I focused on the "innovation" of the act called *Mangara Pelle Paliya* into the *Sanni Yakuma* ritual, and the way this became a big issue for the *aduras*. This is also an act which elsewhere was suggested to "originate" from a cult for *Mangara*, a ritual practise which had disintegrated at the time of my field-research. I also said that the final *bali* offering act, which was performed in all rituals I viewed, was absent in the rituals discussed by Kapferer. The *bali* offering is thought to "originate" from a ritual called *Bali tovil* which was performed for protection in periods of "bad" planetary influence. The most essential point though, regarding the fluidity as well as innovative qualities of ritual acts, is Kapferer's (Ibid. 180) own claim that the presentation of the *Sanni demons*, the *Daha-ata Sanni* act, which according to Kapferer is viewed as essential for the ritual efficacy, were traditionally performed in another ritual called *Sanni Yakuma* and not in the *Mahasona Samayama*. In my view this fluidity makes Kapferer's focus on the ritual structure problematic, especially since his analysis depends on the ability of aesthetical components to affect emotions engaged through special offering acts, and that the order and content of these acts is essential to effect the change from what he calls a demonic I to a not-demonic Me.

Another problem which also works against his analysis is the fact that the "ideal" structure of the rite, with offerings following the pattern evening-, midnight-, and morning watch

is broken from time to time. This occurred especially in cases where the patient was *avesa* like Sandun, basically since the *yakku* themselves interfered with the rituals and declared what kind of offerings they demanded. As I have argued, the ritual performance is not a closed field of practise, but the different audience are able to break into the performance and change its development and contents. For instance in Sandun's case, Sandun-demon-trance declared that she was in need of a *yantra* to be cured, and that "her" *yakku* wanted to dance. As noted, the time for the event was declared by her, and not by the *adura*. The *aduras* on their part changed the content of the rite they had prepared for and left out or performed short versions of some offering acts in order to make time for this. When the correct time arrived, Sandun-demon-trance did not dance, and Ariyadasa declared that she would be permanently cured by the help of *yantra* protection only, and not the rite itself. Still, the purification and binding of *disti* throughout the rite was nevertheless viewed important and carried out.

In another ritual I observed, «*Mahasona*» "himself" announced that he needed a blood sacrifice (*billa*), i.e. the killing of a cock, at 5 o'clock in the morning. This offering should be carried out at the place where he had first put his look at the patient. This was the fifth offering ritual held for this particular man, and the *adura* asked *Mahasona* why the earlier rituals had failed to end his influence upon the patient as promised. The man in demon-trance then declared that the offerings had not been great enough, but if he received a *billa* (blood sacrifice), he promised to leave the patient for ever. To take a life is an action which for a Buddhist gives them the greatest loss of achieved merit on their path to Nirvana, so a "*billa*" is therefore simultaneously the most forceful offering given to the *yakku*. Ideally this should never be done, but in cases where the *yakku's* influence upon a person is as strong as here, this is considered as the last way out.

In this case the *aduras* stopped the ritual offerings after *Mahasona's* announcement, and instead of continuing the ritual offerings, they performed the *Daha-ata Sanni* for the audience in the midnight watch and not in the morning watch. This they did for entertaining purposes only,

while they were waiting for the correct time for the final offering to occur. The patient as well as the *aduras*, with the exception of the one who performed the *Daha-ata Sanni*, in fact fell asleep. When the time for the cock sacrifice occurred, the patient went into deep trance, and the chief *adura* led him to the right place. This procession was held in the dark by a demon-trance dancing man controlled by the *adura* with a cock over his arm, and a torch and an *igaha* in hand, accompanied by fast-beating drums. We were led through a coconut tree garden down to the seashore, with only glittering stars and the lantern of fishing boats as guidance to the physical break between heaven, sea and earth. When the patient arrived at the place, he got the cock in hand and bit the head of the cock. Cooling water was thrown over his body, and by these actions the ritual was completed. As this case indicates, the aesthetical mode and order of the rite was regarded as secondary in the patient's cure. Most important was the force of the offerings which the *yakku* claimed in order to give up the patient, and in this case a live cock was asked for, and offered.

In another ritual I observed, the ritual order was disturbed by *Kali Amma*, a deity whom the patient embodied. *Kali Amma* entranced the patient, and claimed that she had ended the disease, she had forced the *yakku* to leave the patient with her powers. The entranced patient then claimed that no more offerings were needed, and he verified that he was telling the truth with his hands placed on his parents heads. The *aduras* became very upset because of the god's interference with their work and decided to carry out a short version of the offerings required anyway. This was done both because they were unsure of what kind of power *Kali Amma* actually presented, whether it was really *Kali Amma's avatara* and not a "disguised" *yaka* who embodied the patient, and because of the fact that they were indignant about her interference with their work. The point which this case communicates, is that the powers of gods are regarded as superior to the *aduras'* knowledge practise, and further that godly protection is more powerful than the offerings given throughout the rite. Another point which might not be of interest for this argument, but still of relevance, is that the *aduras* on their hand got upset because of this god's

interference, since if this became a common practise by gods there would not be any need of their work anymore.

These cases show I think, that the re-establishment of the cosmic hierarchy might be the goal of the *yak tovil*, but that the ritual order, as which I have shown is flexible and from time to time broken, must be questioned as the path.

Another important objection against Kapferer's emphasis that self-transformation is rooted in the three watches, is based in the *aduras*' own explanations of the content of the watches. To me it seems that the *aduras* thought about the watches as separate sequences, as each one having an internal logic. The breaks between the four watches, that is to say around 6 and 12 o'clock both day and night, are the times when the different *yakku* are allowed by Buddha to "interfere" with the human world. In the same way specific points of time are associated with each of the specific supernaturals. In fact there were time tables available which suggested the most appropriate times for offerings to many supernaturals.

The most important point is still that some *aduras*, at one group interview I held, all agreed that the ritual watches each should ideally end with a *depavila* act, that is to say a human sacrifice trick act. Looking at the ritual performed for Sandun, the first watch ended with a *depavila*, the second with *Deraheva depavila*, and the third with a *bali pideni* (offering of the clay image). The ritual recorded by Kapferer had the same round off in the two first watches, but the morning watch ended with an act called *dekano villakuva*, and not *bali pideni*. The strong symbolism of *depavila* is death, and the *bali* symbolises the *Mahasona* himself in a *deraheva*, death bed. Comparably the *dekano villakuva* could be mistaken to be a similar act as the *avatara balima*, (to see the manifestation of *Mahasona* act), but it vehicles another potential. Scott (1994) suggests that this act should be translated as the offering of the double sided torch. The *adura* dresses up as for the *avatara balima*, but he will not get the powers to "see the *avatara*" as in the other act. They said that this was because the powers in the *mantras* uttered when they applied the black soot-oil mix around their eyes differed. However, in the *dekano villakuva* the *adura* is still a "human *disti*

container", which "collects" *disti* and brings and binds it to the graveyard, the "*disti* stopping place". Following the *aduras'* own statements they then regard the different watches as offering sequences, each being enclosed by an offering act symbolising death, and even in the break between morning and day this is an ideal offering act. This is in contrast to Kapferer's claims of the underlying principles of the three watches, which according to him have different content. The first he argues, leads the patient into the world of demonic illusion the second breaks the demonic illusion, and the third shows a restored cosmic order.

Questioning the role of Cosmic and Social hierarchy in self-transformation

The Buddhist pantheon is as I showed in Chapter 1. really important for the understanding of the *aduras'* practise, especially since it vehicles and structures cosmic power. The powers of Buddha's words and actions are still actualised in this world; also the concept of *varanan* (warrant) structures the executive power in *laukika*, this world. As I have said, Kapferer's argument is based on the idea that the phenomenon of *yaksedosa* is a "cultural expression" of the "broken" social order affecting a person. Further, the cosmic hierarchy reflects the social and political reality of the everyday world, and through the objectification of the first (cosmos) as re-ordered throughout the rite, the latter (society) will be effected as well. The support the patient receives from the community is also viewed as important, and the fact that important relatives, most often males, accept food served by the household is a way to restore the social network of the patient.

Kapferer's stress on the hierarchical structure of cosmos and social organisation contrasts with some other sayings from the *aduras* as well. Considering how the sequencing of the ritual offerings is worked out, the *aduras* argued that it was developed in order to contain the "purity" of the ritual offerings, and not in order to objectify a hierarchical structure. In fact, some *aduras* claimed that the *Daha-ata Sanni* was performed at the very end of the ritual since they regarded the *Sannis* as lower in the hierarchy than the others, i.e. *Mahasona* and *Riri yaka*. Then, as a rule, those superior to anyone must be placated first. This indicates at least that there are other

interpretations for this act than that of the objectification of a restored cosmic hierarchy, as Kapferer stresses.

Concerning the *Daha-ata Sanni* which is so important for Kapferer's argument, that is to say that the *Sannis* appear and are shown to be controlled and tamed by the drummer which is their counterpart in dialogue, I want to highlight the following. When I talked with the *aduras* about this particular act they emphasised that their dramaturgical trick was to play out the nature of the *Sannis* and the diseases they represented. They also emphasised that the offering given from the patient to the *Sanni* was important, and that this would bring cure, and emphasised the curative potential of the songs sung in this act.

Another interesting point is that some *aduras* emphasised that ideally they should have presented all the *Sannis* in this act, and that the most important part of this act was the songs, the *Sannis'* story of origin, and not the dialogue between *yaka* and patient. The only time I saw the *Daha-ata Sanni* performed in this way was at a video recorded by Young Asia television of a *Mahasona Samayama*. I talked with Sheltonmallie, the *adura* in lead of this particular ritual, and he emphasised that even though the comedy-dialogue was absent, he claimed that this was the correct performance of the *Daha-ata Sanni*, since the songs of origin and every *Sanni* "mask appearance" were performed. The comedy of the *Sannis'* movements was, however, also important here. This points out that the *aduras* themselves put an emphasis on the ritual offering as more important for the ritual efficacy than the comedy dialogue. In addition, as Scott (1994) has pointed out, the *aduras* also think that humour "pleases the mind", which is also thought of as curative by them. From this I draw the conclusion that the comedy dialogue is important in this act, but that the *aduras* themselves regard it as having a secondary role for ritual efficacy. It is, however, maintained fun and entertaining.

Qualities of aesthetic components in songs, music and dance

The emphasis Kapferer puts on the aesthetic components in the *Mahasona Samayama* is important. The qualities of aesthetic expressions to evoke sentiments are also a part of the *adurās*' training and knowledge, and as I indicated in Chapter 5. on ritual "tools", sound is thought of as mediating between the worlds, *dumalla* (incense smell) attracts and purifies *disti* and the dramaturgical training of theatre and dance are following the principles of *rasa*. Kapferer on his side emphasises the spectre of emotions evoked through performance as essentially important in his argument. From Kapferer's point of view, the patient's experience of his/her demonic self is dependent on the ritual performance and the order of acts. However, this argument about self-transformation based on aesthetic mode in performance becomes difficult when we think about minor rituals like *pidenis* which are often performed without dance and drama at all, and are still thought of as being curative. On the other hand, public shows where only dance and drama are in focus, are not thought to be curative.

Kapferer himself has not left out this problem: "*Small exorcisms do not present the nature of demonic illness...as part of the structure of their performance. Major ceremonies, in contrast, elaborately define the character of demonic attack, and fill out and outwardly objectify the nature of a patient's subjective experience as this is culturally constructed.... The process of alleviation and cure, the effect of the rite, is carried within the structure of performance itself. This is not so much the case with the minor exorcisms. Their efficacy is not validated and shown in the organisation of performance itself but rather in the nature of patient response following the performance.*" (Ibid. 82). In other words Kapferer admits that the minor rites do not vehicle the same quality as the large scale rites, that of objectifying the demonic. In order to solve this analytical problem, he gives the patient the role that *adurās* have in large scale rites, that of playing out and objectifying for others his/her demonic self, through his/her own physical responses. The main problem which occurs is that the patient him/herself is thought of as dependent on objectification of his/her demonic to be cured, and how can this objectification occur when s/he is playing the objective part?

These objections against Kapferer's focus on ritual structure, order, hierarchy and aesthetical mode also challenge the ground of the theory of subjectivication of the demonic, the collapse of the demonic and the objectification of the demonic which Kapferer pursues. I will not go so far as to say that this self process does not occur within the flow of the rite, since the aesthetical mode of the performance has both self-relieving and self-reflective qualities, but I will argue that this process can not be following the ritual order. Neither do I agree that an objectification of a broken and later a restored cosmic hierarchy mirroring and effecting the patient's own social relations, which Kapferer insist is the thematic and the effect of the rite, is the right track to explain ritual efficacy.

Limitations of performance analysis

According to the anthropology of performance, rituals are representations of reality. The ritual is in this view on-stage, that is, apart from everyday life. To study rituals through the perspective of performance creates an objective distance to the happenings "on stage". The acts are read as metaphors for, symbols of, models of another reality, terms which indicate a distance between ritual and reality. I have already pointed to the fact that Kapferer makes reference to the *aduras'* work as that of actors, as creators of demonic illusion. This makes the reader conceptualise the *aduras* as artists who play a role. Having in mind their own definition of the title of their status, *Yak Adura*, which was translated by Pertold to be; he who holds discourse with demons, or he who controls demons, it indicates an actuality in the *Yak Aduras* own perception of their work which Kapferer in this way overlooks.

The clearest example of objective distance in Kapferer's analysis is found in his comments to the *avatara balima*. As I have said, the main potential issued by the *aduras'* in this act is that of getting the power to see the manifestation of *Mahasona*, to see his shadow and "hunt" it back to the graveyard which is *Mahasona's* dwelling place. Kapferer here makes a distanced analysis and claims that the audience is those who get *Mahasona's avatara* manifested and

objectified. Kapferer holds that the *aduras* are performing an illusionist trick on their audience: "*Exorcists are concerned to present their trance behaviour as both a modelling of demonic possession and as the actual and direct experience of the exorcist who is in the role of the demonic*" (*ibid.* 270). From this he supposes that the *aduras* "become" (as an actor who creates a role) the demonic, and not actualise the most powerful potency as demon controller as the *aduras* themselves explain it.

Kapferer is not ignorant of the *aduras'* own explanations though; "*Exorcists claim that during the dance they sometime see visions of the demonic*" (*ibid.* 267). In this way he has got similar information as I got, but in the next sentence he again stresses the illusory qualities of their work and says; "*They see the illusion of the demonic and are united with its form in illusion. They receive its absolute objectification in the avatara balima, when an exorcist-dancer assumes the manifest form of the demonic illusion and, regularly presented, enters into a trance. This signs and symbolizes both the identity of the demonic with the dancer and the completion of the demonic, as illusion, by the dance itself*" (*ibid.* 267). Seen from the *aduras'* point of view, this act is not an objectification of *Mahasana* and his nature, but rather a manifestation of their own powers to control *Mahasana*. The audience does not see *Mahasana*, only the entranced *adura* is thought to do so. With the imaginary potential of humans in mind, it is also possible to view this differently. Kapferer's claim is then suggesting that the *adura's* hunt for the shadows which is kept unseen for the average present, is the manifestation of the illusory quality of the *yakku*, a manifestation which indicates that they are ghosts existent in human imagination. In my view by reading this act as illusion, and as an act as the *aduras* represent the demonic and in this way objectify their illusory qualities, Kapferer follow his own analytical constructions of the essence of the *aduras'* work rather than their own explanations which point to an experience of the embodiment of actual potency to control the demonic.

Kapferer's analysis also lacks a clarification of how the *aduras* protect themselves against the powers of the *yakku* before and throughout the ritual performance. One example of this is the passage; "*Dumalla is smoked on a brazier, and the dancers inhale the fumes. This action is explicitly made to attract the demons to their bodies*" (*ibid.* 208). This reference is from the very beginning of the *Maha*

Samayama, which is the main offering sequence for *Mahasona*. According to my own material this is at the time when the *aduras* inhale fumes, but they also recite the *araksa mantras*, which are magical words uttered in order to protect them against *yakku's disti*. Likewise, according to my own material also, *dumalla* is inhaled in order to attract the *yakku* on their body, but the *dumalla* has the quality of protecting themselves from the same. My point here is just that Kapferer in this passage lacks important reference to the *aduras'* own explanations of their ritual actions. By performing protective rites, the *aduras* show that they regard the forces they engage as for real, and that they prepare themselves for actual engagements with these. These are actions which in my view are difficult to link with a statement which claims that they prepare for a "simulated" dramaturgical creation of an "illusory" presence of demons as Kapferer would say.

Summing up

Kapferer's analytical bias is in my view basically related to his distanced language, which reads the ritual as representations and connects ritual efficacy to these. The healing potential is then viewed as sharing the qualities of that of music, song and drama, and their ability of creating an illusion of the demonic. In opposition, I find it more fruitful to focus on the *aduras'* own notions about the *yakku* as real, as "substantial" manifestations of a cosmic potential which interferes with human life. In my opinion Kapferer's analysis is limited mainly because it under-communicates the *aduras'* interpretation of the potential in the ritual acts, and their view of the efficacy of their practice. Kapferer overlooks the fact that the *aduras* bind the *yaka's* powers (as argued earlier by Scott 1994), as well as the transactive quality of food and its inter-relational quality as flow of substance. He mentions the serving of food, both to guests and spirits as one of the important tasks during the night, and in this way he touches the main essence of the ritual. He moreover stresses that the acceptance of food by the patient's community from the household is restoring the patient's broken social network. This social process he then claims to be equally important as the offerings to the *yakku* for the patient's cure. Said another way, Kapferer hold that the

restoration of the cosmic hierarchy throughout the rite mirrors the process which takes place at the social level where the hierarchy of the patient's network is objectified and restored.

In my view the hierarchical order of the Buddhist pantheon is of great importance, but mainly as one of the constituting rules of the *tovals*, and not as the means of ritual efficacy. As Scott (1994) emphasises, in the *aduras*' view the ritual efficacy is connected with that of "finally" binding the *disti*. And further in my view, if we can talk about transformational potency of the healing rituals, it is connected with the transactional qualities of the ritual offerings, the transactions mediated by the *adura* between *yaka* and patient.

I have argued that an analytical model which relies on a specific ritual order must be questioned since the ritual offerings' content and order differ from ritual to ritual in accordance with what kind of offerings that are required in order to bring cure. I have also shown that the ritual order from time to time is broken. I will not argue against Kapferer's notions about the potential given in music and dance to evoke different emotional states, and that the comical interlude in the *Mahasona Samayama* shares the quality of theatre in general, which is reflexive. These are qualities found in the ritual practise which I acknowledge. Thus, in my view the aesthetics of the ritual performance engages and intensifies the actualisation of the potential of the offering acts, and therefore also the potency of ritual efficacy. In Kapferer's analysis, the problems occur when he emphasises the three watches, the reordering of cosmic hierarchy, reflected through the ritual acts, the objectification of the demonic and the mirroring of the patient's social world and that of the cosmic hierarchy as being of main relevance for ritual efficacy. Especially the role of the *Daha-ata Sanni* as the "objectified" restored hierarchy is difficult to accept since it is as himself notes "an invention" into the *Mahasona Samayama*, and since the *aduras* stress the offerings and songs as the main content and effect of this act. In other words, his analysis does not accord to the fluidity within the knowledge practise which the *aduras* preserve, and in my view the ideal analytical model for a ritual practise should be able to include cultural variation and change.

An approach to ritual virtuality

It should be noted that Kapferer himself later modified his (earlier) analytical point of view; "I should note that in my earlier ethnography of demon rites I perhaps did not stress enough the power of the demonic possession but overstressed its constructed and representational aspect" (Kapferer 1997:177). In his latest book "The feast of the sorcerer" (1997) he has thus changed focus from rituals as representational media of culture, into a focus upon rituals as separate cultural practises which engage a reality and dynamics of its own.⁸² In his view a ritual is "autothetic" or self justifying, and an activity which refers to itself. The potency of the rite is then that of changing peoples' orientation to their lived reality, and this process takes place within the rite. I stress that this work concerns sorcery and related cultural phenomena, and not *yaksedosa*. The dynamics of the rite he refers to, the *Suniyama*, is not uncomplicated to transfer to the *toivils*. The nature of sorcery is in his view socially constituted and a manifestation of the potency of "intentional consciousness". "Intentional consciousness" is by him understood as the basis of which human beings constitute their realities. Furthermore; "*Sorcery is the force that springs against the enclosing and protective orders of hierarchy*" (1997: xiv).

The title of his work is very instructive. One could briefly say that the title; "The feast of the sorcerer", refers to his analysis of the quality of the sacrifice, which he sees as constitutional for social hierarchy (and power) as well as cosmic hierarchy. The powers of sacrifice is in his view the main force of the *Suniyama* rite. The social hierarchy of the "victim" is mirrored in the cosmic one, and a crack in the former can be reconstituted through an engagement of sacrifice to the latter.

Further, the subtitle "Practises of consciousness and power", refers to three important general social theories of human being and society. The first word, practise, points to his adaptation of Bourdieu's theory of knowledge and practise. Bourdieu holds that practises have

⁸² The following is drawn from Kapferer (1997), but also from a lecture held by him at Moesgård, Århus, Denmark in October 1997.

their own field of operation (doxa) and that peoples' acceptance and internalisation of this knowledge (habitus) influence action. Based on this theory, Kapferer holds that the *aduras'* own knowledge-practise is interesting in itself, and that rituals are embedding human experiences. He therefore uses the *aduras'* knowledge-practise throughout this work as a theory of human consciousness, and of dynamics in social interaction. His anthropological ideal is then that anthropology should rather be concerned with the answers that the anthropologist's informants give to important questions of being in the world and learn from them, rather than reproducing other scholars' general theories of related cultural phenomena.

The second word, consciousness, points to an influence from phenomenology; Castoriadis who discusses the imaginary constitution of reality, and further Husserl who argues that human consciousness is directed into the world, and that intentionality thus is fundamental to consciousness. Consciousness is then viewed as a quality which emerges in relation to something in dialogue with others. The human imagination has both a destructive and a constructive effect upon a human body and its social worlds.

The third word is power, which refers to an influence from Foucault, and Kapferer's acceptance of Foucault's claims that social worlds are constituted by the forces and strategies of power and knowledge. Based on these theoretical directions, which firstly direct a focus upon cultural practises, secondly, on the social dynamics of power, and thirdly, on the force of human intentional imagination, he claims that the anti-sorcery rite, the *Suniyama*, is not a model for Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. In contrast the *Suniyama* is a rite which engages the force of cultural phenomena which constitute humans within their lived realities, and then especially the dynamics of state, which are boundaries constituted by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and social hierarchy of power.

Kapferer, furthermore, makes a distinction between virtuality, actuality and reality. Ritual is here read as "virtual", "actuality" is when people get confronted with and actively deal with life, and "reality" is our lived world. The main difference between these three, is that the ritual

virtuality is relieved from the forces of time and place, and is directed, predictable and repeatable. The second term actuality, is when people actively deals with their own life, the dynamics of personal agency. The third term reality is the complex web of un-controllable and un-predictable social dynamics which works upon and penetrates one's life. The rite in itself is virtual reality, a virtual reality because it is separated from the social dynamics outside of the rite. The virtual nature of the rite refers to an engagement of multi-sensorial qualities, evokement of sentiments like touch, smell, taste, look and sound. The "victim" is intentionally directed into the rite, and gets his imaginary potency engaged by the performance of texts, dance, incense, offerings and other ritual actions. Through the rite s/he is slowly brought to a place which "re-generates" his/her life forces. The ritual dynamics is in Kapferer's view thus "reversing" the destructive force of sorcery, and the ritual itself in performance generates this dynamics. The *Suniyama* rite itself is then empowering a "primordial slowing down" of the dynamics of the "actual" world. The destruction of wealth (sacrifice) and other actions which are said to contain "life generating potency" is carried out, and the result is that the patient in the end will be "re-oriented" to his/her lived reality. This happens through a process moving from non self recognition to self recognition which re-generates the life force of the patient. The ritual texts and actions refer to the dynamics and potency of the rite itself, and not to the world outside. Furthermore, the ritual dynamics is directed to the centre of itself, to the heart of the rite. This centre is in the Suniyama a structure (*atamangala*) simulating the "passage" between world and cosmos. It is made in *yantra* design and has *mantra* inscriptions on its ground. The patient is slowly taken to this place, which is a "space" of "pure possibility" and "life generating" forces.

Kapferer's analytical focus has thus changed from that of rituals' representational quality, into a view of the "intentional potency" given in the content of the ritual acts and the dynamics of the rite. The qualities of the dynamics in the ritual development he illuminate is very similar to Turner's emphasis on the reflective quality of rituals in general. The qualities he sees in the *Suniyama* rite is a primordial slowing down, which is reflective, and through this "imaginary"

process, the patient will be re-oriented to the world when the ritual is over, and actuality begins. I also note that what Kapferer distinguishes as virtuality versus actuality is similar to Turner's general distinction between *communitas/societas* which refers to the "world of the rite" as separated from the "normal world".

The "Feast of the Sorcerer" is really interesting reading, but I have to leave out deeper descriptions and analysis of this work for now. One question which can not be ignored though, is how these notions can be useful in the analysis of the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual. As you might have noticed already, my analytical perspective do not differ too much from Kapferer's new one. I have adopted a phenomenological stance to the work of the *aduras*, and hold that the phenomenon in focus is a constitution of human world, and not a "cultural construction". The distinction between these terms might not be easily apparent, but in my understanding, "cultural constructions" is an instrumental and mechanical term which claims objective knowledge of culture. Moreover is it hegemonic in the sense that everything which can be "constructed" seemingly can be de-constructed and manipulated with. In contrast the term constitution of human lifeworlds, emphasises cultural dynamics and phenomena as they are engaged and lived within their lifeworlds (or *doxa*). It is a term which rather focuses on the phenomenological qualities engaged, the locus of life, rather than physical or discursive expressions. Secondly, I have adopted a practise and knowledge perspective, a perspective which will be deepened in the next part of this thesis. Moreover, as I pointed to in the introductory lines to the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual, I do not regard the *Mahasona Samayama* as a sacrifice, but as a rite which is concerned with transactions between the supernatural agents of misfortune and the patient. The main difference between our perspectives is Kapferer's focus upon social hierarchy and power, and the social aspects and dynamics of the rite. In contrast, I am concerned with the *aduras'* own reflections about and creation of ritual dynamics.

Kapferer's analytical distinction between virtuality, actuality and reality is in my view not easily transferable to the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual. The problem to me is not so much the terms

in themselves as the way Kapferer handles the virtuality of the rite as a closed field whose dynamics is not in dialogue with its enclosing environment (its audiences), but passively engaged while the *aduras'* do their work. I do adopt, however, the general meaning of virtuality which is multi-sensorial stimulation, since this is a concept the *aduras* themselves stressed as qualities in their work. Again the difference of analytical perspective is shown important. With my analysis I am not so interested in how the ritual is different or similar to other sorts of social dynamics. What I am illuminating is the phenomenological qualities the rite engages, and how its actualisation differs in accordance with people's habitus and degree of involvement. Hence actuality is for me a term which refers to a particular person's (or crowd's) engagement of a sign and not as something distinguished from reality or virtuality.

My reference to Peirce, and his phenomenological categories has not been discussed earlier in this thesis; however, it has been an underlying theme. For instance is my usage of the terms "potential" and "actualisation" highly inspired by his theoretical frames. The last sequence of this thesis intends to go into Peirce's semiotics. In the section to follow I will explore the thesis that an actualisation of a ritual potential is highly dependent on the habitus of various audiences, and I claim that Peirce's semiotics is useful in order to illuminate this point.

Part 3

People's habitus and actualisation of ritual potential

In the following I leave the issue of healing rituals and follow the *yak aduras* into another important field of occupation, that of performing «traditional art dancing-shows». The dance acts performed for shows are the very same as those found in the knowledge-practise that the *aduras* preserve. Hence traditional art shows are ritual acts transported into the commercial art industry. I will argue that this transportation of ritual dancing acts into a context of «pure» entertainment affects the actualisation of the potential of ritual acts. I will further argue that the shows' focus upon communication of the acts' entertaining and aesthetic value turns back on the *toivils* themselves and colours the audience defined as «spectators» throughout the *toivils*. The audiences knowledge, expectations, and experience of the ritual process are important when related to what the ritual actually effects. The analysis of this process will be based on C.S. Peirce's Semiotics, his theory of the phenomenological quality of signs. I will argue that his theory reflects this process, since it grasps the dynamics of how people are predispositioned and habituated (through cultural dialogue) into every cultural phenomenon. Habits as a quality of human beings affect actualisation of the potential of the ritual acts in performance. In other words, I will argue that there exists a dialogue between the performers and their audience, supernatural or mundane, in every performance which pays impact upon the performative development and actualisation of its potential. Furthermore I argue that peoples' habits are the determining quality which effects peoples' verbal and bodily communication with and response to the performance at play.

The following chapters pursue four different subjects which all relate to my claim; Chapter 9 tries to contextualise the *aduras'* occupation as performers and preservers of traditional art, and the political interests which affect this status. In Chapter 10 I will shortly present Peirce's semiotics and suggest that his theory is suitable to grasp the complexity of «cultural meaning» in

ritual and show, and how peoples' habits are essential in relation to what ritual acts actualise of their potential. In Chapter 11 I will argue that the *yak aduras'* work as preservers of «traditional art» pays influence upon ritual performance. This argument will be illuminated by analysis of a ritual where the ritual performance aggregated "pure entertainment" for the spectators present. Finally in Chapter 12 I will follow the *aduras* into a traditional art show, and ask if the ritual acts or the ritual tools in the *aduras* knowledge-practise, change their potency in the transportation into this new context?

Daha-ata Sanni; the «traditional-rituals» and performative art



Cultural traditions and nationalism

Anthropologists have for a long time been interested in what is called a revitalisation process of traditional art, or rituals. It is a kind of cultural bricolage where performances have been taken out of their «natural» context and designed to fit to new ones, and followingly the «meaning» that the performances are vehicles of has changed in accordance with its new created purpose. I will emphasise that cultural practises are in a constant dialogue with cultural processes and that there will never be any static repetitive field of cultural performances. It is just the ability of adapting to (social) development within culture which makes the institutions of cultural performances long-lived. An important implication of this argumentation is that peoples' interpretation of performance and on the other side, what the performance effects, are dependent on the situated context of performance. The literature which discusses these cultural processes often links the «traditionalisation of cultural performances» to national identity, or constitution of ethnic identity among specific groups. In this process objects, knowledge, practises or cultural performances are typically stressed as «different» from those of the group perceived as «the other», and are

therefore chosen and emphasised as «summary symbols» representing the particular group. (See Eidheim 1971, Barth 1969, Boissevain 1992).

In Sri Lanka, the Yak Adura's practise has in the same way been a part of the Sinhalese project of nationalism, a process which has been active after the period of British colonial rule. It is argued that the rise of conflict between the two ethnic groups, Tamils and Sinhalese, created a need for those who claimed superiority, the Sinhalese, to build their national ethnic identity. The dancing traditions, both low-country and up-country, fitted the Sinhalese image since the performers were speakers of Sinhala, the religion they preserved was Buddhism and the rituals they performed were an old Sri Lankan practise. (Kapferer 1997). Therefore the *yak aduras* knowledge-practise, which is a marginal and regional Buddhist practise, was viewed as an important part of the Sinhalese cultural heritage, and further as something the Sinhalese could refer to in order to legitimise their claims for ethnic superiority on the island. The issue of the construction process of a Sinhalese ethnic identity will not be discussed in this thesis however. What I intend to focus on, is the fact that some of the people I met during fieldwork, viewed the *yak aduras'* practise as old fashioned «folk belief», as a part of the Sinhalese cultural heritage, their traditional art. In the following I will present some cultural institutions and practises which communicate this view.

A historical note on Sri Lankan performative art

The performing arts in Sri Lanka find its offspring in the ritual healing-traditions and temple festivals, practises which the *aduras* occupy. Before this century, there is a lack of other artistically practises than the ones connected with ritual. According to Ranjini Obeyesekere, Sarachandra (1966) claims in his study of Sinhalese theatre that; "*Buddhism, because it was anti ritualistic, largely non-congregational, and had hardly any prescribed ritual for lay life, gave little scope for the growth of theatre. But early Buddhist missionaries realising the mass need for external or supernatural supports to cope with the*

vicissitudes of daily life, allowed folk rituals to exist side by side with Buddhism" (Ranjini Obeyesekere 1990:118).

The national religion, Buddhism and its ritual practises, is in this view thought to limit the growth of theatre. Still, cultural performances for mere entertaining purposes are not a new idea in Sri Lanka. In another work Ranjini Obeyesekere notes; *«What is interesting, however, is that although Theravada Buddhism gave little official support to theatrical or performative arts and made no attempt to develop even a didactic religious drama, the lively tradition of dramatic performance in the folk religion, closely tied to exorcistic rituals and propitiation rites for gods and demons, existed and flourished. Beginning as comic interludes and impromptu dialogues interspersed between masked dances, they later took on a life of their own and became masked dance-dramas of secular nature. These dance-dramas, called kolam, consisted of a loosely structured array of characters drawn from the socio-cultural world of everyday reality»* (R.Obeyesekere 1992:128). In other words the Koalam theatre plays are probably the first seed to the development of public theatre and shows like the ones venued in contemporary Sri Lanka. The Koalam theatre was created by *aduras* and is still a part of the heritage of some *adura* communities. These plays among others showing local characters as policemen and English ladies, were performed with the main purpose of entertainment. The village of Mirissa is said to be the centre for the Koalam tradition and this village is close to where I lived. Even thus close, I could not during my stay find any Koalam masks (characters) in play. The only ones I found there, were painted, wood-carved faces at the local museum.

As Ranjini Obeyesekere (1992) discusses in her article, today one finds both local productions of secular theatre, films and television-dramas easily available everywhere on the island, except in war zone of the northern peninsula. Easily recognised in these performances are the *yak aduras'* dramaturgical techniques, so their work has had great influence upon artistic development. In my own material, an illustrating example of this dramaturgical influence is a local circus show I came across, where a clown entered the arena imitating the walking pattern of Tambili Paliya, (two steps forth and his bum moved forth and back, two steps forth...) followed

by the common «a stranger passes by» context for comedy dialogue with «word games» as one finds in the "Daha-ata Sanni". The commercial entertainment industry has made its impasse, gained high popularity and has probably come to stay, and a part of this industry is the *yak aduras'* performances of public shows staging traditional dance. Before we get to this, however, let us have a look at the political interests which influence their work.

The ministry of cultural affairs

The political interest in the *yak aduras'* practise is as far I can see, two sided. On the one hand the Ministry of Cultural affairs shows an interest for preserving the "traditional art" for the future generations. On the other hand politicians or political parties hire the *aduras* to perform at various occasions, as a part of their political strategy. The first point will be discussed in the passage to follow and the second point in the last part of this chapter.

The traditional arts in Sri Lanka, are, as noted in Chapter 4 roughly divided into low-country and up-country traditions, where the former refers to the dancing tradition preserved in the southern coastal regions of Sri Lanka, and the latter to the hilly central region. The tradition that the *aduras* represent is the low-country tradition. Further the dancing traditions were distinguished as lache-dance and tandu-dance, the feminine and masculine aspect of the art. However, both traditions are regarded as an important cultural heritage for the Sinhalese as a separate ethnic group. Since the "low-country" tradition is the one which is central in the ritual work of *aduras* I will leave out the "up-country" tradition in the discussion to follow.

One institution created as a result of the government's interest in preserving the traditional dancing art, is the *Kallayatane*, the dancing schools, which are to be found all over the country. (The number in 1997 had passed 800.) A lot of the *aduras* I got to know, and their relatives (both male and female), had been in connection with the dancing schools as teachers. In order to run a dancing school one needs a formal certificate from the government and this certificate is only given to those who know the traditional dances "correctly". This is not enough

however. To become a dancing teacher one also needs an introduction into the syllabus which counts for the national primary and secondary schools. In other words, traditional arts is now one of the subjects in schools, and kids are free to choose training in the traditional art if they like.

Another institution which celebrates traditional arts, is the occasional dancing-competition arranged by the government. The separate sections in contest are classified according to the dancing acts performed in the rituals, as well as acts performed at temple festivals. Several of my informants had been participating in such contests, i.e. Ranatunga, was awarded the best dancer performing the *Vadige patuna* (Telegu-people chapter from the *Suniyama*) dance in Sri Lanka in 1993. *Vadige patuna* is regarded as a very difficult dance, and it is one of the most essential dance-acts performed in the *Suniyama* ritual. As for him this honour of perfection in the art of dance, led to a great feast in his home village when he returned. From the government he received a diploma and medal which he put at the shelf in his living-room. Ranatunga was already then acknowledged as a great artist, and this award only manifested what «everyone else» already knew.

The government also gives a small pension gift to *aduras*, (to those who are recommended by the governments district agents), when they reach the age of 50 years. In 1997 the amount given was 10.000 RS. This amount is only given once. In comparison a garment factory job gives 2000 RS a month, whereas a famous *adura* can earn 10.000 RS a month. An interesting point is that the «pension» is only given to those who have shown special talents in performing traditional art. This indicates that it is only those who are well skilled in dancing who can get this «pension», which again excludes the main part of practising *aduras*, i.e. those skilled in drumming or *mantra*. In my view the government's policy, in this way, elegantly under-communicates the healing practise, to which the dancing art relates.

Dancers of the National State ensemble

The Ministry of Cultural affairs also promotes their own state ensemble of dancers, and during fieldwork I met two persons who had been a part of this troupe. I think these cases are illustrative of their engagement with and reflections about their work as national dancers, so I will let these cases just speak for themselves.

Ajithabanda is an *adura*, well acknowledged for his dancing skills, who was attached to the Ministry of Cultural affairs. His (deceased) father was also formerly a well known *adura* from Weligama, and among other things he performed a dancing show in Galle as early as in 1966 for a Russian boat crew. This was the first dancing show Ajithabanda could remember being performed. His father was also honoured with a medal for his skills, by the early president Bandarnaike who had come across a ritual he performed in the 1950s. Ajithabanda himself had passed the dancing teacher test and could use the formal title *Kallayatane hipati*. He had also gone on tour to Japan in 1985, as a part of the state-ensemble. Later Ajithabanda had trouble finding a way to live on the governmental funding, and today his income is based on his work as a fisherman and on ritual work. He gave the impression of having been really disappointed by the governmental policy. He told that they still called for him in order to perform on Television shows, or important national ceremonies, but they never offered him any money for his job, not even for the bus ticket. Why should he work for free? The fame he got through such shows was of no use for him.

Mahattea had also formerly been employed as a dancer in the state ensemble. He got this job because at this time a friend of his was an influential politician, and recommended him for the job. He's job was to represent this troupe during an European dancing tour arranged in the year of 1966. His mother did not want him to go, for the same reason that she rejected him to perform as an *adura*. Mahattea felt his life passed by without giving him any chances to realise his dreams, and just left without telling his family. They got to know after some days though, but then it was too late for them to avoid his departure, Mahattea was already happily in London. It must have been the most exiting time of his life, and it was a subject he continually returned to.

They had performed shows in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, England and France, had been «on the road» for almost three months. When Mahattea returned to Sri Lanka, his father had passed away, and again his mother urged him to find a job as a clerk, to give up his dancing career. Unfortunately his friend lost his political influence at the same time, and Mahattea felt that he had to follow his mother's wishes. The main problem for my assistant, as so many others in Sri Lanka at this time, was the way governmental employees depended on persons above themselves in the political system. If the person above oneself lost his power, everyone underneath lost their jobs as well. The new political party, regarded the people they replaced as a threat to their gained position, and among other strategies, elimination of central opposition politicians was regarded as an effective method to prevent prospective opposition.⁸³ People, political opinion and power were equally, inseparably mirrored. Afterwards Mahattea frequently performed on local tourist shows, and at the last page of their program folders, it is printed; Dancing groups are available TO VISIT ABROAD.

"Daha-ata Sanni" as the traditional art

The State ensemble most frequently perform at public occasions in Sri Lanka, but as shown, they also frequently visit other places. Some years back the *aduras* performed shows for tourists, both "fake rituals" and staged shows. By "fake rituals" I refer to the rituals performed for show, with a fake patient. I did not come across such rituals myself, and I must admit that I think that this would have been really interesting cases for comparison. The only «fake ritual» I viewed parts of was a television program made by Dina Al Jondi at the Young Asia Television. It was a documentary about Shelton mallie, an *adura* from Weligama and his work. In talks with me he himself claimed that this ritual was carried out "correctly", he had even shown all the eighteen *Sannis*. The eighteen *Sannis* are as far as I know rarely shown in full in «real» rituals, but to show all of them, is still emphasised as correct. When I talked with Ranatunga who also participated in

⁸³ Thanks to Film director Vashanta Obeyesekera for making me aware of the former and prevailing political situation in Sri Lanka, by showing me his film; Death at the doorstep, and the following discussion.

the program, he told me that this performance was just a show, that the patient had not been suffering from *yaksedosa* at all. So shows for various occasions were occasionally performed. Due to the civil war, tourists are today a scarce resource, so during my fieldwork such «fake rituals» were rarely performed. There are also other people which have benefited from the *aduras'* art, and which have organised commercial traditional show tours abroad.

Most commonly though, the *aduras* who are not connected with the national dancing troupe are performing public traditional art shows, the "Daha-ata Sanni". This title on the shows are so commonly used, that it has inspired an author of a book about palm leaf manuscripts (Sirancee Gunawardana 1997:199) to use this term as a reference to the *tovil* named *Sanni Yakuma*, and not to a separate offering act as it actually is. The frequency of the "Daha-ata Sanni" performances, I will argue, have led to a further change in peoples' reference to this term. In a local newspaper D.B.Kappagoda claimed that the comical episodes of the rituals have no bearing on the ritual theme. They were just separate acts of entertainment. In other words, the ritual practise is by some Sri Lankans strongly associated with show and entertainment, and I will argue that the «traditional art» aspect of the *aduras'* work has been integrated into peoples conception of the ritual practise, so that it colours their experience of it when they for one reason or another comes across a ritual.

Another important example of the communication of the *aduras'* work as «the traditional art», I found in the state dance ensemble's program made for a Indian visit (tour) in 1997. The folder informs that the up-country dance was created to a ritual performed for a former Kandyan king. This ritual was the Kohombakankariya ceremony which is known as an anti-sorcery ritual. It further states that the low country dance style developed from many different rituals for exorcisms and fertility cults. The information written is maybe not so interesting as the use of past tense in the presentation. An example is; «As in the case of most countries which had very ancient civilizations, Sri Lanka too had a variety of rituals which claimed to control the great forces of nature. These rituals were performed to invoke the blessings of deities for protection against or cure from illness.» (My

emphasis). In my interpretation these lines illustrates the *aduras'* practise as cultural heritage, as a remembrance of the past, and not as a prevalent ritual practise as it is. With these illustrative examples the "traditional" aspect of the *adura's* work is hopefully cleared out for the reader, and in the next chapter I will turn to a theory which I will use tentatively in order to suggest how this complementary field of operation effect upon the *tovils*.

Summary

In this chapter I have sought to illustrate the content of a complementary field of "modus operandi" of the knowledge-practise of the *aduras*. I have indicated that the *aduras'* knowledge-practise today is a part of the Sinhalese "cultural tradition", and that their art is taught at dancing schools and performed for secular purposes. Yet, I can not underestimate the importance of the link between the prevalent nation-building processes and the political engagement of the Buddhist sangha (order of priests) in this process as essential for the development of public performances. My own fieldwork was too short to clarify the dynamism and the complexity of social factors which have been engaged in this process. However, I guess that the elaboration of perahera processions at temple festivals, and other sorts of public celebrations, could be a part of the cultural dynamisms which has been engaged in the development of the "Daha-ata sannii" shows as I found them. The crossing interests of politics and religion among the Sinhalese will furthermore create the setting for a public show discussed in Chapter 12 below. Nonetheless, the topic of discussed here, does not concern with the wider cultural dynamics, but with dialectical modes of performance, habitus and actualisation of the potential of the ritual acts.

The Semiotics of Peirce

A phenomenological and pragmatic approach to the field of knowledge and experience.

Through this thesis I have referred to the potential of the various ritual "tools" adopted by *aduras* as having specific effects; the *dumalla* has a potential of purification, the *mantras* a potential of «binding *disti*», the *sirisipade* a potential to end various categories of illnesses, the artistic performance to entertain, and to empower the ritual actions as well the potential to please the patient's mind, and so forth. This is the more specific potential engaged throughout the ritual acts. My notion about the actualisation of this potential throughout the ritual performance is a lot more complicated though. The various Interpretants of the ritual acts are engaged differently throughout the ritual, and the *aduras* themselves distinguish between three categories of audiences; the supernaturals, the patient and the spectators. Since I am not a patient, nor an *adura* or a supernatural, my only source to the actualisation of the ritual potential is what became apparent to me as manifested substantially or imaginably through the artistic mode of ritual performance. Still I have access to the *aduras'* own articulation of their experience of the ritual development and the phenomena they engage. Moreover in cases where the supernaturals manifest themselves, as with Sandun-demon-trance, the supernaturals sometimes comment upon the actualisation of the potential of offering-acts; they tell whether they are pleased with the ritual performance, its offerings and so forth. What these examples illustrate, is the dialogical quality of the ritual performance.

My general usage of the terms "potential" and "actualisation" has, however, a strong reference to the semiotics of Peirce. In accordance with his theory of the signs, potential refers to the phenomenological quality of the Peircian first, and by "actualisation" of this potential I refer

to the engagement of a sign within the ritual performance. Furthermore, by various "degrees" and modes of actualisation, I refer to whether the sign is engaged as a phenomenological first (as pure potential, similarity), second (actual engagement, contiguity) or third (reflexive engagement, convention). With the discussion to follow below I intend to elaborate the meaning of these phenomenological qualities which Peirce recognises, and outline a vocabulary for the analysis to follow in the next chapters. In these chapters I will rise the thesis that the actualisation of the complex potential recognised in the ritual «tools» and acts is closely linked with the habitus of its audiences, the habitus of the interpreters of a performance. In my opinion, Peirces' theory of semiotics is suitable in order to demonstrate the dialogic qualities of the aduras' performances since his theory includes an understanding of the complexity of interpretations and effects which is produced by a particular phenomenon in general.

My most important orientation into this theory is Valentine Daniel's book; *Fluid Signs* (1987), where he by the use of Peirce elaborates his informants' notions about three qualitatively different levels of knowledge. Also Milton Singer has made some important notes on Peirce's semiotics in his «Man's glassy essence» (1984), a work which deals with the inspiration Peirce (and on the other hand Saussure) has paid upon the various directions of anthropological theory. In he following I will draw from both these works. In addition to these two authors, I will draw on Csordas' book «The sacred self» (1994) which essentially argues that embodied imagery as well as peoples' habits affects bodily experience. It also affects self-transformation, as in Csordas' case focuses on healing performed by Christian charismatic healers.

Peirce's theory of signs is a pragmatial approach to the understanding of cultural phenomena, meaning and experience. Peirce was clearly inspired by the work of Descartes, and his own are more or less a replication of the «truths» issued by him. One result of this is that Peirce argues against the Cartesian view of the conception of truth as an intuition, against Descartes' famous «enlightenment»; «I think therefore I am». In stead he claims that the experience of truth is nothing else than a moment when a reasoning reaches its logical

conclusion. Further, Peirce has a pragmatical orientation to the world of humans, and for him there does not exist any transcendental ego as Descartes claims, but only an empirical ego who is pragmatically oriented into the world. (Singer 1984:47).

By this, Peirce positioned himself as a pragmatist, and provides that the constitution of knowledge, consciousness of being, has a pragmatic aspect. It is through a constant dialogue with signs that people make and unmake their realities, and people themselves and language (both as signs) are an important part of this process. More specifically, Peirce claimed that human communication are rooted in the triadic sign, and in its structure one finds the most elementary dialogue, the sign that understands its Object. «*Nothing is an object which is not signifiable; nothing is a sign which is not interpretable as signifying some object, and nothing is an interpretant that does not interpret something as signifying an object*» (Peirce quoted in Daniel 1987:15). In other words, Peirce's Semiotics provide that a sign has a triadic structure; sign, Object and Interpretant. In opposition to this conceptualisation of signs, Saussure (and his semiology) claims that signs have a dyadic relation between sign and signifier, and this sign relation is always held by convention. The apparent difference between these models is thus that according to Saussure, a sign is always a sign of convention, while Peirce argues that some signs in culture and nature are signs of contiguity or signs of similarity as well, not only a sign of convention as Saussure claims.

Singer (1984:5) claims that the main difference between these scholars is that when Peirce showed interest in language and nature, Saussure on his hand was only concerned about language. Singer further traces two directions in anthropology which find its inspiration by each of these scholars. He finds; «*The Semiological anthropologist as interested in the description and analysis of cultural symbol systems, - totemism, myths, rituals, ceremonies, kinship terms- as cognitive systems, abstracted from their ethnographic context of social relations and individual action and feeling. The Semiotic anthropologist, on the other hand, may be interested in the study of the same symbol systems but would like to anchor that study in an ethnographic context of interpersonal relations and individual emotions and activity.*» (Ibid. :6). The first direction is the structural orientation to culture, represented by scholars such as Levi Strauss and

Leach, and on the other hand a behaviourist or interactional orientation to culture represented by i.e. G.H. Mead and C.Geertz. Semiotics has influenced upon the Phenomenological direction to the field, authors like Daniel (1987), Kapferer (1997) and Csordas (1994). Semiology on its part has been an important inspiration for cognitive anthropology; Quinn, Goodenough and Block.⁸⁴

What both directions have in common though, is that they both pursue a pragmatic approach to the study of culture, that the study of culture can be carried out by a recognition of its pragmatic, syntactic and semantic aspects. Still, according to Singer, semiotics gains advantage over semiology since semiotics are not bound to linguistic codes only, but to empirical Objects which again open up to various kinds of interpretations. To Peirce, language is only one of many conventional signs, while for Saussure it is the only one. However, even if Peirce's model is more «naturalistic» than Saussure's model, it is still a pragmatic model, which regard language as the source of recognition of the phenomenological qualities of signs in general. Therefore Peirce's theory, are most suitable for analysis of narratives, or statements in general, as the source of deeper understanding of the phenomenon in focus.

As I said, according to Peirce the sign has tripartite structure, Sign or Representamen, Object and Interpretant. One example which illustrates this tripartite structure could be the Object «*Mahasona*», who appears to someone in his *avatara*, the dog (Representamen). The Interpretant is the person who this Representamen appears to, an Interpreter who knows the link between a dog and *Mahasona*. As Daniel says; «*For a sign to function as a sign, there must be present in it all three correlative functions. Objects may exist in the universe as individual empiricities of existent facts, but they do not become real unless they are represented by a sign, which representation is interpreted as such by an interpretant. This process of signification is as real in nature as it is in culture.*» (Daniel 1987:19). The three aspects of a sign is triadic and one Object can "belong" to many Representamens and Interpretants, Interpretants to many Objects and so forth. I.e., before I heard about *Mahasona* at

⁸⁴ All these three are represented in Borofsky (1994).

all, and his relation with a dog, I would never as an Interpretant have linked these two together. This is the sign's dialectical mode, or stated differently, the sign only a vehicle of meaning in its dialogue with other signs.

In order to avoid that this tripartite sign structure ends up in an endless chain of "nonsense", Peirce maintain that signs through dialogue get a «habituated» signification. Habits are the conventional perception of signs, what people «unconsciously» accept as their true meaning. In order to bring this understanding forth, Daniel states; *«By appreciating Peirce's concepts of belief and doubt, we can arrive at an understanding of his concept of habit. «Man is a bundle of habits»... Belief is habits become conscious... Becoming conscious of habits is a distinctively human attribute, making reflection, and even critical self-reflection possible».* (Ibid. :24-25). Habits are then viewed as what constitute culture, *«culture are regnant and generative signs of habits»* (Ibid. 24), a set of habits shared by a group of people by convention. Further; *"Peirce's concept of habit is that of self-analysing and self-correcting disposition to act in a certain way under given circumstances and motivations. A habit is for him (Peirce) the final or logical interpretant of a sign and as such, gives Peirce's theory of sign an essentially pragmatic dimension. The making and remaking of habits, subject to self-control through muscular effort and acts of imagination constitute the chief means of the formation and growth of the self»* (Singer 1984:159) In other words, habits are peoples' imagery, their embodied experience, knowledge and interpretation of a sign, and habits predispositions action.

Both Csordas (1994), Daniel (1987) and Singer (1984) note the similarity between Peirce's notion of habits and Bourdieu's term habitus. In general Bourdieu's meaning of the term is that habitus is a shared field of knowledge which predispositions an agreement of behaviour within an environment, a practise, or an interaction field held by a social group. Bourdieu further argues that the accessibility of a habitus is socially limited and constituted by class relationships, and as a consequence of this he called the social actors' habitus, their cultural capital. Bourdieu, moreover, distinguishes between the "opus operatum" of a cultural practise and its "modus operandi", where the "opus operatum" is the "objective knowledge" (theory) and "modus operandi" its field

of operation. Habitus is the generating principle which intermediates these. Bourdieu also delimits a conception of a "deeper structure", a state of the body, which affects habitus. This is the "practical belief", doxa. *«Practical belief is not a state of mind, still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines (beliefs), but rather a state of the body. Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned, the preverbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense.»* (Bourdieu 68:1990). The distinction between habitus and doxa is not easy to illustrate, but in my interpretation doxa is an aspect of habitus, the internalisation of a habitus of a field of knowledge and practise. Doxa and habitus can be more or less shared within a social group, in accordance with its more or less elaborated field of reference or practise.

Linking the general theories of Peirce and Bourdieu together gives in my view a suitable analytical framework for the leading questions raised in this part of the thesis. Peirce is concerned with the phenomenological qualities engaged in human lifeworlds and Bourdieu offers a framework for the studies of cultural practises. Both agree that a cultural phenomenon is generated by the principle of habitus. What I find interesting with Peirce in particular, however, is his phenomenological qualities, and the next sequence is a presentation of these.

Phenomenological qualities: first, second and third

Peirce classifies signs as Icon, Index and Symbol and argues that sign (Representamen) is related to its Object by similarity (Icon), contiguity (Index) or convention (Symbols). These three categories of signs further represent three phenomenological qualities, Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. *«Firstness designates that category of pure quality or even a pure quantitative possibility considered in abstraction from everything else, and whereas Secondness represents sheer existence, brute fact, or actuality. Thirdness is that gentle force that mediates First and Second, bringing them into significant relationship. Habit represents Thirdness almost to perfection.»* (Daniel 1987:27). Said in another way, in Peirces view there is nothing like a hermeneutically sealed sign, only trafficking signs which are only brought into

consciousness through conscious reflection (Ibid. :29). In other words, signs make sense by mental association in phenomenological Third, while in their First and Second the meaning of the signs are direct, or embodied imagery (doxa) if you like.

Representamen, Object and Interpretant further vehicle three relative First, Second and Thirds which Peirce classified. These categories both refer to the phenomenological qualities of signs and to the ways the Representamen, Object and Interpretant are interrelated. The relative first of the Representamen, Peirce call a Qualisign, which «*is a sign whose representative quality lies in its quality*» i.e. *mantra* sounds which share the quality with the supernaturals in its pure potential. The Representamen's relative Second is called a Sinsign, which refers to the case where a sign becomes an inter-related part of a greater whole. i.e. a *mantra* uttered at a ritual. At last its relative third is classified as a Legisign, a sign which invokes convention, i.e. a book with written *mantras*.

The relative first of the Object is called Icon, which is a sign where the Object and its Representamen share some quality. In Sri Lanka the masks of the various *yakku* are an example of an Icon in the sense that the Object (mask) is similar to their Representamen, a vehicle of similar potency. For a Christian the cross is an Icon for the crucifixion of Jesus. Index is the name given to the Object's relative second. As Daniel notes; «*it is a sign in which resemblance or shared quality does not define the relationship between object and the Representamen, but, instead, contiguity or concurrence defines their significant link.*» (Ibid. :34). The mask becomes an (Iconical-) Index when it is used in performance since the mask processes contiguity with the potency of the phenomenon of the spirit that it represents. Symbol on its part is recognised as the Object's relative third, and the Object is linked to its Representmen by convention only. An important example of a Symbol is for Peirce languages, but following our example a *Sanni* mask in a Norwegian museum would be a Symbol since it is placed into a context where mere convention gives meaning to the Object.

The Interpretant could, according to Peirce, be any interpreter of nature. Nonetheless, in this analysis I am only concerned with humans as interpreters. The Interpretant is as a relative first a sign of possibility, and this quality of the Interpretant is given the name Rheme. «*A rheme is*

pure interpretive potentiality whose very appropriateness is not determined until it is actualised in use, in a context, in an instant..» (Ibid. :35) The main attribute of the Rheme, since it is undifferentiated, is that one can not recognise it as true or false. I suggest that embodied experience of *avesa*, demon trance, falls into this category of Interpretants in that it is an undifferentiated embodied experience of the *yakku* in its first in its pure potency. Distinguished from the Rheme is the Interpretants relative second, the Dicent sign, a sign of fact. This is a sign which can be understood as true or false. As I understand this Interpretant, it must be the experience of being in the actual world, in active engagement with one's environment. Throughout the healing rituals a person who interferes with the ritual development through actions, response, verbal utterances and so forth interprets the Object and its Representamen by brute fact, Secondness. Finally, the relative third of the Interpretant is the Argument. The Argument establishes the truth as truth and it is the true nature of belief. The argument are the interpreter who engages reflexive awareness into a sign. My whole thesis which is an argument, (by convention,) engages you as an interpreter in Thirdness.

Peirce's phenomenological qualities of signs are in this way differentiating the qualitatively different relations a Representamen has with its Object and Interpretant. This is a reference to how the potential the sign is a vehicle of affect the human body. This potential effect is strongest in Firstness where the Representamen shares the potential of what it represents, and the Interpretant is engaged by reflex in its appropriateness. In Secondness the tripartite sign is in need of other sign relations to activate its potential and is engaged by brute fact or , and finally the conventional sign, recognised as a phenomenological third engage a mental association of the Interpretant which reflects over the sign's potential as experienced in its first and second. The interpretive third corresponds with Bourdieu's notions on habitus, the discursive field of practise.

Summary

A summary of Peirce's theory is now needed. Peirce's Semiotics is a theory of the constitution of reality, the constitution of reasonable thought. It is a theory which makes clear that signs are subject to variation, depending upon the context in which they occur. Peirce provides that reality is nothing more or less than signs which engaged by convention, (as a third) by its factuality (as a second) and its pure potential (as a first) create the reality within which people live. The quality recognised within the traffic of signs is the dynamics which reflects the meaning and experience articulated within the world of sign semiosis. The openness to worldly and cultural development of Peirce's model is in my view what makes it interesting, even if its dynamical nature is far too abstract and complex to follow in depth. According to this model what I present through this text is also just a conventional Symbol of reality, a performance of the habits of social anthropology. Still Peirce argues that the phenomenological qualities of signs can be recognised in reality: *«My view is that there are three modes of being, and I hold that we can directly observe them in elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way. They are the being of positive qualitative possibility, the being of actual fact, and the being of law that will govern the future»* (Peirce in *ibid.* :239).

An apparent problem with the analysis to follow, is how to conceptualise the way the ritual practise effects the interpenetrating substances in *laukika*, and moreover, how the force in the teachings of Buddha's works. An engagement of these qualities vehicles the potency to intermediate between all beings in all kinds of worlds. This knowledge makes every ritual act (discussed here as a *Representamen*) as performed in any context, into acts which vehicle an Indexical relation with the potency of the principles of cosmology and religion (the *Object*) that it shares quality with. To avoid this "problem" I will treat Buddhism and Cosmic conceptions as the "doxa" in the analysis to follow, the "practical belief" which I do not question.

Leela, a sorcery victim. A comparative case

In the comparative case to follow, I intend to discuss how peoples' habituated imagery effects their experience of the *Mahasona Samayama* ritual. The discussion will be based on the fact that, first, the *aduras* play up to three different audiences, second, that these audiences have a capability to break into the performance and enter into actual dialogue with its development. In other words, I intend to illuminate how the *Mahasona* ritual actualises various degrees of its complex potential in various ritual contexts. In Sandun's ritual, discussed in Chapter 7, the illness was highly factual since she had *avesa* and the *aduras* had to negotiate with Sandun- demon-trance throughout the ritual. This intensified the actualisation of the *aduras'* potential as demon controllers, this particular quality of their role became substantial and not only simulated. Comparably, in the following case, I will show how the *aduras'* entertaining skills are displayed into its most brilliant way.

The *Mahasona Samayama* took place in Alutgama a village located in Ratnapura area, for a woman, let us call her Leela. The *aturea*, Leela, was primarily suffering from *yaksedosa*, but her body and house were told to be under the influence of *preta* (ghost) and *bahirewas* (earth spirits) as well. When I asked Leela what had happened to her she said that she had been troubled with headache and bellyache for many years. Her suffering started 15 years ago, after they moved into their house which was located some distance away from her home village, yet close to her husband's gem mine and paddy field. She told that she had never felt comfortable in her new home. Leela further explained that she had experienced temporary memory loss and for some time she felt extremely shy when she met others. In one period she had not even recognised nor talked to close relatives. This behaviour pattern is indicative of *pretas* (ghost), and the influence of

pretas made her drift in the forest for hours, deny to wash herself and to eat. Leela herself thought that her misfortune was caused by sorcery, that someone had made a spell to their land before they moved in. She also suspected a particular person to have served her food «spiced» with charmed oil five years ago, since her suffering increased in this period.

Leela's husband was a wealthy man, and Leela's family turned out to be rather influential in the district as politicians and members of the local Lions club, and as Kapferer (1997) points out, the fear of sorcery's powers is strong among the wealthy ones. In Leela's case she and her husband had moved into a new house in a neighbouring village, some distance away from her and his relatives' place. Kapferer (1997) maintain that the concept of sorcery is related to the powers of social dynamism of inclusion and exclusion. By adopting his argument to Leela's case, one could say that she had crossed a physical as well as an imagined social community border, invaded the village community from outside. As a consequence she had to negotiate with her new co.-villagers in order to become included in her new community. As her case indicates, it might be that the exclusion force of sorcery had obstructed her attempt. Most possible though is it that she had failed to be socially accepted in her new village, that she had not been integrated in this village community. To sum up, one could say that Leela's suffering were caused by sorcery, but on the other side of the coin it could have been caused by the lack of acceptance from her village community.

In order to recover, she had tried Western- and ayurvedic- medicine treatment, but none released her pain. She only "got heat in the body". One year ago, she had a *Preta Pideni*, a ghost offering ritual, performed for her, but it had failed to bring cure. Nonetheless, she thought that *preta* and *yakku* were the agents of her illness, and she claimed that the *aduras* who performed the *pideni* for her, had not carried out the offerings "correctly". For the performance of the coming ritual then, she had called for *aduras* from Akkurogoda, a village in the Matara district. The *aduras* were recommended from her brother's son in law, who came from Akkurogoda himself. The *aduras* who performed the following ritual were all *bereva* (drummer caste). Leela's misfortune was

diagnosed as caused by sorcery,⁸⁵ but the curse had led to *yaksadosa*, and had to be healed as such⁸⁶.

I came to Leela's house in the evening some hours before the *Mahasana Samayama* ritual started. I was informed that during the night before, the *aduras* had finished offerings to *bahirewas* and *preta*, and made a protective *yantra*, an *araksa yantra*. The *yantra* should be tied the following morning. At midday they had made small offerings (*pideni*) to *Ira Modum Riri Yaka*. These former offerings indicates that Leela's *yaka* trouble was complex, and that the offerings included in the *Mahasana Samayama* were not complete enough to end Leela's connection with all her troubling *yaksadosa* agents.

An "absent" audience considered

The decisive factor for my claims about Leela as someone who had failed to get integrated in the local community, was the lack of community support given to her ritual. In most rituals I went to many neighbours appeared, relatives and friends who gave a helping hand in the ritual preparations. Some people paid visits in the midday, brought gifts to the household and lots of people joined after the ritual had started in the evening. For Leela's ritual, this was not the case.

As I have shown in Chap 7, also Sandun's household lacked their community's support at her ritual, and her fathers furiously directed at his sons' absence was related to this fact; on this day he was in need of their assistance indeed. In Sandun's case, the almost total absence of a human audience at the performance of the *Ira Modum Samayama* was striking, and as I pointed out, there were only some boys from the neighbourhood who showed up to the *Mahasana*

⁸⁵ The *adura* who made the diagnosis had charmed and dugged four limes in the ground, one for each corner of the houseland. Then after some time he had taken them up, and cut them. Two out of four limes were then rotten inside. This is an indexical sign of sorcery.

⁸⁶ The healing crew consisted of Ratnasiri, a Mantra chari who had made the diagnosis and was in lead of the ritual, two drummers, Degayu and Jaiyaneris, Podi banda mantra karayia and Ranatunga, Ariyapala and Piyatunga, *aduras* who are specialised in dancing, singing and acting were called in to perform. As mentioned all the performers were from Akkurugoda, and belonging to the drummer caste (*bereva*). In contrast the healing crew of Subasinghe in Sandun's case belonged to different castes. Nonetheless, the rituals performed for Sandun and Leela represent, according to the *aduras'* own distinctions, the same regional healing tradition, the Matara tradition.

Samayama ritual. Women and children stayed absent apart from those who belonged to Sandun's household. In contrast Leela's relatives, which were living in a neighbouring village, gave a helping hand in the ritual preparations. Even visiting relatives from Colombo showed up who had come to give their support. In the evening the crowd exceeded 60 people, but still this was very few compared with rituals with great support. Rites which can summon up to 200-400 people.

At Sandun's ritual, the lack of support from neighbouring women and children were, as I have said, caused by their fright of attracting the *yaka's disti* themselves. Especially women were thought of as taking a higher risk than men, since their sex is associated with *killi*, the polluting substance, which make them ritually more impure than men. The female *killi* substance is thought to be especially attractive for *yakku*. The reason why Leela's ritual lacked neighbouring support was not given these connotations. Since *yaksedosa* and the ritual practise in general is regarded as "polluting", and since my impression is that people in Ratnapura not commonly have a chance to join such social gatherings, the reason why they stayed absent could also have been caused by fear just as in Sandun's case. It should also be said that all of the members of the household, which I talked to, were convinced that Leela was only a little bit distressed. They claimed that she was her own agent of misfortune. Nevertheless, they supported her desire of having a ritual performed. So in this way a third reason for the absence of neighbours could be the wish of Leela's own household to leave the neighbours out.

Mahasona Samayama, a comparison of ritual content

In the following I want to illuminate the main differences which occurred in the performance of *Mahasona Samayama* for Leela compared with one for Sandun. This is done with the intention of giving a final illustration of the difficulty of relying on the *tovil's* ritual order in a model of self-transformation as Kapferer (1983) does. The time schedule for the offering acts performed were as follows;

SANDUN

05.40 Preta Pideni

Sandayama (evening watch)

06:25 Seating of the patient

07:15 Suniyam vidhya pideni

07:25 Hende Pideni

11:40 Padure kavi

00:00 *Mahasona*, Riri Yaka and Suniyam

Depavila

Maha te

Maduyama (midnight watch)

01:00 Maha Samayama;

Mahasona kapakarannawa

Pandam pade

Pollulto pideni

Mahasona Mask appearance

Igaha pade

Hatt Paliya

Saudem

02:55 Avatara Balima

03:25 Preta Pideni

03:55 Yantra Protection tying

04:00 Deraheva Depavila

Aluyama (morning watch)

04:20 Ata Paliya

Daha-ata Sanni

06.20 *Mahasona* Bali Pideni

Tying of protective thread

LEELA

Sandayama (evening watch)

06:05 Puja (offering) to guardian gods and Lord Buddha.

06:15 Seating of the patient

06:30 Suniyam vidhya pideni

06:45 Hende pideni

09:55 Riri Yaka Depavila

Maduyama (midnight watch)

10:55 Maha Samayama;

Mahasona kapakarannawa

Pandam pade

Polluto pideni

Mahasona Mask appearance

Dekano villakku pideni

Igaha pade

Maha te (tea break)

Saudem, Adav dances

Hatt Paliya

Mangara Pelle Paliya

03:20 Deraheva Depavila

04:05 Avatara Balima

Aluyama (morning watch)

04:50 Ata Paliya

Daha-ata Sanni

06:35 Dekano villakku pideni

Mahasona Bali pideni

Tying of protective Yantra, and thread.

The offering acts performed in Sandun and Leela's *Mahasona Samayama* differed in various ways.

Thus, most apparent is the difference in the time schedule which Kapferer (1983) makes so

important in his analysis, and the order of ritual offering acts. An important difference between the two rituals is the performance of *Mangara Pelle Paliya* in Leela's ritual which was left out in the ritual performed for Sandun. According to Kapferer this ritual act is one of the most elaborated «episodes which creates the everyday in the comic». This is in Kapferer's interpretation the act which creates the "illusion" of that the god's power strengthens and gradually "drives back" the forces of the demonic through the comedy of the "everyday". An important note on this act, which I will return to later, is that it was performed without entertaining effect in the ritual for Leela, as it often is. Moreover, the *Maha-te*, the great tea break, was served just before the *Maha-samayama* started in Sandun's ritual, and before the *Saudem* in Leela's ritual. According to Kapferer *Maha te* is held when the midnight watch, which according to him symbolises the death of *Mahasona*, was ended. He argues; «*The break is highly significant, for while the comedy of the previous episodes created the everyday in the comic, the break actualizes the contexts of the everyday*» (Kapferer 1983:204). According to Kapferer the drama of the *Sannis* creates the illusions that they are controlled and tamed by the everyday, but as shown this break which he makes so significant as the manifestation of the everyday, does not always appear at times of the rite where this interpretation of the break could be valid. In my view these examples again point to the difficulty of relying on the very structure of the rite as a model of self-transformation as Kapferer (1983) does, since ritual acts, content, elaboration and their timing differ in every performance.

The force of habits, actualisation of ritual potential

Bringing the comparison between Sandun and Leela's rituals further, the attention Sandun got as a patient, was totally absent in Leela's case. In fact she was not taken care of by any of her households members, but was seated alone at her bed during the whole performance. The household had one ritual assistant, but he did not do his job properly. For instance the fire sticks in the offerings were not supplied with paraffin oil, he forgot to shout *Aiboo..(long live)*, and Leela was not hidden behind the white curtain in *Mahasona's* mask appearance and at other

essential times during the ritual. In other words, the assistant and the audience present showed that they lacked the habituation into the ritual practise which the audience at Sandun's ritual clearly had. They did not know their roles.

An important feature of Leela's ritual was a camera crew who taped the whole ritual. The camera crew had been hired by Leela's husband, with the intention of selling the tape later to a television company, and in this way earn some money on Leela's cure. I myself had brought along two visiting friends who video taped this ritual as well. The camera crew(s) presence created a special context for the ritual performed in various ways. In particular this coloured the dancing. The *aduras* really showed their dancing art skills, as they performed for show. The people present on their part expressed their fondness of the *aduras'* performance with applause. This was a response only given in one other ritual I viewed, in a ritual where a camera team was present as well. As a comparison I also experienced some boys being sanctioned by the household when they clapped their hands in accordance with the drum rhythm in another ritual I witnessed. They were not allowed to "participate" in the ritual in this way. The applause given on Leela's ritual could therefore on the one hand be interpreted as that the presence of a camera team indicated a general performance focused attention up to the ritual practise, on the other hand the camera team could have triggered this response from the audience. Still, the first suggestion finds strongest evidence considering the fact that the same household one month later was the main sponsors and promoters of a public «Daha-ata Sanni» show in Awissawella.

I could have gone into depth of the ritual acts and the attention and response of the spectators but in order to keep my argument short, I will generalise and say that the household was only interested in those parts of the ritual which had an entertaining value to them. The audience paid attention to the first part of the ritual, to the dancing acts in the Hende Pideni. On their part the *aduras* themselves used all their potency to impress the audience with the aesthetics of their art. Half way into the midnight watch the main part of the audience had just disappeared, for then to return in the morning to view the *Daha-ata Sanni*. In other words, the house-folks did

not pay specific attention to the acts where *disti* binding and sacrifices are of greatest risk for the patient and the *aduras*. These are the sequences that people who are habituated into the knowledge field of the ritual practise gave their greatest attention to.

Following Peirce the ritual dynamics can be said to operate in both Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. I argue that the ritual acts as Representamen ideally vehicle an Iconic-Indexical relation with its Object. An Iconical-Indexical relation points to the quality of a strong actualisation of the cosmic forces engaged throughout the ritual. Apparently, throughout the ritual performed for Leela, the *aduras'* role as mediators between the *yakku* and patient was successful, the offering transactions were complete. In their own view this was so due to the correctness of their work and due to the fact that Leela claimed to have been cured. Still, it seems that the recognition of the resemblance between the «aesthetical transaction» and the «virtual transaction», the potency of the rite which the *aduras engage* through their performance, for people present at Leela's ritual was lost. The response shown by the audience, and the doubt they verbally expressed, indicate that the ritual acts became interpreted by convention (third) and not by its factuality (second), that the sign vehicled the phenomenological quality of an Argument, and not a Decent sign, or a Rheme. The actualised potential of ritual acts was for the spectators only the engagement of its aesthetical qualities, and not the forces that the *aduras* mediate.

At Sandun's ritual the ritual acts vehicled Iconic-Indexical qualities as well, the *yakku's* potential became actualised by brute fact (secondness) in its highest degree due to Sandun-demon-trance, and in the way *Mahasona* made Subasinghe crawl around on the ground. Subasinghe-demon-trance and Sandun-demon-trance as Interpretants were engaged in the phenomenological quality of a Rheme due to their embodied experience of the *yakku's* force in pure potentiality, in a "state" of undifferentiated similarity with the Object, Representamen and Interpretant. For the people present, who, to use Bourdieu's terms, were predispositioned, or habituated into the doxa of the practise, the quality of the Interpretant was that of Decent sign, due to the brute factuality of the *yakku's* appearance as substantial manifestations in Sandun's and

Subasinghe's bodies. In general, at Sandun's ritual, the ritual acts as signs were vehicles of the *yakkus* potential to a greater degree than their potential to effect entertaining and aesthetical experience. The main interpretation vehicled by the acts had the phenomenological quality of a Decent sign. Interesting though was that at Leela's ritual the *Mangara Pelle Paliya*, which is a parade, a show of royal emblems, did not actualise its entertaining potential due to a plain performance from the *adura*. So both peoples predispositions and imagery, as well as the *aduras* performative skills effect the entertaining potential triggered in the ritual acts.

In other words, I will argue that peoples' predispositions, or embodied imagery if you like (Csordas 1994), acts directly up to peoples' experience of the ritual acts. This is an experience which again becomes expressed and put into direct dialogue with the ritual performance and may effect the ritual development itself, the triggering of its manifestational potential. The people present at Leela's ritual showed great interest for the aesthetical quality of the *aduras'* practice. They even promoted a show with the same *aduras* one month later. In other words, they were clearly inspired by the art tradition label which follows the profession, and their response became directed by the knowledge of shows and not of *tovil* rituals since the first interpretation accorded with their habits.

What I have tried to say, is that peoples field of knowledge, the public dialogue which they as human signs is a part of, effects peoples' imaginations, their doxa which is their predispositioned direction of their conception and experience of cultural phenomena. Some signs act directly up to emotion, as with music and a successful dramatical performance which evoke the spectators' sentiments, *rasa*. The reason of thought which in dialogue creates a verbal sign who refers to this particular experience is socially created and internalised as truth. The fact that some families were more troubled than others, that all the patients I met had seen or had rituals performed before and in this way had direct access to this field of knowledge points to this conclusion. Another point which underscores this argument is that there are Christians who claim to be «possessed» by the Buddhist guardian gods, such as Katarangama (Stirrat 1992). For a

Sinhala Buddhist a possession by this god would have been a sign of devotion and not of demonic influence as it is in these cases. Stirrat's study is highly interesting; it indicates that the engagement of the sign of «possession» in the Catholic church gives another interpretation to and actualisation of a similar embodied phenomenon. So in a way I hold that the potency of human and nature is the pure possibility of human lifeworlds, and that the engagement of these possibilities is effected within cultural practises of manifold nature.

«Daha-ata Sanni», Awissawella pansela, Ratnapura.

Buddhism, politics and show

Introducing the «Daha-ata Sanni» show here is in a way to end this thesis where my fieldwork ended. The fact that this was my last meeting with some *aduras*, led me to view this show as an important case to write about. The loss of their voices forced me into giving answers of my own. Anyhow it really was an interesting as well as entertaining farewell with the *aduras'* «world», and the "Daha-ata Sanni" shows definitely deserves some notations. However, before I get to the "farewell show" in Awissawella, comparative shows will be presented.



The first "Daha-ata Sanni" show I viewed took place in Kekkenedura (Matara district) only a few weeks after my arrival in the field. I had put out a rumour about my interest in the *yak aduras'* practise, and a friend thought that a show to be venued would be interesting for me, and

so it was. My friend had bought tickets in advance, but only a minority of the audience had done so. At least there were no ticket conductors around. Anyhow, still fair looking with a local government agent attaché, I got a first row seat, and the man who showed us the way turned out to be the man in charge of this show. He told that he had promoted shows for several years, and this time had engaged some young boys to help him out with the arrangement since; «It is important for the younger generation to learn to appreciate our traditional art». The show was mainly sponsored by local families, but the stage was also decorated with a Honda commercial. The show started at 22:00 in the evening, the same time I later discovered was the main time for the audience to enter the rituals. (Could it be because this was the time when the evening ritual in every village home ended, the end of the daily local soap on TV ?). This night about 400 villagers had gathered to view the show.

Before the artists started their repertoire, a huge oil lamp was lit by the main guests, as a blessing to Buddha. After the salutation, the speaker asked the audience for one minutes silence as remembrance of the fighting soldiers on the Sinhalese side of the civil war.



I had expected to view the whole *Daha-ata Sanni*, the eighteen mask appearances of *Sanni Yaka*, but the title of the show was rather misleading as the performers (*aduras*) had picked the

most entertaining acts from the whole spectre of *toivils*. Some of the selected acts were the barber scene from the *Gamaduva* (a community rite for health and wealth), the *Daru-mav* (child-mother) act from the Rata Yakuma (a fertility ritual), the masquerade of Pandam Paliya, *Sallu Paliya*, *Tambili Paliya*, *Guru Rakse* and *Gara Yaka*, and the *Vadige Patuna* act (the Telegu people chapter) from the *Suniyama*.

When I later came to know the four performing *aduras*, I realised that they had chosen the acts they knew best, the acts they were most «famous for» in the district. Soddu malli was one of two (the other was Rajpala) I met in the whole area who performed the child- mother (*daru-mav*) act in the *Rata Yakuma*, an act which was definitely his star performance. Soddu malli had won a medal for being the best performer of this act in a governmental competition as well. Ranatunga and Soddu malli were performing the *Vadige patuna* act from the *Suniyama*, the act Ranatunga had won his medal for, and an act I saw them perform together many times later in *Suniyama* rituals and shows. Dayanande performed the demon mask appearance acts and Shelton mallie was the one who performed the more rarely viewed acts as the barberscene from the *Gamaduva*, a *Koalam* figure and the *Guru Rakse*. These four *aduras* were really like local «pop stars» with high recommendation and fame for their artistic performance of these particular acts.

This time I used the opportunity to just enjoy the performance at play, and simultaneously I wondered about how I should get in touch with the performers which seemed to have only male supplicants on the stage. Fortunately this did not become a problem when I got to know the *aduras* themselves. I participated at a few *Daha-ata Sanni* shows, and the political interest which was mirrored in these performances was clear. Most apparent was this in a «Daha-ata Sanni» show performed after the UNP party's public meeting in Tangalle and a show venued in Moratuwa outside Colombo which was arranged by the leader of a socialorganisation. The Moratuwa show was venued in an open field opposite his house, and the Minister of Cultural Affairs was present as an official guest. The speaker this night held a speech where he told that he was really sad that this great tradition was disintegrating. The *aduras* themselves however, was

given "low caste" treatment by their promoters, and in contrast of the speakers concerns, the most apparent promotion where gained by the political promoter and not the *aduras* themselves.

Summing up, the *aduras* are benefiting from the traditional shows since they get the opportunity to promote their skills as artists, and this is a field of occupation which gives them some extra income. I must emphasise though that the *aduras* themselves regard the *toivils* as their favourite «stage», and that these public shows are of secondary interest. The mirror of political interests is important since the politicians use the «traditional art» as a way to gain credibility and support among people. The «Daha-ata Sanni» shows have common appeal, and is an occasion people heartily join into. These shows also strongly communicate an interest in Sinhala Buddhist traditions, so the politicians on their hand might hope that these shows benefit their political party by linking communication of Sinhala Buddhist ideals with the experience of joy.

What I find most interesting though, is the question I raised at the beginning of this chapter, which was: Does the reference to the supernatural through ritual acts, become de-Indexicalised in a context of public shows? In order to give some suggestive notes to this question I will now turn to the public show that Leela's relatives sponsored and promoted one month after her ritual. This was show which mirrored the crossing interest of politics, Buddhism and traditional art.

The Awissawella show

The show in Awissawella was venued at the local temple ground, the very same temple which Leela's family had given land to and sponsored the establishment of. As I told, Leela's family was important and influential in this part of Ratnapura. Leela's brother in law was a leading politician in the UNP (United National Party, the greatest opposition to the ruling SLFP) in this area. They were also important members of the local LIONS club. For this show, Leela's husband told that they had used their influence and collected money from other important people as well. The

location at the Buddhist temple manifested that the Buddhist priests and the supporting politicians shared political interests.

When I talked with Leela's husband he claimed to have been impressed by the *aduras'* dancing skills at the previous ritual, and had therefore got the idea of arranging such a show. Leela's son in law, who was from the performing *aduras'* village, on his part claimed that he was specifically interested in the *aduras'* dancing art. They told that they had arranged a show before presenting the up-country dance tradition, (which is a strong part of the dancing tradition in the Ratnapura area), but the *aduras'* dance had been a lot more impressing than the others. After the previous ritual, which Leela's son in law videotaped, he got the idea of collecting such videos for historical documentation, and he stressed this as the reason why the show was to be performed the same night.

The *aduras* arrived the evening before the show, and had a good time by looking at the video from the *Mahasana Samayama* performed one month ago. Only Pieneris, Ranatunga and Degayu (drummer) were from this healing crew, and Shelton mallie and Soddu malli from the show in Kekkenedura were the two other dancers. The following morning, when I appeared, the *aduras* were busy making the backdraft to the show. The backdraft was almost identical with Maha-sammata's palace, used in the *Suniyama* ritual, but significantly, since the *ata mangalla* which is the «power-centre», the place of re-orientation into the actual world,⁸⁷ of this structure was left out. (See picture no. 13 & 14). My assistant had got himself an important job as the speaker for tonight's show, and he was fully occupied by preparing his speech. He also (for the third time I experienced) performed some small magic and stopped the rain which had been falling heavily. (He summoned Lord Vishnu's powers and tied a white piece of cloth on the backdraft).

The main difference from the other shows I witnessed was the religious context it was performed within. The *aduras* themselves were treated as the promoters' guests, and not by the

⁸⁷ This is the interpretation Kapferer (1997) gives to this structure.

temple priests. So in this way the priests showed only a distanced engagement in the show which was about to take place.

As I said, the show arena was situated at the temple ground, but a small modification of it must be stressed. The dancing arena was located next to the temple fence, just outside the «Sunday school building», so it was still within the temple ground, but not inside the fence which encloses the temple itself. The arena was circular, and seen from the "Sunday-school" which function as the *aduras'* «dressing room», a roofed tribune was placed by the left and a hilly ground was on the right hand side. Just above the backdraft, there were a tiny entrance field. The show arena was enclosed by a fence made of sticks and thread. (Its design reminded me of the fence enclosing the arena at the *Gara Yakuma*, a community rite). By the fence, above the back draft a offering basket was placed which was four levels high and nicely decorated with banana-three tusks. This was an offering basket for Saman, the local guardian deity. By its feet a huge pot of water was placed. The Buddhist priests, easily recognisable in their saffron robes, were seated at the tribune, together with the important sponsors, and their relatives. The rest of the audience sat on the two other sides.

While the people were seated, the *aduras* did their preparatory rites, such as sprinkling saffron water on the arena, on themselves and their costumes. Further they recited their *araksa mantras*, the *mantras* for protection. At the same time they were cracking jokes and teasing each other, showing a real good mood while dressing up for the show to come.

The show started by sunset, and the first announcement was made by the head priest. He encouraged people to pay attention to their cultural heritage, their ancient dance and arts rather than the modern commercial entertainment industry. In the same way he asked people to pay attention to the Buddhist doctrines communicated in the show and otherwise to follow them in their daily life. He also asked the people present to act in the ways that are suitable on the temple ground. Further he stressed that this show had the potential of a *Santi Karmaya*, i.e. rites of blessings to gods which would benefit the people and the community as a whole. The

governmental army was then remembered and he wished for protection to all the fighting soldiers, and honoured and named all the sponsors and promoters of the show.

He then asked all of us to remove our shoes, lie down on our knees with our hands clasped together up on our chest and think about Lord Buddha. He then lit the lights in the offering stand and placed flower offerings inside, lights and flowers for Buddha, Saman and other guardian deities. A *pirit* pray, a recitation of the Buddhist doctrines and the good deeds of Buddha's life was held, and at last everyone bent down, and the *pirit* were ended. Mahattea, the speaker of tonight, got the microphone and oriented about the show to come. He saluted the priests, the promoters, sponsors and the people present. The local UNP leader had asked him to say that even if they represented a political party in opposition to the leading one, they wished all the best to the President and her party in their difficult war against the (Tamil) Tigers, and so he did. He presented all the dancers and told about the practise they represented, and after this the show started for real. The show took off, and the *aduras* showed their star acts, the most entertaining acts they knew from all the *tovils*, the practise they inherit.

Up to now, I have stressed the context within which the show took place. I think these preparatory speeches were important in order to communicate for the audience the acts' effects. Their imagery pointed to the traditional dance, the Sinhalese heritage and the power of Buddhist religion. The *aduras* themselves communicated the same imagery through the ritual tools they adopted in this particular performance. The ritual tools transported into this context were only those belonging to the particular acts. Those which were not transported from the *Mahasana Samayama* into this context were the ritual offerings, *mantras*, *yantras*, *igaha*, arecanut cracker (*gire*), limes (*dehi*), betel-leaves (*bulat*) and demon-pipe (*vasdanda*). The only songs recited were the oratory songs of the various characters. In other words, all these tools with strong mediating potential between the various worlds, with potential to relieve the patient from *yaksedosa*, were left out. The *aduras* themselves stressed the lack of the *atamangala* in the back draft as important,

for the shows de-Indexicalisation of this structure's strong mediating and transformative potential.

The show started with the drummers singing a song in honour of the guardian gods, followed by the common Mangul Bere drum rhythm, which is the introductory rhythm played at any Buddhist ceremony. The *aduras* had freely picked acts from both the *Suniyama* ritual, the Pattini rite and others. I must admit that I do not know all these ritual acts well enough to elaborate how they have been transported from ritual into show. Anyhow, the *Daha-ata Sanni* title was as always misleading since the 18 *Sannis* did not appear at this show either. Nonetheless some of the *Sannis* appeared, and in the following I will shortly discuss how the phenomenological potential of these acts were actualised in this context.

I argue that the Iconical-Indexical phenomenological engagement of the few *Daha-ata Sannis* (discussed as an object) which were shown this night, vehicled the phenomenological quality as a third, or a Symbol for the particular *Sanni*. This is in opposition to the Indexical/Iconical quality these characters are a vehicle of at healing ritual performances. An important change in the act itself was that it was performed without any offerings to the *Sannis*, a fact which itself indicates that the Indexical relation to the *yakku's* forces was not engaged through this performance. The Interpretant, the people present were also a third due to the aesthetical performance they appreciated. The *aduras* themselves though, showed through their preparatory rites that they themselves viewed even the performance of show as Indexical with the powers they control in the *toivils*. Soddu malli gave me his «powerful» protective *yantra* in hand before he performed his «star» act, the child-mother act from the fertility rite. I did not think about this then, but I guess he did so because he viewed the potential of this act as Indexical with the Riddi Bishaus whose powers this *yantra* blocked.

In my interpretation, this qualitative change in the ritual acts indicates that the potential of the ritual acts to effect a patients' body, to release the body from *yaksedosa*, is dependent on the ritual offerings and the process of substantial transaction, *disti* binding and cutting engaged within

a healing ritual. It seems that the entertaining aspect, simulates or visualises the actual process and in this way strengthens its force. (Show eller rituale) The *Sannis* as transported into the context of show, does not vehicle this potential, since the actual force of offerings is their force to cure, a potential not actualised in show. So what is left within this context is the evokement of sentiments through the dramaturgical performance, the reference to Buddhism and the merit-giving potential in Buddha's words and teachings.

After the ritual show ended, lots of people came to the scene in order to take a handful of the water in the pot placed by the foot of Saman devaya's offering structure. This is holy water, with merit giving potential.

Summing up

These shows learned me that the traditional art is widely known in Sri Lanka, and that shows were performed frequently to a really amused audience who eagerly applauded between the different acts. In the case of Leela's ritual this public recognition of the aesthetical performance was thus transported into the ritual context, and in my view, this happened since their predisposition to the *aduras'* practise was Buddhism and traditional art, and not the engagement of the *yakku*. The context that ritual-acts are performed within strongly affect its potency and effect. The ritual in Kekkenedure was interpreted by some as a community rite, and so was the one in Awissawella. For the latter show, this interpretation was more obvious since it was venued by the temple with the priests present. The sponsors and promoters of the show gained social credibility and manifested their status as local superiors. As noted earlier, this is also stressed by Kapferer (1983, 1997) to be the case of *toivils*, since the local support of the rituals manifest the households position in their community, in fact this is a quality of every "official" social gathering among the Sinhalese.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have argued that there is a strong political interest in the *aduras'* work, an interest which emphasises the Buddhist and artistical qualities of their practises more than their capability of bringing cure. The "political" interest has given the *aduras* another field of occupation as teachers at dancing schools and as performers of «Daha-ata Sanni» shows, and their engagement in the state-ensemble, or similar troupes, has made the *aduras* into international representatives of Sri Lankan traditional art as well. I have also argued that politicians and other «important people», like the promoter at the Moratuwo show, use the «Daha-ata Sanni» for promotion. The «Daha-ata Sanni» discussed above is in contemporary Sri Lanka also the common term for the «low-country» traditional art. To the question of how the *aduras* themselves relate to this dualistic position of being performers of a disintegrating tradition and at the very same time keeping life in the same tradition through their ritual work, I must say that there is no apparent conflict. For the *aduras*, their work is related to the practise they preserve, because this is their source of skills which they creatively transport into various contexts.

However, the communication of a focus upon the Buddhist qualities and the aesthetical value of the *aduras'* work have had impacts on peoples' predispositions (habits) to the ritual practice and the phenomenological quality of their engagement of experience of the ritual performance. As shown, the peoples assembled at Leela's ritual were not habituated into the doxa of the rite, but into the doxa of traditional art. Due to the dialogical mode of the ritual performance, where to the audience by their verbal and bodily "responses and engagement" becomes a part of the dramaturgical mode of the *aduras'* work. In the *Mahasona Samayama* performed for Leela the entertaining aspect of the *aduras* work became actualised in its highest degree through "dialogue" with the spectators present. In the case of the show, the engagement of the entertaining value of the ritual acts was the main purpose of performance, and the offerings and transformative tools were left out. This indicates that the embodied experience

processed throughout ritual performance is both dependent of peoples' imagery as well as the context of performance (the signs' relations to other apparent signs).

In this chapter I have tried to bring the discussion of the *aduras'* lives into a new track since the literature I has access to have not put specific attention to their work in the art industry. My focus has however stayed on the ritual practise that they preserve, and not the shows which mainly engage pure entertainment and not self-transformative efficacy. I admit that, as in the case for the *aduras* themselves, this was my secondary field of interest throughout fieldwork. More detailed information could possibly have given a more nuanced answer to the questions raised here. Anyhow, the practice that the *aduras* as a whole preserve is an endless source of creative thought, actions and knowledge which all engage fundamental questions of being, and as long as there are *aduras*, there are actual answers to contemplate.

Appendix 1

Caste rank and main occupation of my informants' castes.

Goigama

The highest caste among the Sinhalese, and is traditionally associated with farming. According to the Varna system, Goigama belongs to the shudra. One finds Goigama people all over the island, but the Goigamas from the Kandy area are today regarded as the highest among Goigama subcasts.

Karava

Is interpreted as equal in rank to Goigama, or lower, according to who one talks to and in which relation caste is stressed. Michael Roberts' (1982) work shows that the Karava caste consists of Indian migrants who came to Sri Lanka and settled down at the Southern part of the island from 1300-1400 AD. Karavas claim to be of ksasthya (king servants) origin, which makes them superior to Goigama, if one follows the Varna system. They have never claimed superiority to the Goigama, however, but rather tried to be accepted as equals. Among them one finds a lot of businessmen, politicians as well as religious leaders in addition to their traditional occupation as fishermen.

Salagama

The traditional occupation of salagama castes is cinnamon peeling. Their history is the same as for the Karavas, but they are regarded as a slightly lower caste than the Karava.

Bereva

Is the traditional "tom tom" (drum) beaters in Sri Lanka. Their occupation has been to participate in religious ceremonies for common people as well as kings. Together with Doby (washer caste), Oli (potter caste) and others, their ancient function was to act as ritual servants to the king. They are however regarded as a low caste among the Sinhalese.

Appendix 2

Mythological texts

1. Vesamuni, the lord of the yakku. His story of origin.

"Once upon a time, there lived in Northern India a Brahmin, named Kuvera, who owned seven sugar mills. He gave the molasses from one of his mills to a bikkhu (a buddhist monk), with the idea of doing a good deed and earning merit. Later, he also gave the molasses of the other mills away, and continued doing this for twenty years till he died. He was reborn in one of the heavens,..., and then received the name Kuvera-deviyoraja (Kuvera god king). After he again died, he was born for the third time in Uttarakurudivaina. By a marriage he became very rich and had a palace and a large garden. In this garden there grew a strange tree, called kapruka (kalpa tree), which not only brought forth the most diverse fruits but everything else that might be wanted. The people who lived in this land were a thousand years old, but here also there were yakku who persecuted and tormented them. At night they used to sit on the people and use them to ride on. Therefore, Buddha and Sakra offered Kuvera-deviyoraja the sovereignty over the yakku and gave him a third eye and a sword, which could kill anyone at a great distance. So he became the ruler of all the yakku in all the four parts of the world. With his host of yakku, bhuto (bhute) and preteo, Vesamuni rajiurovo persecuted mankind uninterruptedly from then on with illnesses, epidemics, and all kinds of plagues, giving his subjects his orders and sending them out to spread harm everywhere" (Wirz 1954:24).

2. How Buddha forced the Yakku to accept the Adura's powers

"One day, so the legend relates, Buddha resolved to go to the Sakvala-gala (the place where the Yakku resides) to reason with the yakku, since they wanted to undertake a campaign against mankind. Sakra (the lord of gods) warned him and offered to accompany him but Buddha refused his proposal and decided to go alone. But Sakra did not desist from cautioning him and

trying to dissuade him from his purpose. Buddha went his way, notwithstanding. He had assumed the form of an old beggar. On the Sakvala-gala there were as many yakku as drops of water in the ocean. When he arrived there the yakku asked him what he wanted. Buddha only asked them for shelter for the night, but they refused to listen and bade him go his way. Buddha continued his entreaties; any little space, he said, would suit him. At last, the yakku sent him to see their leader and so he was allowed to pass the night on a small spot of rock. When it began to grow dark, Buddha made his halo radiate a little so that the stones became warm. A weird sensation seized the yakku. They went to their leader, and reported what had happened. But he did not believe them, for how could the old beggar have managed to do such a thing? Meanwhile it grew hotter and hotter, and already the rock began to glow. All the yakku came running and threw themselves at Buddha's feet and entreated him to spare them. «We are poor miserable creatures» they cried, «feeding on slime and spittle». Buddha had pity on them. «I will spare you» he said, «but only on one condition; when you have struck somebody with illness and the adura summons you, you have to come and accept the offerings which you are presented with. Afterwards, you must leave the men alone whom you have been pursuing and restore them to health again" (Wirz 1954:24-25).

3. Suniyam Santi Karmaya upete

The origin of the first anti-sorcery ritual.

(Translated verbally by my assistant. The text presented below is kept in the original translation since it convey some of the syntactic of Sinhala and is in my view kept more similar to the original texts). There was a king, Maha sammata. (The one king). He was appointed as a king of the people. When he was a prince the courteous got together and brought a proposal, this is the conductible time to marry a good lady. Good in every respect; beautiful, young and with good manners. So they were in search of such a beautiful lady. At last they came to know that God Vishnu had one sister. She was known as Manikpala. She was so beautiful, her eyes were like blue

gems, when she talked smell like blue lotus flowers came out of her mouth. She was well shaped, not too short, not too tall, not too thin, not too fat.

At the same time, there lived another man called Wasawarti maroa. He was a prince, but a troublesome man. (He had bad manners, a man with bad character). He was also in search of a beautiful woman to marry, and he also came across this beauty, and liked her very much. Anyhow, Manikpala married Maha sammata.

This marriage made Wasawarti maroa burn with anger, and he made plans to split them. He himself knew mantras, and had psychic powers.

Maha sammata went for a battle in another country, to fight the asuras in a word-duel. The queen was left behind at the palace together with the servants. Wasawarti got to know that Maha sammata had left, and one night he came to the palace, disguised as Maha sammata. He addressed the servants to open the door, and one servant came and opened the trapdoor, but the strong odour of citrus made the servant suspicious. The servant then found Manikpala and reported to her; Oh queen, someone has come to the door. It looks like Maha sammata, but he smells like citrus, and how can I open the door then. Manikpala answered: When my husband comes to the palace, it spread a fragrant smell similar to blue lotus flowers, this must be some other person. In doubt she said; it might be Wasawarti maroa. She went to the door, and disclosed Wasawarti immediately. Then the queen got angry, and said; Get out of my premises, go away and called Wasawarti the most awful things (*Djaddoe?*). Wasawarti got angry for this, and threatened her; I am a prince, I will take revenge from you.

Then Wasawarti went off and made some bad mantras. With his psychic powers he put his hands in the "underworld", and took hands full of burning substance (mantel?) (*ginidjall*) and threw it onto the palace. Then he transformed himself into a big wiper, red in colour, and got into the palace, and by the look of it Manikpala got excited and fainted.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Bruce Kapferer's (1997:69) similar myth tells that the snake entered Manikpala's body. I suspect that this detail was too obscene for my assistant to utter, and that this is the reason why Manikpala according to this myth just faints at the sight of the snake.

The servant who found her, prayed for *Vishnu* and *Sakras* in order to come and rescue the queen. Through his psychic powers *Sakra* came to know what had happened to Manikpala, and he assembled the other gods. What shall we do?, he asked, in order to rescue this beautiful queen. Maha sammata is at war... and a long discussion followed. After all the gods came to one conclusion. They had decided to ask *Oddisa rsiya* for help; he is the clever one who can cure these things. So as a messenger they selected god *Vishnu* to bring *Oddisa rsiya* here.

God *Vishnu* accepted, and went off to find *Oddisa rsiya*. On his journey he had to overcome a lot of obstacles *Wasawarti* had created on his path. But *Vishnu's* psychic powers were stronger than *Wasawarti's* and he managed to reach *Oddisa rsiya's* palace. *Vishnu* knocked on the door, and *Oddisa rsiya* who was at sleep at the top floor could with his psychic powers see *Vishnu* at his front door. *Oddisa* asked *Vishnu* why he had come, and *Vishnu* told him what had happened to queen Manikpala. Finally he asked him if he could come with him and cure the queen, and so he did.

Oddisa rsiya came along to Maha sammata's palace and made the diagnosis. *Oddisa rsiya* ordered to do a *yaga* (ritual).

Then for this ritual *Oddisa rsiya* asked the other *rsis*, who knew the *veda-sastra* to help him out with the *yaga*. One *rsi* asked him to build a temporary shed, to make a *vidiya* inside. It should be made on the ground of the northern side of the palace. This *vidiya* should have four entrances, and the queen should be seated in the middle of this *vidiya*. This place was named *ata-mangalla*. In the middle of this *vidiya* they first spread clean ashes and drew *yantra* on it. Then they covered it with a new mat. On the mat they spread rice and drew another *yantra* on it. Then they covered this with another mat, and Manikpala were seated at the top of it.

This was the first *santi karmaya* done by the *rsins*. Very early this ritual were called *Brakma deva santi karmaya*, and today this anti sorcery rite is called *Suniayama*. The first name given tells that this ritual were formerly performed by the *Brahmins*, who again learned this to the *Yak Aduras*.

4. Riri Yaka Sirisipade

1. According to the power given by ramaraja, demons can sometimes stay in the graveyard, while demons are waiting in the graveyard they cause illness by frighten the people, to recover the patient, that illness caused by the demon Riri Yaka, we have to give a living cock with its blood and heart. Oh demon come out of the head of the patient by the power of Lord Buddha.

2. People who are drawn in the water, suddenly will cause sickness of the Riri Yaka, the blood thirsty Yaka, is sometimes called Totepala Riri Yaka, disease is caused while in the graveyard, and in the three road junctions, and in such instanses we have to give yaka dola. That is offering like fried sirials, fried meat, and come out of the patients forehead with the power of Deva.

3. Sometimes blood thirsty Yaka Riri Yaka, use to come disguised himself as 18 different ghosts, we call Billi dahaata, and as a beggar and as a monk, and as a dog, and like that he use to frighten to the people when they are going to the water falls, and when they are going to the river where the Dobis are washing clothes, and in such a way blood thirsty yaka, cause sickness. And get rid of the patients illness we have to give offerings flowers, and release the patients sickness in the patients neck with the power of the Sangha.

4. In threatening from the Riri Yaka, enter into the human world, and he uses to frighten the people in the four road junctions. and in the graveyards, and cause sicness to the people, and with teh power of the devas give orders to go away and release the sickness on the two sholders of the patient. Oh come out Riri Yaka.

5. Time to Riri Yaka, the Yaka causing sickness to humans in the human world. And when you meet a person near the graveyard you make them sick, but we giving you meat and fish as we have collected from sea as well as land, and wiht the power of Lord Vishnu the demon Riri Yaka will come out of the patient stomach.

6. The demon called Riri Yaka appearing to the people disguised himself as a beggar, and cause sickness to the people on the arm joints and the legs joints and make pain on the parts of the human body, and make headache. Oh Riri Yaka, come and accept the living cock placed in my hand, and release the sickness caused in the joints of the legs with the power of planet Chandra.

7. Oh Riri Yaka, You comes with the permission of Lord Vesemuni, when you comes we will offer you fried meat and sirials, as you like but we wont allow you to be here in the human world, but we put all the powers of the Devas on you and please relase the sicness caused by you and accept the offerings as we give. And relase the sickness on the ancles on the patient, and come out of the ancle

8. We will happily decorate everything arranged for you and give you with the flowers, sanduns, and oil, mal bullat, and will come with powers of all the Devas and relasing all the sickness caused by you. on the two feet, and the twenty fingers nails, on the feet of the patient.

9. With powers of god Vesemuni who have given promition to Yaku from the early days as we have nice arranged all the needs for you. Insense, chandanam and everything as eatable and insentives flowers and with the powers fo the learnded Irsins who lived those days and considers their powers and considers about their powers and accept the all things given to you as offerings, and release the sicness from head to toe.

5. Mahasona sirisipade

1. Mahasona came from long distance with the determination of war. By seeing the beryl ground where the cremation was done to king Mama Sammete, This yaka came to know that he can not do any sickness, so the patients sickness in the head will be cured soon.

2. Mahasona ascending upper part of the sky , makes horrible sound which makes human being deaf and blind and swollen body. With the power of Saman dejo, without any delay give up the sickness in the patients ear.

3. Swimming across the sea, come to our performances, if you believe the power of the jamaraja, accept what we are giving as offerings, and release the patients sickness in the two shoulders

4. Mahasona is possessing a bear head, in the left hand holding a weapon called helle, in the right hand a sword. And he is with his 30 thousand followers, and any sickness caused, do let release and accept the offerings.

5. He was born from the Kombekaris womb and received the permission from Vesamuni and became the king of the buthe and yaka. And release the sickness from the two elbows, and fingers, and let all of the sicknesses come out of the patient.

6. Mahasona, why are you appearing in three witcheries, why do you want to swim in the blood lake, why do you want to eat human body, why do you want to suck the blood. The demon who is killing small infants, please release the chest and stomach pain from the patients sickness and come out of the patients body.

7. Mahasona shaking the sword in front of the ironlore and riding on the back of a pig, Pull out flames out of the mouth, the sickness caused by the Mahasona to the patient, the bear of the tights will come cured, and accept the offerings given by the patient.

8. Mahasona is searching after something to eat, among the fees and to rest some time where the robols are resting. According to the offerings, things like coins he prefers, and rice he prefers to offerings. After accepting offerings release sickness on the lower part of the legs ankles and toes, and come out of the human body

9. We are giving calling to all sorts of devas, by all sorts of mantrams and are chanting in the name of the lord Buddha. In the power of the Lord Buddha as well as devas, Mahasona will have to come and accept the offerings only, and release the sickness of the patients heals, and twenty nails, all sorts of sickness in the body. By releasing the sickness in the head, forehead, neck, mouth, leg, two shoulders, two hands, stomach, two tights, to knee caps, legs, feet, heals, all the places will be healed, all sorts of sickness will be cured, with the triple gem.

6. Yakku Bandima Mantra

Om Namoh! Through the powers of Bahirawa demon being tamed, Bahirawa demon being tamed, Gara yaka being tamed, Gara yaka being tamed, Naga yaka being tamed, Naga yaka being tamed. Shepperd yaka being tamed, Shepperd yaka being tamed. Pillu yaka being tamed, Pillu demon being tamed, Daha-ata Sanni yaka being tamed, Asura bahavana being tamed, Gamda bahavana being tamed, Naga bhyavana being tamed.

The sky being tamed, the earth being tamed, the soil of the earth being tamed, the ocean being tamed, the waves of the ocean being tamed, the twelve months being tamed, seven hours in seven days being tamed. The males and the females of the astrological caste, the washer caste, commerce caste, farmers caste being tamed, and bound by the Sri Maha Bodhi (Sacred Bo tree).

Eighty four thousand demons and she demons do stay. Bind them to the lime tree, using Bahirawa bandana, and eight strands of thread. Dhenam- Dheem- Dheen- dangena-gana-gana-koti-bhatha-prabha-vam-vin-vin-vin- [and more mantrams follows].

7. Riri Yaka Mantra

Om Reen Sri Sawara len Sawara kattu bukattu mukku nel kappu yaya riri majan gan karol mum del nal payu saruwa rara kaka mu da namga ponga raga ad dada dahare kada katta kaile aa gan ran yee gan uu uu hanumantha mukkeel naga poogu gawra riri dantha noruk pattu hana hana ri ri gan yak nanda ka pebi marudra theri narayane. Do take possession of death for three minutes-thoswa!!! Jaladawana katuka periga tha neele muppa kondun kachhchi le addath dahare dahak geendra kaami vai vara riri yaka.

8. Mantra used in the Riri Yaka depavilla.

-Om reen harlala harlahidi rama gini kallum hira bandana gidi gidi yama kumb ghu.

-Deadly demon if you dwell in this patient body I will break your head into seven pieces using the glan sword used by the Vaishravans God. So without being tortured so leave the possession of the patient, fly away, shaking the earth, Om srin, dealy mother spirit, fly away, leaving the possesion, om rin rai rai re gidi gidi kida kida.

-Fly away with the sacrifice of the cock I am offering. ija ija ija kaka om reen reen dala vila vipula putte Vesamuni.

-Do take possession of the cock, and take possesion of the Asura flower prince at Neela Kuuta montain, and through the powers of God Sri Vishnu fly away

-Om Srin Narayane gini gini riri Kuralaen riri ponne, if you do not leave this human being, I will set fire to your dwelling, with the help of twenty eight demons.

-Om srin narayaner gini gini leave this human body through the powers of Yama.

Appendix 3

Aduras' skills and occupations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	A	MC	MC	MC	A	A	A	A	MK	A	A	BK	BK	BK	AA	
Offeringbaskets	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Songs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Bali design								x				x	x	x		
Mask (wood carving)																x
Diagnosis	x	x	x	x	x				x							x
Protective Yantra	x	x	x	x	x				x							x
Protective Oil	x	x	x	x	x				x							x
Mantra		x	x	x	x				x							x
Dance to all tovils	x	x	x	x	x	x	x									x
Dance to some tovils								x		x	x					
Gurunanse, teacher		x		x												
Dancing schools				x	x	x										
Drumming	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	xx	xx	xx	x	
Tour abroad		x			x		x	x				x				
Local shows	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
Perahera	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Trance dance skills	x	x			x	x	x	x								x

MC; Mantra Chari; Adura skilled in mantra and dancing to all tovils

A; Adura; Adura mainly skilled in dancing

MK; Mantra karaya; Man specialised in mantra

BK; Bereva karaya; drummer

AA; Adura/Arudaya; An adura who simultaneously is a godly devotee.

Appendix 4

Glossary

adav- short dances, performed as offerings to gods

adura- ritual healer

aibowewa- long life. Ritual term for the common Aibowan

aille- offering plate

aluyama- morning watch

ambun kavi- songs which describe the origin and making of the ritual buildings, offering-baskets etc.

amma- mother

anduna- soot/oil mixture used by the adura's in the face

anguru- earthen-pot containing burning coal and resin.

araksa- protection

araksa-mantra- protective mantra

araksa-nula- protective tread

arudhaya- a devoted person

asirivada- a short version of songs

ata- eight

ata-cona- the eight cardinal directions

ata-mangala- ritual enclosure in the Suniyama, placed within the main ritual structure

ata-paliya- the eight paliyas (procession of eight)

aturea- patient

aturea pandala- the Patient's bed

avatara- manifestation of the supernaturals

avatara balima- to see the avatara of Mahasona, a name given to an ritual act

avesa- demon trance

baba- baby

bahirevas- earth spirits, also called buthe

bali- clay image or clay in general

bandaras- territorial demon/gods

bandima- to bind, here in the usage of binding disti

baratto- the masculine aspect of dance, (the same meaning as the Sanskrit term tandu)

baya- fear or fright

belma- look

bera- ceremonial drum used in tovil

bera pade- dancing rhythm

bera tala- drum rhythm

bereva- drummer caste

Bereva karaya- drummer

bhava- emotion

bhikku- Buddhist priest

billa- living sacrifice (i.e. a cock)

bulat- betel leaf

butha- the element of earth

Daha-ata sanni- The eighteen sanni, or the common term for public shows

dannewa- give, hand over

daru-mav- child/mother act

dauwla- ritual drum

dekano willaku- double sided torch

depavila- human sacrifice trick

deraheva- death bed

deva- god

devale- shrine

devata- Godling, demon god.

devaya- God

devi- goddess

Devol devi- The god of fire

dharma- the teachings of Gotama Buddha

disti- pollutive substance from yakku

dolaha pideni- offerings to Mahasona

dosa- faults, misfortune. Related to bodily substance

dumalla- resin

durava- chair men caste (or toddy tappers)

epa nula- protective thread

Gammaduve- the community rite celebrating goddess Pattini

Gana devi- God Ganesa, the elephant headed god. Son of Shiva and Katarangama's brother

Ganesa- Same as Gana devi

gewatte- land

gire- Arecanut cracker

goigama- farmer caste

gotowatie- Offering basket to Mahasona

guru musti- teacher secrets

gurunanse- teacher

hakami- the caste of land workers

Hatt pelle paliya- the procession of seven (offerings) items

Hende pideni- evening offerings to yakku

igaha- the ritual stick, in general arrow

ile- small offering plate made of banana-tree stem pieces

Ira Modum Samayama- Offering ritual for the sun at its high Riri Yaka

ira modum- Noon

Iswara- Another name for Shiva. The name given to him as one of the seers the rsins. In general Shiva is the world's destructor

jataka- myths concerning Buddhas' life and teaching

kahadiyara- Saffron water, purifying water used throughout ritual

Kalas paliya- One of the eight paliyas, the one who brings holy earth

Kalayatana- dancing school

Kalayatana hipati- authorised teacher at dancing schools

Kali Amma- A manifestation of the Hindu goddess Kali

kallas- earth

Kalu Yaka- "The black yaka" A yaka who especially "lust" for women

kannalauva- pleading verses

kapporo- champhor-cube

kapurala- temple priest

karaiya- man

karannewa- speak

karava- the caste of fisher men

kavi- song

killa dannewa- "pollution hitting", dumalla on fire in rituals

killi- impure substance associated with ritual impurity

kokula- Cock

kovil- garden temple

lache- female aspect of dance

lankapalas- guardian deities

laukika- of this world

loka- world

lokottara- beyond this world

maduyama- midnight

Mahasona- The great cemetery demon

Maha Samayama- the great offering time

Maha Sammata- The great king

Mahavamsa- the great chronicle of Sri Lanka

mal- flower

Mangara devi- A god who protects Mahasona

Mangara pelle paliya- The procession for Mangara god

Mangulbere- A ceremonial drum rhythm saluting Lord Buddha

Manikpala- Vishnu's sister and the wife of Maha Sammata, the great king

mantra- charms, the cosmic sound

Mantra Chari- A fully schooled Adura.

Mantra karaya- A man specialised in mantra

Maroa- The death spirit

maya- illusion

mono- mask or in general usage face

naga- snake, or gods who controls snakes

namaskaraya- prayer which gives gods honour.

namaste- salutation to gods

nanomora- protective oil

natuma- dance

natya- dance

Natyasastra- A theory of Indian dance

Nibbana- nirvana

njatnja kannalauva- a special category of songs of pleading

nula- thread

Om- The cosmic sound which address Brahma, Vishnu and Iswara

pade- dancing steps

padure- Mat

paliya- in general; procession

pambaya- a straw doll, scare crow

panca- five

panca bhuta- the five worldly elements; earth, water...

panca messe- the centre offering pedestal in the Mahasona vidiya.

pandam- torch

perahera- temple procession

pideni- offering

pilli- substantial impurity affecting a persons own karma

pirit- Buddhist prayer

pitta- bile

pitte pantie- low ranked spirits who dwell outside of cultivated land

pol geddie- coconut tree stick

polluto- feather

Polluto pideni- the offering of feather, hair and spit to Mahasona

porale- the name of Mahasona's graveyard, the "disti stopping place"

preta- ghosts

puja- offering to gods at shrines

Rahu- Saturn

rajaraya- king servant system

rakse- demons who are superior to the Yakku

raksi- female rakse

rasa- taste or sentiments.

rasaya- the Sinhala term for rasa

Rata Yakuma- the fertility rite

Riddi Bishaus- The seven wives of Kalu Kumare, entiteled as queens

Riddi Yaksini- The seven wives of Kalu Kumare, entiteled as demons

Riri yaka- the blood thirsty yaka. Appears in 9 manifestations.

roga- illness

rsin- supernaturals referred to as the "seers"

rupa- visual form

sabdaya- speech

sabdha- sound of speech

Sakra- The protective god of Sri Lanka and Buddhism

sakti- female potency

salagama- Cinnamon peeler caste

sallue- Pattini's shawl

samsara- the cycle of rebirth

sandayama- evening

sandon- saffron

sangha- Buddhist order of priests

sannis- A generic term for the 18 followers of Kola Sanni Yaka

santi karmaya- rites of blessing

saudem- dancing combinations for salutation of gods

sema- phlegm

sirisipade- head to foot verse

Suniyam- The god of sorcery

Suniyama- The anti sorcery rite

tala- rhythm

tambili geddie- young coconut

tambili- coconut

tandu- The masculine aspect of dance

tatoe- offering stand

tatoe- offering stand

torana- offering pedestal

tovil geddere- the common entitling of the house of the patient when a tovil takes place

tovil- a healing ritual with offerings to yakku

tundos- faults in the three bodily humours

upete kavi- songs of origin

varanan- permission, warrant, authorisation

vasdanda- demon pipe

wata- wind, referring to one of the three bodily humours

Veddha- The "aboriginals" of Sri Lanka

Wesawarti- "the world poisoner"

Vesemuni- the lord of yakku

vidiya- road, or a term for the big offering structures used in toviles

villaku- fire stick

yadini kavi- songs of origin and exploits of the yakku

yak adura- he who removes demons, ritual healer

yaka- malevolent spirit

yakdessa- he who holds discourse with demons, ritual healer

yakku- plural for yaka

yaksadosa - yaka trouble, misfortune caused by disti

yaksini - female yakku

yantra - cosmic diagram, the form of mantra

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